

The making of White Australia:  
Ruling class agendas, 1876-1888

Philip Gavin Griffiths

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of The Australian National University

December 2006



I declare that the material contained in this thesis is entirely my own work,  
except where due and accurate acknowledgement of another source  
has been made.

Philip Gavin Griffiths



## Contents

	Acknowledgements	ix	
	Abbreviations	xiii	
	Abstract	xv	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>		<b>1</b>
	A review of the literature	4	
	A ruling class policy?	27	
	Methodology	35	
	Summary of thesis argument	41	
	Organisation of the thesis	47	
	A note on words and comparisons	50	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Class analysis and colonial Australia</b>		<b>53</b>
	Marxism and class analysis	54	
	An Australian ruling class?	61	
	Challenges to Marxism	76	
	A Marxist theory of racism	87	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Chinese people as a strategic threat</b>		<b>97</b>
	Gold as a lever for colonisation	105	
	The Queensland anti-Chinese laws of 1876-77	110	
	The 'dangers' of a relatively unsettled colonial settler state	126	
	The Queensland ruling class galvanised behind restrictive legislation	131	
	Conclusion	135	

Chapter 4	The spectre of slavery, or, who will do 'our' work in the tropics?	137
	The political economy of anti-slavery	142
	Indentured labour: The new slavery?	149
	The controversy over Pacific Islander 'slavery'	152
	A racially-divided working class: The real spectre of slavery	166
	Chinese people as carriers of slavery	171
	The ruling class dilemma: Who will do 'our' work in the tropics?	176
	A divided continent? Parkes proposes to unite the south	183
	Conclusion	189
Chapter 5	The shadow of Mill: The 'necessity' of a culturally homogeneous society	191
	The necessity for national homogeneity	196
	John Stuart Mill: Theorist of homogeneity	200
	The dilemmas of homogeneity I: Where do you draw the line?	214
	Chinese people as a 'threat' to free institutions	223
	Was it all just racism?	228
	The dilemmas of homogeneity II: What is to be done about the Irish?	236
	The dilemmas of homogeneity III: Is liberalism to be betrayed?	244
	Conclusion: The sublime logic of homogeneity	248
Chapter 6	The politics of 'coloured labour' in Queensland, 1876-1882	255
	The ruling class debate over Pacific Islander labour, 1876-77	261
	The squatters defeated: <i>The Pacific Islands Labourers Act of 1880</i>	273
	The planters fight for indentured Indian labour	284
Chapter 7	The politics of 'coloured labour' in Queensland, 1883-1886	293
	The 'coolie' issue destroys McIlwraith	295
	The Liberals triumphant	300
	The politics of 'coloured labour' immigration in Queensland	310
	The labour trade condemned	315
	Separation: The planters try to divide Queensland	321
	Separation blocked	335
	What was resolved by 1888?	343

Chapter 8	Capital vs labour? The class logic of anti-Chinese racism	349
	The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , the seamen's strike and Chinese immigration	356
	Duty to nation and 'race': The seamen's strike in the <i>Evening News</i>	366
	The seamen's strike in Queensland's conservative newspapers	375
	Containing discontent	383
	Conclusion	400
Chapter 9	Towards the Chinese immigration crisis of 1888	403
	The anti-Chinese laws of 1881	405
	The 'awakening east': China's emergence as a military power	417
	Fear of British betrayal	420
	The danger of the open door at Darwin	432
	A challenge to colonial control: The Chinese Commissioners' mission of 1887	444
	South Australia refuses to close Darwin to Chinese immigration	451
Chapter 10	The making of the first White Australia policy	459
	A determination to legislate	463
	Please explain	473
	The <i>Afghan</i> crisis	483
	The significance of the anti-Chinese movements, 1886-1888	498
	The colonies decide: The Intercolonial Conference of 1888	510
	Closing the open door at Darwin	516
	Conclusion	534
Conclusion		537

Bibliography	547
Official records	547
Private archives	550
Newspapers and magazines	552
Contemporary books	553
Contemporary articles	558
Books	568
Articles and chapters	587
Unpublished theses and papers	607



## Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have been written without the Australian Postgraduate Scholarship I was awarded in 1999, and I wish to thank ANU for the confidence it showed in me, and for funding two major research trips to Brisbane and Adelaide. From the Department of Political Science and then the School of Social Sciences in the Faculty of Arts, I received strong institutional support and the friendship and support of academics and postgrads.

I owe special thanks to Rick Kuhn, my principal supervisor, for his support from the very start of this project, for helping me deal with problems, and bring it to the point of submission. Panel member, Frank Bongiorno, challenged me and encouraged me, and continued to offer assistance long after he left ANU. Sarah Gregson has been a constant supporter and intellectual comrade. Her own thesis, "Footsoldiers for capital: The influence of RSL racism on interwar industrial relations in Kalgoorlie and Broken Hill" was an inspiration, and Sarah read and commented on this thesis. It was Ben Wellings, my room-mate at ANU, who suggested I read John Stuart Mill when I was puzzling over the fascination that some colonial politicians had for building an 'homogenous' society. Henry Chan made an immense contribution to this thesis when he rang me in January 2002 and asked me to write an 8000 word chapter on the politics of anti-Chinese racism for a book he was editing. I had six weeks to do it, and took seven. The book was never published, but writing that chapter forced me to synthesise the argument of this thesis, and gave the project a tremendous

boost. I have given many seminar and conference papers on the material in this thesis, and wish to thank all those who listened, and especially those who challenged my arguments. Thanks too to Bruce Knobloch for proofreading.

I wish to thank the staff of those libraries and archives I used in my research: Chifley Library, the Australian Dictionary of Biography, and the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at ANU; the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra; the National Library of Australia; National Archives of Australia; the State Library of New South Wales and the Mitchell Library; NSW State Records; Sydney University Archives and the Fisher Library at Sydney University; the UNSW Library and UNSW Archives; the State Library of Victoria; Victoria's Public Records Office; Monash University Library; the Baillieu Library at the University of Melbourne; the John Oxley Library in Brisbane and in particular Karen Freidl; Queensland State Archives; the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland; the State Library of South Australia, including the Mortlock Library; the South Australian State Archives; the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide; the British Library; and the Public Records Office, London.

My capacity to undertake this project was first developed as a member of the International Socialist Organisation, where I learned both the basics of Marxism and the nature of class struggle and political struggle. Dave Nadel and Tom O'Lincoln taught me how to write. It was the ISO's critique of left nationalism that first aroused a sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing explanations of Australia's history and ultimately led to this thesis. The theories of the International Socialist tendency, especially the theory of state capitalism and its relationship to imperialism, provided the theoretical basis from which I began

my first independent explorations into Australian history 25 years ago. I owe my greatest intellectual debts to these comrades.

I wish to thank all my friends and comrades in the struggle for a better world – and especially Jane Keogh and Claire Bruhns from the Refugee Action Committee in Canberra. My family, and especially my mother, Nelva, have given me enormous support and frequent scolding to hurry up and finish.

But in a largely solitary undertaking, such as writing a PhD thesis, it is those closest to you who bear the heaviest burden, and who are most critical to providing the affection and constant listening that allows it to happen. No one has done more to help me see this project through than my partner, Sigrid McCausland. She not only put up with the anxiety that comes when chapters never seemed to get finished, but also contributed her own vast knowledge of Australian history and archival sources to help me find my way.



## Abbreviations

AJCP	Australian Joint Copying Project
ASN	Australasian Steam Navigation Co.
Col Sec	Colonial Secretary
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly (South Australia)
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NSW	New South Wales
NSW LA	New South Wales Legislative Assembly
NSWPD	<i>New South Wales Parliamentary Debates</i>
NT	Northern Territory
ORDLA	<i>Official Record of Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Qld)</i>
ORDLC	<i>Official Record of Debates of the Legislative Council (Qld)</i>
PRL	Political Reform League (NSW)
PRU	Political Reform Union (NSW)
Qld	Queensland
QPD	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Debates</i>
QSA	Queensland State Archives
QT	<i>Queensland Times (Ipswich)</i>
SA	South Australia
SAPD	<i>South Australian Parliamentary Debates</i>
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
Tas	Tasmania
TLC	Trades and Labour Council
V&P	<i>Votes and Proceedings</i>

Vic	Victoria
VPD	<i>Victorian Parliamentary Debates</i>
WMDA	Working Men's Defence Association (NSW)

## Abstract

This thesis argues that the colonial ruling class developed its first White Australia policy in 1888, creating most of the precedents for the federal legislation of 1901. White Australia was central to the making of the Australian working class, to the shaping of Australian nationalism, and the development of federal political institutions. It has long been understood as a product of labour movement mobilising, but this thesis rejects that approach, arguing that the labour movement lacked the power to impose such a fundamental national policy, and that the key decisions which led to White Australia were demonstrably not products of labour movement action.

It finds three great ruling class agendas behind the decisions to exclude Chinese immigrants, and severely limit the use of indentured “coloured labour”.

Chinese people were seen as a strategic threat to Anglo-Australian control of the continent, and this fear was sharpened in the mid-1880s when China was seen as a rising military power, and a necessary ally for Britain in its global rivalry with Russia. The second ruling class agenda was the building of a modern industrial economy, which might be threatened by industries resting on indentured labour in the north. The third agenda was the desire to construct an homogenous people, which was seen as necessary for containing social discontent and allowing “free institutions”, such as parliamentary democracy.

These agendas, and the ruling class interests behind them, challenged other major ruling class interests and ideologies. The result was a series of dilemmas and conflicts within the ruling class, and the resolution of these moved the colonial governments towards the White Australia policy of 1901. The thesis therefore describes the conflict over the use of Pacific Islanders by pastoralists in Queensland, the campaign for indentured Indian labour by sugar planters and the radical strategy of submerging this into a campaign for North Queensland separation, and the strike and anti-Chinese campaign in opposition to the use of Chinese workers by the Australasian Steam Navigation Company in 1878. The first White Australia policy of 1888 was the outcome of three separate struggles by the majority of the Anglo-Australian ruling class – to narrowly restrict the use of indentured labour in Queensland, to assert the right of the colonies to decide their collective immigration policies independently of Britain, and to force South Australia to accept the end of Chinese immigration into its Northern Territory. The dominant elements in the ruling class had already agreed that any serious move towards federation was to be conditional on the building of a white, predominantly British, population across the whole continent, and in 1888 they imposed that policy on their own societies and the British government.



# *Chapter 1*

## Introduction

THIS THESIS explains the development of the White Australia policy in a new way, not as the result of working-class racism or working-class mobilisation, but as a ruling-class attempt to secure three major objectives – Anglo-Australian colonisation of the continent, a modern rather than indentured labour economy, across the whole continent, and an “homogeneous” population. These strategies were fought for by the dominant elements within the ruling class in a series of conflicts from 1876 onwards, with the first White Australia policy being established by 1888 through legislation that effectively prevented Chinese immigration and severely constrained the employment of indentured non-European labour in Queensland. The laws adopted in 1901, shortly after federation, represented a broadening and consolidation of the principles established in 1888.

White Australia was one of the defining elements of Australian nationalism and a central feature of Australian politics for two-thirds of the twentieth century. Frank Castles and Paul Kelly have argued that in the period around federation, Australia’s first national politicians developed an “Australian settlement”, a set

of broad policies agreed to by all major parties, policies above the fray of partisan conflict, which guided the year-by-year business of legislating and governing. They see White Australia as a crucial part of this “Australian settlement”.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless it was dismantled in a long process beginning in the late 1950s and ending in 1975 with the passing of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. The ideology of “White Australia” and the prevention of non-European immigration were always affronts to the peoples of Asia, and with decolonisation after the Second World War, the affronts were felt by the political leaders and business people who were now *running* Australia’s neighbours. With racism more generally discredited after the Holocaust, the White Australia policy had become a strategic, ideological and economic liability.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even years after its official demise, White Australia and its attendant racism have continued to haunt Australian politics. During 1984-85, Geoffrey Blainey won a national audience for his campaign against the supposed “surrendering” of Australia to Asia through immigration. In August 1988, Liberal opposition

---

<sup>1</sup> Francis Castles, *Australian public policy and economic vulnerability: A comparative and historical perspective*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, especially pp. 91-109. Paul Kelly outlined his theory of the Australian Settlement in *The end of certainty: Power politics & business in Australia*, revised edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1994, pp. 1-13. His account has been controversial, and *inter alia*, the subject of a major discussion in *The Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, with contributions by Geoffrey Stokes, Marian Sawer, Stuart Macintyre, Judith Brett, Paul Smyth and Kelly in reply. Significantly, all of the contributors agree that there was some kind of agreed national political strategy in place for most of the twentieth century and all who mention the White Australia policy see it at the centre of this hegemony.

<sup>2</sup> This is the argument of The Immigration Reform Group, *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar? The background to ‘White Australia’ and a proposal for change*, revised edition, Melbourne University Press, Parkville (Vic), 1962, pp. 88, 92-103. See also Sean Brawley *The white peril: foreign relations and Asian immigration to Australasia and North America 1919-78*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1995, pp. 297-320; Gwenda Tavan “The dismantling of the White Australia Policy: Elite conspiracy or will of the Australian people?” in *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 109-25.

leader, John Howard, called for reduced Asian immigration in a vain attempt to win votes. Pauline Hanson's election to federal parliament in 1996 unleashed racist campaigns against both Indigenous people and non-European immigrants that were openly tolerated, if not encouraged, by Howard as Prime Minister. Since 1999, John Howard has used the issues of refugees and terrorism to promote fear of Arab and Muslim people<sup>3</sup> Many writers see contemporary Australian politics as a legacy of White Australia, including Ghassan Hage, and the distinguished contributors to *Legacies of White Australia* published in 2003.<sup>4</sup> Ien Ang argued that the rise of Hanson was "a sharp reminder that the structures of feeling of White Australia have not disappeared".<sup>5</sup> From the right there is a renewed willingness to defend the White Australia policy as "a rational, and in a number of ways progressive, product of its times."<sup>6</sup> For those of us who wish to permanently rid society of racism, it is imperative that we have a clear understanding of its origins and underpinnings. This thesis will argue that the currently hegemonic explanation of White Australia is fundamentally flawed, and of limited assistance in understanding racism in Australia, either in the past, or today.

---

<sup>3</sup> Scott Poynting, Greg Noble, Paul Tabar and Jock Collins, *Bin Laden in the suburbs: Criminalising the Arab other*, Sydney Institute of Criminology, Sydney, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Ghassan Hage, *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*, Pluto Press, Annandale (NSW), 1998; and *Against paranoid nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society*, Pluto Press, Annandale (NSW), 2003. See also Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, culture and nation*, UWA Press, Crawley (WA), 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Ien Ang, "From White Australia to fortress Australia: The anxious nation in the new century" in Jayasuriya, Walker and Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia*, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Windschuttle, *The White Australia Policy*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004, p. 9.

## A review of the literature

For all its importance, the White Australia policy has been relatively little studied; and the dynamics leading to its adoption have been least studied of all. Until 1974, there was only one substantial history of the campaign to exclude non-white immigrants: Myra Willard's *The history of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, first published in 1923.<sup>7</sup> The early 1970s saw a transformation in the approach of historians, most of whom for the first time saw White Australia as a question of racism, and began investigating the nature and history of that racism.<sup>8</sup> For the first time, too, the experiences of Chinese and other non-European people in Australia, and their contact with Anglo-Australian people,

---

<sup>7</sup> Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first pub 1923). RJ Lewis makes a similar comment regarding Victoria for the years 1880-1907, "the period which saw the greatest involvement in Victoria's history of Governments in passing or attempting to pass measures which were specifically designed to restrict non-Europeans. And yet it had been little studied." From "'Strangers within the gates': Victorian governments and non-Europeans", 1880-1908, MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1982, p. ii. I am aware of nothing since which fills the gap identified by Lewis.

<sup>8</sup> Humphrey McQueen, *A new Britannia: An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood (Vic), 1970; FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia: Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971; *Volume 2, Black versus white*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971; *Volume 3, Colonialism*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1972; Ann Curthoys, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975); Andrew Markus, *Fear and hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979; Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1982; Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978; Robert A Huttenback, *Racism and empire: White settlers and colored immigrants in the British self-governing colonies 1830-1910*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1976.

began to be studied, and that has continued to develop.<sup>9</sup> However, after a burst of interest in the 1970s, research into the reasons for anti-Asian racism stalled, in sharp contrast to the intense focus on contact between Aboriginal people and European settlers that has developed over the past two decades into a major discipline in its own right. Indeed, in 1982, Eric Andrews wrote that, “Further work on the general picture [of White Australia] is *not* needed”.<sup>10</sup>

A major reason for this complacency was the dominance of a mythology of White Australia, in which large scale Chinese immigration during the gold rushes had alerted working class people to see Chinese people as a danger; and even if the riotous methods they used were unfortunate, all classes became more and more agreed that the white working class had to be protected from Asian immigration. In the labourist version of this myth, White Australia was seen as the product of a class struggle between pastoralists and sugar planters, who wanted to exploit “cheap coloured labour”, and the working people who fought to stop them. Thus it is the working class (however defined) that imposed the policy against exploitative employers. This mythology still dominates popular views of the White Australia policy, as can be seen in the *Sydney Daily Mirror*, which in 1994 headlined an historical feature on the

---

<sup>9</sup> Among the more notable are Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995; Cathie R May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns, 1870-1920*, Studies in North Queensland history, Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, (Townsville), 1984; Diana Giese, *Beyond Chinatown: Changing perspectives on the Top End Chinese experience*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995; Regina Ganter (Guest editor), *Asians in Australian history*, *Special issue of Queensland Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, November 1999; Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1985; M De Lepervanche, *Indians in a white Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> EM Andrews, *Australia and China: The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1985, p. 248, emphasis in the original.

Clunes riot of 1873: “White Australia Policy sprang from workers’ uprising”.<sup>11</sup> In the lead-up to the 1996 federal election, Opposition leader, John Howard, told one audience that, “it was the Coalition which finally put an end to Labor’s White Australia policy.”<sup>12</sup> Fuelling this myth was the insistence of the Labor Party over decades that it was the only reliable custodian of the White Australia policy; in the words of Labor leader, James Scullin, “Labour is solid for a White Australia, and no amount of political propaganda will shake the people’s faith in our party on that big national question.”<sup>13</sup>

The four major works which have attempted to explain White Australia were written by Myra Willard (1923), Charles Price (1974), Robert A Huttenback (1976) and Andrew Markus (1979). Willard’s was the pioneering history, regarded as sufficiently authoritative that there was no new book-length account for over half a century. She proposed two dynamics which led to the adoption of White Australia: the resistance of the working class to competition with non-European labour; and the desire to preserve “a British-Australian

---

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Mirror* (Sydney), 30 September 1994.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Politics and patriotism: A reflection on the national identity debate’, speech given by Hon John Howard, Melbourne, 13 December 1995, [online] <http://www.ozpolitics.info/election2004/1995-ident.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006]. He was, of course, wrong on both counts. The *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901* was a central plank in the 1901 election campaign of the quasi-Protectionist government of Edmund Barton as well as the Labor campaigns in various states, and the legislation was written and introduced by the Liberal, Alfred Deakin. The principle was overwhelmingly supported by the Free Trade party led by George Reid, as well as by Labor, with the parliamentary debate revolving around the form which exclusion would take, rather than the principle of exclusion itself. Similarly, while coalition governments began the formal unravelling of the policy, it was only completed under the Whitlam government from 1973-75. On this see Gwenda Tavan, *The long, slow death of White Australia*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Carlotta Ellis, “Why does the A.L.P. support the ‘White Australia’ Policy? (1855-1940)”, MA thesis, Melbourne University, c1950, p. 1. See also Jack Lang, *I remember*, Invincible Press, Sydney, 1956, chapter 6, “White Australia saved Australia”.

nationality” throughout the continent.<sup>14</sup> These two themes have dominated the historiography of White Australia, with this qualification – that since the 1970s, the second has been reconceptualised as “racism”, and occasionally imperialism. Where there has been debate, it has been, for instance, over whether or not the motives of the colonial working class were “economic” or “racial”.<sup>15</sup>

In the hands of some writers, the central myth was qualified to acknowledge the role played by middle class elements. Ray Markey described the various anti-Chinese campaigns from the gold rushes through to the end of the nineteenth century as attracting “a populist alliance of diggers, city artisans, small businessmen and bourgeois liberals”.<sup>16</sup> Ann Curthoys too embraced the idea that, “What emerged during the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, then, was an alliance among the political organisations of the working class, the self-employed, and the small employers.”<sup>17</sup> But in even the most subtle accounts, it was the motives of the working class, and the labour movement’s role in the campaigns, that were described, analysed and highlighted, while those politicians who led the campaigns were generally described in terms of the demography of their electorates (mostly working class), rather than their own class positions or interests.<sup>18</sup> The mythology is also sustained by partial truths

---

<sup>14</sup> Willard, p. 189.

<sup>15</sup> See Verity Burgmann, “Capital and labour” in Curthoys and Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies?* pp. 20-34, for the outlines of this debate.

<sup>16</sup> Ray Markey, “Populist politics” in Curthoys and Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies?* p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Curthoys, “Racism and class in the nineteenth-century immigration debate” in Andrew Markus and MC Ricklefs (eds), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian immigration*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (NSW), 1985, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 443, where she describes seven NSW MPs involved in the anti-Chinese campaign of 1878 as “a group of M.L.A.’s, usually representing working class electorates”. Of the seven, John Davies was a former Cabinet minister and the

that are deceptive in the impression they create. For instance, in his discussion of refugee policy in Australia, Don McMaster wrote, "Trade unions were major supporters of the White Australia policy, perceiving immigrant labour, and especially Chinese labour, as a threat to working conditions."<sup>19</sup> He neglected to say that most politicians, squatters, religious leaders, newspapers, schoolteachers and businesspeople large and small, were also major supporters of the White Australia policy.

The problem is that the historical consensus is unconvincing to anyone who cares to look critically at the explanations on offer. The writer most hostile to the established mythology, Verity Burgmann, argued that, "It attributes to the working class a degree of power and influence that is quite unrealistic."<sup>20</sup> Legislation to restrict Chinese immigration was passed by the Queensland parliament in 1877 when there was little ongoing labour movement in that colony. While individual strikes could be won, and governments pressed to give relief to the unemployed at times, no labour movement in any colony had the capacity to exert sustained class pressure before the 1890s, and certainly not pressure on the scale needed to impose a long-term immigration policy on the state. The most powerful working class mobilisation in Australia before 1890 was the seamen's strike of 1878-79, centred in New South Wales, which saw

---

President of the Protestant Political Association, perhaps the most powerful, ruling-class political machine in NSW; Macintosh was a businessman and ally of Davies'; McElhone was a rich merchant, exporter and Sydney City Councillor; Hungerford was a major pastoralist who in 1883 had 3 million acres in the Gulf country and 1 million acres in South Australia near the Queensland border; and O'Connor was another major businessman and Sydney City Councillor. The remaining two were skilled artisans with business links and support (Melville, and Cameron).

<sup>19</sup> Don McMaster, *Asylum seekers: Australia's response to refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South (Vic), 2001, p. 136.

<sup>20</sup> Burgmann, *Capital and labour*, p. 33.



thousands of workers take prolonged industrial action to prevent the Australasian Steam Navigation Company from replacing European seafarers with Chinese. This industrial action was supported by a vast cross-class popular movement that defeated and ultimately ruined the largest business in Sydney. Yet *this* movement could not force the New South Wales parliament to pass a law to restrict Chinese immigration, similar to Queensland's.<sup>21</sup>

One of the very few other writers to have subjected the existing explanations to sustained scrutiny is Robert J Lewis, in his MA thesis, "Strangers within the gates': Victorian governments and non-Europeans, 1880-1908".<sup>22</sup> Lewis was frustrated by the Australia-wide approach taken by Willard, arguing that "in covering the situation of all the colonies, Willard may end up not sufficiently explaining them individually." After listing the factors which Willard believed led to anti-Chinese legislation in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia in 1881, Lewis asked:

Were Victorians more affected by competition, the Queensland situation, or the introduction of diseases? Were all colonies equally concerned with all factors? Willard does not say, relying on such expressions as: "the now fairly general desire for the restriction of Chinese immigration found united expression" ...<sup>23</sup>

He found that Victoria rarely featured in Willard's account, and so its anti-Chinese legislation was essentially unexplained. He found Charles Price's 1974 account similarly frustrating; the closest it came to explaining the 1888 anti-

---

<sup>21</sup> The attempt by Premier Sir Henry Parkes to pass a Chinese immigration bill was defeated less than four months after the end of the strike, *SMH* 23 April 1879, p. 2, col. 6 and p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>22</sup> University of Melbourne, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *Strangers*, p. iii.

Chinese laws in Victoria was in arguing the strength of public opinion. Lewis commented:

It may well be that this explanation is correct, but it would need to be explored and justified much more. Did “public opinion” simply reflect politicians’ attitudes, or did it influence them? Did it result in politicians being forced into introducing laws they really did not want? Or did it just influence the timing of the measures? Is there any correlation between popular demands and actual legislative details? Were politicians succumbing to electoral pressure to safeguard their seats?<sup>24</sup>

Neither did Lewis find any satisfaction in the work of Andrew Markus or Geoffrey Oddie,<sup>25</sup> observing that neither offered any explanation for the 1881 legislation; and that they argued that the 1888 legislation could have been the result of union campaigning. But there was a gap: the mobilisation of 1887-8 ended around May 1888, but “the legislation itself was not passed until six months later”, a problem which Markus recognised but did not resolve.<sup>26</sup>

One reason for this lack of any convincing explanation lies in the methodology of Willard, Price, Huttenback and Markus, who painted a picture of society-wide antagonism to Chinese (or other non-European immigration), and then charted the legislative debates and consequences. What were missing were causal linkages. Myra Willard’s method was to focus on situations of conflict, when Anglo-Europeans campaigned or rioted against the Chinese. This seemed to Willard to prove that the presence of Chinese people was a problem, that

---

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Strangers*, pp. iv-v.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Oddie, “The Chinese in Victoria, 1870-1890”, MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1959.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, *Strangers*, pp. vi-viii.

Europeans and Chinese could never mix, and that the Chinese threatened the standard of living of the working class. These campaigns supposedly aroused the antipathy of the vast majority, and colonial governments supposedly succumbed, eventually, to popular pressure and passed more and more restrictive legislation against the Chinese. But why should they succumb, unless they agreed with restriction? And if they agreed with restriction, why?

In Willard, the working class had immediate, economic interests and expressed them in opposition to the Chinese, while the squatters and sugar planters (and the directors of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company in 1878) sought cheap, indentured labour. But the leading politicians and most of “the people” were above all this sectionalism, thinking only of what was best for the nation and all classes.

Though the leaders of the people admitted the cogency of the industrial reason for the exclusion of Asiatics of the coolie classes, one and all, including the leaders of this [Labor] party, believed that the higher social and political grounds for their policy were more conclusive than those of labour.<sup>27</sup>

What we have here is the development of a nationalist mythology, not an explanation of White Australia. The possibility that these “statesmen” might have been pursuing class agendas of their own is not even considered.

By the early 1950s, this self-congratulatory history no longer fitted, at least for some historians. The White Australia policy was being challenged from within

---

<sup>27</sup> Willard, p. 203.

the policymaking establishment on liberal and foreign policy grounds. Diplomats, businesspeople and travellers found it was insulting to the newly independent nations of Asia who were our neighbours and that some of its rhetoric sounded uncomfortably close to that of the recently defeated Nazis. The racism of the policy had to be dealt with, and thus began a fitful debate over whether the working class was racist in mobilizing against Chinese people, or simply pursuing economic protection.<sup>28</sup>

The early 1970s represented a turning point in the historiography of the White Australia policy. For the first time, substantial historical works were published that saw racism as the policy's defining feature, and set out to document, analyse, explain and historicise that racism. The first, and most cathartic work was Humphrey McQueen's *A new Britannia*. McQueen's project was much broader than racism; he was inquiring into the nature and social roots of radicalism and nationalism, with the aim of debunking the Old Left's historical

---

<sup>28</sup> This debate began in the mid-1950s, when *Australian Quarterly* magazine sponsored a debate consisting of four short articles by academic historians about the origins of White Australia. Bruce Mansfield was primarily concerned to argue that the White Australia policy was racist – a radically new position for an academic to take – and not a cover for some other political project, such as defending working class conditions. This led him to explicitly endorse Willard's conclusion that the main impetus for White Australia was the desire to preserve a British-Australian nationality; "The origins of 'White Australia'", *Australian Quarterly*, December 1954, pp. 61-68. Mansfield's analysis was contested by KM Dallas, who stridently argued that behind White Australia lay "opposition in shearing shed, mine and sawmill to the infiltration of scab labour in any form. The commonest form then, except in the canefields, was that of Chinese labour"; "The origins of 'White Australia'", *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, March 1955, pp. 43-52 (quote p. 43). Racism was thus largely irrelevant. Bede Nairn's contribution echoed that of Dallas; while conceding that a "parasitical racialism" adhered to the policy, "The economic factor was of infinitely greater importance in the development of the White Australia Policy than either the racial or political." However a rising sense of nationalism was also crucial; "A survey of the history of the White Australia Policy in the 19th century", *Australian Quarterly*, Sept 1956, pp. 16-31 (quotes, pp. 26, 28). Thus the lines of debate, between an explanation of White Australia as a product of racism, versus a product of economic self-interest and working class self defence, were outlined.

mythology of radical labourism in general, and Russel Ward's eulogy of the independent, radical bush worker in particular. McQueen's book was important because it exposed the virulence of anti-Asian racism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the racism inherent in Australian nationalism, the degree to which racism was central to much early Labor politics, and the way that anti-Asian racism translated into pro-Empire militarism after the turn of the century. McQueen thus located Australian racism in "the chauvinism of British imperialism," seeing it as "inherent in Australia's economic and geographic position as the advance guard of European conquest" and "intensified by its geographic proximity to Asia."<sup>29</sup>

But having made the essential conceptual leap to imperialism and colonialism, McQueen turned back to relocate his case within a century of left nationalist mythologising. Despite the centrality of British imperialism for McQueen, the "tribunes of racism in Australia" were not its local representatives – the Governors, naval and military officers, trading and pastoral capitalists, cabinet ministers, imperial visitors, official priests, Orange Lodge officials, or newspaper editors – but "the leaders of the Labor Party".<sup>30</sup>

McQueen was followed in 1971 by FS Stevens, who edited a three volume collection of articles on aspects of Australian racism.<sup>31</sup> For some pioneer

---

<sup>29</sup> McQueen, *A new Britannia*, pp. 21, 42.

<sup>30</sup> McQueen, *A new Britannia*, esp. pp. 21, 50.

<sup>31</sup> FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia: Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971; *Volume 2, Black versus white*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971; *Volume 3, Colonialism*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1972.

researchers into Australian racism, Stevens' collection was pathbreaking,<sup>32</sup> but only a handful of articles in the three volumes addressed the history of the White Australia policy and its attendant anti-Asian racism, and there were few original insights on this issue.

Kathryn Cronin produced two state-based accounts of anti-Chinese racism that were rich in descriptive content. She first contributed a long section on hostility to the Chinese in Queensland to *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, which she co-wrote in 1975 with Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders.<sup>33</sup> This used extensive archival sources and local newspapers to describe the racism faced by Chinese labourers and gold miners outside the context of major campaigns and crises. It included a brief but illuminating account of Chinese rural labour; from its introduction by planters in 1850s to the extensive Chinese agriculture in the north in the 1880s and 1890s, which was eventually wiped out by government action. Cronin pointed to the use of fear of disease, especially leprosy, to whip up fear of Chinese people, and the way wildly inaccurate and terrifying information about the disease was deliberately promoted. Her account of the

---

<sup>32</sup> In the Preface to the 1988 edition of *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, Ray Evans and Kay Saunders wrote of their reaction to the publication of Stevens' three volumes. They had felt dissatisfied with the existing histories of white-black and Anglo-Asian contact: "There was little in any of these works directly confronting the historical problem of white racism in Australia. That is why, as researchers working upon white interactions with Aborigines, Melanesians and Chinese in Queensland, we were greatly stimulated by the seemingly iconoclastic appearance, in 1972, of a three volume set of studies, boldly titled *Racism: The Australian Experience*, edited by economic historian, Frank Stevens. These books seemed to herald a long overdue penetration of the Anglo-Australian psyche, in search of the hidden roots of 'race prejudice'. As a reading experience, *Racism* was thus cathartic in terms of what it frankly raised for public disclosure rather than what it ultimately deciphered. It fired a scatter-gun of disturbing articles into a formerly quiet public place and, to our ears, it carried the report of a starter's pistol." pp. xi-xii

<sup>33</sup> Kathryn Cronin, "'The yellow agony': Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland" in Evans, Saunders, Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988, pp. 235-340. *Race Relations* was first published in 1975 as *Exclusion, exploitation, and extermination*.

Queensland gold rush is fascinating, and she uses a few “case studies” to really good effect; for example describing the development of the race issue in Cooktown, where local opinion was initially divided, but then shifted as the number of Chinese rose rapidly and racist agitators created fear.

The most significant weakness in Cronin’s account was her tendency to quote indiscriminately and juxtaposes comments made at very different times from the 1860s through to the late 1890s and beyond, without hinting that there might have been some shift in social or political conditions or underlying assumptions over that period.<sup>34</sup> Equally, there was too often a lack of consideration about who was making a statement – the mere existence of a racist comment was enough to have it recorded.<sup>35</sup> The result was that when dealing with the urban movement, she saw similarities in the racism of the pastoralists, the agitators, the workers and the middle class, but did not even discuss the possibility that there might be differences in their approach to people of different origins.

---

<sup>34</sup> For example, her discussion of racial attitudes towards the Chinese jumps from comments made in 1876, to comments made in 1855, then 1881, 1877-78, 1881, 1899, and 1866, all within a page, pp. 242-3. The material used for subsequent pages is just as chronologically jumbled.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Cronin reports that “European labourers continued to argue against the morality of the capitalist who wanted to hire aliens...”, *Yellow agony*, p. 262, but the source for this is a letter by the Senior Sargeant at Stanthorpe to the Commissioner of Police. As sources for her discussion of the attitudes of miners towards Chinese people, on p. 259, she has used G Carrington, *Colonial Adventures and Experiences*, London, 1871, p. 181; *Cooktown Courier*, 20 June 1874; G.R. Fitz-Roy Cole, “John Chinaman Abroad”, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 98, 1878, p. 450; *QPD.*, XXIII, 13 June 1877, p. 235; CA Feilberg, “Can the Chinaman be Made a Good Colonist?”, *Victorian Review*, I, p. 367; see *Yellow agony*, Footnotes 229-233, pp. 325-6. All these are ruling class figures; with the parliamentarian quoted being Francis Ivory, one of Queensland’s richest squatters, who voted in the minority against anti-Chinese legislation. Only the editors of the *Cooktown Courier* would have had some relationship with North Queensland miners. Two pages later, p. 260, Cronin makes the same assertion: “The whites derived many of their attitudes concerning the Chinese from actual contact with them, for they were often camped cheek by jowl on the goldfields.” Her source for this is Mr. Kelsey, *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, IX, 1877-78, 63.

Cronin attempted to fit much of the racism she found into an analysis that, “The contact experiences of these years were to influence greatly the kind of stereotypes popularly applied to the Chinese and the northern Aborigines by European miners.”<sup>36</sup> The argument that racism is a product of contact was also central to the writing of Andrew Markus, and Verity Burgmann has condemned this approach as blaming the victims of racism for the racism they suffered.<sup>37</sup> This argument is also one of the dominant approaches within the sociology of racism, and is discussed theoretically in Chapter 2. The important point here is that Cronin was unable to substantiate her contact thesis, leaving an enormous explanatory gap in her work. One of the major themes in her chapters was the central role played by racist theories emanating from Britain and Europe and fears, whipped up by the press, that Chinese immigration was “part of a military design to conquer the North”, and that a struggle for survival was imminent. She then declared it “more accurate to assume that these notions of racial conflict were derived more from the whites’ immediate experiences in the frontier situation of the North”.<sup>38</sup> There was no way that fear of a “Chinese invasion” was simply the product of someone’s experience, least of all that of the editors of Brisbane newspapers such as *The Queenslander*, nearly 2000km away from the “experience” of Chinese immigration into the north.<sup>39</sup> Cronin failed to ask the obvious question: when British miners met Chinese people, were their responses and attitudes to people they had not met before in any way shaped by the pervasive and militant newspaper racism of the time? And did this media racism in any way shape the way they experienced and

---

<sup>36</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, p. 258

<sup>37</sup> Verity Burgmann, “Writing racism out of history”, *Arena* [first series], no. 67, 1984, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, pp. 256-7

<sup>39</sup> In a footnote she reports the Melbourne *Argus* claiming that the outcry against the Chinese was “far greater” in Brisbane than the north; note 285 on p. 327.



theorised that contact? Within half a page of describing some invasion propaganda, Cronin described “occasions when Chinese and Europeans travelled or worked together, for mutual protection against native raids”,<sup>40</sup> and elsewhere noted European miners and storekeepers defending Chinese people oppressed by police or mining wardens,<sup>41</sup> and white miners facing scurvy when Chinese gardeners were driven out of their towns.<sup>42</sup> The result was an analytical mess.

Cronin also wrote a major account of the Chinese in early Victoria,<sup>43</sup> which focused on the gold rushes, and the earlier period during which many Chinese were brought in to do agricultural labour. She dealt with the violence and racism they faced in detail, documented it as widespread, and showed that the pastoralists were just as racist as the anti-Chinese campaigners. She went on to look at racial ideology, official responses, church missionary activity, and briefly at what happened after this period. For her, the legacy of the frontier (ie gold) experience was long lasting and profound. *Colonial Casualties* drew on a wide range of archival sources to show that hostility and violence towards Chinese people on the gold fields was sustained, and effectively rewarded by the government. Cronin provided a far richer and more credible account than earlier writers, and debunked a series of myths. However, she also asserted that the campaign against the Chinese continued into the 1860s and 70s, the period during which most discriminatory legislation was repealed, without any recognition that such a campaign might have been less violent and more

---

<sup>40</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, p. 257

<sup>41</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, pp. 274-5

<sup>42</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, p. 287.

<sup>43</sup> Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1982.

intermittent. Her weakness once again was that she seemed content to describe responses to Chinese immigration, and to describe the racism directed towards them, rather than explain it or investigate its dynamic and possible class or political agendas behind it. As with her long discussion of the Chinese in Queensland, she indiscriminately mixed quotes from 1850s and 1880s with no sense that things might have changed. In particular, she made no attempt to analyse the role of the press or politicians in the anti-Chinese agitation, although she quoted liberally from them. Ruling class racism is frequently described in her two accounts, but neither identified as such, nor theorised.

Like Cronin, Robert A Huttenback set out to locate the racial exclusionism of the settlement colonies of the British empire in “the xenophobia and race hatred of the Anglo-Saxon”, along with “the workingman’s fear of losing his job to ‘cheap’ labour from Africa and Asia.”<sup>44</sup> Written primarily from Colonial Office records, Huttenback’s book was both a description of the racist beliefs and arguments of British colonists, and a narrative of discriminatory and exclusionary legislation. While useful at this level, it offered little by way of analysis. Huttenback saw two principles on a collision course in the empire — the principle of “the natural equality of mankind at large”, and the determination of British settlers that their colonies would be a “White Man’s Country.”<sup>45</sup> At no point do we find out why one principle triumphed over the other; racist exclusion triumphs as a result of the triumph of racism. Neither is there any serious justification for his argument that, “Race hatred was the driving force behind legislation”. What does become clear is that for all its

---

<sup>44</sup> Huttenback, *Racism and empire*; see pp. 58, 323, for succinct statements of his thesis.

<sup>45</sup> Huttenback, *Racism and empire*, p. 21.

professed attachment to equality, the Colonial Office was so weak in insisting on this principle that Huttenback concluded that its officials shared the racism of their colonial subjects.

In a recent article on the historiography of White Australia, Matthew Jordan has challenged historians who essentialise Australian racism, such as Raymond Evans, for whom “the idea of a white Australia was born...in the protracted process of Aboriginal dispossession, degradation and demise.” Jordan argues that this approach

runs the risk of imposing a set of ideas which only came to dominate in the late nineteenth century on a period when notions of race and blood had to compete with, and were for the most part subordinate to, notions of civil liberalism.<sup>46</sup>

He points to ambivalence towards race through the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and the argument from Henry Reynolds and Andrew Markus that “colonial attitudes to race underwent a fundamental shift sometime during the 1870s and 1880s.”<sup>47</sup> Ann Curthoys, too, has pointed out that both the advocates of the super-exploitation of unfree labour, and those for the exclusion of “coloured” labourers, were racist.<sup>48</sup> Racism cannot explain the outcome of a struggle in which two of the major protagonists were racist.

---

<sup>46</sup> Matthew Jordan, “Rewriting Australia’s racist past: How historians (mis)interpret the “White Australia” Policy”, *History Compass*, no. 3, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Jordan, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ann Curthoys, “Racism and class in the nineteenth-century immigration debate” in Andrew Markus and MC Ricklefs (eds), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian immigration*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (NSW), 1985, p. 99; see also her “An uneasy conversation: The multicultural and the indigenous” in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p. 23.

Andrew Markus and Charles Price attempted to use comparative history to understand White Australia, by looking at anti-Asian attitudes in Australasia and the Americas, and attempting to draw comparisons. Like Price and Willard, Andrew Markus' *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia & California 1850-1901*, published in 1979, is an account of the most successful campaigns and crisis points in the campaign for a white Australia. Markus argued that the "near consensus" for racial exclusion, achieved by the end of the nineteenth century, was a product of "the experience of Chinese immigration".<sup>49</sup> In other words, it was contact between different peoples that gave rise to hatred and a desire for exclusion. Nowhere did he make a plausible case to support this theory; his "proof" was constructed from suggestion and implication. Despite his methodological emphasis on "direct experience", he described very few experiences of contact between Chinese and European people – indeed, at one point he argued that, "After the gold rushes, agitation in urban areas arose not from the experience of a competitive system but from fear that one would come into being."<sup>50</sup> Why should ordinary people fear a system of competition unless the dominant discourses of the time – shaped overwhelmingly by newspapers – attempted to convince them that this was a future danger? Those experiences of contact Markus did discuss were experiences of conflict, and his sources for these were overwhelmingly newspapers, and the reports of mining wardens on gold fields.

---

<sup>49</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp. xx-xxi. It should be noted that he does not mean the Chinese experience of immigration, nor the experience of the receiving population (which of course included people from many backgrounds, including some Chinese), but his imputation of the experience of British-Australians.

<sup>50</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, p. 249.

In fact, Markus's own evidence tended to undermine his implicit argument. The anti-Chinese movement he described was occasionally massive and explosive, such as during the seamen's strike of 1878-79; but most often it was small, isolated, sometimes dominated by trade unions with limited organisation and resources, unable to raise more than token amounts of money, with little real influence over politicians. Such a discrepancy ought to have led him to question his own emphasis, to look beyond the trade union campaigns to explain anti-Chinese legislation. While Markus discussed "experiences" which generated conflict, he ignored a range of other, relevant experiences, such as the experience of reading newspapers, day after day, permeated by the racism of the British empire, with episodic dishonest "exposés" of Chinese communities; the experience of being harangued by anti-Chinese ideologues; and the experience of economic insecurity. His discussion of "experience" was always focused on the experience of miners competing to find gold, or working class competition for jobs, a limitation which corrupted the validity of his argument. Nowhere did he discuss the middle-class experience of competition, as felt by the shopkeepers and publicans who were often the leaders of anti-Chinese agitation on mining fields.<sup>51</sup> Nor did he discuss the ruling class experience of grappling with the problems of ruling their colonies, and attempting to understand rival strategic doctrines.

Markus was entirely unreflective about his sources; never considering, for instance, the vast silence about most Chinese-British contact and the possibility that a newspaper's failure to report such contact might reflect peaceful and tolerant cohabitation which was therefore hardly "news". Nor did Markus

---

<sup>51</sup> Curthoys notes the importance of storekeepers at Lambing Flat, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 327.

consider that newspaper reports of European grievances against Chinese people might have been sensationalised, dishonest or slanted to suit the political agenda or financial interests of the editor or owner.

By contrast, Jerome Small's pathbreaking thesis on the Clunes riot of 1873 found Chinese communities that were integrated into a wider, British-dominated community, and also Chinese communities that had been isolated and ostracised. Significantly, the warning that the Clunes Mining Company had recruited Chinese miners to scab on the strike came from Chinese miners who had a good relationship with their British-Australian neighbours, while the Chinese recruited to break the 1873 miners' strike came from an isolated community. A struggle between employer and employees was then reported as an anti-Chinese crusade after the event and at the behest of the middle class leadership of the town, including its newspaper. This was how the rest of Australia "experienced" the Clunes struggle; as articles in newspapers which described a supposed racial struggle for survival.<sup>52</sup> Like Small's thesis, the literature which has emerged over the past decade on Chinese-European contact in the nineteenth century paints a far more differentiated picture than Markus's focus on conflict.

Charles Price's exercise in comparative history, *The Great White Walls are Built*, was published in 1974 as a quasi-defence of White Australia. Price compared the movement for exclusion in Australia during the period 1836-1888 with those in New Zealand, British Columbia and California. In his Preface, he argued that the reason for taking this comparative approach was to show that "countries

---

<sup>52</sup> Jerome Small, "Reconsidering White Australia: Class and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot", BA (Hons) thesis, La Trobe University, 1997.

with consistently severe restrictions on immigration, such as Australia, have fewer race problems than countries with long periods of free migration".<sup>53</sup> Like Willard, Price focused on periods of crisis, and on the campaigns to secure exclusionary legislation. He rejected the traditional labourist view that racial exclusion was nothing more than a product of the working class fighting for its economic interests, and posited instead a series of reasons for the adoption of the White Australia policy. These were: economic interest; humanitarian and religious fears at a new kind of slavery and slave trade; fears of being swamped politically and socially by vast numbers of Chinese settlers; the struggle of a new young country to find some identity and social homogeneity; antipathy to strangers of such conspicuously different customs and culture; worries about maintaining law and order; and explicitly racist fears about mixing with peoples of a "lower" civilisation or of "inferior" biological stock.<sup>54</sup> This thesis will show that Price's list of concerns came a lot closer to describing the key agendas that led to White Australia than most other histories, and provided a significant number of analytical leads. In part, this is because Price's research was focused on parliamentary debates over exclusionary legislation.

While there are many problems with such a limited approach, Price was unapologetic, arguing that it was the laws and their implementation that most affected non-European immigrants, and "parliamentary proceedings give a reasonable coverage of the issues, opinions and policies involved".<sup>55</sup> The virtues of this approach are that it focused on the decisions made by the colonial ruling

---

<sup>53</sup> Price, *Great white walls*, p. x.

<sup>54</sup> Price, *Great white walls*, pp. 117-8. Also pp. 48-50 where he sees these elements present in the pre-gold rush agitation.

<sup>55</sup> Price, *Great white walls*, p. 20.

class as a whole, and that some of the major arguments against exclusion are described and discussed, aspects missing from both Willard and Markus. However the speeches of the politicians were not measured against any external reality except numbers of Chinese and social “disturbances”, and only weakly linked to any wider structure of mainstream political or social thought. Entirely left out was the possibility that racism became a respectable lightning rod for other social discontent. It is a book of description rather than analysis. Price seemed unable to conceive of a ruling class with distinct interests from the mass of the population. Thus speeches and arguments were taken at face value.

The one, significant exception to this historiography of White Australia was the work of Adrian Graves on the Queensland sugar industry. Graves produced a materialist analysis of the Queensland sugar industry to link the exclusion of Pacific Islanders – one of the key elements in the Commonwealth’s White Australia legislation of 1901 – with a period of crisis and restructuring.<sup>56</sup> While the abolition of the labour trade was a political act, campaigned for by the Queensland Labor Party and legislated as part of the White Australia legislation of 1901, Graves argued that it was facilitated by the withering of plantation production as a system and the development of a generalised white labour market throughout coastal Queensland.<sup>57</sup> Graves has provided an explanation for an important component of the decision to implement the formal White Australia policy in 1901, but offered little explanation for the political campaign against indentured Islander labour waged by liberals and plebeian activists from the early 1870s, nor for the decision of the Queensland Liberal government

---

<sup>56</sup> Adrian Graves, *Cane and labour: The political economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993.

<sup>57</sup> Graves, *Cane and labour*, esp. pp. 62-69.



in 1885 to outlaw Islander recruitment from the end of 1890. I deal in more detail with Graves and the issues raised by him in Chapter 7.

In the early 1980s, Verity Burgmann sharply attacked the historiography of White Australia, accusing historians of covering up and justifying the racist past, blaming the victims of racism for the racism they suffered, and then, where racism was admitted, shifting the blame for it onto the working class. She was critical of those radical historians, such as Humphrey McQueen and Andrew Markus in the 1970s, who, while insisting that the White Australia policy was racist, also reinforced the mythology that it was the labour movement that led the fight for exclusion. In these new accounts, the working class was now imbued with a racist ideology, rather than mere “economic” motives for their hostility to “coloured labour”. Racism, she argued, was a ruling class ideology, and racism amongst the working class reflected the ideological domination of the ruling class.<sup>58</sup> Burgmann made three substantive criticisms of the dominant historical explanation. First, the unreal degree of power it accorded the labour movement; secondly that, “It is not logical that the middle class, let alone the capitalist class, would espouse the White Australia ideal out of any concern for working class wage levels”; and finally that middle-class racism “barely exists” for most historians. Burgmann offered suggestions towards an alternative explanation, including an argument that the real motivation for the policy of racial exclusion lay in ruling class distaste for the competition provided by Chinese (and other Asian) businesspeople able to employ Chinese (and other non-European) labour, but did not develop these

---

<sup>58</sup> Verity Burgmann, *Writing racism*, esp. pp. 84-92; Burgmann, *Capital and labour*, pp. 21-22.

herself.<sup>59</sup> Methodologically, she was calling on historians to examine the motives and interests of the ruling class, arguing that these would provide the key to understanding White Australia.<sup>60</sup>

It is a powerful argument. Almost all historians acknowledge that all classes overwhelmingly supported the adoption of the White Australia policy in 1901; yet apart from Burgmann's brief suggestions, not one historian has ever examined the *class* motives that led the vast majority of the Anglo-Australian ruling class to take this stand. It seems that the working class has economic and class motives and interests, but not the capitalists, nor the middle class.<sup>61</sup> This chasm in historical explanation struck Peter Corris most forcefully in 1973:

If racialism was...an ingredient in the thinking and behaviour of all Australians, regardless of class, right through the political spectrum, the present emphasis in discussion on working-class and radical racialism will be misleading to any attempt to understand racialism as a whole. What about the bosses?<sup>62</sup>

The problem was still present for Ann Curthoys in 1985:

The crucial historical question is why the *large* urban employers and pastoralists joined the exclusionary forces, which they did in the early 1860s and again more wholeheartedly during the 1880s.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Burgmann, *Capital and labour*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>60</sup> Burgmann, *Capital and labour*, p. 33; *Writing racism*, p. 85.

<sup>61</sup> With this exception, that pastoralists supposedly craved Chinese labourers for their supposed cheapness and docility; JB Hirst, *The Strange Birth of Colonial Democracy: New South Wales 1848-1884*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 160. This argument will be dealt with later.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Corris, "Racialism: The Australian experience", *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 15, no. 61, October 1973, p. 754.

<sup>63</sup> Curthoys, *Racism and class*, p. 98, emphasis in original.

However crucial it was, the question has remained unanswered, and largely ignored.

## A ruling class policy?

In more general terms, the argument for focusing on possible ruling class agendas for the White Australia policy rests first and foremost on the fact that all the anti-Chinese laws passed in colonial Australia were passed by ruling class parliaments; not just in the ordinary sense that it is the priorities of the largest capitalist enterprises and industries which impose themselves most forcefully on lawmakers (as they do today), but in the narrow sense that to be a member of one of the colonial parliaments required a man to be rich or to have wealthy backers. Election campaigns were expensive, members of parliament were unpaid (except in Victoria), and only the rich could afford to take the time required for parliamentary duties. Moreover, an individual required broad, ruling-class and middle-class support to win a seat in parliament, and this was reflected in the tradition of "requisitioning" candidates, whereby a citizen was petitioned to offer himself for election by "leading men" in the electorate. In all the colonial parliaments, from 1876 to 1888, there was only a handful of members of parliament with links to the organised labour movement, and even fewer for whom those links were their predominant base of support.

In other words, ruling class legislators could largely get what they wanted without public meetings, petitions, protests and riots. For the ruling class more generally, MPs were available to be lobbied privately. The mass media examined all proposed legislation in the light of whatever version of ruling

class interests guided the paper's editors. They had the social power to explain and justify proposals they agreed with; and they almost unanimously supported restrictive legislation against Chinese immigration, even though some disagreed with the detail of proposed laws. Most of the great public debates in the decades before 1890 reflected divisions within the ruling class, such as the debates over indentured labour in the Queensland sugar industry, over government aid to church schools and the role of religion in education, over taxes and the spending of government money on public works, over land legislation, over Ireland and British foreign and colonial policy, and increasingly over free trade or protectionist tariffs. It was precisely divisions in the ruling class that opened a variety of issues up for public debate, and allowed for agitation to occasionally develop amongst the plebeian classes.

Such a view rejects the orthodoxy that colonial Australia was ultra-democratic, a "working-man's paradise" in which "the people ruled". Some historians have argued that the views of politicians reflected those of their electors because they had to get themselves elected by the broad population.<sup>64</sup> Such a view leaves out the ability of the elite to marginalise genuine radicals as "dangerous" and "ignorant" of the needs of politics. In fact colonial democracy was far closer to the model advocated by Joseph Schumpeter, in which ordinary voters merely got to choose between competing groups of rulers.<sup>65</sup> Robert Michels gave us a

---

<sup>64</sup> This is especially argued for members of parliament representing "working class electorates"; some writers see this as the reason they campaigned against Chinese immigration; Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 443; One of Markus' strategies is to give details of the background and electorates of anti-Chinese politicians representing "working class" electorates; Markus, *Fear and hatred*, p. 78 for Cameron; p. 135 for Melville.

<sup>65</sup> See Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1976, p. 269.

realistic way of understanding the rhetoric of democracy in colonial politics when he observed:

A conservative candidate who should present himself to his electors by declaring to them that he did not regard them as capable of playing an active part in influencing the destinies of the country, and should tell them that for this reason they ought to be deprived of the suffrage would be a man of incomparable sincerity but politically insane.<sup>66</sup>

Some of the techniques necessary for capitalists and their managers, lawyers and priests to retain political control within a system of universal suffrage were also spelled out by one of its most trenchant opponents, the Italian elitist, Gaetano Mosca:

All those who, by wealth, education, intelligence, or guile, have an aptitude for leading a community of men, and a chance of doing so – in other words, all the cliques in the ruling class – have to bow to universal suffrage...and also, if occasion requires, cajole and fool it.<sup>67</sup>

According to Girvetz, “Thus, ironically, the democratic myth is one that an elitist society, which despises democracy, must perpetuate and preserve.”<sup>68</sup>

Apart from the myth-making process they highlight, his comments remind us that historians must be especially careful not to take any political rhetoric at face value, least of all in colonial Australia.

---

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in HK Girvetz, *Democracy and elitism: Two essays with selected readings*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1967, p. 33.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Girvetz, *Democracy and elitism*, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> Girvetz, *Democracy and elitism*, p. 33.

Nowhere is the importance of examining ruling class agendas clearer than in Queensland, which led all other colonies in the passage of more restrictive anti-Chinese legislation between 1876 and 1884. The upper house of the parliament which passed the 1876 and 1877 laws was dominated by squatters who were, in the mythology, the champions of “cheap coloured labour”.<sup>69</sup> The Conservative party in Queensland, based as it was on pastoralists, sugar planters and mining capital,<sup>70</sup> was in its majority strongly anti-Chinese from 1877 onwards. In 1878 it was Conservative Queensland politicians and newspapers that mobilised most strongly in support of the intercolonial seamen’s strike against their replacement by Chinese workers. Moreover, before 1890, Queensland’s trade union movement was the weakest of the four eastern mainland colonies. JB Dalton has argued that, “Unionism in Queensland really began in 1883”, with no Queensland unions represented at the first two intercolonial trade union congresses, in 1879 (Sydney) and 1884 (Melbourne). The Brisbane Trades and

---

<sup>69</sup> This labourist mythology is summed up in William Lane, *The workingman’s paradise: An Australian labour novel*, with an introduction by Michael Wilding, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1980; also Banjo Paterson’s “A bushman’s song”:

I asked a cove for shearin’ once along the Marthaguy:  
 “We shear non-union here,” says he. “I call it scab,” says I.  
 I looked along the shearin’ floor before I turned to go—  
 There were eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-shearin’ in a row.

Originally published in *The Bulletin*, 24 December 1892 [online] <http://www.bushpoetry.com.au/masterpoets/MasterPoetsHome/PatersonAndrewBartonBanjo/tabid/704/Default.aspx?PageContentMode=1#1250> [accessed 1 December 2006] According to Ann Curthoys, “In the 1870s the number of Chinese immigrants gradually rose again; again the pastoralists and large employers supported Chinese immigration”, see “An uneasy conversation: The multicultural and the indigenous” in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p. 23. Ray Markey, *Populist politics*, p. 67, argues that the Chinese Immigration Bill of 1879, “had been heavily defeated in the upper house, where pastoralists and others who may have been interested in cheap coloured labour, predominated.”

<sup>70</sup> Duncan Waterson, *Personality, profit and politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894*, The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture, 1978, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984.

Labour Council was only formed in late 1885, but even then, unionism “remained relatively weak in the face of heavy immigration and limited settlement on the land which combined to create a large labour market on which employers could draw.”<sup>71</sup>

The passage of anti-Chinese laws in Queensland reflects neither anti-Chinese agitation, nor anti-Chinese violence on the goldfields or elsewhere. There was agitation against Chinese miners on Queensland goldfields from 1867 to 1872, and a series of brutal attacks,<sup>72</sup> but no move towards restriction. An examination of the conservative *Brisbane Courier* newspaper for the years 1876 and 1877, the first years in which anti-Chinese legislation was passed in the Queensland parliament, showed just one report of a violent protest against the substantial Chinese immigration into the Palmer River goldfields. A crowd of whites had on two separate days prevented Chinese people from landing at Trinity Bay (Cairns). The government sent extra police to the area and the tensions subsided.<sup>73</sup> Significantly, this incident occurred *after* the passing of the first anti-Chinese laws in parliament, and a few days after the Governor, Cairns, reserved them for the consideration of the Colonial Office.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> JB Dalton, “An interpretative survey: The Queensland labour movement”, in DJ Murphy, RB Joyce, Colin A Hughes (eds), *Prelude to Power: The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton (Qld), 1970, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, pp. 279-81.

<sup>73</sup> This was first raised in parliament, *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 1018 (LA Adjournment debate, 18 October 1876), and then *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 1046 (LA Question without notice, 19 October 1876).

<sup>74</sup> This was the Gold Fields Amendment Bill, reserved on 11 October. The actions at Trinity Bay were on the 15th and 17th October. The Governor was then sent a substantial petition against Chinese immigration from Cairns (the place), 18 October, letter 76/2870 in QSA, Col Sec inwards corresp., SRS5253-1-229.

This thesis examines the development of ruling class thought and action on the issue of Chinese and other “coloured” immigration, in relation to the strategic environment in which the Anglo-Australian ruling class found itself, its strategies for economic and political development, its tactics for containing class tensions, and the tensions within the ruling class on these (and other) issues. At the time, the attempt to formulate effective strategies was done within the parameters of existing British imperial thought. Virtually all previous historians of White Australia have treated this context too superficially, as they have necessarily neglected the occasional, but important, apostasies initiated in Australia as the local ruling class ditched significant imperial “principles” in their own, local class interest.

One advantage of this methodology is that the White Australia policy is seen as both durable and historically contingent. The durability of the decision reached in 1888 to effectively end Chinese immigration, and the ease with which it was extended to all non-Europeans in the years 1896-1902, suggest that some profound, general and ongoing interest was involved, one necessarily congenial to the ruling class and the politicians in every colony who made the laws and to the administrators who organised their implementation.

The White Australia policy shaped, and impinged on, three of the great general ruling class agendas: who will do the work? how shall the state be constructed? and what form shall their ideological hegemony take? White Australia was both a population policy, and a definition of nationality and nationalism. It also imposed certain costs on sections of the ruling class. It limited the labour force, eliminated the possibility of different state structures in different parts of the continent, and locked the developed south-eastern centres into taking responsibility for a vast area of the earth’s surface in which there was minimal



capitalist development. White Australia worked against any strategy of economic integration into Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time when Asian capitalism was starting to grow spectacularly, most notably in Japan, and Australian exports to the region were also growing rapidly.<sup>75</sup> Finally, the ruling class was also locked into promoting a certain ideology of Australian nationalism, one which emphasised protection of white living standards from competition from poorer countries, and this in turn limited its own freedom of action. Given these significant consequences, it is remarkable that for the most part, the dominant capitalists, politicians and ideological institutions of the Australian bourgeoisie worked assiduously to sustain White Australia from 1901 to the late 1950s. While it is true that great national policies and structures also influence the structure of the ruling class, this strong support for White Australia over a long period suggests that the policy strongly reflected ruling class needs. Had it not, broad groups among the rich and powerful would have begun organising against it long before it was abandoned.

My argument also suggests reasons for the gradual abandonment of the White Australia policy in the 1960s and 1970s, as many of the conditions which gave rise to it changed, confronting the ruling class with new challenges and the need to develop new strategies. This methodology posits working-class, ruling-class and middle-class people as active participants in the making of, and

---

<sup>75</sup> Sandra M Tweedie, "Between depressions: Australian dilemmas in the quest for Asian markets, 1893/1933", MComm (Hons) thesis, University of New South Wales, 1982. John Fitzgerald has also looked at some of the perverse consequences of the Anglo-Australian decision to create a continental nation in hostile antagonism to Asia, "European settler colonialism and national security ideologies in Australian history" in R Leaver and D Cox (eds), *Middling, meddling, muddling, Issues in Australian foreign policy*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1997, pp. 91-119.

resistance to, the White Australia policy. Conventional historiography has either ignored the ruling class, or built its analysis around a small fraction of capitalists – squatters, sugar planters and others supportive of racially oppressed “cheap” labour. It has painted the rich and powerful as either ultimately recognising the validity of working class concerns, or as helpless in the face of working class mobilisation. These approaches are unsustainable given the nature of colonial society.

None of this is meant to imply that the ruling class was always united over “white Australia” strategies. Marx called the bourgeoisie “hostile brothers”,<sup>76</sup> and the literature already discussed is replete with examples of ruling class conflict, including the supplanting of one ruling class element by another in the struggle for domination. Indeed, the 1888 decision to effectively shut Chinese immigration out of the Australian continent was reached despite a measure of ruling class opposition, and at considerable economic cost to some South Australian and Queensland capitalists, and to the South Australian state, which had invested nearly a million pounds in a railway project that was made unviable by the anti-Chinese laws. The way these elements acquiesced in their defeat suggests that it was imposed by the wider ruling class, with whom they had so much in common, rather than by hostile working class elements, against whom they might have been expected to show stronger and more strident resistance, and to find other ruling class support for such resistance.

---

<sup>76</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A critique of political economy, vol. III, The process of capitalist production as a whole*, edited by Frederick Engels, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1959, p. 253.

## Methodology

The methodology of this thesis has been to examine the arguments of ruling class political leaders, and to link them with the broader structures of thought to which they refer; to seek empirical confirmation that this broader agenda actually related to real issues facing governments or the ruling class; and to plot ways in which these ideas shaped policy and strategy in a wider sense.

Consequently, a large number of secondary sources were used in searching for insights into the key elements of bourgeois thought in general, and also more specifically on British anti-slavery debates, the political strategies of John Stuart Mill, imperial policy, global political rivalries in the 1880s, ideas of colonisation and discussions of social control.

Newspapers were a major source, of fundamental importance when studying the structure and content of political thought. The *Brisbane Courier* was used extensively for political and conservative opinion in Queensland around which a significant part of my narrative is built. I also drew heavily on Sydney's *Evening News*, the colony's largest circulation newspaper, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. There were a very small number of high quality journals published in the period, including *Melbourne Review*, *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine* and the *Victorian Review*, an important monthly publication which drew contributions from many of the leading intellectuals in Australia during its seven year life from 1879 to 1886. Here the reader can often find ruling-class intellectuals debating national policy in a sophisticated manner. Local newspapers were also valuable, as were scandalous, satirical and polemical magazines, such as the *Lantern* (Adelaide), the *Stockwhip* (Sydney) and the various mutations of Harold Grey's *Pilgrim* (Sydney). Finally I undertook a

major project studying regional Queensland newspapers during periods of racist agitation, guided by Denis Cryle's *The press in colonial Queensland*.<sup>77</sup>

Among the key primary sources used in this thesis were parliamentary papers, the record of parliamentary debates, and Colonial Secretaries' correspondence for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. These were the major sources for strategic and policy discussion within and between governments. Also important in this regard was the private correspondence of colonial political leaders. Here the most fruitful collections were those of Sir Henry Parkes (Mitchell Library), Sir Samuel Griffith (Mitchell Library), CH Pearson (Latrobe Library), Sir Samuel Way (Mortlock Library) and Sir Thomas McIlwraith (John Oxley Library). I found little to be gained from the papers of businessmen and women. Even from those businesspeople who became politicians, the surviving archival records are dominated by immediate business concerns and while I used the papers of people such as Robert Philp, PF McDonald (Queensland), John Warren, and George and Edward Hawker (South Australia), they contributed only marginally to this thesis.

I have not attempted to write a history of the development of racial thought in Australia; nor describe the development of the new White Australia nationalism that became a significant factor ideologically in the late 1880s. It is my belief that the contours of racial and nationalist thought in Australia were substantially shaped by Australian ruling class priorities, as well as by the imported racism of the British empire, and I hope that this thesis provides a useful starting point for subsequent efforts to describe and explain these. Nor

---

<sup>77</sup> Denis Cryle, *The press in colonial Queensland: A social and political history 1845-1875*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1989.

have I systematically researched the various anti-Chinese movements, although I examined them where relevant. I found little serious history of the many radical-plebeian movements of the time, movements led by middle class people and mobilising people described as “working class” in the daily press. These would be useful subjects for future research.

I have focused primarily on New South Wales and Queensland as the two colonies which played the greatest role, and restricted this thesis to the years 1876-1888. Charles Price considered 1888 to be:

the year by which the Canadians, Americans, Australians and New Zealanders, after much debate and many changes of mind, had at length thrashed out their feelings and attitudes to the Chinese and had decided to impose restrictions tantamount to complete exclusion from permanent settlement. It was then relatively easy to extend these restrictions to other peoples.<sup>78</sup>

In choosing this time frame I do not seek to diminish the importance of earlier or later developments. The policy of preventing nearly all non-European people from settling in Australia had developed, fitfully, from the 1840s, when liberals in the New South Wales Legislative Council and self-styled representatives of the working class had led a campaign against the importation of several

---

<sup>78</sup> Price, *Great white walls*, p. xi. This opinion is shared by Ann Curthoys, “Liberalism and exclusionism: A prehistory of the White Australia policy” in Jayasuriya, Walker and Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia*, p 31. David Johanson wrote in 1960, “The period from the mid-seventies to 1890 is the decisive one in the history of the White Australia policy.” See “History of the White Australia policy” in Immigration Reform Group (ed Kenneth Rivett), *Immigration: Control or colour bar? The background to ‘White Australia’ and a proposal for change*, Melbourne, 1962, p 6. For John Hirst, “Before the Commonwealth was established, the colonies had acted together to exclude Chinese and other Asians. Federation was not needed to make the White Australia policy”, *The sentimental nation: The making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 22.

thousand indentured Chinese labourers. Their concerns revolved around the impact of large scale indentured labour on society – the “immorality” of the Chinese, the liberal fear that Chinese labour would inhibit British immigration – and the supposed similarity of the importation to the reviled slave trade. In her subtle and important PhD thesis, Ann Curthoys argued that this liberal opposition “was directly derived from the Colonial Office” – hardly a bastion of working class and labour politics – “and radical positions” – by which is meant, those who shared the politics of elite liberals such as John Stuart Mill.<sup>79</sup> The arrival of tens of thousands of Chinese people as part of the gold rushes, and the consequent competition between diggers for declining quantities of alluvial gold, provided agitators with the opportunity to organise a series of violent race riots in Victoria and New South Wales, and led politicians to pass the first legislation restricting specifically Chinese immigration into Victoria (1855), South Australia (1857) and New South Wales (1861). Curthoys argues that the significance of the gold rush riots in New South Wales was not that they were the major reason for the passing of anti-Chinese immigration laws in 1861, but that they tipped the balance in the unelected Legislative Council between those favouring indentured labour and those opposed.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the combination of anti-Chinese riots and anti-Chinese legislation left a major residue of anti-Chinese racism in Australian politics at all levels.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ann Curthoys, *Race and Ethnicity*, p. 90. “Radical” in this context means British radical liberalism of the 1830s-40s; the politics of John Stuart Mill and their impact on the later anti-Chinese debates are discussed in chapter six of this thesis.

<sup>80</sup> Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 314.

But whatever conclusions were drawn by either rich or poor people during the gold rushes, all three anti-Chinese immigration laws were quickly repealed, so that by 1867 there were no legal obstacles to Chinese immigration into any of the Australian colonies.<sup>81</sup> Curthoys extensively documented a reversal of the gold rush period exclusionism in New South Wales, as townspeople came to realise the value of a local Chinese community, both for the economic activity they generated, and especially for their skill at growing much-needed vegetables and fruit. Within two years of the notorious Lambing Flat (Young) anti-Chinese riot of 1861, civic leaders from the town of Forbes were telling the NSW government that the reintroduction of Chinese people was an “absolute necessity”. Even at Young, Chinese miners were ultimately allowed back despite the bitterness aroused by the riot. Curthoys also described a low level of newspaper and popular agitation against Chinese people for a prolonged period, a quiescence which ended decisively in 1878, with the famous seamen’s strike, in which European seafarers successfully fought the employment of Chinese crews by the Australasian Steam Navigation company.<sup>82</sup>

There were important developments after 1888, which included South Australia’s abortive attempt to set up a system of Indian indentured labour for the Northern Territory and the subsequent debate over handing the Northern Territory over to a future federal government; Queensland’s repeal of the law ending the recruitment of indentured Islander labour and the subsequent populist campaign for ending the labour trade; the South Australian proposal for a conference of the three colonies with tropical territory to discuss “coloured

---

<sup>81</sup> Willard, p. 35.

<sup>82</sup> Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, ch 6; also pp. 252-3.

labour"; schemes to encourage Japanese immigration; Queensland's adherence to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty; the widening of the 1888 laws in a number of colonies to exclude all Asian and African immigrants; and the federation debates that saw Indigenous people lose the right to vote and other important rights in the federal constitution. Thus, while the legislation of 1901 represented a turning point in the exclusion of non-European immigrants to Australia, it was a modest one. The principle of White Australia had been adopted by colonial premiers at their conference of 1888, and focused on one national group – the Chinese. When significant immigration from other Asian countries, in particular India and Japan, was seriously mooted in the 1890s, the response was another intercolonial conference in 1896 which adopted the principle of excluding all "coloured races". Some colonies had passed exclusionary legislation which was later modified to incorporate a superficially non-discriminatory language test, a dress rehearsal for the later Commonwealth system.<sup>83</sup> The granting of powers over immigration to the proposed federal government was a feature of all the draft constitutions of the 1890s, and this represented widespread agreement amongst the leading politicians that Australian immigration policy would be uniform and harshly restrictive.

One feature of this thesis is the extensive use of direct quotation, and on a few occasions, repetitive quotation to make a similar point. The positions of many key ruling class people and institutions, such as the colonial pastoralists, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and the various Legislative Councils, have been seriously misrepresented at times, and extensive direct quotation has been considered necessary to establish my analysis of their opinions. Extensive

---

<sup>83</sup> Willard, pp. 109-115.



quotation is also necessary to establish that opinions being ascribed are representative, and not exceptional, and to establish the ideological context within which debates took place, and decisions made.

## Summary of thesis argument

This thesis sees the White Australia policy, not as the inevitable product of the racism that saturated colonial Australia, but the product of the dominant agendas of the Anglo-Australian ruling class. The first concern was strategic: that a significant Chinese immigration, especially into areas of low European population, could involve the risk of weakening or even loss of Australian control of that part of the continent. Major sections of the ruling class believed they faced a struggle over which people would colonise Australia. This suggested the possibility of future war with China, or the possibility that a large Chinese population could be a fifth column during a war with one of the major European powers.

To these fears was added the dilemma of how to manage production and exploit labour in northern, tropical Australia. If the British/Australian ruling class failed to develop and populate the north, it would stand as a constant invitation to any other powerful nation wanting colonies, or land for settlement. One of the racist myths of British imperialism – a leftover from slavery – was that “white men” could not labour in the tropics, and this was widely accepted

in the colonies.<sup>84</sup> That left the plantation model as the only acceptable alternative, where a tiny population of whites supervised and ruled over a large “coloured” labouring population which worked cheaply, under indenture, for several years, with very few political rights – a society like that of Mauritius, Fiji, or the Caribbean sugar colonies. A century of anti-slavery agitation meant that such a model represented an economic, social and political threat to those who wanted a society based on free-labour capitalism and parliamentary rule. It would also have consigned such societies to economic and social backwardness, producing simple commodities instead of advanced manufactures and other sophisticated products. In the minds of ruling class strategists, the recent American Civil War showed the dire consequences of a racially-stratified society. Furthermore, a plantation economy employing large numbers of Chinese or other Asian labourers could involve importing a potential military danger, reinforcing the fears that led to their first agenda. Having stolen a continent they were unable to fully use or develop, they feared other powers wanting a share, and they feared those who could develop the continent pushing them aside. Those apprehensions grew as Australia’s isolation diminished.

Thus the second major agenda of the dominant elements in the colonial ruling class was the minimisation of indentured “coloured labour”, so that a modern, industrial economy could be built. The dangers associated with a plantation economy could have easily been eliminated by abolishing the special indenture

---

<sup>84</sup> For instance, Raphael Cilento (with Clem Lack), *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland*, Historical Committee of the Centenary Celebrations Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1959; Kay Saunders, “Uncertain bondage: An analysis of indentured labour in Queensland to 1907, with particular reference to the Melanesian servants”, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1974, pp. 36-39.

laws that enabled planters to so ruthlessly exploit Islanders, but Australian capitalists had invested heavily in plantations in the South Pacific. Moreover, capitalists wanted the ability to indenture white labour for more conventional employment. Rather than attack the plantation system and give equal rights to Islander labourers – an approach consistent with working class agendas – they preferred to protect the plantation system offshore by excluding and victimising the labourers, and using racial stereotyping to do so. Nothing more clearly indicates the ruling class nature of the dominant discourse around this issue and the way it was resolved, than this.

The third major agenda of the colonial ruling class was the construction of an “homogeneous” population, both demographically and culturally. This was justified using theories articulated by John Stuart Mill, who had warned that representative democracy required national homogeneity. The pursuit of homogeneity was not an excuse to exclude Chinese and other non-European people; it lay behind ruling class attempts to integrate the Catholic Irish through state-run education systems.

Chinese people were the major group regarded as unable to be assimilated into Australia’s British culture. Chinese people were not Christian and could not, it was feared, be disciplined using the ideological methods used on people of British origin. A large Chinese population would threaten existing political structures and techniques for social control. Chinese camps were notorious for providing a space for “larrikins” and prostitutes. Chinese people were disciplined by their own secret societies which raised the prospect of alternative centres of power. To admit large numbers of Chinese to British-Australian nationality would undermine the effect of existing nationalist and racist ideologies on the white population and necessitate the construction of new

nationalist and class collaborationist ideologies. Such a strategy was not even considered.

These somewhat separate issues came to a head in 1888. When China complained to the British government about Australian anti-Chinese laws, the British demanded explanations from the colonies. The “disloyalty” of London was greeted with anger and dismay. The tension was heightened when thousands of Chinese labourers entered the Northern Territory, which was under South Australia’s control, to work on the Darwin-Pine Creek railway. Through the 1880s, the South Australian Legislative Assembly tried five times to restrict Chinese immigration to the Northern Territory and five times the bills were rejected by the Legislative Council.<sup>85</sup> The politicians representing the majority of the whole Australian ruling class faced a challenge to their ability to shape the kind of society they wanted. An imposed resolution to the “Chinese question” was thus necessitated by the intransigence of South Australia’s upper house and the fraction of the ruling class it represented, and by the lack of confidence colonial political leaders felt in the British government. By November 1887, the governments of the three eastern colonies had agreed in principle to meet to plan more extreme exclusionary legislation, and some political leaders were clearly looking for opportunities to create a crisis that would resolve the issue.

---

<sup>85</sup> These will be discussed in chapters 9 and 10; the six bills were:

1880: all South Australia: defeated in Legislative Council (private member’s bill of JC Bray)

1880: Northern Territory only: defeated in Legislative Council

1881: all South Australia: amended to South Australia proper in Legislative Council

1886: extend to Northern Territory: defeated in Legislative Council

1887: extent to Northern Territory: defeated in Legislative Council

1888: all South Australia with same provisions for Northern Territory: adopted

The South Australian government's representative in the Northern Territory created a furore when he reported that hundreds of Chinese people were heading for the central Australian ruby fields, and the government used this report to impose restrictions to be reviewed by parliament. In Victoria and New South Wales a crisis was manufactured by the arrival of the SS *Afghan* at Melbourne on 27 April 1888 carrying 268 Chinese passengers. The Victorian government forced the captain to leave without disembarking the 52 Chinese passengers bound for Melbourne. Even before the ship reached Sydney, hysteria was at fever pitch. Tens of thousands of people marched to Parliament, led by the Mayor of Sydney, and there were attempts to rush the chamber of the Legislative Council. The Parkes government promised to stop any of the Chinese from the *Afghan*, and the three other ships in the harbour, from landing; and brought retrospective legislation into Parliament to legalise its actions and dramatically reduce the number of Chinese allowed to enter New South Wales.<sup>86</sup> In Brisbane, the day after the *Afghan* arrived in Sydney, rioters smashed up the Chinese district.<sup>87</sup> Within six weeks, the colonies had met at an intercolonial conference, held on 12-14 June, and agreed to common legislation to virtually prohibit Chinese immigration. As awkward as the Australian actions were, the colonial legislation was approved in London.

The crisis of 1888 cannot be understood simply by looking at the agitation or rhetoric of the anti-Chinese campaigners. Only an awareness of the fundamental interests involved allows us to understand the crisis, and the role

---

<sup>86</sup> See Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp. 143-4; IM Britain, "Victoria, the Chinese and the federal idea, 1887-1888", *ANU Historical Journal*, no. 6, November 1969, pp. 49-54 for Victoria.

<sup>87</sup> Raymond Evans, "Night of Broken Glass: The Anatomy of an Anti-Chinese Riot" in *Fighting words: Writing about race*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999, pp. 79-94.

played by public mobilisation in helping force a conclusion. This analysis is reinforced by the durability of the settlement of 1888. Most of the dynamics that led to the crisis of 1888 remained operative for the following 70 years and more. The Anglo-Australian ruling class held onto its continent grimly, fearing other powers or peoples attempting to use it or take control of it. Japan's rise to military power saw those strategic fears shift, most especially from 1905 to 1945. Australian nationalism was constructed as racist and exclusionary, and proved an effective means of encouraging class collaboration and containing radical working class militancy. The issue of slavery or semi-slavery is the one that lost relevance as indentured labour systems proved decreasingly profitable, and sugar and other commodity producers moved to a new system based on family farms and centralised milling. One consequence of this is that historians have radically misunderstood elements of the rhetoric used in the debates over Chinese immigration and Islander labour.

There were a number of second rank issues in the decision for exclusion. One is the centrality of gold in ruling class and middle class hopes for accelerated economic development and political liberalisation,<sup>88</sup> and their concern that Chinese miners dug up the gold and took it home, rather than investing it in Australia. There were widespread and false allegations that Chinese people were immoral, and used opium to seduce white women.<sup>89</sup> These played a

---

<sup>88</sup> The flavour of some of these hopes is captured in Paul A Pickering, "The Finger of God: Gold's impact on New South Wales" in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 37-51.

<sup>89</sup> One of the main instruments in promoting the idea of Chinese immorality was the "Report of the Select Committee into Common Lodging Houses", chaired by Angus Cameron MLA, NSW V&P, 1875-6, vol. 6, pp. 845-68. It was a completely dishonest exercise, aimed to vilify Chinese people (and, I would argue, rescue Cameron's political career), and had a vast impact on public opinion.

significant role in whipping up racist hostility to the Chinese, but were not central to ruling class strategic thinking. Sir Henry Parkes repeatedly made a point of rejecting these allegations; but did not soften his hostility to Chinese people. A range of small and medium-sized capitalists complained about Chinese competition: furniture makers, tobacco growers, fruit growers and teamsters. Mobilisation by these groups did not make Australian policy, but contributed to the strength of the exclusionist position. So too, in a more significant way, did the trade union, plebeian and bourgeois-dominated anti-Chinese campaigns.

## Organisation of the thesis

In chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical assumptions of this thesis, which lie in Marx's historical materialism and his theorisation of base and superstructure. I outline and deal with attacks on this from postmodernism, and the alternative theories of racism developed by writers such as John Rex and Pierre van den Berghe grounded in Weberian sociology. These underpin the "contact" theory used by Andrew Markus and other writers. I argue for an understanding of colonial Australia as a class society, deal with objections to that analysis, and use an understanding of base and superstructure to outline a Marxist theory of racism.

The body of the thesis is broadly divided between three chapters, 3 to 5, which outline the three major ruling class agendas, and five predominantly narrative chapters, 6 to 10.

In chapter 3 I discuss the first ruling class agenda, colonisation, and the perception that Chinese immigration threatened British control of sections of Australia. I illustrate my argument through a narrative of the attempts made by the Queensland parliament in 1876-77 to restrict Chinese immigration.

In chapter 4 I discuss the second ruling class agenda, anti-slavery, the danger that systems of unfree labour would create some kind of semi-slave economy and society, and the belief that any substantial Chinese or “coloured” labour force would catalyse the development of a racialised, unfree system of labour. I outline the specifically bourgeois structure of anti-slavery thought, and the post-slavery British critique of other unfree labour systems, including the danger that they would produce a stunted economy churning out commodities, rather than a modern, wealthy state. I lastly discuss the revisionist histories which have challenged the idea that Pacific Islanders were “slaves” in some sense.

In chapter 5 I discuss the third ruling class agenda, the need for a racially and culturally homogeneous society to entrench social control by the capitalist state. I argue that this was legitimised, if not grounded, in the theories of John Stuart Mill, and move to locate the origins of this element in Mill’s thought in that of the aristocratic anti-capitalism of the Coleridgians, their rejection of enlightenment liberalism, and Mill’s own desire for a politics of social stability that protected bourgeois privilege. The chapter then tests the seriousness of this discourse by seeing if there were other ways in which homogeneity was pursued by the colonial ruling class; in the process briefly discussing the ideas behind the systems of national education, in choosing the national origin of European immigrants, and disputes over how to deal with Irish Australians.



Having theorised the three major ruling class agendas that led to White Australia, I move to offer some narrative explanations for various “coloured labour” and Chinese immigration laws, explanations grounded in the three agendas. In chapters 6 and 7, I look at the development of the politics of “coloured labour” in Queensland from 1878 to 1886. Queensland was the only colony in which large-scale indentured labour was employed, and the politics of “coloured labour” were central to all political debate in the colony over this period. I show that, not only did Queensland lead in the restriction of Chinese immigration, but also that major sections of the ruling class combined to deprive pastoralists of indentured Pacific Island labour. Attempts to set up a system of indentured Indian labour were defeated by the Liberals in the 1883 election and subsequent legislation; and this led to an attempt by sugar planters and their allies to separate North Queensland from the South. Northern separation was initially resisted by all bourgeois politicians in the South, Conservative and Liberal, with major sections of Conservative politics determined that any system of indentured “coloured labour” would be controlled by a state dominated by southern bourgeoisie.

In chapter 8, I use the controversy around the seamen’s strike of 1878-9 to discuss the class logic of anti-Chinese racism, and in particular, the argument that it had an anti-capitalist dynamic. I look at the attitudes of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, showing them to be caught between a hostility to Chinese immigration and a fear that anti-Chinese agitation was anti-capitalist, protectionist, and tending towards communism. I contrast their position with those taken by a range of other conservative papers in New South Wales and Queensland. Finally, I sketch ways in which ruling class politicians such as Sir Henry Parkes and Sir Thomas McIlwraith were able to use anti-Chinese agitation to contain working class and plebeian discontent towards them.

In chapters 9 and 10, I examine the factors leading to the Chinese immigration crisis of 1888, and the story of the crisis and its resolution. I present a new narrative of this pivotal crisis, illustrating the centrality of ruling class politicians in events, the disputes among them, and their final decisive act in warning the South Australian upper house that it faced a choice between closing the door to Chinese immigration at Darwin, and missing out on federation.

The anti-Chinese legislation and hysteria of the late 1880s was an element in the process by which an increasingly wealthy and powerful local ruling class established a measure of independence from London, partly as a means of remaining a loyal part of the empire. White Australia was a declaration that Australian politics would be driven by a fear of Asia and Asians, a standpoint which remains – despite all the talk of engagement and multiculturalism – a significant element of government decision-making today.

## A note on words and comparisons

Nineteenth-century usages often saw the term “working class” applied to anyone who actually worked; the counterpoint being the capitalist who lived through risking their capital. I have used “working class” to mean people employed by capitalists, and who had no managerial role. I have used the word “plebeian” to denote a broader layer of society, including working class people, free selectors, artisans, self-employed people and employers who worked alongside their one or two staff. The phrase is valuable in representing radical activism within this wide social layer, and there is a long tradition of this in

Australia. I have used it for organisations such as the Working Men's Defence Association in Sydney from 1877, which is briefly discussed in chapter 8. I distinguish such plebeian activism from the more conventionally bourgeois-led organisations such as the Political Reform Union from 1878, or the Protectionist-controlled Anti-Chinese League in Sydney in 1887-88, whose leaderships were far from plebeian.<sup>90</sup>

I have capitalised the words Conservative and Liberal to identify association with a political network. This is relevant in Queensland and Victoria, and to some extent South Australia, where there were identifiable parties. The use of lower-case conservative or liberal denotes a general political orientation.

The word "race" was used very loosely in the period covered by this thesis. It was often used as a synonym for nationality or people, and its use did not necessarily imply a racist outlook.

In order to make sums of money intelligible, I have provided a rough estimate of equivalents, on the basis of £1 in the period 1876-88 being worth \$300 in 2006.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Markey describes the PRU as "a bourgeois-led protectionist and democratic body with working class support", a description I would agree with, *Populist politics*, p. 70.

<sup>91</sup> I have done this on a wages basis; estimating that the average wage for a competent labourer in the 1880s was around 40 shillings or £2 a week where no board or food was provided, while in 2006 a labourer would earn at least \$30,000 per annum. See, for instance, the survey of wages in the iron trades in *SMH* 1 July 1879, p. 5, cols. 1-2. Most wages are given in hourly figures, but Chapman & Co. labourers received 36s a week. In September 2006, the legal federal minimum wage in Australia was \$12.75 hour, or \$484.50 week, Australian Fair Pay Commission, *Wage-Setting Decision and Reasons for Decision*, October 2006 [online] [http://www.fairpay.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/222E8249-FCA4-42BB-93CD-32B906C2662B/0/AFPC\\_Oct2006\\_Wagesettingdecision\\_Fulldocument.pdf](http://www.fairpay.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/222E8249-FCA4-42BB-93CD-32B906C2662B/0/AFPC_Oct2006_Wagesettingdecision_Fulldocument.pdf), p. 19 [accessed 1 December 2006]. Most labourers earn more than this. At the ASN docks, skilled mechanics in 1879 earned 10s to 11s a day, or £3 to £3 6s a week; comparable workers in 2006 would expect to

earn well over \$900 to \$1000 a week, suggesting my index may err on the side of understatement. Workers today pay significant amounts of income tax, but also receive unemployment benefits, medical insurance and other welfare benefits unavailable in the nineteenth century.

One alternative method of comparison would be to use long term price indices. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' calculations show that if consumer prices were indexed at 100 in 1945, they were between 45 and 56 in the period 1877-88, with an average of 51.3; whereas in September 2006, the index was 2766, a multiple of 54 times. From *Year Book Australia* 2002. [online]

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/632C047B9DC5DA2ACA256F2A000E-CF0B?opendocument> [accessed 1 December 2006] I calculated the price index by taking the average of 1989 (1714) and 1990 (1839), and multiplied it by the index for September 2006 (155.7), based on a base-point of 100 for 1989-90 [online]

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/e8ae5488b598839cca25682000131612/938da570a34a8edaca2568a900139350!OpenDocument> [accessed 1 December 2006] Of course, over such long time periods, these figures are only valid as orders of magnitude.

This suggests a three-fold increase in living standards, making any compromise approach problematic. I regard the wage-based figure as being more valid because the subjective understanding of the reader is more strongly related to their weekly or annual income, than to comparative prices.

## *Chapter 2*

# Class analysis and colonial Australia

THE UNDERLYING theoretical assumptions behind this thesis are those of classical Marxism, and in particular, the assumption that colonial Australia can be understood as capitalist, as a class society, with a ruling class which dominated the economy and politics. Historical materialism has been productive of some of the greatest historical writing – from the works of Marx and Engels themselves, through the contributions of EP Thompson, Christopher Hill and the other British Marxist historians, George Rudé and Georges Lefebvre, CLR James and Eugene Genovese, and the archaeology of V Gordon Childe.

The propositions of historical materialism have been challenged by Weberian approaches and post-structuralism, and within Australian history, by historians writing within these intellectual frameworks. In this chapter, I will respond to these criticisms and to arguments which reject the idea that colonial Australia can be understood in class terms, and outline a Marxist theory of racism.

## Marxism and class analysis

At the heart of the Marxist theory of history is the argument that in complex societies, the principal means of production are controlled by a minority class which exploits the labour of the direct producers. This exploitation is resisted by the direct producers, and it is this resistance, as well as competition amongst the minority who control society's resources, that necessitates the parallel development of an armed state to impose social order, and a formalised set of ideas by which the business of exploitation can be legitimised. In one famous passage, Marx theorised this as base and superstructure, the idea that the "legal and political superstructure" of society rested on its productivity and its relations of production; that changes in the material production of social life led to struggles for control of the political superstructure and over the content of social ideas.<sup>1</sup> For the past 150 years, this formula has been enormously controversial. Particular formulations in Marx were used by some – most notoriously, by Stalinist regimes and parties – to insist that the nature of a society's state and politics were determined by its economic and class structure. Mechanical determinists also asserted that human society had passed through a series of predetermined changes in economic and political structure and that a final stage, socialism, would be the inevitable result of economic development.<sup>2</sup> Such a reading had little in common with Marx, who emphasised the ability of the state, the legal system and ideas (including religion) to partially shape the

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Preface and introduction to A contribution to the critique of political economy*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> This tendency is discussed in Chris Harman, "Base and superstructure", *International Socialism* (UK), no. 32, summer 1986, pp. 4-9.

nature of economic relations. Marx also canvassed the possibility that revolutionary change could be defeated and social progress radically reversed.

In an important exposition of Marx's theory, Chris Harman argued that the superstructure of any society was inherently conservative, with the state protecting particular systems of exploitation, particular ruling classes, and the role of the particular structures of thought in naturalising these.<sup>3</sup> It was not only the class struggle of the exploited but also the incremental development of human productivity, and new relations of production and exploitation, that challenged the institutions of the superstructure, which in turn resisted change. If exploitation and class struggle necessitated the development of a superstructure, the superstructure itself worked to intensify that class struggle, as new classes and class elements gained in strength. The ultimate result, Marx argued, would be "an epoch of social revolution", ending in either the "revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the ruin of the contending classes."<sup>4</sup>

Two elements of this theory are particularly important for this thesis. The first is that a ruling class is neither to be defined in a narrow political sense, as the social group in control of the state; nor in a narrow economic sense, as those who own the means of production; but as consisting of the entire layer that rules society and benefits from the routine exploitation of other people's labour. In late colonial Australia, this included the medium and large capitalists and their managers, large landowners, politicians and top state officials, and the

---

<sup>3</sup> Harman, "Base and superstructure", esp. pp. 18-23.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the communist party*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965, p. 89.

priests, journalists, 'respectable' humanitarians, sectarian organisers and intellectuals who dominated the production of ideas in society. The issue is confused by the nineteenth-century tendency, even in Marx, to designate the bourgeois element as "middle class", long after they had conquered economic and political power in Britain.<sup>5</sup>

Within a ruling class so defined, there is both a division of labour and a conflict of interests. For capitalist society in particular, the business of politics and the creation of ideas about the world is subcontracted to professional specialists – politicians, journalists, academics, priests, lawyers and judges. Hal Draper sees in Marx an argument that the bourgeoisie has a particular inaptitude for politics and ideological development.<sup>6</sup> This division of labour also means that there can be sharp conflicts between the direct capitalists and their politicians or ideologists over specific issues. Alongside this division of labour there is a conflict of interests, as different industries call for different state measures and different ideological justifications. These conflicts are frequently fought out within the state apparatus, and compromises reached. The long conflict between manufacturers (and others) and pastoralists (and others), over free trade and protection in late colonial and early federation Australia, is an example of this.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> See Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's theory of revolution: Volume II: The politics of social classes*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1978, p. 290; see also p. 169n.

<sup>6</sup> Draper, Karl Marx, vol. II, chapter "Intellectual labor and laborers", pp. 486ff; this is also extensively discussed in his *Volume I: State and bureaucracy*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Phil Griffiths, "The decline of free trade in Australian politics, 1901-1909", BA (Hons) thesis, Macquarie University, 1998.



If rival economic interests, or rival ruling class strategies, lead to conflict and some kind of resolution, that resolution is then embodied in laws, institutions and ideas – superstructural elements – and these in turn shape the further development of class relations and the productive forces of society. The victory of protectionism in 1907 changed the Australian economy and ideas about Australian society. The stability of this victory and its capacity to become an enduring policy were dependent on the continued accumulation of capital at a rate sufficient to match the capital attached to rival nations. By the 1970s, this strategy was failing as a means to accumulation, and a radical shift took place in ruling class thinking, with a new, neo-liberal paradigm triumphing in the 1980s, which in turn also had a dramatic effect on class relations and productive capacity.<sup>8</sup>

This thesis argues that the structures of racial exclusion in Australia should also be seen in this way – as the result of a fight within a ruling class that had a variety of economic interests and strategic opinions. One of the former was plantation agriculture, especially sugar, which was for decades based on substantially unfree labour and relations of production with very different dynamics to those based on so-called “free labour”. The solution to this conflict involved the state imposing more and more onerous restrictions on the use of unfree labour. The victory of the exclusionists paved the way for federation, shaped the composition and size of the Australian working class, and limited capitalist development in the north.

---

<sup>8</sup> These issues are canvassed in Paul Kelly, *The end of certainty: Power, politics & business in Australia*, revised edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1994; and David Love, *Straw polls, paper money*, Viking, Ringwood (Vic), 2001, albeit from a neo-liberal point of view.

Seeing the ruling class as divided does not obviate an understanding of the rich and powerful in colonial Australia as a *class*. A vast panoply of ideas and legal institutions were defended by all of them, including wage labour, property law, the nation state, and national citizenship. The common bourgeois reaction – economic, legal and ideological – to the great strikes of the early 1890s was compelling evidence that Australia had its own powerful ruling class; as was the ability of their politicians to bury previously bitter disagreements and unite into a single right wing party when finally confronted with a mass labour party.<sup>9</sup> Such an understanding reflects the methodology of historical materialism – to find the class and sectional/class interests behind major conflicts in politics and ideas.

The second element of Marx's theory important for this thesis is the proposition that the outcome of class and social struggles is never pre-determined, but shaped by the relative political and material resources of each side, their ability to mobilise force and popular support, and the determination and resolution of each side, which includes the quality of its leadership. If this thesis appears to focus disproportionately on the role of Sir Henry Parkes, it is not just because his papers are amongst the few to survive from amongst his contemporaries, but also because of his extraordinary ability both to lead the bourgeoisie of New South Wales, and represent their interests.

Marx's theory of base and superstructure was attacked from within Marxism by EP Thompson, as "a bad and dangerous model", because of the way it was used

---

<sup>9</sup> Griffiths, *The decline of free trade, passim*.

by Stalin to remove human beings from the making of history,<sup>10</sup> and asserted that “class is a cultural as much as an economic formation.”<sup>11</sup> Thompson’s primary target was the anti-humanism of Althusser and his followers, but one of the legacies of his argument was a generation of social historians who looked at the world from the experience of those at the bottom, ignoring the broader structure of class relations shaping that experience.

Thompson’s own work did not reflect these theoretical positions. It was materialist, grounded in the development of new relations of production and focused on class struggles that were driven by conflicting interests, and alive to the impact of changing relations of production on ideas and institutions and the impact of politics and legal structures on economics. *The making of the English working class* described the transformation of a disparate layer of wage earning artisans and labourers, who identified predominantly with their separate trades and the struggle against the landed interest, into a self-conscious *class*, singular, in open conflict with its symbiotic rival – the class of (especially manufacturing) employers, and the government. The strike, trade union and radical press tended to replace plebeian mass actions such as the “food riot”, while politically, the radical constitutionalism of the 1790s, gave way to Owenism and quasi-socialist political economy. Underpinning this class polarisation were changed methods of production, changed economic relations, and also a rapprochement between the landed gentry and emerging manufacturers, pushed together by their mutual counter-revolutionary panic.<sup>12</sup> The essays

---

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Harvey Kaye, *The British Marxist historians: An introductory analysis*, Polity Press, London, 1984, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> EP Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, Penguin, Harmondsworth (UK), 1968, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, *Making of the English working class*, *passim*.

making up *Customs in common* looked at the growing polarisation between patricians and plebs, the fights over enclosure of the common lands, and the attempts to enforce the imperatives of the commercial grain market against those who insisted on feeding the local community in times of dearth.<sup>13</sup> *Whigs and hunters* found Thompson searching for the reasons behind the sudden declaration of fifty new capital offences in England in 1723, and discovering an eruption of “class war” in the forests of East Berkshire and Hampshire, driven by rival claims for the use of forest resources between the declining gentry and yeoman class of the long-established forest communities, and the newly rich landowners and lords (temporal and ecclesiastical) who asserted their right to graze their deer unimpeded in “their” forests. Also involved was a struggle over the legal and ideological bases of economic life as “non-monetary use rights were being reified into capitalist property rights”<sup>14</sup>. Matt Perry has suggested that for Thompson and other humanist Marxists, such as Eugene Genovese and Christopher Hill, the “contradiction between the explicit theoretical abandonment of base and superstructure and the practical attachment to it, allowed their work to continue within the very best tradition of Marxist history” while undermining the ability of future historians to clearly grasp the theoretical issues involved in understanding the past.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> EP Thompson, *Customs in common*, Penguin, London, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> EP Thompson, *Whigs and hunters: The origin of the Black Act*, Penguin, London, 1990, p. 244.

<sup>15</sup> Matt Perry, *Marxism and history*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 2002, p. 123.

## An Australian ruling class?

While historians have largely ignored the role played in the development of proto-White Australia laws by the rich businessmen, squatters and lawyers who dominated the colonial parliaments before 1888, is it fruitful to consider this social layer as a class, and specifically as a ruling class? I argue that it is.

Certainly in economic terms, there is compelling evidence that Australian capitalism in the colonial era was dominated by a ruling class. Bob Connell and Terry Irving saw the period of colonial self-government as one in which the mercantile bourgeoisie asserted its hegemony. This involved the defeat of the landowning gentry who were dominant before 1840, the termination of state-controlled, unfree labour, the development of financial institutions that were able to concentrate large amounts of money capital for lending and investment, the increasing penetration of urban capital into pastoralism, and an increasing proletarianisation of working-class life and sharper class polarisation. Politically, they argued that the self-governing parliaments were numerically and hence politically dominated by urban colonial businessmen and their specific agendas for economic development.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, there is very little historical analysis of colonial capitalists and their political agendas. Dick van Dissel argued that the Adelaide gentry constituted the ruling class of South Australia,<sup>17</sup> while Manning Clark saw the

---

<sup>16</sup> RW Connell & TH Irving, *Class structure in Australian history*, Second edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992 (first pub 1980), pp. 83-114.

<sup>17</sup> Dirk van Dissel, "The Adelaide gentry, 1850-1920" in Eric Richards (ed), *The Flinders history of South Australia: Social history*, Wakefield Press, Netley (SA), 1986, pp. 333-370; also Dirk van

1870s and 1880s as “The golden age of the Australian bourgeoisie.”<sup>18</sup> In a careful discussion of the economic and social developments which led to the rise of the New South Wales Labor Party in 1890, Ray Markey saw the late colonial period as a pre-industrial, mercantilist one in which “a new urban financial and industrial ruling class” began to emerge.<sup>19</sup> EL Wheelwright and Ken Buckley likewise asserted that the “mercantile class” was “the leading force in the bourgeoisie”.<sup>20</sup> Andrew Wells described the colonial economies of the 1880s as a mixture between the large scale production of wool, minerals and agricultural commodities for the world market, industries where productivity was high and capital accumulation and economic power concentrated; and an urban economy of large numbers of petty producers and the self employed in which production was labour intensive and class differentiation “muted”. An important section of the colonial ruling class, the largest finance capitalists, were located in London.<sup>21</sup> Wells’ attempt to establish a different emphasis in our understanding of Australian capitalism in this period was interesting and suggestive, but undermined by his failure to engage with rival accounts (and not just that of Connell and Irving), the paucity of his discussion of mercantile capital in Australia, and his neglect of the growing element of manufacturing

---

Dissel, “The Adelaide gentry 1880-1915: A study of a colonial upper class”, MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1973.

<sup>18</sup> AW Martin quotes Clark making this comment in 1954, “Political groupings in New South Wales, 1872-1889: A study in the working of responsible government”, PhD thesis, ANU, 1955, p 27.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Markey, *The making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp. 20-2.

<sup>20</sup> Ted Wheelwright and Ken Buckley, *No paradise for workers: Capitalism and the common people in Australia 1788-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 110.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Wells, *Constructing capitalism: An economic history of eastern Australia, 1788-1901*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, pp. 140-1.

that was capital intensive.<sup>22</sup> Manufacturers constituted a significant element in the colonial ruling class.

A few historians have seriously examined the close links between business and politics in colonial Australia.<sup>23</sup> The most meticulous examination of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for the period 1872-87 concluded that, "a single social class predominated".<sup>24</sup> Its author, AW Martin, called this the "middle classes", but it is clear that he meant what a Marxist would understand as the ruling class. "Persons connected with the pastoral, mercantile and professional callings always accounted together for over seventy per cent of the membership of the Assembly," he wrote.<sup>25</sup> There were compelling practical reasons for this.

Except in unusual circumstances, it was thus necessary for a man to possess an independent income before contemplating an entry into the

---

<sup>22</sup> For example, in 1891, Victoria's 30 gas plants represented an investment of £1.8 million, an enormous amount, and their capital/labour ratio was ten times the average, NG Butlin, *Investment in Australian economic development, 1861-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1964, pp. 207-8. Mort's Dock in Sydney was always a very large employer, with 1000 staff in 1886, Connell & Irving, p. 111. The scale and nature of colonial manufacturing is discussed by GJR Linge in *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing, 1788-1890*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1979.

<sup>23</sup> Duncan Waterson, *Personality, profit and politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894: The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture, 1978*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984; DB Waterson, *Squatter, selector, and storekeeper: A history of the Darling Downs 1859-93*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1968; GP Taylor, "Business and politics in Queensland, 1859-1895", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1967, pp. 75-92; Lyndon Thomas Megarrity, "Robert Philp and the politics of development in Queensland 1890-1903", PhD thesis, University of New England, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Martin thesis, p. 290. He used these words about Britain in the eighteenth century, but immediately added that, "For different reasons, a similar situation had developed in New South Wales". See also pp. 59-60.

<sup>25</sup> Martin, thesis, p. 46 and accompanying table. He did not see these professionals as in any way an independent force: "many of the large professional group had a considerable community of interest" with the "pastoral and mercantile representatives", he wrote on the same page.

political sphere. Evening sittings of Parliament made it possible for Sydney men actively engaged in business or the professions to become members. Financial means were a still greater necessity to country representatives.<sup>26</sup>

The long and bitter agitation for payment of members was driven by anger in the working class and the plebeian middle class at their practical exclusion from political decision-making, just as this agitation informed the hostility of conservatives.

One problem with many Australia-wide analyses is that they largely focused on New South Wales and Victoria, and did not deal with the unevenness of development across the continent. The struggles over “coloured labour” in Queensland are central to the development of the White Australia policy. There are several reasons for this, all grounded in the later development of both frontier and urban capitalism in Queensland. The pastoral frontier was still expanding in the 1880s, and the plantation-based sugar industry experienced a first great boom which ended in 1884, and then another period of expansion in the 1890s, while urban capitalist development in Brisbane and the other major centres really only took off in the 1880s, decades behind Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Nevertheless, I think it is mistaken to see the Queensland ruling class as dominated by “the squatters and planters who controlled the huge pastoral holdings of the interior and the sugar producing belts along the Queensland coast”, as Bill Thorpe seemed to do in his pioneering discussion of class,

---

<sup>26</sup> Martin, thesis, p. 48.



colonisation and capitalism in colonial Queensland.<sup>27</sup> There is a widespread agreement that Queensland pastoralists had lost their dominant political position by the early 1870s.<sup>28</sup> The governing Liberal party of 1883-88 had few squatters in its ranks, unlike the Liberal administrations of Macalister in the 1860s; while the significance of the emergence of the McIlwraith Conservative party in the late 1870s was that it represented an alliance between pastoral capital and miners, sugar planters and some finance capitalists, including McIlwraith's business partners.<sup>29</sup> McIlwraith's place in Queensland party politics was described by his loyal deputy, John Murtagh Macrossan, as follows:

You were never the head of the squatting party although you trusted once that you were – and annoyed and angered me very much by doing so – and that you were proud of it. The only party you ever were the real head of was the little party which gathered around you on the opposition cross benches and the few non-squatters which for various reasons joined you since. I never regarded myself as a member of a squatting party. We simply used them and they used you as the only shield they had between them and the devil [ie Griffith and the Liberals].<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: Perspectives on a frontier society*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1996, p. 198.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Schindler, "The evolution of political parties", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 1, no. 3, August 1917, p. 138; Waterson, Squatter, selector and storekeeper, p. 231; PS Callaghan, "Political alignments in the Queensland Legislative Assembly 1878-99", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1968, pp. 19-22; Palmer in *QPD*, vol XX (1876), p. 215; Duncan Waterson, *Personality, profit and politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894: The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture*, 1978, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984; DK Dignan, "McIlwraith and the squatters", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. IV, no. 3, December 1950, pp. 412-19.

<sup>29</sup> GP Taylor discusses the development of the McIlwraith business network and its political manifestations in "Business and politics in Queensland, 1859-1895", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1967, esp. pp. 80-86.

<sup>30</sup> Letter Macrossan to McIlwraith, 25th May, 1883, in McIlwraith-Palmer papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/20. The letter was written when the McIlwraith government was facing rebellion by squatters over its plans for a transcontinental railway, with election defeat also looming.

Thus, the history of the McIlwraith government 1879-83 was in part a history of tension and conflict between the Cabinet and an ultra-squatter “subsection”; and this in turn reflects the significant shift in political power which had taken place just before the period covered by this thesis. The enormous economic power of the squatters, and the dependence of Queensland capitalism as a whole on pastoral income, could not deliver them hegemony over the rest of the ruling class and the middle class. This was plaintively acknowledged by the conservative *Maryborough Chronicle*:

Mr Buzacott has to a great degree been a representative of the pastoral interest, and though this industry is the source of the trade of Rockhampton, and the growth of which depends on its profitable extension, yet, as will be found always the case, as population settles in large numbers and forms large towns, the mass of the people lose sight of the springs whence flow the prosperity they enjoy, and the cry is raised of capital against the people, the latter being supposed to be represented by the Liberal party, the former by the Opposition. Rockhampton has reached a stage which Maryborough went through some time ago, when the people would have none but a Liberal to rule over them.<sup>31</sup>

In large part, this was because the squatters were seen as opposed to the development of a broadly-based capitalism, in which small farmers and urban interests would flourish. Thus the squatters made enemies out of many who were also either rich, or ambitious small owners. As a consequence, the growth in urban, mining and small-farmer/selector capital underpinned the political defeat of the Queensland squatters. Aspects of this process have been discussed by Duncan Waterson in his study of class and power on the Darling Downs,

---

<sup>31</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* 23 Nov. 1878.

home of the “pure Merino” squatters. Waterson saw the storekeepers of the three main towns of the region as the people “who, together with their associates the small farmers, contested and finally broke the squatters’ stranglehold.”<sup>32</sup>

While pastoralism underpinned the municipality’s [Toowoomba’s] progress and prosperity, administrative, service, processing and even manufacturing functions expanded at a faster rate, particularly during the late ‘sixties and throughout the ‘seventies.<sup>33</sup>

However, to town businesspeople, by attempting to monopolise the land, “Pastoralism appeared to be blocking economic opportunity, political change and social advancement.” So the urban capitalists mobilised voters in general to defeat the squatters politically. But this victory would not have been enduring had it not led to new opportunities for investment and profit. But, “Once the selectors [small farmers] were established and the power of the squatters was broken...the storekeepers’ radicalism died. By 1893 they, as well as the surviving squatters, were the economic conservatives of the Downs.”<sup>34</sup> Denis Cryle’s discussion of the press in Queensland showed the squatters attempting to use control over newspapers to translate their economic power into political control, and eventually failing because urban liberals counter-mobilised, using their own, rival newspapers to cohere the population behind their program of extensive colonisation and land settlement.<sup>35</sup> In Brisbane, leading Liberal

---

<sup>32</sup> Waterson, pp. 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Waterson, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Waterson, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Denis Cryle, *The press in colonial Queensland: A social and political history 1845-1875*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1989, *passim*.

politicians were involved in setting up a rival bank to the McIlwraith-Drury dominated Queensland National Bank.<sup>36</sup>

To the political weakness of the squatters must be added the relative decline in pastoralism as a driver of economic growth. Thorpe's view of the Queensland ruling class reflects a belief that capital accumulation in society was driven by the dominant export industries, a view which is shared by those who argue the "staple theory" of Australian economic development.<sup>37</sup> This approach was trenchantly criticised by economic historian Noel Butlin, who argued that investment was the primary driver of economic growth in Australia, with much of the capital coming from Britain. While pastoral and mining exports remained crucial, the Australian economy after 1860 "was moving rapidly, it would seem, in a direct away from that indicated by its natural factor endowment", towards construction and the development of import-replacing manufacturing.<sup>38</sup> Butlin considered the urbanisation of Australia its most remarkable feature.

These broader Australian developments were also reflected in the growth of capitalism in Queensland. Table 2.1 shows that while investment in agricultural and pastoral business was a major proportion of total private sector investment from 1871-85, investment in residential construction was greater; and that in 1886-90, agricultural and pastoral investment stalled. Table 2.2 shows that from 1870-1892, new capital formation in the Queensland pastoral industry never

---

<sup>36</sup> GP Taylor, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, JW McCarty, "The staple approach to Australian economic history", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. IV, no. 1, Feb. 1964, pp. 1-22.

<sup>38</sup> NG Butlin, "Growth in a trading world: The Australian economy, heavily disguised", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. IV, no. 2, Aug. 1964, pp. 138-58. See also his *Investment in Australian economic development, 1861-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1964.

exceeded the level of current surpluses in the industry, and that from 1883, there was very little new investment in the industry. These figures together show that over the period covered by this thesis, most capital was invested outside pastoralism and plantations, and suggest that squatters either consumed their surpluses, or invested them outside Queensland pastoralism.

**Table 2.1 Estimates of new capital formation and replacement outlays in Queensland, 1866-90 (£000)<sup>39</sup>**

<i>Sector</i>		1866-70	1871-75	1876-80	1881-85	1886-90
Total Private sector	New	2189	5548	3957	9110	7756
	Replace	417	698	1000	1454	1833
Agricultural and pastoral	New	213	1934	1717	2352	98
	Replace	260	355	573	819	808
Residential	New	1079	3065	1803	5135	5328
	Replace	71	120	152	225	319
Industrial	New	685	212	121	863	967
	Replace	40	130	128	184	297
Shops and offices	New	208	255	164	388	874
	Replace	43	67	84	119	164
Mining	New	4	82	152	372	489
	Replace	3	26	63	107	245
Total Public Sector	New	1370	1242	3357	6402	7945
	Replace	143	268	426	817	1677

<sup>39</sup> GJR Linge, *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing, 1788-1890*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1979, pp. 676-77.

**Table 2.2 Estimates of pastoral surpluses and new capital formation in Queensland, 1870-92 (£m)<sup>40</sup>**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Current surplus</i>	<i>Imputed gains from livestock increase</i>	<i>New capital formation</i>
1870	1.12	0.06	0.02
1871	1.47	0.43	0.04
1872	1.33	0.12	0.43
1873	1.58	0.60	0.44
1874	1.70	1.60	0.44
1875	1.65	1.63	0.59
1876	1.74	1.61	0.43
1877	1.68	0.33	0.43
1878	1.42	0.70	0.88
1879	1.35	1.13	-0.14
1880	1.66	1.82	0.22
1881	1.51	2.66	0.93
1882	na	4.69	0.91
1883	2.71	2.62	0.35
1884	1.97	-0.73	0.16
1885	1.60	-0.48	na
1886	1.45	-0.14	-0.26
1887	2.16	1.66	-0.16
1888	2.28	2.06	na
1889	2.47	1.18	0.17
1890	2.57	2.69	0.35
1891	3.37	3.38	-0.14
1892	3.35	2.33	-0.14

<sup>40</sup> Boot, HM, "Debts, drought, and foreclosure: Wool-producers in Queensland and New South Wales, 1870-1905", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XXVII, no. 2, Sept 1988, p. 36.

Thus a significant proportion of Queensland's private investment took place in Brisbane in the 1880s, as urbanisation occurred even more rapidly in Queensland than in the more developed colonies. By 1881, Brisbane's population had doubled from 15,029 in 1871 to 31,109, and then tripled over the next decade to 93,657 in 1891.<sup>41</sup> There is nothing in the profile of Queensland's exports, nor in the expansion of the pastoral, sugar or mining industries, to explain such a rapid increase in the capital city's population. There was also substantial urbanisation in Queensland's regional centres; by 1891, Rockhampton had 14,392 people, Charters Towers 13,320, Ipswich 13,059, Maryborough 11,724, Gympie 10,972, Toowoomba 10,936 and Townsville 10,356.<sup>42</sup>

While there have been debates about the nature of Australian capitalism and its ruling class, there has also been a strong current of both contemporary writing and later historical interpretation that sees late colonial Australia as either a classless society, or one in which universal suffrage had put control of the government effectively into the hands of "the people" or "the mob", depending on your political standpoint. Connell and Irving have pointed out that both the USA and the Soviet Union also had their myths of a classless society.<sup>43</sup> Such an argument is contradicted, compellingly, by the frequent poverty, hardship and

---

<sup>41</sup> TA Coghlan, *A statistical account of the seven colonies of Australasia, 1895-6*, Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1896, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Bowden, Bradley, "'Some mysterious terror': The relationship between capital and labour in Ipswich, 1861-96", *Labour History*, no. 72, May 1997, p. 82. See also AJ Boyd, "Queensland: An introductory essay" in Price Fletcher (ed), *Queensland: Its resources and institutions*, William Clowes & Sons, London, 1887.

<sup>43</sup> Connell and Irving, pp. 11-12. They suggest that this "sense of classlessness...grew from a particular balance of class forces moving through a particular course of politico-economic development. It was, paradoxically, the expression of a particular kind of class consciousness, and that is a major reason why it has persisted."

uncertainty of colonial life for wage-earners, working-class women and the unemployed.<sup>44</sup> While an immense amount of law and a significant police and prison apparatus protected property, before the 1890s there was almost no legislation for injured workers, unemployed people or the sick; nor for small investors trusting in the governance of “leading men” such as those who made the laws in Victoria in the lead-up to the catastrophic bank crashes of 1893. It seems a strange popular democracy that could be so negligent of the immediate and vital interests of the mass of people entitled to vote.

Ronald Lawson was one who rejected the Marxist model of class structure in his illuminating study of Brisbane in the 1890s. He imagined that Marxism demanded “two distinct, self-conscious, antagonistic classes”, and was incompatible with a social structure embodying a “regular gradation of status groups bridging the gulf between the extremes”.<sup>45</sup> Yet there is a rich Marxist tradition of analysing the gradual process of class differentiation, and the many different forms that intermediate classes have taken in modern capitalism.<sup>46</sup> Lawson situated himself within an emerging revisionist current, which included Denis Murphy and JB Dalton and rejected the quasi-class analysis of Robin Gollan and left nationalist historians. Part of Lawson’s argument seems

---

<sup>44</sup> Shirley Fitzgerald, *Rising damp: Sydney 1870-90*, Oxford University Press, 1987; Anne O’Brien, *Poverty’s prison: The poor in New South Wales 1880-1918*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1988.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A study of an Australian urban society*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, pp. 78-9.

<sup>46</sup> In *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954, Marx analysed the class politics of the peasantry and small proprietors, and the role played by their leadership at a time of social crisis. Geoffrey de Ste. Croix has pointed out that in *The poverty of philosophy*, Marx discussed a class divided society in which the class struggle had “not yet assumed a political character”, *The class struggle in the ancient Greek world: From the archaic age to the Arab conquests*, Duckworth, London, 1981, p. 60.



to be that classes were not hardened because social mobility still existed in Brisbane, though he astutely pointed to the rapidly diminishing prospects during the 1890s that someone of humble birth could join the rich.<sup>47</sup> This offers no contradiction to classical Marxism, which does not see class as a quasi-caste or rigid hierarchy. A certain measure of social mobility simply suggests that some working-class or middle-class people became capitalists, and changed their class location.

Class analysis, however, is not about exceptional (or lucky) individuals who escape the grinding poverty of working class or plebeian life. The degree to which class had hardened in colonial Australia is shown in a remarkable study by WD Rubenstein. He examined probate returns for Victoria from 1860 to 1974 to determine the distribution of wealth, and found that relative inequality declined from colonial times into the twentieth century. For Victoria in 1880, he found that 72% of men and 91% of women died owning no noticeable property. For those who did leave some property, no matter how minimal, the average estate was £1689, a colossal sum, equal perhaps to half a million dollars in 2006 values. Rubenstein concluded:

If Australia offered the highest standard of living in the world to the working class, as was widely believed, it was not high enough to permit more than a minority to own a house, and bank account, or, indeed, measurable property of any kind.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Lawson, pp. 79, 63.

<sup>48</sup> WD Rubenstein, "The distribution of personal wealth in Victoria 1860-1974", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XIX, no. 1, March 1979, pp. 26-41; quotation p. 38.

Lawson's own study supports a Marxist analysis of colonial Australia as class divided. He showed "a high degree of social differentiation" in Brisbane. When the 1890s depression hit, he found that most of the elite suffered only modest losses "which did not drastically affect their style of life", while workers, who relied on a subsistence wage, "often suffered considerable deprivation."<sup>49</sup> In dismissing Marxism, he talked of a society in which "there was a wide consensus of aims and values, and little meaningful identification with social classes."<sup>50</sup> He described the response of the government to the depression as "retrenchment", a polite way of saying that workers (and officials) were sacked without any welfare provision. Nevertheless, he admitted that in the clothing trades, "Abuses were most common and most notorious", including "sweating", or outwork; while at the *Brisbane Courier*, printers were thrown out of work by mechanisation, the introduction of linotype.<sup>51</sup> It is hard to see in this "a consensus of aims and values". He also described a social elite which gathered around the exclusive Queensland Club, people who tended "to look down upon the nouveaux riches."<sup>52</sup> If the elite looked down on *rich* people who were a bit uncouth, how did they view the poor? Did they really have "little meaningful identification with social class" in Brisbane? Finally, the "partisanship and extreme reactionary measures" of the government in the maritime strike led to the rise of the Labor Party and in the words of the *Brisbane Courier*, "the complete fusion of the historical factions of our legislature". Even Lawson had to concede that this was a reflection of class consciousness, though he imagined it fleeting.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Lawson, pp. 42, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Lawson, p. 80.

<sup>51</sup> Lawson, pp. 31, 51, 65, 52.

<sup>52</sup> Lawson, pp. 60, 61.

The theoretical shallowness of this revisionist current (and also of its left-nationalist foil) was discussed by Brad Bowden in his study of class struggle in Ipswich. Bowden described a process of rapid capitalist development in which ruthless employers were able to contain and defeat the organising efforts of working-class people using a combination of repression and paternalism. He rejected both the mythology of a labour movement “socialist from the jump”, and the historiography of a labour movement emerging from within the dominant liberal hegemony, arguing that:

the social, economic and political structures of life in Ipswich suffocated any emerging sense of labour identity. In Ipswich, the “liberal ethos” of the employer existed only as a facade. Employment prospects, church life, home ownership, admission to public hospitals and charity in times of crisis were all largely under the control of a small number of families. The emergence of even a feeble labour identity was linked to a prolonged and bitter struggle to redress this unequal relationship in order to achieve decent wages and working conditions.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, it is incumbent on any historical explanation of politics and society in Australia in the 1880s to explain the development of that class polarisation which erupted so thoroughly and dramatically in the early 1890s in the great strikes and formation of the Labor Party. The classes which fought each other so bitterly and at times violently in 1890-91 were not created in a few months or years; neither was such a profound alienation between them. The crisis of 1890-91 was produced by economic, political and social developments in the years

---

<sup>53</sup> Lawson, p. 82.

<sup>54</sup> Bowden, p. 96.

before, and this crisis stands as a test of all attempts at historical explanation of that period.

At the time, some in the ruling class dissented from the idea of Australia as classless. In the prestigious and generally conservative journal, *Victorian Review*, EW Burton argued that:

The wealthier part of every community, although opposed by the countervailing influence of manhood suffrage, commands the greater power, even in the popular branch of the Legislature. The direct and indirect forces of the richer classes assert themselves in every election. Electoral contests can, generally, only be engaged in by men endowed with ample means. It is not possible for any representative to win a contested seat without the aid of wealthy supporters.<sup>55</sup>

As an example of this domination, Burton cited the imposition of taxation, which had been “apportioned in a manner as unjust as could under free institutions have possibly been devised”; by taxing the import of necessities so that the total burden fell as much as possible on the working classes.

## Challenges to Marxism

Over the past two decades, class analysis has been subjected to a full-scale assault by poststructuralists, who have rejected the possibility of developing

---

<sup>55</sup> EW Burton, “Considerations upon the upper chamber in the Australasian legislatures”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 37, Nov 1882, p. 3.

knowledge of the past, arguing that all we have are texts, themselves self-interested interpretations to which we bring our own agendas. From such a perspective, historical endeavour either becomes a literary activity devoid of truth-claims,<sup>56</sup> or the endless deconstruction of texts, whether ironically or playfully.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, history itself was an attempt to legitimise either the “grand narrative” of progress, or of working class revolution, and hence part of the oppressive structure of power-knowledge.<sup>58</sup> One response was to focus on the experience of the powerless and marginalised;<sup>59</sup> another to look for and deconstruct discourses of oppression. In reply, the liberal historian, Richard Evans, pointed out that it is a pre-existing theory – the supposed *bête noire* that transforms history into metanarrative – that enables the historian to look beyond the superficial. “Without Marxist theory... a major and influential classic such as E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* would never have been written.”<sup>60</sup>

A range of Marxists have also answered the critique of postmodernism. For Alex Callinicos totality is not an oppressive concept, but the reality of society. Capitalism is a global system “into which all the human activities on the planet, in all their richness and variety, are integrated...[and] subordinated to the logic

---

<sup>56</sup> White, Hayden, *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973, p. ix, p. x.

<sup>57</sup> eg Derrida, quoted in Lawrence Stone, “History and postmodernism” in Keith Jenkins (ed), *The postmodern history reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 242.

<sup>58</sup> Robert F Berkhofer Jr, *Beyond the great story: History as text and discourse*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge Mass, 1995, pp. 40-41.

<sup>59</sup> eg Foucault, discussed in FR Ankersmit “The Dilemma of Contemporary Anglo-Saxon Philosophy of History” in his (ed), *Knowing and Telling History: The Anglo-Saxon Debate*, Wesleyan University, 1986, p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> Richard J Evans, *In defence of history*, Granta Books, London, 1997, p. 234.

of competitive accumulation governing the system.”<sup>61</sup> Matt Perry argues that, far from having any theoretical foundations, postmodernism is grounded in “Nietzsche’s irrationalism, Saussure’s linguistics, Foucault’s discourse analysis and Derrida’s textualism”,<sup>62</sup> and both Callinicos and Perry have subjected these theories to a powerful critique. To the postmodernist rejection of social theory as oppressive, Callinicos responded that “historical inquiry requires some conception of how human beings relate to their variable social contexts, and of the nature of and the differences between social contexts.”

The only choice the historian has is between the self-conscious adoption of an articulated social theory and the tacit reliance on an unacknowledged social theory. Taking the latter course means that the generalizations used by the historian escape precise formulation or critical scrutiny.<sup>63</sup>

This became particularly relevant in debates about Holocaust denial. An approach to history that denies the ability to establish facts or any notion of truth, leaves us without any basis on which to challenge those who insist that the Nazi Holocaust did not happen. Indeed, postmodernist Diane Purkiss has even argued that “most neo-Nazi historians adopt the most conservative possible protocols of discovery, revelation and truth-telling”, which for her shows the dangers of relying on evidentiary methods.<sup>64</sup> Richard Evans challenged this, arguing that the revisionists in fact falsified their evidence.

---

<sup>61</sup> Alex Callinicos, *Theories and narratives: Reflections on the philosophy of history*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 209.

<sup>62</sup> Perry, p. 141.

<sup>63</sup> Callinicos, *Theories*, p. 92.

<sup>64</sup> Evans, *In defence*, pp. 241-2.

There is in fact a massive, carefully empirical literature on the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Clearly, to regard it as fictional, unreal, or no nearer to historical reality than, say, the work of the “revisionists” who deny that Auschwitz ever happened at all, is simply wrong. Here is an issue where evidence really counts, and can be used to establish the essential facts. Auschwitz was not a discourse. It trivializes mass murder to see it as a text. The gas chambers were not a piece of rhetoric. Auschwitz was indeed inherently a tragedy and cannot be seen either as a comedy or a farce. And if this is true of Auschwitz, then it must be true at least to some degree of other past happenings, events, institutions, people as well.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, all historical evidence is a product of social conditions, and requires interpretation. But to see history as “irreducibly theoretical” is not to reduce history to some social theory; it is to see history as a dialogue between theory and evidence while recognising that empirical evidence “imposes inescapable limits on all theorising.”<sup>66</sup> Far from being a determinist teleology, Marxism is, as Engels put it: “above all a guide to study... All history must be studied afresh”.<sup>67</sup>

In the postmodernist rejection of social theory, Perry finds a mirror image of conservative empiricism; “It expresses the same theoretical incapacity of dealing with complex dynamic contradictory worlds.”<sup>68</sup> This incapacity is evident, for instance, in the work of Patrick Joyce, who attempted to rewrite nineteenth-century labour history on the basis of a deconstruction of the language of class. As Marxist historian, Neville Kirk, argued, this approach

---

<sup>65</sup> Evans, *In defence*, p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> Callinicos, *Theories*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>67</sup> Letter to Schmidt, quoted in Perry, p. 61.

<sup>68</sup> Perry, p. 152.

all too often simply accepts language, and especially the language of self-representation, at face value. There is also the strong tendency to divorce saying from doing and self-presentation from the ways in which one is seen and represented by others.<sup>69</sup>

Kirk in particular rejected the way Joyce accepted the nineteenth-century English liberal, John Bright's, claim to be the "standard bearer of the people" at face value, given the long-standing popular memory of Bright as a "tyrant".<sup>70</sup> A range of Marxists have challenged poststructuralist theories of language and the supposed indeterminacy of meaning, drawing on the social theory of language developed by Volosinov and others.<sup>71</sup>

Much of the poststructuralist critique of Marxism was focused on a caricature, drawing on the dogmas of Stalinism, as in Ann Curthoys' assertion that Marxist historical method was "teleological, resting on the idea that history has a purpose, is a story only half told, whose ending is already knowable but not yet achieved."<sup>72</sup> More substantial was Curthoys' argument that the divisions in society were plural:

since race, ethnicity, and gender play a very important part in determining economic opportunities, social position, and access to power. If gender and ethnic differences and conflicts constantly cut

---

<sup>69</sup> Neville Kirk, "History, language, ideas and postmodernism: A materialist view" in Keith Jenkins (ed), *The postmodern history reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p. 332.

<sup>70</sup> Kirk, *History, language*, pp 332-3.

<sup>71</sup> Perry, pp. 141-3; Paul Blackledge, *Reflections on the Marxist theory of history*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006, pp. 6-11; see especially Marnie Holborow, *The politics of English: A Marxist view of language*, SAGE Publications, London, 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Ann Curthoys, "Labour history and cultural studies", *Labour History*, no. 67, November 1994, p. 15.



across class relationships, how can we continue to see classes as social groupings, as collective political actors?<sup>73</sup>

This argument has widespread adherence, and represents a major challenge for Marxist attempts to explain racist social structures, including the racial exclusion represented in the White Australia policy. The first thing to note is that there is nothing new in this argument. In *Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique*, Frank Parkin argued that:

The most damaging weakness in any model of class that relegates social collectivities to the status of mere incumbents of positions, or embodiments of systemic forces, is that it cannot account properly for those complexities that arise when racial, religious, ethnic, and sexual divisions run at a tangent to formal class divisions.<sup>74</sup>

Parkin's agenda was to attack Marxism, not develop a theory of race or racism, but others who have also argued for a plural or Weberian understanding of power did make the attempt. The three writers who had the greatest influence on Australians writing about White Australia in the 1970s were Michael Banton, Pierre van den Berghe and John Rex.<sup>75</sup> They were deeply discontented with

---

<sup>73</sup> Curthoys, *Labour history and cultural studies*, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Frank Parkin, *Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique*, Tavistock publications, London, 1979, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Ann Curthoys explicitly acknowledged her intellectual debt to van den Berghe, using the title of his *Race and ethnicity* (Basic Books, New York, 1970) for the title of her PhD thesis, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", Macquarie University, 1973, p. iv; as did Andrew Markus in his *Fear and hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, where he attempted to apply to nineteenth century Australia a modified version of the dominant and competitive ideal types of van den Berghe's race relations theory, pp. 287-8 for acknowledgement, and pp. 242-50 for his attempt to apply a modified version of van den Berghe's theory. Ray Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin framed their work within the somewhat more radical theory of John Rex, see Kathryn Cronin, "'The yellow agony': Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland" in Raymond Evans, Kay

mainstream race relations sociology in Britain and America, which through the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s had been focused on “empirical” studies, for instance of racial tensions and attitudes in specific localities. Writing in 1967, Van den Berghe saw the empiricist and anti-theoretical nature of much of the existing work as ideological, hiding a complacent liberal optimism about “the basic ‘goodness’ of American society” and a social program focused on getting minority groups assimilated into the mainstream. Rex saw the contribution of professional sociologists as “negligible” at best, and reactionary at worst, with some seeing their job as protecting Britain’s political culture from the threat supposedly posed by “coloured people”.<sup>76</sup>

Banton attempted to develop a general theory focusing on the development of racist ideas and the social construction of racist behaviour, while both van den Berghe and Rex attempted to construct typologies of racial situations and to identify those social structures which underpinned forms of institutionalised racism.<sup>77</sup>

Rex rejected Marxism, and instead theorised race relations as a product of the relations between social groups of some kind, but in attempting to define these social groups he faced the conundrum inherent in this kind of analysis. For the conception of “racial group” to mean anything, it must either be something objective in human society, or it must be a category determined by human

---

Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), p. 264.

<sup>76</sup> van den Berghe, *Race and racism*, pp. 5-8; John Rex, *Race, colonialism and the city*, pp. xii, 167, 180.

<sup>77</sup> John Rex, *Race, colonialism and the city*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1973, pp. 174, 177.

consciousness. The only possible basis for an objective ascription of “race” is biological, and Rex rightly rejected that as having no foundation in science. He then considered defining “a situation as racial if the people whom we are studying think it to be so”. This, too, he rejected for being “subjective”, and because “it sells the pass to the racists” by allowing them to determine that “race” really is biological. The result was that he had nowhere left to go, and seven pages later, in *Race, colonialism and the city*, he had decided that a racial situation was one “of inter-group differentiation in which men [sic] explain the differences between them in terms of biological theories.” Perhaps the racists did get to define racial situations, and by extension, racial groups, after all. The more serious problem was that the argument was largely circular, racists produce racialised situations and races which in turn open the door to racism.<sup>78</sup>

Pierre van den Berghe’s theory of racism has many similarities to that of John Rex. He argued that a “race” is a group that is “socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria”, and, “[i]t is not the presence of objective physical differences between groups that creates races, but the social recognition of such differences as socially significant or relevant.” Racism occurs when there is institutionalised inequality between two or more social groups and some kind of cultural or physical difference between the groups, socially defined as “race”. Again, the existence of “races” is a product of racism; and racism a product of unequal relations between races. Again, the argument is almost entirely circular.<sup>79</sup> One consequence of the Rex/van den Berghe approach is that it

---

<sup>78</sup> Rex, *Race, colonialism and the city*, pp. 183, 184, 190-1, 203-4. Of course the difference between these two propositions is that the second involves a situation of structural differences between social groups, and Rex lists and discusses nine such structures.

<sup>79</sup> Pierre van den Berghe, *Race and racism: A comparative perspective*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, London, Sydney, 1967, pp. 9, 13. It cannot be entirely coincidental that van den Berghe

naturalises both race and racism. As Colette Guillaumin pointed out, the very notion of “race” implies that there are profound natural differences between groups of humanity, and that racism has a natural, biological foundation.<sup>80</sup>

The issue of social group formation is the most problematic part of this approach to understanding racism. It is largely assumed that “white” people, those belonging to the dominant group, would naturally choose to belong to it. But what is not explained is why “black” people, belonging to the subordinate group, would choose to belong to the social group defined as “black”;<sup>81</sup> their acceptance of this status is simply assumed. As Theodore W Allen put it in his monumental study of the origins of African-American slavery, “while some people may desire to be masters, all persons are born equally unwilling and unsuited to be slaves”. Allen insisted that to understand the origins of slavery and the idea of the white race in the United States, you needed to study the business of social control – how it was that the slave owners and the rest of the ruling class were able to impose racial slavery on African labourers, and then sustain it by mobilising and disciplining poor whites.<sup>82</sup> In criticising the psycho-cultural approach of Carl Degler, who argued that American slavery was a product of English prejudices against black people, Allen insisted that “*whatever the state of English prejudices at that time, any attempt to hold African laborers in*

---

moved to embrace a form of sociobiology in the late 1970s; see his “Race and ethnicity: A sociobiological perspective” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, 1978, pp. 401-11.

<sup>80</sup> Her argument is discussed in Robert Miles, “Apropos the idea of ‘race’ ... again” in Les Back and John Solomos (eds), *Theories of race and racism: A reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, pp. 136-7.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Lyon pointed out that this was the implication of Banton’s approach, in “Banton’s contribution to racial studies in Britain: an overview”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, October 1985, pp. 81-3.

<sup>82</sup> Theodore W Allen, *The invention of the white race: Volume 1: Racial oppression and social control*, Verso, London and New York, 1994, pp. 1, 8-21.

lifetime hereditary bond-servitude was doomed by the African 'prejudice' against it, as expressed by flight and rebellion."<sup>83</sup> And even when it came to cohering the dominant group, the "white" race, where all the benefits were concentrated, compulsion was necessary. In his book, *Race Relations*, Michael Banton noted some of the processes by which people designated white were *compelled* to respect and sustain the colour line in the US South. In this analysis he argued that social groups cohered as a result of "stimuli", and that when it came to the US South, "there are many stimuli to evoke racial alignment".<sup>84</sup> But once again, at precisely the point where racism needed to be explained, there was no explanation as to how and why these "stimuli" were able to dominate the field when so many people had a direct interest in getting rid of them. One common approach, typified by the work of Frank Parkin and reflected in almost all writing on the exclusion of Chinese people in Australia, was to see the white working class as the group who imposed "social closure" against racialised people. David Mason has challenged this approach, pointing out that white workers "are themselves excluded from access to valued resources".<sup>85</sup>

What Banton, Rex and van den Berghe have in common, despite their analytical differences, is a Weberian approach to the structures of racism. All use the Weberian device of "ideal types" to describe differing situations of racial conflict and domination, and all see "race" as an autonomous structure of power in society, reflecting a Weberian (and indeed Nietzschean) view of relations of domination as inherently plural.<sup>86</sup> At the level of broad social

---

<sup>83</sup> Allen, *Invention*, vol. 1, p. 8; italics in original.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Banton, *Race relations*, Tavistock, London, 1967, pp. 62-8.

<sup>85</sup> See Parkin, pp. 37, 39, 86; David Mason, "Race relations, group formation and power: A framework for analysis", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, October 1982, p. 426.

<sup>86</sup> See Alex Callinicos, *Theories*, p. 111.

theory, the British Marxist Alex Callinicos has argued that the central analytical weakness of Weberian sociology is its single-minded focus on conflict and power, which leads its adherents to “lose sight of what Marx calls the labour process – the co-operative activity through which human beings work together”.<sup>87</sup> The same methodological problem is evident in what I am calling “Weberian” approaches to racism.<sup>88</sup>

This problem becomes most acute when Weberian and other decentred approaches are asked to theorise white *anti-racism*. Any theory of racism must be able to offer a consistent explanation of its opposite. If racism represents an independent structure of power and privilege, separate from economic power and state power, how do we account for white support for black civil rights in America, white support for Aboriginal land rights in Australia, and white support for refugees and Muslims at the present – even if these currents are in a minority? How do we account for the almost total disappearance of anti-Catholic prejudice in Australia – a prejudice that was extremely powerful (and organised) for over a century? It is here that the one-sided focus on power and conflict characteristic of Weberian theories becomes most problematic. Some of the writers I have discussed have dealt with this issue, and their approaches are revealing. Banton saw class solidarity as one way that ethnic identity can diminish,<sup>89</sup> but didn’t develop the point. Pierre van den Berghe saw the possible

---

<sup>87</sup> Callinicos, *Theories*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Lyon makes this point about Banton and Rex, in Banton’s contribution, p. 474. Banton links the “plural society” approach of Kuper and van den Berghe to Weber and his analysis of groupings called “stand”, or estates (as distinct from status groups) in *The idea of race*, Westview Press, Boulder (Co), 1977, p. 164. See also David Mason, “Introduction” in John Rex and David Mason (eds), *Theories of race and ethnic relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1986, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Banton, *Idea*, p. 12.

destruction of apartheid flowing from contradictions in the successful development of South African capitalism, which had broken down tribalism amongst Africans and led to the emergence of a militant and political urban mass. While apartheid gave whites power, it “prevented the rise of a class of Africans with a stake in the status quo” and thus created a wide range of classes with “a common interest in radical change” even as it undermined traditional African structures of authority.

In short, then, the ruling white group, as in much of the rest of the continent, inevitably undermined what it sought to preserve and brought into being what it tried to prevent. It so completely monopolized wealth and power, and so rigidly identified itself with the status quo, that any change must be against it.<sup>90</sup>

This elegant and exciting suggestion has far more in common with Marxism than Weber, and is quite at odds with the approach taken in the rest of his work.

## A Marxist theory of racism

It has become a commonplace to assert that Marxism is incapable of explaining racism, because it supposedly reduces racial oppression to class.<sup>91</sup> I would argue that, to the contrary, it is precisely the methodology of base and

---

<sup>90</sup> van den Berghe, *Race and ethnicity*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>91</sup> In fact, it is theorists who posit plural sources of power who end up reducing racial oppression to...race, or to some timeless “human nature”, the supposedly inherent hatred of black people by white, or a power-based discourse of racism.

superstructure that allows Marxism to avoid reductionism, and to explain racism as building on the structures of class oppression and reinforcing the class power of the dominant bourgeoisie. In this section, I will show how Marxists have used base and superstructure to construct a theory of racism, which I will summarise as nine theses. The rest of this thesis will address some of these propositions.

Alex Callinicos has suggested that Marx himself developed the beginnings of a Marxist theory of racism, in the following discussion of anti-Irish racism in England in the 1870s.

Every industrial and commercial centre in England possesses a working class *divided* into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and stupid tool of the *English rule in Ireland*.

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This *antagonism* is the *secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Alex Callinicos, "Race and class", *International Socialism* (UK), no. 55, summer 1992, pp. 18-19, emphasis in original.



Thus, in free labour capitalism, racism is structured within existing class relations. The power to impose this oppression, the control of productive resources through which to play different groups of workers off against each other, and the control of the means of ideological production – especially newspapers – are all functions of capitalism. From Marx’s brief comments, Callinicos identified four crucial points which I will identify as theses:

- Thesis 1* Economic competition between workers creates the possibility for workers to be divided on “racial” lines.
- Thesis 2* Racist ideology can have an appeal for white workers because, given their alienated existence within capitalism, racism offers an identity possessing the illusion of power – what WE duBois called “a public and psychological wage”.
- Thesis 3* While racialised workers suffer most from racism; white workers in general do not benefit from it either; it predominantly benefits the ruling class.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> This assertion has been enormously controversial. It is not the task of this thesis to debate the point, but it is worth pointing out that many serious studies support this thesis. Among the vast number of historical studies which sustain this point, perhaps the most distinguished is Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s unfinished revolution, 1863-1877*, Harper & Row, New York, 1988. There are many studies which make this argument for Australia, including Constance Lever-Tracy and Michael Quinlan, *A divided working class: Ethnic segmentation and industrial conflict in Australia*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1988; Andrew Markus, “Divided we fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900”, *Labour History*, no. 26, May 1974, pp. 1-10; Sarah Gregson in “‘It all started on the mines’?: The 1934 Kalgoorlie race riots revisited”, *Labour History*, no. 80, May 2001, pp. 21-40; Sarah Gregson, “Defending internationalism in interwar Broken Hill”, *Labour History*, no. 86, May 2004, pp. 115-36. Two studies which draw this conclusion based on examining relative wages are Michael Reich, “Who benefits from racism? The distribution among whites of gains and losses from racial inequality”, *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. XIII, no. 4, fall 1978, pp. 524-44; and Albert Szymanski, “Racial discrimination and white gain”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 41, June 1976, pp. 403-14.

*Thesis 4* As a result, the ruling class makes strenuous efforts to sustain racist divisions.<sup>94</sup>

Given many of the debates about Marxism, it is important to note that Marx's was not *solely* a theory of racism used to divide and rule the working class: the use of racism was only possible because it filled a need in the lives of workers, who had been turned into machines for the production of profit *and* because Britain was a great power. Drawing on the insights of WE Du Bois, Alex Callinicos compared the "psychological" role played by racism to that played by religion, seen by Marx as "the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions." Thus racism gives white workers a particular identity, and one moreover which unites them with white capitalists.<sup>95</sup>

Marx also captured the colonial element in anti-Irish racism, suggesting one more fundamental proposition:

*Thesis 5* Racism is not just negative "stereotyping", but is used to strengthen and justify real oppression, including colonial or imperial domination of other peoples.

In a remarkable study of the development of white racism in the United States, Theodore W Allen has argued that in colonial Virginia, the first ideology of whiteness was developed at precisely the moment that indentured African labourers were transformed into lifelong chattel slaves, and relations of production also transformed. He argued that Virginian capitalists were

---

<sup>94</sup> Callinicos, *Race and class*, pp. 19-22. In fact Callinicos organises this discussion under three headings, but I have separated his discussion of his point iii, p. 22, into two separate headings (my 3 and 4), because two quite distinct issues are involved. WE duBois is quoted on p. 20.

<sup>95</sup> Callinicos, *Race and class*, pp. 20-21.

desperate to divide their labourers, and that the lesser oppression (and minor privileges) associated with “whiteness” meant that poor whites could be made into a “social control layer”, to enforce the domination of Afro-American slaves in the emerging plantation system.<sup>96</sup> Ideas about the “inferiority” of black people were later exported to Britain to justify slavery as it came under attack.<sup>97</sup> And there is a vast literature on the use of racism to justify Europe’s colonial empires.

There are three further elements of a Marxist theory of racism which are immanent in Marx’s own writings. Firstly, there is his internationalism, most famously expressed in the injunction: “Working men of all countries, unite!” Thus, from a range of passages within the *Communist Manifesto*, one can distil an argument to the effect that:

*Thesis 6* The working class can only achieve lasting victories against exploitation and oppression if it is united in struggle. By creating a world of cooperative and collective labour on a large scale, modern capitalism hence creates the possibility for working class unity, and this includes unity across “racial” and national lines.

A strategic conclusion follows:

*Thesis 7* The task of communists is everywhere to “point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality” and race.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Allen, Theodore W, *The invention of the white race: Volume 2: The origin of racial oppression in Anglo-America*, Verso, London and New York, 1997.

<sup>97</sup> This is brilliantly discussed in Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The history of black people in Britain*, Pluto Press, London and Boulder (Colorado), 1984, esp. pp. 146-65

<sup>98</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, pp. 41-46, 47 (also p. 76).

Marx's letter on the Irish movement, from which Callinicos drew, involved one further, and also fundamental strategic observation: that the oppression of the Irish by the English in both Ireland and England was in turn producing a revolutionary response from the Irish, both from the peasants at home, and the proletarianised Irish in Britain itself. Thus we might draw from Marx one final thesis, that:

*Thesis 8* Racism is *contradictory* for capitalism: offering short term domination, profits and stability, but unleashing a potentially revolutionary dynamic, the more so as the more racialised workers are integrated into the working class of the dominant-nation.

Of course, this potential could not be realised unless the working class of the dominant national grouping rejected racism. So from around 1867 to 1871, Marx was personally involved in attempts to influence the British labour movement to support Irish independence, and to educate the German workers' movement on the issue.<sup>99</sup> John Newsinger argues, convincingly, that Marx's assessment of the revolutionary potential of Irish workers in the English working class was exaggerated, but this does not undermine his general proposition. Apart from its unique ability to explain the nature and strength of racism in modern capitalism, Marx's proto-theory had two further strengths: it suggested a theory of working class *anti-racism*, and thus it offered the beginnings of a strategy for fighting racism, with the prospect of eliminating it altogether – a strategy which Marx's most serious followers developed into a core element of their everyday politics.

---

<sup>99</sup> The development of Marx's views on Ireland and the struggle to win radical English workers to the cause of Irish independence is discussed in John Newsinger, "A great blow must be struck in Ireland': Karl Marx and the Fenians", *Race and class*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1982, pp. 151-67.

Of all the subsequent contributions to the Marxist tradition on the issue of racism, perhaps the most significant was that of Lenin. Lenin developed the concept of oppression within Marxist theory in *What is to be done?* where he argued that the revolutionary struggle of the working class was not simply a struggle against the conditions of employment and political rights of workers, but against all tyranny and all oppression, no matter who the victims were. In particular, he laid great stress on the responsibility of socialists and workers in the imperialist countries to fight for the liberation of the nationalities oppressed by their own nation state.<sup>100</sup>

The great racial issue faced by Lenin's movement was anti-semitism. Lenin was opposed strategically to cultural separatism, but his hostility to anti-semitism was fundamental. He saw racism as a ruling-class device to contain unrest when military force was no longer sufficient.

When there was no really popular revolutionary movement, when the political struggle was not yet connected and integrated with the class struggle, simple police measures against individuals and study circles had their use... [But] Against the people's revolution, against the class struggle the police cannot be depended on; one must have the backing of

---

<sup>100</sup> This issue is extensively discussed in Tony Cliff, *Lenin: Volume 1: Building the party*, Pluto Press, London, 1975, pp. 44-56. See also, Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), *What is to be done? Burning questions of our movement*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp. 69-71; 78-80. Cliff, p. 53, quotes Lenin as arguing, "What you have to do is stress, in Russia, the freedom of secession for oppressed nations, and, in Poland, their freedom to unite." This support for the rights of the oppressed to separate organisation, from socialists amongst the dominant group, alongside an argument for united action from socialists within the oppressed, represented an entirely new approach to Marxist strategies for fighting oppression. In "Draft resolution on the place of the Bund [the Jewish socialist workers organisation] in the party", written in 1903, Lenin argued, "complete unity between the Jewish and non-Jewish proletariat is moreover especially necessary for a successful struggle against anti-Semitism, this despicable attempt of the government and the exploiting classes to exacerbate racial particularism and national enmity", from *Collected works*, vol. 6, p. 468.

the people, too, the support of classes... One must stir up national hatred, race hatred; one must recruit "Black Hundreds" from among the politically least developed sections of the urban (and, following that, naturally, of the rural) petty bourgeoisie; one must attempt to rally to the defence of the throne all reactionary elements among the population at large; one must turn the struggle of the police against study circles into a struggle of one part of the people against the other.

That is precisely what the government is now doing when it sets Tartars against the Armenians in Baku; when it seeks to provoke new pogroms against the Jews; when it organises Black-Hundred gangs against the Zemstvo people...

Lenin suggested that racism became necessary once the working class emerged as a national class, attempting to shape and challenge national politics. Like Marx, Lenin saw the potentially revolutionary consequences of united resistance to racist violence.

Of course, by fanning racial antagonism and tribal hatred, the government may for a time arrest the development of the class struggle, but only for a short time and at the cost of a still greater expansion of the field of the new struggle, at the cost of a more bitter feeling among the people against the autocracy. This is proved by the consequences of the Baku pogrom, which deepened tenfold the revolutionary mood of all sections against tsarism.<sup>101</sup>

These were no mere words: at the risk of their personal safety, Bolshevik activists challenged racism and national chauvinism. In the country that invented the pogrom, the Bolshevik party included a disproportionate number of Jewish activists in its leadership. At the moment of revolution, it proposed a

---

<sup>101</sup> Lenin, "Preface to the pamphlet: *Memorandum of Police Department Superintendent Lopukhin*", written in Feb-March 1903 and first published in 1905, in *Collected works*, vol. 8, pp. 203-5.

Jewish socialist, Leon Trotsky, to head the All-Russian Soviet which seized power as the elected leadership of the workers, soldiers and peasants.

One result of this tradition of internationalism and anti-racism (and support for national self-determination) has been generations of racially oppressed people and their leaders who have identified with “communism”, including large numbers from the pre-1939 Jewish communities in Europe, a significant minority of Afro-American activists in the 1930s and the 1960s and 1970s, and millions more in the Third World. This was reflected in the production of some path-breaking Marxist histories of racism and colonialism, such as CLR James’ *Black Jacobins*, and Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and slavery*.

One of the most significant recent contributions to understanding racism has come from Kenan Malik, whose book, *The meaning of race*, traces the history of racist ideas and their social function. Malik argued that as capitalism developed in Europe, the ruling classes needed ideas that would naturalise economic and social inequality in an era of formal, legal equality. Racism was thus a product of ruling class needs, not a starting point for social discourse.<sup>102</sup> In this Malik was implicitly building on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony.<sup>103</sup> Both Malik and

---

<sup>102</sup> Kenan Malik, *The meaning of race: Race, history and culture in western society*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 1996. In recent years, Malik has abandoned some of his own theory to become a warrior against Islamism in the name of defending the enlightenment.

<sup>103</sup> Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed & trans Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971, esp. pp. 12, 235; Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-1926: with additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders*, trans & ed Quintin Hoare, International Publishers, New York, 1978, pp 454-462; Williams, GA, “The Concept of ‘Egemonia’ in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some notes on interpretation”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* (New York), vol. 21, no. 4, 1960, pp. 586-599.

Martin Barker have shown how cultural racism was rebuilt in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the neo-liberal offensive.<sup>104</sup> Thus we might conclude with:

*Thesis 9* Racism is an integral part of the hegemonic ideas of capitalist society, because of the role it plays in naturalising inequality in political systems in which individuals are nominally equal, but radically unequal economically and socially.

This is the broad methodology I will use in identifying the economic and class roots of the White Australia policy.

---

<sup>104</sup> Malik, Meaning of race, and Martin Barker, *The new racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe*, Aletheia Books, University Publications of America Inc, Frederick (Maryland), 1982.



## *Chapter 3*

# Chinese people as a strategic threat

[W]hat we cannot help seeing are two enormous overflowing reservoirs. Two rivers are issuing from them; the white river and the yellow river, the one fertilising the lands through which it runs with the seeds of Christian civilisation, and the other threatening to destroy them. Already at several points these rivers are meeting, dashing against each other, and contending for the mastery. What will be the final issue? The twentieth century will inscribe it in its annals.

– *Baron von Hübner, 1884*<sup>1</sup>

FROM 1876 TO 1894, Chinese people and the Chinese Empire were seen as strategic threats to control of the Australian continent by the Anglo-Australian ruling class. At its simplest and most visceral, the ruling class feared the Chinese as rivals in the colonisation of Australia – the only serious rivals.

In this chapter, I will discuss the centrality of colonisation in Anglo-Australian ruling class strategy and the reasons that China was feared as a rival colonising

---

<sup>1</sup> Hübner, Baron von, *Through the British Empire* (2 vols.), John Murray, London, 1886, vol. 2, p. 509.

power. I will then consider the central role of gold rushes – as both levers for increasing British population and colonisation, and as increasing the sense of danger from China. In 1877, Queensland passed its first law restricting Chinese immigration, and I will show that this was motivated by fears that it would lose control of the north to Chinese people.

For the Anglo-Australian ruling class, colonisation was fundamental to their view of what they were doing in the world. Australia's colonists were at the forefront of the British Empire, expanding the greatest force for civilisation in the history of humankind. One of Australia's religious leaders, Rev J Jefferis, saw colonisation as the divine mission of England: "We have to settle and organise commonwealths, in which our own people shall grow up orderly, free, virtuous, and religious", and on that basis opposed the use of Chinese labour in place of European.<sup>2</sup> The rhetoric of colonisation was pervasive, and immigration policy, land legislation, railway construction, education and many other issues were debated within a rubric of "the work of colonisation". The potential could be seen in the growth and the future hopes of the United States of America.

Colonisation also had an economic and a strategic importance for the Anglo-Australian ruling class. Edward Gibbon Wakefield had argued that an empire of settlement colonies was necessary to alleviate the pressures created by widespread poverty and declining rates of economic growth in Britain.<sup>3</sup> These

---

<sup>2</sup> Rev J Jefferis, *The Chinese and the seamen's strike: A lecture*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney; Gordon and Gotch, Brisbane, 1878, pp. 5-6. Jefferis was recruited by the Fairfaxes in 1877 to preach at Pitt St Congregational Church for the princely sum of £1000 per year.

<sup>3</sup> June Philipp, *A great view of things: Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Thomas Nelson (Australia), Sydney, 1971, pp. 14-28.

were themes that would continually recur through the rest of the nineteenth century. In his celebrated series of lectures, *The expansion of England*, Sir John Seeley insisted:

We must cease altogether to say that England is an island off the north-western coast of Europe, that it has an area of 120,000 square miles and a population of thirty odd millions. We must cease to think that emigrants, when they go to colonies, leave England or are lost to England... When we have accustomed ourselves to contemplate the whole Empire together and call it all England, we shall see that here too is a United States. Here too is a great homogeneous people, one in blood, language, religion and laws, but dispersed over a boundless space.<sup>4</sup>

But active support for British immigration was also controversial. In 1870, *Sydney's Evening News* commented on the class dimensions involved:

While the bulk of the population, as is only reasonable to expect, are lukewarm on the general subject [of immigration], the mercantile classes are keenly alive to the advantages which a steady stream of immigration would confer on them and indirectly on various other sections of the community.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, the paper thought that some from the mercantile classes were so keen for immigration to be increased that they did not consider the possible negatives. Immigrants needed to be able to settle on the land, otherwise all the problems of city life in Europe would be imported.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sir JR Seeley, *The expansion of England: Two courses of lectures*, Edited and with an introduction by John Gross, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1971 (1883), p. 184. For the influence of *The expansion of England*, see Marika Sherwood, "Race, empire and education: teaching racism", in *Race & Class*, vol. 42, no. 3, Jan-Mar 2001, pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening News* (Syd), 2 March 1870, p. 2, col. 2 editorial.

It was this fundamental and broad ruling class, imperial agenda – the British colonisation of Australia – that was supposedly threatened by Chinese immigration. Chinese people were seen as the *only* rivals to Britain in the colonisation of Australia. Only China had the population and colonising energy to send enough of its sons (and ultimately, daughters) to supposedly “swamp” the European population. As early as the 1830s Herman Merivale, that great and widely-read theorist of colonisation, had described China as “another of the great colonizing countries of the globe... its industrious people swarm into every part of the Eastern Ocean, where there appears to be an opening for their exertions”.<sup>6</sup>

Anxiety about China focused, to the point of obsession, on its population of 400 million people. Alongside having the human material, China was believed to be forced to colonise by overpopulation and famine. It was constantly argued that wherever the Chinese settled, they pushed out everyone else. On introducing his government’s Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill in March 1879, New South Wales Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, painted China as a land “containing nearly 400,000,000 of souls, where the conditions of life were so trying that it was hard to find standing room, where any outlet would be eagerly seized upon.” China was just “an easy journey from us over a pleasant sea” and without restriction, Chinese people “would outnumber the Europeans on this soil”.<sup>7</sup> Parkes had long believed there to be a plan by the Emperor of China to colonise Australia. In a memo of April 1881, as he worked to build support for a second attempt at laws to restrict Chinese immigration, he ordered his police

---

<sup>6</sup> Herman A.M. Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies: Delivered before the University of Oxford in 1839, 1840 & 1841*, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London, 1861, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 6 March 1879, p. 6, col. 1.

chief to question new Chinese arrivals for “information that can be obtained as to the movement in China which has resulted in the arrival of these vessels – whether it is a private speculation or an emigration under official sanction. In any case what numbers are likely to follow.”<sup>8</sup> Seven years later, and again Premier, he warned his Governor, Carrington, of “the overshadowing fact giving it a grim significance – every year growing more palpable – that behind these thin intruders there are 400 millions like them.”<sup>9</sup>

When South Australia’s Chief Secretary, William Morgan, moved in 1880 to support a private members’ bill to restrict Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory, he too warned that, “the Northern Territory was only removed by some eleven day’s steaming from a place where there were 400 millions of Chinese, which might send out unlimited swarms of people to settle down upon the Northern Territory”.<sup>10</sup>

Fear of Chinese numbers was overwhelming amongst ruling class legislators. South Australian Education Minister, and later Government Resident in the Northern Territory, J Langdon Parsons, a supporter of “coloured labour”, declared that, “the chief reason why he feared Chinese immigration was...chiefly because of their enormous numbers.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Memo from Parkes to Fosbery, NSW Inspector General of Police, 19.4.81, in Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, special bundle 4/829.1, letter M18212. Fosbery reassured Parkes, in a report dated 21.4.81, that the emigration was a private speculation and had no official connection, Report to the Inspector General of Police by Robert Anderson, Inspector and S Johnston, Sub-Inspector, same location.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Parkes to Carrington, 8 June 1888, Parkes corresp., A876, vol 6, pp 141-4.

<sup>10</sup> SAPD 1880, col. 1040.

<sup>11</sup> SAPD 1881, col. 112.

That sense of threat was particularly acute regarding northern Australia – the area closest to China, where the European population was so slight, and where the climate was believed to favour the Asian over the European, an issue I will discuss in chapters 4, 6 and 7. In the Queensland Legislative Council, the squatter, William Yaldwyn:

We were near neighbours to a teeming mass of Chinese; – nearly 400,000,000 of them were separated from us by a narrow stretch of placid ocean. It was a stern struggle for existence in that closely packed country, and the advantages possessed by a rich and sparsely inhabited colony like Queensland must be only too apparent to them. The peaceful invasion had begun; it was idle to think it would cease.<sup>12</sup>

Even those politicians who stood up to oppose anti-Chinese bills, often made it clear, as did Archibald Jacob in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in March 1879, that, “the introduction of Chinese here in any numbers would be injurious to the best interests of the country”.<sup>13</sup>

This argument peppered nearly all the parliamentary and public debates on Chinese immigration from 1877 to 1888. It is also to be found in the editorial columns of Australia’s colonial newspapers, great and small. The pro-sugar planter, conservative, *Maryborough Chronicle* declared in 1878 that, “the people of Queensland should wish that the teeming millions of China should not overflow into this country”,<sup>14</sup> while the paper’s nemesis, the anti-planter Queensland liberal, William Brookes, just weeks later compared China with

---

<sup>12</sup> *QPD* vol XX, p. 619.

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 21 March 1879, p. 3, col. 4.

<sup>14</sup> 30 Nov. 1878.

Ireland during the famine. "This meant emigration from China on a scale that no one living had ever seen or read of."<sup>15</sup>

The colonisation of Australia had a profound military dimension for the British Empire. The great Whig Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, saw all Britain's colonies as supplying markets for her manufactures, and military supplies and support in war. But when it came to the colonies of settlement, he saw:

a general advantage in the possession of Canada & Australia wch. [sic] is hard to define but not difficult to perceive. The British race in those colonies form in time of war one nation with us nearly as much as Aberdeen or Cork...<sup>16</sup>

This reflected one of the basic propositions of all military theory in the nineteenth century, the idea that the "numerical strength of the population is...an element of war resources"<sup>17</sup> It was such a commonplace that it was always assumed, but rarely stated. One who did state it was the recently-defeated Queensland Premier, John Douglas, writing in 1880 on the subject of a future Australian federation: "The method, indeed, by which States have grown great is almost uniform in history. They gathered population and territory"<sup>18</sup>

The unspoken assumption here was that people of British origin, under the rule of a colonial government, would be loyal to the empire; that the colonial ruling

---

<sup>15</sup> *The Week* (Brisbane), 18 January 1879, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Grey, 19 August 1849, quoted in Philipp, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> JCR Colomb, *The Naval and Military Resources of the Colonies*, ?1879, bound with others as Australian Pamphlets in Mitchell Library. Colomb was an influential writer on military issues in Britain at the time.

<sup>18</sup> "An Australian nation", *Melbourne Review*, no. 17, Jan 1880, pp. 5-6.

class and the colonial state could exercise effective social and political control over its subjects. The converse – that settlers from another country would be loyal to the rulers of that rival power – implied a potential weakness if the bulk of the colonising population was not of British origin. On that score, the British-Australian ruling class was particularly vulnerable, especially with regard to the tropical northern third of the continent. The offensively named “empty north” would become a popular theme in political debate from the early twentieth century onwards.

Over the long term, the settlement of British people in the sparsely-settled north acquired a *military* importance to Australian governments. This was concisely expressed in 1905 by Alfred Deakin, who talked about:

the strongest reasons of all why white men should not only be found in Victoria and New South Wales, but in Queensland and every other part of Australia, and that is our peremptory and absolute need for self defence. We have to realise that it is much cheaper to have white settlers planted on the soil than to maintain a standing army to defend unoccupied territory.<sup>19</sup>

For ruling class politicians, European settlers were also “an addition to the power to resist the pressure of Chinese to which they would inevitably be submitted sooner or later”.<sup>20</sup> Alfred Deakin described the White Australia policy as “much more than the preservation of our own people here. It means

---

<sup>19</sup> Deakin, Alfred, *Presessional Speech of Mr Alfred Deakin, M.P. to his constituents at The Alfred Hall, Ballarat, 24th June, 1905*, Melbourne, 1905 (his “Notice to Quit” speech), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Speech by James Boucaut, former Premier SA, given in SA LA, 1877, cited in Louise Renfrew, “Wilton Hack and Japanese immigration into the Northern Territory: 1876-1877”, BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1992, p. 33 (reference is probably *SAPD* 18 July 1877, p. 418).



the multiplication of our own people so that we may defend our country and our policy.”<sup>21</sup> The Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry, which reported in 1912, was reflecting a very long-held, ruling class view when it warned that:

If the idea of “White Australia” is to become an enduring actuality, some means must be discovered of establishing industries within the tropical regions...the supreme justification for the protection of the Sugar Industry is the part that the industry has contributed, and will, we hope continue to contribute to the problems of settlement and defence of the northern portion of the Australian continent.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the White Australia policy was not just a policy of excluding “coloured” immigrants, but of assisting British people to migrate and settle.

## Gold: A lever for colonisation

If British colonisation was at the centre of all ruling class strategy for the Australian colonies, then gold came to hold a central place in schemes for expanding British settlement. During the gold rushes of the 1850s there was a

---

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first published 1923), p. 204. See also the speech of F McKeon at a public meeting in Dalby, 30 August 1876, discussing the new Land Bill. McKeon argued that, “there was an absolute necessity for the legislature to establish a permanent yeomanry on the soil. The present hostile attitude of Russia and her gradual encroachments on the possession of Great Britain were facts with which all were well acquainted, and we were equally aware that this Colony was wholly unprepared to resist the aggressions either of Russia or any other power that might invade our shores. The question was, how to establish this permanent yeomanry.” *Dalby Herald*, 2 September, 1876.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Sandra M Tweedie, “Between depressions: Australian dilemmas in the quest for Asian markets, 1893/1933”, MComm (Hons) thesis, University of New South Wales, 1982, p. 185.

tripling of the non-Indigenous population of Australia. Paul A Pickering has described the extraordinary hopes that liberals in NSW had that the discovery of gold by Edward Hargraves would attract “throng[s] of willing migrants” and lead to the transformation of their society.<sup>23</sup>

Gold was seen as a lever for economic development. In 1851, Henry Parkes’ paper, the *Empire*, had argued that, “The greater proportion of those who shall emigrate to New South Wales, even with the avowed object of digging for gold, will eventually settle down to the ordinary avocations of life, or become the producers of some new source of wealth.”<sup>24</sup> Thus gold mining was an exceptional industry, and exceptional laws were needed to preserve it for Europeans, points explicitly made by Queensland’s Secretary for Public Lands, John Douglas in debate on the 1876 Goldfields Bill.<sup>25</sup> When introducing the bill into the Legislative Council, CS Mein declared that the colony owed a huge debt to European miners and prospectors for developing the gold fields, thus giving an impetus to trade.<sup>26</sup>

In 1880, after discussing the intention of the Berry Government in Victoria to spend £20,000 on prospecting and other attempts to develop mining industries, the *Brisbane Courier* argued that gold mines, “when prosperous, contribute largely to the support of every other industry in the colony, and attract a

---

<sup>23</sup> Pickering, Paul A, “‘The finger of God’: Gold’s impact on New South Wales” in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten histories and lost objects of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2001, pp. 37-51.

<sup>24</sup> The *Empire*, 23 June 1851, in Pickering, *The finger of God*, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> QPD, vol. XX, pp. 380-1.

<sup>26</sup> QPD, vol. XX, p. 618.

population for whose introduction we have not to pay."<sup>27</sup> In this we can see the source of a specifically *ruling class* resentment of Chinese gold miners. Not only were Chinese people in general a threat to British colonisation of this vast continent, but Chinese miners plundered the special resource that governments hoped would bring British migrants without cost. In 1886, South Australia's Education Minister, John Cockburn, introduced a Gold Mining Act Amendment Bill into parliament, saying:

a goldfield that was worked by Europeans was a focus of prosperity to all the adjoining settlements. They required the squatters' meat, and the stores of the tradesmen, and generally circulated money in a way that the Chinese did not... If the Chinese were permitted on the goldfield it might as well be wiped off the map.<sup>28</sup>

In a deputation to Sir Samuel Griffith, the Employers Association of Queensland described the difference between Chinese and European mining thus:

White diggers, although exhausting alluvial deposits of gold, set the wealth they create circulating through the community, thus strengthening and developing every industry. The gold they win thus remains as a permanent benefit to the country. The Chinese on the other hand, working in association as diggers, carriers, storekeepers and merchants not only win the gold but supplied all the necessities of the miners, thus arresting and retaining any indirect profit which the country might have obtained from their presence. The whole profits went to China, and when the Chinese thus working had exhausted a portion of the alluvial field, the gold was gone, and none of the wealth

---

<sup>27</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 27 Feb 1880, p. 2, cols. 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> *SAPD* 1886, col. 453.

created in the process remained in the colony... The result is that instead of finding a permanent population planted on the field, we have it left on our hands, vacant and sterilized.<sup>29</sup>

The goldfields were seen as part of the front line in the battle between Britain and China to colonise Australia, and this attitude seems to have shaped much of the rhetoric used in this and similar debates. Chinese miners were accused of rushing in to take advantage of the gold Europeans had found, never prospecting themselves. This was not true; some fields were discovered by Chinese prospectors, and on others, European miners and prospectors sold their claims to Chinese miners. Nevertheless, for Queensland's John Murtagh Macrossan, the Chinese miner "invariably trod upon the heels of the European miners, and on every hand took possession of their ground". It is revealing that Macrossan's main concern was that European miners who rushed from one goldfield to another, would often come back to find their temporarily abandoned claim being worked by Chinese miners.<sup>30</sup>

The logic of this was to ban Chinese, or other "aliens", from the gold fields. Addressing Queensland's 1876 Goldfields Bill, WE Murphy MLA argued that, "if they were to legislate on these matters they should do so in such a way as to encourage their own countrymen more than to encourage foreigners".<sup>31</sup> The following year, WG Bailey argued that Chinese miners "crowded out the white digger" and moved that all foreigners (ie non-British) be banned from the

---

<sup>29</sup> Report of Deputation on 18 July 1887, file 87/5583, filed with 87/6523, in Queensland State Archives, SRS5253-1-514.

<sup>30</sup> *QPD*, vol. XX, pp. 377-78. The same point was made by Peter McLean, p. 377, but CH Buzacott disagreed, p. 469.

<sup>31</sup> *QPD*, vol. XX, pp. 382-3.

goldfields.<sup>32</sup> The idea was picked up by the ultra-conservatives as an alternative to explicit immigration restrictions, but rejected because it still left open the possibility of large-scale Chinese immigration for other labouring.<sup>33</sup> At other times over 1876-7, the idea of restricting Chinese immigration by banning aliens from goldfields was supported by Macrossan, and in the Legislative Council, by such eminent squatters as HG Simpson, AH Brown, JP Bell, Sir Arthur Palmer and FT Gregory.<sup>34</sup> In 1886, Cockburn's solution to the Chinese "threat" in South Australia's Northern Territory was to imitate Queensland's law which prohibited Chinese miners from entering a gold field for three years after its discovery – unless it was discovered by Chinese miners.

This broader ruling class agenda enables us to understand, in a new way, the central role of the gold miner in the mythology of White Australia, which is presented as a working man's struggle against capital.<sup>35</sup> Until now, historians have tended to focus on the actual rioters on the goldfields, who were overwhelmingly miners, rather than those who organised them and those in positions of real power, whose broad strategic agendas called for anti-Chinese agitation and legitimised anti-Chinese violence.

---

<sup>32</sup> Speaking on the Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill (1877), *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 248. Bailey withdrew his amendment after debate.

<sup>33</sup> See WH Walsh in *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 362. In the event, Walsh's amendment attracted only three more votes, those of CR Haly, W Scott and JM Thompson; p. 363.

<sup>34</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII (1877), p. 359 (Macrossan), *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, pp. 94-5 and 109-112 (Simpson), *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, pp. 84-5 and 115-7 (Brown), *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII (1877), pp. 352-3 (Bell), pp. 353-4 (Palmer), *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, pp. 117-119 (Gregory).

<sup>35</sup> This mythology also conflates the independent gold fossicker of the early rush periods with the later period of quartz mining, largely organised by capitalists, in which the miners were wage labourers. Both groups of miners were, of course, "working men"; see CN Connolly, "Miners' rights" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 40-41.

## The Queensland anti-Chinese laws of 1876-77

In 1875, there were no legal restrictions on Chinese immigration into any of the Australian colonies, nor had there been since 1865. After the anti-Chinese agitation during the gold rushes had died down, and the anti-Chinese laws in Victoria and New South Wales had been repealed, the first new restrictions on Chinese immigration came in Queensland in the years 1876-77. The trigger for these new laws was the Palmer River gold rush, which saw large numbers of Chinese people arrive to dig for gold and make their fortunes in the far north. The Chinese Immigration Restriction Act, passed in Queensland in 1877, became the model for anti-Chinese laws in the other colonies in the early 1880s, and Queensland's laws of 1884 were more restrictive again, not surpassed until the prohibitive laws passed in most colonies in 1888. In a very real sense, Queensland led the way towards White Australia.

Most Queensland politicians supported some form of indentured "coloured labour" for the sugar industry, and many supported widespread use of racialised Asian labourers. But in 1877 they came to regard Chinese labour as different, and a special threat. The central issue was their growing fear that the colonial government could lose effective control of a large area in the north of the colony to Chinese people and even the Chinese Empire. To some, the danger was an actual "invasion" that was happening then and there, which would force "white" people to take up arms and fight. To others, the danger was that the British population of Queensland would be "swamped" by a much larger Chinese population, and that the dominance of British institutions, laws and culture would be threatened. But however it was expressed, the fear was of a loss of control due to an influx of population, a sense of "strategic" danger.

The Palmer River gold rush was on the same scale as colonial Australia's greatest, with a million ounces of fine alluvial gold being extracted, most of it from 1874-6.<sup>36</sup> But the Palmer was also the most remote and inaccessible of the great goldfields: situated on Cape York Peninsula, west of the Great Dividing Range, north-west of what is now Cairns, and some 2000km north of Brisbane. It required a long, arduous and dangerous journey over a makeshift track from the port of Cooktown to reach the field.

Most of Queensland was, at the time, sparsely settled by Europeans, with a white population of less than 200,000 in 1877. The northern, tropical half of the colony had only a few thousand Europeans. There was virtually no infrastructure in Far North Queensland apart from the rudimentary port of Cooktown. The British empire might have seized this territory, and the Queensland government might have been given authority over it, but the government had little ability to control what happened there. In all the discussion of the Palmer River gold rush in the Queensland parliament, there was an enormous sense of vulnerability.

The politics of Chinese immigration in Queensland changed dramatically from 1874 to 1877. When the liberal Macalister government came to office in January 1874, it had no intention of restricting Chinese immigration. Indeed in July that year, under pressure from the sugar industry, the government asked the Governor, the Marquis of Normanby, to write to the British Consul at Amoy in southern China, asking him to facilitate the importation of Chinese labourers for the sugar industry, assuring him that agreements reached in China between

---

<sup>36</sup> Noreen S Kirkman, "Chinese miners on the Palmer", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 13, no. 2, May 1987, pp. 49-62, p. 49.

Chinese labourers and Queensland planters would be valid, and that Chinese labourers so imported would be covered by the colony's *Masters and Servants Act*.<sup>37</sup> However, by the time the Consul in Amoy had replied, in January 1875, the Queensland Government had gone cold on its own idea.<sup>38</sup> By April 1875, the Government was trying to stop, not facilitate Chinese immigration, warning Hong Kong, that:

all steamers carrying Chinese to Cooktown will be liable to be detained there until the Health Officer satisfies himself that they are fit subjects to be landed; also, that it is proposed that all aliens shall be subject to a miner's right of £4, and a business license of £8.<sup>39</sup>

This radical turnaround was in response to the large-scale arrival of Chinese miners and merchants in Cooktown, most of whom were on their way to the Palmer River diggings. The Queensland government's message to Hong Kong in April 1875 also warned of measures that were contained in a bill which proposed to amend the Gold Fields Act of 1874. This bill, moved by the Secretary for Public Works and Mines, Henry King MLA, but not a government measure, was never proceeded with.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile the Government's earlier attempts to facilitate the importation of Chinese labourers now caused it some embarrassment, as did the new Governor Cairns' attempts to revive interest in importing labourers during 1875.<sup>41</sup> It is extremely difficult to see the timing of

---

<sup>37</sup> "Immigration of Chinese and Indian Coolies" in Qld *V&P*, 1875, vol. II, p. 560.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from HH Massie, Under Colonial Secretary, to Governor's Private Secretary, dated 14 January 1875, in "Immigration of Chinese and Indian Coolies", Qld *V&P*, 1875, vol II, p. 566.

<sup>39</sup> Telegram dated 13 April 1875, in Qld *V&P*, 1875, vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Bill first moved on 29 April 1875, see Qld *V&P*, 1875, vol. 1, p. 21. The government's failure to proceed with King's bill appears to have been one of the reasons for his resignation from the government in May 1876.

<sup>41</sup> In a minute to Governor Cairns, Premier Macalister wrote, dishonestly:



this move as a product of violence on the gold field, or plebeian agitation, though elements of both were present. As Kathryn Cronin has shown, there was far more violence and agitation against Chinese miners from 1867-72 than in the Palmer rush, but no move by the ruling class parliament to restrict Chinese immigration. This violence included an anti-Chinese riot at Crocodile Creek in 1867, a roll up at Gympie in 1868 that drove Chinese miners out of a previously abandoned site, Chinese miners being driven from goldfields at the Norman, the Gilbert Range, and Cape River in 1869, and a violent attack on Chinese miners at Cloncurry in 1871 in which six Chinese and two whites were shot. By contrast, after meticulous research, Cronin documents threats only against Chinese miners at Oakey Creek, Stoney Creek, Finegold Creek, Limestone Creek, and Sandy Creek, all part of the Palmer River rush and all in the areas of the Palmer where whites were in a majority. She also found incidents in 1876 of white miners causing trouble if Chinese miners took over temporarily abandoned mines.<sup>42</sup>

---

The Government never contemplated Chinese emigration to Queensland; on the contrary, when requested to appoint an agent in China for the purpose, they have always declined to do so.

A perusal of the Executive Minute of 30th July, 1874, shows that the Minute contains simply an answer to three questions contained in the previous correspondence. These answers are simply matters of fact, and the Government are entirely ignorant of what was written by Lord Normanby.

The Government are opposed to any action that would savour of encouragement to Chinese immigration.

From "Immigration of Chinese and Indian Coolies", in *Qld V&P*, 1875, vol. II, p. 569.

<sup>42</sup> Kathryn Cronin, "'The yellow agony': Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland" in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), pp. 279-83. Cronin's evidence of violence against Chinese miners is scattered throughout her chapters, but these pages contain the material summarised.

In 1876, with the number of Chinese miners on the Palmer passing 10,000, the Queensland government, now led by George Thorn, introduced legislation to discourage any further Chinese immigration.<sup>43</sup> In parliament, it proposed dramatically increasing the duty on rice, from two pounds a ton to one penny a pound (ie £9.6.8 ton); and moved to raise the price of miner's licences for Asian and African people from ten shillings to three pounds, and the cost of a gold fields business licence from four pounds to ten.<sup>44</sup> These proposals were extensively debated, and passed both houses of parliament, but the amendments to the Gold Fields Act were reserved by the Governor on 11 October 1876, and ultimately disallowed by the Colonial Office in London on 27 March 1877. Lord Carnarvon, the British Colonial Secretary declared that the bill offended Britain's policy of open borders, and in particular contravened various treaties of peace and amity entered into between Britain and China, which gave the citizens of both powers the right to enter each other's territory – a provision primarily designed by Britain to give it access to trade. Carnarvon also warned that the legislation discriminated against Chinese people from

---

<sup>43</sup> Thorn became Premier on around 6 June 1876, see DB Waterson, *A biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*, second revised edition, Casket publications, Sydney, 2001, p. 187 (for Thorn) and p. 118 (for Arthur Macalister, whom he succeeded). The move against Chinese immigration was virtually the first act of the new government, after surviving a major no confidence debate. This restructuring of the Ministry seems to have been provoked by Henry King's resignation from the Ministry; and if so, it is probable that it was related to the Chinese issue.

<sup>44</sup> The Premier introduced the *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill* on 12 July 1876, see Qld LA, V&P, 1876, vol. I, p. 34. The proposal for an increase in the duty on rice was first outlined by the Treasurer, Dickson, on 26 July 1876, see QPD, vol. XX, pp. 362-3; and a *Customs Duties Bill* to give effect to the proposed increase was moved on 10 August 1876, see Qld LA V&P, 1876, vol. I, p. 579. Both proposals were first debated in the Ways and Means debate, see especially QPD, vol. XX, pp. 388-476. The Gold Fields Bill passed on 7 September 1876, see QPD, vol. XX, pp. 633-38; but assent was reserved on 11 October, and the Bill sent to London for its decision. The Customs Duties Bill passed in September; and was assented to by the Governor on 25 September.

Hong Kong and other colonies who, “in virtue of their birth-right, have acquired the status of natural-born British subjects.”<sup>45</sup>

A huge furore followed. The obligations placed on the Australian colonies by the British-Chinese treaties, and the rights of Chinese subjects of the empire, would feature in immigration debates until the end of the century; and it gradually became the objective of the majority of the Anglo-Australian ruling class either to avoid, or free themselves from, these obligations.

The liberal government, now headed by John Douglas, responded in the 1877 legislative session by introducing a slightly different Gold Fields Bill, which passed unamended through the Legislative Council.<sup>46</sup> They also pushed through a Chinese Immigrants Regulation Bill, the first legislation to explicitly limit the number of Chinese people allowed to enter Queensland. The government proposed to allow only one Chinese person for every five tons of a ship’s tare; that was increased by the Legislative Council to one for every ten tons. The bill also imposed a £10 entry tax, which would be refunded if the immigrant left within three years and had been of good behaviour. It passed in an amended form through the Legislative Council and was promptly assented

---

<sup>45</sup> He approvingly quoted an earlier despatch by Sir John Young, *inter alia*, “exceptional legislation intended to exclude from any part of Her Majesty’s dominions the subjects of a State at peace with her Majesty is highly objectionable in principle.” See despatch from The Secretary of State for the Colonies to The Officer administering the Government of Queensland, London, 27 March 1877, in NSWLA *V&P*, 1876-77, vol. 1, pp. 687-9.

<sup>46</sup> Introduced 12 June 1877, see Qld *V&P*, 1877, vol. 1, p. 76; also *ORDLA* Qld, vol. XXIII, pp. 203-4; passed by Legislative Council 12 July 1877, see Qld *V&P*, 1877, vol. 1, p. 166. Assented to by Governor, 2 October, see Qld *V&P*, 1877, vol. 1, p. 386.

to by the Governor,<sup>47</sup> a tacit admission that the previous year's action in disallowing the bill had been a mistake.<sup>48</sup>

These political events provide the context for the most serious anti-Chinese violence in far north Queensland. In mid-October 1876, after the passing of the Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill and several days after its reservation by the Governor, a large crowd of armed whites prevented Chinese people from landing at Trinity Bay (Cairns). When those Chinese people arrived at Hodgkinson, they were denied rations, forcing them to leave.<sup>49</sup> Cronin documents the emergence of an organised anti-Chinese movement at Charters Towers, Thornborough and Hodgkinson from May 1877,<sup>50</sup> but this only happened after London's rejection of the Gold Fields bill, the event which galvanised ruling class Queensland to campaign for restrictive legislation, and which saw anti-Chinese racism and hysteria dominate much of the Brisbane and regional press.

Four features of this history stand out. Firstly, the Queensland government's own actions shifted in response to the arrival of large numbers of Chinese people; from a willingness to facilitate the importation of labourers in 1874;

---

<sup>47</sup> Introduced 19 June 1877, see *Qld V&P*, 1877, vol. 1, p. 99; Also *ORDLA Qld*, vol. 23 (1877), p. 277; passes through Legislative Council on 8 August, see *Qld V&P*, 1877, vol. 1, p. 256. Assented to on 20 August, see *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, p. 197.

<sup>48</sup> There are two interesting aspects to Governor Kennedy's prompt assent to this anti-Chinese legislation. Firstly, it was against his own personal opinions; indeed he became notorious for having some Chinese servants. He had received instructions to assent to the legislation. Kennedy's opinion is recorded in his dispatches to London, QSA PRV8225-1-1, confidential despatches, 16 May, 16 June, 30 July, 11 August 1877. Secondly, the Colonial Office's acceptance of the legislation had already been suggested to the Legislative Council by its President, Sir Maurice O'Connell; see his speech, *ORDLC Qld*, 1877, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, p. 282.

<sup>50</sup> Cronin, *Yellow agony*, p. 283, also pp. 279, 282.

reversing that and vacillating over anti-Chinese measures in 1875; an attempt in 1876 to make mining and immigration to Queensland more of a financial burden; and finally, in 1877, legislative restriction on immigration and exclusion from new goldfields.

Secondly, there was a shift in the nature of the argument about Chinese immigrants. In the 1876 debates, MPs raised a range of general concerns about large scale Chinese immigration, emphasising the allegation that the Chinese did not pay their way, a device for gaining the approval of the Governor and the Colonial Office. But in 1877, with the number of Chinese immigrants on the Palmer reaching 17,000, politicians focused on a strategic fear for control of the colony.

Thirdly, it is clear that these were not measures aimed at “coloured” immigration or “coloured labour” in general, but at Chinese immigration in particular. Attempts to explain the White Australia policy as a product of “the xenophobia and race hatred of the Anglo-Saxon,” miss the highly differentiated nature of the ruling class response to “coloured” people from different origins.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, in 1877, in the aftermath of London’s disallowance of the 1876 legislation and with the number of Chinese miners at its height, the unelected and conservative Queensland Legislative Council proved itself more militant in opposing Chinese immigration than the elected Legislative Assembly, a position which fundamentally contradicts the established mythology and historiography.

---

<sup>51</sup> Robert A Huttenback, *Racism and empire: White settlers and colored immigrants in the British self-governing colonies 1830-1910*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1976, p. 58.

The shift in official arguments about Chinese immigration can be seen by contrasting the way two sets of legislation were introduced. In bringing in the 1876 bills to punitively tax Chinese miners and Chinese businesses on the gold fields, and to raise the duty on rice, Treasurer James Dickson argued that these measures represented a judicious way of making these immigrants help the state revenue; and would also discourage the immigration of the Chinese.<sup>52</sup> This is very different to the alarmism with which George Thorn, Minister for Works, reintroduced the Goldfields Bill into the Legislative Assembly in June 1877: “the Government hoped to put an effectual stop to the invasion which had taken place in the Northern parts of the colony, and more especially on our goldfields.”<sup>53</sup> In debate, John Douglas, the new liberal Premier, was melodramatic.

He did not hesitate to make use of the term “invasion”, for it really was an invasion, and as they were backed up by many millions of their countrymen, at no very great distance from the shores of this colony, it may also be called a dangerous invasion – nay, a more dangerous invasion than any which [sic] they might be called upon to resist by armed effort.<sup>54</sup>

[T]hey [ie Queenslanders] were the nucleus of what would eventually be a great nation; and what might be the consequence of this Chinese invasion of the present time who could tell? It might entirely reverse and change their prospects as a people.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 356.

<sup>53</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 234.

<sup>54</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 245.

<sup>55</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 246.

And with the Chinese preponderance on the Palmer, “the white population were not very certain that they might not have to defend themselves by force of arms.”<sup>56</sup>

Many Europeans in the North had armed themselves, with the full knowledge that they would, sooner or later, have to defend themselves. It had been stated that the Chinese were occupying only places which had been abandoned by the European diggers; but this was wrong, and if the Chinese still congregated in such numbers in the gullies of the Palmer, Europeans would not long remain, and the whole country before long would be occupied by the Chinese. These were the really serious facts of the question they had to deal with.<sup>57</sup>

Was this purely demagoguery? In a private letter to New South Wales Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, regarding a proposed new colonial defence program, Douglas wrote:

I must confess that personally I see no necessity for much expenditure on defensive works... The invasion which causes us the greatest anxiety at the present time is this Chinese inroad. It is a serious affair you will find. Sir Arthur Kennedy seems to be satisfied that the Queen’s Government will not give way about it, and that they will insist upon Chinamen being placed on an equality with our own people - I think that they will not insist but in the mean time we are in a fix.<sup>58</sup>

Douglas’ private dismissal of the need for defence installations – a position he would never have taken publicly at the time, given that Britain was on the brink

---

<sup>56</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 247.

<sup>57</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 248.

<sup>58</sup> Letter to Parkes, 4 June 1877, Parkes corresp, A881 p. 141.

of war with Russia – gives authenticity to his professions of strategic concern over Chinese immigration.

In the 1876 debates, a handful of MPs only had argued from a position of immediate strategic concern towards the so-called Chinese “invasion”, most notably the Postmaster General, CS Mein, William Yaldwyn, and William Bailey.<sup>59</sup> In the 1877 debates, Douglas’ focus on the supposed strategic threat was echoed by the majority of speakers. For Thomas Stephens, a former Colonial Treasurer who had retired from running the Brisbane *Courier* newspaper:

It was certain that with the present influx of Chinese, two or three years would not pass before Government would find that every Government officer, every white man, would be driven from the North; as the Government of the colony could not, and would not, raise an army, they could leave it to the English Government to keep the northern territory of Queensland in order. A naval force might or might not be available, but a military force would be required to regulate or coerce the Chinese two hundred and fifty miles inland from the coast.<sup>60</sup>

Now we are all aware that politicians say all kinds of things to get their way. What was interesting in the 1877 debate was the way that MPs who openly advocated the virtues of Chinese labour in the pastoral and sugar industries shared the strategic concerns of the Premier. Voting on the Goldfields Bill in

---

<sup>59</sup> Mein, on 6 September 1876, moving the *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill* in the Legislative Council, *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 618; Yaldwyn on the same day in the council, p. 619; Bailey in the Legislative Assembly on 18 October, *QPD*, vol XX, p. 1018.

<sup>60</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, p. 115.



1876 followed party lines almost perfectly;<sup>61</sup> however in 1877 most conservatives supported the anti-Chinese legislation. The conservative Opposition leader, AH Palmer, a leader of Queensland's pastoralists, "believed that in their place the Chinese were very useful members of the community." But he "wished it to be understood that he was not an advocate for filling the Northern portion of the colony with Chinese, in the way they were swarming into it now". If the government's scheme for restricting Chinese immigration "was, in his opinion, a proper one, it would receive his support. This dangerous influx of Chinese might be checked in a legitimate way..." And, "[T]he rush of the Chinese to the Northern portions of this territory is such an evil that legislative action upon it has become absolutely necessary if we are to preserve it for the British race, and that legislation should be almost immediate."<sup>62</sup>

The conservative JM Thompson was the only politician to explicitly reject all this as scare mongering, and he got only implicit support in this from Francis Ivory, WH Walsh and FT Gregory, all ultra-squatters.<sup>63</sup> But they were deserted by most on their own side. For the immensely wealthy squatter, Joshua Peter Bell, "No action in this matter could be too strong...to prevent this country being inundated by Chinese".<sup>64</sup> Conservative squatter, Charles Haly, declared that, "No measure could be too strong to put down the Chinese invasion".<sup>65</sup> The

---

<sup>61</sup> MacDonald was the only MLA to vote for the Thorn (liberal) government on a no-confidence motion and against the Goldfields Bill second reading; whilst Macrossan and Bailey were the only MLAs to vote against the Thorn government, and for the bill being read a second time.

<sup>62</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, pp. 248, 353.

<sup>63</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 355 (Thompson); p. 235 (Ivory); p. 362 (WH Walsh); *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, p 83-4 (FT Gregory), though he later accepts the need to "check" the Chinese influx, p. 117. By "ultra-squatter", I mean those who fought for the commercial and political interests of squatters in a particularly strident and unyielding manner.

<sup>64</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, pp. 352-3.

<sup>65</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 250; see also p. 362.

emerging conservative leader, Thomas McIlwraith, expressed relief that the government “intended to introduce legislation which would put a stop to Chinese immigration on its present scale”.<sup>66</sup> His followers agreed: CH Buzacott thought “it was necessary to put a complete stop to Chinese immigration for the present”;<sup>67</sup> while JM Macrossan even raised the spectre of disloyalty if the British refused to allow them to stop the Chinese. “He thought that even if the colonies of Australia had to resign whatever benefits they were likely to derive from their connection with Great Britain, it would be better for them to do so than to allow their country to become an appendage of the Chinese Empire.”<sup>68</sup> George Grimes MLA, a liberal sugar planter, believed that:

the position of affairs with respect to the Chinese invasion was a very serious one, and threatened the existence of Queensland as, he would not say a British but an Anglo-Saxon colony. Anything that could be done to check this influx of Chinamen would, he felt sure, be hailed with satisfaction by every member of this House...

It might seem a simple thing to Lord Carnarvon, that there would be 17,000 Chinamen in Queensland; but to Queenslanders – who knew how small was the proportion of Europeans, and how easy it was, considering their proximity to China, to make the 17,000 17,000,000.<sup>69</sup>

The Queensland Upper House then toughened up the proposed law considerably – halving the number of Chinese people that could arrive on a ship, from one per five tons registered weight, to one per ten tons; and removing a clause which allowed Chinese people to get their £10 entry tax

---

<sup>66</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 252.

<sup>67</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 252.

<sup>68</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 359.

<sup>69</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, pp. 250-1.

returned if they left within three years, a clause the Assembly reinstated. Where British subjects of Chinese origin were excluded from the restrictions, the Council tried to include them, until the Assembly rejected that amendment as well.

Concern about large-scale Chinese immigration was felt by the leaders of most other colonies. In June 1876, in the wake of Governor Cairns' reserving the Queensland Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill, Victorian Premier Graham Berry assured his Queensland counterpart, John Douglas, that

The Legislature and Government of Victoria have not been unmindful of the grave national danger which an inordinately large Chinese immigration would occasion, and from time to time have checked and controlled the same by legislation, imposing special taxes and imposts on Asiatic aliens, not alone or even chiefly for revenue purposes, but distinctly to limit the numbers of a race which carries with it social and physical dangers.<sup>70</sup>

Fear of the strategic implications of Chinese immigration was also strong amongst Queensland's newspapers. From 1876 to 1877 there was a major change in the editorial line of the *Brisbane Courier*, the colony's "leading" newspaper. In 1876 the *Brisbane Courier* had rejected the scaremongering: "There is no reason, we believe, to fear a Chinese invasion." Quite the contrary, the Queensland government controlled a vast area, "[s]tretching as it does far into the tropics", but unsuitable as a region for white labour. The Chinese who had come to the Palmer could be of immense value in developing the north, as they had developed and peopled the Straits Settlements and Burma:

---

<sup>70</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII (1877), p. 345.

we should apply ourselves to the task of making the best of a race possessing a vast capacity for usefulness as applied to a territory which can never be very attractive to the great bulk of those people who constitute the rank and file of the European immigrating classes.<sup>71</sup>

There were two caveats to this argument: firstly, a concern at the “repugnance” shown by Chinese labourers towards plantation work;<sup>72</sup> and secondly, that the Queensland state might not be able to control them.

The real question...is not so much whether we should avail ourselves of the redundant population of Asia to colonise the northern shores of Australasia, but is society sufficiently consolidated; has the system of colonisation under which population has gradually extended up the shores of Eastern Australia become sufficiently matured, and is it sufficiently confident in its own powers to undertake this task of controlling the advancing tide of immigration which may set in from China?<sup>73</sup>

In 1876, the paper was more concerned with the wide-scale suffering and death of Chinese miners on the Palmer, and their desire to make Chinese miners pay as much as possible for the privilege of mining in the colony. As late as 13 March, the paper was still open to accepting significant Chinese immigration. An editorial discussed an inquiry set up in California on the subject of Chinese immigration, and commented that, “the evidence published in the San Francisco papers leads us to infer that it will be favorable to the Mongolian

---

<sup>71</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1876.

<sup>72</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 7 July 1876. The editorial claimed that Chinese labourers had been tried as plantation labourers in Mackay, the Northern Territory and other places, and failed.

<sup>73</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1876.

immigration.” The paper summarised some of this favorable evidence, in order to “assist our legislators”.<sup>74</sup>

On 31 March 1877, the paper’s position suddenly changed, just after news came that London had vetoed the Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill of 1876.<sup>75</sup> The language of the *Brisbane Courier* was now strident, accusing the imperial government of “encouraging Chinese immigration, contrary to the wishes of the colonists”, and Lord Carnarvon of, “assisting the Chinese invasion”. On the substantive question, there was a complete U-turn. “Australia cannot be both Chinese and British”; “every Chinese immigrant, if he does not supplant a European laborer, by his presence amongst us, renders the colony less attractive to European immigrants.” Comparisons with Singapore, “only useful as an entrepôt”, were now explicitly rejected.<sup>76</sup>

In particular, the paper now embraced the idea of a strategic danger; a continuation of the increasing rate of Chinese immigration “would almost transform the colony of Queensland into a Chinese settlement... The danger with which the British population of Australia is now threatened is urgent and great”. By 8 May it was anticipating joint Australian action “to repel this invasion of a race which, if not promptly resisted, could merely by its force of numbers overwhelm these colonies as with a flood”.<sup>77</sup> On 18 August it attacked “the shallow selfishness of many of the arguments used in favor of Chinese immigration”, and a correspondent who “thinks the Chinese may be the very

---

<sup>74</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 13 March 1877.

<sup>75</sup> The veto was signed in London on 27 March 1877.

<sup>76</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 31 March 1877.

<sup>77</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1877.

people wanted for the development of Northern Australia”, arguing, “[t]he Chinaman...threatens our right of self preservation, our duty to our families, our country, and our civilisation”. The paper declared its aim as “making Queensland from south to north a British colony”.<sup>78</sup>

### The ‘dangers’ of a relatively-unsettled, colonial settler state

In late 1876, the British Foreign Office sent J Dundas Crawford, “an *attaché* to the British Legation in China, and a fluent speaker of the Chinese language”, to the Australasian colonies to investigate and report on colonial concerns regarding Chinese immigration.<sup>79</sup> In his secret and well-informed report, Crawford commented that this concern was a product of “the exaggerated influence of a doubt as to the permanency of white conquest.”<sup>80</sup> Fear that European domination was in doubt was also a theme in American William Hepworth Dixon’s highly influential, *White conquest*, published in 1876;<sup>81</sup> and it was also central to Charles Pearson’s 1893 classic, *National life and character: A forecast*.

In retrospect, these fears, and the arguments used to support them, seem bizarre, and it would be easy to dismiss them as nothing more than an

---

<sup>78</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 18 August 1877.

<sup>79</sup> *SMH* 15 Dec. 1876, p. 4, c. 5.

<sup>80</sup> J Dundas Crawford, “Notes by Mr. Crawford on Chinese immigration in the Australian colonies”, *Foreign Office [Britain] Confidential Prints*, Number 3742, 1877, p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> William Hepworth Dixon, *White conquest: In two volumes*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1876, esp. pp. 368-73.

irrational, racist extravagance.<sup>82</sup> But the widespread agreement within the ruling class, that significant numbers of Chinese immigrants would be a real danger – a position taken by both supporters and opponents of restriction, suggests that there was something more than racist paranoia involved. The imagining of present and future dangers, and of other people and states as enemies, is at the heart of “strategy”.<sup>83</sup> The actual rivalry of states, and their use of war and colonisation to expand their power, makes some of this imagining “rational” from the point of view of the ruling classes involved.

It is in this sense that there was a ruling class logic to their fear of Chinese immigration. If the colonial ruling class exaggerated – wildly – the danger to their control which might result from Chinese immigration, it was largely because their grip on northern Australia was so slight. And they could see few means to strengthen it. Most believed that white men could not work in the tropics, that the tropical climate was dangerous to the health of Europeans, and that the area was only suited to supporting Asian or African people. Thus, they feared a few thousand Chinese immigrants because they could, potentially, be the means by which a few tens of thousands settled, and then more, until they dominated the north. They were unmoved by arguments that the vast majority of Chinese immigrants saw themselves as temporary migrants, intent on saving some money and going home to die. And no matter how weak the Chinese state was in the present, Australia’s politicians imagined dangers posed by a

---

<sup>82</sup> For example, Raymond Evans, “‘Pigmentia’: Racial fears and White Australia” in A Dirk Moses (ed), *Genocide and settler society: Frontier violence and stolen indigenous children in Australian history*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004, p. 106.

<sup>83</sup> This argument lies at the heart of the constructivist critique of foreign policy; see, for instance, Anthony Burke, *In fear of security: Australia’s invasion anxiety*, Pluto Press Australia, Annandale (NSW), 2001. Continued Australian fears of Indonesian invasion of the north reflect the same paranoid, ruling class “imagining”.

modernised China, centralised and well led. The Chinese state might have been opposed to the emigration of its subjects, but emigrate they did. China may have had no expansionary intentions, its own military efforts may have been defensive and anti-imperial, but Australia's ruling class imagined the future capacities of a country with 400 million people. In twenty, fifty or a hundred years, a resurgent China might then be able to use a settled Chinese population in northern Australia to expand its empire and export some of its (supposedly) surplus population. This anxiety about China's potential, as distinct from its contemporary power, was succinctly expressed in 1881 by Sir George Innes MLC, Minister for Justice in the Parkes-Robertson government.

I do not care whether the time is near or far remote when we are likely to be inundated by such hordes as to form a majority of the population; the liability to such a disaster renders it a politic and proper measure to limit or prohibit Chinese immigration.<sup>84</sup>

A reflection (and indeed a product) of this ruling class imagining of future possible strategic dangers was the publication of invasion fantasies in Australia. These had initially focused on France and Russia (and other countries too) as possible "invaders",<sup>85</sup> reflecting Britain's historic strategic rivalries and the emergence of French and Russian interest in the Pacific. Then in the late 1880s, China began to feature prominently. Neville Meaney has pointed out that three "Asian invasion" novels – William Lane's notorious *White or Yellow?: A Story of the Race War of A.D. 1908*, serialised in the *Boomerang* from February to May

---

<sup>84</sup> NSWPD, vol 5, p. 651.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Hyslop has located 192 war scares in Australia during the nineteenth century, with the 1850s as the most troubled period; "War scares in Australia: in the 19th century", *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol 47, No 1, 183rd issue, February 1976, pp 23-44.



1888; Kenneth Mackay's *The Yellow Wave* (1893); and CH Kirness' *The Australian Crisis* (1908/9) – represented the three successive phases in the fears whipped up in Australia, Chinese immigration, Chinese invasion, and Japanese invasion.<sup>86</sup> The strengthening of fears of a Chinese invasion reflected the change in China's military status after 1885, a result of its partially successful resistance of French invasion of Indo-China.<sup>87</sup>

The possibility of a self-sustaining Chinese community in northern Australia was also given credibility by the new, successful communities Chinese people had built in California, and across south-east Asia. The second half of the nineteenth century saw large-scale migration from southern China, driven by overpopulation and poverty, and attracted to areas of economic opportunity, and not only to the United States and Australia. It was a movement beyond the control of the central government in Peking, which was opposed by many in the southern provinces. From being an island with a few hundred people in 1819, when Sir Stamford Raffles arrived to establish a trading port, the population of Singapore had grown to 95,000 by 1871, 55,000 of whom were Chinese. By 1881, 32,000 more Chinese people had moved there, and a further 35,000 by 1891. From 1881 to 1913, between 37,000 and 103,000 Chinese men sailed every year from Hong Kong to Singapore alone, and many more to other destinations.<sup>88</sup> Perhaps the Chinese-driven development of Singapore, and other towns and cities in south-east Asia would eventually be mirrored in northern Australia;

---

<sup>86</sup> "'The Yellow Peril', Invasion Scare Novels and Australian Political Culture" in Stewart, Ken (ed), *The 1890s: Australian literature and literary culture*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996, pp 258-263.

<sup>87</sup> This is discussed more fully in chapter 9.

<sup>88</sup> James Francis Warren, *Rickshaw coolie: A people's history of Singapore (1880-1940)*, Oxford University Press, Singapore & New York, 1986, pp. 15-18.

indeed there were Chinese merchants in Darwin who intended exactly that.<sup>89</sup> By 1888, some 7000 Chinese people were living and working in the Northern Territory, and this was part of the reason for the Chinese immigration crisis of 1888.<sup>90</sup> The Singapore example, of Chinese merchants, businesspeople and labourers creating a predominantly Chinese society, was frequently mentioned in parliamentary debates on Chinese immigration.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the extreme sensitivity of Australia's colonial ruling class to relatively small numbers of Chinese people was in part a semi-rational, class response, given that they had annexed a vast, extraordinary, land mass – an entire continent – most of which could not be quickly settled, nor brought under close administrative control, by the British or their colonial surrogates. Given that British-Australian colonisers could not intensively use the land they had annexed, they were determined to keep other peoples from using it, or settling on it. Across hundreds of millions of hectares of “unsettled” land, even a small “alien” settlement was thus believed to be a strategic danger in a way that it would not have been in a “settled” area. The political consequence was the building of a “wall” to keep out undesirable “others”. Thus Chinese exclusion and the “White Australia” policy, and the intensity of these policies, are not just products of Australia as a colonial settler state, but of it being a *relatively unsettled* colonial settler state.

---

<sup>89</sup> Margaret Patricia Rendell, “The Chinese in South Australia and the Northern Territory in the Nineteenth Century: A study of the social, economic and legislative attitudes adopted towards the Chinese in the colony”, MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1952, pp. 85-6.

<sup>90</sup> More fully discussed in chapters 9 and 10.

<sup>91</sup> See Charles A Price, *The great white walls are built: Restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888*, The Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with the Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, p. 160; speeches of Baker, *SAPD* 1881, Playford, *SAPD* 1888, col. 205; col. 634, Ramsay, *SAPD* 1888, cols. 215-224; see also article summarising views of Prof. EW Gilliam, *Mackay Standard*, 20 October 1886.

## The Queensland ruling class galvanised behind restrictive legislation

The final element of the “White Australia” myth which is contradicted in the pivotal experience of Queensland in the late 1870s, is the idea that the exclusion of the Chinese was a product of the agitation of the working classes or plebeian miners.<sup>92</sup> An examination of the *Brisbane Courier* for the years 1876 and 1877 showed just one report of a protest against the substantial Chinese immigration into the Palmer River goldfields. On 15 and 17 October 1876, a crowd of whites had fired on Chinese people attempting to land at Trinity Bay (Cairns). The government sent in extra police and the tensions were contained.<sup>93</sup>

Significantly, this incident occurred *after* the passing of the first anti-Chinese laws in parliament, with all the attendant anti-Chinese rhetoric, and a few days after the Governor, Cairns, reserved them for the consideration of the Colonial Office.<sup>94</sup> When the *Courier's* weekly stablemate, *The Queenslander*, came out for restrictions on Chinese immigration in March 1876, seven months before the attack at Trinity Bay, it claimed that there had not been any kind of racial war on the goldfields; that while “some snarling occurred between the races, they were, as a rule, too fully and profitably employed to be able to spare the time necessary for a settlement of their animosity of race and color.”<sup>95</sup> Within a

---

<sup>92</sup> This appears to be the argument of Kathryn Cronin in *Yellow agony*, p. 283.

<sup>93</sup> This was first raised in parliament, *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 1018 (LA Adjournment debate, 18 October 76), and then *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 1046 (LA Question without notice, 19 October 76). These were included in the verbatim reports of parliament in the *Brisbane Courier*. A short follow up item was published in the *Brisbane Courier*, 20 October, p. 2 col. 7.

<sup>94</sup> This was the *Gold Fields Amendment Bill*, reserved on 11 October. The Governor was then sent a substantial petition against Chinese immigration from Cairns (the place), dated 18th October; letter 76/2870 in QSA, Col Sec inwards corresp, SRS5253-1-229.

<sup>95</sup> *Queenslander*, 25 March 1876, p. 16. Hostility to Chinese miners was far more intense than the magazine allowed.

month, the magazine was railing against “The invasion of the Chinese”, and publishing “humorous” items on how Chinese people supposedly had the worst smell of all foreigners.<sup>96</sup>

The mainstream political and press reaction against Chinese immigration into Queensland in 1876-7 simply cannot be understood as some kind of “working class” campaign. This is not to deny or downplay the significance of plebeian anti-Chinese agitation or actions. Kathryn Cronin has documented a series of anti-Chinese agitations, and brutal attacks on Chinese miners on Queensland goldfields from 1867 to 1872.<sup>97</sup> But with the opening of the massive Palmer River goldfield in 1873, there seems to have been a decline in such tensions. Indeed, it was at this time that the Queensland government took the first steps towards recruiting Chinese agricultural labourers for the sugar industry – an action that is inexplicable if one sees government policy as shaped by goldfields violence. Cronin’s own research would suggest that the re-emergence of anti-Chinese agitation on the goldfields in 1875 followed, rather than led, agitation in parliament for measures to restrict Chinese gold mining and Chinese immigration, and the adoption of anti-Chinese campaigning by the press.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> *Queenslander*, 29 April 1876, p. 16; 1 April 1876, p. 17.

<sup>97</sup> Kathryn Cronin, *Yellow agony*, pp. 279-81.

<sup>98</sup> The first legislative move to restrict Chinese miners on Queensland goldfields came on 29 April 1875, from Henry King MLA, *V&P Qld*, 1975, vol. 1, p. 21. He tabled “a bill to amend ‘The Gold Fields Act of 1874’ so far as relates to Asiatic and African Aliens”, but it seems that it was never debated, and was removed from the Order Paper at the end of the parliamentary session, *V&P Qld*, 1875, vol. 1, p. 357. The first plebeian move against Chinese miners since 1872, noted by Cronin, came in June 1875, with white miners on a number of Palmer River goldfields, posting notices threatening Chinese with death, *Yellow agony*, p. 282. Cronin notes increasingly serious actions against Chinese miners in the north in late 1876, after the passage of the Gold Fields Act of 1874 Amendment Bill, and its reservation by the Governor in October, *Yellow Agony*, p. 282. The organisation of a series of anti-Chinese associations at Thornborough, Hodgkinson and Charters Towers happened only after the Gold Fields Act of 1874 Amendment

Significantly, most of the anti-Chinese actions in this period were on (often remote) goldfields, and these were not mirrored by protests or organising in the larger towns and Brisbane. The predominant pressure for restrictive legislation came from above, not below.

The fear of Chinese colonisation of northern Australia was a specifically ruling class concern. Working class people in Sydney or Melbourne or Brisbane had no reason to fear settlement by other people two or three thousand kilometres away. Chinese people in Darwin were no threat to “white” jobs in Sydney. It is significant that, during 1876-77, while the *Sydney Morning Herald* was agonising over the “enormous number of Chinese who are locating themselves in Northern Queensland”,<sup>99</sup> there was virtually no response from either the trade union movement in Sydney or Melbourne, nor from the populist plebeian movement in Sydney. This latter is especially significant, because a mass movement against state-funded assisted immigration was built in Sydney during 1877, a movement powerful enough to seriously threaten the grip of the Premier, Sir John Robertson, on his seat in parliament. In the dozens of mass meetings held during 1877 to protest against assisted immigration, there were only a few off-hand references to Chinese immigration, and as late as January 1878, there was no mention of opposition to Chinese immigration in the

---

Bill was vetoed in London, leading to both a public campaign by the Queensland Government, and its decision to introduce restrictive legislation.

<sup>99</sup> This conclusion is based on a thorough reading of *SMH* coverage of the anti-assisted immigration meetings held in 1877. Quote from *SMH* 18 May 1876, p. 4, cc. 5-6; other editorials dealing with the Chinese “crisis” in Queensland on 11 Aug. 1876, p. 4, cc. 4-5; 19 Aug. 1876, p. 4, c. 7-8; 22 Aug. 76, p. 4, cc. 5-6; 10 Nov. 1876, p. 4, cc. 3-4; 15 Dec. 1876, p. 4, cc. 5-6; 14 April 1877, p. 4, cols 4-5; 23 May 1877, p. 4, cols. 5-6 and p. 5 col. 1; 6 June 1877, p. 4, cc. 4-5; 8 June 1877, p. 4, cc. 5-6 & p. 5, c. 1; 15 June 1877, p. 4, cc. 5-6; 23 June 1877, p. 4, c. 3-4; 4 July 1877, p. 4, cc. 4-5; 25 Sept. 1877.

Manifesto of the protectionist Political Reform League.<sup>100</sup> Once the labour and plebeian movements in Sydney had been aroused by the decision of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company to replace European with Chinese sailors, then the issue of Chinese colonisation in the north did become an issue for them; but only then. In this context, labour movement and plebeian organisers simply repeated a wide range of objections to Chinese immigration which had already been developed and publicised by the establishment media.

The *Brisbane Courier* itself revealed both its own class position, and the class nature of the anti-Chinese movement, in May 1877:

the opposition to Chinese immigration here is not maintained by disorderly loafers or by discontented working men alone, but springs from the painful conviction forced upon thoughtful, liberal-minded, and leading men throughout the colony that an overpowering Asiatic immigration, such as we are more than threatened with, would be destructive of our best interests...<sup>101</sup>

Queensland led the rest of Australia towards the White Australia policy, because whatever differences they had over “coloured labour”, conservatives and liberals in the ruling class agreed that they wanted their class and the British empire to both rule and colonise the territory.

---

<sup>100</sup> See, for instance, *SMH*, 18 Oct. 1877, p. 5, c. 5; *SMH* 18 Oct., p. 5, c. 3. The only mention of Chinese immigration that I could find in the election campaign was a question at a meeting for the marginal candidate for West Sydney, AS Hamilton, *SMH* 16 Oct. 1877, p.3, cc. 4-5. For the PRL Manifesto, *SMH* 25 Jan. 1878, p. 3, c. 7. Seamen’s Union leader, Thomas White, who would lead in attacks on Chinese people during the seafarers’ strike of 1878-9, was one of its vice-presidents, as was Walter Cooper, a former *SMH* journalist who had written anti-Chinese exposé stories.

<sup>101</sup> Editorial, *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1877.

## Conclusion

While the British government had asserted its sovereignty over the whole of continental Australia in 1829, the Anglo-Australian ruling class felt little confidence in its actual control of the continent. The British population of Australia in 1876 was still under two million, but most of those were in Victoria and New South Wales. The European population of Queensland was barely 160,000 in 1876, most of whom lived in the south-east corner. The vast expanses of northern Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia were effectively unpopulated by Europeans.

Colonisation was a central strategic and economic priority for the Anglo-Australian ruling class. Chinese immigration was seen as a threat to this. China had the numbers that could threaten European dominance of vast areas of the continent, and European and Chinese capitalists had developed the structures to facilitate large-scale emigration. Chinese migration into North Queensland and the Northern Territory was seen as a far more threatening problem due to the tiny numbers of European settlers in those regions. And this anxiety was most acute about the northern goldfields, which could either be a lever for British colonisation and economic development, or a magnet for the Chinese.

Strategic fear of Chinese immigration dominated in the Queensland ruling class after March 1877. The following year, Queensland's conservative newspapers would campaign in support of the Seamen's Union as it fought to stop its members being replaced by Chinese sailors in the famous strike of 1878, discussed in chapter 8. All subsequent legislation regulating "coloured labour" in Queensland was debated in the light of its supposed impact on British colonisation, as discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

This concern then grew during the 1880s, as China was believed to have increased its military power and this rival source of colonisation came to have a more threatening strategic dimension. This expanded Chinese “threat” was intensified by the perceived disloyalty of the British government towards colonial interests, most spectacularly over its disavowal of the “annexation” of New Guinea by Sir Thomas McIlwraith in 1883, which was followed by the actual annexation of the northern half of New Guinea in 1884 by Germany. The idea that Britain could be trusted to look after Australian ruling class interests was also undermined by the belief that Britain had an alliance with China in opposition to Russian expansion eastwards.

Ruling class anxiety over China as a strategic threat reached its peak in 1887-88, and was sparked when the Chinese Emperor sent a delegation of Commissioners to Australia to report on the treatment of Chinese people in the colonies. The *Sydney Morning Herald* and New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes believed that the Commissioners were sent to pave the way for the establishment of a Chinese colony in Australia. Chinese government complaints were then taken up by the British government, reinforcing the impression in Australia that Britain was prepared to sacrifice local ruling class interests in pursuit of its global agenda. The strategic dimension to the crisis of 1887-88 will be discussed in chapters 9 and 10.



## Chapter 4

### The spectre of slavery, or:

### Who will do 'our' work in the tropics?

IN JANUARY 1888, in the midst of a growing Australian hysteria about Chinese immigration, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a stiffly-worded "please explain" to the Australian governors demanding a report outlining all "exceptional legislation affecting Chinese subjects" and the reasons for it.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most interesting and complete reply came from Tasmania's Attorney-General, Andrew Inglis Clark,<sup>2</sup> who argued that if significant

---

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese Minister in London, Liu Jui-fen (Lew-ta-Jen), had complained to the British Foreign Office about laws discriminating against Chinese immigrants to the Australian colonies, and in particular to the imposition of a £10 poll tax (letter of 12 December 1887, copy sent to all Australian colonies in letter from Sec State Colonies London, HT Holland, to colonial governors, 23 January 1888, NSWLA V&P 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 221. The colonial governors then asked their ministers to draft responses.

<sup>2</sup> Clark was to become a major figure in the drafting of the Australian constitution. John Hirst called Clark the "best informed delegate" at the 1890 federation conference, and emphasises the importance of the draft constitution he brought to the Constitutional Convention in 1891, *The sentimental nation: The making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, pp. 11, 31, 291-2; see also Henry Reynolds, "Inglis Clark: Some afterthoughts" in Richard Ely: with Marcus Haward & James Warden, *A living force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the*

numbers of Chinese people should come to the colonies they would either threaten “the supremacy of the present legislative and administrative authorities”, or, if they accepted an inferior social or political status, they

would create a combined political and industrial division of society upon the basis of a racial distinction. This would inevitably produce in the majority of the remainder of the population a degraded estimate of manual labour similar to that which has always existed in those communities where African slavery has been permitted, and thereby call into existence a class similar in habit and character to the “mean whites” of the Southern States of the American Union before the Civil War. Societies so divided produce particular vices in exaggerated proportions, and are doomed to certain deterioration.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that Clark was *not* arguing that Chinese immigrants would undercut established wage levels for European labourers. His argument was far more profound – that in sufficient numbers, Chinese immigrants might produce a fundamental change in the economic, social and political structure of Australian colonial society such as to drive it backwards. Clark was outlining two separate, but related objections to allowing the Australian colonies to become a mixed-race society. The first was a concern to avoid the economic and social backwardness that would result from allowing a slave-style regime to arise. This was the second key ruling class agenda behind the making of White Australia, and will form the focus of this chapter. Also embodied in Clark’s

---

*ideal of the commonwealth*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2001, pp. 396-401, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> Memo from Andrew Inglis Clark to PO Fysh (Tasmanian Premier), dated 24 April 1888, NSW State Records, Col Sec special bundles 4/884.1. Clark’s memorandum was regarded as sufficiently important for it to be published in *SMH* 15 May, 1888. The paper described it as “exceedingly able”.

memorandum was a belief that parliamentary democracy was impossible in a mixed race society, which will be more fully discussed in chapter 5.<sup>4</sup>

Most postwar writers have failed to take these concerns seriously. Not so earlier writers like Keith Hancock. In *Australia*, Hancock presented the question as one in which a mixed race society is a danger to everyone; threatening “demoralisation of the coolie over-driven by white capital, demoralisation of the poor white overwhelmed by coolie competition, demoralisation of the half-breed children of coolie and poor white who can find no firm place in either of the competing civilisations.” There was more than a whiff of the politics that led to the “stolen generations” in this. Hancock argued that it would be dangerous to “give a share of political power to aliens”, but dangerous too would be the alternative: “a successful tyranny over Orientals would destroy the character of [Australian] democracy”.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1880s, the dangers of slavery were not a problem from the distant past. Brazil and Cuba still had massive slave populations. The American Civil War, the most murderous war ever to engulf a European-style society, was of recent

---

<sup>4</sup> Clark’s memorandum has been the subject of a detailed study by Richard Ely, “Inglis Clark’s 1888 ‘Memorandum’ on Chinese Immigration” in Ely et al, *A living force*, pp.71-101. Ely’s discussion is marred by egregious errors, claiming, for instance, that in 1887, “about 1000 Chinese immigrants entered the [Northern] Territory”, p. 72, whereas 1000 entered the NT in December 1887 alone, leading to greatly exaggerated fears at the time. He discussed “Illegal arrivals, including illegal arrival of Chinese”, p. 92n, but at the time being discussed, July 1887, no arrivals were illegal because no Chinese immigration legislation had been passed in Tasmania. Ely also fails to see the political background to the memorandum. He draws out Clark’s insistence on the fixity of the Chinese character, but does not comment on the clear references to slavery. He mentions JS Mill being another “who shared Clark’s view that the Chinese were simply not assimilable”, pp. 84-5, as if Mill were following Clark, rather than the opposite; Mill was Clark’s hero; Reynolds, *Inglis Clark*, p. 400. More importantly, Ely does not see Mill’s wider theoretical structure, which is discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> WK Hancock, *Australia*, The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1961 (first pub. 1930), pp. 61-2.

memory. Indeed, when Andrew Inglis Clark was writing his memorandum, the end of the American Civil War was as recent to him as the election of Bob Hawke as Prime Minister was to Australians in 2006. Henry Parkes had been a young Chartist in England in 1833, when the British Parliament voted to emancipate the empire's West Indian slaves.

The question of who would do the work, under what kind of social relations and what kind of legal structure – a question central to any ruling class – was debated throughout nineteenth-century Australia. One of the first, great social movements – against the transportation of convicts in the 1830s and 1840s – was built almost entirely within the discourse of anti-slavery, and against some of the very richest people in New South Wales, including pastoralists who craved their labour. The response of some pastoralists to the drying up of convict labour, the importation of a few thousand Chinese labourers and other so-called “coolies” in the 1840s and early 1850s, was seen as an attempt to consolidate an aristocratic, semi-slave regime.

It was not just the businesspeople, artisans and labourers of Sydney who were opposed to the Australian colonies being developed on the basis of “coolie” labour. In 1841, the British Colonial Secretary, Sir James Stephen, warned the Governor of New South Wales:

To expedite augmentation of wealth in New South Wales by introducing the black race there from India would, in my mind, be one of the most unreasonable preferences of the present to the future which it would be possible to make. There is not on the globe a social interest more momentous...than that of reserving the continent of New Holland as a place where the English race shall be spread from sea to sea unmixed with any lower caste. As we now regret the folly of our ancestors in

colonising North America from Africa, so should our posterity have to censure us if we should colonise Australia from India.<sup>6</sup>

However, nearly forty per cent of Australia's land mass is in the tropics, and most of Australia's politicians were convinced of the racist myth that "white men" could not safely do manual labour in tropical climates. Failure to develop capitalist enterprise in the north was, in the minds of the ruling class, unthinkable, so they were left with the thought, terrible to many, that the only form of economic development that was possible involved plantation-based agricultural production using some form of indentured "coloured labour". But this in turn raised the spectre of slavery, and hence economic backwardness, moral corruption, aristocratic rule and social degeneration. A "black north" would mean importing a massive population of "coloured aliens" who would be a standing menace to the safety of both the northern and the more conventionally bourgeois southern colonies and hence to their economic and political structures. Finally, divergent social systems on the one continent would carry the terrible possibility of a future internecine war.

All these fears and dilemmas were sharpened by the experience of Pacific Island labour on the sugar plantations of Queensland (discussed in this chapter and chapters 6 and 7), by the campaign for a separated North Queensland colony from 1884 onwards (discussed in chapter 7), and in the late 1880s, by the refusal of the South Australian Parliament to close the door to Chinese immigration through Darwin (discussed in chapters 9 and 10).

---

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Ann Curthoys, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973, p. 92.

In this chapter I begin by delving into the intellectual structure of British anti-slavery, which combined humanitarianism, evangelical moral individualism and *laissez-faire* economics. Theories of slavery provided the framework used by the dominant element within the colonial ruling classes to grapple with the issue of “coloured labour”. I then consider the post-slavery issue of indentured labour, which was seen as a new kind of slavery, and the modern controversies over whether or not Pacific Islander indenture in Queensland resembled slavery in any way. A great deal of anti-Chinese rhetoric also drew on anti-slavery and the chapter will describe the way Chinese immigration was seen as carrying the seeds of a future structure of slavery. I then discuss the ruling class dilemma over who would do their work in the tropics, before concluding the chapter by describing one manifestation of the problem of the north: the extraordinary proposal from Sir Henry Parkes in 1879 to amalgamate Australia’s temperate colonies, with Queensland left to pursue a separate and different existence.

## The political economy of anti-slavery

New World slavery is today rightly remembered for its racism and utter brutality. But the success of the British anti-slavery movement from the late eighteenth century through to emancipation in the years 1833-38 was a product of more than humanitarianism.<sup>7</sup> Britain’s anti-slavery campaigners and politicians came to see slavery as a threat to British notions of order and

---

<sup>7</sup> One other crucial element in the abolition of slavery, not directly relevant to this thesis, was the massive revolts waged by slaves; see especially Robin Blackburn, *The overthrow of colonial slavery 1776-1848*, Verso, London & New York, 1988.

morality, to Britain's control of its colonies, and its economic future. For the popular mind, slavery was presented, first and foremost, as immoral and opposed to Christian virtue. There was immorality of the most obvious kind: the unrestricted sexual relations between slaves, and the sexual exploitation of female slaves by their masters. Slavery denied the basic humanity of the individual slave. The hostility of planters towards any attempt to convert their slaves to Christianity became notorious. They

argued that black people were not human beings but animals without souls to save. "What, such as they?" they cried. "What, these black Dogs be made Christians? What, shall they be like us?"<sup>8</sup>

The result was an undeclared war between planters and missionaries, with the harassment, jailing and murder of missionaries in the West Indies, actions which scandalised deeply religious (and increasingly evangelical) British society.

Behind this moral crusade was the fear that an immoral society faced collapse and ruin, as the corrupt and decadent French monarchy and aristocracy had been destroyed by revolution after 1789. The Quakers argued that "nations were chastised for their sins".<sup>9</sup> Thus Richardson sees Wilberforce and his campaign for "serious Christianity" as in part an attempt to persuade the idle

---

<sup>8</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying power: The history of Black people in Britain*, Pluto Press, London and Boulder (Colorado), 1984, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> See David Turley, *The culture of English antislavery, 1780-1860*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991, pp. 21-2.

youth of the British aristocracy to turn their backs on the dissolute lifestyle that surrounded them.<sup>10</sup>

In this world view, nothing so strongly promoted immorality as unlimited arbitrary power, the kind of power associated with slave-ownership. This unlimited power was dangerous because it denied the historic understanding that to rule a people involved obligations of protection and care, however limited. Slavery deprived the slave of any stake in society and fuelled rebellion, which was dangerous to the state. Slaves were also denied any opportunity for their own moral improvement, something that deeply offended the dynamic evangelical movement of the time, which emphasised the individual's "burden of personal responsibility" and "dramatized the dangers of moral complacency".<sup>11</sup>

If slavery corrupted the slave-owner, and deprived the slave of the opportunity for moral advancement, so it also corrupted the poor whites in slave societies. Perhaps worst of all, slavery tended, "by its vile associations, to degrade honest industry, and make men ashamed of useful occupations".<sup>12</sup> According to Thomas Halliwell, slavery "brings labor into contempt, and fixes to it the badge of degradation".<sup>13</sup> In the slave states of America, those white people without

---

<sup>10</sup> Ronald Kent Richardson, "The signs of power: A study of English anti-slavery thought", PhD thesis, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1982, pp. 135, 143-4.

<sup>11</sup> David Brion Davis, *The problem of slavery in the age of revolution 1770-1823*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1975, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> John E Cairnes, *The slave power: Its character, career, and probable designs: being an attempt to explain the real issues involved in the American contest*, third edition, Follett Foster & Co, New York, 1863, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Halliwell, *The American war considered specially with regard to slavery*, Part II, G Watson, Dunedin (Scotland), 1865, p. 32.



slaves therefore lacked any useful role in society. The work of artisans could partly be done on the plantations, and there was little demand for white, free, manual labourers. They were thus reduced to a “promiscuous horde” who were “little removed from savage life, eking out a wretched subsistence by hunting, by fishing, by hiring themselves out for occasional jobs, by plunder.”<sup>14</sup> They became known as “mean whites”, or “white trash” – and it was the creation of this social layer Andrew Inglis-Clark feared in his reply to the Colonial Office. As a consequence, there could be no substantial immigration of “white” labourers into a slave or plantation economy.

Alongside the moral critique of slavery went an economic critique. In the late eighteenth century, West Indies sugar represented everything that economic liberals and manufacturers despised about the mercantilist system and the monopoly privileges it gave to planters and merchants. Eric Williams saw the attack on slavery as part of the attack on a no-longer profitable mercantilism by the dominant, bourgeois wing of the British anti-slavery movement that wanted free trade and free labour as the economic foundations of society.<sup>15</sup> For these economic liberals, no great, wealthy, modern economy could be built on the foundations of slave-based production – and this also went to the heart of the ambitions of the Australian ruling class. There were many components to this theoretical structure, but all served to reinforce the supposed economic, social,

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard Fogel and Stanley L Engerman, *Time on the cross: The economics of American Negro slavery*, vol. 1, Little Brown, Boston & Toronto, 1974, p. 183.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and slavery*, Introduction by DW Brogan, Andrew Deutsch, London, 1964 (first pub 1944), esp. pp. 135-42. See also David Brion Davis, esp. pp. 350-55; James Walvin, “The propaganda of anti-slavery” in James Walvin, (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, pp. 66-7.

political and moral primacy of free wage-labour;<sup>16</sup> a counterposition recognised from the other side by Virginia's *Richmond Examiner*, when it attacked Abraham Lincoln on his election as President, as "a man pledged to carry on, and if possible to complete the warfare of free labour against our own divine rights of slave labour."<sup>17</sup>

For British liberals, slave-based production was the most expensive and wasteful. "The experience of all ages and nations, I believe, demonstrates that the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any," warned Adam Smith in *The wealth of nations*.<sup>18</sup> One issue was the cost of reproducing what Marx called labour power. "The fund destined for replacing or repairing...the wear and tear of the slave, is commonly managed by a negligent master or careless overseer. That destined for performing the same office with regard to the free man, is managed by the free man himself," and in this could be seen "[t]he strict frugality and parsimonious attention of the poor".<sup>19</sup>

Free labour led to a greater intensity of labour, whereas "[a] person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible...[work] can be squeezed out of him by violence only".<sup>20</sup> Free labour also encouraged greater skill in the labourer and technical

---

<sup>16</sup> This point is made by Robin Blackburn, *The overthrow of colonial slavery 1776-1848*, Verso, London & New York, 1988, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Halliwell, *The American war*, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. Edited, with an introduction, notes, marginal summary and an enlarged index by Edward Cannan, MA, LL.D., Fifth Edition, Methuen & Co, London, 1930 (1904), vol. 1, book III, p. 364.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Wealth of nations*, vol. 1, book I, p. 82.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Wealth of nations*, vol. 1, book III, p. 364.

improvements in production – two of the most vital factors in increasing productivity. In Smith's view:

Slaves...are seldom inventive; and all the most important improvements, either in machinery, or in the arrangement and distribution of work, which facilitate and abridge labour, have been the discoveries of freemen. Should a slave propose any improvement of this kind, his master would be very apt to consider the proposal as the suggestion of laziness, and of a desire to save his own labour at the master's expence. [sic]<sup>21</sup>

These points were taken up and developed by later liberal theorists. Writing seventy years after Smith, John Stuart Mill relentlessly emphasised the superiority of free wage labour and its ability to provide an incentive for the labourer to work with greater intensity, energy, care and intelligence. "An Englishman, of almost every class, is the most efficient of all laborers, because, to use a phrase, his heart is in his work." This was a result of a "capacity of present exertion for a distant object, and...thoroughness of...application to work on ordinary occasions."<sup>22</sup> By contrast, "labor extorted by fear of punishment is inefficient and unproductive." More ominously:

slavery, even in the most mitigated form, is incompatible with any high state of the arts of life, and any real efficiency of labor. For all products which require much skill, slave countries are always dependent on foreigners... All processes carried on by slave labor are conducted in the rudest and most unimproved manner."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Wealth of nations*, vol. 2, book IV, pp. 181-2.

<sup>22</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy, with some of their applications to social philosophy*, Charles C Little & James Brown, Boston, 1848, vol. 1, pp. 128, 125.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Wealth of nations*, vol. I, book II (Distribution), p. 297.

In other words, a slave economy might churn out large quantities of raw sugar or raw cotton or raw tobacco, but could never hope to become a modern, efficient, industrial society. This was a point developed by the last group of great anti-slavery theorists, who wrote in the context of the American civil war. JE Cairnes, for instance, argued that because the labour of slaves was so crude, it was “quite impossible that he should take part with efficiency in the difficult and delicate operations which most manufacturing and mechanical processes involve.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, manufacturing and commerce required “the congregation in towns of large masses of workmen,” but “where the workmen are slaves,” manufacturing by large groups of slaves “could only be carried on at the constant risk of insurrection”. Slavery involved constant danger and thus the need to protect the slave state would prevent the growth of manufacturing and commerce.<sup>25</sup>

The declining profitability of West Indian sugar plantations was used as evidence for the backwardness of slavery as a system. Indeed in the early years of the nineteenth century, their solvency was believed to rest on a tariff which discriminated against all other sugar imports into Britain.<sup>26</sup> In the United States, slave plantations were seen as wasteful because they destroyed the productive capacity of the soil, a tendency which was used to explain the demand for new slave territories in the American west.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the cross*, p. 187.

<sup>25</sup> Cairnes quoted in Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the cross*, p. 187.

<sup>26</sup> Walvin, *Propaganda*, pp. 66-7

<sup>27</sup> Cassius Marcellus Clay, discussed by Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the cross*, pp. 159-60; Halliwell, *The American war*, p. 18; JE Cairnes, speech “The revolution in America”, in *Political essays*, Macmillan and Co, London, 1873, p. 88; EW Burton, EW, “Considerations upon the upper chamber in the Australasian legislatures”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 37, Nov 1882, p. 13; David Brion Davis, p. 62.

One of the problems that faced those opposed to slavery was that while slavery was disastrous in the medium or longer term for Britain as a whole, in the short term it was profitable for planters, merchants and an array of capitalists and investors whose wealth derived from the West Indies. There were always capitalists prepared to put their own gain ahead of the wider interests of society, and this was openly discussed in influential histories that touched on the movement against slavery.<sup>28</sup> Thus the struggle to eliminate slavery came to be seen by capitalist politicians as inherently involving a struggle against a minority of their own class.

The suppression of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery became pillars of British nationalism, proof of Britain as the supposed pillar of liberty in the world. But the legacy of British anti-slavery was contradictory, and undercut by British practice and by the immediate emergence of indentured labour as a substitute.

## Indentured labour: The new slavery?

The slave trade was banned by the British empire from 1807 and slavery in the British empire abolished in the Act of 1833.<sup>29</sup> In its place grew a system of indentured labour, in which Indian, Chinese and other labourers “contracted” to work for a number of years for a set wage in a remote plantation economy.

---

<sup>28</sup> For example, William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *A history of England in the eighteenth century*: Volume 6, Second edition, Longmans, Green, and Co, London, 1887, p. 292.

<sup>29</sup> Blackburn, *The overthrow of colonial slavery*, pp. 314, 457.

Gone was the ownership of the labourer; in its place came some of the paraphernalia of freely-contracted wage labour. But for many middle-class reformers, this was simply a rebadging of slavery, and they were soon pointing to the abuses of the new system. The Paris Anti-Slavery Conference of 1867 warned that, “all the present systems of coolie immigration and contracts of labour, although regulated may, and actually do, degenerate into new forms of the slave trade and slavery.”<sup>30</sup>

The issue of indentured “coloured” labour was discussed by Herman Merivale in his enormously influential *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*, mostly based on lectures given at Oxford University from 1839 to 1841. Merivale distinguished two paths of economic development for new colonies; one which focused on meeting the wants of the colonists, the other which focused primarily on production of a single commodity for export.<sup>31</sup> In the first category were Canada and the northern colonies of America, some of which were established purely as places of refuge from religious persecution; in the second category were the plantation colonies of the American south and the West Indies.

Unlike the fairly abstract reasoning of Adam Smith, Merivale did not pretend that unfree labour was always unprofitable. In some colonies, the production of exportable commodities could be extremely profitable, but raised the danger

---

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Kay Elizabeth Saunders, “Uncertain Bondage: An analysis of indentured labour in Queensland to 1907, with particular reference to the Melanesian servants”, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1974, immediately prior p. 1 (no page numbering).

<sup>31</sup> The highly influential JCR Colomb made a similar distinction; but added a third category, that of the military colony; in *The Naval and Military Resources of the Colonies*, bound in volume of Australian pamphlets, Mitchell Library, Sydney, p. 3.

that this would produce an insatiable demand for labour. The question was: how much free labour was available? "Slave labour," he wrote, "is dearer than free *wherever abundance of free labour can be procured*...the great demand for slaves and the great profitableness of slavery, at the present day, arise altogether from that scarcity."<sup>32</sup> This point was also taken up by John Stuart Mill:

Whether slavery or free labor is most profitable to the employer, depends on the wages of the free laborer. These, again, depend on the numbers of the laboring population, compared with the capital and the land. Hired labor is generally so much more efficient than slave labor, that the employer can pay a considerably greater value in wages, than the maintenance of his slaves cost before, and yet be a gainer by the change; but he cannot do this without limit.<sup>33</sup>

Elsewhere Merivale argued that the critical point in the history of colonies came when capital began to accumulate. "If they succeed in procuring and preserving a compulsory supply of labour, they become, virtually or actually, slave countries; and the sources of their prosperity, and causes of their decline, have been traced".<sup>34</sup> In a much later appendix (1861) to his *Lectures on Colonisation*, Merivale paid particular attention to the example of Mauritius, where Indian "coolie" labourers had been brought in to provide labour for the sugar industry. He was sceptical of claims of the colony's success:

---

<sup>32</sup> Herman Merivale, *Lectures on colonization and colonies: Delivered before the University of Oxford in 1839, 1840 & 1841*, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London, 1861, pp. 303-5, emphasis in original.

<sup>33</sup> Mill, *Principles of political economy*, vol. 1, book II, p. 299.

<sup>34</sup> Merivale, p. 576.

what are the future prospects of a colony, in which industry is exercised, not by the native population, but by a multitude of strangers, brought over by an artificial arrangement for a temporary purpose? If they return to their home (which comparatively few do as yet) they carry with them their earnings, and impoverish the country they were brought to enrich...in everything but the compulsion and the cruelty, the immigration trade is but a repetition of the slave trade, and the economy of Mauritius resembles that of Cuba. Such a colony is but a great workshop, rather than a miniature state.<sup>35</sup>

The whole point of Merivale's survey was that durable and long term prosperity came from slower, more rounded growth, from an economy based on small farmers and free labour. A successful colony needed to restrain the planter or commodity producer motivated solely by quick profits.

## The controversy over Pacific Islander 'slavery'

It was the sugar industry that brought to a head all the tensions within the Queensland, and indeed, Australian ruling class, over "coloured labour" and "slavery" in the north. From 1863, over 60,000 Pacific Islanders were brought to Queensland to work under three year indentures, the vast majority in the sugar plantations. In response there was a long and bitter campaign against the labour trade, and it was one of the issues that divided ruling class politics.

---

<sup>35</sup> Merivale, pp. 346-7.



The campaign against Pacific Island labour was conducted within the intellectual framework of anti-slavery. One of the first petitions taken up against the use of Pacific Islanders, from residents of Brisbane in 1869, saw “the system of importing South Sea Islanders as labourers into Queensland as a step in the direction of slavery”.<sup>36</sup> This accusation was made repeatedly in parliamentary debates,<sup>37</sup> and by Queensland Governor Musgrave (1883-88), who privately told Sir Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under Secretary for the Colonies (and former Queensland Premier), that the recruitment of Islanders was “a system & arrangements wh. are as much like slavery & the slave trade as anything can well be wh. is not avowed as such.”<sup>38</sup> These were also the terms in which the issue was debated in ruling class journals. In one debate in the *Victorian Review*, John Wisker declared:

The Kanaka is brought to Queensland in the capacity of a beast of burden... When he arrives on the mainland, he is bound hand and foot to his employer. Nothing is done for his mental or moral improvement. He performs his task when he does not die under it, which latter event is a distressingly common occurrence... His wages, should he be fortunate enough to get them, are spent upon firearms and strong drink. He is not likely to cultivate any other tastes, or, indeed, to be permitted to cultivate any... From whatever point of view this wretched business be regarded it presents the same aspect. It is a slave trade.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Quoted Ruth LL Tomkys, “Queensland Immigration 1859-1901”, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1930, p. 69

<sup>37</sup> See for instance, debate on *Polynesian Labourers Bill* in Queensland Legislative Assembly, 22 May 1877, from *ORDLA*, vol. XXIII, pp. 50-69.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Herbert, 3 Jan 1884. Musgrave’s own copy is loosely inserted into the book of his private letters, Sir Anthony Musgrave’s Private Letters, Oxley Library, Acc 334, tr 1863, A2/5/2.

<sup>39</sup> John Wisker, “The victim of civilisation”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 35, Sept 1882, p. 550.

The hegemonic status of the slavery argument can also be seen in the regularity with which supporters of Islander labour felt obliged to deal with it.<sup>40</sup> Planters and their supporters argued that Islanders had freely contracted to work in Queensland for three years, and many words were spilled debating the degree to which Islanders had understood or consented to the reality of indenture.

After the system was destroyed by the Commonwealth's *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901*, popular, academic and semi-official histories almost always presented indentured labour on the sugar plantations as a form of slavery.<sup>41</sup>

But the late 1960s saw the emergence of a revisionist current.<sup>42</sup> Researchers such as Peter Corris, Patricia Mercer, Carol Gistitin and Clive Moore delved into the experience of Islander communities in Australia and in the Pacific, using oral history and the documentary record to put Islanders, their lives, culture and agency at the centre. These were pathbreaking histories that greatly expanded, and in many ways decolonised, understandings of Island and Islander communities. The revisionists rejected the idea that Islanders had been slaves, arguing that this represented them as passive victims. They particularly rejected the popular view that recruitment had been little more than the kind of

---

<sup>40</sup> For example, Francis M Harricks, "Coloured labour in tropical Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 36, October 1882, p. 660; also George J Perkins, *Mackay. An essay upon the rise, progress, industries, resources, and prospects of the town & district of Mackay*, HB Black & Co, Mackay, 1888. p. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Dunbabin, *Slavers of the south seas*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1935; Edward Wybergh Docker, *The blackbirders: A brutal story of the Kanaka slave-trade*, Queensland Classics edition, Angus & Robertson, London, Sydney, Melbourne, 1981 (first pub 1970); Hector Holthouse, *Cannibal cargoes*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1969.

<sup>42</sup> Clive Moore argues that "there never was a coherent revisionist school of thought relating to the Queensland labor trade", but there is a definable group of historians, drawing on each other's work, who make broadly similar arguments about the nature of the labour trade, and life and work on the plantations; see Clive Moore, "Revising the revisionists: The historiography of immigrant Melanesians in Australia", *Pacific Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 1992, esp. p. 78.

kidnapping reminiscent of the African slave trade, which had been the central issue in debates at the time. For Clive Moore:

It is demeaning to the intelligence of the Melanesian people to presume that they presented themselves to be kidnapped from the same beaches on the same islands, generation following generation, for forty years or more. The majority made a definite decision to leave their islands to spend three or more years in Queensland: on Malaita this applies to as many as eighty percent of the recruits.<sup>43</sup>

The significance of the revisionist critique for this thesis is that it suggested that there was no real basis for fears of a slave, or semi-slave society, leaving us with the implication that the struggle against Islander labour was either nothing more than racism, or a proxy for other conflicts.<sup>44</sup>

There are major problems with the revisionist approach. It minimised the difference between Islander indenture and wage labour in general; underplayed the role of coercion; and maximised the difference between the sugar plantation in Queensland and slavery in the American south. Thus, Queensland (and later Australian) liberals were seen to be legislating against Islanders, rather than against a danger to modern capitalism.

---

<sup>43</sup> Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1985, p. 47.

<sup>44</sup> Saunders, *Uncertain Bondage* [thesis], pp. 480-81; DK Dignan, "Kanaka Political Struggle: An analysis of the attitude of conflicting groups to the introduction, and employment in Queensland, of South Sea Island labour", Third year honours essay, c1949, Fryer library, University of Queensland, pp. 33-37; Bryan Jamison, "Blackbirding in New Guinea waters? The 1884 voyage of the *Hopeful* and the Queensland labour trade", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1990.

Certainly, a debunking of the mainstream and popular histories of the labour trade as little more than kidnapping was well overdue. But where the mythologists saw only coercion, the revisionist historians admitted and described some of it, only to generalise or periodise it away. So Clive Moore, for instance, agreed with Kay Saunders that perhaps 25-30% of recruitment involved elements of illegality, but emphasised what he saw as the majority experience of free choice.<sup>45</sup> Thus, as one experience was emphasised, the opposite was neatly hidden. Neither did Moore allow for a mixture of coercion and “choice”, nor deal with the possibility that coercion coerced more Islanders than those immediately affected. When Moore pointed to the 80 per cent from Malaita who may have signed up voluntarily for plantation indenture, he left out the fact that 80 per cent of Malaitan recruitment occurred after 1885, by which point state supervision of recruitment had become fairly intense.<sup>46</sup> Moore also tried to quarantine kidnapping and coercion to the early labour trade:

Recruiting in its early stages was primarily by deception and force. But kidnapping was not a continuing theme as the recruiting trade progressed into the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s. Recruiting became a voluntary affair...as the islanders became aware of the real nature of the labour trade and life on the plantations...<sup>47</sup>

Adrian Graves rejected this explanation and periodisation:

---

<sup>45</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 45-7.

<sup>46</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, p. 25; Saunders, *Uncertain bondage* [thesis], p. 477. Peter Corris, *Passage, port and plantation: A history of Solomon Islands labour migration 1870-1914*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1973, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Clive Moore, “Used and abused: The Melanesian labour trade” in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *A most valuable acquisition, A people's history of Australia*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy and Ringwood (Vic), 1988, p. 156.

coercion was not confined merely to an “early and brief” period of the labour trade. The best documented cases of kidnapping, involving more recruits and recruiters than previously, occurred in the 1880s, twenty years into the system, and there were isolated instances reported in the 1890s.<sup>48</sup>

He argued, instead, that the methods of recruitment reflected changes in the recruiting industry, and the demand for labour on the plantations. The period of the worst abuses, around 1883-4, coincided with the height of a sugar boom, when recruitment into Queensland reached record levels. Deryck Scarr described an intensification of Melanesian Islanders’ “long-standing attitude of alternate attraction and repulsion in relation to labour vessels...during the 1890s [when] [i]nstances of firing on the boats greatly increased,” the reason being the resentment of the elders at the recruitment of the young men.<sup>49</sup>

Graves saw this new Pacific history as lurching into the methodology of neo-classical liberalism, assuming that “the decision to migrate was rational and progressive, the operation of free choice in the context of a competitive labour market.”<sup>50</sup> So Carol Gistitin, for instance, saw Islanders as “migrants by choice...attempting to maximise their opportunities,”<sup>51</sup> with little acknowledgment of the structural constraints within which any choices were made. Graves argued instead that “expansive, intrusive capitalism” disrupted

---

<sup>48</sup> Adrian Graves, “The nature and origins of Pacific Islands labour migration to Queensland, 1863-1906” in Shula Marks and Peter Richardson (eds), *International labour migration: Historical perspectives*, Maurice Temple Smith, Hounslow (UK), 1984, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Deryck Scarr, *Fragments of empire: A history of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967, p. 160.

<sup>50</sup> Graves, *Nature*, pp. 113-4

<sup>51</sup> Carol Gistitin, *Quite a colony: South Sea Islanders in central Queensland 1867-1993*, Aebis Publishing, Brisbane, 1993, p. 4

the traditional Islander economy and society, which in turn created both personal and social crises that drove many individuals to either seek or accept indenture. As part of this process, the recruiters found compradors within the coastal communities of the Melanesian Islanders, who used a mixture of coercion and the manipulation of traditions of reciprocity to mobilise new recruits for the labour trade from inland villages. For this they were rewarded with tobacco, guns and other commodities, items that further strengthened their local and regional position and their ability to produce further recruits. It also deepened the dependence of Islanders on this trade, perpetuating the cycle of labour recruitment.<sup>52</sup>

But if Graves gave us a subtle analysis of structure and agency in recruiting, he joined the revisionists in rejecting any comparison with the slavery of the American South, which was the approach taken in Kay Saunders' celebrated PhD thesis.<sup>53</sup> Graves made essentially two arguments: firstly that the legal status of slaves and indentured Islanders was fundamentally different, that the Islanders "were both treated and behaved essentially as wage labourers"; and secondly that planters were "enthusiastic profit-maximisers".<sup>54</sup> The latter is, of course, no argument against the idea that Queensland saw something akin to slavery. Robert W Fogel and Stanley L Engerman, in their controversial book *Time on the Cross* made the same claim for the ante-bellum planters of the American South,<sup>55</sup> and critics of slavery hostile to *Time on the Cross* have not

---

<sup>52</sup> Graves, *Nature*, pp. 124-38. Graves' critique has been replied to by Clive Moore, *Historiography*, and Ralph Sholomowitz, *Marx and the Queensland labour trade, Working Papers in Economic History, No. 54*, May 1992, Flinders University of South Australia.

<sup>53</sup> Saunders, *Uncertain bondage* [thesis].

<sup>54</sup> Graves, *Nature*, pp. 224-5. See also Clive Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 153-5, 197-9.

<sup>55</sup> Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the cross*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 67-78.

disputed the profit-seeking orientation of the slave-owners. Even Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, who opposed any notion that planters were capitalists, situated New World slavery as one of the projects of profit-seeking merchant capital; the American South was “in but not of the capitalist world”; its plantation economy “embedded in a world market”, based on relations of production that were pre-capitalist.<sup>56</sup>

There is, of course, no argument that the legal status of slaves was radically different from that of indentured labourers, nor that the indenture system in Queensland was not chattel slavery. Moreover, historians as varied as Moore, Saunders and Graves have pointed to the increasing role played in the sugar industry, from the late 1880s to 1906, by so-called “time expired” labourers who had served out their indentures, stayed in Queensland and became wage labourers. But for the period covered by this thesis, most Islander labour in the sugar industry was provided by indentured labourers. The relevant question is not: were indentured Islanders slaves? but, Did the coercion and unfreedom involved in the indenture system create economic, social and political structures that involved a dynamic similar to that of slavery? Moore, for instance, has acknowledged that the legal end of slavery in the British empire in the 1830s did not necessarily lead to any significant change in “the related socio-economic and concomitant juro-political structure of an ex-slave society”.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D Genovese, *Fruits of merchant capital: Slavery and bourgeois property in the rise and expansion of capitalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, pp. 16-18.

<sup>57</sup> Moore, Kanaka, pp. 197-8.

In order to better understand the dynamic of plantation production in Queensland, it is worth reviewing the general nature of wage labour, and its importance for capitalists and the capitalist system. For Marx, wage labourers are completely dispossessed of any means to sustain themselves outside wage labour. They must find the means to keep themselves alive – food, shelter, clothing, and the means to reproduce their ability to work – by purchasing commodities in the market place. Wage labourers have no means of raising the money required to buy those subsistence commodities other than to offer for sale their capacity to labour, their labour-power, to an employer. The “freedom” of free labour lies in the freedom the worker has to dispose of their labour power as their own commodity, which includes the freedom to choose the employer to whom they sell it.<sup>58</sup> The corollary of this freedom for the worker is the freedom of the employer to stop purchasing a worker’s labour power, to quickly get rid of surplus or unsuitable employees. All the traditional obligations and bonds which tied ruler and ruled to each other are broken by a relationship that embodies both “freedom” to move jobs, and the tyranny of insecurity for the worker. The dynamism and extraordinary productivity of capitalism are inseparable from these relations. For the worker there is also the freedom to choose from competing subsistence commodities. Indeed the ability to choose the nature of one’s subsistence, although limited in reality, represents one of the major incentives for workers to offer employers careful and intense labour. The business of producing commodities for the subsistence of the working class thus became an arena for capitalist enterprise, competition and profit-making, and a central part of the Australian colonial economy.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Robert Miles, *Capitalism and unfree labour: Anomaly or necessity?*, Tavistock Publications, London and New York, 1987, pp. 20-26.



A brief consideration of these basic propositions immediately exposes severe problems for the idea that indentured labour in some way resembled wage labour. Queensland sugar planters turned to indentured labour precisely to *avoid* “free labour” relations of employment. They constantly complained that white labourers were “unreliable” because they would move on if they found conditions intolerable or go on strike when the planter was most vulnerable. Sugar cane must be crushed within hours of harvesting or else a large proportion of the sugar is lost.<sup>60</sup> Strategically timed strikes are a problem faced by all employers, but the sugar plantations were mostly in areas without a “mature” labour market. One of the fiercest critics of indentured labour was the southern Queensland sugar planter, Samuel Grimes, who was able to find employees from the general labour market in and around Brisbane.<sup>61</sup> But most plantations were in the north, and the sugar industry was central to the colonisation of coastal Queensland, constantly pushing the frontier of European settlement further north. The solution of the planters was to staff their plantations with labourers who could not go on strike, who could not be dismissed, who had to be given the means of subsistence every day, whether or not they worked or worked well, and who had to be paid in full at the end of

---

<sup>59</sup> Of course there is not a lot that is genuinely free about this arrangement. Marx has eloquently described the violence and state intervention used to forcibly dispossess millions of their means of making a living, and to impose on them the obligation to offer themselves for employment to capitalists; see Karl Marx, *Capital: A critique of political economy*, vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954, pp. 667-93.

<sup>60</sup> Evidence of William Langdon, manager at the Pyramid Plantation, Cairns, Mon 14 Jan 1889, “Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the general condition of the sugar industry in Queensland, and to report upon the causes which have led to the present languishing condition of the industry throughout the colony, the best means to be adopted for reviving and maintaining its prosperity, and generally, upon the prospects of tropical agriculture in Queensland: Together with minutes of evidence and the proceedings of the Commission and appendices”, Queensland, *V&P Legislative Assembly*, 1889, vol. IV p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> Hume Black speech in debate on *Pacific Islands Labourers Act Amendment Bill*, Tues 5 Feb 1884, in *ORDLA Qld*, vol XLI, p. 253.

their three years' indenture however well or badly they worked. Virtually none of the mechanisms of incentive or self discipline which are so fundamental to free wage labour were at work here.<sup>62</sup>

Having resolved that reliable and cheap labour was essential, the planters copied the indenture system of the post-slavery colonies. The Pacific Islanders they imported were bound to an employer for a full three years, had no right to change masters, and were distributed to employers largely according to deals made with shipping companies and recruiting captains.<sup>63</sup> Employers claimed they tried to keep Islanders from the same village or Island together to ensure greater harmony and productivity, but this was essentially their choice. Clive Moore and others have documented the many ways in which this bondage was (very) partially circumvented by employers, including the hiring out of their labourers for short periods to others,<sup>64</sup> but these in no way changed the fundamental nature of the relationship. While the system of indenture meant that the individual labourer was released from their bondage after three years, new recruits meant that, for employers and the Island communities, the system was ongoing.<sup>65</sup>

In the absence of strong economic incentives, or any culture of wage labour amongst the indentured labourers, planters turned to violence to extract labour. The normalcy of this is illustrated by the casual and unashamed discussion of it by planters; such as the manager of Rubyanna who, as late as 1896, insisted that

---

<sup>62</sup> In both slavery and indenture, employers developed incentive mechanisms, but these do not change the underlying nature of the relations of production.

<sup>63</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 154-5.

<sup>64</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 147-53.

<sup>65</sup> Graves, *Nature*, pp. 115, 118-38.

“the best way to deal with the Kanaka is to use a certain amount of force.”<sup>66</sup>

While this violence was neither as brutal nor extensive as under Atlantic slavery, it could still be severe, and its importance underlines the similarity of relations of production under indenture and slavery.

However, it was the extraordinarily high death rate that convinced many that indentured plantation labour was a species of “slavery”; and it remained high despite various measures of state protection. Over the 41 years of the labour trade, the average death rate for Islanders was fifty per thousand. This compares with a death rate of nine or ten per thousand for male Europeans of similar age. Over the thirteen years discussed in this thesis, the period of greatest recruitment, the average death rate was well over seventy per thousand, and in 1884, the death rate reached the staggering figure of one in seven Islanders.<sup>67</sup> The cumulative death rate of Pacific Islanders in Queensland for the four years 1882-5 virtually equalled the death rate of Australian prisoners of war held by Japan, 1941-5.<sup>68</sup> Historians long regarded the causes of

---

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Adrian Graves, *Cane and labour: The political economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993, p.130.

<sup>67</sup> The death rate of Islanders in Queensland from 1875-88 is below, from Kay Saunders, “‘The black scourge...’: Racial responses towards Melanesians in colonial Queensland” in Evans, Raymond, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), p. 188. The figure is deaths per 1000 Islanders in Queensland for each year.

1875	85.11	1876	63.60	1877	51.39	1878	85.87
1879	55.78	1880	62.89	1881	64.74	1882	82.64
1883	75.74	1884	147.74	1885	98.84	1886	58.20
1887	59.00	1888	52.00	1889	57.00	1890	46.44

From 1889-94, the death rate ranged between 40 and 60 per 1000; from 1894-1904, from 25 to 40 per 1000. The recruitment of Islanders for every year from 1863-1904 is tabulated in Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>68</sup> 21,649 Australians were held as prisoners of war by Japan in the war of 1941-5, of whom 7777 died, a death rate of 36%; Humphrey McQueen, *Japan to the rescue: Australian security around the Indonesian archipelago during the American century*, William Heinemann Australia, Port

this high mortality as including poor diet, poor housing and clothing, long hours of work and overwork, inadequate sanitation and lack of medical care.<sup>69</sup> As part of their argument, revisionist historians rejected this explanation, arguing instead that it was caused by the immigration of Islanders into an entirely new disease environment, against which they had little or no resistance.<sup>70</sup> It is not the task of this thesis to resolve this controversy. What is not at issue is the extraordinary callousness of the planters and the general indifference of the Queensland government regarding the lives of Islanders. Everyone knew about the extraordinary mortality rate, and yet, far from being restricted or curtailed, the recruitment of Islanders for the industry was encouraged by both Liberal and Conservative governments – up to 1884 at least – because of the exceptional profits involved. So while Islanders were not slaves and their bodies were not “owned” by the planters, the planters and squatters did have the *de facto* right to cynically use up Islander lives by the thousand and Islanders had no right and minimal capacity to “escape” this danger. It was only when wage labour became the dominant employment relationship for Islanders from the mid-1890s, and large numbers of Islanders

---

Melbourne, 1991, p. 322. By contrast, the cumulative death rate of Pacific Islanders 1882-5 was 35%, representing a total of 3926 lives lost, Graves, *Cane and labour*, p. 248. Interestingly, McQueen sees exposure to exotic tropical diseases as one of the reasons for the high prisoner of war death rate, pp. 322-3.

<sup>69</sup> For example, Kay Saunders, *Workers in bondage: The origins and bases of unfree labour in Queensland 1824-1916*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1982, pp. 85-91.

<sup>70</sup> Moore, *Historiography*, pp. 64-5. Neo-liberal economic historian, Ralph Shlomowitz, has backed this up by calculating that the death rate in the first year of indenture averaged 81 per 1000, falling to 26 per 1000 subsequently. Moore saw the exceptional mortality of 1884-85 as resulting from the recruitment of labourers from new, low contact areas, including the Islands to the east of New Guinea. Moore then saw the poor state of European knowledge of tropical diseases and medicine, Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 245, 250-52, 254-63, 130. Kay Saunders also alludes to the impact of unfamiliar diseases generally, and the Melanesian response to sickness, as compounding a serious problem, *Workers in bondage* [book], p. 87.

had some right to choose employers, that their mortality rate dropped dramatically.<sup>71</sup>

Thus a series of broad similarities to chattel slavery invite us to consider the significance of the differences, the chief of which is the ownership of the human labourer by the slave-owner. This, of course, had enormous ramifications for the life of the slave or indentured labourer, and for the degree to which cooperation could be gained or coercion “needed” on the plantation. Significant as this difference was, it does not fundamentally affect the relations of production involved. On both slave and indentured labour plantations, labourers had been dispossessed of the means of production through the process of migration (whether largely coerced or significantly voluntary). Labourers were bonded and tied, and for both labourer and employer, the incentives and disciplines of wage labour were largely absent. The employer was almost totally responsible for the subsistence of the labourer, and thus in a position of extraordinary *personal* power over the labourer. In both the American South and Queensland, the planter had either effective control of, or substantial immunity from, the local machinery of the state.

Therefore the revisionist analysis of relations on Queensland’s sugar plantations is deeply flawed. Bourgeois (and working class) concerns about the indenture of Pacific Island labourers responded to the very real problems produced by a system of largely unfree labour. As Prime Minister Edmund

---

<sup>71</sup> See Graves, *Cane and labour*, p. 245. For Islanders who were allowed to stay in Queensland beyond indenture and work as wage labourers, mortality fell to 14 per 1000, which was much closer to the European rate. Of course this is also consistent with the disease environment explanation. Peter Corris suggests that the shift to working in small groups on family-owned farms, rather than plantations, was a factor, see *Passage, port*, p. 79.

Barton wrote to Sir Robert Philp, the wealthy merchant Premier of Queensland in 1902:

It seems somewhat incongruous to suppose that a man cannot be virtually a slave unless the law makes him the property of a master, or the mere existence of a contract between two persons necessarily prevents one of them from being in the power of the other.<sup>72</sup>

For many in the Queensland ruling class, the plantation system looked ominously like the dreaded system of slavery in the American south, with its economic backwardness and the seeds of civil war it nurtured. This was the system that the planters and their commercial allies wanted to expand on the basis of indentured Indian labour. But there was one more significant difference compared with the American South: the central state apparatus in Queensland was in non-planter hands, and capable of changing the terms on which labour was organised to produce sugar. It would continue to limit the system of racialised indentured labour until the new Australian national state put an end to it in 1904.

## A racially divided working class: The real spectre of slavery

Historians who overstate the difference between indentured labour and slavery, also tend to misunderstand the nature of liberal objections to indenture, and why liberals feared a semi-slave regime. Rather than focus on extravagant

---

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Saunders, *Uncertain bondage* [thesis], p. 10.

statements made in election campaigns, the liberal position can best be understood by looking at more careful formulations. One of the most sophisticated expositions of the liberal position came in a speech made by Queensland Opposition Leader, Samuel Griffith, in an 1882 debate over proposals to introduce indentured labour from British India. Griffith centred his argument on the dangers of a racially divided working class, a situation which would give rise to servile labour. By this, he meant

the labour of a class different from that of the ruling class in the country, and who were not admitted to the same political rights as the ruling class. That was servile labour. It was the labourer being held to do duty by stringent penal laws, and being carefully supervised and looked after by the Government. In a word, it was the opposite in every respect of free labour done by persons holding equal political rights with their governors, and who had a share in the management of the country. *It sometimes took the form of slavery*, by which was meant a form of labour in which the servant got no wages and was obliged to serve for life. That, he supposed, was the definition of slavery in its essence, but there was not much distinction whether the servitude was for life or for a term of years.<sup>73</sup>

The experience of other countries was that “in every case the existence of a large servile population was inconsistent with the existence of free institutions.” Getting rid of slavery had involved “a great convulsion” in the United States, and, he might have added, a great social struggle in Britain as well. For Griffith as for Merivale, the issue wasn’t as narrow as slavery; indeed the social and economic structure of the former slave colonies was just as much to be rejected. Jamaica and the other West Indies Islands “were not fit for free institutions...

---

<sup>73</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol XXXVII, pp. 188-9, my emphasis.

and they were reduced to the position of a Crown colony, which was practically an official oligarchy." British Guiana:

was a very rich country, he believed, with a comparatively small number of large plantations, a large population mostly of servile labour, and the government of the country was in the hands of something less than 200 persons; and it was perfectly clear that so long as the civilisation of that colony went on in that way free institutions could not be applicable to it. If they turned to Mauritius they found very much the same state of things. The European population, he believed, was something under 20,000 – not much over 10,000 – and the Indian population was a quarter of a million. They were governed by what he called just now "an official oligarchy." Of course free institutions such as they had in the Australian colonies could not possibly be applied to a state of society like that.<sup>74</sup>

William Brookes, a Brisbane ironmonger, was perhaps the most famously obsessive campaigner against Pacific Island labour in Queensland. In an 1884 debate on the new Liberal government's *Pacific Islands Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Bill*, Brookes attacked the high mortality rate of Islanders, arguing that they had been worked to death.

The evil of coloured labour was that it placed the servile labourer too much under the control of the white man. They might not call that slavery, but it was akin to it – cousin to it; and unless they were very careful it would soon degenerate into slavery.<sup>75</sup>

The liberal attack on "slavery" was in reality an attack on the building of an unfree, racialised workforce, a structure which had chattel slavery at its

---

<sup>74</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol XXXVII, p. 189.

<sup>75</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1884, vol XLI, p. 355.



extreme. The dangers that earlier theorists had seen in slavery were extrapolated to become problems with any racialised society, and the intellectual structure of anti-slavery was thus mobilised.

So when debating the *1877 Polynesian Labourers Bill* in Queensland, Albert Hocking argued that, “When those men were exclusively employed in manual labour, it also had the effect of degrading manual labour in the eyes of Europeans.”<sup>76</sup> Queensland Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, made the same point to Governor Musgrave in 1885: “the function of manual labour is regarded as degrading, and if any numbers of the white race continue to be engaged in it, they degenerate in social estimation, and are looked down upon as ‘mean whites’.”<sup>77</sup> It is important to note that this is *not* an argument that Islanders competed with white labourers, although that point too was made. This is an argument that manual labour became racialised by the use of indentured, “coloured” labourers, and the result was that manual labour was no longer acceptable to white workers.

A second major element to this argument revolved around the idea that a racially divided society would give rise to caste distinctions, with society tending to divide “into distinctly marked upper and lower classes, and superior and inferior races, and hence to acquire aristocratic habits and institutions”, as AJ Ogilvy put it.<sup>78</sup> Again, this was an idea directly inherited from the anti-slavery movement and Ogilvy made an explicit connection, warning: “As the

---

<sup>76</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1877, vol XXIII, pp. 50-69.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Saunders, *Uncertain bondage* [thesis], p. 229.

<sup>78</sup> See, for instance, AJ Ogilvy, “National Character--Part 1: A sketch. By an evolutionist”, in *The Sydney Quarterly*, vol. III, no. 11, Sept 1886, p. 535.

Northern States of America were to the Southern, so are Victoria and South Australia on the one hand to Queensland and Carpentaria on the other".<sup>79</sup> For Brisbane's liberal paper, *The Week*, McIlwraith's conservatives and their campaign for Indian coolie labour for the sugar industry, "aimed to build up an aristocracy on a basis of cheap labour; criminal expeires, Chinamen, Polynesians, East Indians, Malays".<sup>80</sup> Such commentary was racist, but there was far more than racism involved here.

The argument about an incipient aristocracy tapped into a rich vein of mainstream, bourgeois thought in Australia, which celebrated the struggle against the "slavery" of convictism, imposed by would-be squatter aristocrats. The 1870s and 1880s saw much local literature on the theme of convict life, the highpoint of which was Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*. Clarke's politics are suggested by his long association as a writer for the conservative *Argus* newspaper in Melbourne. In an obituary for Clarke, the Melbourne banker, Henry Gyles Turner, described one of the main themes of *His Natural Life* as, "The dehumanizing effect upon the officials, of the exercise of arbitrary, irresponsible despotism".<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Ogilvy, *National character*, 535. According to David Brion Davis, Sir James Stephen, later British Prime Minister, had argued that, "the root of the problem [with slavery] was the existence of a master class which was allowed to play the part of despot over what are in effect British subjects." pp. 166-7.

<sup>80</sup> *The Week*, 5 January 1882, p. 12. It is worth noting that *The Week* opposed the seamen in the 1878 strike over the ASN replacing Anglo-Australian with Chinese labour, on the kind of liberal grounds argued by the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

<sup>81</sup> in "Marcus Clarke", *Melbourne Review*, vol. VII, no. 25, January 1882, p. 12.

## Chinese people as carriers of slavery

The same methodology was at work in the debates over Chinese immigration in the 1870s and 1880s. As it began to become an issue in Australia in the late 1870s, the fear was constantly expressed that Chinese immigrants would bring with them the elements of a slave-based economy. At one level, it was argued that Chinese immigrant labourers were themselves actually slaves or semi-slaves. So when NSW MLA, Angus Cameron, a trade unionist turned businessman, moved in 1880 to restrict Chinese immigration, he spent more than a quarter of his speech asserting that Chinese people did not come as free men, they could not call their bodies or their souls their own, and they were closer to being slaves than anything else. These were arguments echoed by other MPs in that debate.<sup>82</sup> When William Box debated the *1877 Gold Fields Amendment Act* in the Queensland parliament, he called the Chinese serfs in their own country, while Postmaster General, CS Mein had described them as “serfs of their employers”.<sup>83</sup> When RW Thompson wrote to Henry Parkes in 1887, he enclosed a clipping about a new American law banning the immigration of contracted labour into the country. He suggested that such information might be valuable to Parkes in dealing with Chinese immigration, because “these undesirable immigrants are introduced here under contracts of servitude”.<sup>84</sup>

In fact, there was widespread misunderstanding – wilful or otherwise – of the nature of Chinese migration. From the 1850s, almost all Chinese migrants to

---

<sup>82</sup> *NSWPD First Series, 1879-80*, vol. 3, p. 2696.

<sup>83</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, p. 72 (Mein); p. 82 (Box).

<sup>84</sup> Letter 26 July 1887, in *Parkes Corresp*, A917, p. 345.

Australia were either entirely free, or migrated on the “credit-ticket” system, where their fare to Australia was borrowed, often with their village land as security. Until the loan was repaid, the lender usually had some control over the services of the labourer, meaning that the broker or money lender was in a position to exploit the services of the worker. The aim of most Chinese migrants was to return to their village and family having accumulated significant wealth in Chinese terms. These facts were known in the Australian colonies, having been established by an inquiry by the Victorian Legislative Council in 1857.<sup>85</sup>

On another level, the portrayal of Chinese people as bearers of slavery, as expressed by Andrew Inglis Clark and WK Hancock, rested on the assumption that the presence of a sufficient number of people from a supposedly “inferior race” – for instance, a situation in which the number of Chinese was broadly equal to, or more than, the number of “whites” – would create a racial division in the labour market, with the Chinese doing the menial and labouring work in slave-like conditions. Part of the problem was simply that white businesspeople would impose an economic tyranny on “coloured” people which would inevitably spread and reshape the whole of society. Rather than ban indentured labour, rather than protect the rights and conditions of the labourer, rather than legislate against discrimination according to race, the liberal majority of the colonial bourgeoisie imposed its economic development agenda, based on free

---

<sup>85</sup> These facts are broadly agreed; see CY Choi, *Chinese migration and settlement in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1975, p. 13-14; CF Yong, *The new gold mountain: The Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921*, Raphael Arts, Richmond (Vic), 1977, pp. 1-2; also p. 230, footnote 7. Michael Williams has given us the most profound study Chinese migration to Sydney and other ports in his PhD thesis, “Destination Qiaoxiang: Pearl River delta villages and Pacific ports 1849-1949”, University of Hong Kong, 2002.

labour, choosing to stigmatise Chinese people as servile, rather than bourgeois interests as unprincipled and socially dangerous.

The *Brisbane Courier* saw the choice before the colony as a civilised society of free men or one of “a million Chinese coolies and a thousand employers”.<sup>86</sup> When Attorney General, HJ Wrixon, was helping draft Victoria’s reply to the “please explain” from the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1888, he saw the Chinese as “introducing an element rather of slave than of free labour among us”.<sup>87</sup> In the SA Legislative Council in 1888, the colony’s Chief Secretary, JG Ramsay, quoted from the Commission which reported to the American Senate, that Chinese labourers “can be managed and controlled like unthinking slaves.”<sup>88</sup> James Powell, who was in 1878, rich enough to be a creditor of Sir Henry Parkes, told the latter (after demanding payment of his £80), how he had first won his vote in East Sydney, twenty years earlier, by his analysis of the “Chinese question”.

At that time (as now) from an abstract point of view I could not quite see the equity or justice of endeavouring to keep the Chinese out of a British Colony when at the same time the Imperial Government were knocking Chinese Ports open because they would not trade with us, but I did see the force of your position that a low and degraded condition of Civilization could not be made to work in harmony with an aspiring people, worse than all I saw and still see (as I think) the elements of an

---

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Andrew Markus, *Fear and hatred: Purifying Australian and California 1850-1901*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, p. 85.

<sup>87</sup> Memo dated 28 March 88, P88/831 found with P88/1160, Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS1163/P0/141.

<sup>88</sup> *SAPD*, 1888, col. 224.

embryo slavery in the attempt to work Chinese labour in conjunction with British interests.<sup>89</sup>

Kathryn Cronin attacked historians for taking this rhetoric at face value, saying they disregarded “the essential point that the so-called ‘economic’ threat posed by Chinese was closely tied to the racist acceptance of them as irrevocably servile.”<sup>90</sup> While Cronin was discussing this rhetoric of “servile Chinese” in the context of labour movement agitation, her point was nonetheless extremely important. Chinese people in Australia were not “servile”; they were relatively free labourers, and there is a long litany of European ruling class complaints about their willingness to stand up for their rights. In accepting the view of the Chinese as “servile”, the European-Australian labour movement undermined significant possibilities for solidarity.

The point here, however, is different. Extensive plantation production actually existed in Australia in the 1880s, built on the basis of unfree labour. The possibilities were believed to exist, and perhaps really did exist, for a radical expansion of plantation production, in the Northern Territory and North Queensland.<sup>91</sup> If such production could be organised, it was believed that Australian capitalists would have been able to recruit Chinese and other so-called “coloured labourers” to do the work in unfree conditions. This reflected

---

<sup>89</sup> Letter dated 9 August 1878, Parkes corresp, A901, p. 47. Note that this letter was written before the seamen’s strike. £80 was then close to a year’s wages for a labourer, so Powell was clearly a man of substance.

<sup>90</sup> Kathryn Cronin, “‘The yellow agony’: Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland” in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1988, p. 300.

<sup>91</sup> Queensland squatters had also recruited significant numbers of indentured Pacific Islanders in the 1870s.

not just the racism of Australian capitalists and the Australian political system, but the poverty of ordinary people in China, the immense global economic and political power of the British empire, and the ability of white employers and the Queensland colonial state to impose a system of racial oppression and unfree labour. Understanding the ruling class response to Chinese people as “racist”, which is Cronin’s approach, fails to see – indeed hides – the more substantial, concrete agenda here.

The issue for most political leaders and newspaper editors in Australia was that such an expansion of plantation production would be dangerous for the glorious economic and political future they had mapped out for their colonies, and the continent as a whole. Thus, at a mass meeting called to support the striking seamen in Brisbane in November 1878, William Brookes declared that, “he wanted the colony to keep growing and not dwindle to ‘the low level of a decayed West Indian island.’” For his part, Simon Fraser MLA warned that “nearly all Asiatic races were under a sort of slavery, and were unable to understand our institutions” and that Queensland would “degenerate into what the poet speaks of as the home of ‘The tyrant and the slave.’”<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Meeting at the Brisbane Town Hall, 25 November 1878, report in *The Week*, 30 November 78, pp. 750-1.

## The ruling class dilemma: Who will do 'our' work in the tropics?

All the fears associated with "slavery" were brought into sharpest relief by the problem of "the north". Just under 40 per cent of the Australian land mass is in the tropics. The area involved is colossal, around three million square kilometres, almost as big as modern India. But it was widely believed within the ruling class that "white men" could not do labouring work in such a hot climate.<sup>93</sup> This idea was central to the world-view of those politicians who opposed anti-Chinese laws, such as Oscar de Satgé, AH Brown and William Thornton in Queensland.<sup>94</sup> When the British Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, gave his reasons for allowing the passage of Queensland's (slightly amended) *1877 Goldfields Act Amendment Act* and its *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act of 1877*, he argued that Chinese labourers would be needed in "those tropical districts in which Europeans cannot perform field work."<sup>95</sup>

But most politicians opposed to Chinese immigration also believed that white men could not labour in the tropics. The Premier of Tasmania, PO Fysh, dissented from the resolutions of the 1888 Intercolonial Conference, called to develop a united policy among the Australian colonies to practically prohibit

---

<sup>93</sup> For instance, Sir Raphael Cilento (with the assistance of Clem Lack Snr), *Triumph in the Tropics: An historical sketch of Queensland*, Historical Committee of the Centenary Celebrations Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1959: Cilento's book was a polemic against the idea that "white" men could not work in the tropics; Kay Saunders, *Uncertain bondage* [thesis], pp. 36-39; Warwick Anderson, *The cultivation of whiteness: Science, health and racial destiny in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 2002, esp. pp. 73-86.

<sup>94</sup> De Satgé, *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 484; Brown, pp. 621-2; Thornton, *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 88.

<sup>95</sup> Text read to the SA parliament by John Bray on 28 July 1880, in *SAPD 1880*, c. 519; also *SMH* 21 August 1878, p. 4, c. 6.



Chinese immigration. Fysh's government had pushed through the colony's first Chinese immigration Act in 1887, but he attacked the proposed new law as disregarding "the climatic characteristics of the Northern territories of Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia, which are a barrier to successful occupation, except in pursuit of avocations peculiarly tropical and unsuitable to European labour."<sup>96</sup>

This created an enormous problem for the ruling class; the only profitable path to development in the tropics seemed to involve the kind of future warned against by Merivale. This was clearly expressed by one of Australia's greatest liberal theorists, Charles H Pearson. In his internationally celebrated speculation, *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, Pearson described the fate of a country into which an "inferior" people was admitted in large numbers:

Its colonists would soon be divided into a wealthy ruling caste, planters or miners, and mean whites; while the blacks, servile or semi-servile, would increase year by year, because their labour was necessary to maintain and extend the fortunes of the governing caste.<sup>97</sup>

He was describing a future marked by the features he associated with slave societies. The ruling class dilemma was felt most sharply in Queensland. Either the government engaged in the dangerous experiment of relying on white workers for labour in the tropics; or developed the Australian tropics into a kind of semi-slave state based on unfree "coloured" labour; or left the tropical

---

<sup>96</sup> From Tasmania's official dissenting statement to the 1888 Intercolonial Conference on the Chinese question, see "Conference on Chinese question: Proceedings of the conference held in Sydney in June, 1888" in NSW LA *V&P*, 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 176.

<sup>97</sup> Charles H Pearson, *National life and character: A forecast*, Macmillan and Co, London and New York, 1894, p. 42.

areas undeveloped, “empty” and vulnerable. The choices were all a nightmare. This was a uniquely ruling class dilemma; the labour movement had no interest in promoting plantations in the north, which is one reason the labour movement seems so much more strident on the issue. But we should not confuse stridency with power. By the 1870s there was a profitable sugar industry in Queensland, and few members of the ruling class wanted to see it destroyed; but most did not want a “black north” either. The result was an extraordinarily confused and agonised debate within the ruling class.

Many tried to find a way to square the circle. Typical was Sir Samuel Way, the politically active Chief Justice of South Australia, who wrote to Sir Henry Parkes in that month of crisis, May 1888:

I believe the Chinese have work to do for us especially in tropical Australia – but I do not yield to you in the wish to make extra tropical Australia the home of an Anglo Saxon race free from any admixture of Mongolian blood.<sup>98</sup>

Few in the ruling class argued that there simply wasn't a problem, but some saw the problem as exaggerated. These were most often conservatives, usually large landowners or squatters. Richard Chaffey Baker, an immensely rich and powerful landowner, mining magnate and the dominant figure in South Australian conservatism, told the Legislative Council in 1880 that the Northern Territory would either have to be peopled by “Asiatics” or abandoned. But he did not entirely dismiss the possibility of danger, saying that he would not want to see 100,000 Chinese people in the Territory, and quoted approvingly

---

<sup>98</sup> Letter to Parkes, dated 31 May 1888, Parkes corresp., A913, p. 334.

from a letter from the Territory: "If there was any danger of the place being flooded with Celestials it would be another matter. There is no danger of the kind".<sup>99</sup> When Liberal Queensland Premier John Douglas, spoke to his government's anti-Chinese *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill*, in August 1876, he conceded that "under proper control, they [Chinese people] would very likely be the very best class they could introduce for developing the tropical resources of North Queensland." But he had a different assessment of the situation to Baker; in 1876, there were already too many Chinese in Queensland for him.<sup>100</sup>

One issue facing the Australian ruling class was that this belief, that white men could not work in the tropics, had worked its way deeply into British ruling class ideology, initially as a justification for new world slavery.<sup>101</sup> In his widely read history of England in the eighteenth century, WEH Lecky commented that "conditions of climate, and therefore of cultivation, ultimately determined the course of negro [sic] slavery in America."<sup>102</sup> Even Adam Smith thought that, "The constitution of those who have been born in the temperate climate of Europe could not, it is supposed, support the labour of digging the ground under the burning sun of the West Indies".<sup>103</sup> David Walker saw "[m]uch of the anxiety about the degenerative effects of heat" as coming "from the British

---

<sup>99</sup> In debate on Northern Territory Chinese Immigration Bill, 27 October 1880, in *SAPD* 1880, cols. 1652-3.

<sup>100</sup> *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 380. By 1879 he was arguing that white men could work in the tropics.

<sup>101</sup> Warwick Anderson, *The cultivation of whiteness: Science and racial destiny in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South (Vic), 2002, p. 266.

<sup>102</sup> Lecky, *A history of England*, p. 282.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Wealth of nations*, book I, p. 88. See also Kenan Malik, *The meaning of race: Race, history and culture in western society*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 1996, p. 62 quoting Montesquieu to the same effect.

experience in India".<sup>104</sup> Sir George Bowen, whose imperial career had taken him to rule over many of Britain's tropical or sub-tropical colonies, including Queensland, would have agreed as he warned his superiors in London:

In a tropical Colony it is simply impossible for Englishmen to work as they can work in the temperate climate of England, or of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. At Hong Kong, it is necessary for the preservation of the vigour of the English officials that they should be allowed periodical leave of absence.<sup>105</sup>

The former Australian liberal, Robert Lowe, now Viscount Sherbrooke, confessed to Sir Henry Parkes in 1879 that he did not understand Queensland. "I always supposed that in that climate the work could not be done by Europeans and now it seems they want to expel the Chinese. Who is to do the work."<sup>106</sup> When Queensland's anti-Chinese Goldfields Bill was disallowed, the Governor of NSW, Sir Hercules Robinson, wrote to his Premier, Parkes:

Nearly one half of the continent of Australia is within the tropics, & can never be a home for the Anglo Saxon race. Is it to remain for ever a waste? If not by what tropical race or races may it be peopled - & in what proportions, & under what regulations & restrictions?<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999, p. 141. Even though I reject this proposition as stated, I agree that the experience of life in tropical and hot climates would have reinforced the existing racist ideology.

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Earl of Derby, dated 14 May 1883, in Sir George Bowen (ed Stanley Lane-Poole), *Thirty years of colonial government: A selection from the despatches and letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G., etc, Governor successively of Queensland, New Zealand, Victoria, Mauritius and Hong Kong*, 2 vols, Longmans, Green & Co, London & New York, 1889, vol. 2, p. 256.

<sup>106</sup> Letter 27 Nov 1879, Parkes corresp, A924, p. 464; lack of question mark in original.

<sup>107</sup> Letter 26 June 1877, Parkes corresp, A972 (date order).

In *The meaning of race*, Kenan Malik argued that, “Racial theories accounted for social inequalities by ascribing them to nature.”<sup>108</sup> Here was an element in the process by which the domination of the white over the black was made an inevitable result of nature. To ideas about the impossibility of white labour in hot climates, British intellectual racists added a range of deterministic theories to explain, as Edward Dicey put it, “the simple instinctive conviction of Englishmen, that the Empire of England is part of the natural order of things”.<sup>109</sup> These included the idea that Britain’s success was a result of its cold climate and the need to labour to survive and prosper there; while a tropical environment had condemned indigenous people to primitiveness and barbarity. After travelling through the Pacific, Major JC Bell commented, “it is useless to imagine that the natives will ever work continuously...when...the necessaries of life are so easily attainable without labour.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, “high” civilisations could only flourish in temperate climates.<sup>111</sup>

A tropical environment was both dangerous to the physical health of white people, and dangerous to their moral fibre and usefulness. Even in temperate Australia there were fears for the future of Australian society. In “The coming Australian”, James F Hogan saw three main characteristics of those British people born in Australia as, “An inordinate love of field-sports”; “A very decided disinclination to recognise the authority of parents and superiors”; and “A grievous dislike to mental effort”. He located the cause of these in the

---

<sup>108</sup> Malik, *The meaning of race*, p. 70.

<sup>109</sup> Edward Dicey, “The federation of the Australias”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 10, Aug 1880, p. 453.

<sup>110</sup> Major JC Bell, “Among the Pacific islands (concluded)”, in *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 49, November 1883, p. 38. See also Walker, *Anxious nation*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>111</sup> Walker, *Anxious nation*, p. 141.

unfortunate Australian climate, which encouraged living outdoors. Sport in particular was “a passion that must be kept in check”.<sup>112</sup>

The idea that white men could not work in the tropics was gradually demolished by a mixture of experience and political intervention. There were fortunes and profits to be made in the north, so white miners prospected, white teamsters carried freight, white labourers built roads, railway lines, ports, shops, pubs and other buildings and staffed these many workplaces. These people gave liberal politicians a sense that “coloured labour” wasn’t necessary in the long run, and gradually, politicians like Samuel Griffith and John Douglas took up an argument that white labour was possible in the tropics. These nationalist politicians found, in turn, fiercely nationalist doctors like Raphael Cilento to apply their considerable talents to working out how to make it so.

But climatic determinism hung around for decades. Long after the White Australia policy was adopted, a minority of pastoralists and politicians continued to insist that “black labour” – which invariably meant racially oppressed labour – was necessary to develop the north. Warwick Anderson has chronicled the long debate amongst doctors and biologists over the tropics and the impact (or otherwise) on Australians’ ability to remain white – or British.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup>James F Hogan, “The coming Australian”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 18, Nov 1880, pp. 103-4.

<sup>113</sup> Anderson, *The cultivation of whiteness, passim*.

## A divided continent? Parkes proposes to unite the south

The heightened atmosphere of military tension from the late 1870s pushed the British government and many of the Australian colonial governments to seek formulas for Australian political unity, primarily to facilitate military defence. These discussions frequently raised the problems associated with tropical agriculture. Typically, it was Sir Henry Parkes who tested the limits of this ruling class dilemma.

In October 1879, as New South Wales Premier, Parkes proposed an amalgamation – *not* a federation – of Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales, in a remarkable article he wrote for the *Melbourne Review*. What was most significant was his pointed rejection of Queensland as part of this merger, “because her capabilities of soil and climate so clearly mark her out for a colonizing career dissimilar from that of her elder sisters”. In other words – although Parkes does not say this explicitly in the article – because of her tropical climate, Queensland will be a plantation colony, dependent on “coloured labour”.<sup>114</sup> Parkes accepted that Queensland would be different; as late as 1883 he asked the British government to appreciate the “necessity that labourers accustomed to tropical heat must be found for carrying on outdoors industries in tropical Australia, or that otherwise the land must remain unoccupied.”<sup>115</sup> Such a society could never be integrated with the British-style liberal capitalism of New South Wales and the southern colonies.<sup>116</sup> By contrast,

---

<sup>114</sup> Henry Parkes, “An Australian nation”, *Melbourne Review*, no. 16, October 1879, p. 327.

<sup>115</sup> Letter Parkes to Selbourne (Lord Chancellor in Gladstone’s govt) re New Guinea, 15 December 1883, Parkes corresp, A932, pp. 418ff.

<sup>116</sup> It is significant that Parkes only began publicly attacking the Queensland labour trade in 1892, when Australian federation involving Queensland had finally become an imminent

he could happily propose the merger of the three because of “the corresponding character of their leading pursuits, and their equality of promise in their future capabilities” and these can lead to “a reciprocity of patriotic feeling”.<sup>117</sup>

Given the enormous obstacles to it, and the almost flippant way he dealt with them in his article, it might be imagined that Parkes’ proposal was not entirely serious. This is not reflected in the doggedness with which he prosecuted it privately. He wrote to British Liberal leader, WS Gladstone, for the first time in five years to seek support for it, putting his proposal more explicitly: “The Colony of Queensland, embracing a large part of northern territory suited to the growth of cotton, sugar & tropical products, seems destined to form a nation quite distinct from these south-eastern colonies.”<sup>118</sup> From John Plummer came the opinion that, based on his own discussions with John Stuart Mill, Parkes’ views on colonial federation appeared identical to Mill’s.<sup>119</sup>

His proposal was taken very seriously in South Australia. Former Premier and Supreme Court Judge, Sir James Boucaut, wrote to tell Parkes, “I am hot with you on Federation, & I wish I could actively help you in the grand cause”;<sup>120</sup> while the Rev J Jefferis felt it necessary to deliver a damning critique of it to the South Australian establishment at a meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall in June 1880. Jefferis was one of the leading churchmen in Australia in the 1870s and

---

possibility, and Griffith abandoned his former opposition to it, arguing for a renewal of the trade as Premier of a coalition between conservative liberals and McIlwraith’s party.

<sup>117</sup> Parkes, *An Australian nation*, p. 327.

<sup>118</sup> It is transcribed on a card in the index to the Parkes corresp, fiche 25. Ref WE Gladstone papers, vol. CCCLXXVI.

<sup>119</sup> John Plummer, “Recollections of John Stuart Mill”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 17, March 1881, p. 546. The significance of these is discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>120</sup> Letter to Parkes, 31 Oct 1879, Parkes corresp, A873, p. 80-81, emphasis in original.



1880s,<sup>121</sup> a status reflected in the reception he received in Adelaide where he was introduced to the meeting by the Governor, with Premier William Morgan and Tasmanian Premier Giblin speaking in discussion and Sir Henry Ayres, President of the Legislative Council, moving the vote of thanks. Jefferis' speech was extensively covered in the official Adelaide press, and published as a pamphlet in December 1880.<sup>122</sup> He chided Parkes for excluding Tasmania from his confederation, but his main purpose was to argue for the north. He chose in part to argue on Parkes' own ground, pointing out that Queensland's "productions are not all of a tropical or semi-tropical character. If she grew sugar she could also grow wheat." There was another agenda here, and one keenly felt by his audience: "if South Australia is invited to join her two wealthier sisters, it surely must be on the condition that she carries with her the magnificent but much abused and slowly developing Northern Territory." In other words, South Australia would not be separated from her own tropical possession. But Jefferis was not proposing continental unity: Western Australia is not even to be discussed because it "is still in effect a penal settlement."<sup>123</sup>

There is considerable evidence that Parkes convened the Intercolonial Conference of November-December 1880, held in Melbourne, to push his

---

<sup>121</sup> Jefferis was Minister of the Pitt Street Congregational Church in Sydney at the time; enticed to that post from Adelaide by John Fairfax on a stipend of £1000 a year, an extremely large income. In a letter to Parkes from the Local Option League, 29 Jan 87, he is listed second of the twenty Vice-Presidents, behind the Dean of Sydney and ahead of the Lord Bishop of Goulburn, which counts as some measure of the status accorded to him at the time, Parkes Corresp, A924, p. 44. His entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* runs to five columns.

<sup>122</sup> Adelaide Register, 18 June 1880; Rev. J Jefferis, *Australia confederated: A lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Adelaide, by the Rev. J. Jefferis, LL.B. with speeches on the occasion by His Excellency Sir W.F.D. Jervois, G.C.M.C, C.B. Governor of South Australia; The Hon. W. Morgan, Premier of South Australia; The Hon W Giblin, Premier of Tasmania; Sir Henry Ayers, K.C.B., George Robertson, Sydney, 1880, p. 27.*

<sup>123</sup> Jefferis, *Australia confederated*, p. 7.

agenda along.<sup>124</sup> Only two other colonies were invited: the ones Parkes wanted to see amalgamated with New South Wales. The conference had been originally proposed to discuss common action against Chinese immigration (and this was achieved in Sydney in January 1881), but when faced with a lukewarm response, Parkes suggested a conference between the three colonies he wanted to unify to discuss border tariffs. The *Sydney Morning Herald* had a partial understanding of Parkes agenda, writing during the conference that:

[New South Wales Governor] Lord Augustus Loftus remarked, some little time ago, that it had been his lot to witness the union of Germany begin in a Customs Convention, and grow to what the world has seen. A little Conference is being held in Melbourne, at which the idea of a Customs agreement between the three southern colonies of Australia is being discussed, to see how far it is possible at present, and how far it is impossible. That is, no doubt, the natural beginning of federation, and apart from compulsion arising from external danger, that is the natural beginning for closer union.<sup>125</sup>

Certainly, customs union seemed to have appeal in South Australia. In the March 1881 election campaign, shortly after the second conference, the free trade Premier, William Morgan, advocated a customs union with NSW and the popularity of this proposal can be gauged by the response of the opposition

---

<sup>124</sup> In the Preface to his pamphlet, *Australia confederated*, dated 18 December 1880, Jefferis commented that "At the Conference recently held in Melbourne, not a few of the matters referred to in the following Lecture have been discussed with courtesy and candour, and with fair promise of mutual agreement." p. 3. The November-December 1880 conference adjourned and reconvened in Sydney in January 1881 with all the Australasian colonies invited. Historians have generally focused on the later event because it made decisions to pass uniform laws restricting Chinese immigration – but have done so without noticing the very different composition and agenda of the 1880 meeting.

<sup>125</sup> *SMH*, 1 Dec 1880, p. 4 col. 6.

leader, John Bray, who supported it, despite being a protectionist.<sup>126</sup> Bray won the election, and South Australia's "tariff was assimilated in some respects to that of New South Wales" as a result.<sup>127</sup>

Once the November/December 1880 conference was agreed to by the three colonies, Parkes urged them to try and find "some common ground for alliance", pointing to, "The immense territory of Western Australia and the northern part of Queensland [which] appear to me to be destined to a separate political existence", words entirely reminiscent of his *Melbourne Review* article.<sup>128</sup>

In the end, Parkes' unification proposal appears to have been rejected by the other colonies, and it was opposed by the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>129</sup> But it represented an enormous challenge to Queensland's politicians. Indeed Queensland's former liberal Premier, John Douglas, quickly replied to Parkes' article, firmly declaring the Queensland intended to be part of any future Australian federation.

[T]here are not in Queensland, at the present time, half-a-dozen men of reasonable intelligence and ordinary experience who contemplate the

---

<sup>126</sup> Donald Robert Beer, "South Australian politics in the 1880s", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1960, pp. 31-2.

<sup>127</sup> Speech by Thomas Playford, 3 July 1888, *SAPD* 1888, col. 195.

<sup>128</sup> Letter Parkes to colonial secretaries of Victorian and South Australia, 2 November 1880, NSW State Records, Colonial Secretary's special bundles, 4/830.3 Also, letter to Victorian Chief Secretary, Graham Berry, 2 November 1880, Parkes corresp, Mitchell, A916, pp. 439-41. However a letter from South Australian Premier, William Morgan, expressed ironic pleasure at Parkes wanting better relations with SA and Victoria: "judging from the past I have very little hope of any satisfactory arrangement being made at the forth coming conference". Morgan to Parkes, dated Nov 10th 1880, in Parkes corresp, A925, p. 414.

<sup>129</sup> *SMH*, 4 December 1880, p. 5 cols. 2-3.

existence here of a separate nationality except in association with the rest of the Australian states, colonies, dependencies, or whatever else they may be called.<sup>130</sup>

But whatever Queensland's "public men" contemplated, there were many in the south who saw the widespread use of indentured and "coloured" labour as a fundamental obstacle to federation with Queensland. It may not be a coincidence that Parkes made his proposal just months after a conservative government took office in Queensland.

The debate over whether or not a "black north" was inevitable, dangerous or necessary continued until federation, and after, most intensely during the campaign for North Queensland separation from 1884-7, which will be discussed in chapter 7. It was at the centre of the debate about Chinese immigration into South Australia's Northern Territory. During the final, cathartic debate on this issue, in the South Australian Legislative Council in 1888, Allan Campbell argued:

The labor question did not merely apply to the Northern Territory, but also to the northern portions of Queensland and West Australia. In fact the northern portions of Australia were so distinct in all their natural characteristics that the southern portions could not legislate for them on the labor question. So soon as we got federation of the colonies he thought the separation of these northern portions of the colonies from the southern should immediately take place. When that time came he was sure there would be no further difficulty over the labor question.<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> John Douglas, "An Australian nation", *Melbourne Review*, vol. 5, no. 17, Jan 1880, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> *SAPD*, 1888, col. 1335.

On the opposite side of the argument, in the late 1890s, North Queensland Labor politicians saw federation as a means of destroying black labour.<sup>132</sup>

## Conclusion

From the 1880s on, the issue of tropical labour in Australia became a burning question for the wider Australian ruling class, whose politicians were attempting to federate the independent colonies. It was an article of imperial faith that “white men” could not work in the tropics, and that profitable tropical production would involve unfree “coloured labour” ruled by a small white minority. However, mainstream British bourgeois thought had condemned such societies as carrying some of the burdens associated with slavery; of being economically backward, producing an aristocracy of rulers and a subculture of “mean whites”, and being morally repugnant and degenerate. The prospect of a “black north” carried with it the even more alarming prospect of a future civil war. The development of a large and profitable sugar industry in Queensland had created a deep dilemma for the ruling class between current profits and future prospects. How they resolved that dilemma will be discussed in future chapters.

---

<sup>132</sup> Joe Harris, “The struggle against Pacific Island labour, 1868-1902”, *Labour History*, no. 15, November 1968, pp. 44-5.

## *Chapter 5*

# The shadow of Mill: The ‘necessity’ of a culturally homogeneous society

Members of the European family of nations joining our community become amalgamated with the general population...their habits of life, their style of civilization, their religion and morals, and their physique, are so much on an equality with our own that they blend readily with the population and are heartily welcome. The Chinese stand out in marked contrast...and occupy an isolated position in every community where they are found... Nor is it the mere fact of this isolation, but the impossibility of its being otherwise. The Chinese, from all points of view, are so entirely dissimilar as to render a blending of the peoples out of the question.

Victorian Premier, Duncan Gillies<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Gillies to Governor, Victoria, 11 April 1888. All the colonial replies to London’s “please explain” re anti-Chinese laws were published in Qld LA *V&P* 1888, vol. 3. Gillies’ letter is on pp. 197-8.

ONE OF THE consistent themes in ruling class arguments for restricting Chinese immigration was the necessity to create an homogeneous society in Australia based on British culture, and the supposed inability of Chinese people to be assimilated into it. Cultural homogeneity was a necessity; the presence of a significant group who could not assimilate would threaten the free institutions of the colonies – parliamentary government elected through near-universal male suffrage, the rule of law and freedom from arbitrary government.

While this dovetails with the argument discussed in chapter 4 – that a large non-white population would stimulate a racially-divided labour force which could take on some of the characteristics of slavery – it was conceptually different. This can be seen (even through his obscurantism) in the 1888 memorandum drafted by Tasmanian Attorney-General, Andrew Inglis Clark.

The...supposition that the Chinese immigrants would...acquire political equality with the remainder of the population, suggests a result equally menacing to the permanence of the civilization and structure of society now existing in these Colonies, inasmuch as the indurated and renitent character of the habits and conceptions of the Chinese immigrants make their amalgamation with populations of European origin, so as to become constituent portions of a homogeneal community retaining the European type of civilization, an impossibility.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of homogeneity was central to *all* the official memoranda, sent by the Australian colonial governments to London in 1888, in response to Britain's demand that they justify "exceptional legislation" applying to Chinese

---

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum dated 24 April 1888, in Qld LA V&P 1888, vol. 3, pp. 199-201.

subjects.<sup>3</sup> I have referred above to the responses of Victoria and Tasmania; in his reply to London, New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes warned:

There can be no sympathy, and in the future it is to be apprehended that there will be no peace between the two races...

The most prevailing determination in all the Australian communities is to preserve the British type in the population.

There can be no interchange of ideas of religion or citizenship nor can there be intermarriage or social communion between the British and Chinese.<sup>4</sup>

Writing on behalf of the Queensland Government, Sir Samuel Griffith told the Colonial Office that:

the main and, in the opinion of this Government, the insuperable objection to allowing the immigration of Chinese is the fact that they cannot be admitted to an equal share in the political and social institutions of the Colony. The form of civilisation existing in the Chinese Empire, although of a complicated and in many respects marvellous character, is essentially different from the European civilisation which at present prevails in Australia, which I hold it be essential to the future welfare of the Australian Continent to preserve.<sup>5</sup>

The need to create an homogeneous population was widely asserted by ruling class figures in political debates over “coloured labour” and Chinese

---

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies, HT Holland, to Governors of Australian colonies, 23 January 1888, NSWLA *V&P* 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Parkes to Secretary State Colonies (Knutsford), 31 March 1888, Qld LA *V&P* 1888, vol. 3, pp. 193-4.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Samuel Griffith, to Governor Sir Anthony Musgrave, 24 March 1888 in Qld LA *V&P* 1888, vol. 3, pp. 191-2.



immigration. During the debates on Queensland's Polynesian Labourers Bill in 1880, the *Brisbane Courier* outlined the over-arching reasons for limiting the use of "coloured" labour:

It is not merely or mainly because white workmen dislike Polynesian labor that we are legislating to restrict it within as narrow bounds as possible. It is because we are all desirous of forming, as far as climate and the circumstances of the colony will allow us, a homogenous community. We dwell on the point, because it is the great and all-sufficient justification for our exceptional laws directed against colored aliens.<sup>6</sup>

The idea that the future Australian federation needed to be a culturally homogeneous society, dominated by British culture and British political institutions, was widely shared among the colonial ruling class, and especially amongst its senior politicians, priests and journalists. When Queensland Premier, Samuel Griffith, introduced the *Federal Council of Australasia Bill* into parliament in 1884, as a first step towards federation, the conservative Opposition Leader, Boyd Morehead, declared: "I firmly and thoroughly believe in a confederation of the colonies in order to make us a great and homogenous whole."<sup>7</sup>

Chinese immigration in particular was seen as a threat to their shared political vision. In a letter to South Australia's premier ruling class newspaper, the

---

<sup>6</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 19 October 1880, editorial p. 2. In colonial discussions on this issue, the word "homogenous" was used almost uniformly, where the intended meaning was clearly "homogeneous" in today's usage, ie "composed of parts all of the same kind", as against "corresponding in structure because of a common origin", *The Macquarie Dictionary*, revised edition, Macquarie Library 1985.

<sup>7</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, 1884, p. 127.

*Register*, the business-dominated Anti-Chinese Association of Queensland called on South Australia to restrict Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory, appealing to “the hope we all cherish of founding a homogenous Australian people on this continent”.<sup>8</sup> This attachment to homogeneity has been referred to by previous historians.<sup>9</sup> Myra Willard expressed this homogeneity agenda as “the preservation of a British-Australian nationality.”<sup>10</sup> But historians have presented this desire for homogeneity without attempting to determine its broader social and political importance. This chapter argues that these ideas were given enormous legitimacy by the theory of government argued by John Stuart Mill, especially in his *Considerations on representative government*.<sup>11</sup> A short discussion of Ernest Gellner’s materialist explanation for the pursuit of national homogeneity will lead to my argument that the roots of Mill’s theory of homogeneity lie in the Romantic/aristocratic reaction to eighteenth-century liberalism. This discussion is contextualised by a series of situations in which Anglo-Australian politicians attempted to construct an homogeneous population: dealing with European immigrants, rejecting Chinese immigrants, and attempting to assimilate the Catholic Irish. The interplay between racist prejudice and the racist doctrine of homogeneity

---

<sup>8</sup> The letter was published in the *Register* (Adelaide), 29 March 1880; it was then read to South Australia’s parliament by Opposition leader, John Bray, when moving an anti-Chinese Bill on 28 July 1880, in *SAPD* 1880, cols. 517ff; the extract from the Queensland letter is in col. 521. For the business-dominated nature of the Anti-Chinese Committee, see *Brisbane Courier*, 30 Jan 1880, p. 3 col. 1, which reports the committee meeting in the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce, and preparing a document on the “problem” of Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory.

<sup>9</sup> Charles A Price, *The great white walls are built: Restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888*, The Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with the Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, esp. pp. 106-10, 255-60.

<sup>10</sup> Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first published 1923), pp. 188-9.

<sup>11</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Considerations on representative government*, edited with an introduction by R.B. McCallum, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1946.

suggests that while the ruling class were more or less racist as individuals, constructing a supposedly homogeneous nation was a major ruling class strategy, and deemed necessary to stabilise a class-divided society.

## The necessity for national homogeneity

The idea that the state should be a culturally homogeneous nation is a relatively new idea in human history, first developed in nineteenth-century Europe.

Ernest Gellner was one of many writers who pointed to the novelty, and indeed strangeness, of the idea that “homogeneity of culture is *the* political bond”.<sup>12</sup>

According to Kenan Malik, it was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that “the idea of a homogenous national culture and of a nation as the embodiment of an organic history and heritage began to take hold”.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, cultural or linguistic homogeneity was not the basis of the first nationalisms, in the United States, France and Britain, which Eric Hobsbawm called “state patriotism”.<sup>14</sup> In the US and France, the original nationalism was constructed in an environment of revolution, and built on ideals of freedom and equality, supposedly shared by their diverse peoples. In her study of the rise of

---

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, Phoenix, London, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Kenan Malik, *The meaning of race: Race, history and culture in western society*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 1996, pp. 137, and 133-40 more generally. Eric Hobsbawm has argued that in the first half of the nineteenth century, apart from the Italian and German middle-classes, nowhere else was a common language made the argument for a unified national state, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, esp. pp. 102-3.

<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*, p. 87.

British nationalism from 1707-1837, Linda Colley argued that it did not represent a “homogenisation of disparate cultures”, but a compromise between rival and divided ruling class elements who could come together to promote a patriotism built on hostility to the rivals (and colonial subjects) of the British state. In particular, she argued that British nationalism was built on protestant hostility to Catholicism, which was associated both with backwardness and Britain’s great rival, France.<sup>15</sup> Colley acknowledged that her reference to “Great Britain as a nation...may bewilder, and even offend those who are accustomed to thinking of nations only as historic phenomena characterised by cultural and ethnic homogeneity.”<sup>16</sup>

I am not suggesting for one moment that the growing sense of Britishness in this period supplanted and obliterated other loyalties. It did not... As even the briefest acquaintance with Great Britain will confirm, the Welsh, the Scottish and the English remain in many ways distinct peoples in cultural terms, just as all three countries continue to be conspicuously sub-divided into different regions. The sense of a common identity here did not come into being, then, because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead, Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences...<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Colley, *Britons*, p. 6. Keith Robbins disagrees with aspects of Colley’s explanation, however he supports that aspect of her argument that is important here, that the British state was not created by cultural homogeneity. He differs from Colley in insisting that more than anti-French anti-Catholicism was involved, that a process of “blending” of people from the various backgrounds was also important and this accelerated during the nineteenth century, “An imperial and multinational polity: The ‘scene from the centre’, 1832-1922” in Alexander Grant and Keith J Stringer (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, esp. pp. 249-51.

We have then, a problem of political history: When, how and why did the nation come to be imagined as homogenous?<sup>18</sup> And when did this become part of mainstream British political theory? In other words, on what did the homogenous-nation orthodoxy in Australia rest in 1888?

Ernest Gellner developed a brilliant, materialist explanation for the deep economic and political logic behind homogeneity. In his *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner argued that an homogeneous national culture was required for the functioning of what he called, modern industrialism. A productive system relying on innovation and changing technologies created a mobile workforce that was necessarily highly skilled. More importantly, he argued, work became semantic. Communication became central in the work process, and instructions and messages had to be well understood when separated from the messenger.

The capacity either to articulate or to comprehend context-free messages is not an easy one to acquire. It requires schooling, prolonged schooling. And modern society, given that work is semantic in this manner, requires *everyone* to possess this skill. It is the first society in history in which literacy is near universal; to put it another way, it is also the first society ever in which a high culture becomes the pervasive culture of the entire society, displacing folk or low culture.<sup>19</sup>

Thus industrial societies required both a common language and a common culture, and a language and culture that is common to both rulers and ruled,

---

<sup>18</sup> Here, I use the word “homogenous” deliberately, the modern western nation having come to have been conceived as the state of a people with a common origin.

<sup>19</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 29. *Nationalism* is an updated version of his classic text, *Nations and nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY), 1983; emphasis in original.

unlike pre-industrial or “agrarian” society. In this we have another dimension to the critique of racialised structures of production, such as the early sugar plantations of Queensland, where there was no common language or culture between the planter/manager and the mass of gang labour.

For Gellner, it was this objective need for homogeneity, in the context of a system of geographically distinct states, that explained nationalism:

the principle – so strange and eccentric in the age of agrarian cultural diversity and of the “ethnic” division of labour – that homogeneity of culture is *the* political bond, that mastery of (and, one should add, acceptability in) a given culture (the one used by the surrounding bureaucracies) is the precondition of political, economic and social citizenship.<sup>20</sup>

For all capitalist societies, the modern education system was a vital means for creating the educated and culturally-homogeneous labour force needed by employers and the state. Not only was this true in the Australian colonies, but as I will discuss later, the education system was seen as a vehicle for integrating the Catholic Irish population, the most significant element alienated from the dominant nationalism and the imperial state.

However, it is one thing for economic progress to “need” something; it is quite another thing for it to happen. Politics, ideas and action are needed to realise political change. Gellner argued that Romanticism provided the ideas, with its celebration of feelings and sentiment as against cold-blooded rationality, along with a philosophy that humans were culturally defined, and that each culture

---

<sup>20</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, esp. pp. 25-30; quotes from p. 29; emphasis in original.

was unique. "Romanticism was almost ideally suited to provide nationalism with its idiom and its style."<sup>21</sup> This was a widely shared view. But there is an explanatory gap here. Why should liberals, who celebrated rationality, progress, science and individual merit take up the mystical, backward-looking ideas of people who stressed obligation, obedience, the unknowability of nature and tradition?<sup>22</sup>

## John Stuart Mill: Theorist of homogeneity

Perhaps the most significant British theorist of national homogeneity was John Stuart Mill. In *Considerations on representative government*, Mill argued that "free institutions" required racial homogeneity, a dominant nationalism, and strong support for law and order. "Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist", he wrote.<sup>23</sup> First published in 1861, *Considerations* was an exploration of both the advantages and dangers (as Mill saw them) of representative government. Of the advantages: representative government was "the ideally best form of government";<sup>24</sup> "all

---

<sup>21</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, pp. 66-9.

<sup>22</sup> CEM Martin reported that when the conservative romantic John Ruskin published some essays on political economy in the early 1860s, they were "received with a storm of disapprobation", "The works of John Ruskin", *Victorian Review*, vol. X, no. 57, July 1884, p. 293. Ruskin attacked buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest (what made your market cheap?); and the piling up of colossal fortunes while huge numbers of people were buried in misery and degradation, while competition produced anarchy.

<sup>23</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 292.

<sup>24</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 136.

free communities have both been more exempt from social injustice and crime, and have attained more brilliant prosperity, than any others, or than they themselves after they lost their freedom.”<sup>25</sup> The extension of the franchise made people more patriotic.<sup>26</sup> But representative government was not possible for all states. Underpinning the reasoning behind this were two notions: that representative government would only survive where the people were prepared to fight to defend it; and that it required an active, practical citizenry as distinct from a passive one.<sup>27</sup> So, for a federation to succeed – and this was a compelling issue for the Anglo-Australian ruling class in the 1880s:

there should be a sufficient amount of mutual sympathy among the populations... The sympathies available for the purpose are those of race, language, religion, and, above all, of political institutions, as conducing most to a feeling of identity of political interest.<sup>28</sup>

A common history, victories and defeats shared by a people, helped bind them together. But without a common language and identity, there would be the danger of political fragmentation.

The influences which form opinions and decide political acts are different in the different sections of the country. An altogether different set of leaders have the confidence of one part of the country and of another. The same books, newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, do not reach

---

<sup>25</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, chapter VIII.

<sup>27</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 152-3; 146-8.

<sup>28</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 298. He goes on, naturally enough, to look at that great federation, the United States of America, and some of the structural weaknesses which led to civil war. Mill's arguments on the prerequisites for a successful federation were drawn on by EW Burton in an article attacking proposals for imperial federation, "The political destiny of the colonies", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 20, June 1881, pp. 147-62.



them. One section does not know what opinions, or what instigations, are circulating in another.<sup>29</sup>

Lack of common identity was most dangerous in regards to the military, whose job it was to kill. Towards foreigners, the soldier could have no sympathy, nothing more than the humanity one extends towards animals. So if some part of the state's subjects were as foreigners to the soldiers, they "will have no more scruple in mowing them down" than they would towards avowed enemies. Such an army could become the executioner of liberty.<sup>30</sup> Thus a multi-ethnic state could not remain free and democratic over the long term; multiculturalism as we know it in Australia would spell danger to Mill. It should not, therefore, be surprising that Graeme Campbell, then Independent MHR for Kalgoorlie and an opponent of multiculturalism, quoted Mill's *Considerations* in a parliamentary debate on racial tolerance in 1996.<sup>31</sup>

Mill's argument was challenged by Lord Acton. He argued, against Mill, that a monocultural nation would become the ally of authoritarianism:

The presence of different nations under the same sovereignty is similar in its effect to the independence of the Church in the State. It provides against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations, and giving to the subject the restraint and support of a combined opinion... Liberty

---

<sup>29</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 291-2.

<sup>30</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 292-3. In earlier articles, Mill had made this point with specific reference to the crushing of the national/democratic movement in the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire.

<sup>31</sup> Judith Brett, "John Howard, Pauline Hanson and the politics of grievance", in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter (eds), *The resurgence of racism: Howard, Hanson and the race debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton (Vic), 1997, p. 25; she references CPD 30 Oct 1996, p. 6176.

provokes diversity, and diversity preserves liberty by supplying the means of organisation.<sup>32</sup>

Acton warned of the oppression inherent in any attempt to create a *national* state:

The greatest adversary of the rights of nationality is the modern theory of nationality. By making the state and the nation commensurate with each other in theory, it reduces practically to a subject condition all other nationalities that may be within the boundary. It cannot admit them to an equality with the ruling nation which constitutes the State, because the State would then cease to be national, which would be a contradiction of the principle of its existence. According, therefore, to the degree of humanity and civilisation in that dominant body which claims all the rights of the community, the inferior races are exterminated, or reduced to servitude, or outlawed, or put in a condition of dependence.<sup>33</sup>

While Acton's critique stimulated an ongoing debate in Britain, it had no discernible echoes in the Australian colonies,<sup>34</sup> where Mill's arguments were taken very seriously. For a start, Mill himself was easily the dominant political theorist in pre-1870 Victorian Britain.<sup>35</sup> In the colonies, his influence was extraordinary,<sup>36</sup> and much of the discussion on the issue of assimilation and

---

<sup>32</sup> John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, "Nationality" in his *Essays on freedom and power*, selected, and with an introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb, The Beacon Press, Boston (Mass), 1948, p. 185.

<sup>33</sup> Dalberg-Acton, *Nationality*, pp. 192-3.

<sup>34</sup> The debate on these issues is discussed in Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1994.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Turk, *Coleridge and Mill: A study of influence*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1988, pp. 26-7.

<sup>36</sup> In Australia, "leading men" seem to have regarded Mill as a demi-god. In the most sophisticated journal published in Australia before federation, the *Victorian Review*, Mill is repeatedly cited as an authority on issues ranging from the debate over Henry George's scheme for land nationalisation, see Samuel Rinder, "A Californian Political Economist.—A reply", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 22, Aug 1881, p. 420; to debates over state subsidies to

homogeneity was in terms that reflected his arguments. From time to time writers referred directly to Mill's requisites for the federation of states on a lasting basis.<sup>37</sup>

Far from reflecting the logic of radical eighteenth-century liberalism, or the utilitarianism with which he had grown up, Mill's argument that the nation-state should be culturally homogeneous reflected the influence of the Romantic/aristocratic reaction *against* liberalism. In his *Autobiography*, Mill described his famous emotional breakdown, and his encounter, in the late 1820s, with the romantic poets, and then with ideas of the Coleridgians. Influenced by German philosophy, they brought into political debate "the general doctrines and modes of thought of the European reaction against the philosophy of the eighteenth century."<sup>38</sup> The most famous of this reactionary current was Thomas Carlyle, "the sage of Chelsea", whose early writings railed

---

denominational schools, see James L Hegarty, "Primary Instruction in Victoria", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 2, p 213-4. Politicians and writers looked for support in Mill, as JA La Nauze has described Alfred Deakin doing on his conversion to protectionism, *Alfred Deakin: A biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1965, pp. 37-38. John Plummer's "Recollections of John Stuart Mill" has more in common with modern fan journalism than any serious discussion, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3 no. 17, March 1881, pp. 542-9. For Mill's influence on prominent journalist and North Queensland separationist, William Coote, see Christopher Rous Robertson, "A re-evaluation of three nineteenth century Queensland histories: 'History of the colony of Queensland from 1770 to the close of 1881' by William Coote, 'In the early days: A history and incident of pioneer Queensland' by J.J. Knight, 'The Genesis of Queensland' by Henry Stuart Russell", BA (Hons) thesis, History Department, University of Queensland, 1994, pp. 13-14, 34. According to Henry Reynolds, John Stuart Mill was Andrew Inglis Clark's hero, "Inglis Clark: Some afterthoughts" in Richard Ely: with Marcus Haward & James Warden, *A living force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the ideal of the commonwealth*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2001, p. 400. Thus political debate in the late colonial period took place in the shadow of John Stuart Mill and his theories.

<sup>37</sup> eg EW Burton, *Political destiny*, pp. 147-62.

<sup>38</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, Second edition, Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, London, 1873 pp. 128, 152-3, also pp. 161-2. The key figures Mill mentions as influencing him were Maurice and Sterling and then Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

against both economic liberalism, and the lack of leadership from the British aristocracy:

British industrial existence seems fast becoming one huge poison-swamp of reeking pestilence physical and moral; a hideous *living* Golgotha of souls and bodies buried alive... Thirty-thousand outcast Needlewomen working themselves swiftly to death; three million Paupers rotting in forced idleness, *helping* said Needlewomen to die: these are but items in the sad ledger of despair.<sup>39</sup>

Carlyle's argument was that a doctrine of individualism, selfishness and *laissez-faire* would produce the destruction of society, amidst poverty, the spread of disease, alienation and bitterness. In return for the indifference of the ruling class to their welfare, British workers would give insurrection and revolution, as had happened in France when the ruling class had proven itself greedy, corrupt and careless about its responsibilities. Chartism represented a warning of the dangers to come. In his early writings he rejected the whole of the liberal argument; his solution was the revival of a true church and a true aristocracy, and a return to the values of the Middle Ages, symbolised in the character of Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury, mythologised in *Past and Present*.<sup>40</sup> This book was widely read by Australian colonial liberals nearly half a century later:<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Michael Cannon, *Who's master? Who's man? Australia in the Victorian age*, Thomas Nelson Australia, West Melbourne, 1978, p 47. I have been unable to find the source of this in Carlyle, but it expresses, in concentrated form, the style and content of Carlyle's writing.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and present*, Second edition, Chapman and Hall, London, 1845.

<sup>41</sup> Bruce Mansfield, "Australian nationalism in the growth of the labour movement in the eighteen-eighties in New South Wales, with reference to Queensland", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1951, p. 25.

If the convulsive struggles of the last Half-Century have taught poor struggling convulsed Europe any truth, it may perhaps be this as the essence of innumerable others: That Europe requires a real Aristocracy, a real Priesthood, or it cannot continue to exist. Huge French Revolutions, Napoleonisms, then Bourbonisms with their corollary of Three Days, finishing in very unfinal Louis-Philippisms: all this ought to be didactic! All this may have taught us, That False Aristocracies are insupportable; that No-Aristocracies, Liberty-and-Equalities are impossible; that True Aristocracies are at once indispensable and not easily attained.<sup>42</sup>

Mill rejected the Coleridgians' attacks on political economy, and their idealist philosophy. But he embraced their political approach:

They were the first (except a solitary thinker here and there) who inquired with any comprehensiveness or depth into the inductive laws of the existence and growth of human society. They were the first to bring prominently forward the three requisites which [are] essential principles of all permanent forms of social existence.<sup>43</sup>

Mill summarised these three principles in a major essay on Coleridge in 1840. The first was a system of education for citizens which aimed at teaching them to subordinate their own desires to the broader needs of society; a role played "in modern nations...principally by religious teaching". Without the "restraining discipline" of such moral education – for that was what Mill meant – "the natural tendency of mankind to anarchy" would assert itself. The second principle was a feeling of loyalty to some element of society's broad constitution, "something which is settled, something permanent, and not to be

---

<sup>42</sup> Carlyle, *Past and present*, pp. 323-4.

<sup>43</sup> John Stuart Mill, "Coleridge" in his, *Essays on ethics, religion and society*, Volume X, *Collected works of John Stuart Mill*, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, pp. 138-9.

called into question”, which enables society (the socio-economic system and its rulers) to weather the storms of internal dissension. This could be adherence to a common god, or acceptance of an hereditary ruler or ruling class. Mill’s third principle for stability was cohesion amongst the members of society, a sense of community or common feeling in some sense – an attachment to the state or the nation.<sup>44</sup>

Here, liberalism met its antithesis. Instead of the fierce rationalism of Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo and James Mill, we had a powerful defence of the necessity of sentiment. Instead of worship of the individual and Adam Smith’s belief in the benefits flowing to society from the selfish pursuit of wealth, we had an insistence on restraint in the interests of social order. Instead of the struggle for individual freedom, we had praise for the moral role of religious teaching and an insistence on loyalty to some crucial element of the state structure. On the publication of Mill’s series of articles, “The spirit of the age” in 1831, Carlyle supposedly declared, “Here is a new Mystic,” and Mill became one of Carlyle’s “most fervent admirers”.<sup>45</sup>

Mill’s essay on Coleridge theorised the need for ideology in class society. The reality of ruthless exploitation was to be hidden (so far as possible) behind ideas that emphasised mutual loyalty and “common feelings” of race or nation. The

---

<sup>44</sup> Mill, Coleridge, pp. 133-6.

<sup>45</sup> Mill, Autobiography, pp. 173-6. Mill was not a new mystic in the sense Carlyle had hoped, and this soon became apparent, according to Mill. But there was a close intellectual collaboration. Immediately on his father’s death, Mill invited Carlyle to become a contributor to their London and Westminster Review, and “though each individual article continued to be the expression of the private sentiments of its writer, the general tone conformed in some tolerable degree to my opinions”; Autobiography, p. 206. Mill gave Carlyle the notes he had accumulated for a history of the French Revolution, encouraging him to take up the project.

resistance of the working class was to be contained by the development of something that was broadly accepted, even unchallengeable, in the political structure – the Queen, parliament, whatever symbol that might confer legitimacy on the state. Education would be shaped by a ruling class moralism that preached the necessity for restraint. Mill here was theorising the need for what Gramsci called hegemony, in an age when the old means of hegemony (especially religious fear and paternalistic dependence) were disintegrating. Racism, nationalism and personal moralism were some of the means through which this new hegemony might be constructed. For Mill a government that ruled ideologically was more powerful and less threatened than one which ruled by force; he identified coercive societies with backwardness and fragmentation. This was a widely understood idea within the Anglo-Australian ruling class; after yet another attempt on the life of the Russian Tsar, the *Brisbane Courier* suggested that, “A Parliament elected by universal suffrage may be far more effective than overcrowded transport ships and deportations to Siberia in overcoming the [revolutionary] movement.”<sup>46</sup>

Where Jeremy Bentham and his fellow materialists rejoiced in the collapse of the old ideological order – and wanted to pull down some of the surviving institutions which had sustained it – Mill wanted something to replace them. He saw the radical French *philosophes*, whom he had attempted to imitate in his youth, as ideological wreckers and destroyers. While they were “innovators, in their theories, [they] disregarded the elementary principles of the social union...

---

<sup>46</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 19 March 1880, p. 2, cols. 5-6.

In the weakening of all government they saw only the weakening of bad government."<sup>47</sup>

While for Mill, much of this was unavoidable due to the selfishness and corruption of the aristocracy, the result was "moral anarchy and unsettledness, which we have witnessed and are witnessing." In his view, they had no sense of history, and

did not acknowledge the historical value of much which had ceased to be useful, nor saw that institutions and creeds, now effete, had rendered essential services to civilization, and still filled a place in the human mind, and in the arrangements of society, which could not without great peril be left vacant."<sup>48</sup>

In the institutions they destroyed – presumably the monarchy, aristocracy, and the primary role of the church – they failed to see "necessary elements of civilized society".<sup>49</sup> Mill did not become a Coleridgean, nor did he completely abandon Bentham's materialism, instead consciously and eclectically taking what he agreed with from each.<sup>50</sup>

In *Considerations*, Mill had a contradictory agenda. He wanted progress, in this case towards a more representative form of government, because that would ensure future prosperity and stability. However, he also wanted to protect property. Like Carlyle, Mill saw the working class as both the coming power

---

<sup>47</sup> Mill, Coleridge, pp. 136-7.

<sup>48</sup> Mill, Coleridge, p. 138.

<sup>49</sup> Mill, Coleridge, p. 138; also p. 139.

<sup>50</sup> Turk argues that "an apologia for eclecticism" was one of Coleridge's most important influences on Mill, Coleridge and Mill, p. 213.



and a danger. Paul Smart thought *Considerations* “characterised partly by a dread fear of the labouring classes and their potentially destructive political power”.<sup>51</sup> Graeme Duncan made the same point: Mill dreaded “the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass”; “the uncultivated herd who now compose the labouring masses”.<sup>52</sup> Mill also feared “that source of enmity which is universal in this country towards the whole class of employers, in the whole class of employed”. And he feared the hatred towards owners of property. “When, indeed, the poor are so poor that they can scarcely be worse off, respect on their parts of rights of property which they cannot hope to share, are never safely to be calculated upon.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in *Considerations*, there was an extensive discussion of the supposed dangers of universal suffrage.<sup>54</sup> According to Duncan, Mill was “primarily concerned at the use which the poorest and most numerous class might make of political power.” A democratic suffrage would likely produce “a legislature reflecting exclusively the opinions and preferences of the most ignorant class.”<sup>55</sup> This concern for property and social stability reflected both Mill’s class position, and his concern for the future of bourgeois society. Both John and his father, James, were part of the imperial establishment, as senior officials of the East India Company. Mill’s popular reputation as a champion of liberty and

---

<sup>51</sup> Paul Smart, *Mill and Marx: Individual liberty and the roads to freedom*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1991, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup> Graeme Duncan, *Marx and Mill: Two views of social conflict and social harmony*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1973, p. 228.

<sup>53</sup> Duncan, *Marx and Mill*, p. 227.

<sup>54</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 212-222.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Duncan, *Marx and Mill*, p. 228.

universal suffrage is wildly exaggerated.<sup>56</sup> Only the educated and cultured received Mill's approval.

Like all the great, radical liberal philosophers, Jeremy Bentham was a universalist. The logic of Mill's position drove him to particularism, and especially, to the mystification of the nation:

That which alone causes any material interests to exist, which alone enables any body of human beings to exist as a society, is national character... The true teacher of the fitting social arrangements for England, France, or America, is the one who can point out how the English, French, or American character can be improved, and how it has been made what it is. A philosophy of laws and institutions, not founded on a philosophy of national character, is an absurdity.<sup>57</sup>

Where Bentham was a system-builder, working from general principles, Mill oriented to the value of tradition, and of history in showing what had actually "worked":

The very fact that a certain set of political institutions already exist, have long existed, and have become associated with all the historical recollections of a people, is in itself, as far as it goes, a property which adapts them to that people, and gives them a great advantage over any new institutions in obtaining that ready and willing resignation to what has once been decided by lawful authority, which alone renders possible those innumerable compromises between adverse interests and

---

<sup>56</sup> Currin V Shields argues this with particular vigour, "Introduction" in John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, with an introduction by Currin V Shields, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1957, esp. pp. xxvi ff.

<sup>57</sup> John Stuart Mill, "Bentham" in his, *Essays on ethics, religion and society*, Volume X, Collected works of John Stuart Mill, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, p. 99.

expectations, without which no government could be carried on for a year, and with difficulty even for a week.<sup>58</sup>

Thus the business of creating political institutions, and a national political ideology, was a matter of understanding what had succeeded in the past, what had been able to work in the popular imagination, what had tapped into pre-existing prejudices and already had legitimacy. Different institutions were needed for each country, as the “national character” of each was different. When Mill applied this particularism to the colonial world, he revealed a contempt for “backward” peoples that paralleled his contempt for the British working class. In *Considerations*, Mill even argued a progressive role for slavery and imperialism:

a people in a state of savage independence, in which every one lives for himself, exempt, unless by fits, from any external control, is practically incapable of making any progress in civilisation until it has learnt to obey. The indispensable virtue, therefore, in a government which establishes itself over a people of this sort is, that it makes itself obeyed. To enable it to do this, the constitution of the government must be nearly, or quite, despotic.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> John Stuart Mill, “Remarks on Bentham’s philosophy” in his *Essays on ethics, religion and society*, Volume X, Collected works of John Stuart Mill, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp 131-2; he writes “even personal slavery, by giving a commencement to industrial life, and enforcing it as the exclusive occupation of the most numerous portion of the community, may accelerate the transition to a better freedom than that of fighting and rapine.” Mill does not propose sanctioning slavery by civilised states; they “have far other means of imparting civilisation to those under their influence; and slavery is, in all its details, so repugnant to that government of law which is the foundation of all modern life, and so corrupting to the master-class”, p. 132.

Mill's theory was therefore profoundly elitist at both the domestic and imperial level.<sup>60</sup> *Considerations* is a discussion about how the rich and educated imperial minority might best rule society, in which the poor and ignorant, or the colonised, are the majority. Indeed, he specifically disavowed the democratic ideas of earlier thinkers, "in which it was customary to claim representative democracy for England or France by arguments which would equally have proved it the only fit form of government for Bedouins or Malays."<sup>61</sup>

Duncan saw Mill's argument as an attempt to mitigate class conflict and avoid fundamental cleavages which would destroy society; and hence a manifesto for the status quo.<sup>62</sup> Thus both class hegemony and racism were fused in Mill: a racial idea of the nation became a means to contain class struggle and social strife at home, and to maintain the distance between the imperial rulers and the colonised of India and elsewhere in the wider empire.

Therefore, it is not in labourism, but the aristocratic Romanticism and anti-liberalism of the early nineteenth century, that one of the principal intellectual foundations of the White Australia policy is rooted: the idea of the homogeneous nation, protected by strong immigration laws against people who supposedly could not assimilate into a British culture. John Stuart Mill was not the original architect of such politics, but he played a pivotal role in theorising and legitimising them for both British and colonial liberals. In practice, the

---

<sup>60</sup> There is an extensive literature on the "aristocratic" element in Mill's politics. As well as works already cited, it includes, Alan S Kahan, *Aristocratic liberalism: The social and political thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992; Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (California), 1994; Turk, Coleridge and Mill.

<sup>61</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 130.

<sup>62</sup> Duncan, *Marx and Mill*, pp. 269-72.

politics of social homogeneity and immigration control would throw up contradictions and dilemmas for colonial liberals. This chapter will now proceed to discuss how the struggle for a culturally homogeneous society was waged in colonial Australia.

## The dilemmas of homogeneity 1: Where do you draw the line?

For colonial liberals, there were several problems with the strategy of homogeneity. The first was that Britain, and indeed England itself, were multi-ethnic societies. What, then did homogeneity mean in these circumstances? The entire logic of nationalism, and especially the demand for homogeneity, was to draw a line and exclude those who did not fit into the “homogeneous” people. Ernest Gellner likened cultural nationalism to the setting up of an exclusive club, with membership defined by sentiment; while Eric Hobsbawm pointed to the terrible consequences that exclusion implied for those who did not fit easily within the definition of the nation.<sup>63</sup>

Nationalists have long argued over who does and does not “fit” within the nation, and what the nation actually consisted of, and these arguments were often very messy. To deal with some of this, Mill theorised the concept of

---

<sup>63</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 68; Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*, pp. 93-100, discusses the way these conflicts were initially focused on the issue of national language.

assimilation. He argued that stronger nationalities could absorb and transform weaker and more backward ones, and that this would benefit humanity:

Nobody can suppose that it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilized and cultivated people – to be a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all privileges of French citizenship, sharing the advantages of French protection and the dignity and prestige of French power – than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlander as members of the British nation.<sup>64</sup>

In popular form, this was the idea that the English “race” had a unique power to assimilate the people of certain other societies. This idea recognised – indeed was built on – an acknowledgement that, “Strict purity of blood is not to be found in any nation, and the greater part a nation plays in the history of the world, the further it is sure to be from any such purity.”<sup>65</sup> In a sense, the notion of the assimilating power of the English was just another expression of English racial superiority which was so dominant in late colonial Australia; but it also provided a bridge from a multi-ethnic history – including the multi-ethnic history of England itself – to the homogeneity idealised by Mill and others.<sup>66</sup> It

---

<sup>64</sup> Mill, *Considerations* [Shields edition], p. 234.

<sup>65</sup> *Victorian Review*, vol 8, no 43, May 1883, pp 99-100, in the regular column “The contemporary thought of Great Britain, Europe, and the United States”, in this case summarising Longman's Magazine, Nov-Feb (1882-3).

<sup>66</sup> Britain's (and England's) multi-ethnic history is touched on in J Crozier, “Ireland and historical comparisons”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 18, April 1881, pp. 698-706. The supposed assimilating power of British and Christian civilisation is discussed with reference to Jewish people in a summary of the April 1883 issue of *The Edinburgh Review* in “The contemporary thought of Great Britain, Europe, and the United States”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 45, July 1883, p. 317.

was celebrated in an 1862 despatch by Queensland Governor, Sir George Bowen, describing a trip to the northern ports where he met successful “foreigners” who had married in the colony, whose children spoke English, and who saw the English national anthem as their own.<sup>67</sup> Many saw the United States and its famous “melting pot” as an example of this; some with the twist that “the dominant English element asserts its supremacy by assimilating the stranger.”<sup>68</sup>

The necessity for assimilation could be used to apply pressure on the acceptable non-English to take themselves over that bridge. When J Crozier discussed the Irish problem in the *Victorian Review*, he argued that the Saxons had eventually submitted to the Normans, and despite “the most vexatious of tyrannies...in the end they coalesced with the victors, and the amalgamation of race resulted in producing a united England, strong at home and abroad.” The Scottish Highlanders, he argued, had responded to their dispossession by going “out into the world to seek for other homes”. The tragedy of Ireland was that it was still, after six centuries, unreconciled to England.<sup>69</sup> In 1885, the journal’s editor lamented:

Ireland’s greatest misfortune is that she cannot sink her nationality and, like Scotland, become English in the broadest meaning of the word. In

---

<sup>67</sup> Sir George Bowen, *Thirty years of colonial government: A selection from the despatches and letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G., etc, Governor successively of Queensland, New Zealand, Victoria, Mauritius and Hong Kong*, edited by Stanley Lane-Poole, 2 vols, Longmans, Green & Co, London & New York, 1889, vol. 1, pp. 224-229.

<sup>68</sup> *Victorian Review*, vol 8, no 43, May 1883, pp 99-100, in the regular column “The contemporary thought of Great Britain, Europe, and the United States”, in this case summarising Longman's Magazine, Nov-Feb (1882-3).

<sup>69</sup> J Crozier, “Ireland and historical comparisons”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 18, April 1881, pp. 698-9.

that case, she would really become an integral and contented portion of the British Empire.<sup>70</sup>

It was, of course, news to many Scots that they had sunk their nationality into Englishness. A polite, but tart, reply was published the next month, from prominent journalist, Angus Mackay. He warned that while they respected the English, the Scots were upset by claims that they were part of England. He complained about colonials saying England or English as if there was no Scotland or Scots and defended the existence of a separate Irish national character. "There is no fear of any power on earth, either of sentiment or force, absorbing or destroying Scottish nationality or national feeling," he warned.<sup>71</sup>

The Queensland liberals presented the issue of amalgamation in a less humiliating or threatening manner. When introducing his legislation to encourage the indenture of European labourers to Queensland, Samuel Griffith emphasised the multi-racial composition of the English, and the ability of those indentured to be assimilated into the mainstream:

we must remember the stock from which we came. We have in our veins the blood of many countries besides England; Germany and Scandinavia are both countries related to us in blood, and the people of both these countries have shown that they make admirable colonists, not only in

---

<sup>70</sup> H Mortimer Franklyn, "Ireland a nation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 13, no. 73, November 1885, pp. 66-82, quote p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> Angus Mackay, "Is Scotland merged into England?" *Victorian Review*, vol. 13, no. 74, December 1885, pp. 157-61. This is by no means a dead issue; in 1995 the British government created a furore when its chief adviser on school curriculum called for "the development of a British cultural identity in all schoolchildren regardless of their ethnic background", with an emphasis on "the English language, English history and literary heritage" etc; Alexander Grant and Keith J Stringer, "Introduction: The enigma of British history" in their (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 4. Quotes are from *The Guardian*, 19 July 1995.



Australia, but in the United States and the Dominion of Canada. I should be glad to welcome any number of men from either of these two countries. They will coalesce with our own race, and form one united people.<sup>72</sup>

In response, the conservative leader, Boyd Morehead, decried the presence of German immigrants in Queensland, arguing that they remained a separate, national bloc:

the German vote is now looked upon as a fixed factor in politics in this colony. It is looked upon as a solid vote; and because it is a solid vote it may be a very good thing for the junior member for Toowoomba... But I look at it in a different light. Here we have men coming from the most despotic country in the world, and though they enjoy all the privileges of our liberal institutions they only blindly bind themselves together and become a dangerous political factor... only a few years ago we had an instance of it down at Beenleigh, where a German pastor refused to allow English to be spoken in his school.<sup>73</sup>

We cannot know whether this was a true reflection of Morehead's opinion, or a purely opportunist attack on a piece of legislation the conservatives were attempting to destroy. Either way, it points to the vulnerability of even the whitest of white immigrant communities faced with ruling class elements determined to seek political advantage in a climate of national conformism.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, 1884, p. 274.

<sup>73</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, 1884, p. 281.

<sup>74</sup> I raise the issue of opportunism, not merely because of Morehead's general character, but because this view of German immigrants was very different to that of McIlwraith's. In the 1888 election, McIlwraith, back in the leadership of the conservatives, managed to literally buy a major German-community newspaper and gain its political backing, which in turn helped return him to power. Some years later, at a banquet in his honour in London, McIlwraith described Germans as the best colonists for Queensland.

Griffith's Treasurer, James Dickson, in reply to Morehead, made his Premier's point more explicitly: it was a question of creating a new national type:

In another generation there will be no Germans here, nor Irish, nor Scotch, [sic] nor English – they will all be Queenslanders; and the sooner we recognise that fact, and become imbued with national feelings, and become citizens of this great and fair land of Queensland, the greater will be the chance of our becoming a large and powerful nation.<sup>75</sup>

For his part, Sir Henry Parkes took a harsh position, insisting that non-British immigrants had to be forcibly dispersed and assimilated. In 1881, about 200 Italian men, women and children arrived in Sydney, survivors of a failed colonisation experiment in tropical New Ireland. The New South Wales government agreed to help them settle, but insisted that they disperse into the community, something they resisted. The Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, twice visited the Italians to insist on their dispersal, warning that, "The Government did not approve of having a colony within a colony",<sup>76</sup> and that, "The customs of the country and other circumstances render it undesirable, indeed almost impossible, for them to settle down altogether in one locality", even to the point where "friends and families may have to separate".<sup>77</sup> The "need" for a culturally homogeneous society meant that these traumatised people had to

---

<sup>75</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1884, vol. XLIII, p. 285.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Ann Curthoys, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973, p. 643. Curthoys, pp. 614ff deals with the general demand that "white European" immigrants disperse and become "English", but she does not seek theoretical roots for this approach.

<sup>77</sup> This was part of an official notice, dated 21 April 1881, that was pasted up on the walls of their barracks, NSW State Records, Colonial Secretary's special bundles, 4/828.1. Dispersal was also argued in terms of learning English and the customs of the country.

make a new life in a completely alien environment, without the presence or close support of their countryfolk.<sup>78</sup>

At least Parkes' response indicated that Italians *could* become "Australians"; there were other peoples who were simply not acceptable. When agitating for the imperial government to annexe Fiji to the empire in 1874, Parkes insisted that Fiji could not be added to New South Wales. In a letter to the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, he wrote: "the system of representative Government under which we live could not by any possible adjustment be extended to a mixed population the great majority of whom are in the condition of the aboriginal inhabitants of Fiji".<sup>79</sup>

The issue of where to draw the line was not merely a political one. It had an impact on the rate of growth in the Australian colonies. Australia's great rival for immigrants was the United States, whose explosive expansion after the mid-1870s depression rested on a staggering level of immigration: over half a million a year on average in 1880-93, never dipping below 200,000 a year during the 1890s depression, soaring later, in 1905-14, to an average of over a million a year.<sup>80</sup> The major sources of this staggering immigration were Germany (1,031,500 in years 1881-5 and 548,200 1886-1890), the Scandinavian countries (352,300 and 304,200), Celtic Ireland (345,400 and 310,100) and Italy (109,500 and 197,800).<sup>81</sup> By comparison, Australian governments were largely uninterested, if

---

<sup>78</sup> In fact, most managed to cohere in a community in northern NSW, now called "New Italy".

<sup>79</sup> Minute dated 16 May 1874, NSW Col Sec correspo special bundles 4/788.3.

<sup>80</sup> Vernon M Briggs Jr, *Mass immigration and the national interest*, second edition, ME Sharpe, Armonk (New York), 1996, pp. 55-6.

<sup>81</sup> Edward Alsworth Ross, *The old world in the new: The significance of past and present immigration to the American people*, T Fisher Unwin, London, 1914, pp. 45, 66, 92, 119.

not hostile, to encouraging immigration from these countries. Only Queensland offered assisted passages to a small quota of Germans and Scandinavians; all colonies felt they were getting too many Irish, and none sought Italians, apart from a brief Queensland experiment in 1891.<sup>82</sup>

This approach, of focusing on ethnic selection for an homogeneous population, was hegemonic, but not universally supported. In the *Victorian Review*, Francis Myers argued instead for unrestricted European immigration, and a “melting pot” approach:

'Tis a mean, a contemptible thing, that puerile jealousy, which shrinks from a fancied danger in immigration unequally apportioned amongst the three strains of British blood. Welcome to all! must be the true Australian patriot's creed. Their national impulse will sink beneath the influence of new conditions and associations; and children will be born to them, stamped with the characteristics, and imbued with the genius of their native land.<sup>83</sup>

Myers argued for the colonies to follow the lead of America and both federate and separate themselves politically from the British Empire, to avoid the bloodshed that would result from involvement in a European war. In particular, he argued for an end to nationally limited immigration programs, and for throwing open the ports to all from Europe.

---

<sup>82</sup> There was no official assistance for immigrants to the US, but moving there was far cheaper and easier for unassisted migrants than moving to Australia. For NSW and Germans, Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 616. With the recruitment of indentured Pacific Islanders banned under the 1885 law from the end of 1890, there was a brief experiment with the recruitment of Italians for the sugar plantations. The history of that experiment, and the manoeuvres surrounding it and its demise, is told in William A Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1995.

<sup>83</sup> Francis Myers, “The strength of isolation”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 15, Jan 1881, p. 292.

There were “practical” proposals too to boost migration to Australia beyond the limits set by the population balance formula. ET Wakefield saw large-scale emigration as the solution to the poverty of Ireland and proposed the wholesale emigration of entire communities, so as to maintain family and local ties.

Queensland Premier McIlwraith’s 1881 proposal for a trans-continental railway through the centre of Queensland might, he thought, provide both the impetus for this organised colonisation, as well as an economic incentive. He argued that many tropical and sub-tropical agricultural products required a large pool of seasonal labour and hence a higher population density. Under his scheme, “in a few years your colony would have shot ahead of all the other Australian Colonies: and you would live to see attained a degree of prosperity that otherwise would not be reached by your great grand children.”<sup>84</sup> These alternative developmental ideas were rejected at some cost to the development of Australian capitalism.

Arguments about who could or could not be assimilated, and under what conditions, would become a feature of Australian political debate over the next century; indeed they were still present in the furore over Middle Eastern refugees in 2001 and after. But there was one group who were regarded as completely unassimilable, and therefore a threat to the homogeneity that rising Australia needed: the Chinese.

---

<sup>84</sup> Letters in McIlwraith correspondence, John Oxley Library, OM64-19/9, dated 17 June 1881 and 30 June 1881 and accompanying document and pamphlet. I could find no record of McIlwraith’s own opinions on Wakefield’s scheme – he had clearly encouraged Wakefield to adapt it to suit Queensland’s needs. It is possible that it was vetoed by the British-based consortium bidding for the right to build the railway (although I found no such reference in the many letters from them to McIlwraith in the McIlwraith papers); equally the broad ruling class hostility to Irish Catholics could have been enough to make such a proposal problematic.

## Chinese people as a 'threat' to free institutions

The idea that Chinese people could not assimilate with Europeans was a constant theme in ruling class discussions and in the colonial newspapers; and many went on to explicitly link that belief to the idea, *pace* Mill, that this supposedly made Chinese people a threat to the “free institutions” so cherished by the Anglo-Australian population. During the early weeks of the 1878 seamen’s strike, the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* argued:

their tastes, their habits, and their modes of thought are extremely dissimilar from those of Europeans; so great, indeed, is the diversity between the two races that it is difficult to conceive of the possibility of their amalgamating and becoming a homogeneous people. If such amalgamation were possible, it could only be effected with the loss of very much which the Anglo-Australian colonist holds most dear, in social, religious, and political life.<sup>85</sup>

The editorialists of the conservative *Brisbane Courier* summed up Australian ruling class political thought when discussing the Polynesian Labourers Bill of 1880.

Our Legislature has recognised the fact that, in our society, which is purely democratic, it is clearly a misfortune to have an intermixture of people who cannot fuse into the same mass as the rest of the community, and who displace others that could do so.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 27 November 1878.

<sup>86</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 29 October 1880, p. 2, col. 3.

For the journalist, Carl Feilberg, associated at the time with the conservative Melbourne *Argus*, Chinese people “cannot assimilate with a self-governing colonial community, and if introduced in large numbers they will cause a severe, and perhaps fatal, attack of social and political dyspepsia.”<sup>87</sup> Not long back from the Intercolonial Conference of 1881, and debating a bill to restrict Chinese immigration into South Australia, the colony’s Minister Responsible for the Northern Territory, John Langdon Parsons, thought “It was almost impossible from such diverse elements [ie British and Chinese] to be able to build up a solid, compact, and well-welded State.”<sup>88</sup>

A wide range of arguments were mobilised to prove that Chinese people could not integrate with Europeans in Australia. These included the supposedly fixed character of the Chinese, enslavement to custom, passivity and hence supposed preference for despotism. These arguments too, either drew on Mill, or were reinforced by him. In his classic, *On Liberty*, he wrote of the “despotism of custom” being everywhere “the standing hindrance to human advancement”. He linked this to Asian society, and China in particular, where democracy was unthinkable:<sup>89</sup>

A people are no less unfitted for representative government by...extreme passiveness, and ready submission to tyranny. If a people thus prostrated by character and circumstances could obtain representative institutions, they would inevitably choose their tyrants as their representatives, and the yoke would be made heavier on them.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Carl A Feilberg, “Can the Chinaman be made a good colonist?” *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, Jan 1880, p. 363.

<sup>88</sup> *SAPD*, 1881, col. 112.

<sup>89</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>90</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, p. 154.

These concerns were widely echoed in Australian politics. In the 1879 debate on Parkes' *Chinese Immigration Regulation Bill* in the NSW Legislative Assembly, James Greenwood said the Chinese had "inertia stamped upon their faces...it would take ages to lift them up and make them worthy of the liberties the people here enjoyed",<sup>91</sup> while Daniel O'Connor argued that the Chinese "had not the ingredients of improvement in them".<sup>92</sup> In the South Australian Legislative Council, Dr. Campbell thought "the Chinaman's greatness had been his ability to stand still... His inferiority was like his country's poverty – it was simply from lack of development."<sup>93</sup> During the second reading debate on the *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill (1877)*, the Government Minister in the Queensland Upper House, Charles Stuart Mein referred to the report of the Joint Special Committee of the House of Representatives and Senate on Chinese immigration into the US, and argued that, "The American race is progressive, and in favour of a responsible representative Government. The Mongolian race seems to have no desire for progress, and to have no conception of representative and free institutions."<sup>94</sup> This position was echoed by his premier, John Douglas: "They do not desire the franchise; they could not intelligently use it; and if they had it they would control the elections... They understand no form of government but despotism".<sup>95</sup> For Carl Feilberg, an enlightened autocracy was "the form of government suited to the [Chinese] race".<sup>96</sup> Again, the point here is not simply that leading journalists and politicians had a racist view of Chinese people, but that they linked it to the future of "representative

---

<sup>91</sup> *SMH* 7 March 1879, p. 3 cols. 3-4.

<sup>92</sup> *SMH* 7 March 1879, p. 3 cols. 4-5.

<sup>93</sup> In debate on Chinese Immigration Bill, 7 September 1880, in *SAPD*, 1880, col. 995.

<sup>94</sup> *ORDLC* Qld, vol. XXII, pp. 74.

<sup>95</sup> *ORDLA* Qld, vol. XXIII, p. 246

<sup>96</sup> Feilberg, *Can the Chinaman*, pp. 371-2.



and free institutions” in Australia. For Feilberg, the unchanging nature of the Chinese person, and their orientation to autocracy, was a reflection of “a hundred generations of poverty... The untiring industry, the frugality, and perseverance of the Chinaman are the inherited instincts of his race”.<sup>97</sup>

Another of John Stuart Mill’s conditions for representative government to work was a population that respected and assisted the police:

a people must be considered unfit for more than a limited and qualified freedom, who will not co-operate actively with the law and the public authorities in the repression of evil-doers. A people who are more disposed to shelter a criminal than to apprehend him...required that the public authorities should be armed with much sterner powers of repression than elsewhere, since the first indispensable requisites of civilised life have nothing else to rest on.<sup>98</sup>

In colonial Australia, there were constant allegations that Chinese people would not help the police. The South Australian MLC, James Ramsay, quoted from a report by the NT Resident: “Inspector of Police reports that...Chinese will not assist police with information which will lead to the detection of crime, unless in serious offences committed on their own countrymen.”<sup>99</sup> A related issue was the allegation that Chinese people had their own parallel system of police, punishment and courts.<sup>100</sup> While such a situation would inherently challenge any state apparatus – and this concern was freely expressed – this was raised as proof of their supposed incapacity to be assimilated, and the threat this posed

---

<sup>97</sup> Feilberg, *Can the Chinaman*, p. 372.

<sup>98</sup> Mill, *On liberty and Considerations*, pp. 112-3.

<sup>99</sup> *SAPD*, 1888, col. 223.

<sup>100</sup> See for instance, Sir Henry Parkes in 1879, *SMH* 6 March 1879, p. 3, cols. 4-6 and p. 6, col. 1.

to “free institutions”. To these allegations was added the charge that Chinese “camps” or communities were both dens of immorality, and places of refuge for immoral and criminal Europeans.

It was not just Chinese people who were judged incapable of assimilating. The *Brisbane Courier* extended this badge of exclusion to Pacific Islanders as well:

It is idle to expiate on the moral qualities of the Polynesians, and to reckon up the number who are baptised and go to church. Hon. gentlemen who dwell on these points should go further, and face this question – are Polynesians men of whom they are prepared to admit individuals into their houses on terms of perfect social equality, or to welcome as occupants of the benches beside them in the Council Chamber? If not, they are alien particles intruded into our body politic, which cannot preserve its democratic character unless composed of individuals on whom there rests no bar of race or color that may operate to prevent them from mingling with the general body of citizens, exercising all their privileges and social opportunities.<sup>101</sup>

None of these arguments went unchallenged, and the fact that politicians and others were at pains to show Chinese people Europeanising themselves suggests the importance of this debate. Thus in the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1876, Oscar de Satgé, a conservative squatter, contended that soon after Chinese people arrived in the colony, they moved from a diet of rice and...

began to eat flour and meat, and if they were allowed time, adopted European habits in other respects. He had watched the Chinamen on the Clermont gold fields, where there were some hundreds, and he found that amongst them...several publicans, for the Chinese took to grog in

---

<sup>101</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 29 October 1880, p. 2, cols. 3-4.

the end; and, in fact, they became a respectable class of society – if that was to be thought respectable...<sup>102</sup>

Of course, de Satgé was purely interested in defeating the liberals over the issue of so-called “cheap labour”. In New South Wales, Dr Bowker claimed that, “Fifty years had not given us sufficient experience of the Chinese to say that they could not assimilate to our laws.”<sup>103</sup> The point here is not just that there were voices against excluding Chinese immigrants, but that they felt obliged to argue within the intellectual framework established by John Stuart Mill.

## Was it all just racism?

Most discussions regarding the suitability of Chinese immigrants were saturated with racism. So, was all this talk about homogeneity just a cover for this racism? Was homogeneity just a polite – seemingly neutral – way of insisting on a racist agenda? Telling the imperial government that restrictive legislation was motivated by a desire for homogeneity made the business of dealing with the Chinese government easier than telling them Chinese subjects were regarded as inferior. Was it simply the case that antipathy towards Chinese people that prompted exclusion?

---

<sup>102</sup> *QPD*, vol. XX, p. 484. The context was the first attempt by the Queensland government to increase taxes on Chinese miners by raising the duty on rice; and this measure went alongside the attempt to increase license fees on the goldfields.

<sup>103</sup> *SMH* 7 March 1879, p. 3, col. 2.

The entire doctrine of building an homogeneous society was, of course, racist: it stereotyped people according to their social and cultural origins. It is also clear that the doctrine of homogeneity worked to legitimise racial categorising. At the same time, there was a fluidity about the idea: some people were not quite so bound by their culture, and they were the people who could assimilate.

It is impossible to disentangle completely the issues. Were politicians motivated by a strategic vision (that was racist), or by personal prejudice, or both? The period we are discussing comes after two great surges of racism in Britain itself, one sparked by the Indian war of independence of 1857, and the second by the massacre of Black people unleashed by Jamaica's Governor Eyre in 1865.<sup>104</sup> A survey of Sydney's *Evening News* for the 1870s showed the paper to be saturated with racist stereotyping.<sup>105</sup>

The assertion that Chinese people could not "assimilate" was not borne out in practice. There is a considerable and growing scholarship discussing the history

---

<sup>104</sup> See Ronald Hyam, *Britain's imperial century 1815-1914: A study of empire and expansion*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1976, pp. 70-81. Edward John Eyre, known in Australia as an "explorer", was Governor of Jamaica in 1865 when he suppressed an organised protest by Black people against a local magistrate. Eyre declared martial law, had the charismatic Black leader GW Gordon arrested, court-martialled and then ordered the death penalty himself. Some 439 people were killed or hung, 600 flogged and a thousand homes burned. The hangings went on for five weeks. Eyre was recalled, and two mass movements were built in response. One, led by Thomas Carlyle, and drawing together the conservative literati and clergy of Britain, demanded his exoneration; the other, led by John Stuart Mill and drawing together scientists and democrats, demanded his prosecution. This is widely seen as a turning point, after which racism became more explicit, normal and derogatory in Britain; see also Bernard Semmel, "The philosophical radicals and colonialism", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 21, no. 4, December 1961, pp. 513-25; CC Eldridge, *The imperial experience: From Carlyle to Forster*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1996, pp. 151-6; Douglas A Lorimer, *Colour, class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century*, Leicester University Press, 1978, pp. 178-200; Malik, *The meaning of race*, pp. 97-8; Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 297-9.

<sup>105</sup> I drew this conclusion after reading and analysing all editions of the *Evening News* (Sydney) for the months of March 1870, 1872, 1874, 1876 and 1878.

of Chinese people and Chinese communities in Australia, and one of the common themes to have emerged is that, alongside racism, there was a significant, if uneven, level of Chinese integration into mainstream Anglo-Australian society.<sup>106</sup> For instance, Morag Loh has shown how one Chinese herbalist in the early twentieth century had an extensive European practice in Gippsland, while Kate Bagnall has unearthed evidence of considerable mutual sympathy between white Australian women and the Chinese hawkers who visited their homes.<sup>107</sup> In his study of the 1873 Clunes “riot”, when Chinese miners were recruited to break a miners’ strike, Jerome Small found that the Chinese miners recruited had had little contact with European-Australians, and that the European Clunes miners were warned of the scabbing by Ballarat Chinese miners who were well integrated into their predominantly European community.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from the supposed dislike felt by European Australians towards Chinese people, there were two issues upon which the debate about homogeneity

---

<sup>106</sup> This is evidenced by the papers presented at a succession of conferences on the history of Chinese communities in Australia; by the articles in the special edition, “Active voices, hidden histories”, vol. 6, 2004, of the *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, and by the launch in May 2005 of a new academic journal, the *Journal of Chinese Australia*.

<sup>107</sup> Morag Loh, “A country practice: Thomas Chong, herbalist of Bairnsdale; his place, his practice, his peers” in Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific, Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 15-25; Kate Bagnall, “Across the threshold: White women and Chinese hawkers in the white colonial imaginary”, Paper presented to the 11th biennial conference of the Australian Historical Association, Brisbane, 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Jerome Small, “Reconsidering White Australia: Class and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot”, BA Hons thesis, La Trobe University, 1997. Various adaptations of this thesis have been published; most accessibly his “Reconsidering White Australia: Class and racism in the 1873 Clunes riot” on the Marxist Interventions website, [online] <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions/raceriots.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006].

focused most intensely: intermarriage, and voting. No-one pursued these themes with more vigour than Sir Henry Parkes. At a crucial moment in his campaign, introducing his anti-Chinese bill of 1888, he declared:

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 all our social rights, including the right of marriage.<sup>109</sup>

The issue with voting was simple: giving Chinese people an influence over politics and the state could ultimately threaten Anglo-Australian colonisation, and the ruling class's control over the continent (as discussed in chapter 3). Sydney's best-selling newspaper, the *Evening News*, declared that, unlike the squatters and their conservative supporters, the liberals

have realised that the free social, as well as political, life of the colony would be endangered by the presence of a large population which could not be trusted with political rights, and they have legislated accordingly.<sup>110</sup>

When it came to marriage, the problem for Parkes, and many other anti-Chinese ideologues, was that some "white" women *were* prepared to marry Chinese men. In Victoria, there were 250 marriages between Chinese men and European women in 1866-80; while in NSW in 1878, 181 European women were married to Chinese men, with another 171 de facto marriages.<sup>111</sup> Confronted with

---

<sup>109</sup> Sir Henry Parkes, *Fifty years in the making of Australian history*, 2 vols, Books for Libraries Press, Freeport NY, 1971 (orig 1892), p. 478.

<sup>110</sup> *Evening News* (Syd), 16 November 1878.

<sup>111</sup> Andrew Markus, "The burden of hate: The Australian inter-racial experience, 1850-1901. A comparative study of the Australian mainland colonies and California, with special emphasis

evidence of this from a report of the slum areas of Sydney, he responded that it not only condemned the Chinese, but also “our own sisters... It was a most frightful stigma on the character of English women... [It] describes a state of female depravity impossible to believe.”<sup>112</sup> In the South Australian parliament, John Moule MLA described his family as not recognising a marriage between one of their family and a Chinese man. “He objected to people coming with whom we could not assimilate.”<sup>113</sup> Clearly, the ability to assimilate was in the eye of the beholder. In the late 1880s, Melbourne and Sydney, detectives were assigned to find women living with Chinese men, and to ascertain whether they could be charged with vagrancy.<sup>114</sup>

Intermarriage was a fundamental mechanism for the strategists of homogeneity. Indeed the Protector of Aborigines in New South Wales suggested, in 1882, that with “the Black aborigines...fast disappearing &...destined to soon become an extinct Race”, that “the great number of half-castes...should not be...allowed to live a gipsy life...[but] compelled to work for their own living – and thus ultimately merge into the general population.”<sup>115</sup> There were, however, a variety of viewpoints on the issue of intermarriage. One of the chief complaints about Chinese immigrants was that they were mostly male, that they didn’t bring women, and it was darkly hinted that they must

---

on the working class”, PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1974, pp. 221-2; see also John F Horsley, “The Chinese in Victoria”, *Melbourne Review*, no. 16, October 1879, p. 418.

<sup>112</sup> Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 428. The context of this comment was debate on the report of the Select Committee into Common Lodging-Houses, in the NSW Parliament in 1876.

<sup>113</sup> *SAPD*, 1888, col. 586.

<sup>114</sup> EH Parker, “Report on the Chinese question”, Report no. 24867 of the British Foreign Office, December 1888, found in Qld State Archives, PRV7188-1-1, pp. 5-6.

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Governor Loftus to Lord Kimberley, 4 October 1882, in Governor’s Correspondence, NSW State Records, 4/1646, letter 168, p. 311.

have been engaged in widespread homosexuality. Some religious figures concluded that it might be a good thing if Chinese men married suitable white women, which put them at odds with people like Parkes. Indeed, Rev John Dunmore Lang, a leading liberal agitator in mid-nineteenth century New South Wales, and a longstanding opponent of Chinese immigration, became one priest who did marry many Chinese men and European women, leading him to soften his attitude to Chinese immigration in general. On his death in 1878, thousands of Chinese people marched in his funeral procession. In the controversy surrounding the ASN dispute of that year, the Bishop of Melbourne suggested that the colonies should encourage intermarriage and social intercourse between Chinese and Europeans.<sup>116</sup>

A handful of ruling class figures argued against the doctrines of racial superiority and racial purity. Henry Copeland MLA, a significant figure in New South Wales politics in the 1870s and 1880s, supported legislation to restrict the entry of Chinese people in the parliamentary debate of 1879, on the grounds that he wanted a European population settled in the colony, and supported the seafarers strike of 1878-9 when their employer, the Australasian Steam Navigation Company (ASN), replaced them with Chinese sailors. But he rejected any idea that "Europeans were such a God-descended race that they were entitled to monopolize the greatest portion of the earth's surface." These were interesting sentiments coming from a long-time gold miner, and representative for a goldfields electorate. He also specifically rejected the broader fear of racial contamination. When challenged, he replied with an argument familiar to pastoralists and stock-breeders:

---

<sup>116</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* (Qld), 19 December 1878.



He thought rather that the mixture [of Europeans and Chinese] would invigorate the race. There was nothing like a cross. He would ask hon. gentlemen to set aside foolish prejudices and say where they could find prettier children than those resulting from marriages of Chinese with white women.<sup>117</sup>

More typical was the response of the maverick ultra-conservative Captain Arthur Onslow MLC. With an arrogance unique to the most elevated of the ruling class, he declared that, “the class of women who marry the Chinese are so utterly debauched that it is the Chinese who suffer from the marriages... I cannot think that any decent woman would submit to the embraces of a Chinaman.”<sup>118</sup>

However, there is nothing in revulsion at intermarriage that inherently leads to a politics of exclusion. Many American whites were repelled at the idea of intermarriage with blacks, and even passed laws to prevent it, but this did not imply an agenda of exclusion. Some in the Anglo-Australian ruling class who considered the Chinese inferior and degraded, wanted them for low-paid manual labour. Moreover, amongst the Anglo-Australian ruling class, there was revulsion at the idea of marriage across *class* lines, of marrying down. The maverick right wing liberal, Arthur Bruce Smith, lamented that:

It is too frequently supposed by the more fortunate, and more delicately nurtured side of society, that the distinction among men in wealth,

---

<sup>117</sup> *SMH*, 7 March 1879, p. 3, c. 1. Copeland’s comment was greeted with outrage. Copeland’s significance can be gathered by the length of his entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, nearly two pages. He was a liberal and supporter of Parkes; and after falling out with him, became a minister in the Stuart government in 1882, until he made a drunken speech on St Patrick’s Day 1883 and was sacked from the ministry.

<sup>118</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 5, p. 647.

education, and social position, is of an innate and permanent character; and that what are called the working classes, constitute a distinct species of human nature, designed by Providence for the purpose of doing the rough and objectionable work of the world.<sup>119</sup>

Nevertheless, the idea that national homogeneity was necessary allowed racist hostility towards Chinese people to be fashioned into an agenda of exclusion. Equally, those who rejected racist paranoia could also be convinced of the need for exclusion. In the New South Wales Legislative Council in 1881, John Watt supported the Parkes government's second attempt at restrictive legislation, but he did so while rejecting much of its argument. "I do not participate in the terrors conjured up" by the government, he declared. "I have no fear that our civilisation will be endangered or that the Chinese will come here in such large numbers as to overwhelm us." In many situations, he argued, Chinese people had saved communities through their supply of vegetables, or their steady labour. But he still supported restriction, for reasons of homogeneity. "The national instinct, however, is opposed to the Chinese, and we may rely upon it that the national instinct is true." This argument was challenged by Philip Gidley King, another supporter of restriction, who nevertheless argued that "Those who are guided by instincts are generally inferior to those who are guided by reason. Instinct guides the lower animals..."<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Bruce Smith, *Liberty and liberalism: A protest against the growing tendency toward undue interference by the state, with individual liberty, private enterprise and the rights of property*, Centre for Independent Studies, St Leonards (NSW), 2005 (first published 1887), p. 168. Bruce Smith rejected such ideas as a challenge to the fundamental principle of equality, but his own credentials on this issue are questionable; his daughter remembers that to him, "Labour politicians and their supporters were considered to be of the lower orders and therefore their views were not tolerated in the way the middle-class politicians were." Yvonne Larsson, "The political ideas of Arthur Bruce Smith", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1974, p. 95, Papers of Yvonne Anne Larsson, University of Sydney Archives, Agency P184, Accession 1303, Box 1.

<sup>120</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 5, p. 690.

Many of those who opposed the restriction of Chinese labour did so on the grounds that a larger population of Asian labourers would mean that, "The labourer and the skilled artisan would be forced higher up the social scale, and, rather than work in association with the Chinaman, he would take the higher position."<sup>121</sup> Frederick Darley MLC drew on Mill's approach to reject any idea of allowing the development of "a subservient class composed of Chinese, or some other inferior race of people" because "It would be impossible to form a nation out of such a community."<sup>122</sup>

## The dilemmas of homogeneity II: What is to be done about the Irish?

Another reason that the pursuit of homogeneity was central to the ruling class was that, unlike Britain or the Austro-Hungarian Empire or France, Australia was a colonial settler state. The vast majority of its population were immigrants, or the children of immigrants. From 1787 onwards, the peopling of Australia had at every step been a deliberate process. Governments had spent vast sums of money to attract immigrants, and parliaments, newspapers and the public had debated the kind of people they wanted. Standing in the shadow cast by John Stuart Mill, Australia's colonial politicians felt that every decision about the peopling of Australia would have profound political consequences for the future. The argument for homogeneity was not simply a device to exclude

---

<sup>121</sup> John F Horsley, *The Chinese in Victoria*, p. 428.

<sup>122</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 5, p. 683. Darley was NSW Chief Justice from 1886-1909.

(disliked) Chinese people. This can be seen in the dilemmas the Anglo-Australian ruling class faced in dealing with the Catholic Irish, who were particularly contentious as immigrants. In part this was because the colonies faced a conundrum. Poor Irish Catholics were easier to get as potential immigrants, and their labour was needed. However, they also came with potentially dangerous ideas: both Roman Catholicism, which was seen by the Protestant establishment as an obstacle to progress; and a profound antipathy to Britain as a result of conflicts in Ireland itself.

One way the southern colonial governments found to deal with this “problem” was to insist that, “immigrants should be brought from England, Scotland and Ireland in proportion to the total population of those three kingdoms.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, while there was no active restriction of Irish people coming to live in the colonies, there was a restrictive quota in place to limit the number assisted. The degree to which colonial governments were sensitive about this ethnic mix can be seen from the reaction to the British government’s proposed Irish Land Bill of 1881, which included a provision for the assisted emigration of agricultural labourers to British colonies. From New South Wales came a very sharply worded protest:

the Legislature of New South Wales has made it a condition in the public expenditure for Immigration that the immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland should not be in such excess in respect to any one country as to disturb the national elements of the three Kingdoms at present prevailing in the population of the Colony.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth Bray, “Government-sponsored immigration into South Australia 1872-86”, MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1961, pp. 171-2. In general, Wales is not mentioned in this regard.

<sup>124</sup> In a minute to Governor Loftus from the Parkes Government, signed by Parkes and dated 27 July 1881. In Parkes corresp, A916 p. 484.

Immigrants were welcome so long as they “are persons suited to the work of colonization and to the independent exercise of their rights under our free Institutions”, but not if they were going to bring seditious doctrines and create discord.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, when an Ulsterman approached Daniel Cooper for his opinion on a plan to set up an agricultural colony in New South Wales, he was disabused. Cooper reported the approach to Sir Henry Parkes, saying: “I told him at once it could not be done and if it could you were dead against Irish Colonies as Irishmen were very good Colonists when scattered among the others but were just as troublesome in Australia as in Ireland when in a flock.”<sup>126</sup>

All the dilemmas and tensions surrounding Irish immigration and the desire for an homogeneous population came to the fore in the development of state education in the Australian colonies. In his historical survey of education in Australia, AG Austin found remarkable uniformity in colonial legislation, with all six colonies setting up national education systems between 1872 and 1893, systems which abolished state aid to church schools.<sup>127</sup> In all the debates on national education, the large numbers of uneducated and therefore “ignorant” children was a major issue, as was the failure of the denominational schools to deal with the problem. But social cohesion and the creation of a culturally homogeneous society were just as central. Hyams and Bessant saw a link between the principles underlying the new education systems, and the future White Australia policy. Australia’s colonial politicians had embraced:

---

<sup>125</sup> Minute to Governor Loftus from the Parkes Government, 27 July 1881, Parkes corresp, A916 p. 484.

<sup>126</sup> Letter to Parkes, 3 Sept 1880; section dated 5 Sept. In Parkes corresp, A920, pp. 50-51.

<sup>127</sup> AG Austin, *Australian education 1788-1900: Church, state and public education in colonial Australia*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Melbourne, 1961, pp. 166-70.

the goal of a unified society. Social cohesion in a community in which the newcomer predominated was to them a vital aim... Ethnically and culturally the same purpose was to be pursued in later years by the imposition of strict barriers to non-European immigration into the country.<sup>128</sup>

Social homogeneity was created in the national schools in much the same ways it was in the factory system: through the imposition of standardisation in teaching and recreation; through the observation, classification and measurement of children and teachers, and through intense and detailed supervision. This was the project of a gigantic bureaucracy, consciously constructed for the purpose.<sup>129</sup>

One of the greatest obstacles to the much-desired social cohesion was religious sectarianism, and the claims of some churches – most especially the Roman Catholic – to the allegiance of the faithful, an allegiance superior to that claimed by the nation-state. Hyams and Bessant argue that the hardening of liberal attitudes towards the churches was not just a product of growing secularism, but an “expression of concern that strong popular identification with sectional groups within the community might encourage social divisiveness.”<sup>130</sup> Austin too found Australia’s liberal politicians, “while not anti-religious...hostile to the claims of the Churches, and opposed the intervention of any authoritarian institutionalism between the State and the individual.”<sup>131</sup> The authoritarian

---

<sup>128</sup> BK Hyams and B Bessant, *Schools for the people? An introduction to the history of state education in Australia*, Longman, Camberwell (Vic), 1972, pp. 47-8.

<sup>129</sup> Christopher Mead, “Compelling us to an ideal: How education became compulsory in NSW, 1788-1903; some revisions and incorporations”, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1999, pp. 174-95.

<sup>130</sup> Hyams and Bessant, *Schools for the people?* p. 48.

<sup>131</sup> Austin, *Australian education*, p. 170.

institution that most concerned liberal politicians in the late nineteenth century was the Catholic Church. In one of the most racist diatribes ever published against the Irish in a “respectable” publication, AM Topp argued that Victoria’s Education Act was “the most efficacious means” to destroy the power of the Church and “assimilate this alien race”.<sup>132</sup>

A problem here for many in the ruling class was that religion was still the cornerstone of public morality, and an education system without a religious basis would be amoral and unthinkable. Sir John Robertson’s attempt to introduce a new compromise in the struggle over national and secular education in New South Wales in 1876 foundered on the opposition of his Treasurer, the banker Sir Alexander Stuart, who told Parliament that the Victorian education system had failed because “it endeavoured to dissociate what never could be dissociated, education and religion.”<sup>133</sup> The 1888 invasion fantasy, *The battle of Mordialloc*, reflected the same outlook: the Australian colonies were morally and economically disintegrating, in part because the politicians had responded to religious dissension by excluding religion and history from the schools. “In no country, perhaps...could a more dangerous experiment have been tried with the education of its rising youth.” Instead, the young breathed “an atmosphere of the densest materialism.”<sup>134</sup> This dilemma underpinned the bitterness of the debates over religion and education, and church and state.

---

<sup>132</sup> AM Topp, “English institutions and the Irish race”, *Melbourne Review*, vol. 6, no. 21, January 1881, p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> *Evening News* (Syd), 10 March 1876, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>134</sup> Anon, *The Battle of Mordialloc: or how we lost Australia*, Samuel Mullen, Melbourne, 1888, pp. 11-12.

In Victoria and New South Wales in particular, there were conflicts between the Catholic Church and government over the abolition of state aid to denominational schools. In 1879, Sydney's new Catholic Archbishop, Vaughan, launched an extraordinary attack on the state schools of New South Wales, denouncing them as "seed-plots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness", and declaring that they were worse than the Scavenger's Daughter, a medieval instrument of torture, because they were "the most effective instruments...for squeezing very gradually and almost imperceptibly the Catholic faith out of a Catholic people."<sup>135</sup> This attack was met with hysteria from evangelicals and secular liberals alike. The Parkes government responded with its *Public Instruction Act*, passed in early 1880, which made primary education nominally compulsory, cheap and widespread, and abolished payments to denominational schools.

Sir Henry Parkes has rightly been seen as an anti-Catholic bigot, but he was also one of the most sophisticated ruling class ideologists and politicians in colonial Australia. His desire for an homogeneous society created an enormous tension with his militant Protestantism, and the electoral advantages that sectarianism brought him. In the early 1870s, as the bitter sectarianism he stirred up after the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh was receding, Parkes retreated – forming an electoral alliance with the Catholic political network to get his candidates elected and form a strong government.<sup>136</sup> His broader desire

---

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Austin, *Australian education*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>136</sup> In March 1868, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Alfred, was shot and wounded by an Irishman, HJ O'Farrell. Parkes, who was then Colonial Secretary made vague, but sensational allegations of a Fenian conspiracy, allegations proven to be untrue. In the process he became a hero to the Protestant sectarians in New South Wales. See AW Martin, *Henry Parkes: A biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, pp. 268-69.



for some kind of reconciliation between faiths was reflected in a private letter he wrote to the leading Victorian Catholic, Gavan Duffy:

I fervently pray to God that a way may be found out for your “race” to mix with mine as fellow citizens, apart from that power which hitherto in every political crisis has guided them in one direction right or wrong... So long as obstacles are opposed to our being one Australian people, we shall be a factious & senseless rabble.<sup>137</sup>

The rapprochement did not last long, and the struggle over state education from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s represents the height of sectarian bitterness in the history of New South Wales. But religious rivalry was not the only fundamental issue here. Indeed, Parkes’ biographer, AW Martin, sees him as having been repelled by the sectarianism of James Greenwood, the evangelical cleric who led the Public Schools League in New South Wales and who was said to see Catholics as “creatures who ought to be swallowed up, having been first grilled by a sufficient heat of public agitation”.<sup>138</sup> Leading Catholic politicians, such as Michael Fitzpatrick, John McElhone, WA Duncan

---

<sup>137</sup> Martin, Henry Parkes, p. 268. The respite was in part due to Parkes’ bankruptcy and forced resignation from Parliament. Duffy, a Catholic, had broken the ice and written to Parkes saying he belonged back in Parliament; significantly, Parkes sent this letter to Carlyle. Duffy’s approach led to a rapprochement between Parkes and NSW Catholics that facilitated electoral victory in 1871. The mixing Parkes desired to see was believed to be impossible in Britain. In an article, “The backbone of the Irish question”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 29, March 1882, pp. 587-91, Alexander Montgomery, argued that the “fundamental basis of all Irish discontent lies in the simple antipathy of race and religion. The hatred of England as England and Protestantism as Protestantism, is as lively and intense to-day amongst the Irish Celts as ever it was when they had a real oppression to complain of.” Thus intermarriage was prevented, and Montgomery described the gulf in racial terms, pp 588-9. All these discussions are framed in terms consistent with, if not shaped by, Mill’s theory.

<sup>138</sup> Martin, Parkes, p. 306. Martin goes on to say that at the subsequent election, in November 1880, Parkes “worked himself up into perhaps the most emotional anti-Irish peroration he had ever delivered – and feverishly returned, full circle, to the frank anti-Catholicism of his pre-1872 days”, p. 313.

and George Day, rejected their Archbishop's attack on state schools, and declared themselves in favour of national education, even though they rejected Parkes' bill.<sup>139</sup> In his speech moving the *Public Instruction Bill*, along with swipes at the Catholic hierarchy, Parkes emphasised the importance of forging a unified, homogeneous, national people:

Surely the Catholic religion...cannot be a thing, the teaching of which renders it necessary to separate the Catholic children from the other children of the country. They must mix in after years, and be associated with each other in all the duties of every day life. Let them be workers, traders, men of competent means; let them go anywhere they may, into whatever groove of society they come – they must mix with persons entertaining other opinions... let us remember that we are above everything else free citizens of a free commonwealth. Whether we are Englishmen, Scotchmen, or Irishmen, or whether we are the sons of some foreign land, over and above every other consideration we ought to be Australians.<sup>140</sup>

The bruising battle over secular state education showed the lengths to which the dominant current within the ruling class was prepared to go to build an homogeneous society.<sup>141</sup>

These divisions had a wider implication. No attempt to develop a nationalism that included the Irish could be described as "English" or "British". This, I

---

<sup>139</sup> For Fitzpatrick, *NSWPD*, vol. 1, pp. 315-32; for McElhone and Day, Barry Bridges, "Sir Henry Parkes and the New South Wales Public Instruction Act, 1880" in S Murray-Smith, *Melbourne studies in education*, 1975, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1975, p. 192; for Duncan, Martin, Parkes, p. 313.

<sup>140</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 1, pp. 274-5.

<sup>141</sup> Ironically their victory in imposing compulsory national, secular education led to an enormous, and successful, effort by the Catholic Church to establish its own, near-universal system of schools.

believe, is the real significance of the concept of a “white” Australia. As Parkes’ comments show, it was potentially inclusive of the Irish, as well as the substantial numbers of northern European immigrants, whom most politicians believed could assimilate easily into their “British” society. It meant that immigrants of Irish, and especially Irish Catholic origin, could identify with Australia and Australian nationalism, even if they hated the empire to which the Australian state was committed. Douglas Cole has argued that, “ethnic consciousness of being British was never sharply distinguished from that of being white.” Nevertheless, it was distinct. For every WD Forsyth: “Scratch White Australia and you find British Australia” – something those of Irish Catholic origin would have had difficulty doing – there was a *Bulletin*, which wanted to preserve Australia “for the Anglo-Saxons *and kindred races*.” The New South Wales protectionist politician, EW O’Sullivan, sought to merge the Irish and British into an “Anglo-Celtic Race”.<sup>142</sup> By describing Australia as “white”, the Australian state could present itself as the defender of something supposedly important to the Irish Catholic.

### The dilemmas of homogeneity III: Is liberalism to be betrayed?

It is rarely acknowledged that throughout the nineteenth century, the British tradition was one of open borders. This was a tradition associated with

---

<sup>142</sup> Douglas Cole, “‘The crimson thread of kinship’: Ethnic ideas in Australia, 1870-1914”, *Historical Studies*, no. 56, 1971, pp. 516-7, my emphasis.

liberalism, and free trade liberalism in particular, and it was a policy that Britain had attempted to impose on China. The use of immigration controls to protect the “homogeneity” of Australian colonial society represented a challenge to this principle, and thus posed a dilemma for many colonial politicians. Some of those who decided to abandon open borders felt obliged to give good reasons for doing so; while a few others tried to maintain open borders in the colonies even as the pressure within their class intensified for restriction on Chinese immigration.

The strength of the open borders hegemony can be seen in the apology made by the Douglas government’s minister in the Queensland Legislative Council, Charles Stuart Mein, when moving the second reading of the *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill (1877)*: “under ordinary circumstances, it is objectionable, and contrary to the spirit of the British nation, to interfere with the peaceful introduction, or passage through, or residence in its territories, of the people of any other nation not at war with Great Britain.” But there was a higher law: self preservation.<sup>143</sup> John Malbon Thompson, the long-time MLA for various Ipswich electorates and former Minister for Lands under Palmer, drew on the tradition of open borders to oppose the bill. He “maintained, and had always maintained, that there should be free intercourse between all nations. He could not see that because the Chinese were yellow, wore pig-tails, and wrote in extraordinary characters, therefore they should be excluded from the colony”.<sup>144</sup> Like many others opposed to immigration restriction, he saw it as an example

---

<sup>143</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXII, p. 76. “Self preservation” was often code for the defence of British institutions, and more particularly, the British peopling of Australia.

<sup>144</sup> In debate on the *Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill, 1877*, in *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, p. 244.

of a detested protectionism.<sup>145</sup> In the New South Wales parliament in 1879, Michael Fitzpatrick argued that Britain “opened her arms to the whole universe, that her shores offered an asylum to the enslaved and the oppressed of all nations.”<sup>146</sup> The recently deposed Colonial Secretary was speaking in opposition to Sir Henry Parkes’ *Chinese Immigration Bill*. For his part, Parkes was keen to emphasise that he was only proposing restriction: “There was no such thing to be found in the civilized world as one nation prohibiting the landing of people on its shores. But they had the right to restrict”.<sup>147</sup>

For the vast majority of parliamentarians in New South Wales, protectionism was seen as another betrayal of liberalism, and long and often did they lecture protectionist Victoria on this point. And for many immigration restriction was a form of protectionism, and this caused considerable angst for liberals who wished to restrict Chinese immigration. The distinguished MLA, Saul Samuel, declared himself a free trader, “but there were other considerations than those of free trade, and one important one was to preserve the British character of our community.”<sup>148</sup> This was to be a significant part of the ruling class debate over the ASN dispute in 1878-9 (discussed in chapter 8).

Samuel Griffith was one of the few to reject the idea that a tradition of open borders existed. He argued that there was no tradition of allowing aliens to come in large numbers; indeed, “until recently it was almost an [sic] universal

---

<sup>145</sup> *QPD*, 1876, vol. XX, p. 373. In this case he was referring to attempts to stop Chinese immigration into the United States. A similar point was made by the squatter-politician, Joshua Peter Bell, in opposing the increased tariff on rice in 1876 which was intended to discourage Chinese immigration, *QPD*, vol. XX, pp. 390, 485.

<sup>146</sup> *SMH* 6 March 1879, p. 6, col. 1.

<sup>147</sup> *SMH* 21 March 1879, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>148</sup> *SMH* 10 April 1879, p. 2 col. 4.

law not to allow the free ingress of foreigners into a country's territory. It was entirely a modern development to allow this, except within a very few years, by any country in Europe except England, and even by England only within a comparatively recent period."<sup>149</sup>

Time and again, the issue of excluding Chinese people was posed as one of "national survival", which was code for the need for an homogeneous society. In the 1879 debate, Garrett thought it "a national question", ie "to preserve the British Australian character of the community".<sup>150</sup> Angus Cameron, the former union leader who had campaigned vigorously against ASN, also put his opposition in national terms. He claimed to wish that Australia could open its arms to people of the whole world, but "there is great danger of our national character being completely undermined." The danger came from "men, who for selfish purposes may take it into their heads to ignore the national character".<sup>151</sup> Even Fitzpatrick, who opposed the bill, thought ASN unwise and "unpatriotic".<sup>152</sup> When Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* discussed the seamen's strike it declared that, "We have little sympathy with theorists who contend that foreigners of whatever race or colour should be admitted into our common wealth on equal terms with our own people."<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII (1877), p. 350.

<sup>150</sup> *SMH* 7 March 1879, p. 3, cols. 2-3.

<sup>151</sup> *NSWPD First Series*, 1879-80, vol. 3, p. 2695.

<sup>152</sup> *SMH* 6 March 1879, p. 6, cols. 1-3.

<sup>153</sup> *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton) 27 November 1878.

## Conclusion: The sublime logic of homogeneity

The broad ruling class policy of constructing an homogeneous people, of predominantly British background, drawn roughly equally from the different British peoples, was a key element in Australian population policy, as well as a major foundation for the White Australia policy. When Henry Reynolds discovered Mill, he commented:

It seems to me, then, that we could have had Australian nationalism much as it was, with restrictive immigration, with deportation of the Kanakas, with restrictions on Aborigines, if it had just been based on Mill's liberal nationalism and not on Social Darwinism.<sup>154</sup>

This chapter demonstrates that White Australia *was* in significant part based on Mill's liberal nationalism. In an article focused on the period 1880-1920, Mark Francis has argued strongly against historians who see Social Darwinism as shaping the attitudes of Australian colonial officials towards Aboriginal people.<sup>155</sup> The same, I would argue, applies to attitudes towards Chinese people. Whilst Herbert Spencer was enormously influential on colonial liberals, most criticism of Chinese people focused on Chinese culture, and the way it shaped Chinese people. Indeed, when Australian ruling class intellectuals discussed "the future Australian race" in the 1880s, the debate was between environmental determinists and moralists; Social Darwinism was a minor

---

<sup>154</sup> Henry Reynolds, "Racism and other national discourses" in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter, *The resurgence of racism: Hanson, Howard and the race debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton (Vic), 1997, pp. 36-7.

<sup>155</sup> Mark Francis, "Social Darwinism and the construction of institutionalised racism in Australia", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 51, 1996, pp. 90-105.

element.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the entire doctrine of assimilating (white) foreigners runs counter to it.

The doctrine of homogeneity stood above individual differences in opinions on race, in very much the same way as doctrinal differences became secondary to the belief that some religious observance was the cornerstone of morality.

Indeed, people who disliked racism (as Mill himself professed to do) could be won to the demand for Chinese exclusion on the basis that homogeneity of race was necessary for stability, and to preserve liberal political institutions. Any doubts could be assuaged by the consequences of Britain's failure to assimilate the Catholic Irish,<sup>157</sup> or the news of ethnic/racial rioting and other tensions in the United States and elsewhere. Indeed, the more that nationalists insisted on imposing cultural and linguistic homogeneity, the more tensions around nationality increased, thus "proving" the necessity for homogeneity for a stable and united state. More than one ideologist has argued that racist White Australia had protected the country from the racial tensions experienced in other countries. This was indeed, a sublime logic.

---

<sup>156</sup> Indeed, attitudes amongst the ruling class towards the "lower orders" had as much in common with Social Darwinism, as attitudes towards "inferior races". For Australia, see Bruce Smith, *Liberty and liberalism*, p. 168; for Britain, Lorimer, *Colour, class*, esp. pp. 92-130.

<sup>157</sup> The dangers of a cultural divide between rulers and ruled were described by MC McCarthy O'Leary in "Ireland since the Land League", *Victorian Review*, vol. X, no. 60, pp. 575-79: "The gentry of the country belonged, for the most part, to an alien race and to an unpopular religion. The descendants of English settlers, of James' planters or of Cromwell's soldiers, they held but little in common with the lower order. The very distinctions of rank necessitated a difference in occupations, whilst on Sunday – on that day which is supposed to unite all Christians in humble adoration of the Giver of all Good – the landlord and his family went in solitary state to church, whilst his tenantry were to be seen flocking in crowds along the roads to worship at a different shrine. Such singular circumstances could not fail to serve as a bar of separation to keep asunder those whom similar hopes and a community of interests should have united most closely together."



The doctrine of homogeneity would never have achieved the dominance it did without the intensifying propaganda around race emanating from Britain, and especially after the near-war with Russia in 1877-8 and the resulting mania around “jingoism”. There is a great deal of evidence to support historians who insist on the influence of British racism. However this is incomplete as an explanation. People didn’t believe in “racism”, they believed certain things about particular “races”. Many believed in the superiority of the English “race”; but there was no reason why the Catholic Irish should share this opinion. Opinions on Chinese people might have been derogatory, but most of the English race patriots had vicious opinions of the Irish, and they were not going to exclude them. Homogeneity was a strategic doctrine that called for some kind of agreed description of the nation as a whole. It had the advantage of allowing many different racist views to be sustained within it. A person could be anti-Irish (or anti-English) and support a white Australia. In their daily lives, most Chinese and European Australians lived together in relations of accommodation. The doctrine of homogeneity allowed people to like their local Chinese vegetable seller, but support the prohibition of Chinese immigration as state policy.

Bede Nairn summed up this general approach well in his “Epilogue” to the 1989 re-publication of *Civilising Capitalism*, in which he defended the White Australia policy, minimising and rationalising its racism. As well as pointing to trade unionists’ fear of Chinese labour market competition, Nairn argued that what mattered to them was not “class consciousness” – which, he argued, they didn’t have in any Marxist sense – but Henry Parkes’ “crimson thread of kinship”.

To their north were many millions of people with ancient and strikingly different forms of religious, social and political organisation. Their non-white colour identified not only these people, but also their incompatible systems and customs. Australia understandably saw them as a threat to the nation they had formed.<sup>158</sup>

For Nairn, the essence of White Australia was unity, not prejudice, which was marginal. “What is now known as racism was the subsidiary part of the primary objects of national cohesion, stability and defence”, he wrote.<sup>159</sup> This unity included unity of race, of culture, customs and political system. Australians could not have had its British-based democracy, more democratic than Britain itself, without this unity.<sup>160</sup>

This idea, that democracy depended on racial unity, was a myth; a myth theorised by John Stuart Mill, and promoted by countless politicians after him. The myth was designed to construct ideological bulwarks to limit and contain working class discontent and rebellion, and that is how it was understood here by senior colonial politicians. In 1887, Sir Henry Parkes wrote to his fellow Premiers arguing that it was “a question of policy of the first magnitude to cement society together by the same principles of faith and jurisprudence, the same influence of language and religion, and the same national habits of life.”<sup>161</sup> When he wrote those lines, all of those principles were under challenge. Parkes was widely hated amongst the political working class in New South Wales; and June 1887 had seen a substantial republican movement successfully challenge

---

<sup>158</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising capitalism: The beginnings of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1989 (first published 1973), p. 255.

<sup>159</sup> Nairn, *Civilising capitalism*, p. 253.

<sup>160</sup> Nairn, *Civilising capitalism*, p. 254.

<sup>161</sup> Writing in 1887, quoted in Willard, *History*, p. 190.

public meetings called to discuss celebrating Queen Victoria's jubilee. Indeed, the monarchist meetings could only go ahead when the militia was called out to protect them from "disloyal" elements.<sup>162</sup>

Far from being an instrument of working class protection or empowerment, White Australia was designed and understood to be an instrument of ideological domination, all the better to ensure exploitation. When Alfred Deakin introduced the Immigration Restriction Bill in 1901, he argued that racial homogeneity was central.

A united race means not only that its members can intermix, intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies one inspired by the same ideas, an aspiration towards the same ideals, of a people possessing the same general cast of character, tone of thought – the same constitutional training and traditions – a people qualified to live under this Constitution – the broadest and most liberal perhaps the world has yet seen reduced to writing – a people qualified to use without abusing it, and to develop themselves under it to the full height and extent of their capacity.<sup>163</sup>

He spoke these words in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1890s, a depression that had seen the new trade union challenge to capital smashed, but which had also seen the savings of most in the middle class wiped out in a series of spectacular bank crashes in 1893. Class bitterness was palpable, and

---

<sup>162</sup> Luke Trainor, *British imperialism and Australian nationalism : manipulation, conflict, and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1994, pp. 69-70. See also Mansfield, *Australian nationalism*, pp. 185-9; *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 24 June 1887; Sir Alfred Stephen, Diary entry for Sunday 12 June 1887 (p20-21), Papers of Stephen family, Mitchell Library, ML MSS 777/2.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in David Dutton, *One of us? A century of Australian citizenship*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2002, p. 32.

democracy loathed by the rich and powerful. The idea of Australia being a society in which rich and poor could intermix and intermarry was laughable; as was the idea that the people shared “the same general cast of character, [or] tone of thought”.

Luke Trainor has written that, “Not all concealment is ideology but the concept does involve a deception whereby some contradictions are obscured and with them, the class interests they serve.”<sup>164</sup> Certainly the White Australia policy, and the nationalist mythology that surrounded it, was both ideological, and constructed to conceal the class interests it served. But it was more than this: it was the lynchpin of a ruling class strategy of social control and social cohesion, a strategy theorised by John Stuart Mill.

---

<sup>164</sup> Trainor, *British imperialism*, p. 32.

## *Chapter 6*

# The politics of 'coloured labour' in Queensland, 1876-1882

THE CONFLICTS which led to the adoption of the White Australia policy were experienced most intensely in Queensland, and about Queensland, in the years from 1876 until the deportation of the majority of Pacific Islanders in 1906.<sup>1</sup> It was the colony whose tropical industries were most advanced, and whose non-European, non-indigenous population was the largest. Here the ruling class found itself grappling with the question of who should comprise the labouring class in the tropics. While some focused purely on the profits they might make, others were troubled by the possible consequences of such decisions – for colonisation, continued “white” immigration, the structure of their economy and society, investor confidence and investment flows, military security, the structure of their ideology and the problems of social control.

---

<sup>1</sup> In colonial discussion, Pacific Islanders and labourers brought from New Guinea were generically described as “Polynesians”, despite all being “Melanesian”. Indian labourers indentured for field work were commonly described as “coolies”.

The dilemmas were enormous. Queensland capitalists had organised a dynamic and fabulously profitable sugar industry, which in turn opened up the tropical coast of Queensland to wider capitalist development. However planter success was founded upon the exploitation of Pacific Island labourers, and when they proved too few in number, the planters employed Chinese people, labourers from other Asian countries, and campaigned for the right to indenture Indian "coolies". In the minds of most liberals, townspeople, selectors and miners, these coloured labourers and wealthy capitalists were harbingers of a society more like the backward American South than the powerful industrial economy of Great Britain. Indentured labourers allowed Queensland's pastoralists to survive the trials of drought, fluctuating prices and "unreliable" white labour during the late 1860s and 1870s, but employing them narrowed the white labour market in parts of the inland. Strategic safety, white colonisation, and modern economic development competed with the temptations and necessities of current profit in a devoutly capitalist society.

As a result of the intensity and length of the struggle over coloured labour, Queensland had the most sharply party-divided parliamentary politics of all the Australian colonies. Then, when the majority of the Liberal party joined the Conservatives in 1890, opposition to coloured labour galvanised behind the new Labor Party. The issue also created divisions inside the rival parties, with many urban Liberals impatient with their party leadership's tolerance of Pacific Island labour in the sugar industry; while the extreme squatters of the Conservative party caused trouble for their urban/commercial colleagues with their own demands for "cheap coloured labour" on pastoral properties. As McIlwraith's deputy, John Murtagh Macrossan, put it in February 1884, in a debate on new laws to further restrict Chinese immigration:

The colonies of Victoria and New South Wales are not in the same danger that we are. They have no large capitalists wishing to introduce Chinese in gangs to work on plantations or to do any other kind of work...<sup>2</sup>

White Australia mythology has Queensland as the “black labour” colony, but this is less than half the story. This chapter and the next illustrate the many important ways in which Queensland’s bourgeoisie led Australia into the White Australia policy, and how the dominant element of Queensland’s Conservative party, the urban commercial bourgeoisie, led by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, played a major role in that process. As Lyndon Megarrity has found, there was a conservative “vision of a ‘White Queensland’ in which non-whites would play a discreet (and unacknowledged) pioneering role.”<sup>3</sup>

Queensland passed the first post-gold rush legislation restricting Chinese immigration in 1877, and tightened it dramatically in 1884, well in advance of the other colonies. In 1885, Queensland legislated to end the recruitment of Pacific Island labourers, to take effect from the end of 1890; and in the 1888 election, the winner, McIlwraith, declared that the issues of Pacific Island labour and Indian “coolie” labour were dead. Thus, by the time colonial governments met in June 1888 to adopt a *de facto* White Australia policy and agree on harsh anti-Chinese legislation, Queensland had spent more than ten years constructing a series of legislative impediments to “coloured” labour and non-European immigration. While Islander indenture was revived in 1892 by Sir

---

<sup>2</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1883-4, p. 348.

<sup>3</sup> Lyndon Megarrity, “‘White Queensland’: The Queensland government’s ideological position on the use of Pacific Island labourers in the sugar sector 1880-1901”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 52, no. 1, March 2006, pp. 1-12.

Samuel Griffith in perhaps the greatest political about-face of nineteenth-century politics, Griffith refused to join with South Australia, which was trying to find a way to recruit indentured Indian labourers, in a conference to discuss the labour problems of the tropical colonies. For Griffith, renewing indenture was a limited measure to aid a specific industry; the general principles of White Australia remained.

For their part, a majority of Conservative party politicians supported anti-Chinese laws when introduced by the Liberals in 1877 and 1884, and they legislated in 1880 to deny indentured Pacific Island labourers to a significant group of their supporters, the inland pastoralists. While he attempted to set up a scheme of indentured Indian labour, McIlwraith insisted – under pressure – that the labourers be returned home, forcibly if necessary, at the end of their indentures. When the sugar planters campaigned for northern separation as a result of Griffith's coloured labour legislation, *all* the southern Conservative politicians voted against it in parliament, thus inflicting a major defeat on what most saw as the movement for a "black north". Having decided against Chinese immigration, the Conservatives put themselves at the head of a series of vicious anti-Chinese agitations – in support of the 1878 seamen's strike, in the agitation that started in North Queensland in 1886, and in the bitter election campaign of 1888, where they set out to paint the Liberal Premier Griffith as pro-Chinese.

The conflict over coloured labour saw political principle and self-interest both intersect and collide. In the Conservative party there were those like WH Walsh who opposed all attempts to restrict coloured labour, while the Liberal party boasted those like WH Brookes who resisted the pragmatism of their leaders



and fought to eliminate all coloured labour from the sugar industry.<sup>4</sup> But it was more normal for the tension between principles and capitalist development to dog the major parties and individual politicians. The leading Liberals wanted to get rid of coloured labour, but they also wanted profits and economic development. To cripple the profitable sugar industry would have led to both immediate disinvestment in that industry, and to investor caution more widely. Capitalist expansion was as much a liberal principle as free labour. On the conservative side, British and white control of the colony was the principle challenged by coloured immigration.

For their part, the sugar planters were willing to cut a deal over any legislation that left their industry intact and profitable; while the shopkeepers and businessmen mostly fought to ensure that the labouring population was white, free, growing, and able to spend their wages in the town on the beer, clothes, shoes and flour they manufactured or sold. So the shopkeepers and publicans of the Darling Downs were more concerned to deprive squatters rather than sugar planters of indentured labour, a move the squatters resisted in their own self-interest.

The tensions between principle and capitalist development led to charges of hypocrisy. Sir Samuel Griffith in particular was charged with inconsistency on the issue of coloured labour and no doubt there was an element of truth in this, fuelled by extravagant comments on the campaign trail. However Griffith was a largely consistent politician, balancing partially contradictory principles and rival capitalist interests. He wanted a modern, free-labour, industrial capitalist

---

<sup>4</sup> This polarisation is discussed by the *Brisbane Courier*, 19 May, 1880, p. 2 cols. 5-6.

economy and he also wanted a profitable sugar industry. His various policy lurches were all responses to the particular challenges and opportunities of the moment, as he saw them. He could not have maintained his leadership of the Liberal party over two decades had there not been substance and underlying continuity in his positions on this central issue. It is for the historian to uncover the substance and continuity.

All these cross-currents led to a series of policy distinctions; over who should be allowed coloured labour, over the conditions under which coloured labourers might be introduced and indentured, over the ethnicities which were tolerable or not. Sugar planters were treated most sympathetically because their industry was deemed impossible without "coloured" labour, as white people were supposedly unable to work in the tropical heat, and too unreliable and expensive for such a pioneering industry.<sup>5</sup> Plantations set up in "unsettled" areas needed the most elementary clearing of vegetation and the establishment of infrastructure. Queensland's sugar planters were competing with international rivals who almost all used indentured labour. The claims of squatters were regarded less favourably, the industry prospering in other colonies on the basis of free, white labour.

When it came to the origin of indentured labourers, a distinction was drawn between the Chinese, who were regarded as the most dangerous for reasons already described in chapter 3, and Pacific Islanders who were regarded as the least harmful by many, because of the small population of the Islands from which they came. However the destruction of society on those Islands, and their

---

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 4 for a full discussion of this.

depopulation due to recruiting, became a source of controversy. Indian labourers were seen more equivocally; they came from a large population, like the Chinese, but one that was under the control of the British empire. Some imagined a future Indian invasion; others saw British control as insurance against that.

## The ruling class debate over Pacific Islander labour, 1876-77

In the forty years after 1863, more than 62,000 Pacific Islanders were "recruited" to work as labourers in Queensland, mostly on sugar plantations, along with significant numbers of Chinese, Sinhalese, Javanese, Malays, Japanese, indigenous and other peoples.<sup>6</sup> For the sugar planters and their supporters, indentured coloured labour was necessary because only indenture guaranteed that labour would be available when it was needed. Over many years they campaigned for a system of regulated, Indian "coolie" labour to replace Islanders and an end to the uncertainty they faced over labour supply.

For its part, liberal Queensland mobilised against Pacific Islander labour, in one of the most sustained political struggles of the late colonial period. Amazingly, there is no comprehensive history of the movement against indentured labour in Queensland.<sup>7</sup> This thesis will not attempt to fill that void; the outline offered

---

<sup>6</sup> Kay Elizabeth Saunders, "Uncertain Bondage: An analysis of indentured labour in Queensland to 1907, with particular reference to the Melanesian servants", PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1974, pp. 42-47.

<sup>7</sup> This observation was confirmed to me by Clive Moore, personal discussion, 10 July 2001. The most significant contributions to this history are Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia*

below aims instead to draw out the broad political concerns which motivated various elements within the ruling class, and the way the whole debate contributed to the ultimate adoption of a White Australia policy nationally. Certainly in Queensland the debate over Pacific Islanders dwarfs the parallel debates over Chinese or Indian "coolie" immigration; and the administration of the recruitment and indenture system generated a vast official correspondence.

Chapter 4 outlined the intellectual framework of anti-slavery that informed and shaped the movement against indentured Pacific Islands labour, and most historians have discussed the anti-Islander movement in that light. Many have also seen this movement as driven by working class fears of competition from cheap labour. While this was undoubtedly an element, for the period prior to 1890, labour historian, Joe Harris, believed that "the working class played supporting roles and bit parts only."<sup>8</sup> However, there is a second ruling class agenda that is central to these debates. In this chapter I argue that whatever the motivations of working class people in Queensland, for ruling class parliamentarians and newspaper editorialists, Pacific Islanders were seen as a danger to white colonisation, and specifically to Queensland's strenuous efforts to attract British and European immigrants – an agenda fundamental to ruling class hopes for the future, and one to which the working class was largely hostile.

---

*policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first pub 1923), chapters 7-9, pp. 135-187; Joe Harris, "The struggle against Pacific Island labour, 1868-1902", *Labour History*, no. 15, November 1968, pp. 40-48; DK Dignan, "Kanaka Political Struggle: An analysis of the attitude of conflicting groups to the introduction, and employment in Queensland, of South Sea Island labour", Third year honours essay, University of Queensland, Fryer library, University of Queensland, c1949.

<sup>8</sup> Harris, *Struggle*, p. 40.

This colonisation/white immigration agenda can be seen in the first restrictions placed on the use of Pacific Island labourers, which were aimed at stopping *pastoralists* employing them. In April 1877, the new Douglas administration introduced a regulation:

that no applications for permission to introduce South Sea Islanders will in future be granted to other persons than those actually employed in tropical or semi-tropical agriculture.

And further, that no transfers of South Sea Islanders will be permitted unless to those engaged in such agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

This regulation remained in force – with one significant exception to be discussed below – for three and a half years until the principle was enshrined in the *Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880*.

From the very earliest years of the labour trade, Pacific Islanders had been indentured by pastoralists. While the first Islanders were introduced in August 1863 by Captain Robert Towns, it was not until 1867 that a significant number arrived.<sup>10</sup> As a result of pressure from the British government, legislation to regulate the recruitment, employment and return of Islanders was passed in 1868 by the squatter-dominated parliament. The extent of squatter involvement in the labour trade is reflected in the high proportion of Islanders working on inland stations; in 1868, some 488 Islanders out of 1147, and in 1869, 697 out of

---

<sup>9</sup> *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol. XX, no. 68, 14 April 1877, p. 1138.

<sup>10</sup> Dignan, *Kanaka political struggle*, p. 7. The numbers introduced were 148 (1865), 177 (1866), 1237 (1867), p. 9

1539.<sup>11</sup> However, from the very first, liberals opposed the use of Islanders by the squatters. When the first bill to regulate the employment of Islanders was debated in the Queensland parliament, Liberals (unsuccessfully) moved an amendment to restrict their employment to coastal areas.<sup>12</sup> In 1870, after their defeat in the elections, the Liberals set up the Political Reform Association to campaign, *inter alia*, on the issue of Islander labour.<sup>13</sup>

The intertwining of ruling class anti-slavery and white colonisation agendas is illustrated in the concerns raised by the *Brisbane Courier* – then still a liberal paper – in 1867:

the coolie gives no adequate return for his services. He does not build, neither does he settle upon the land. How different if white labour is employed. Fair wages are paid, a family supported; goods are bought, the tradesmen on all sides are benefited, not alone the butcher, the baker, the grocer, but the shoemaker, the tailor, the cabinet maker, the saddler, and a host of others; and social progress is fostered; trade is stimulated and encouraged, the land is settled upon and cultivated by men with families; and the demand for recreation (mental as well as physical), and for instruction creates a supply; so that all classes are improved, and the status of society is raised.<sup>14</sup>

Dignan argued that from 1870 to 1872 there was a significant hardening of liberal opinion against Islander labour.<sup>15</sup> By 1876, it represented a major

---

<sup>11</sup> Kay Saunders, *Workers in bondage: The origins and bases of unfree labour in Queensland 1824-1916*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1982, pp. 45, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Dignan, *Kanaka political struggle*, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Dignan, *Kanaka political struggle*, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1867, quoted in Dignan, *Kanaka political struggle*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Dignan, *Kanaka political struggle*, pp. 34-5.

controversy in Queensland politics, driven by stories of Islanders being mistreated, and by an economic recession that made large numbers of white workers unemployed while Islanders were used extensively on pastoral stations.<sup>16</sup> Legislation was promised by Liberal Premier, George Thorn, but his government was weak.<sup>17</sup> By March 1877, Thorn was gone, and John Douglas became the Liberals' third Premier in three years.

Douglas gazetted his regulation limiting the indenture of Pacific Island labourers to tropical and semi-tropical agriculture five weeks after being appointed Premier. He made two attempts to enshrine this restriction in legislation, which would also have increased employer obligations towards Islanders and government supervision over Islander employment. In 1877 his Colonial Secretary, William Miles, attempted to amend the bill in committee by moving that no licenses for recruiting Pacific Islanders be issued after 31st December 1880.<sup>18</sup> Sensing an opportunity to destroy the bill, it seems that the ultra-squatters in parliament supported Miles' amendment – it would not affect them, as either version of the bill would legislate the existing regulation against recruiting Islanders to work on pastoral stations. The Attorney-General (and future Premier), Samuel Griffith, spoke against Miles' amendment. The final

---

<sup>16</sup> On mistreatment, see evidence of Sheridan to Select Committee, "Report of the Select Committee to enquire into the condition of Polynesians", Qld LA V&P, 1876, vol. III, pp. 93-105; on controversy, see TA Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From the first settlement in 1788 to the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*, 4 vols, Macmillan of Australia, South Melbourne, 1969 (first published 1918), vol. III, pp. 1508-9; Letter of Thomas Jemenson in the *Brisbane Courier*, 29 July 1876, p. 6, c. 3; speeches in parliament in 1976 by Henry King, WH Groom, WH Pettigrew, John Douglas and Simon Fraser, QPD vol XX, pp. 183, 189, 204, 220, 267.

<sup>17</sup> It appears that Thorn may have bought his government time in office by agreeing to allow sugar planters and pastoralists to run their own Select Committee to inquire into the recruitment and employment of islanders. For a scathing review of the Select Committee, see *Brisbane Courier*, 24 November 1876, p. 3, cols. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Miles' amendment is discussed in a *Brisbane Courier* editorial, 18 June 1877, p. 2, col. 5.

result was that the Douglas government abandoned the bill, and *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* record no further debate after an inconclusive committee discussion on 19 June 1877. Another attempt to pass a similar bill in 1878 was also abandoned by the Douglas government, but its regulation remained in force, with the acquiescence of parliament.

The arguments for the 1877 bill placed a great deal of emphasis on the threat posed to British colonisation by the extensive use of Islanders in the interior. Colonial Secretary Miles believed that "if these Islanders were to be allowed to flow into the colony, European immigration must cease; else they would drive white labour out of the field, in which case the colony, instead of progressing, would start upon a course of retrogression",<sup>19</sup> a position that again united concern for colonisation with concern about the consequences of a semi-slave regime. While informing parliament that there were now 1241 Islanders working in the interior, Premier John Douglas also reflected the broader obsession with European colonisation:

for every cheap Islander introduced a European labourer was driven away...working men would tell them that their chances of employment were lessened by every Polynesian who was imported; working men knew this well, and had means of communicating this information to their friends at home. Nothing damaged Queensland more in the home labour market, on which it must ultimately depend for supply, than the report which reached there in reference to the Polynesian question.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 50

<sup>20</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 53.



For Attorney-General, Samuel Griffith, anything which discouraged white men from coming to the colony would hinder its progress, while for Colonial Treasurer, Garrick:

two streams of immigration could not well be carried on together. The fact that men on coming to the colony would have to compete with black labour must always be a serious drawback to getting European immigrants; and if they were to continue that labour to any considerable extent, Queensland might eventually become like one of the West Indian colonies – merely a small colony, practically, of black people – a result he was sure no person in the colony would desire to see.<sup>21</sup>

Significant figures in the Conservative opposition supported the bill. Its new leader, Thomas McIlwraith, with extensive pastoral interests of his own, argued that “an immense number of the population had withdrawn themselves from the colony. And this was largely owing to their having to compete on such unequal terms with black labour.” His solution was tariff protection for a sugar industry run by white farmers.<sup>22</sup> He took this position in effective opposition to most other pastoralists. The *Dalby Herald*, a mouthpiece for the squatters, condemned the bill:

it is not only class legislation in favor of the sugar-planters, but political class legislation as well. The capitalists and agents, who are really the great holders of the sugar estates, will benefit by it to the exclusion of the farmer, and why those should be helped, who are well able to help themselves, to grow cane at a lower rate than the small planter, we cannot tell.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 59; Griffith comments p. 56.

<sup>22</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> *Dalby Herald*, 26 May 1877.

Conservative, John Murtagh Macrossan, declared himself against Islander labour altogether, calling it “this discredit to the colony, and this great discouragement to European emigration.”<sup>24</sup> Patrick O’Sullivan, the storekeeper, publican and property investor who would vote for a McIlwraith government in 1879, argued three grounds for the total exclusion of Islanders, the first being that, “the employment of Polynesians interfered with that of white people, our own race, who, when bringing their capital, intelligence, and enterprise to the country should find scope for their free exercise.” He pointed out that, “If free selection were established all over the colony” – as it was in the southern colonies – “there would be plenty of white labour, and no other required.”<sup>25</sup>

None of the speeches that constituted the majority in the debate saw competition by coloured labour against European in “working class” terms as threatening wages and conditions; it was instead a threat to their future profits and prosperity and to their system of colonisation. Most historians have radically mis-read this rhetoric as driven by a working-class agenda. Indeed, the high immigration agenda of the ruling class politicians and conservative newspapers like the *Courier* ran directly counter to the wishes and demands of the fledgling labour movement.

But within this large parliamentary majority, there was a division. Some were genuinely against any further labour trade; others were prepared to accept it for the future of the sugar industry. Premier Douglas would have liked to abolish

---

<sup>24</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 52. Details about O’Sullivan from DB Waterson, *A biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*, second revised edition, Casket publications, Sydney, 2001, p. 149.

Islander labour altogether, except that the Islander labourers “bolstered up a large interest representing the investment of large capital, and it was very difficult to abolish it all at once.”<sup>26</sup> The former Liberal Colonial Secretary, RM Stewart, thought Islanders should be confined to industries where they were indispensable, such as sugar because he did not think it could be grown in the north by white labour.<sup>27</sup> On the Conservative side, Macrossan was for restricting Islander labour as much as possible.<sup>28</sup>

There was a strong thread running through the debate that account had to be taken of the sugar industry, and that its reliance on black labour must be respected. Some said it should be allowed time to either change or close down. Certainly there was hostility to Miles and his supporters when they advocated putting a definite stop to Islander recruitment from the end of 1880. Were it passed, suggested the *Brisbane Courier*:

all improvement upon sugar properties must at once cease; it is even probable that further cultivations will at once be abandoned on many southern plantations, and by the end of the given years the sugar industry of Queensland will have ceased to exist. The value of this industry is, we think, scarcely appreciated by the colonists at the present time... This year, after the almost total destruction of the cane by rust in the previous season, the value of the crop, rum and sugar, amounted to about £500,000; in the coming season an increase of 50 per cent is anticipated.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 58.

<sup>29</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 18 June 1877, p. 2, col. 5.

Thus, as the *Brisbane Courier* argued in 1880, there were essentially three ruling class positions on the issue of Pacific Island labour: unrestricted access for all employers under regulation; prohibition as soon as possible; and then a third position, the *Courier's* own, which I would label, a "pragmatic colonisation" position.

The third party is composed of those who propose to deal with this question from a practical, not a theoretical basis. They will permit Polynesian labor to be employed, but only under such conditions as will prevent it from displacing white labor. Since the sugar plantations in this colony have been created only by the help of black labor, it cannot be said that the employment of that labor on them has displaced white, nor is it likely that if the black labor was disallowed it would be replaced by white. Seeing, then, that the employment of Polynesians on the plantations has not interfered with white labor, and that the prohibition of their employment would probably destroy what is already one of the most valuable of our Queensland industries, the great majority of colonists have resolved to restrict the employment of Polynesians as nearly as possible to the plantations, but not to deprive the sugar planters of their services. This was the principle of the Polynesian Bill introduced in 1878 by Mr. Douglas.<sup>30</sup>

This leads us to consider why it was that in 1877, after three years of inaction, a Liberal government finally took decisive action, and was effectively supported in that by a large section of the Conservatives. Clearly the recession of 1876-7 had an impact, creating widespread bitterness at the employment of Islanders, that bitterness including storekeepers, small business people and artisans, as well as labourers. However, this is an inadequate explanation; the Queensland ruling and middle class was quite capable of ignoring the sufferings of the

---

<sup>30</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 19 May, 1880, p. 2 cols. 5-6.

European working and plebeian classes when it suited them. I argue that 1877 represented a turning point on this issue for the same reason it did on the issue of Chinese immigration; the Queensland ruling class believed it faced a challenge to European colonisation of the north and that Britain would not adequately resist this. As discussed in chapter 3, the perceived Chinese threat placed an even greater premium on successful British/European colonisation, and that is reflected in the emphasis on successful immigration in the 1877 debates on Douglas' Polynesian Labourers Bill.

News that the Thorn government's weaker anti-Chinese legislation had been vetoed in London arrived in Queensland around 29 March 1877.<sup>31</sup> Almost immediately, on 31 March, the *Brisbane Courier* switched to a virulently anti-Chinese position for the first time, a position it maintained thereafter. Douglas issued his regulation denying pastoralists indentured Islanders on 13 April, just two weeks later, and a week before writing to the other colonies seeking their support against London's decision on the Chinese question.

When the *Brisbane Courier* discussed the latest annual report by the Registrar-General in its editorial of the 24 May 1877, in the midst of the parliamentary debate over Islander labour, the paper focused on what it saw as an alarming level of non-European immigration; finding that while the increase to Queensland's population by European immigration was 5700, this was being challenged by an increase of Chinese and Islander people of 5400.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> The decision was made by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, on 27 March; see "Despatch from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Queensland," printed in *Qld LA V&P*, 1877, vol. I, pp. 815-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 24 May 1877, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

This was the context for the parliamentary discussion of Islander labour and the terms under which it would be allowed, and the reason, I believe, that the really sore point for most politicians was the employment of Islanders by pastoralists. If pastoralists in the southern colonies could make large profits using white labour, Queensland's pastoralists were now going to be expected to do the same. Some Conservative politicians were as hostile to the pastoralists on this point as the Liberals. Macrossan thought:

the employers were themselves to blame for it. He had known that white men, when looking for labour, were told by the squatters, "We do not wish to employ you; the Kanakas are our men." In short, white labour had been driven out of the North... Some persons might suffer, but that invariably happened in great and salutary changes of this kind. But there was this consolation, that their sufferings had been brought about by their own folly, in preferring coloured labour to white.<sup>33</sup>

The Conservative brewer, Patrick Perkins, backed him up:

The character which the country out West had acquired was such, that when labourers in search of employment were recommended to go there they refused to do so. They were under the impression that nobody need apply for employment there but black men; and if, instead of advocating and encouraging that class of labour, employers out there had turned their attention to white labour, and had established some mutuality of feeling and some community of interest with that labour, he believed the present state of affairs would not be in existence. They had, therefore, brought this upon themselves.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 178.

<sup>34</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXIII, 1877, p. 179.

The squatters were beaten. The leaders of both the Liberal and Conservative parties went to the 1878 election on a platform of confining Pacific Island labourers to the sugar plantations.

### The squatters defeated: *The Pacific Islands Labourers Act of 1880*

The new Conservative government of Thomas McIlwraith, which took office in January 1879, might have avoided legislating on the issue of Pacific Islanders altogether, but the behaviour of the pastoralists and their parliamentary leadership ensured that their defeat in 1877 would be cemented in legislation and surrounded by bitterness. In early 1880, with the Premier in Britain, the ultra-squatter Colonial Secretary, AH Palmer, lifted the ban on pastoralists recruiting Islanders. By the time a handful of squatters had brought new gangs inland, sections of the Queensland outback were in uproar. There were public meetings in several towns, and in Aramac, ministers Palmer, Morehead and Buzacott were burned in effigy.<sup>35</sup> The *Courier's* report of the Aramac protest meeting emphasised its middle class nature:

The storekeepers say the Kanakas are no benefit to them, as after working their time out, they are taken to a seaport town for reshipment, and there spend their three years' earnings. The publicans say they do *them* no good because the Act forbids the sale of liquors to Islanders; and, as many of the station managers say, they "hate the sight of them" ...

---

<sup>35</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 26 February 1880, p. 2, col. 5 and col. 7; 6 March, p. 6, col. 4; 15 March 1880, p. 2, cols. 3-4; p. 6, cols. 5-6; 20 March 1880, p. 6, col. 2.

A league is formed here consisting of all classes of the community, subscriptions for its support to consist of not less than one shilling.<sup>36</sup>

Behind the scenes, there was rebellion in the Conservative Cabinet. Postmaster-General, CH Buzacott, wrote to McIlwraith that the issue had damaged the Conservatives in Rockhampton.<sup>37</sup> Six years later, Palmer's actions still rankled, and John Murtagh Macrossan, forced to defend his role in the scandal, would claim that he "was a long distance from Brisbane when it took place, but...the action of myself and another member of the Cabinet had the effect of preventing that action from being repeated."<sup>38</sup>

Partly as a consequence, the government brought in a new Pacific Islands Labourers Bill in August 1880, and the miscreant Palmer had the responsibility of moving the bill, sections of which he clearly despised. The bill introduced a series of reforms that had long been advocated. The wages of Islanders were to be paid every six months, and a bond was to be paid to secure their wages and their return home should their master become insolvent. A fee was to be charged on all labourers recruited to pay for better government supervision. New controls were placed on transferring a labourer to another employer, and a new dietary scale was introduced. Hospitals were to be set up for Islanders, and the death of any Islander was to be reported to authorities. All these measures were generally agreed.

---

<sup>36</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 15 March 1880, p. 6, cols. 5-6. Note that one shilling would be equivalent to \$15 in 2006 values; £1 (20 shillings) represented more than a week's wages after board for station-hands, according to the *Courier*.

<sup>37</sup> Buzacott to McIlwraith, 21 May 1880, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/5. Buzacott's brother ran the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*.

<sup>38</sup> Speaking during the debate on northern separation, *ORDLA Qld*, 1886, vol. XLIX, p. 641. Macrossan was replying to a speech by Robert Aland, see p. 629.



Kay Saunders sees the clauses in the 1880 bill banning the indenture of Islanders for pastoral work as flowing from changes to the structure of pastoral production, as investment in infrastructure such as fences and dams made a large, unskilled workforce less necessary.<sup>39</sup> While these changes were certainly occurring, and reducing the demand for labour on each property, there was nothing in this debate which supports her conclusion, and the bitterness with which it was conducted suggests that real interests were indeed being affected. A wide range of issues was canvassed in debate on the bill. Hard line liberals argued for abolition of Islander labour, planters argued their case for a profitable industry and pastoralists defended their use of Islanders. The dangers of slavery were canvassed, while conservatives denied that anything approaching slavery could be found on Queensland plantations. Liberal leader, Samuel Griffith, and his lieutenants disavowed any desire to deny Islander labour to the sugar planters, and instead tried unsuccessfully to also apply the restrictive provisions of the bill to time-expired Islanders.

But beneath the veneer of respectable debate and parliamentary manoeuvre, the squatters were angry. Their government was legislating to deny them cheap labour, the kind of "crime" they normally associated with Liberals. John Stevenson declared the bill had nothing to do with the interests of the "Polynesians" or European workers; the culprits were "a few agitators, publicans and storekeepers in certain townships who had raised an excitement on the question", a charge repeated later by squatter, Lumley Hill.<sup>40</sup> The most violent attack came from leading conservative, Boyd Dunlop Morehead.

---

<sup>39</sup> Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXXIII, pp. 352 (Stevenson); 842 (Hill).

Morehead was one of Queensland's leading stock and station agents, immensely wealthy, and a large-scale business pastoralist on the McIlwraith model. In parliament, he was a tenacious defender of pastoral interests, but the broader unpopularity of the pastoralists and the narrowness of their outlook meant that his contributions were often little more than muck-raking or point-scoring. A future Premier, he possessed little of Palmer's political intelligence or broad understanding of society. Like Palmer, he possessed an effortless arrogance matched by few other politicians. Within a few months, McIlwraith would reconstruct his ministry, using the opportunity to promote both Palmer and Morehead out of the elected Assembly, Palmer to the Presidency of the Legislative Council, and Morehead to the Council as Postmaster-General and government representative there.

But now, in September 1880, Morehead was expected to assist *his* government to pass a law depriving *his* constituency of cheap labour. It was too much. With the bill in its committee stage, discussing the clause restricting Islanders to tropical or semi-tropical agriculture, he launched an extraordinary attack on the sugar planters and their leader, his conservative colleague, Francis Tyssen Amhurst. It is doubtful that Amhurst was used to such abuse – he was the brother of Lord Amhurst of Hackney, and like many of the largest planters, a lesser son of the British aristocracy.<sup>41</sup> Morehead began by telling parliament that he was not there to defend the use of Pacific Island labour by pastoralists; “the day was gone by for that; and so he believed the day of their employment by sugar-planters would go by.” The thing that made him angry was that “animus was shown towards that class of people who were at present the mainstay of

---

<sup>41</sup> This wider point is discussed in Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], pp. 53-54.

the colony – the idea now was to do all they possibly could to hamper the squatters and to pet and pamper the sugar industry.”

The hon. and selfish member who represented Mackay [Amhurst] seemed to think of nothing beyond Foulden – that sugar plantation of his which was so appropriately named. That hon. member seemed to think that the whole management of the immigration affairs of the colony should centre in and about the sugar producing districts. He did not believe that the hon. member cared one straw whether any more white men were introduced into the colony... Now that sugar had become an export, all the hon. member cared about was its production by blackfellows.

This was slightly unfair; during the 1878 election campaign, Amhurst had defended the use of Pacific Islanders on pastoral stations.<sup>42</sup> As for Amhurst himself:

Let hon. members look at the hon. member for Mackay, who was a typical sugar-planter, and then look at the hon. member for Clermont,<sup>43</sup> who was a typical squatter, and see which was the most fattening occupation of the two. Were they going to further assist the hon. member for Mackay to get his full – to fatten still further on the State? Were they going to make him even richer than he was now?

Finally Morehead found some comfort in measures that would impinge on employers of Islanders:

It was the tendency of this measure to make the sugar-planters rich at the expense of the State... He was therefore glad to see a measure proposed

---

<sup>42</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 20 November 1878.

<sup>43</sup> Henry Weld-Blundell.

which would provide for a proper system of inspection to be paid for by taxing the employers themselves. That was a step in the right direction. Any amendment that would be proposed which would injuriously affect the hon. member for Mackay should receive his hearty support.<sup>44</sup>

Not a word of censure from Morehead's fellow parliamentarians is recorded in Hansard, and in the colony's leading newspaper there was not a hint of his personal attack.<sup>45</sup> But it was not the end of pastoralist resistance.

In the squatter-dominated Legislative Council, carriage of the bill was in the hands of Charles Hardie Buzacott, one of Queensland's most sophisticated newspaper journalists and publishers, and one of the leaders of the town-conservatives who supported McIlwraith. Buzacott had an unenviable task; persuading the unaccountable Councillors to pass a law that challenged their own economic interests, and those of their friends.

The need for legislation to protect islanders reflected a general problem in racially-divided societies: it had been proved in all countries where servile labour was employed that there were men of European descent who did ill-treat their labourers and that exceptional legislation must be authorised, if the community in which such labour was employed wished to preserve itself from the stigma attaching to men who ill-treated their fellow-creatures who were not in a position to protect themselves.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXXIII, p. 840.

<sup>45</sup> The *Brisbane Courier's* report of parliament the next day reported Morehead's outburst thus: "Mr. MOREHEAD pointed out that the sugar industry had been unduly fostered. If the planters must have this description of cheap labor, it was only fair that the squatters should have it so as to produce their wool cheaply, as this was the only reason why the planters cried out for cheap labor. He did not advocate the employment of the labor in the outside districts." 29 September 1880, p. 3, c. 4. There was no other indication of Morehead's behaviour elsewhere in the paper.

<sup>46</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, p. 138; Buzacott's whole speech is pp. 136-8.

This was a specific problem for Queensland because there had been abuses, and it had become “a matter in which their reputation was concerned”. They were also impelled to act because of the constant agitation on the issue, “which had not had a beneficial effect. It had been the cause of much ill-feeling and recrimination. It had made a considerable section of the population dissatisfied and disposed to maintain an agitation” – a swipe at Palmer’s indiscretion, and a warning to the Council to “give their consideration to the measure with unprejudiced minds”.<sup>47</sup> But there was a glaring problem with the legislation – it proposed to legislate “discrimination which should be exercised between one class of employers and another”, something which both offended the general ruling class view of proper legislation, and hurt the specific fraction of the ruling class which filled many of the seats in the Legislative Council. Buzacott’s response was tortured: as unfair as it was, “It was necessary for the honour and credit of the colony that they must have legislation”, but “legislation they could not have unless they consented to legislate illogically and inconsistently”. And this is what he asked them to do: “The politician must compromise and must keep before him what was possible, rather than what was theoretically and absolutely right.”<sup>48</sup>

But it would take more than the tortured logic, pragmatism and veiled threats of a local newspaperman, no matter how distinguished, to get these proud, wealthy and successful men to swallow this bitter pill. For Thomas Murray-Prior, Rockhampton squatter and son of an officer in the 11th Hussars, it was introducing slavery. “He could not see why, in the first place, any employer

---

<sup>47</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, p. 138.

<sup>48</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, pp. 136-7.

had not a right to employ such labour as he deemed necessary, and why South Sea Islanders should not be free"; though of course what he meant by freedom for the Islander was not, perhaps, a definition most people would recognise. For the Darling Downs squatter, James Taylor, it was a tyrannical bill, iron-handed in its measures which required employers to seek favours – the right to employ Islanders – from mere officials. Pioneer sugar planter Louis Hope saw the bill as the work of a few publicans who feared losing business, an opinion shared by that proud attack-dog of the pastoral cause, WH Walsh, who complained that the designs of the Almighty, who had given them such a fine tropical estate to develop, were being frustrated.<sup>49</sup>

One of the few squatter-politicians who showed a glimpse of the legislative or political skills which were supposed to accompany the eminence of a seat in the Council was Gordon Sandeman. He shared their contempt for the bill, but also saw that throwing the bill out could endanger a great capitalist interest in the colony, the sugar industry, and warned, "if the Bill were thrown out now they should very likely in the future have a change of Government". But his colleague, Francis Ivory, the squatter son of a Scottish judge who had represented the Burnett region with its plantations and pastoral stations in the lower house, was having none of this. He was openly in favour of cheap labour – which was nothing more than capital brought into the colony. The problem "had originated with the publicans and storekeepers, because the Polynesians did not get their wages paid in the interior, so that the publicans and storekeepers might have milked them dry before they came to the coast." A

---

<sup>49</sup> For Walsh's politics and role in party struggle, see Denis Cryle, *The press in colonial Queensland: A social and political history 1845-1875*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1989, esp pp. 124-31.

frustrated Buzacott might have later reminded him (over a stiff drink) that their Conservative government would not exist without the support of publicans and storekeepers like Patrick O'Sullivan, the brewer Patrick Perkins, and others whose sympathies were with the urban commercial classes. But Ivory had others to blame as well, including the sugar planters who were responsible for most of the deaths of Islanders, and immigrants from Britain, who were

a discontented class of labourers – trades-unionists who had been forced out of England...and who brought with them all their antipathies and antagonistic feelings to men who had worked themselves into positions of independence; and it was to pander to the feelings of these people that a young colony like this was supposed to sacrifice all its best interests.<sup>50</sup>

This was all too much for the Postmaster-General. He “had been exceedingly surprised at the tone of the debate”. The attacks on those demanding the restriction of Islanders were insulting to the public in general, and honest and disinterested men in particular. Worse, “Some of the speeches delivered by hon. gentlemen who were employers of labour seemed to indicate that those hon. gentlemen looked at the question simply from their own standpoint.” He lambasted them for being completely out of touch with public opinion. “The feeling of the people...was unmistakably demonstrated. They were bound to yield”:

They might resist that expression of opinion in the Council, and they might throw the Bill out, and for years obstruct the settlement of the question; but if hon. members would remember what was done by the last Government that was in power, they would see that it would be just

---

<sup>50</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, 1880, pp. 138-56.

as much in the power of succeeding Governments to decree that no licenses should be issued at all...<sup>51</sup>

After a few more bad-tempered comments, the second reading of the bill was easily carried, but the skirmishing continued into the committee stage where definitions were argued over, and a raft of minor changes made. In a new attempt to punish the planters, the Council voted for a clause, moved by the Liberal leader, CS Mein, to limit the daily work for Islanders to eight hours.<sup>52</sup> This attracted an immediate protest from Maryborough plantation owner and MLA, Henry Palmer, saying the clause would be disastrous for the planters. There was no reply to this as the Council moved to the vote.<sup>53</sup> Back in the Legislative Assembly, the eight-hours provision was knocked out – which suggests how little influence the working class had in shaping this legislation – and after more minor changes, the bill was accepted by both houses and signed into law on 18 November 1880.<sup>54</sup> The *Brisbane Courier* was pleased with the bill:

No doubt it belongs to that kind of legislation which is objected to by the extreme advocates of non-interference with private enterprise. It forbids the employer to get his labor where or how he finds most convenient. But it is in accordance with the policy which this community has deliberately adopted, that of regarding the settlement of a European people, capable of forming a homogenous society, as the first consideration. We are anxious to develop our resources by the quickest and surest means, provided always that the development shall not interfere with the realisation of this hope.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, 1880, pp. 156-7.

<sup>52</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, 1880, pp. 178-80.

<sup>53</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XXXI, 1880, p. 198.

<sup>54</sup> *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol. XXVII (July-December 1880), pp. 1257-70.

<sup>55</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 20 October 1880, p. 2, cols. 3-4.



The *Pacific Islands Labourers Bill 1880* illustrates many of the key elements of the majority ruling class strategy on coloured labour. Indeed, it is the Conservative Party disciplining a significant part of its own constituency, with the support of the *Brisbane Courier*, that illustrates the ruling class nature of the strategy being imposed. The European, and predominantly British, colonisation of the Australian continent was central to their view of a prosperous and safe future, and the north was not to be exempted. Equally, the colonies were to build modern, wage labour economies, and not sink to the level of an indentured labour colony. While the explosive economic growth and profits offered by a successful sugar industry were to be nurtured, the problems inherent in using indentured labour were to be contained – they would not be allowed to determine the overall nature of the colony. Indeed, the *Brisbane Courier* celebrated the good fortune of Queensland's ruling class "in securing the services of a race of people who, while performing the work we require, are not likely to open the floodgates and pour in upon us a tide of colored humanity."<sup>56</sup> Faced with the intransigence of the Legislative Council, the *Courier* did not limit itself to an argument for pragmatic concessions. It declared:

It is not merely or mainly because white workmen dislike Polynesian labor that we are legislating to restrict it within as narrow bounds as possible. It is because we are all desirous of forming, as far as climate and the circumstances of the colony will allow us, a homogenous community. We dwell on the point, because it is the great and all-sufficient justification for our exceptional laws directed against colored aliens.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 20 October 1880, p. 2, col. 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 29 October 1880, p. 2, col. 3.

## The planters fight for indentured Indian labour

With the final defeat of the squatters in 1880, the focus of the “coloured labour” debate in Queensland moved firmly back to focus on the sugar industry. The explosive growth of the industry, and the demands of the planters for coloured labour, would lead to a vast struggle over coloured labour, a conflict that would escalate and polarise until the planters were fighting for the break-up of Queensland itself. This is a fight the planters would lose, and lose principally at the hands of the rest of the capitalist class in Queensland.

High prices and high profits from the late 1870s led to a massive expansion of the sugar industry, both geographically and in terms of capital invested. Where 11,005 acres of cane were grown in 1878, the figure was 38,557 acres in 1885; while sugar produced rose even more spectacularly, from 12,356 tons to 55,796. The centre of the industry moved further north, as the areas around Brisbane and Maryborough became relatively less important. Production developed rapidly in the far north, and Mackay became the centre of the industry. In six frenzied months, from October 1881 to March 1882, 240,000 acres of land around Mackay were sold for plantations and prices trebled.<sup>58</sup> The capital structure of the industry was also transformed, with the wealthy planter residing on his plantation giving way to joint-stock companies owning plantations run by local managers. The sources of capital also shifted, as Melbourne-based businesses and British capital moved in.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Adrian Graves, *Cane and labour: The political economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993, p. 16. Only a modest portion of the land sold for plantations was planted with sugar cane.

<sup>59</sup> Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], pp. 58-9; Graves, *Cane*, p. 17.

One important result was an enormous pressure to recruit more labourers. Indeed, from an average of around 2000 labourers per year, from 1874 to 1877, which dipped to a low of 1463 in 1878, recruitment in the following years shot up to 2182, 1995, 2643, 3139 and peaked at 5273 Islanders at the height of the boom in 1883. Recruiters were pushing the limits of what their existing Island sources could provide, but even that was not enough for the planters. They constantly complained of labour shortages – in parliament, newspapers and private correspondence. Recruiting ships moved into areas previously unexploited, especially in and around New Guinea.<sup>60</sup> There was a reversion to kidnapping and forced enlistment. A new series of recruiting outrages shocked Australian and British society in the mid-1880s, threatening the very existence of the labour trade. The Islands themselves began to suffer a crisis of depopulation, a development which troubled the leading planters.

The planters responded by turning their hopes and demands to India, which had provided hundreds of thousands of indentured labourers for the sugar and other industries of many far-flung British (and French) colonies, including Mauritius, British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaya and Natal.<sup>61</sup> For the planters, the Conservative party and the *Brisbane Courier*, the call for “coolie labour” would dominate their view of the future, and their

---

<sup>60</sup> Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], p. 97 has a table showing the origin of Pacific Island recruits each year. Vanuatu (New Hebrides) is the dominant source until 1882; the Solomons begin to become important in 1874, and more important again in 1881, while the New Guinea islands become very significant in 1883 and the most important source in 1884, at the height of the recruiting frenzy. Note, too, that recruitment drops back dramatically by 1885.

<sup>61</sup> Hugh Tinker, *A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas 1830-1920*, Oxford University Press (for the Institute of Race Relations), London, New York & Bombay, 1974, pp. 113-5.

strategy for settling the "coloured labour" debate for decades to come.

However, as soon as the cry was raised, the Liberals began their resistance.

The importation of Indian labourers ("coolies") had been the original "coloured labour" proposed for Queensland, as the newly-established colony sought economic advantage from the American Civil War. Enterprising capitalists and the fledgling government hoped to grow cotton to feed British textile mills whose American supplies were imperiled by the war. Negotiations with the British government of India were concluded, legislation passed in 1862 and regulations published in 1863 to allow and control the indenture of "coolies". This effort was still-born, due to the success of sugar grown with cheaper Islander labour, and the regulatory framework was allowed to lapse. In 1874, there was a new attempt to get the Queensland government to regain permission from India to indenture labourers. Thomas Fitzgerald, pioneer sugar planter, cohered the three north Queensland members of parliament and together they published a "Northern Manifesto", five demands which they insisted would represent "justice for the North". One of these was "coolie labour" for the sugar industry.

When Fitzgerald's motion for Indian labour reached parliament, the Legislative Assembly split three ways. Fitzgerald himself argued for "coolies" on the basis of the particular needs of the sugar industry in the tropical climate of North Queensland. The recently elected Liberal Premier Macalister argued a position hostile to any "coloured labour" in Queensland. According to IN Moles, who

has discussed the history of the "coolie labour" issue in Queensland,<sup>62</sup> Macalister misjudged the mood of the Assembly. But so too did the squatters Ivory and Morehead, who supported Fitzgerald's motion as a means of introducing cheap labour more generally. In the process they crystallized a third position, led by John Murtagh Macrossan, the north's most important politician for nearly two decades. Macrossan had intended to support Fitzgerald, but Ivory and Morehead changed his mind, because he was opposed to any labour that would compete with Europeans.<sup>63</sup> Fitzgerald's motion was defeated.<sup>64</sup> Macrossan's position did not just represent a split in conservative ranks, but also found support amongst liberals who were prepared to countenance "coloured labour", if it were strictly limited to producing for profits for the sugar industry. Macrossan's position presaged the dominant bourgeois position adopted from 1877 (and legislated in 1880) over limiting Pacific Islands labourers to tropical and semi-tropical agriculture.

In early 1881, with the sugar industry facing a shortage of Pacific Island labourers, the McIlwraith government began a new push for indentured Indians. The Colonial Secretary, Sir Arthur Palmer, wrote to the Indian government seeking Queensland's re-inclusion on the list of approved places for indenture.<sup>65</sup> The motive, said Palmer, was the difficulties they expected the sugar industry to have recruiting coloured labour from the Pacific. Alfred Hewitt of Pleystowe Plantation, Mackay, had written to Palmer the previous

---

<sup>62</sup> IN Moles, "The Indian Coolie labour issue in Queensland", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 5, no. 5, 1957, pp. 1345-72. Moles' article was far more subtle than most on the issues of "coloured labour".

<sup>63</sup> Moles, Indian coolie labour, p. 1354.

<sup>64</sup> Fitzgerald's motion was initially debated on 22 May 1874, without conclusion, Qld LA *V&P* 1874, pp. 207, 213; and the debate finalised on 7 July 1874, when it was defeated 18-12, pp. 351-2.

<sup>65</sup> Qld LA *V&P*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 543

month to tell the government to appoint an Indian Coolie Commissioner: "It is startling to see how many Mills & plantations are slacking & only labor is wanted to develop a grand industry on land unsuited for anything else."<sup>66</sup>

From the first the government proposed to limit the employment of Indian labourers to tropical and semi-tropical agriculture, accepting the ruling class consensus of 1877. While Palmer's approach to India remained secret for some time, the government's strategy was revealed when it placed on the Estimates to be approved by Parliament, money for a government agent in India. The Liberals prepared – confidently – for battle over the issue, but when the expenditure item came up for debate, Palmer withdrew it, saying, "preparations were not sufficiently forward to admit of an immigration agent being sent into British India, and if the money were voted there would be no use for it."<sup>67</sup>

In fact, it was to take another two years before the McIlwraith Government was able to finalise regulations that were acceptable to both the town conservatives in the ministry and the British Government of India. In particular, the government found that in its first draft of regulations controlling indentured labour from India, it had made no provision to confine "coolies" to tropical or semi-tropical agriculture after their first indenture was finished. The drift of post-indenture coloured labourers into the general labour market was an issue the Liberals had focused on in the debate over the Pacific Island Labourers Bill

---

<sup>66</sup> Hewitt to Palmer, 7 March 1881, McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, no. 452 in OM64-19/46.

<sup>67</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXXV, 10 October 1881, p. 913.

in 1880.<sup>68</sup> McIlwraith proposed a regulation to jail for six months any Indian labourer who did not re-indenture or return home, a provision the British Government of India rejected, insisting that “No penalty...[should] be imposed on any Indian immigrant who may have been induced to evade the law.” It proposed, instead, punishing the employer, with a regulation that made it illegal to employ Indian labourers except under an agreement ratified by government officials.<sup>69</sup> The British Indian government was able to impose a series of other unwanted conditions on the indenture of labourers, including provisions regulating hours of work, weekly days off, higher minimum wages, a specific Protector of Immigrants who spoke Indian languages and would be paid for by Queensland, and that 40 adult females would be recruited for every 100 adult males.<sup>70</sup>

While McIlwraith was negotiating, Griffith was campaigning. In 1882, in parliament, he moved the repeal of the existing Coolie labour laws.<sup>71</sup> His argument centred on the dangers of racialised labour – servile labour. For Griffith, the issue was not as narrow as “slavery”; indeed the social and economic structure of the former slave colonies was just as much to be

---

<sup>68</sup> This led to “some slight alterations” being proposed; McIlwraith to Indian Government, 21 June 1882, in *Qld LA V&P*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 549. The Liberals were to have great fun with the idea that these were “slight” alterations.

<sup>69</sup> *Qld LA V&P*, 1883, p. 430.

<sup>70</sup> See correspondence published in *Qld LA V&P*, 1882, vol. 2, pp. 543-49 (and regulations following), *Qld LA V&P* 1883, pp. 429-30 (and regulations following). It is significant that attempts to limit the hours of work for Pacific Island labourers in 1880 – initially proposed by petulant squatters in the Legislative Council – had ultimately been defeated.

<sup>71</sup> The “Labourers from British India Act Repeal Bill”, moved by Griffith on 18 July 1882, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXXVII, p. 98; the second reading debate is on 27 July, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XXXVII, pp. 188-219.

rejected.<sup>72</sup> Griffith also took up the supposed danger to British colonisation. The regulation that would force Indian labourers home – the “slight alteration” proposed by McIlwraith – would not protect Queensland. The British Indian Government insisting on a significant proportion of women coming with male labourers proved that as far as they were concerned:

the coolie should come here, not as a mere labourer to work for a short time and then go back, but that he might, in fact, remain in the colony and become a settler in it. The Government of India were troubled with a redundant population just as they were in England, and were anxious that their people should emigrate and settle elsewhere.<sup>73</sup>

James Dickson, the leading liberal and prominent Brisbane merchant and banker who was said to represent the importers in Queensland politics,<sup>74</sup> focused on the danger that Indian labourers represented to the British colonisation of Queensland. He argued that Pacific Islanders had been accepted as “a temporary expedient”, to “enable planters to overcome the pioneering difficulties of successfully cultivating sugar.” Islanders represented no fundamental threat because their numbers were so modest:

He did not think they would in any way assume such large proportions as to cause alarm for the future. Coolie immigration he considered quite a different question. In introducing coolie immigration no one could fix its extent, no one could tell to what extent they would settle in the

---

<sup>72</sup> See chapter 4 of this thesis, “The spectre of slavery”, and in particular the discussion, “A racially divided working class: The real spectre of slavery”.

<sup>73</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, pp. 190-1.

<sup>74</sup> Bruce Mansfield, “Australian nationalism in the growth of the labour movement in the eighteen-eighties in New South Wales, with reference to Queensland”, MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1951, p. 227 (typed 226), citing *Boomerang*, 28 January 1888.



colony, or to what extent they would affect their social institutions and the progress of the colony.<sup>75</sup>

He echoed Griffith's concern over the mandated importation of women from India:

Would they not be employed as domestic servants in the households on the plantations? If so...there was no limit to which the thing might go. They were introducing a class of people accustomed to the imitative arts and skilled in mechanical industries, and some of their race had shown marked ability in the professions. There was no denying the fact that all occupations and pursuits in the colony would be open to their class; and if once established there he could see clearly that there would be very little room and very few attractions left to induce his fellow-countrymen to make the colony their home.<sup>76</sup>

For Dickson the issue was not simply to establish profitable industries: "They might buy accumulation and wealth too dearly" if it involved "the degradation of the population". There was "no country in the world where there was a mixed servile and free population which could be said to hold a leading position among the nations."<sup>77</sup>

In response to Griffith, McIlwraith moved that all regulations under the Coolie Labour Acts would have to be passed by parliament, and not just gazetted by the government, and insisted that he would do nothing to endanger the progress of white colonisation:

---

<sup>75</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, p. 197.

<sup>76</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, p. 200.

<sup>77</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, pp. 199-200.

He believed they should do all they could to assist the sugar-planters in their work; at the same time he considered it was their duty, as colonists, to provide for the well-being of their fellow countrymen – those white races at home whom they wished to do so much to encourage to come here... He saw, therefore, no danger whatever to the colony from the introduction of those men, provided they were not allowed to mix among the general population.<sup>78</sup>

This did not impress William Kellett, the successful stock and station agent (and former pastoral manager) who had helped bring McIlwraith to power in 1879. The proposal to bring 40 Indian women for every 100 male labourers “simply meant that those people were to settle down here and become colonists in every respect, and he believed in a very short time they would have equal votes and rights with the white population of the colony.” The result, he feared would be “that before many years were over they could be inundated from India”.<sup>79</sup>

Two days before the parliamentary debate, William McIlwraith, a part-owner of the *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, wrote that he saw Griffith’s proposed repeal of the Coolie labour laws “as an attempt upon the part of Sam to compel you to commit yourself farther than you have done.”<sup>80</sup> If so, it was a success, for it was only McIlwraith’s timely concession on Coolie labour regulations that allowed the government to narrowly defeat repeal, 27-23. It would prove a hollow victory.

---

<sup>78</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, p. 196.

<sup>79</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1882, vol. XXXVII, p. 201.

<sup>80</sup> William McIlwraith to Thomas McIlwraith, 25 July 1882, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/15, letter no 464. According to PS Callaghan, William was Thomas’s brother, “Political alignments in the Queensland Legislative Assembly 1878-99”, BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1968, p. 45. I understand this assertion is contested.

## *Chapter 7*

# The politics of 'coloured labour' in Queensland, 1883-1886

The decision of Queensland's sugar planters to press for the right to recruit indentured Indian labour broke the broad ruling class consensus which had hitherto tolerated their use of indentured Pacific Islanders. It was the Indian "coolie" issue that most sharply divided Liberals from Conservatives, and on the one occasion when the issue was put to the test, the Queensland general election of 1883, the Conservatives were defeated. The planters' push for Indian labourers helped provoke a raft of restrictive labour legislation by the new Liberal government, and this in turn led the planters to gamble on separation for North Queensland. It was in this contest that the real balance of forces within the ruling class was revealed. While the urban-conservatives, represented by the *Brisbane Courier*, supported the planters in their desire for Indian labour, that support was conditional on a broader political structure which quarantined what they believed would be the effects of racialised labour, and prevented any shift away from a predominantly white Queensland with a modern, free-labour economy and a parliamentary political system. Thus, when

the planters took their demands to the extreme of campaigning for a separate, new colony of North Queensland, the *Courier* and the southern conservatives abandoned them, and their arguments provide us with a profound insight into the real agendas of a major element of the Queensland ruling class.

The planters' aggression in seeking labour during the boom years of 1883-4 led directly to a new round of atrocities by recruiting ships, creating such a scandal that the Liberals were forced to pass legislation to terminate the Pacific Islands labour trade after 1890, and accelerate their own plans for a sugar industry based on white labour. Thus the planters faced the prospect of no "coloured" indentured labour at all once the labourers recruited in 1890 were sent home.

Ultimately, as Adrian Graves has argued, the push for "coloured labour" for Queensland's sugar plantations was undermined by a long crisis in the plantation system of production itself, a crisis that saw a long and painful shift to production based on (white) family farms and central mills processing the cane. Alongside this went a crisis in the indenture of South Sea Islander labour, a crisis which led to Islanders being increasingly employed as higher-paid wage labourers on farms, with a declining number of first-indenture Islanders recruited to work on a declining number of plantations. Graves' emphasis on the material underpinnings to the ability of the state to abolish Pacific Islands labour represents a welcome rejection of the notion that the White Australia policy was simply about racism,<sup>1</sup> but however important the microeconomics of cane production, politics were just as important. Plantations were retained for

---

<sup>1</sup> Graves makes this rejection explicit in "The abolition of the Queensland labour trade: Politics or profits?" in EL Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism*, volume four, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1980, esp. pp. 41-42.

decades longer in Mauritius, Fiji and the West Indies. The strategic and economic vision of key ruling class leaders in Queensland, and nationally, narrowed the options for producing sugar. The fact that this vision also coincided with changes in the methods by which sugar could be profitably produced undoubtedly reduced the level of conflict on the issue, and ensured that Queensland retained a large sugar industry.

By 1887, Queensland had enacted harsh legislation against Chinese immigration and stopped naturalising Chinese residents, it had removed legislation that might have made the indenture of Indian labourers possible, and it had legislated to end the labour trade in indentured Pacific Islanders. The push for North Queensland separation, which many feared would produce a black-labour plantation economy, had been blocked by the united action of liberals, southern conservatives, and the Colonial Office. When the Conservatives won the 1888 Queensland election, they did so on a platform very similar to that which would ultimately become the White Australia policy.

## The 'coolie' issue destroys McIlwraith

The year 1883 represented the death-rattle of the Conservative government. McIlwraith's proposal to allow the building of a transcontinental railway on the land-grant principle through outback Queensland from Charleville to the Gulf of Carpentaria threw a major portion of the squattocracy into active opposition to him and profoundly undermined his government. His attempts to secure Indian labour for the sugar planters galvanised the urban and rural liberals against him in what amounted to a new crusade. Even worse, the issues came

together as many speculated that McIlwraith's real agenda was to build the transcontinental with "coolie" labour. Neither the support of the *Brisbane Courier* on both these issues, nor the widely-supported annexation of New Guinea in April 1883, could save McIlwraith.

It was the "coolie" issue more than any other which destroyed his Premiership. The letters he received from his closest supporters are eloquent testimony to that. William McIlwraith warned him from Rockhampton in July 1882, as the debate was opening up: "This Coolie question is a bothersome business, and I wish I saw you well rid of it. It is one of the questions in connection with which appeals may be made to the feelings and prejudices of the lower class, & they tell at the ballot-box."<sup>2</sup> The wealthy capitalist William Forrest, warned him from the Melbourne Club, "I much fear that the Coolie question primarily, & the Trns Contl in a secondary degree will kill you at the next election."<sup>3</sup>

As his key supporters began debating strategy for the 1883 parliamentary session and the election campaign to follow, there were divisions. The leading sugar planter, Hume Black, wanted the Conservatives to take up the "coloured labour" issue aggressively. In May 1883, he toured the far north, and reported good meetings and success in arguing for "coolies":

At Herberton the miners were enthusiastic, especially as they never thought I would have plunged recklessly into the labour question up there. Somehow I managed to get hold of their attention from the start &

---

<sup>2</sup> William McIlwraith to Thomas, 25 July 1882, letter no. 464 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/15.

<sup>3</sup> Forrest to McIlwraith, 14 Feb 1883, letter no. 565 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/17.

laid such a plain statement of the case before them such as they admitted had never been done before. With regard to the labour question I find far less opposition than I expected. Everywhere along the coast the people are doing no good towards extension of cultivation for want of labour & at the next election it will not be “do away with coloured labour” but regulate it. Even in the Torres & at Herberton they say – Have it on the coast but we won’t have it up here. I have especially pointed out that it is quite impossible to prevent coolie labour being imported but that the danger is in having it without regulations confining its employment.<sup>4</sup>

John Hamilton, the doctor and sometime miner who represented Gympie, was quite opposed to this strategy:

In the first place its hardly conceivable the prejudice which exists against Coolies – I have noticed it in Gympie, Wide Bay District & Brisbane – It’s useless to explain that the restricted introduction of Coolies will prevent the unrestricted introduction of a worse race [Chinese], their reply is that Coolies are more objectionable.<sup>5</sup>

For Hamilton, the government was in a hopeless bind on the issue:

If we do face the question next year it won’t benefit the sugar industry. The Indian Government won’t of course assent to the regulations which were sent there and if we in consequence lessen the restrictions Parliament won’t consent to them and the fear of a dissolution or a resignation of the Ministry would not in the last session have the same effect as it had in previous ones in inducing men on our side to vote with the Government on the question. It would have the reverse effect as it

---

<sup>4</sup> Hume Black to McIlwraith, 15 May 1883, letter no. 584 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/18, emphasis in original.

<sup>5</sup> John Hamilton to McIlwraith, April 1883, letter no. 587 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/18.

would be a safe and a good card for them to play at the next election & I'm sure you can spot men in our crowd who would play it.<sup>6</sup>

John Murtagh Macrossan was in no doubt about the problem the conservatives faced. In his own electorate he said, "Townsville is the enemy's stronghold. There the anti-Coolie cry will bear the best fruit."<sup>7</sup> But he also thought they had a chance, if they deflected concern over "coolies" onto the Chinese issue.

The Coolies will be a great thorn in our side but if properly handled between this and the election the Chinese can be made a still greater thorn in Sam's [Griffith's] side. Don't you forget that at Roma The [sic] Chinaman is a more dangerous competitor than the Coolie to the working man.<sup>8</sup>

According to Macrossan, the biggest problem was that the planters themselves were doing too little to win the public argument:

The planters everywhere in the districts up here have been very supine. Men who will not help themselves by the very small duty of looking after the roll are unworthy of the sacrifice we have made and are making for them. I have been tempted more than once to throw them and the Coolie to the devil.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> John Hamilton to McIlwraith, April 1883, letter no. 587 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/18.

<sup>7</sup> Macrossan to McIlwraith, 25 August, 1883, letter no 636 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/19.

<sup>8</sup> Macrossan to McIlwraith, 25 May 1883, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/20. The significance of Roma is that McIlwraith was to give a major electoral speech there on 7 June.

<sup>9</sup> Macrossan to McIlwraith, 13 August 1883, letter 641 in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/19.



One consequence was backsliding and inconsistency in their own ranks as the pressure mounted. Macrossan complained: "Cooper like the infernal fool he has always been would support colored labor at Cairns and go against it at Herberton."<sup>10</sup> In Rockhampton, the Conservative, Ferguson, kept his seat by campaigning as "an uncompromising opponent of land grant railways and coloured labour, and if these subjects are mentioned in the Governor's Address he will vote against the Ministry and the address in Reply."<sup>11</sup> William McIlwraith railed privately against this treachery, but when Griffith moved in parliament to put McIlwraith out of office, Ferguson voted with his old leader. However, the Conservatives were routed, and Griffith had a majority of 35 to 20.<sup>12</sup>

Approval for the recruitment of Indian labourers for the sugar industry was finally given by the British Government in India in a letter dated 15 September 1883, just as the McIlwraith government was being destroyed at the polls. When the Indian government finally received a response from Queensland, it was from a new Premier, informing them that there would be no recruitment of indentured labour from India, and apologising for the waste of their time.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Macrossan to McIlwraith, 2 Sept 1883, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/23.

<sup>11</sup> Will McIlwraith to Thomas, 21 August 1883, letter no. 643, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/19.

<sup>12</sup> Roger B Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984, p. 88. The actual tests of strength between the Conservatives and Liberals when Parliament first met after the election saw Griffith win votes 29-17 (for Groom rather than Scott to be Speaker, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 7); blocking McIlwraith's attempt to get new estimates printed (30-19, p. 11); and adjournment (p. 24). To these numbers must be added the votes of Dickson, who was out of Queensland and made Treasurer on his return, and the two Liberals who won the seats of Cook and Aubigny, after successfully challenging the election of two McIlwraith supporters.

<sup>13</sup> *Qld V&P*, 1883-4, vol. 1, p. 1423.

## The Liberals triumphant

The new Premier, Samuel Griffith, intellectual and energetic, set about recasting Queensland labour law and restructuring the sugar industry. First he attempted to repeal the *Labourers from British India Act*, but was narrowly thwarted in the Legislative Council; he finally succeeded in 1886. Then Griffith amended the *Pacific Islands Labourers Act of 1880* to restrict Islanders to field work. The *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act of 1877* was also amended to reduce the number of Chinese people who could come by any ship – even if not travelling to Queensland – from one for every 10 tons of its tare to one for every 50 tons; to increase the entry tax from £10 to £30; and to end the refunding of the entry tax. A *Native Labourers Protection Act*, which prevented the employment of Aboriginal people on ships within Queensland waters, was passed with the aim of reducing abuses associated with *bêche-de-mer* fishing. It also provided for written work contracts for Aboriginal workers. The *Immigration Act* was amended to provide greater government support for the indenture of European immigrants. In the first year of the Liberal regime it seemed that, apart from the new Land bill, parliament debated little other than labour and immigration law.

The overall effect of this activity was to limit the labour options for sugar planters *and* the work options for Pacific Islanders. This reflected the Liberal government's strategy, which I see as one of quarantining the sugar industry, and applying moderate pressure on the planters. They were to be guaranteed "a practical supply of labour"; but no more.<sup>14</sup> The legislative whirlwind of 1884

---

<sup>14</sup> Speech of Garrick, Postmaster General and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, on the *Bill to Repeal the Labourers from British India Act*, *ORDLC Qld*, 1884, vol. XL, p. 56.

was intended to box them in without destroying them and the profits they generated.

With the shortage of labour from the Pacific Islands, planters had taken to employing Chinese people, and in 1883, 2578 had arrived in the colony, the first really substantial intake since the 1877 legislation.<sup>15</sup> The planters had been prepared to pay the £10 poll-tax.<sup>16</sup> Griffith responded with the *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act of 1877 Amendment Bill*. In the parliamentary debate, leading Conservative, John Murtagh Macrossan, pointed out that it cost £25 each to obtain Pacific Island labourers, and a further £6 to return them to the Islands. Even with a poll-tax of £20, as proposed in the initial draft of the Bill to amend the Chinese Immigration Act of 1877, the Chinese labourer would be cheaper to recruit. Indeed, the planters were prepared to pay £30 to recruit an Indian labourer. "I have no wish to injure the planters," he declared, "but I have a strong desire to protect the Europeans." This led to the poll-tax being raised to £30.<sup>17</sup> Sugar planters were to be strongly discouraged from employing Chinese labourers.

Some sugar planters had experimented with labourers from other sources, including the Malay Peninsula. The Premier was sanguine: "I think the persons who have tried that experiment have already become so heartily sick of the result of it that we need not anticipate any serious attempt to renew it."<sup>18</sup> The

---

<sup>15</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 346.

<sup>16</sup> Joyce, Samuel Walker Griffith, p. 102; Hume Black in *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 439. See also letter from Butterfield and Swire to Colonial Secretary, Hong Kong, 14 May 1883, in *Qld LA V&P*, 1883-4, vol. 2, p. 1422.

<sup>17</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 348.

<sup>18</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, p. 273. Adrian Graves suggested that part of the problem was a failure to make agreements with foreign governments; see his *Cane and labour: The political*

government made no move to limit or ban the introduction of labourers from other parts of Asia, but made it clear that they would do so if they thought it necessary. When Swallow and Derham, who owned “Hambledon” plantation, asked about the possibility of importing Japanese labourers, Griffith responded:

there is at present no law in force prohibiting the introduction of Japanese subjects... If at any future time the introduction of Japanese should prove injurious to the welfare of the Colony I have no doubt that restrictions on their introduction would be imposed by Parliament.<sup>19</sup>

Griffith had made the same point in Parliament when Macrossan had argued that restricting the importation of Islanders or Indian labourers would lead to hundreds or thousands of Malays and others being introduced.<sup>20</sup> An “almost-white Queensland” policy was being constructed. The government wanted the

---

*economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993, p. 38. This assertion seems strange. Where Graves asserted that negotiations with the Indian government broke down, in fact they did not; the Indian government agreed to permit the recruitment of indentured labourers when the Queensland parliament passed legislation agreed between Queensland and India. The problem for the planters was that negotiations had taken two years – the issue mentioned by Graves, Queensland’s reluctance to pay for the administration of the system to protect Indian labourers, had been one of the reasons for the delay – and the Indian government’s agreement came as the Conservatives lost power. Graves argues that, “One of the important factors in the unwillingness of countries to have labour treaties with Queensland was the colony’s notorious reputation with respect to the ill-treatment of Pacific island labour and the state’s unwillingness to frame legislation which guaranteed the rights of migrant workers.” *Cane and labour*, p. 38. These assertions *may* be true, but are not substantiated by his reference, which is to a letter by Derby, the British Colonial Secretary, dated 18 July 1883, in which he rejected a request by planters to recruit indentured Chinese labourers in Hong Kong. Derby’s brief letter simply said that the Governor of Hong Kong was not to permit such indenture unless Queensland said it wanted such immigration, and then passed laws to protect the indentured immigrants in the same way India insisted that its labourers were protected; *Qld LA V&P*, 1883-4, vol. 2, p. 1421. No Queensland government wanted Chinese immigration, which is why the planters tried to arrange it privately, even during the McIlwraith regime. Britain would have faced an angry response from the Queensland government, and no doubt a considerable public agitation, had it allowed any such scheme.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Joyce, Samuel Walker Griffith, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 239.

sugar industry to restructure itself eventually around European labour. Its model was the established and successful sugar industry of northern NSW where European small farmers grew cane for the mills of companies like the Colonial Sugar Refining Co.<sup>21</sup>

Given the problems of an immature labour market, the government set out to facilitate the use of white indentured labour. They amended the *Immigration Act* to provide even greater subsidies for the passage of agricultural labourers from Britain, Germany or Scandinavia who agreed to work in Queensland under indenture – subject, like Pacific Islanders and others, to the draconian provisions of the *Masters and Servants Act*. Under the new subsidies, an employer could land a male or female labourer under forty years old in Queensland for £1, a fraction of the cost of recruiting an Islander, and with no obligation to pay for their return. Subsidies were also offered to bring the wives and children of white labourers.<sup>22</sup> The planters expressed their utter lack of interest in the legislation. The failure of this legislation to change the nature of labour in the sugar industry was clear in 1886, when just 123 of the 10,630 emigrants who were sent to Queensland by the Agent-General were indentured; and they were mostly farm labourers and domestic servants, with three venetian blind makers.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> GC Bolton, *A thousand miles away: A history of North Queensland to 1920*, The Jacaranda Press, in association with the Australian National University, Brisbane, 1963, p. 147; also p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, 1884, pp. 272-5.

<sup>23</sup> Agent-General's report for 1886, see *Qld LA V&P*, 1887, vol. 3, p. 573; Immigration Agent's report for 1886, *Qld LA V&P*, 1887, vol. 3, p. 600. Earlier, in July 1885, in the Governor's speech opening the year's parliamentary session, the government regretted "that little advantage has hitherto been taken of the Act passed by you during last session to facilitate the introduction of indented labourers from Europe." *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLVI, p. 3.

The new Liberal government's position on Pacific Island labour reflected the same strategy. Islanders would continue to be introduced, but for Griffith, "the introduction of these islanders is only a temporary measure":<sup>24</sup>

When the Government thought the time had arrived for the prohibition of Polynesian labour, they would be perfectly prepared to take the responsibility of doing so. It was their function to do so... He thought himself that the prohibition of the introduction of black labour should be concurrent with the substitution of some other labour to take its place.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, there were 14,000 Islanders in Queensland; "Those persons are here, and we have to deal with the matter as we find it...we must do something to see that they do not injure the other portions of the community."<sup>26</sup> The new *Pacific Islands Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Bill* excluded them from working machinery, making products marketable, being grooms or coachmen, or horse driving or carting except in field work, and removed them from domestic service. It also aimed to limit time-expired Islanders to field work, and to ban the supply of firearms to Islanders.<sup>27</sup> According to Adrian Graves, the legislation succeeded: "The tendency to employ more Whites in skilled positions was reinforced after the passage of legislation in 1884 restricting Pacific Islanders to unskilled tasks in sugar cultivation."<sup>28</sup> It also had the effect of reducing demand for indentured Islanders in a situation where demand had previously far outstripped supply. Not surprisingly the planters supported the passing of the legislation, since it would reduce competition for time-expired

---

<sup>24</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 333.

<sup>26</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, pp. 134-5.

<sup>28</sup> Graves, *Cane and labour*, p. 37

Islanders.<sup>29</sup> Graves also argued that an expanding European population also facilitated the employment of whites in the sugar industry.

Kay Saunders saw a profound contradiction in the Liberal position. The policy of limiting Islanders to field work:

ensured the very structure they [the liberals] strove to destroy... [B]y insisting that contracted Melanesians work only as servile tropical agricultural labourers, Griffith's legislation was preserving the hegemony of the planters; it stopped the Melanesians from being recruited into more remunerative capacities either within the sugar mills or outside the sugar industry altogether.<sup>30</sup>

Saunders was formally correct; the legislation weakened the position of the Islanders as against their employers, seemingly in contradiction to the professed anti-slavery politics of the Liberals. But this missed the bigger point. The Liberals were largely indifferent to the position and problems of the Islanders; their primary concern was the impact of sugar plantations and "servile labour" on the economic structure and politics of Queensland society as a whole. They were concerned to ensure a modern industrial capitalist future guaranteed in part by parliamentary democracy; not one as a backward plantation colony.

This contradiction in the Liberal position was picked up by the conservatives, who threw all the liberal rhetoric about freedom back at them. As originally

---

<sup>29</sup> Speech of Hume Black, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 140; also p. 242: "he was especially anxious the Bill should pass".

<sup>30</sup> Kay Saunders, *Workers in bondage: The origins and bases of unfree labour in Queensland 1824-1916*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1982, p. 65.

moved, the legislation would have forced current time-expired Islanders back onto the plantations, and forced future time-expired Islanders to stay on the plantations, their only alternative being to return to their island. The Conservatives' new leader, Boyd Morehead, affected outrage: "Is this man and brother, with whom we have shaken hands, to be turned into a slave? Is it to be considered sinful to employ such a man?"<sup>31</sup>

[I]t had been traditional amongst Englishmen that as soon as a man touched English soil he was a free man. But it seemed to be a different state of affairs in Queensland. Not only was he not a free man when he touched this shore – which he was not under the Bill – but even years after, when he had carried out all the conditions under which he was engaged, he was, after years of freedom, to be seized and told, "You shall only do so-and-so or you shall be deported from the colony."<sup>32</sup>

This line of argument was not congenial to the planters. They were on the defensive, and were happy to make whatever concessions they could to maintain the existing system – or at least its essentials. Hume Black believed:

that no doubt the whole trouble in connection with the kanaka labour had been brought about by time-expired kanakas remaining in the country and becoming a perfect nuisance in the towns and municipalities. He believed that it was the wish of the working men especially to see the time-expired labourer legislated for. Those labourers came here with the distinct understanding that they should return home at the expiration of their agreements.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, pp. 146-7.

<sup>32</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 238.

<sup>33</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 240.



And Griffith pointed to the disservice the Conservatives were doing to the planters' cause:

They were told the other day that the planters were pining for a supply of kanaka labour, and that they could absorb any number of them, and yet when they proposed by the Bill that some 900 or 1,000 kanakas should be available for them they came down and cried out about doing an injustice to the poor black.<sup>34</sup>

Despite this, the Conservatives' agitation was effective.<sup>35</sup> The government backed down and proposed that the clauses forcing time-expired Islanders to do agricultural field work not apply to those who registered by 1 September 1884, with proof they had been in the colony for five years. This special class of Islanders formed the core of those who were able to resist deportation in 1906.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 318. The "900 or 1000 Kanakas" referred to the time-expired Islanders who would be forced back onto the plantations under the legislation as initially proposed.

<sup>35</sup> It would be interesting to investigate the motives of the squatters in campaigning for this clause, which deprived the sugar planters of the forced labour of the 900 or 1000 time-expired Islanders then in Queensland. Was it a belated payback for the planters' support for the 1880 legislation which deprived the squatters of Islander labour? See the bitter speech Morehead made about the planters in chapter 6.

<sup>36</sup> Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1985, pp. 274-85. *The Pacific Island Labourers' Act* (Cwealth) of 1901 ended the labour trade from March 1904, and gave the new Federal Government power to deport Islanders found in Australia after December 1906 who did not have the certificates of exemption granted in Queensland's 1884 legislation. It was one of the major legislative manifestations of the new Commonwealth's White Australia policy. By the end of 1906, some 691 Islanders held the certificates of exemption which protected them from deportation. After a Royal Commission, the Commonwealth also decided to exempt several hundred more. See Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first pub 1923), pp. 182-5; Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 274-92 and esp. pp. 284-5.

Griffith's Pacific Islanders labour policy also faced a challenge from more intransigent Liberals, an element that had grown dramatically with the general expansion of the urban and small farmer population in Queensland, and which had a sizeable presence in parliament after the Liberal triumph of 1883. The hard Liberal parliamentarians were rich farmers, manufacturers and urban businessmen who wanted to hasten the destruction of the labour trade. They chose to test their strength by introducing an amendment that would limit the working week for Islanders to nine hours a day, six days a week.<sup>37</sup> This time, there was none of the mischief dished up by the ultra-squatters in 1880 when they had attempted to wreck the McIlwraith ministry's legislation by imposing an eight-hour day; this time the Conservatives all voted against the amendment, to protect the planters' interests. The hard Liberals were defeated 13 votes to 26, with eleven of their Liberal colleagues, including most of the Ministry, voting against them.<sup>38</sup>

The hard Liberals took their stance on the basis of a report by two doctors, Wray and Thompson, who had reported in 1880 on the appalling mortality of Islanders, arguing that it was caused by being overworked by greedy planters; just one more element of the plantation system that made it reek of the abuses of American slavery.<sup>39</sup> The planters' response was weak, challenging the

---

<sup>37</sup> Moved by Grimes, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 334.

<sup>38</sup> The vote is on a change of wording, but it clearly reflects the substantive sentiment on the issue, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 345. Brookes was the only Minister in the Legislative Assembly to support the amendment. Seven of the thirteen voting for Grimes' amendment had been elected at the 1883 election; two more had been elected in by-elections the year before. Of that nine, all except Higson (Rockhampton) represented electorates in the Liberal heartland, the populous south-east corner of the colony.

<sup>39</sup> See Grimes' speech, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 334; Brookes, p. 335; Jordan, pp. 335-6. The report of Drs. Wray and Thompson is in *Qld LA V&P*, 1880, vol. 2, pp. 414-20.

mortality figures as exaggerated, and arguing that sometimes in agriculture long hours were needed.<sup>40</sup>

The repeated assertion that Queensland's anti-"coloured labour" legislation was driven by a desire to protect white working men is challenged both by the Liberals' support for the laws promoting the indenture of white labourers, and by the response to Grimes' nine-hour day amendment. John Ferguson, the anti-"coloured labour" conservative, suggested that legislating a nine-hour day for Islanders would affect white employers:

How would it work if the shopkeepers were compelled to work their employes only eight hours? The sugar planters could not be expected to restrict their hours of labour to nine in the crushing season. It would be right enough for some seasons of the year to work only six or seven, but during the crushing season the work must be done the same as on Saturdays in Brisbane, where shopkeepers had their employes working sometimes in the morning from 9 o'clock till 11 o'clock at night, though on other days they might be at work only eight hours.<sup>41</sup>

Griffith, supposedly the champion of working-class racial exclusion, voted against the hours amendment, fudging the issue by claiming that the factory acts in Britain had very complicated clauses on working hours. He argued that the planters would not overwork them out of self-interest – a self-interest that had not been effective to date – and that the over-riding issue was the need to restrict the number of Islanders and their social impact.<sup>42</sup> James Foote, the

---

<sup>40</sup> See speeches of Hume Black, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, pp. 334, 343-4.

<sup>41</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 337. Ferguson was a conservative who had campaigned for Rockhampton at the 1883 election on a platform opposed to "coloured labour". He supported McIlwraith as Premier, but also Griffith's labour legislation.

<sup>42</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, pp. 337-8.

wealthy Ipswich shopkeeper and businessman, agreed with the hard Liberals that Islanders needed to be protected, but was confident that with careful administration by the new government, the abuses of the past would be stamped out. "He was not one of those who were desirous of hampering the planter too much in dealing with the labour", a view most large employers shared about their own industrial relations.<sup>43</sup> William Salkeld, the Ipswich auctioneer, attempted to defuse this argument, pointing to the vulnerability produced by long contracts of indenture. "White people generally engaged from day to day, or from week to week, or at the most from year to year; and they were far better able to look after themselves than the Polynesians";<sup>44</sup> itself an interesting piece of liberal mythology that illustrates how little this legislation had to do with protecting white workers.

## The politics of 'coloured labour' immigration in Queensland

The four major debates on labour and race in the Queensland Parliament in 1884 give an excellent overview of issues surrounding "coloured labour".<sup>45</sup> What they show is that these issues cannot be understood simply as a conflict between the supporters and opponents of "coloured labour" in general. Certainly that was one point of division, with some Conservatives unqualified

---

<sup>43</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 340.

<sup>44</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, 1884, p. 342.

<sup>45</sup> There were in these debates some relatively sophisticated speeches which ranged across a wide range of relevant issues; for instance Griffith, introducing the *Pacific Island Labourers Bill*, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, esp. pp. 133-4.

advocates of “coloured labour”,<sup>46</sup> while Liberals in general were concerned about either “slavery” or “semi-slavery” resulting either from the labour trade, or a possible future preponderance of “coloured labour” in the north. By contrast, Conservatives by and large dismissed this concern. But most Liberals and most Conservatives also distinguished between different *types* of “coloured labour” because in their minds, there were other issues involved – pre-eminently the related issues of colonisation and strategic control.

Chinese labour was rejected by most in the ruling class, with strategic concerns dominating. For Conservative leader, John Murtagh Macrossan, “Our great danger is from the Chinaman. We experience little danger from the kanakas, and the Government has taken care that there shall be no danger from coolies...”<sup>47</sup> His Conservative colleague, John Hamilton, saw 400 million Chinese as “infinitely more dangerous than coolies or any other coloured labour”.<sup>48</sup> When Griffith introduced the 1884 bill to increase restrictions on Chinese immigration, the most substantial debate was over whether or not the restriction on the number of Chinese allowed should apply to Chinese people planning to come to Queensland, or to all Chinese people on a boat stopping at a Queensland port, people who might be traveling to another colony altogether. Real interests were involved here; the latter, harsher position would discourage shipping companies from stopping at northern ports on their way south, and this would disadvantage those ports. So the vote was not for or against Chinese

---

<sup>46</sup> For example, WH Walsh, *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, pp. 86-89, 113. O’Doherty had an interest in a large plantation. He thought the problem was not the *Coolie Act*, but whether “the people would not day by day and month by month see that the best thing they could do for themselves and their children was to encourage cheap labour in the best manner they could.” *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 347.

<sup>48</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 348.

immigration, but how much sacrifice would be imposed on North Queensland in order to maintain a high level of restriction. In the Legislative Assembly, the latter, harsher position was supported 32-9, with six conservatives included in the 32.<sup>49</sup>

Pacific Islanders were the most acceptable – or least unacceptable – “coloured” labourers because their small numbers in the Islands presented no strategic danger to British control of Queensland. By contrast, the greater resistance to Indian labour by the Liberals reflected their fears for white domination in the long term. James Garrick, Postmaster General and Liberal leader in the Legislative Council, summed this up:

The introduction of coloured labour from the South Sea Islands is very different from the supply of coolies from British India. In one case we bring labourers from islands scattered over a large sea and inhabited by comparatively few people, and it is easier to manage those islanders who come in small numbers than it would be to control the vast hordes that might be brought into the colony from India.<sup>50</sup>

...or, he might have added, from China. The veteran “anti-slavery” campaigner William Brookes made a similar point when discussing the Pacific Island Labourers Bill:

---

<sup>49</sup> Debate on this point can be found in *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, pp. 116-20, where the Legislative Council voted 11-6 to amend the Bill to make the tonnage restriction apply only to Chinese people destined for Queensland; *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, pp. 619-21, where the Legislative Assembly voted to remove that amendment 32-9; and *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, pp. 124-132 where the Legislative Council finally accepted the Legislative Assembly’s position. This final debate in the Council ended bizarrely, with a series of votes taken and the Legislative Assembly’s position finally accepted on a vote of 11-9 when two conservatives left the chamber and two Liberals returned. One of these, Kevin O’Doherty, commented that, “by voting as he did he probably was instrumental in averting a crisis.” p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, p. 40.

The Legislature had decided to exclude coolies mainly because they existed in such large numbers that they might overrun the colony. For the same reason they objected to the Chinese. But they did not object to kanakas, because they could not defend themselves.<sup>51</sup>

John Murtagh Macrossan objected to the Liberal government's *Pacific Island Labourers Bill* because in his mind, Islanders were simply not an issue. "He did not think the Kanaka question was before the country at all during the elections. It was the Coolie question that was then before the country."

It was not a question of kanakas, but a question of coolies, and of Chinese more than of coolies in his electorate; and it was also more a question of Malays than of coolies, and the kanakas were left in the background altogether. There was a sort of tacit admission, not only in his electorate but, so far as he could observe, in all the other electorates, that the Kanaka question should be kept out of view altogether.<sup>52</sup>

Conservatives generally rejected the idea that Indian labourers were a danger. Norton saw Indians as acceptable, while Chinese were a "real danger to the State".<sup>53</sup> Macrossan argued that, "Chinamen and Malays...are the real danger to the working classes, not the coolies".<sup>54</sup> Gordon Sandeman turned the popular stereotype of the Chinese sojourner on its head and applied it to Indian labourers instead:

He could say that, from what he knew of the Indian labourer, his desire was not, like the Chinese, to settle down in a foreign country. There was

---

<sup>51</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 238.

<sup>52</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 326.

<sup>53</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 57.

<sup>54</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLI, p. 58.

no class of people in the world who had a greater objection to foreign countries. Their only object was to make a little money and then return to their native village, and live upon what they had earned.<sup>55</sup>

This analysis enables us to see that there were real and genuine lines of division between the Liberals and Conservatives on the issue of “coloured labour”, but the division was more complex than one between advocates and opponents of “coloured labour”.

Similarly, a close examination of the debates and conflicts over “coloured labour” shows that it is impossible to understand it as one of working-class pressure against capitalist greed. Certainly, some politicians attempted to give it such a character. When the Liberal minister, James Garrick, did this in the Legislative Council, the immensely wealthy William Forrest, punctured

the lofty scorn with which the hon. gentleman treated capitalists. It had appeared to him that the Postmaster-General was somewhat inconsistent; for was he not one of the largest capitalists himself that we had? – and did he not own terraces of houses in George street?<sup>56</sup>

It is certainly true that the Liberals, at times, identified themselves as the champions of working men, but this does not mean that there was any proletarian agenda involved in their actions. Indeed, a central part of Griffith’s labour strategy was white indentured labour from Europe, something politically active workers had generally opposed.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Griffith himself

---

<sup>55</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, p. 59.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Fletcher quotes Persia Campbell (in *Economica* No 1, Jan 1921) as arguing that “A hatred of squattocracy and convictism, and of indenture systems had left an indelible mark on



admitted that, “The principal argument against the introduction of European labour – the argument that has always been brought against it – is that its introduction will lower the average rate of wages.”<sup>58</sup> He disputed this, but no party that was genuinely responding to working-class agitation would have introduced such a measure.<sup>59</sup>

## The labour trade condemned

The Pacific Islands labour trade had been surrounded by controversy from the beginning, but the recruiting scandals of 1883-4 destroyed the credibility of the labour trade, and drove the Liberal government to legislate to end the indenture of Pacific Islanders permanently – though this radical move would be reversed

---

the Australian consciousness”, and that this influenced trade union attitudes towards the Chinese, in his “The role of the immigration question in gaining for the labour movement recognition by society in the period 1877 to 1890 in New South Wales”, MA, University of Sydney, 1964, p. 31. The introduction of the Agreements Validating Bill into the NSW Parliament by Sir John Robertson was strongly opposed by the Sydney Trades and Labour Council. The bill enforced agreements made between employers and workers that saw the employer pay for them to come to NSW to work for them, and included penalties up to two years solitary confinement. The TLC forced its representative, Angus Cameron, to abstain from voting for the bill; this was one of the major incidents leading to a rupture in relations between Cameron and the TLC; see Sydney TLC minutes, 3 February, 10 February, 17 February, 13 April, 20 April 1876, Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales papers, Mitchell Library, A3828. The legislation was subsequently used to recruit strikebreakers during the coal dispute in the Hunter Valley in late 1879, and leading trade unionist, Thomas White, told the Sydney Trades and Labour Council, “hoped that the Agreements Validating Act would be struck out of the statute book.” *SMH*, 22 Aug 1879, p. 6, col. 2.

<sup>58</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, p. 273

<sup>59</sup> There are very few situations in which genuine working class sentiment was gauged on the issue. See report of John Douglas’ election meeting at the large Union Foundry in Maryborough, 12 Nov 1878, *Maryborough Chronicle*, 14 Nov 1878. There is opposition to assisted immigration, and discontent at Douglas’ answer to a question on the issue. See also the advertisement on the issue in that issue of the *Chronicle*.

in 1892, before it became effective.<sup>60</sup> The scandals erupted as a result of a new wave of aggressive labour “recruitment” from islands around New Guinea, areas previously untapped for plantation labour. This new recruitment began in April 1883 and was driven by the increasing difficulty of finding labourers in the established areas of the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, and the pressure from planters for more and more recruits as the sugar boom reached its peak in 1883-4.

The New Guinea Islands were a gold mine for the recruiters; they could pick up their fill of labourers in a fraction of the time it had been taking. Recruitment soared, with 5797 Islanders coming from the New Guinea Islands in just eighteen months. However, unlike the communities and young men of the established recruitment areas, the young men from New Guinea had no idea how long they were being taken for, and what they were expected to do, in part because the recruiters were unable to communicate with them. Violent clashes marked the new recruitment from the very beginning. Once in Queensland, many of the new recruits resisted their labour obligations, and significant numbers deserted in desperate attempts to get home.

Ominously, the new labourers began dying at a colossal rate, probably because of their minimal resistance to the new disease environment. On one Mackay plantation, Homebush, 85 new recruits died in the nine months to February 1884. By May, Griffith had banned any further recruitment from New Ireland and New Britain; the recruiters responded by focusing on new islands, but the high death rate continued. In Mackay in the year 1884, some 823 labourers died

---

<sup>60</sup> This section relies heavily on Peter Corris, “‘Blackbirding’ in New Guinea waters, 1883-84: An episode in the Queensland labour trade”, *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 3, 1968, pp. 85-105.

out of a total of 3697, a rate of 22%, and it was predominantly the new recruits who died.

Revelations about the methods used in recruiting led to a series of well-publicised trials. The most notorious case was that of the *Hopeful* and its recruitment voyage from May-July 1884 to the D'Entrecasteaux, the Louisiades and other islands around New Guinea. Its recruiting agent, Neil McNeil and another crew member were both convicted of murdering Islanders who resisted recruitment and sentenced to death, a sentence which was commuted to life imprisonment after a vociferous and massive campaign by the Conservatives. The captain of the *Hopeful* and its Government Agent, the man supposedly charged with protecting recruits and ensuring the integrity of recruitment, were both convicted of kidnapping and sentenced to life imprisonment. Three others were also jailed for their part. An amendment to the *Oaths Act* in October 1884 allowed Islanders (and other "blackfellows") to give evidence in court, using the *British Kidnapping Act* as its model.

The scandal had reached such a proportion by December 1884 that Griffith set up a Royal Commission to investigate. Its investigation was historic in its comprehensiveness. The commission looked into eight voyages and interviewed 480 of the 625 labourers recruited. Its report was chilling in its indictment, describing the *Hopeful's* voyage as "one long record of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping, and cold blooded murder." It found that only nine of the 480 recruits had known what they were signing up to.

The report found that most of the Islanders wished to return home, and the government immediately announced its intention to repatriate them, and compensate the planters for their loss of labour, which ultimately cost over

£20,000, a colossal sum. The Acting Head of the Pacific Islands Branch of the Immigration Department, Charles Horrocks, was sacked, and legislation introduced in September 1885 to ban the issuing of recruitment licenses after 31 December 1890. The bill passed both houses of parliament with virtually no resistance.

The political impact of twelve months of scandal was enormous. The revelations undermined Britain's proud but increasingly hollow boast about its role in suppressing slavery. The German government protested against the labour traffic and asked Britain to help "prevent any transgression of the limit which divides the lawful traffic in Polynesians from slave trading."<sup>61</sup> The labour recruiter, WT Wawn, who was stripped of his recruiting licence and denounced in the Royal Commission, wrote:

The atrocities committed by the crew of the *Hopeful*...together with the verdict of "guilty" against the offenders, proved a sore blow to the labour trade. Very naturally, the unsophisticated public began to ask if it was possible that the stories told by missionaries and other opponents of the trade, about kidnapping and murders, might not be founded upon facts.<sup>62</sup>

Even in the heart of the sugar industry, Mackay, a promotional pamphlet for the town published in 1888 felt obliged to note that the "series of atrocities" revealed in 1884-5

---

<sup>61</sup> Sir Raphael Cilento, with the assistance of Clem Lack Snr., *Triumph in the tropics: An historical sketch of Queensland*, Historical Committee of The Centenary Celebrations Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1959, p. 291.

<sup>62</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *From the dreaming to 1915: A history of Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1982, p. 249.

shocked the whole civilised world... Thus the whole system of coloured labour was condemned; and throughout Australia and Britain it was boldly declared, that North Queensland was fast becoming a slave colony, and rivalling in cruelties and tyranny the Southern states of the American Union.<sup>63</sup>

For the *Brisbane Courier*:

the labour trade is condemned by the almost unanimous consent of Australia and is a scandal to the Empire... The labour trade must cease. Even if its continuance in its present maimed condition were likely to save the sugar industry – which we do not believe – it would still have to be stopped.<sup>64</sup>

The paper attempted to blame Griffith for the scandals, claiming that recruiting in new areas always led to abuses, and that Griffith, as minister controlling immigration, had personally authorised all the worst voyages, despite knowledge of how labour recruiting had been done. This line was dutifully followed by the Melbourne *Argus*, which declared that “Australia is pretty well tired of this South Sea labour traffic. Scandals seem to be inseparable from it.” But the equally conservative *Sydney Morning Herald* considered the Queensland government “free from all complicity in these transactions”.<sup>65</sup> For both the *Argus* and the *Courier* the scandal was an opportunity to demand once again that the Queensland government replace Islander labour with indentured Indians, a position supported by the liberal Queensland Governor, Sir Anthony

---

<sup>63</sup> George J Perkins, *Mackay. An essay upon the rise, progress, industries, resources, and prospects of the town & district of Mackay*, HB Black & Co, Mackay, 1888, pp. 33-34.

<sup>64</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 26 May 1885, p. 4, col. 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Argus*, 13 May 1885, p. 6, cols. 4-5; 14 May, p. 5, cols. 1-2; *Brisbane Courier*, 7 May 1885, p. 7, col. 1.

Musgrave. For their part, the planters had silenced themselves as part of their tactics for pursuing the separation of North Queensland.

There is an arguable case that abolition of the labour trade was not what Griffith wanted, but that he was forced to legislate by the enormity of the crimes committed around New Guinea and the political backlash. As early as February 1884, Governor Musgrave had declared himself “shocked at what has come to light since I have been here... The Kanaka labour traffic is a slave trade”. He reported that “Griffith has told me that he had no idea it [the labour trade] was half so bad.” This was long before the worst of the scandals had even occurred, much less come to light, yet Musgrave believed the conduct of recruiters so bad that “I doubt that anything but the radical cure of stopping the trade & making it piracy will be of any avail.”<sup>66</sup> Despite this undoubted opportunity to ban the labour trade, Griffith chose to rely on more stringent regulation and administration. Griffith had long insisted that he would ensure sufficient labour for the sugar planters. Musgrave declared his confidence that Griffith was “honest in his desire to do what can be done to prevent these iniquities”; yet his efforts failed as the atrocities continued during 1884. Certainly, the *Courier* did not believe that Griffith was about to legislate abolition; in fact it taunted him, arguing that his policy of closer regulation of the labour trade had been the price for vetoing the use of Indian labour, and challenging him “to take the step which should have been taken years ago—the total prohibition of the labour trade.”<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Sir Anthony Musgrave to John Bramston, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1884, in private letter book, Musgrave collection, Oxley Library, Acc. 334, pp. 170-76.

<sup>67</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 4 May 1885, p. 4, col. 5. The *Courier* declared it had always been opposed to the labour trade, a staggering dishonesty.

With abolition unavoidable, Griffith faced the difficult choice of seeing the sugar industry decline, backing down and accepting indentured Indian labour, or finding a way to restructure the industry on the basis of white labour. This was the most “experimental” and risky of the alternatives, but he pursued it with some vigour. In 1885 he introduced proposals to subsidise the erection of central sugar mills to be owned by co-operatives of local sugar planters, on condition that their cane was grown with white labour. Three such mills were erected, and were soon in financial difficulties; nevertheless, as a result of a mixture of political and economic pressures, this was the way in which the industry was ultimately restructured.<sup>68</sup>

## Separation: The planters try to divide Queensland

As Queensland’s sugar planters faced obloquy over the treatment of Islanders and defeat at the hands of Griffith and the new Liberal government over “coloured labour”, they turned in a mixture of desperation and overconfidence to a campaign for the division of Queensland and the formation of a new colony of North Queensland. Northern separation was a major issue in Queensland politics for much of the period from 1885 to 1894,<sup>69</sup> and became a proxy issue through which much of the struggle over labour was continued in Queensland.

---

<sup>68</sup> Graves, *Cane and labour*, pp. 23-48, 57-9.

<sup>69</sup> Christine Doran, *Separatism in Townsville, 1884 to 1894: ‘We should govern ourselves’*, History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, 1981, and p. 67 for end of the movement; Lyndon Megarrity, “Robert Philp and the politics of development in Queensland 1890-1903”, PhD thesis, University of New England, 2001, pp. 92-97.

The public face of the separation movement emphasised the raw deal the developing north supposedly got from southern politicians who dominated the Brisbane parliament a thousand or fifteen hundred kilometres away, who took too much in revenue from the north, and spent too little of that money building its urgently needed infrastructure. Certainly Edward Shann, writing in the 1920s, believed they had a strong case.<sup>70</sup>

There had already been some agitation in the north for separation, especially at Bowen, and the beginnings of a significant separation movement in Townsville in 1882 supported by both Liberals and Conservatives, but this had been paralysed by the bitter party struggle of 1883. The movement revived in September-October 1884, with a wave of public meetings across northern towns arousing interest in separation in early 1885. In April 1885, a convention of delegates from eleven North Queensland towns was held in Townsville to agree on a petition to the Imperial Government for separation from Queensland, and to decide on the politics of the movement. The convention was a considerable success; the mining centre of Charters Towers being the only significant town not represented. The separation petition was also successful, gathering over 10,000 signatures, from an area whose adult male European population was just 19,000. Even the Premier – who disputed the validity of many of the signatures – admitted that perhaps 6000 residents had signed it.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Edward Shann, *An economic history of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1930, p. 248.

<sup>71</sup> Griffith's letter challenging the validity of the 10,006 signatures is to the Governor of Queensland, 19 January 1887, and published in *Qld LA V&P*, 1887, vol. 1, the relevant sections being pp. 420-21. Griffith claimed that only 3393 were found on electoral rolls for year 1886 as at July, out of total 12,687 of Northern Districts. He then claimed to have sent the lists of signatures and the districts they claimed to live in to police officers to check. The result was that 3860 could not be identified as having been at any time residents in the districts set opposite to their name,



The petition was sent to the Colonial Office in London in June 1886,<sup>72</sup> and supporters of separation and delegates sent from North Queensland managed to secure a number of interviews with Colonial Office officials, including the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to press their case. Today the movement is but a footnote in history, but the Liberals of the time were sufficiently worried to devote considerable resources to fighting it.

For the sugar planters, the idea of a separate northern colony held out the prospect of “sensible” legislation guaranteeing them “coloured labour”, and cheaply. In a soon-to-be-famous letter, the sugar planters, John Ewen Davidson and Sir John Lawes, wrote to the Colonial Office in London in January 1885, supporting the separation movement on the grounds, *inter alia*, that:

There is an absolute diversity of interests between the inhabitants of tropical and temperate Queensland on the subject of coloured labour.

There are millions of acres of rich land along the north-east sea-coast covered with tropical jungle of no use for pastoral purposes, and which can only be utilized for tropical production by the means of coloured labour.

This coloured labour, which is absolutely necessary for tropical agriculture, is denied to the inhabitants of the North by the representatives of the South or temperate portions of the Colony, and the development of one of the main sources of prosperity in the Colony is thereby completely stopped. The inhabitants of Northern Queensland are anxious to obtain coolies from India under proper regulations and supervision, and so put an end entirely to the Polynesian labour traffic,

---

349 had left, and 111 signed twice or more. The discrepancies were largest for signatures claiming to come from Townsville and Mackay.

<sup>72</sup> The text of the Separation petition can be found in Qld LA V&P, 1886, vol. 1, pp. 440-41.

which is a fertile source of *omnes* troubles and complication. This is refused by the South, who last year repealed "*The Indian Coolie Act*".<sup>73</sup>

Of course, the interests of the sugar planters were not the only motivation for separation. Townsville businesspeople had their own motives, one of which was the desire for their town to be the capital; no doubt this too was one of the motives for the long-standing separationist agitation in Bowen. In 1886, the *Northern Miner*, the dominant newspaper in the north's greatest mining centre, Charters Towers, and the group of capitalists around the paper, switched from opposition to Separation, to support, in the wake of a dispute with the Premier over the latter's attempts to contain wild speculation in northern mining stocks. The switch in Charters Towers briefly added to the credibility of the movement, but the exact relative weight of the interests behind the separationist movement is not at issue here. Whatever the motives of anyone else, the sugar planters had decided to dissolve their struggle for bonded, racialised labour into the movement for separation, and this gave the separation movement a certain significance in the development of the White Australia policy, and damned it in the minds of those opposed to "coloured labour".

The entire logic of events, from early 1884 until August 1886, was towards a greater and greater polarisation around the issues of northern separation and "coloured labour". The planters were first radicalised by the collapse in sugar prices during 1884, which produced a widespread crisis in the sugar industry

---

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Davidson and Lawes to Colonial Office, 14 January 1885, in Qld LA V&P, 1885, vol. 1, pp. 377-8. Davidson and Lawes were, of course, wrong about the *Labourers from British India Act* having been repealed.

that got worse as the year progressed.<sup>74</sup> The raft of labour legislation, restricting their ability to recruit “coloured labour” and increasing its cost, led them to fear that the very future of their now unprofitable industry was threatened. As soon as it became clear that Griffith was going to put an end to planter plans for indentured Indian labour, the parliamentary leader of the sugar planters, Hume Black, warned that the government’s course of action might lead to North Queensland separating from the south.<sup>75</sup> When arguing against clauses in the new *Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Bill* that would keep Islanders from working in sugar mills, he claimed to see “nothing but the southern portion of the colony represented” on the ministerial benches: “It was essentially a Brisbane Government.” At that stage he “deprecat[ed] any such idea as that of separation”, but thought that a Brisbane parliament could not legislate indefinitely for the north.<sup>76</sup> Two weeks later, Black was more frustrated: “it became more and more apparent how impossible it was in Brisbane to legislate for the varied conditions of the colony.”<sup>77</sup> The position of the Liberal government seems to have hardened even further against the planters when some small farmer representatives from north of Brisbane attempted to gain the right to hire time-expired Islanders, and Black supported them.<sup>78</sup>

The polarisation deepened markedly when the leading financial house in the sugar industry sought British approval for indentured Indian labour without

---

<sup>74</sup> Graves, *Cane and labour*, pp. 41-2. Drawing on the evidence of EB Forrest at the 1889 Royal Commission, Graves shows that top quality sugar fell from £28-34 per ton in 1883, to £18-20 per ton in 1885. The prices of lower quality sugars fell similarly, with the biggest price falls in 1884.

<sup>75</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, pp. 27-8; also Morehead, p. 29. The issue was also raised by FT Gregory in the Legislative Council, *ORDLC Qld*, vol. XL, p. 42.

<sup>76</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1883-4, vol. XLI, p. 137.

<sup>77</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, 1883-4, vol. XLI, p. 253.

<sup>78</sup> See *ORDLA Qld*, 1883-4, vol. XLI, pp. 311-14.

regulations being enacted in Queensland. In April 1884, RJ Jeffray, Chairman of the Melbourne-based brokerage firm, W Sloane and Co, began moves to seek permission to import privately indentured Indian labourers into Queensland, which Jeffray believed to be possible under Queensland legislation. He drew up a letter/petition to the Colonial Office, dated 9 July 1884, which was signed by around thirty sugar planters and capitalists with investments in Queensland sugar.<sup>79</sup> When Griffith received a letter from the Colonial Office asking his attitude to the proposal, he was surprised and clearly angry. Any move by the Indian government to authorise unregulated indenture would, he replied, “be regarded by this Government as a most unfriendly act.”<sup>80</sup> Jeffray had believed, on the basis of informal approaches, that the Queensland government would accept such a privately run system. A tense exchange of letters saw the wealthy and powerful Jeffray tell Griffith that the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Company was closing down three of its five sugar mills, and backing the move towards separation:

there is a diversity of interests in the enormous extent of country now known under the name of Queensland, and that what may be good for

---

<sup>79</sup> See Qld LA *V&P*, 1884, vol. 2, pp. 827-8, for the text of the letter to the Colonial Office; the only public signatures to the letter were those of Jeffray and J Ewen Davidson, managing director of the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Co, a subsidiary of Sloane’s. See *Mackay Mercury*, 8 October 1884 for report of the letter, including number of signatories. See *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, pp. 778-9, for discussion in Parliament of the letter after it had been published in the Brisbane newspapers. Sloane & Co were deeply involved in the sugar industry, later merging with another firm to become the Union Mortgage and Agency Co. See CP Taylor, “Business and politics in Queensland, 1859-1895”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1967, p. 90 (and footnote). When Hume Black first stood for parliament for the seat of Mackay in the 1878 election, the conservative incumbent, FT Amhurst, wrote bitterly to Sir Arthur Palmer that Black’s candidacy could let a third candidate – presumably a Liberal – get the seat, and that, “Hume Black is nothing less than Sloane & Co’s nominee”. Letter to AH Palmer, 23 September 1878, no. 424, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/45.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Griffith to the Queensland Governor, 30 September 1884, in Qld LA *V&P*, 1884, vol. 2, p. 929.

the Southern districts is not necessarily good for the great and as yet partially developed territory of the North. That there cannot be a homogeneity of interests in a country stretching from temperate regions right through twelve degrees of tropical latitudes (along a coast line of over 1,000 miles) is apparent enough...<sup>81</sup>

Late September 1884 saw the public rejection of the Jeffray scheme by the government, and the end of any hopes the planters had that the government would seriously assist them with "suitable" labour. In August 1884, when Hume Black debated the *Immigration Act Amendment Bill*, he claimed that the government had promised the planters a complete labour scheme to replace "coloured labour", and all they got was a few clauses to make white indenture slightly cheaper. The government had even refused to take responsibility for finding indentured labour in Britain and Europe, telling the planters to do it themselves. In a markedly more bitter speech than previously, Black declared:

The whole progress of the North was being checked, and checked to such an extent that there would be a feeling of irritation, unless better counsels prevailed, that there would be one unanimous cry for separation throughout the whole of the North... He would far rather see federation than separation; but when he saw such determined attempts made to ignore the difference of climate between the North and South, he said that the present Queen-street Ministry had not the slightest consideration for anything north of Rockhampton.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Jeffray to Griffith, 20 November 1884, in *Qld LA V&P*, 1884, vol. 2, p. 939. From the collection of papers published here, pp. 925-40, it is apparent that Jeffray began by writing on 10 April 1884, from Aden, to ask his office to informally approach the Queensland government as to its attitude to his proposed private indentures. Wrongly advised that the government would accept them, he approached the Colonial Office who then wrote to the Queensland Governor on 31 July 1884 seeking a response from Griffith; who dealt with the issue in Parliament on 25 September and attracted a letter of explanation from Jeffray dated 4 October.

<sup>82</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIII, p. 276. See also editorial in *Mackay Mercury*, 14 January 1885.

It is from this point that the real beginnings of a Northern Separation movement can be dated. By October 1884, the movement had won the allegiance of John Murtagh Macrossan, the north's most significant politician,<sup>83</sup> and the first public meeting to promote Northern Separation in Mackay was held on 28 October.<sup>84</sup> The newspaper most closely aligned with the sugar planters, the *Mackay Mercury*, listed the Griffith government's restrictions on "coloured labour", its Immigration bill, and its new land legislation as reasons that separation had become necessary.<sup>85</sup> As northern ruling-class agitation for separation intensified, the Townsville based committee for Northern Separation met in mid-October 1884, and its chairperson focused on the treatment of the sugar industry – rather than the general mistreatment of the north – as a primary reason for taking up the issue anew.<sup>86</sup>

Late 1884 and the early months of 1885 saw the establishment of Northern Separation leagues in many northern towns. Mackay MLA, Hume Black, undertook an extensive speaking tour of the north in March and April 1885, forming leagues and agitating for separation. His tour ended in Charters Towers a week after the Convention, where a separation league was formed

---

<sup>83</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 18 October 1884.

<sup>84</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 29 October 1884. The meeting was held in the afternoon, ensuring that it was dominated by those businesspeople who could afford to attend during a weekday.

<sup>85</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 15 October 1884. It is worth noting that two months earlier, 2 August, the paper was promoting a petition to the government to change its policies; and a month earlier, 17 September, the paper was arguing about the government's policy, rather than promoting separation as a solution.

<sup>86</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 18 October 1884. This paper is partly damaged, and the name of the Chairperson, and the details of the time and date of the meeting, are lost. But it would undoubtedly have been within ten days of publication. No Townsville newspapers from the period survive.

despite the hostility of the town's dominant newspaper, the *Northern Miner*, which denounced Black:

It is a shameful thing that a member of the Legislature should be permitted go about the colony preaching disunion and treason when the Russians are at our doors. We advise the miners and working men to roll up to-morrow night and tell this emissary of slave drivers that we are opposed to Separation and Coolies.<sup>87</sup>

When the Convention met at Townsville, from 9 to 11 April 1885, the majority were either sugar planters, or strongly sympathetic to them. However, some delegates pointed out that the ambitions of the planters were a serious problem for the movement, as were those of the capitalists of Townsville who looked forward to making their town the new colonial capital city. The petition adopted at Townsville, the first item on the Convention's agenda, made no mention of either the sugar industry, or indentured labour. Thus, from April 1885 onwards, the movement for Northern Separation consistently and assiduously denied that it had any interest in gaining indentured "coloured labour" for the sugar planters.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in *Mackay Mercury*, 18 April 1885. April 1885 saw the height of tension between Russia and Britain over Russian military advances into Afghanistan, to the point where reserves were mobilised in Britain, Australian colonial governments desperately shored up local defences, and Australian newspapers were saturated with concern over a possible Russian attack.

<sup>88</sup> See, for instance, William Coote, "Proposed new colony of Northern Queensland", *Victorian Review*, May 1885, pp 58-70. Coote was Secretary of the Executive Committee of the North Queensland Separation Council.

The embarrassing and stupid fictions this produced have misled some historians.<sup>89</sup> They also distorted the public debate over northern separation.

Hume Black claimed to have told his fellow planters,

that if any of them expect by this movement to secure coloured labour, from my experience of politics I consider that they are basing their hope upon a very false foundation indeed. They will be no nearer getting coloured labour in the event of separation taking place than they are now.<sup>90</sup>

This position was ridiculed by the widely respected liberal, Henry Jordan:

Our friends in the North have now determined to take this for their motto, “No coolies – no black labour.” So, then, after all, the Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, has not sacrificed the interests of the northern part of the colony by his black labour policy – by keeping out coolies, by regulating Polynesians, by stopping kidnapping, murder, and all the other

---

<sup>89</sup> Christine Doran writes that IN Moles saw “separationism and the movement to supply coloured labour for sugar cultivation” as “distinct”, in her *Separatism*, p. xvi. Unfortunately, Moles’ BA Hons (penultimate thesis), “A brief history of the separatist movements in North Queensland”, Queensland University, 1955, is missing. When I approached the History Department of Queensland University in October 2005, I was told that this thesis could no longer be found; nor was it available through the university library. Neither was B Hart’s “New state movements in Queensland since 1885”, 1950, available. Moles’ published article, “The Indian coolie labour issue in Queensland”, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 5, no. 5, 1957, pp. 1345-72, does not make this argument in its brief discussion of separatism. Among those who see separation as a predominantly pro-planter movement are Edward Shann, *An economic history*, pp. 247-59; Kay Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], p. 55; Graves, *Cane and labour*, p. 69.

<sup>90</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 539. In fact, what Hume Black had actually said to his fellow planters, when reporting on his tour of the north from February-April 1885, was this:

In the North there was an intense antagonism against coolie labor, and if the planters thought they could get that labor against the wishes of the people they were mistaken. But the planters were willing to leave their fate to the decision of the people of the North. He regretted if his remarks should discourage the planters, but he held out the hope of a rational discussion of their interests. They would have an intelligent representation of the requirements of individual industries... When asked if they intended the tropical sugar industry to perish the meeting shouted no. (*Mackay Mercury*, 25 April 1885, p. 2, col. 4.)



atrocities... They have discovered in the North at last that the Premier is the saviour of his country.<sup>91</sup>

Black told Parliament that,

what the majority hope is that, in the event of separation taking place, the agricultural industry in Northern Queensland will be considered sufficiently important to justify the new Government of the North in giving it a fair consideration, fair treatment – treatment which it has never received from the Government of the South.<sup>92</sup>

Black's demand for fair treatment would become the focus of Liberal attacks.

What, asked Treasurer, James Dickson, was this "fair play" the planters wanted that they were not getting? When he answered his own question – saying it was "black labour" – Hume Black did not respond.<sup>93</sup> The conservative squatter and investment banker, Ernest Stevens, asked Black what he meant

when he asks that the planters should have fair consideration? It cannot be in the direction of getting white labour at a payable rate, because that was offered them and they would not take it. They could not see their way to employ any sort of white labour. If that is the case it must be in the direction of black labour. Well, I think that is sufficient ground for members representing the part of the country which is not interested in black labour, and does not believe in it, to oppose the movement for separation to the full extent.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 635.

<sup>92</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 539.

<sup>93</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 550.

<sup>94</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 565.

The separation movement's attempt to bury the "coloured labour" issue did not wash with the *Brisbane Courier*, which had consistently supported the campaign of the planters to be allowed both Islander and indentured Indian labour.<sup>95</sup> It ridiculed the insistence of the separation movement that separation would not produce a black north:

The Northern sun will not shine the less fiercely; the languors which the unchanging heat of the tropics induce in the European constitution will not be abated, because the separation leaders have managed to persuade their bearers that the laws of nature will be turned aside for their benefit. In the North, as in every other tropical country under the sun, manual labour will sooner or later devolve upon coloured men; and it will be sooner, we are convinced, if separation takes place.<sup>96</sup>

The real motive of the planters in pushing for northern separation is clear. In January 1885, the Separation movement in Mackay launched a petition to the Imperial Government asking that the colony be divided. After a paragraph that showed the size and importance of the North, compared with Queensland at the time of separation from New South Wales in 1859, the petition addressed the grievances of the North. They were, it claimed, the relative lack of representation in the legislature, that government borrowings were used to benefit the South, that they were remote from the seat of government, and the different needs of tropical colonies, especially where sugar was a major industry:

the Government of the said colony has not only failed to supply suitable labor for the requirements of tropical agriculturalists, but has prohibited

---

<sup>95</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 28 August 1886, p. 4, cols. 5-6.

<sup>96</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1886, p. 4, col. 6.

them from taking steps to procure such labor for themselves; that large acreages have in consequence been thrown out of cultivation; that there is every reason to apprehend that in a short time those properties will, in consequence of the action of such government, have to be abandoned; that the sugar industry is the only one which has caused extensive settlement on the Northern Coast lands...<sup>97</sup>

When the Separation Convention discussed the Mackay petition, Power from Cooktown insisted that it had nothing to do with the petition they had adopted, and Rutherford from Port Douglas warned delegates they

should be very careful how they dealt with the petition of the Mackay people. For his own part he saw nothing in it objectionable, but seeing that several people in the North imagined the principal industry of Mackay was a prominent feature in their desire to obtain Separation, it was doubly important the petition should have careful consideration before being adopted by the Conference.<sup>98</sup>

When the Mackay, Walkerston and Eton delegates returned to Mackay to report to the local committee of ruling class figures, they had determined that in their own interests, the planters and their supporters had to publicly bury the labour issue.<sup>99</sup> The sugar planter and pastoralist, ES Rawson, reported on reaction to the Mackay petition for separation:

The Convention agreed to its being sent home by a majority of 9 to 5, but the delegates from the district, on consideration resolved in the circumstances that it was advisable to ask permission to withdraw the petition, which was accordingly done. Mackay was the only district

---

<sup>97</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 17 January 1885.

<sup>98</sup> *Mackay Standard*, 17 April 1885.

<sup>99</sup> Walkerston and Eton were towns within a short distance of Mackay.

which wished to send a separate petition, and as an undue significance would be attached to the requirements of labor for tropical industries in connection with the Separation movement, he was sure the meeting would approve of their action in the matter (Hear, hear).<sup>100</sup>

Hume Black also addressed the meeting, reporting on his extensive speaking tour of the north, warning that “there was an intense antagonism against coolie labor”, but “if the Coolie item was excised they were Separationists to a man”.<sup>101</sup> The planters would have to bury the issue in the short term and trust in their ability to win the argument in a new parliament. Given the support of the key figures in the Townsville separation movement for the sugar planters, this seemed a risk worth taking.<sup>102</sup>

Thus from April 1885, the debate over indentured “coloured labour” was subsumed into the struggle over Northern Separation. This further polarised opinion on the issues, and was no doubt one reason why the Liberal Government moved in 1885 to end the recruitment of Pacific Island labour at the end of 1890 and then in 1886, moved successfully to repeal the *Coolie Labour Act*. When it did these things, there was little more than perfunctory debate in parliament, in sharp contrast to the long and bitter debates of 1884. For the

---

<sup>100</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 25 April 1885.

<sup>101</sup> *Mackay Mercury*, 25 April 1885.

<sup>102</sup> This support can be seen in the comments by Dr Ahearne, the Townsville-based chair of the Separation Convention, the subsequent role played by individuals like Townsville-based Robert Philp, and the attitude of the Townsville press, to the extent we are aware of it. The *Mackay Mercury*, 7 March 1885, a month before the Convention, quoted the *Townsville Herald* thus: “It is becoming plainer every day that unless planters are allowed to obtain labor of a suitable kind, within the next twelve months the sugar industry of Queensland will completely disappear. Whether that is preferable to the admission of Indian coolies under restriction, is open to argument as a political question; but there can be no escape from the economical fact of the certain extinction of the sugar industry without coolies.”

North, the issue was no longer reforming Queensland but leaving it; as a result, the southern Conservatives could no longer fight over these on the basis of the needs of the North.

## Separation blocked

The movement for North Queensland separation was contained, by northern liberals and by a mostly hostile southern ruling class, over a decade and a half, from 1885 to federation. During the 1890s, the rise of the labour movement in North Queensland was to invest separation with the appalling prospect that a separated colony might be controlled, not by “sensible” businessmen, but by the Labor Party with their extreme opposition to any “coloured labour”. Many devout separationists quietly lost their stomach for the cause.<sup>103</sup>

The movement suffered two crucial setbacks in 1886-87. The first was in the Queensland Parliament on 2 September 1886, when a motion for separation moved by Macrossan was not only defeated – that was expected – but defeated by 40 votes to 9, with every non-northern politician, Conservative as well as Liberal, voting against it. The movement, however, had never recognised the authority of the southern parliament to decide the issue – that was the prerogative of the Imperial Government. But when the movement finally won an audience with the Secretary of State for the Colonies in April 1887 in

---

<sup>103</sup> Shann, *An economic history*, p. 258.

London, he rebuffed them.<sup>104</sup> The Queensland election of 1888 punctured the image of a north united for separation. In an election which the Conservatives won in a landslide, five of the sixteen northern seats went against the southern trend to anti-separation Liberals, up from just one of eight in 1883.<sup>105</sup>

Many reasons have been given for London's rejection of the northern separation movement. Griffith had warned the Colonial Office that if the British Parliament decided to divide Queensland, it would have problems dealing with the Queensland debt, which was around £21 million in 1887.<sup>106</sup> Who would guarantee the security held by the bondholders? Clearly, the Queensland government could not be expected to guarantee the whole amount, if nearly half its territory and more than half its exports were removed from it. Neither would the bondholders be satisfied if they were expected to accept the security offered by the new colony – a circumstance which had not been considered when they lent their money. The separationists were never able to satisfy the

---

<sup>104</sup> Sir Henry Holland's rejection of the separation petition is contained in both a letter to the Queensland Governor, 14 June 1887, and a transcript of his interviews with the North Queensland separationist delegation of Hume Black, Isidore Lissner (MLA Kennedy) and Tory MP Harold Finch-Hatton; see *Qld LA V&P*, 1887, vol. 1, pp. 441-52.

<sup>105</sup> There were eight northern MPs in the general election of 1883. Subsequently, in 1885, two new northern members were added to redress the most stark imbalances. One of these came from the division of Townsville and the creation of a new electorate, Musgrave, out of the rural areas surrounding the town. The second came from making Townsville electorate a two-member constituency. See Griffith's speech introducing the Additional Members Bill of 1885, *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLVI, p. 88. Hence, in the vote on Northern Separation in 1886, the north had 10 MPs, one of whom, Rutledge, voted against it. The first member for Musgrave was the Townsville-based Robert Philp, who played a major role in the northern separation movement, and subsequently became Premier of Queensland. There was a subsequent and more comprehensive electoral reform in 1887, which then produced a much enlarged parliament elected in 1888. These changes reflected the rapid population growth of Queensland.

<sup>106</sup> In his letter to Governor Musgrave, intended for despatch to London, 19 January 1887, *Qld LA V&P*, 1887, vol. 1, esp. p. 425. In his covering letter, Musgrave backs Griffith re allocation of the public debt of Queensland, p. 420.

British government on this extremely sensitive point,<sup>107</sup> although in 1890, when London-based supporters of separation approached the major colonial and London banks, they appeared indifferent to the problem and even supportive of the impact of separation on the security of their loans.<sup>108</sup> The Colonial Office was also wary of using imperial powers to divide a colony with nearly thirty years of self-government, against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of its elected members of parliament.<sup>109</sup>

In Queensland, the rejection of the separationist petition also involved broader issues. The leading pastoralist, John Donaldson, spoke against any further reduction in the size of the local market.<sup>110</sup> The demography of northern Australia became a significant part of the only sophisticated element in the debate over separation. It had earlier been discussed in an important article by Carl Feilberg, in the *Victorian Review*, in 1880.<sup>111</sup> Feilberg argued that traditionally, when Europeans lived in tropical areas, they were able to organise and extract enormous wealth but not produce a strong community:

a race that is dependent on the physical exertions of an alien people for the supply of its every-day needs has but a feeble hold on the land... Colonisation, in the true sense of the word, is only possible where colonists, taking possession of a tract of wilderness, are able to carry out with their own hands all that their brains can plan.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Harold Finch-Hatton to Lord Knutsford, 17 December 1890, in Rawson Collection, Oxley, 2967/04.

<sup>109</sup> Qld LA *V&P*, 1887, vol. 1, p. 442.

<sup>110</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, p. 638.

<sup>111</sup> Carl A Feilberg, "The future of north-eastern Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 5, March 1880, pp. 699-711.

<sup>112</sup> Feilberg, *The future of north-eastern Australia*, pp. 707-8.

But North Queensland promised to be different, because miners were the dynamic element in the North Queensland economy. This meant that the growth of mining would lead to a preponderance of miners among white settlers; they would put down roots as agriculturalists and settlers; and would retain their traditional hostility to "coloured labour". Thus, "in Northern Queensland, everything tends to prevent the occupation of the country after the usual tropical fashion, by white men directing the labour of coloured workmen".<sup>113</sup> Should the miners dominate, and produce a society of white selectors, graziers and labourers, North Queensland

would be a community of a quite different sort from the feeble societies which, in Mauritius or the West Indies, direct a swarm of coloured labourers, with whom they can find no bond of sympathy except in the common degradation of vice. It would be full of the rough vigorous life of a democracy, a society kept pure by the constant interchange of social relations, in which the continual upward and downward currents removed effete particles from the top of the structure to supply their places by stronger material from the bottom.<sup>114</sup>

Leading Townsville separationist, WV Brown, turned to Feilberg's argument in the parliamentary debate on separation, in an attempt to prove the movement was not about black labour. Feilberg's article proved, he argued:

that separation will make it more difficult for the planters to get coloured labour than it is now, because the miners will then have more influence. At the present time a large section in the south of the colony are not very much opposed to coloured labour, and they go with the planters to a certain extent, but the miners will always oppose coloured labour, and

---

<sup>113</sup> Feilberg, *The future of north-eastern Australia*, p. 704.

<sup>114</sup> Feilberg, *The future of north-eastern Australia*, p. 708



there is not the slightest chance of planters getting coloured labour in the colony of North Queensland.<sup>115</sup>

The *Brisbane Courier* rejected this argument. Since Feilberg had written, mining had not grown as fast as it might, while capitalists had rushed into the sugar industry. "The balance of power has shifted," it wrote, "and the influence of the planters in the North would be much greater now than seemed likely then. Sugar cultivation, if the capitalists eager to go into it have their way, would go ahead at a rate that would leave no time for the slow development of an acclimatised European community of farmers."<sup>116</sup> The question for the paper was therefore to protect the democratic and liberal quality of Australian society and politics:

Political severance from the great bulk of the European population of Australia will intensify the social effect of the change [in population]. We do not refer to the possibility of slavery, or any nonsense of that sort, talked by people who ought to know better; but to the obvious effect of labourer and employer being separated by the broad bar of colour and race. A Northern aristocracy – a race aristocracy – will confront the Australian white democracy, and no strong effort of imagination is needed to picture the result.<sup>117</sup>

Danger therefore lay in an Australia in which north and south developed along radically different political lines. The spectre of the American Civil War lay heavily over its argument:

---

<sup>115</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. XLIX, pp. 552-3.

<sup>116</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 28 August 1886, p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>117</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1886, p. 4, col. 6.

if tropical Australia is politically severed from the South – for the movement started in Northern Queensland will not stop there – we may leave to our children such a legacy of evil as that from which America only rid herself by the most terrible fratricidal war which the modern world has seen.<sup>118</sup>

The *Courier's* argument led to a sharp rebuke from the *Townsville Bulletin*, which accused the Brisbane paper of peddling the old lie about slavery.<sup>119</sup> The *Courier* responded sharply, insisting that it did not refer to the issue of slavery. The question was the political impact of class relations:

Our contention is that in a purely tropical colony field work, at least, and probably all manual labour, will ultimately fall into the hands of coloured men, and if the white community inhabiting such a colony is politically severed from the rest of Australia, and thus cut off from constant intercourse with the great body of the Australian democracy, it will undergo a social change, and harden into a caste-race aristocracy. If on the other hand separation does not take place, the employment of coloured people in the Northern portion of the colony will not affect the bulk of the white population, who will remain, in any case, in the South, and the influence of the democratic majority will predominate. In other words, if separation does not take place, the Northern whites, though employing coloured labour, would remain in touch with the great body of their Australian countrymen; whereas, if they do separate, they will lose touch and drift apart.<sup>120</sup>

It is important to emphasise that this was *not* the Liberal position, but it shared many of its assumptions. A modern, progressive, liberal and democratic society required both racial homogeneity, and crucially, a social link between those

---

<sup>118</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1886, p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>119</sup> See also *Townsville Herald*, 28 Aug 1886, p. 9.

<sup>120</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 3 September 1886, p. 4, cols. 5-6.

who worked and those who exploited. In Australia, with its vast tropical territory, this meant an almost-white Australia would be necessary, a nation in which the south politically dominated the north. This was the ruling class settling its internal differences, and contrary to the mythologists, the broader labour movement was largely uninvolved. The weekly meeting of the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council held a few days after Macrossan moved the separation motion in the Queensland Parliament did not even discuss separation, much less mobilise on the issue.<sup>121</sup>

In the southern colonies, the two major conservative papers had little to say on separation. The Melbourne *Argus* did not run a single editorial on the issue during (or shortly after) the great events which marked the movement: the April 1885 convention, the June 1886 presentation of the petition of 10,000 signatures to the Acting Governor, nor the August-September 1886 parliamentary debate on the issue. This is a silence worth investigating. The paper did publish reports from its Brisbane correspondent who dismissed the agitation:

I do not think there is any real bottom to the movement except in Townsville, which reckons on being the capital, and among the sugar planters. Meanwhile the latter go on with the farce of pretending that they are anxious to separate for quite other reasons than the desire to obtain what black labour they require, and the others "make believe" to credit them.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 25 August 1886, p. 5, col. 5.

<sup>122</sup> *Argus*, 17 April 1885, p. 6, col. 2.

In January 1887, their Brisbane correspondent claimed that outside Townsville and the sugar towns, there was little more than acquiescence in separation; “very few people would be concerned it if never came”.<sup>123</sup> The owners and managers of the *Argus* had a particularly close relationship with financial institutions and individuals with large investments in Queensland, and the paper strongly advocated the recruitment of indentured Indian labour,<sup>124</sup> but it is probable that the paper’s Victorian supporters included both large-scale investors in Queensland sugar, and others whose interests were pastoral and urban, and who were therefore deeply divided on the issue of separation. Such a division on a sensitive Queensland issue may have led to caution by the paper’s editors.<sup>125</sup>

Unlike the *Argus*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was very sympathetic towards Queensland’s Liberal Premier. It described Griffith as having demolished the case for separation put by Davidson and Lawes on behalf of the planters in 1885, and backed Griffith’s social and political objections to large-scale “coloured labour”:

---

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in *North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist*, 1 February 1887.

<sup>124</sup> Editorial, *Argus*, 18 April 1885, p. 9, col. 3.

<sup>125</sup> In 1881, as Premier, Thomas McIlwraith had used RJ Jeffray, Chairman of the Melbourne broking firm, W Sloane & Co, to complain to the *Argus* about its treatment of McIlwraith in the famous “steel rails” scandal. Gordon Evans replied to Jeffray that McIlwraith’s complaint was with the *Australasian*, and that, “I have frequently spoken to its Editor & tried to impress upon him that he should be careful in dealing with Queensland questions. I have reminded him again that all our friends in Victoria, who hold interests in Queensland, are supporters of the McIlwraith Ministry, and that on that account he should be quite sure that he is in the right before indulging in unfavorable criticism. I have also spoken to the *Argus* people in the same strain”. Gordon Evans to Jeffray, 5 July 1881, in McIlwraith Papers, Oxley, OM64-19/9. The letter was sent to McIlwraith by Jeffray.

Mr. Griffith does not stand alone in his opinion as to the conditions under which coloured labour on a large scale may be employed without social or political embarrassment. A suggestion similar to that quoted above was made in these columns some years ago; but the applicability of the scheme to the actual circumstances of any part of Australia is a doubtful matter.<sup>126</sup>

Thus it seems there was, at best, only modest sympathy for the planters and their separation movement from those in the south most likely to support them; and intense hostility from liberals. The vast majority of the ruling class in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland had made up its mind. Most were against the use of “coloured labour”, but even those sympathetic to it, limited their sympathy to the needs of sugar capitalists, and wanted to make sure it was regulated and controlled by the priorities of modern, urban capital.

## What was resolved by 1888?

By 1888, an observer could be forgiven for thinking that the “coloured labour” debate in Queensland had been resolved. The colony’s parliament had passed strongly restrictive laws against Chinese immigration in 1884, and as a result of the Inter-colonial conference on Chinese immigration in June 1888, its representative committed the government to pushing through the virtually prohibitive measures decided upon at the conference. Indentured labour from India had been decisively rejected at the 1883 election, and its leading proponent, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, was returned to office in 1888 declaring the

---

<sup>126</sup> *SMH* 22 April 1885, p. 8, col. 6 and p. 9, col. 1.

issue dead. The Liberal government had legislated to end the recruitment of Pacific Island labourers from the end of 1890, and that too had been publicly (if not privately) accepted by the Conservative party which won the 1888 election.<sup>127</sup> The attempt by the sugar planters to divide Queensland so that they could avoid all these restrictions had been rebuffed in both Brisbane and London. Both major political parties had embraced the ideal of a “White Queensland”.

Looking back from 1901, an observer might draw the opposite conclusion: that nothing had been really resolved by 1888. The Pacific Islands labour trade had been re-legalised in 1892 and, as a result, Queensland embroiled in another decade of “coloured labour” debates. There had been renewed agitation for northern separation, and a resolution to that effect had even passed the Brisbane Assembly in 1897, albeit on the casting vote of the Speaker.<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, it had taken federation and the actions of the new Protectionist government, backed by both the conservative Freetrade party and Labor, to resolve the Queensland conflict on the basis of the long-established national ruling-class consensus. Non-white immigration was stopped, Pacific Islander recruitment banned from 1904, and the majority of Islanders deported in 1906. The national ruling class resolved, very firmly, that sugar would be grown by white labour, and the economic disadvantage involved would be compensated.

---

<sup>127</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 14 May 1888.

<sup>128</sup> Shann, *An economic history*, p. 258.

A large tariff would protect Australian sugar from imports, while a substantial bounty would reward growers who used white labour only.<sup>129</sup>

But while the divisions and campaigns of the 1890s were bitter, the argument had narrowed dramatically. The Royal Commission into the sugar industry in 1889 had argued that the industry could not survive without the reintroduction of Pacific Islands labour, yet the conservative governments of 1888-90 made no move in that direction, despite the presence of the planters' leader, Hume Black, in those governments. Robert Philp, who had emerged as another leader of the sugar planters, saw modern machinery, rather than indentured labour, as the future. In 1888 he told parliament:

I am not one of those who believe that it is by the wholesale introduction of coloured labour that the sugar industry will be set on its feet... I believe it is by the importation of machinery and by all kinds of labour-saving appliances that that industry will be firmly established... why should this Government not offer inducements to investors to try and invent machinery that will do away with a great deal of the labour now required by the sugar planter?<sup>130</sup>

The turn back to Islander labour came after the great strikes of 1890 and 1891, and during Griffith's second Premiership, 1890-93, in coalition with McIlwraith. Liberals and Conservatives buried their differences in the face of economic depression and labour movement mobilisation. Griffith's revival of Pacific Islander recruitment in 1892 was presented as a temporary expedient while the

---

<sup>129</sup> Willard, *The history of the White Australia policy*, pp. 185-6; Lyndon Megarrity, "'White Queensland': The Queensland government's ideological position on the use of Pacific Island labourers in the sugar sector 1880-1901", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 52, no. 1, March 2006, pp. 9-10.

<sup>130</sup> Megarrity, Robert Philp [thesis], p. 221, citing Philp in *QPD*, vol. LV, p. 371.

sugar industry continued its restructuring towards family farms supplying central mills, all employing white labour. Without this concession, argued Griffith, a major industry would collapse as mills were closed and their equipment moved to plantation colonies. In his (in)famous “Manifesto”, Griffith reaffirmed the political objections to “coloured labour” he had argued as Liberal leader in the 1870s and 1880s and presented the sugar industry as a very different one from that of 1885. The plantation system based on gang labour was in decline, the planters were keen to hand over growing the cane to small farmers, and sugar cane grown by white labour could be profitable.<sup>131</sup>

Adrian Graves’ discussion of the massive restructuring of the sugar industry in the 1890s, explains the economic underpinnings to the planters’ ultimate “acceptance” of the broader ruling class insistence that white labour must dominate the sugar industry.<sup>132</sup> After 1892, employment relations in the Queensland sugar industry were very different from the pre-1885 period. Griffith’s vision of white labour growing sugar would not be realised until after 1906, but through the 1890s, the majority of Islanders were either wage labourers, or on short-term indentures, and this gave them a measure of bargaining power, which they used.<sup>133</sup> After Griffith was elevated to the Queensland Supreme Court in 1893, the coalition, Nationalist, government continued to assist the restructuring of the industry around small, white-owned farms, using modern central mills for crushing.<sup>134</sup> It also allowed them to use

---

<sup>131</sup> Griffith’s “Manifesto” was published in the daily newspapers on 12 February 1892, and read by him into Hansard, 29 March 1892, in ORDLA, vol. LXVII, pp. 8-9.

<sup>132</sup> Graves, *Cane and Labour*, esp. pp. 57-73.

<sup>133</sup> Saunders, *Workers in bondage* [book], pp. 153-63; Peter Corris, *Passage, port and plantation: A history of Solomon Islands labour migration 1870-1914*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1973, pp. 44, 49-50, 86-7; Megarrity, ‘White Queensland’, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Megarrity, ‘White Queensland’, p. 8.



Islander labour. However this was a structure designed to guarantee that Islander labour would be a small minority in the north. Gone were the dreams of vast plantations and agricultural industries staffed by large numbers of indentured Indian labourers, ruled by a tiny number of rich whites.

The majority of the ruling class in Queensland had determined on an almost-White Queensland in a White Australia. For all the noise and bluster, the change wrought by federation was at the margins – unless you were an Islander.

## *Chapter 8*

### Capital vs labour?

### The class logic of anti-Chinese racism

ONE OF THE GREAT MYTHS about the anti-Chinese movements in colonial Australia is that they had some kind of anti-employer, or anti-capitalist dynamic. The myth is partly embodied in the idea, dominant for much of the twentieth century, that the White Australia Policy had not been racist, but had been enacted to protect workers' living standards,<sup>1</sup> the implication being that it was employers who sought to undermine those living standards. The myth was reinforced by the idea that the agenda of the dominant employers in colonial Australia, and especially the pastoralists, was one of importing large numbers of Chinese (or other "coloured") people to replace more expensive and less obedient white workers – hence the notion that the struggle against Chinese

---

<sup>1</sup> Verity Burgmann has provided an important historiographical survey of this mythology, along with a potent critique of it, in "Writing racism out of history", *Arena*, no. 67, 1984, pp. 85-91. Its most recent exponent is Keith Windschuttle, *The White Australia policy*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004.

immigration was inherently a struggle against the squatters' agenda.<sup>2</sup> It was also reflected in the idea that the labour movement's struggle against Chinese immigration had forced employers to abandon hopes of using Chinese labour,<sup>3</sup> and that anti-Chinese organising had been central to the rise of the labour movement.<sup>4</sup>

One device historians have used to sustain this myth has been to focus much of their history around points of racial conflict – between European and Chinese diggers on the gold fields, or between unions and employers where Chinese workers were used as strike-breakers, such as the Clunes (Vic) strike of 1873 and the (in)famous seamen's strike of 1878-9.<sup>5</sup> Such an emphasis means that the debates and conflict within the ruling class, and the competing agendas that developed, have been glossed over. Racial conflict *inherently* involves the working and plebeian classes on both sides, therefore a decision to focus on such situations reflects an a priori explanation of the racism involved – unless a

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Ann Curthoys, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973, p. 511: "During the [seamen's] strike most employers were forced to agree that their immediate economic interests [supposedly "cheap coloured labour"] and the interests of the community as a whole were in conflict..."; Ray Markey argues that the *Chinese Immigration Regulation Bill 1879*, "had been heavily defeated in the upper house, where pastoralists and others who may have been interested in cheap coloured labour, predominated", in "Populist politics" in Curthoys, Ann and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, p. 590: "Employers were not longer able to argue for cheap Chinese labour or to implement its use after the events of the Seamen's Strike..." She also argues that "pastoralists had long since found that Chinese were not particularly useful to them."

<sup>4</sup> See Markey, *Populist politics*, p. 68; this is also the argument of Richard Fletcher, "The role of the immigration question in gaining for the labour movement recognition by society in the period 1877 to 1890 in New South Wales", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> On Clunes, see Jerome Small, "Reconsidering White Australia: Class and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot", BA (Hons) thesis, La Trobe University, 1997.

searching examination is also made of the wider structures, ideas and reasons which led to confrontation, such as those discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis. This does not mean that high points of racial conflict were unimportant, but that their importance has been overstated, with the effect that the real dynamics behind exclusion have been mystified. An almost one-dimensional use of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Bulletin* as sources representative of capital and labour respectively has provided documentary evidence to suit the view of racial conflict as an element in the class struggle.

The argument that the anti-Chinese movement was a movement of labour against capital has gained perhaps its greatest legitimacy from the seamen's strike of 1878-9, and an analysis of the ruling class politics of the strike will be the primary focus of this chapter. The seamen's strike was truly a major, even cathartic, event.<sup>6</sup> The broader dispute began in July 1878, when the Australasian Steam Navigation Company (ASN), the largest shipping line in Australia and the largest private employer in Sydney, replaced 180 European sailors with Chinese workers. It developed into an all-out strike on 18 November 1878, when hundreds more European sailors were sacked. Most of ASN's remaining sailors walked off the job when their ships arrived in port, and they were joined by wharf labourers who refused to load and unload ASN ships. As the dispute escalated, coal miners in the Hunter and Illawarra refused to cut coal for ASN

---

<sup>6</sup> The strike has been discussed in every major book treatment of the White Australia policy. Other significant treatments are: Ann Curthoys, "Conflict and consensus: The seamen's strike of 1878" in Curthoys and Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies?*, pp. 48-65; Mother Pauline Kneipp, "The seamen's strike-1878-1879: Its relation to the White Australia policy", *ANU Historical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1965-6, pp. 14-18; Charles Jonathon McNeill Hayes, "The seamen's strike 1878-79", BA (Hons) thesis, History, Macquarie University, 1970; Fletcher, *The role of the immigration question*, pp. 106-66.

steamers, paralysing most of the fleet. ASN responded by attempting to recruit hundreds more strike breakers from Hong Kong.

From the beginning, the Seamen's Union and the Sydney Trades and Labour Council ran the strike as both a normal industrial dispute and a struggle against Chinese immigration. Within days of the strike beginning, populist and mainstream political organisations were organising a vast anti-Chinese movement in support of the strikers. There were anti-Chinese riots in Sydney, Bathurst, Tamworth, Rockhampton and other regional centres. ASN was finally defeated when the *SS Mecca*, bringing 350 Chinese workers, upon whom it was relying to restart operations, sank in Torres Strait, and the Queensland government stripped the company of its lucrative mail contract. Negotiations settled the strike on 3 January 1879, with a compromise that allowed the company to keep a proportion of its Chinese sailors. Despite this, ASN gradually got rid of them, but the strike so damaged the company that it was sold in the mid-1880s. This was by far the most significant industrial dispute in colonial Australia before the great strikes of the early 1890s.

For the ruling class, the seamen's strike presented a sharp dilemma. They were, naturally, against strikes, but this one was different because it involved actions by one major business that threatened their broader strategic and national development goals. It was different, too, because one of the main principles the workers were fighting for was theirs – the defence of the Australian colonies as “white”, and based on British institutions. The willingness of the majority of mainstream newspapers to support the strike speaks eloquently for the commitment of the majority of the ruling class to the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. Historians who see capital and capitalism as purely matters of trade and production, who adopt an “economist” understanding and exclude

the state and the dominant ideology from discussions of class and class structure, intrinsically adopt a perspective which “naturalises” these institutions. The business of entrenching the British empire on the Australian continent was both an economic and strategic question for both the British and Australian colonial states, and for British and local capital.<sup>7</sup>

It is also important to situate the ruling class debate over the seamen’s strike in its broader context, one in which “social legislation” had become more and more important, a development that was hotly debated at the time. As Karl Polanyi has pointed out, from the 1860s onwards, legislation began to restrict, in modest ways, the rights of capital, whether it be through laws against impure food, laws regulating the loading of ships and safety at sea, or laws imposing an obligation on employers to provide a workplace that was not inherently dangerous. This social legislation was a feature of almost all European countries, whatever their political structure and ideologies. In liberal Britain, these laws were seen as exceptional and pragmatic, and overwhelmingly passed by Liberals committed to the economic freedom of capital and a minimal state.<sup>8</sup> The dire consequences of unfettered capitalism were also leading to an agonised rethinking of social philosophy in Britain, by ruling class thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, TH Green, and many others.

The vast majority of ruling class newspapers believed that ASN had to be restrained – in perhaps the same way as a noxious industry. However they did

---

<sup>7</sup> Luke Trainor, *British imperialism and Australian nationalism : manipulation, conflict, and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Polanyi, *Origins of our time: The great transformation*, V Gollancz, London, 1945, esp pp. 145-6.

not like the strike; indeed they were already anxious because class tensions had been rising in the Australian colonies. In Britain, France, the United States and Germany there had been massive strikes and class confrontations during the 1870s that had threatened social stability, and ruling class thinkers in Australia sought ways of avoiding such disasters. Through the 1880s, reconciling labour and capital would become a major topic of discussion.

In this chapter I examine newspaper responses to the seamen's strike and, in particular, how they saw the class logic of the strike. The vast majority of newspapers in New South Wales and Queensland supported the strike. This does not imply that a similar proportion of capitalists supported the strike – we simply cannot know this one way or the other. In part the problem is evidentiary; we have excellent archival collections of colonial newspapers, and very few records which tell us what businesspeople and investors thought. Newspapers, however, did not simply reflect local bourgeois opinion. They played a particular role in class society – as key actors in constructing and rationalising the hegemony of capital and the British empire, and as forums for the discussion of bourgeois strategy in nation-building and social development.

I begin with a discussion of the position taken by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The *Herald* is widely taken to reflect bourgeois thought in the colonies, yet on the ASN dispute, it was isolated. The paper's position has also been radically misrepresented. It opposed the strike for class reasons, but this did not reflect support for Chinese immigration. I then consider the stance of Sydney's *Evening News*, the largest circulation newspaper in New South Wales, and the approach taken by Queensland's major regional conservative newspapers, all of whom supported the seafarers. The chapter concludes with some suggestions

regarding the way anti-Chinese racism allowed Sir Henry Parkes to contain plebeian discontent with his right wing politics.

A month after the end of the strike, the *Sydney Morning Herald* lamented the lack of support that ASN had received during the dispute, commenting that whereas thousands of pounds had been raised for the seafarers, “no sympathizing public” had come forward to relieve the company of the £13,000 it had lost in the dispute.<sup>9</sup> This was an illustration of the distance between the company and the broader, politically active elements in the ruling class. The ASN dispute has been remembered as a struggle of labour against capital; it was just as much a struggle of capital against capital, as the broader ruling class – along with large numbers from the middle class – sought to discipline one of their own. Indeed, newspapers like the *Evening News*, regional papers like the *Newcastle Morning Herald* and the Queensland conservative press, all played a major role in legitimising the strike, and in shaping and promoting many of the arguments of the anti-Chinese movement.

This is not to dismiss the importance of the activism and organisation of the labour movement in the dispute. I doubt very much whether the ruling class anti-Chinese politicians in New South Wales could have won their new anti-Chinese laws of 1881 without mass working-class resistance to the ASN sackings and the mass anti-Chinese movement that was built around the strike. The strike made the issue of Chinese immigration seem urgent and dangerous, a warning of what might happen again if legislation were not passed. Along with the memory of the gold-rush anti-Chinese riots, it added a sense of menace

---

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* editorial, 6 February 1879.



to subsequent anti-Chinese protests. However, important it was, this mobilisation was secondary. Whatever class they came from, the anti-Chinese protestors and petitioners were campaigning for one of the central strategic desires of their bourgeois rulers. They did not need to force anti-Chinese laws on the ruling class; they were helping the majority of the ruling class coerce the minority who resisted them, and they provided the ruling class as a whole with an alibi when they had to justify their anti-Chinese laws to the Colonial Office and their peers in Britain – these barbaric laws could be attributed to the great, unreasoning mob. Such a manoeuvre is not unknown in modern political history.

### The *Sydney Morning Herald*, the seamen's strike, and Chinese immigration

The idea that the anti-Chinese movement was anti-capitalist rests in considerable part on an assumption that a significant section of the ruling class in Sydney, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* in particular, were “pro-cheap labour” and hence “pro-Chinese immigration” in the late colonial period. This is not supported by the evidence.

In the years before the seamen's strike, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had run occasional features alleging that Chinese people were immoral and unclean. On the questions of Chinese immigration and “cheap labour” as it was understood at the time, the position of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was unambiguous. It opposed any racialised division of labour, and at every single point, it expressed its opposition to any significant influx of Chinese people, repeatedly

putting this position during the seamen's strike. Perhaps the most salient testimony to the paper's sustained, anti-Chinese position came from Thomas White, President of the Seamen's Union and one of Sydney's leading anti-Chinese agitators, just a few months before the strike:

He could not say that the Press of the colony were in the habit of advocating the cause of the working men, but he must say that the *Sydney Morning Herald* had done all it could to show what the colony would suffer if the "yellow agony" were admitted into it.<sup>10</sup>

For the first half of 1878, there was no real anti-Chinese movement, and little discussion of the issue. In June 1878, in an editorial on new amendments to Queensland's goldfields legislation, the *Herald* commented that, "Under the circumstances in which Queensland was placed [in 1876], there were very few in the colonies who disputed that some form of prohibitory legislation [against Chinese immigration] was indispensable."<sup>11</sup> In early July, in its regular report from Deniliquin, the paper condemned "the contaminating effect of association with Chinese by young people of either sex."<sup>12</sup>

By July 1878, ASN had replaced 180 white sailors with Chinese on both Pacific and intercolonial routes, and the Seamen's Union believed that more Chinese sailors were on their way to Sydney to take more of their jobs. In support of the seamen, the Trades and Labour Council called a large public meeting to agitate against both the company and Chinese immigration.<sup>13</sup> A week later, Sir Henry

---

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 24 July 1878, p. 3 col. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 29 June 1878, p. 4 cols. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 3 July 1878, p. 5, col. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 12 July 1878, p. 6 col. 7 and 24 July, p. 3 cols. 6-7.

Parkes picked up the issue in a speech to the “working men” of Mudgee. The *Herald* excoriated the arguments of the Trades and Labour Council, but endorsed the line taken by Parkes, and in the process gave perhaps its most considered exposition of the issue.

The reasons given by Sir Henry Parkes for limiting the influx of the Chinese are practically two; first, because we are entitled – this being a British possession – to maintain it distinctively British, and in doing so we are protecting our own interests, protecting the interests of the Empire, and probably, in the long-run, protecting the interests of the world at large...and we are as much justified in doing that as we originally were in claiming and occupying the country. In the second place, it is desirable, as far as possible, to prevent the establishment in the same country of races which cannot commingle. Where such a state of things exists, even though slavery may not exist in form, there is always a tendency to it in substance. There is a superior race, and a degraded race, and in such cases the degraded race generally succeeds in pulling down, morally, intellectually, and even physically, its lord and master.<sup>14</sup>

The paper was committed to the bourgeois colonisation and “anti-slavery” agendas discussed earlier in this thesis. Two weeks before the ASN strike began, and with no apparent foreknowledge of the upheaval to come, the *Herald* published an editorial criticising two British writers, Sir Walter Medhurst and WR Greg, for recent articles that displayed an ignorance of the nature and significance of the Chinese issue in Australia:

The colony of Queensland simply asked the Home Government to be able to protect itself against a Celestial invasion, and especially to

---

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 8 August 1878, p. 4, cols. 5-6. The TLC’s public meeting was on Tuesday 23 July 1878, and covered in *SMH* 24 July, p. 3 cols. 6-7. Parkes’ speech at Mudgee was on Tuesday 30 July 1878, reported in *SMH* 2 August, p. 3, cols. 3-5.

prevent her gold-fields being inundated by hordes of Chinese of the lowest order. This is the request which Mr. W. R. Greg says can scarcely be called decent.<sup>15</sup>

The *Herald* was bitterly opposed to the seamen's strike, but this did not in the slightest reflect any support for Chinese immigration. Its opposition to the seamen was firstly on a class basis; they had broken their contracts, and hence broken the law. Was the word of the seamen not to be trusted? it asked, in its first editorial on the strike.<sup>16</sup> The paper was also concerned for the future of Sydney as a great trading and commercial port and for the ASN Company itself, the largest private employer in the colony, representing a vast capital put in danger by the dispute. Over the next fortnight, the *Herald* would publish three more major editorials on the strike and the "Chinese question". On 27 November, the paper set out to counter the tide of support for the seamen, arguing that the fundamental issue was not Chinese immigration, but the inviolability of contracts:

Society could scarcely exist in its present form without a general faith in the keeping of agreements; and, Chinese or no Chinese, the doctrine that people who have deliberately entered into contracts may as deliberately violate them without the consent of the other parties to the transaction, is the last that should receive any sanction in a city which depends for its prosperity upon the uninterrupted development of trade and commerce.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 4 November, 1878, p. 4 col. 6 to p. 5 col. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 21 November 1878, p. 4 cols. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 27 November 1878, p. 4, cols. 5-6.

This was undoubtedly the *Herald's* most potent argument and was carefully and repeatedly replied to by public speakers and editorialists who supported the strike. Some people who supported the seamen, did so despite concern that they had supposedly "broken the law".

Twelve days into the strike, the *Sydney Morning Herald* decided to make it clear that it did not approve of the company's stance. It admonished both ASN and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce for taking "a mercantile view" of the strike:

...it is in the highest degree undesirable to have the colonial marine manned by foreigners; still more so to have it manned by an inferior race...there was never yet a nation that was distinguished for maritime or naval greatness which depended for the service of its vessels on crews of an inferior race; nor is there any reason to believe that the rule for the future will be different, and that maritime greatness will be able hereafter to repose on such a basis.<sup>18</sup>

By early December, a series of attempts at negotiation and mediation had failed. Coal miners had joined the industrial action, paralysing ASN's attempts to keep its steamers sailing, and the anti-Chinese movement had become both deeply bitter, and of massive proportions. The *Herald* now began to search for ways to settle both the strike, and the Chinese question more broadly, and it began discussing possible legislative action. It rejected calls for the prohibition of Chinese immigration – "No community has yet proceeded to this extreme" – and argued instead that the numbers arriving could be limited and a poll tax could be imposed – exactly the measures ultimately adopted in 1881. However these measures would not necessarily help in a situation like the present; they

---

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 30 November 1878, p. 4, cols. 5-6.

“would leave it possible for a public company to employ Chinese to even a greater extent than the A. S. N. Company’s Board of Directors now propose to employ them.”<sup>19</sup> In December 1878, when Sir Henry Parkes returned to power as Premier, he promised a bill to restrict Chinese immigration. The *Herald* commented that while the anti-Chinese agitators would applaud, “it is not likely to be objected to by any other” section of the population: “we have always held not only that it is undesirable that these colonies should possess Chinese in large numbers, but also that we ought to protect ourselves against such a possibility.”<sup>20</sup>

The seamen’s strike was settled on 2 January 1879, but the *Sydney Morning Herald* remained fixated on the class dimensions of the struggle, rather than its racial politics. The issue now was not Chinese immigration – “No one will care to argue that a country like this should be thrown open to Mongolians” – but the moral degeneration of a people looking to the government for protection.<sup>21</sup> “Our trade unions want the Government to be a buffer between the Europeans and the Chinese,” it thundered. While admitting the importance of the Chinese issue, it warned that:

there is no more dangerous tendency than the one which makes one class of men go to the Government...for the means of enabling one section of the community to dictate to the other. Nothing more effectively destroys the personal independence and the civil liberty which have been the special boast of Britons than this, and nothing is more persistently encouraged by the Communistic tendencies of these times.

---

<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 3 December 1878, p. 4, cols. 5-6.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 30 December 1878, p. 4, cols. 4-5; the extract quoted from an earlier editorial is from *SMH* 25 September 1877, p. 4, col. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH* 10 January 1879, p. 4.

It was the supposed inability of the white worker to compete with the Chinese, so loudly declared by the anti-Chinese movement, and the need for state protection from Chinese competition, that raised the hackles of the *Herald*. This was not their anti-Chinese agenda. It warned the workers that in the end, there would be no evading this competition. State paternalism in one area would soon spread to others, and the cry for protection was one step along the road to communism.<sup>22</sup>

And so the attitude of the paper shifted on whether or not New South Wales needed legislative protection from the “danger” of Chinese immigration. When the new Parkes government introduced its *Chinese Immigration Bill* into parliament, the *Herald* noted that it would not prevent “coolie immigration”, nor would it have prevented the ASN dispute. So far as the working class was concerned, the whole complaint was an “economic one”. The paper would not be unhappy “if the whole question were allowed to stop where it is.”<sup>23</sup> The paper rejected the measures in Parkes’ bill, and when the Legislative Council finally voted down the 1879 bill, the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressed its satisfaction, and in doing so made it clear that its real grievance with the bill was “the circumstances of its appearance before Parliament” which were “discreditable”.

---

<sup>22</sup> The *Herald* had been alarmed for some time about the growth of communism in Europe and America. During 1878, it reported the congresses and personalities of French and German socialism, and in late July 1878, devoted three columns and thousands of words to a summary of “The literature of German socialism”. This report attributed the alarming growth of socialism in Germany to the shift from charity to “approbation of all the wildest schemes brought forward in the interest of the poor.” See, for instance, item on German socialists, 20 July 1878, p. 7, col. 4; article on the socialist, Dr Nobiling, 22 July, p. 3 col. 4; report on American communism, 13 August, p. 7, col. 4; reports on the Socialist Congress in Paris and Germany’s Anti-Socialist Bill, 29 October, p. 8, col. 5 to p. 9, col. 1; for “The Literature of German Socialism”, 31 July 1878, p. 7, cols. 1-3, reprinted from *The Times* (London).

<sup>23</sup> *SMH* 1 February 1879, p. 4, col. 6 – p. 5, col. 1.

The bill had its origin in a breach of the law and a defiance of the principle that lawful contracts should be fulfilled by the parties who enter into them. The bill virtually grew out of the strike of the A. S. N. Company's seamen...<sup>24</sup>

The paper was not just angry about the strike, but also "the sympathy shown by many members of the most numerous class with that strike and the defiance of law involved in it". The paper again made it clear that it was not opposed to legislation to restrict Chinese immigration. The key issue was that any changes should be dictated by ruling class agendas, and not allow the enemies of sound commercial principles any sense of achievement.:

Let Parliament legislate, if it will, for the exclusion of the Chinese; but let it act upon its own sense of what the public interest requires, and not in a panic or under the press of class dictation, or for fear lest the peace should be broken and the State should be unable to maintain its authority against law-breakers.<sup>25</sup>

The somewhat exceptional nature of the *Herald's* position during the seamen's strike, can be seen most elegantly in the position taken by the Rev James Jefferis. Jefferis is unknown today, but was one of the major religious figures in colonial Australia. When the seamen's strike began, he was relatively new to Sydney, having moved from Adelaide where he had enjoyed a glittering career as perhaps the city's most celebrated priest. His public lectures there had been patronised by the cream of society, including the South Australian Governor. In 1877 he had been personally recruited by the Fairfaxes to move to Sydney on the colossal salary of £1000 a year to lead the Congregational Church to which

---

<sup>24</sup> *SMH* 24 April 1879, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *SMH* 24 April 1879, p. 5, col. 1.



they belonged.<sup>26</sup> Jefferis' sermons suggest that the Fairfaxes had chosen a man with whom they felt a deep religious and political affinity. He warned of the "dangers into which the ultra-democratic principle may lead us"; attacked Victoria for its protectionism and hoped "New South Wales will never abandon the principles of free trade"; lamented the alienation of the working classes from Christianity and condemned "want of thrift and love of strong drink".<sup>27</sup>

On 8 December 1878, with the controversy over the seamen's strike at fever pitch, Jefferis gave a lecture on "The Chinese and the seamen's strike" at his Pitt St Church, and it was then published as a pamphlet, as so many of his speeches were, by Foster and Fairfax, Sydney.<sup>28</sup> He began by declaring that he would not support either side in the dispute; "I am no judge, no arbitrator, no partisan."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless he contradicted the basis of the position taken by his benefactors at the *Herald*:

The controversy is not really between a certain number of seamen and their employers. It is between Englishmen as a race and the Chinese as a race, between Europeans and Asiatics. It is the battle between the West and the East, the same which of old was fought out at Marathon and Salamis, and which has been waging ever since.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Walter Phillips, "Jefferis, James (1833 - 1917)" in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, pp. 473-5. His salary was perhaps eight times that of an average tradesperson, and possibly equivalent to \$300,000 in 2006 values.

<sup>27</sup> Rev Jas Jefferis, *The enfranchisement of labour: A lecture delivered under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association of New South Wales, on Tuesday, June 18th, 1878, by the Rev. Jas. Jefferis, LL.B.*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney, 1878, pp. 17-22.

<sup>28</sup> Rev J Jefferis, *The Chinese and the seamen's strike: a lecture*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney; Gordon and Gotch, Brisbane, 1878.

<sup>29</sup> Jefferis, *The Chinese*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Jefferis, *The Chinese*, p. 4.

At issue was the colonisation of Australia, which was part of Britain's divine mission. Yet Australia was in peril:

The Chinese are sure to come, if allowed to come, in such vast numbers that Australia will be more Asiatic than European. As they come now, to live for a time but not to settle, their labour is no profit to the community. Since they are able to subsist on a pittance that would not supply an Englishman with food, to say nothing of his home and family, they undersell all European labour, and will eventually drive it from the market.

When Jefferis looked at the Chinese, he found:

There are many things I do not like. The physique of the Chinaman is unpleasant to an Englishman. The sallow complexion, high cheek bones, oblique eyes, hairless chin, and generally retreating forehead...are... contrary to our standard of beauty... As to their habits, they differ from our own, and in many respects are unpleasant.<sup>31</sup>

Jefferis believed that Chinese labourers would be needed by Australian capitalists, to work in the tropical north. But if they came too soon, Anglo-Australia could be threatened:

We want English civilization, English institutions, English social life, dominant and predominant in Australia. If they come to us in great numbers while these are in their formative stage, it will be with results most unhappy to our future.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Jefferis, *The Chinese*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Jefferis, *The Chinese*, p. 11.

A practical man, he proposed measures the government might take to limit the migration of Chinese people, including measures to increase the cost of passage – which is essentially what the poll tax did – and enforce sanitary provisions on common lodging houses.

Jefferis' view of the strike reflected a much wider ruling class view of the issues, one more thoroughly represented in the pages of Sydney's most successful newspaper, the *Evening News*.

### Duty to nation and 'race': The seamen's strike in the *Evening News*

The *Evening News* was Sydney's largest circulation newspaper for several decades, and for the entire period covered by this thesis. It was run by the highly successful Samuel Bennett, who also published the *Town and Country Journal*, which was the largest-circulation weekly journal in the Australian colonies from around 1875 and into the 1890s – outselling the better-remembered *Bulletin*.<sup>33</sup> The *Evening News* is important in this discussion because of its wide circulation and because it supported the seamen's strike from a thoroughly mainstream, conservative-bourgeois standpoint.<sup>34</sup> At the

---

<sup>33</sup> RB Walker, *The newspaper press in New South Wales, 1803-1920*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, pp. 76-8, 82-3.

<sup>34</sup> Fletcher, *The role of the immigration question*, describes the *Evening News* as "very conservative in outlook", saying it "criticized trade union activities on most matters apart from those concerned with immigration", and he concluded, "its appeal was directed to the urban middle class"; p. 63.

very minimum, the position taken by the *Evening News* radically undermines the conventional view that the *Sydney Morning Herald* represented the opinions of the business elite in New South Wales. More importantly, a study of the *Evening News* in 1878 gives an insight into the origins of the bourgeois hegemony of later decades.

The paper did not approve of strikes, but saw Chinese immigration as a threat to the future of the British-Australian nation.<sup>35</sup> On the first day of the strike, it argued:

This is a British colony, discovered, founded, and settled by British energy, and it is no extraordinary selfishness which makes us wish to maintain its essentially British character as the best heritage we can hand down to our children.<sup>36</sup>

Like many others in the ruling class, the paper took a super-imperial view of the issue of Chinese immigration, seeing in it a struggle for control of the Australian continent: "All local questions sink into insignificance beside the great competition between the white and the yellow races."<sup>37</sup> In this, the seamen's strike was a continuation of the earlier movement against transportation. Since those days:

nothing has so vitally affected the future of the colony as this threatened introduction of an inferior and alien population. The citizens of Sydney, regardless of the guns of government-house which were turned upon them, demanded that the scum of Great Britain should not be turned

---

<sup>35</sup> Indeed, it often headlined its news items on the conflict, "Anti-Chinese strike".

<sup>36</sup> *Evening News* 19 Nov 1878, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Evening News* 30 November 1878, p. 4, col. 3.

loose on our shores, and it is not likely that we shall accept the dregs of China, even at the hands of the A.S.N. Co.'s directors.<sup>38</sup>

The position the *Evening News* took on Chinese immigration and the seamen's strike reflected its view of government and society. Where the *Sydney Morning Herald* regarded the protection of property and the rights of capital as paramount, the *Evening News* emphasised the strength of the state; and for this, it was necessary to inculcate a sense of national duty.<sup>39</sup> In an editorial on the problems facing the United States of America, it attacked the modern attitude of "Each for himself and the Devil take the hindmost", arguing:

It was not by the application of principles such as these that any state has become or remained permanently great or prosperous. It is by the fulfilment of "duties" rather than by claiming "rights" that a solid foundation of social prosperity and political strength can be laid.<sup>40</sup>

Thus there was a political limit to the application of liberal economic principles. In this, and in its general view of the nature of society, the paper echoed the organicist view of society held by conservatives like Thomas Carlyle as discussed in chapter 5, and faintly echoed Carlyle's biting denunciations of capitalists who endangered society as a whole with their overwhelming greed and indifference to its consequences.<sup>41</sup> Thus the *Evening News* recognised that the hiring of Chinese workers to meet competition from another shipping line which also employed them reflected the laws of modern commerce, but insisted

---

<sup>38</sup> *Evening News* 30 November 1878, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>39</sup> See in particular the paper's New Year's message for 1879 which was the platform for a restatement of its broad approach to politics, *Evening News* 1 Jan 1879, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Evening News* 18 December 1878, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

<sup>41</sup> For example, in *Past and Present*, second edition, Chapman and Hall, London, 1845, which was widely read by colonial liberals and radicals.

“that there are other considerations, besides those of the immediate expenditure of pounds, shillings, and pence.”

The position of England and her colonies so entirely depends upon the command of the sea possessed by the race, a command resulting as much from her mercantile supremacy as from her ironclad fleets, that it is a matter of grave political importance, that even in the colonies seamanship should be encouraged. We should view with real alarm for the future of the Australian colonies anything like a general employment of Chinese in our mercantile marine...<sup>42</sup>

“If,” the paper argued, “competition between rival companies is driving Australian sailors out of the ships, it is high time that competition should be checked.”<sup>43</sup> Likewise, it rejected the argument from the *Herald* that the law was with the company: “If people were to do everything objectionable which there is no law to prevent them doing, existence would not be tolerated for a single day”.<sup>44</sup>

For Sydney’s *Evening News*, duty was owed – by capitalists as well as workers – to the nation and the race, and it was on these grounds that it attacked the ASN Company, and supported the attempt by the union to restrict Chinese immigration and the employment of Chinese workers. It was:

deeply grieved to find any of our fellow countrymen, who are so far willing to act the part of traitors to their race and country... It is bad enough that we are in danger of a Mongolian invasion, it is infinitely worse that we have a number of men, without a spark of patriotism, who

---

<sup>42</sup> *Evening News* 19 Nov 1878, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> *Evening News* 19 Nov 1878, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> *Evening News* 9 Dec 1878, editorial, p. 2, cols. 2-3.

weigh all things in heaven and earth by the standard of pounds, shillings, and pence.<sup>45</sup>

This was the position of Sir Henry Parkes, himself a disciple of Carlyle's: "By a little comprehensive consideration of the whole question, of what is due to our race, as well as what is due to immediate dividends, the matter might have been settled long ago."<sup>46</sup>

There were severe limits to the support offered by the *Evening News*. As tensions rose in late December 1878, with the expected arrival in Sydney of the *SS Mecca* with over 300 Chinese workers hired by the ASN Company, there were widespread fears of riot, rebellion, and confrontation between strike supporters and the military. The union warned its members against violence and any reckless adventurism; and the *Evening News* also added that the military "would, of course, obey the orders of their commanders, if they are worth their salt, and are quite capable of clearing the streets of any assemblage."<sup>47</sup> As much as the paper supported the anti-Chinese strike, its support for the military was fundamental, and in any conflict with the forces of order, it would abandon the seafarers.

---

<sup>45</sup> *Evening News* 26 December 1878, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Parkes quoted in *Evening News* 30 December 1878, p. 2, col. 2. Parkes' relationship with Thomas Carlyle is one of the great, unresearched elements of his life and politics. Parkes sent Carlyle letters and information about NSW politics, and his own career, visited him in London, and frequently cited Carlyle's views in his speeches. Parkes' public relationship with Carlyle was raised by NSW Premier, James Squire Farnell, at a banquet in his electorate in September 1878, responding to attacks Parkes had made on him: "Some previous Ministers in this country have communications with great minds in England. We can not boast that. I have no correspondence with that great, giant intellect, Thomas Carlyle." *SMH* 9 September 1878, p. 6, col. 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Evening News* 28 December 1878, p. 4, col. 3.

Throughout the strike, the paper argued for compromise by both sides, and read stern lectures to the workers on the dangers of violence and the need for order. Like the *Herald*, it worried about the growth of socialist ideas, but chose not to deliver fierce lectures on the rights of property and employers, preferring to campaign for reconciliation between the classes.<sup>48</sup>

One obstacle to such a conciliation was indifference amongst many of the rich towards what the paper saw as their public duties. In this, its viewpoint also reflected Carlyle. It occasionally lampooned the incompetent among the privileged in order to lionise “true statesmen”. Thus, when Parkes appointed as his Treasurer, the hated anti-union James Watson, Vice-President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce and one of the few who had publicly supported ASN against the seamen, the paper declared:

We have every reason to believe Mr. Watson will be a good treasurer. Private success is the best indication of his fitness for the post, and we regret very much that the anti-Chinese agitators have hastily tried to throw odium upon him because he was manly in his avowal of his sympathy rather with the A. S. N. Co. than with the men. It would be well to find out what his views are on the broader question of Chinese immigration before dubbing him “Chinaman Watson”.<sup>49</sup>

While there were major differences between the philosophical approaches of the *Evening News* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the political positions taken by the

---

<sup>48</sup> See eg, *Evening News* 11 March 1870, p. 3, cols. 3-4, which reprints an article by Wendell Phillips, including this: “[W]e must have the Vanderbilts. We cannot do without the money kings, and we cannot do without individual independence,” and; “the statesmanship of today is to marry and reconcile these two indispensable elements of the future,” – labour and capital.

<sup>49</sup> *Evening News*, 20 December 1878, p. 2, col. 2.



two were in many respects identical.<sup>50</sup> The *News* was Protestant, militantly free trade, moralistic, pro-empire, and pro-law and order, reflecting a wider ruling class consensus. There was little in the paper's politics to give comfort to the labour movement, or to plebeian, middle-class agitators of the time. The paper was contemptuous of poor people, it ridiculed trade unionists, opposed payment for members of parliament, glorified in large scale immigration, and when Victorian Premier, Graham Berry, proposed to set up a national bank to lend money to selectors at low rates of interest, the paper denounced this as "the adoption of Communism as the basis of social life."<sup>51</sup> It is arguable, therefore, that the difference between the two papers on the class logic of the seamen's strike and the anti-Chinese movement reflected a difference in approaches to social discipline between publishers whose broader class identification was very similar.

Some writers have argued that anti-Chinese organising played a major role in the building of the labour movement in the 1880s.<sup>52</sup> For Ray Markey, "the anti-Chinese campaign had been the most sustained organisational experience for the working class in the 1880s."<sup>53</sup> This raises the question: did the *Evening News* strengthen trade unionism and radicalism in colonial NSW? Certainly, the Seamen's Union and other trade unions were strengthened in an immediate

---

<sup>50</sup> This discussion of the politics of the *Evening News* is based on a specific project in which I closely read each edition of the paper published in March of 1870, 1872, 1874, 1876 and 1878.

<sup>51</sup> The paper attacked trade union arguments against assisted immigration in February 1878 as "fictitious" and "alarmist", Fletcher, *The immigration question*, p. 64 (citing *Evening News* 12 February 1878); on Berry, *Evening News* 13 March 1878, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>52</sup> This is the argument of Fletcher, *The immigration question*, see p. 5, also p. 109.

<sup>53</sup> Markey, *Populist politics*, p. 68. It is my strong impression that the campaign against assisted immigration was a far more sustained campaign, and far more central in the ongoing work of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council for a long period of time, than the episodic, if occasionally large, mobilisations against Chinese immigration.

sense by their successful resistance to ASN's attempt to de-unionise its fleet, and some new unions were formed.<sup>54</sup> But in a wider sense, the ideological framework within which the strike was legitimised – a framework in which an individual's first loyalties were to nation and race – was a framework inimical to the full development of working class consciousness. The importance of nationalism in undermining class solidarity was well understood by ruling class thinkers. One of the most sophisticated was Charles Henry Pearson, a minister in Victorian Liberal and coalition governments in 1880-81 and 1886-90, and described by his biographer as “the outstanding intellectual of the Australian colonies”.<sup>55</sup> In his classic work, *National Life and Character*, he argued – like Mill – that nationalism was essential to sustaining the existing body politic. He

---

<sup>54</sup> Fletcher, *The immigration question*, lists the Northern Miners Union and the Coal Lumpers Union, p. 109. His assertion regarding the Northern Miners is contradicted by Robin Gollan, *The coalminers of New South Wales: A history of the union, 1860-1960*, Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, Parkville (Vic), 1963, pp. 45-64, which does not even mention the ASN dispute in his chapter on the rebuilding of the union and the gaining of their first agreement, 1872-81. Representatives of Sydney wharf labourers were prominent in the newly formed Sydney Trades and Labour Council, from 1874 onwards, initially organised as the No 1 Labouring Men's Association and the No 2 Labouring Men's Association, see for example Minutes of Sydney Trades and Labour Council, 18 August 1874, 30 September 1874, in Mitchell Library, A3828. It is clear, also, from the minutes of 11 November 1875, that the Labouring Men's Association was important on the wharves. Unfortunately, the minutes for 1876-80 are missing. Three days into the strike, *SMH* 22 November reported that ASN faced a new crisis as union men refused to coal the steamers. Union leaders said it was not a union decision, but one by the men themselves, suggesting both that the union strategy at that stage was not to widen the dispute, and that the coal lumpers had recognised leaders and organisation, and the ability to act independently of it. It is hard to believe that this is a union formed as a result of the dispute.

<sup>55</sup> John M Tregenza, “Pearson, Charles Henry (1830 - 1894)” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [online] <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050471b.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006]. Tregenza and others have painted Pearson as a friend of labour, but Pearson showed little more than vicious contempt for the poor and the working class. See for example Pearson, “The Education Question”, *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 14, Dec 1880, pp. 141-55; Charles H Pearson, *National life and character: A forecast*, Macmillan and Co, London and New York, 1894, pp. 147, 228-9. Tregenza also wrote that: “Pearson made much of Australia's potential as an ally of Britain in any future war, prophesying that Australia could raise 400,000 to 560,000 men and would be prepared to send a significant proportion overseas.” Tregenza, Pearson entry, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; also Pearson, *National life*, p. 235.

saw the greatest challenge to nationalism and the existing state as coming from citizens “more interested in industrial organisations stretching over the whole earth”. But this was containable; most especially by the “great and not unreasonable jealousy among the workmen of every country lest they should be swamped by the immigration of competitors.”<sup>56</sup> The value of nationalism and racism in containing trade unionism was illustrated within a few months of the end of the seamen’s strike, when the *Evening News* attacked carpenters working on the building for Sydney’s International Exhibition. They had gone on strike over their wages on what had become a dangerous job. Every argument the *Evening News* had used against ASN was now trotted out against the carpenters:

At a time when...every patriotic son and daughter of Australia is intensely anxious that our first International Exhibition should be a complete success, the carpenters have imperilled that success, and have acted with intense selfishness and consummate folly. They have thought to use the pressure of time as a lever by which to obtain an addition to their wages, and the fire-eaters among them have not scrupled to use intimidation against those who prefer duty and honour to the chance of ill-gotten gains.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Pearson, *National life*, pp. 232-4.

<sup>57</sup> *Evening News*, 25 April 1879, p. 2, col. 2.

## The seamen's strike in Queensland's conservative newspapers

The seamen's strike was inter-colonial, with seamen striking, picketing and raising support in ports around Australia. One of the most significant features of the strike in Queensland was the vigorous support given to it by many of the colony's leading conservative newspapers and politicians, including the *Brisbane Courier*, the colony's leading newspaper and the one most closely associated with business and the McIlwraith Conservatives. For Queensland's conservatives, the anti-Chinese dimension in the campaign against ASN was not a conflict between labour and capital, but a struggle to save British Australia, a national struggle in which a trade union had been forced to take the lead.

In chapters 5 and 6, the editorial position of the *Brisbane Courier* regarding a range of "coloured labour" issues was discussed. In this section, I look at the agitation of the leading conservative newspapers from four of Queensland's largest towns: the *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, *Maryborough Chronicle* and *Townsville Herald*. These newspapers are worth studying in their own right, but their significance here is that they reinforce the central role in the anti-Chinese "movement" played by elite conservatives in Queensland, and how broadly the approach of the *Evening News* was adopted by the political ruling class.

In the 1870s, the *Queensland Times*, edited by John Irwin, had a reputation as one of Queensland's most conservative, pro-squatter newspapers.<sup>58</sup> The paper assiduously promoted the political virtues of Ipswich MLA, John Malbon Thompson, a particularly rigid member of the pro-squatter "sub-section", which was later to cause Conservative leader Sir Thomas McIlwraith so much grief. As soon as the seamen's strike broke out, the *Queensland Times* moved to support it. The issue for the paper was the threat posed by Chinese immigration to British and European colonisation of Queensland:

Already in Sydney and in Brisbane they have nearly monopolised cabinet-making, and have driven the white men engaged in that trade either to seek work at other occupations, or to leave both colonies. Unless some check is placed upon them, Chinamen will ultimately monopolise most of our industrial occupations, and thousands of our fellow-countrymen will be shoved out of the land which they have adopted as the home of themselves and their children.<sup>59</sup>

The paper believed that as the struggle grew, "repressive legislation against the Chinese" would be needed in both Queensland and New South Wales.<sup>60</sup> On 3 December 1878, the paper demanded that the Liberal government of John Douglas "terminate the strike in favour of the men...by giving six months' notice of the termination of all mail contracts", which the government did, in an act which largely contributed to the company's defeat. In that defeat, the paper rejoiced.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> See Denis Cryle, *The press in colonial Queensland: A social and political history 1845-1875*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1989, esp. pp. 122-4; on p. 127 describes the paper in 1871 as a "rabid" supporter of the Conservative Palmer.

<sup>59</sup> *QT* 26 November 1878.

<sup>60</sup> *QT* 26 November 1878.

<sup>61</sup> *QT* 4 January 1879.

The paper played a major role in organising a public meeting of support for the striking seafarers. The meeting was initiated when the Brisbane organising committee wrote to William Ginn, a prominent Ipswich merchant, company director and municipal councillor, asking him to take action in support of the seafarers. Ginn's own attitude to trade unions may be gathered by comments he made at the public meeting:

Personally he (Mr. Ginn) was not in favour of strikes like those which he had frequently seen take place in the old country. They were injurious to the men themselves, to their employers, and to trade and their pernicious influences extended far beyond the immediate places in which they took place.<sup>62</sup>

But this was a struggle for life, for the future of the British seaman. By his own account, Ginn was unsure how to raise support for something as distasteful as a strike, and so approached the *Queensland Times*. In order to whip up support for the public meeting, the paper ran a fiery editorial. The ASN Company was threatening

to deprive us of the possibility of rearing a hardy race of Australian seamen – without whom we could scarcely hope in the future to take our place among the Anglo-Saxon communities predestined, from appearances, to be the ruling powers of the world... The company seem to have forgotten that if capital has its rights, it also has its duties.<sup>63</sup>

The paper nervously appealed to its right wing audience: "There is a vast difference between the present and ordinary strikes. The latter are commonly

---

<sup>62</sup> *QT* 19 December 1878.

<sup>63</sup> Editorial, *QT* 17 December 1878.

for increased wages or shorter hours; the one now in existence is for a principle in which every working man in the colony is more or less interested." Thus, "there should be no scruple in the mind of any opposer of strikes which would prevent him from contributing towards the support of the seamen".<sup>64</sup> At the public meeting that night, the motions were moved and seconded by Conservatives and Liberals who had just finished waging a bitter electoral campaign against each other. It is doubtful that the paper's appeal had much impact; there was no mention of the size of the meeting, suggesting it was not encouraging; a modest £9 was raised – of which £5 came from one obviously well-to-do individual – and there was no record of local trade unionists or miners getting involved.<sup>65</sup>

There was, eventually, a meeting called on the issue for Ipswich's many coal miners. Rather than the town hall, the venue was "a green near the Immigration Depot". The anxiety of the miners was palpable; they agreed only to invite the Brisbane seamen to send a speaker to inform them of the facts of the matter, and while some feared destitution if they took industrial action in support of the seamen, the braver of them argued that if they did take action, the local strike support committee, run by the town bourgeoisie, should support them on the same basis as the seamen.<sup>66</sup> These issues were further discussed a few days later in a letter by an erstwhile coal miner. In his view, many of the miners feared that action against ASN would end in failure; that mines which refused coal to

---

<sup>64</sup> Editorial, *QT* 17 December 1878.

<sup>65</sup> *QT* 19 December 1878.

<sup>66</sup> Report in *QT* 21 December 1878.

ASN would be undermined by other local mines which would step in to supply the company.<sup>67</sup>

It is clear from the unusual silences in the paper that its stand was far from universally supported by the local ruling class. Its political pin-up, John Malbon Thompson, was strangely absent from all the paper's reporting of the ASN dispute. It was admitted that contributions for the strikers were weaker than in other centres, and the paper was forced to mention the efforts of Liberals the paper hated.<sup>68</sup> Equally, there were no letters published protesting against the paper's position.

In Maryborough, the conservative *Chronicle* also came out in favour of the strike, arguing that the action of the ASN Company, in employing Chinese seafarers for their Queensland routes, represented a threat to the anti-Chinese legislative barrier erected in 1877 by the government:

If our mercantile marine is to be made up of Chinese sailors, firemen, lumpers, &c., – and this, eventually, it would come to, – all attempts to keep their numbers within controllable limits in the colony would be in vain, and we should have the spectacle of a private company riding rough-shod over the sentiments, the wishes, and the interests of a whole people.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> *QT* 24 December 1878.

<sup>68</sup> *QT* 21 December 1878.

<sup>69</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle*, 30 November 1878. The *Chronicle's* conservatism is demonstrated by its support for squatters and sugar planters against Liberals, and its support of anti-Douglas candidates in the 1878 election.



Unlike Ipswich, the ruling class of Maryborough acted independently of the paper, and petitioned the Mayor to call a public meeting on the issue. The requisition was signed by the unsuccessful conservative candidate for Wide Bay, Edward Booker, and prominent supporters of both Liberal and Conservative candidates for Wide Bay and Maryborough at the recent election.<sup>70</sup> As in Ipswich, the paper ran a strident anti-Chinese editorial on the day of the public meeting, defending the action of the strikers in breaking their contracts, their greatest crime in the eyes of men of capital. This “was unavoidable...for the protest against the action of the Company to be effective”. Had the seamen waited for their contracts to run out, “their protest as individuals or in isolated groups would have been without weight or influence. Indeed, they would have been playing into the hands of the company” by allowing their places to be gradually and quietly filled by Chinese.<sup>71</sup> These were words to send a chill down any bourgeois spine.

Despite (or because of) this elite support, there were few present in the town hall at the nominated starting time, so the Mayor started the meeting half an hour late. Clearly, the conservative newspapers were not going along with some wildly popular cause in order to maintain their authority; they were attempting to make the running on the Chinese issue. The failed Conservative, Booker, moved the first motion, warning that, “If they allowed the invasion of this race, who were worse than locusts, what would become of their children in

---

<sup>70</sup> Petition in *Maryborough Chronicle*, 5 December 1878. BB Moreton, a wealthy squatter of aristocratic lineage, was the (unsuccessful) Conservative candidate for the Maryborough seat. Among those who requisitioned his candidacy, George Stuart, John Graham, SC Davy, James Graham, John Hirst, James Cunningham, JE Noakes, GW Gaynor and TT Woodrow are listed in the petition for the anti-Chinese meeting. The requisition for Moreton to stand for Maryborough was published in the *Chronicle* on 3 October 1878.

<sup>71</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* 5 December 1878.

time to come". Booker drew strength – as did Conservatives generally – from the words of former New South Wales Premier, Sir James Martin, who urged his own parliament to resist what he claimed was a Chinese "invasion" in 1861. "Our shores are close to China, and in a few years they will land millions of them in the colony", he claimed. He denied any radical content to the struggle: "It was not a fight of labor against capital, but a fight of labor against a pest".<sup>72</sup>

In Maryborough, as in other sugar towns along the coast, the issue of Chinese immigration invariably raised the most potent question of Islander labour in the plantations. For the Conservative Booker, "the Polynesian was not in any way so obnoxious as this race". For the Liberal Lowry, the action of ASN set a disturbing precedent: "If the Company had a right to employ this kind of labor, so also had the planters and storekeepers". EJ Hobson reminded his small audience that he had denounced cheap labour from the political platforms of Maryborough, and "had then told them what would be the result, and he was sorry to see it being realised." His solution was to boycott Chinese goods.

But Hobson's concerns were secondary in the Queensland agitation against ASN in 1878. For the ruling class generally, and the conservative newspapers and politicians in particular, the major issue was the competition between Britain and China to colonise the Australian continent, and this provided the context for all the disingenuous talk about Chinese competition pushing out European labour. The *Maryborough Chronicle* summed this up in an editorial in the middle of the strike:

---

<sup>72</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* 7 December 1878.

We believe we have no one to convert when we state that should the laboring and middle classes, the working and trading population of the colony become, ultimately, Chinese, the work of colonization, as at present understood and fostered by the British race, would come to an end.<sup>73</sup>

In Rockhampton, the Conservative agitation was relatively weaker, and was partly overshadowed by a late election, won by the Liberals, and a militant picket of the wharf when a crowd tried to stop the ASN ship, the *Boomerang*, from docking.<sup>74</sup> The conservative *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* was hostile to the ASN action, and opposed to significant Chinese immigration, but was hesitant to support the strike. It saw Chinese people as inured to poverty and deprivation, and capable of out-competing Europeans and threatening British colonisation; thus “when their immense numbers are taken into account, it becomes evident that unless precaution is taken there is some danger of these colonies being overrun by Chinese to an alarming extent.”<sup>75</sup> The initiative for a public meeting against ASN was not in the paper’s hands; nevertheless, it was a bipartisan affair as elsewhere, with Conservatives as well as Liberals introducing the motions. The most racist offering of the evening came from the prominent Conservative, Albrecht Feez, a close friend of Sir Arthur Palmer and a Rockhampton Alderman, soon to be MLA for Leichhardt – who raised the spectre of European colonisation under threat from Chinese numbers and Chinese debauchery:

---

<sup>73</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* 12 December 1878.

<sup>74</sup> The crowd was led by a local publican, James Manly, who was charged with attempting to incite a riot. Manly was clearly present in a leading role, reflecting again that where there was plebeian agitation against Chinese people, it was so often led by storekeepers and publicans. Manly was acquitted. See *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 28 November 1878.

<sup>75</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 27 November, 1878.

We have to deal with the fact of a country with 500,000,000 of people, being within only a few days' sail of our shores, needy to send its teaming [sic] and needy population amongst us...there was one objection to their extensive introduction far more serious, and that was, on the ground of morality. (Cheers.) There was one house in San Francisco which contained 1700 Chinamen – a house not having room enough for seventy Europeans – and the immoralities that existed in that house must be something fearful.<sup>76</sup>

One of the aims of the Conservative party and conservative press was to keep the issues of Chinese immigration and Pacific Island labour separate.

Rockhampton was one place that saw a meeting held to establish an anti-Chinese and anti-Kanaka League. The composition of the speaking list was far removed from that of the anti-Chinese public meeting, being far less elevated and more narrowly Liberal.<sup>77</sup>

In Townsville, the strike began during the election campaign, and candidates were challenged on their approach to the dispute. In a closely fought election, the successful Conservative candidate, John Deane, supported both the ASN strikers and the importation of Pacific Islanders for the sugar industry.<sup>78</sup> With the election out of the way, the conservative *Townsville Herald* began a strident agitation against the ASN Company and its use of Chinese labour.<sup>79</sup> It regarded most strikes as something to be “deprecated”, but there was a higher principle at work here – race:

---

<sup>76</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 29 November 1878. For Feez and Palmer, see Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: Perspectives on a frontier society*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1996, p. 156-63.

<sup>77</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 12 December 1878.

<sup>78</sup> *Townsville Herald* 27 November 1878; this was the day of the election.

<sup>79</sup> The paper explicitly identified itself with the politics of John Murtagh Macrossan, see *Townsville Herald* 23 October 1878.

The resistance of the seamen is founded not only on self interest, but on a social principle which is shared by all classes, whether employers or employed. The antipathies of race are inborn and not easily overcome, even by continued contact between opposite breeds. But when that contact is forced upon a civilised community to their detriment and positive loss it is only natural that the most christianlike spirit should rebel...<sup>80</sup>

As with its southern contemporaries, the main thrust of the *Townsville Herald's* opposition to Chinese immigrants was that they potentially threatened European colonisation. It reprinted the *Queensland Times* editorial discussed above,<sup>81</sup> and, in its own major editorial, argued that “we may find that by force of numbers and by equality of privileges they shall attain to the position of a dominating party, and upset the whole scheme of European society, as it obtains with us.” To this end, the paper approved a major letter from “Anglo Saxon”, who rejected the common argument that the Chinese merely came to Australia to get gold and take home their wealth: “the fact is that whatever land ‘John’ immigrates [sic] to, he tries [sic] to become a resident, and there is no country in the world that offers such inducements to him as Australia.” In his view, Chinese people had the capacity to take over: her merchants “are already ousting European and American merchants from the tea ports of China, they have possession of the greater part of the trade in Singapore and they have a line of steamers on the coast of China and eastern India competing successfully with British shipping”. If they are not stopped, they will push “the white men out of the road until Australia becomes a vast Chinese nation”. Thus the

---

<sup>80</sup> *Townsville Herald* 30 November 1878.

<sup>81</sup> *Townsville Herald* 7 December 1878.

seamen's strike "is not a question of class against class, but a question of race against race".<sup>82</sup>

The *Herald* could tolerate Chinese people growing cabbages, or engaging in the "effeminate" work of domestic labour so "below the dignity of male European labour", but not the replacement of good British sailors by "a cheap draft of sickly, feint-hearted Mongolians" simply to swell "the dividends of an already prosperous company".<sup>83</sup> While the paper was proudly racist, it would not countenance what it saw as unreasonable slurs against the Chinese, and chided the *Brisbane Courier* when the latter blamed Chinese immigrants for small pox.<sup>84</sup> And unlike the *Queensland Times*, the *Herald* found complications in the issue; the sensibilities of those in mining towns, of storekeepers who made a profit from the Chinese, and the need for "keeping up of communication with the South". After all, the strike was disrupting trade and business.<sup>85</sup> But this in no way softened its attitude towards ASN; when the company was finally defeated, it commented that, "Outside the Board of Directors there are very few indeed who do not regard this attempt to flood our ports and vessels with Chinese seamen, as a most unjust and dangerous project."<sup>86</sup> Once the election was decided, the town leadership held a public meeting, chaired by the newly-elected John Deane. Speaking honours were shared between Deane's supporters, and the defeated Liberal, Davey, and his supporters.

---

<sup>82</sup> *Townsville Herald* 11 December 1878.

<sup>83</sup> *Townsville Herald* 30 November 1878.

<sup>84</sup> *Townsville Herald* 21 December 1878.

<sup>85</sup> *Townsville Herald* 30 November 1878.

<sup>86</sup> *Townsville Herald* 4 January 1879.

The liberal Brisbane paper, *The Week*, opposed the strike, and took a position very similar to that of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It described the strike as “mutinous behaviour” and compared the strikers with machine-breakers.<sup>87</sup> An article by “an old trade-unionist” affirmed the right to strike, but condemned the strike itself. “I don’t want to see Chinese replacing English tars, but I’m sad the sailors have taken the wrong and illegal course. Public opinion will not be enough.”<sup>88</sup> Its Sydney Telegram that day saw only defeat for the seafarers: “Fifty Europeans and about a hundred Chinese are now at work on the A.S.N. Company’s wharves. It is considered that the men had better accept the terms offered by the Company at once, for public opinion is beginning to shift round to the Company’s point of view.”<sup>89</sup> This was sheer fantasy.

It is quite clear that the liberal paper saw, in the *Courier*’s support for the strike, an abandonment of some of the fundamentals of bourgeois order. The coverage of the anti-Chinese riot in Sydney on 4 December 1878 in *The Week* was entirely unsympathetic, and it accused the *Courier* of suppressing news of the riot. It therefore covered the riot extensively on the first opportunity, and kept covering it in the following issue, publishing reports from the *Sydney Evening News* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, presumably intending to make *Courier* readers uncomfortable.<sup>90</sup> Ominously it warned:

An editor [of the *Courier*] who has recently indulged in the language of revolution and anarchy could hardly be expected to enjoy reading articles [in the *Sydney Morning Herald*], the burden of which is the

---

<sup>87</sup> *The Week* (Brisbane) 23 Nov 1878, p. 724 (editorial).

<sup>88</sup> *The Week* 30 November 1878, p. 751.

<sup>89</sup> *The Week* 30 Nov, p. 760.

<sup>90</sup> *The Week* 7 Dec, pp. 787, 792, 788; 14 Dec, pp. 818-9.

maintenance of law and order, and the advantages of observing civil contracts.<sup>91</sup>

Once the new NSW Government of Sir Henry Parkes had made it clear it intended introducing legislation to restrict Chinese immigration, *The Week* supported it, arguing that without NSW legislation, the Queensland anti-Chinese laws would be less effective.<sup>92</sup>

## Containing discontent

For the majority of mainstream colonial newspapers, the primary logic of the seamen's strike was not to strengthen trade unionism or working class consciousness, but to increase popular and elite support for British colonisation, as against employers who pursued their own narrow interests without consideration for the wider interests of the ruling class. This logic is apparent in the way that anti-Chinese campaigning contained working class discontent over assisted immigration, and more generally over the anti-labour politics of leaders such as Sir Henry Parkes and Sir Thomas McIlwraith.

Assisted immigration was the system whereby state revenue was used to bring migrants from Britain in large numbers. The labour movement saw assisted immigration as an attempt to flood the labour market, undermine the bargaining position of workers and force down wages. From 1876, there was

---

<sup>91</sup> *The Week* 7 Dec, p. 788.

<sup>92</sup> *The Week* 28 Dec 78, p. 884.



growing opposition to it in New South Wales, and from May 1877, a full-blooded campaign to force an end to it.<sup>93</sup> Unlike the anti-Chinese movement, the movement against assisted immigration won little support outside the labour movement and its politics and base were far more proletarian than the anti-Chinese movement.<sup>94</sup> Neither was it hostile to the individuals who migrated, despite their occasional recruitment as strike-breakers. The first public meeting, called by the Trades and Labour Council on 29 May 1877, was described as “one of the largest public meetings of the Working Classes, held at the Masonic Hall...at which hundreds were unable to gain admission”. Shortly after, a Working Men’s Defence Association (WMDA) was formed, involving leading trade unionists and other radical plebeian and middle class elements; this movement called mass public meetings of thousands, and stimulated protest meetings and petitions from around NSW.

For their part, the rich and powerful were profoundly attached to assisted immigration. It deepened British colonisation of the Australian continent, strengthened the strategic position of the Anglo-Australian state, and accelerated capitalist expansion in the colonies. In all these senses, it was the positive, mirror-image of the exclusionary elements in the White Australia policy, and needs to be analysed as one element of White Australia rather than something separate. The evidence of businesspeople to the NSW Select

---

<sup>93</sup> Albert A Hayden, “The anti-immigration movement, 1877-1893”, *Journal & Proceedings (Royal Australian Historical Society)*, vol. 48, pt. 1, March 1962, pp. 25-43. The Parliamentary Papers of NSW record twelve petitions or public meetings which sent petitions, in the nine months from May 1877 to February 1878. NSWLA V&P 1876-77, vol. 3, pp. 159-171; NSWLA V&P 1877-78, vol. 2, pp. 819-25.

<sup>94</sup> Fletcher, *The immigration question*, both illustrates and argues this point. I do not agree that the campaign against assisted immigration reflected the real class needs of workers, but it certainly challenged the class desires of employers.

Committee on Assisted Immigration in 1880-81 was in stark contrast to that of trade unionists and workers.<sup>95</sup> In the private correspondence of leading political figures, such as Sir Henry Parkes, bitter reproaches were directed to Australian colonial governments who failed to drive up their populations. David Lanarch, the London representative of the Bank of New South Wales, wrote:

You will find that, while you in Australia are shutting your doors agt immigration, America and Canada are doing every thing possible to attract them I know that, at least, you are of my opinion, viz that a fresh stream of immigrants is the life blood of a new country; but, unfortunately, universal suffrage will not permit you to bring your views into effect.<sup>96</sup>

Parkes himself was an implacable supporter of assisted immigration. In 1876, as Leader of the Opposition, Parkes moved that “not less than £150,000 per annum ought to be expended without unnecessary delay in promoting immigration from Great Britain and Ireland”.<sup>97</sup> This was a colossal sum – perhaps \$45 million in today’s values – and would have paid for at least 10,000 extra immigrants.<sup>98</sup> Parkes’ extreme attitude earned him the enmity of the labour movement with Seamen’s Union President, Thomas White, declaring that Parkes would listen to the Chamber of Commerce, but that neither the

---

<sup>95</sup> “Progress report from the Select Committee on Assisted Immigration; together with the proceedings of the Committee, minutes of evidence, and Appendix”, NSW LA V&P 1879-80, vol. 5, pp. 719-813; also “Second progress report from the Select Committee on Assisted Immigration: Together with the proceedings of the Committee, minutes of evidence, and Appendix”, NSW LA, V&P 1880-81, vol. 3, pp. 275-94.

<sup>96</sup> Letter to Parkes 20 November 1879 in Parkes Corresp, Mitchell Library, A892, p. 276. See also letter from Sir Daniel Cooper, temporary NSW Agent-General in London, to Parkes, 2 July 1880, Parkes corresp, A920, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> Coghlan, Labour and industry, vol. III, p. 1284.

<sup>98</sup> From 1871-1880, the NSW government spent £331,981 on 24,412 immigrants, an average of £13.6 per head; Fletcher, The immigration question, p. 50.

government nor the press would listen to the workers.<sup>99</sup> In February 1876, the *Evening News* painted Parkes as the colony's conservative leader, one "leaning towards political finality, if not towards political retrogression."<sup>100</sup> While that is perhaps an exaggeration, Parkes was a fanatic for free trade, an opponent of state provision of welfare, hostile to the movement of free selectors and to effective trade unionism. A serial bankrupt, Parkes lived in relative luxury thanks to massive loans advanced by the banks and wealthy benefactors in the colony.

In October 1877, the WMDA was transformed into the Political Reform League (PRL), and campaigned vigorously against both Sir John Robertson (as Premier) and Sir Henry Parkes (as Leader of the Opposition) in the general election of October 1877, playing a significant role in their shock defeats.<sup>101</sup> Contemporary observer, Timothy Coghlan, later wrote, "Parkes made a determined stand for immigration and lost his seat in East Sydney largely for that reason".<sup>102</sup> Parkes and Robertson retreated to the countryside to get back into the Assembly.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Hayden, *The anti-immigration movement*, p. 27.

<sup>100</sup> The *Evening News*, editorial, 24 Feb 1876, p. 2, col. 2. I do not necessarily accept this description. Parkes was both more contradictory and subtle than this suggests. But he had proven unwilling to disturb a series of political compromises – eg over land legislation and state aid to church schools – despite a growing bourgeois discontent with them. Parkes had a few liberal followers, most notably David Buchanan, and there were conservatives and liberals ranged behind his long-time opponent, Sir John Robertson. Indeed, a month earlier, the paper had argued that there were no parties in NSW politics, 24 Jan 1876, p. 2, col. 2. But the very fact that the *News* could make this assertion of conservatism says a great deal about Parkes' politics.

<sup>101</sup> The WMDA split in around August/September 1877, with a group around Martin Guest expelled. The WMDA then set up a broader Political Reform League involving artisans, small business people and selectors, as well as trade unionists. The PRL held its founding conference in October 1877, during the election campaign, and at the same time as a conference of free selectors. It does not seem to have held the allegiance of the free selectors. See *SMH* 16 Oct 77, p. 1 (meeting notice); 16 October 1877, p. 5, col. 7; 17 Oct 1877, p. 5, cols. 2-3; 18 Oct 1877, p. 7, cols. 3-4.

<sup>102</sup> Coghlan, *Labour and industry*, vol. III, pp. 1285-6. For its part, the PRL did well in the election. While none of its candidates were elected, Thomas White gained 1602 votes in West

Out of office and having lost much of his parliamentary following, Parkes moved to contain the damage caused by his support for assisted immigration. In a major speech he gave in July 1878 to the “working men” of Mudgee, Parkes put the issue of British immigration in the context of the supposed danger represented by the Chinese, and hence the need to “preserve the elements of the British character in this new land”. Parkes warned of the immense population of China, and its potential military power, and went on to explain that,

he believed the Chinese belonged to a nation too numerous for us to sanction a wholesale immigration from, because we were not to admit a people who were aliens to us in language, blood, and faith... [But] he should not like any person to go away from that large meeting under any impression that he was against the introduction of people from our own country. He was not. (Cheers.) He utterly dissented from this doctrine that we had enough people in this country. (Hear, hear.) He utterly dissented from the doctrine that we – into whose hands the princely heritage of our public lands was given – were doing anything at variance with true national morality in spending a portion of that great land revenue in introducing our brothers and sisters from the mother country. (Cheers.) Therefore, he was anxious for the progress of this country in numbers.<sup>104</sup>

---

Sydney, not far behind the defeated Premier on 1891, while the four successful candidates polled from 2117 to 2929 votes; see *SMH* 26 Oct 1877, p. 4, col. 8. They did less well in East Sydney, where another prominent union leader, Frank Dixon, won 1302 votes, compared with 2843 for Parkes who was narrowly defeated, with the four successful candidates gaining 2930-4112 votes.; see *SMH* 25 Oct 1877, p. 4, col. 8. After the election, the *Sydney Morning Herald* acknowledged the success of the PRL campaign by editorialising on the question of assisted immigration, while ridiculing the efforts of working men to get class representatives elected to parliament; see *SMH* 27 Oct 1877, p. 4, cols. 3-4; 27 Oct 1877, p. 4, cols. 4-5 (on immigration).

<sup>103</sup> Elections were held over several weeks, the major Sydney electorates voting first. Parkes was returned for Canterbury – then a rural electorate – and Robertson for Mudgee.

<sup>104</sup> Speech given Tuesday 30 July 1878, reported in *SMH* 2 August 1878, p. 3, cols. 3-5. A week earlier, the Trades and Labour Council had held a mass public meeting in Sydney to protest against the hiring of Chinese seafarers by the ASN company; this provided some context for his remarks. Parkes considered his comments sufficiently important to send the cutting of this speech to WE Gladstone; see letter to Gladstone, August 13 1878, Parkes corresp A931. p. 436ff.

By assisting in the immigration of British labourers, the government was therefore “protecting” the people from the supposed dangers of a Chinese takeover; those who thought NSW had enough people were putting the country at risk from a possible Chinese invasion.

In December 1878, the defeat of the Farnell government opened the way for Parkes to return to power at the head of a coalition with his long-time rival, Sir John Robertson.<sup>105</sup> Having been appointed Premier by the Governor, Parkes and his ministers were required to stand for re-election to Parliament. Now, in the midst of the seamen’s strike, there was none of the well-organised or bitter opposition he had faced a year earlier, and no campaign against him over assisted immigration – despite the supposedly stronger position of the union movement as a result of the strike. Indeed, there were now new reasons to campaign against Parkes. In voting against Farnell’s land bill – the issue which brought the government down – Parkes had been protecting the interests of squatters over selectors. Furthermore, Parkes had nominated James Watson as

---

The major reason for this was undoubtedly his attack on a movement of support for the foreign policy of the Tory Prime Minister, Beaconsfield, in the conflict with Russia over its invasion of Turkey. However, Parkes also referred to his Mudgee speech later in the year, when seeking re-election to parliament after being appointed Premier. In his speech, Parkes was responding to a deputation and presentation, allegedly from the working men of Mudgee. One needs to be very careful interpreting the phrase “working men” in this context; the presentation said nothing about parliament considering assisted immigration, one of the most contentious issues it faced, and one on which Parkes was unpopular.

<sup>105</sup> After the defeat of the Farnell government on its Land Bill on 5 December 1878, there was a two-week political crisis, during which Sir John Robertson, as leader of the opposition, was offered a commission to form a government. When he failed to do this, he resigned from Parliament and the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, asked Farnell’s minister to remain in office. For doing so they were condemned by many. In the meantime, Parkes had emerged as leader of a united opposition of his own and Robertson’s supporters, and a number who had been supporters of Farnell. From this position of strength, Parkes moved a motion of no confidence in the Legislative Assembly, and once this was carried, on 20 December 1878, he emerged as Premier at the head of a new, coalition government in which portfolios were equally shared between his and Robertson’s supporters.

his Treasurer. As Vice-President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Watson had publicly supported ASN in the strike.

There were moves to challenge the re-election of the new ministers, but mostly these revolved around the notion that Parkes was not reliable on the Chinese issue, given his appointment of Watson.<sup>106</sup> But in almost every case this opposition was deflected by a commitment given by Parkes to introduce anti-Chinese legislation as soon as parliament was recalled in the new year. On 25 December 1878, the rump Working Men's Defence Association announced its intention to nominate JB Douglas as their candidate to challenge Parkes in Canterbury.<sup>107</sup> There was no follow-up notice for the next two days, but on Saturday 28th, the WMDA announced: "Canterbury election. — Newspaper Report. — Sir Henry Parkes will levy heavy poll-tax on Chinese. Mr. Douglas, anti-Chinese candidate, will withdraw." It was left to the ageing anti-Chinese zealot, Aaron Wheeler, to force a challenge, and he gained 105 votes to Parkes' 1048.<sup>108</sup> In Bathurst, the right wing squatter and Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, FB Suttor, was left unchallenged. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Mr David Campbell Williamson, a local candidate, nominated himself, but intimated his intention to withdraw from the contest if satisfied with Mr.

---

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, deputation to Parkes on 26 December 1878, reported in *SMH*, 28 December 1878, p. 7, col. 4. Maclean supposedly said: "The citizens and the people at large viewed with alarm the presence of a certain gentleman in his Ministry on account of his recent actions at the Chamber of Commerce against the seamen." Parkes that day denied the truth of some of this, pointing out there had been no reporters present, and that the report had come from the delegation; see *SMH* 30 December 1878, p. 7, col. 5.

<sup>107</sup> *SMH* 25 December 1878, p. 1. This WMDA was the rump of radicals, expelled from the WMDA in 1877 when it had joined with others to form the Political Reform League.

<sup>108</sup> *SMH* 1 January 1879, p. 5, col. 3.

Suttor's utterances on the Chinese question." Suttor spoke of the Chinese as an unmitigated evil and Williamson withdrew his nomination.<sup>109</sup>

The potential for a plebeian and democratic campaign to galvanise opposition to the Parkes government could be seen in the one significant challenge that did take place, to the new Treasurer, James Watson, in The Lachlan. The Political Reform Union's GR Maclean travelled from Sydney to stand against Watson, supported by Jack McElhone MLA. Maclean stood on two bases: support for the demands of the free selectors and against Watson and the new Parkes government because they had worked to destroy Farnell's land bill, and that Watson had supported the ASN Company against the seamen. Maclean did surprisingly well against the long-standing incumbent, despite his campaign being undermined by erstwhile friends. McElhone nominated Maclean on the basis of his hostility to the government over its destruction of the land bill, declared that he had no other objection to Watson, and then abandoned and attacked Maclean when he learned that he had applied for a job as a police magistrate.<sup>110</sup> For their part, the Political Reform Union also abandoned Maclean, on the grounds that Parkes had promised to restrict Chinese immigration. They sent Watson a letter, declaring that "Mr. G. R. Maclean, J.P. is not put forward by the Political Reform Union, or the Anti-Chinese League,

---

<sup>109</sup> *SMH* 1 January 1879, p. 5, cols. 4-5. See also letter from Suttor to Parkes, 31 December 1878, Parkes corresp, Mitchell Library, A928, pp. 435-7.

<sup>110</sup> *SMH* 6 January 1879, p. 3, col. 5. By the Tuesday, McElhone had shifted his ground, arguing that while he was still "grievously disappointed" in Maclean for not telling him about applying for a police magistracy, "the electors must take a broader view of the matter, for if Mr. Maclean were returned it would prove that the electors had no faith in the present Government, because Mr. Watson was the only man in the House capable of filling the position of Treasurer, and consequently if he were defeated the Ministry could not stand." And this is what McElhone wished; see *SMH* Wed 8 January, p. 5, col. 5. However outside that meeting, "party feeling ran high. Mr. McElhone was accused of turning traitor to Mr. Maclean, and a free fight ensued, in which many prominent partisans of each side were conspicuous."

although we at first intended. But having gained all we wanted from the Ministry in the promised legislation on the Chinese question we have withdrawn all opposition.”<sup>111</sup> After Watson’s modest victory, even the *Sydney Morning Herald* had to admit that “the number of votes polled by his opponent was sufficient to show that there was some reality in the contest”, and that after the end of voting, Maclean had addressed “an immense crowd” at Young.<sup>112</sup>

With elections due in November-December 1880, Parkes had every reason to fear a new labour movement campaign against him. In September 1879, his government had sent 200 soldiers with four field guns to the Hunter Valley to suppress picketing by coal miners.<sup>113</sup> The labour movement campaign against assisted immigration was revived in 1879, and once again assumed considerable proportions from December to March 1880, a time of significant unemployment. However Parkes was again successful in containing the movement. He set up a select committee to inquire into complaints about the system, an inquiry whose report was diligently and successfully ignored by the government. Parkes also made a few modest concessions to the prevailing unemployment, cutting the assisted immigration budget by £10,000 and instructing the Agent-General in London to discourage the emigration of iron trades workers.

---

<sup>111</sup> *SMH* 7 January 1879, p. 6, col. 5.

<sup>112</sup> *SMH* 13 January 1879, editorial p. 4, col. 5; also p. 5 col. 2.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH* 22 September 1879, p. 5, col. 2; Robin Gollan, *The coalminers of New South Wales: A history of the union, 1860-1960*, Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, Parkville (Vic), 1963, p. 60. The *SMH* covered the dispute almost daily from 19 August and into late October 1879, and it revived again in 1880. There was also a controversy between Parkes and Loftus on the scale of the military operation; Parkes argued it had been too large. See Parkes to Loftus, 22 September 1879, Parkes corresp, Mitchell Library, A915, pp.667ff; Loftus to Parkes, 22 September, in A974 (no page numbers); Parkes to Loftus, 22 September 1879, A915, pp 660-3; Parkes to Loftus, 22 December 1879, A915, pp. 650-3.



Then in 1880, Parkes encouraged a new round of anti-Chinese mobilising by promising to contact the other colonies about calling an intercolonial conference on the issue, and by campaigning on Chinese immigration during the November-December 1880 elections. It took Parkes until late 1881 to push his new *Chinese Immigration Restriction Act* through Parliament by which time the recession of the early 1880s had ended, and with the economy booming, assisted immigration was dramatically increased.<sup>114</sup>

The Parkes government was defeated at elections in December 1882, but Parkes returned to office in January 1887, to grapple with a major recession, massive deficit and the collapse of land sales revenue. Parliament had ended assisted immigration and there was a mass movement of the unemployed demanding a guaranteed wage for accepting relief work. Parkes won the ensuing general election in February 1887 on a platform of free trade and cuts in public spending. Amidst rising unemployment, Parkes cut rations to all but the most destitute, and used the police to disperse protest demonstrations. As unemployment rose, he told deputations from the unemployed that there were jobs in the countryside, he did not believe their stories of widespread destitution, and that he intended to get rid of the relief system. "The unemployed must look out for themselves. In other countries of the world the Government was not expected and did not find employment for the people", he told them.<sup>115</sup> During the rolling wave of shearers' strikes in NSW that year, the

---

<sup>114</sup> This history is repetitively discussed across parts of several chapters in Fletcher, *The immigration question*, section B.

<sup>115</sup> Coghlan, *Labour and industry*, pp. 1444-49; *SMH* 9 August, 1887, p. 4, col. 6.

government was accused of sending the unemployed into the countryside to places where shearers were on strike.<sup>116</sup>

In 1888, Parkes responded to a crisis around the question of Chinese immigration by ramming severe new restrictions through Parliament. The labour movement's belief that Chinese immigration was a threat to workers led the movement's leaders to praise Parkes. The NSW Branch of the Federated Seamen's Union of Australasia passed a resolution assuring Parkes "of his having earned the well wishes and admiration of the Ten Thousand Seamen composing this body."<sup>117</sup> Robert Boxall, Secretary of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council, told Parkes that "it behoves us to support them who support us".<sup>118</sup> There was no sense in which Parkes was a supporter of organised labour; just months after Sydney's trade union leaders had heaped praise on Parkes for supposedly supporting them, he again sent the military to the Hunter Valley to contain another miners strike.<sup>119</sup>

It was in Queensland that the value of the anti-Chinese issue as a device to contain working class and plebeian discontent was best understood by the conservatives. In the lead-up to the 1883 general election which the conservatives under McIlwraith lost, his deputy John Murtagh Macrossan wrote to him:

---

<sup>116</sup> *SMH* 26 August 1887, p. 4, col. 2 (TLC report).

<sup>117</sup> Letter from Davies to Parkes, 23 May 1888, NSW State Records, Colonial Secretary's Special Bundles, 4/884.1.

<sup>118</sup> Letter 24 May 1888 to Parkes from Robert Boxall, Secretary Sydney Trades and Labour Council, Parkes corresp, Mitchell Library, A873, p. 485.

<sup>119</sup> Gollan, *The coalminers*, p. 75.

The Coolies will be a great thorn in our side but if properly handled between this and the election the Chinese can be made a still greater thorn in Sam's side. Don't you forget that at Roma [where McIlwraith was due to speak as the local MP] The Chinaman is a more dangerous competitor than the Coolie to the working man.<sup>120</sup>

In the 1888 election, both the Liberal Griffith and the Conservative McIlwraith used fear of Chinese immigration to deflect attention from unpopular policies and their own records in government. Griffith's government had been imploding as a recession and drop in revenue had created a crisis for the government, a crisis which saw his Treasurer, Dickson, and Postmaster General resign from the cabinet. So Griffith used his election manifesto to "warn" about the supposed danger from Chinese who would "pour at will over the rest of the country from the NT... There is not room in the same country for the European and Asiatic civilizations to exist side by side."<sup>121</sup>

But McIlwraith's party was also distrusted by working class people, for its class politics, and its support for indentured Indian and Pacific Islander labour. McIlwraith dealt with this problem by launching a dishonest and hysterical attack on Griffith for being soft on the Chinese, for only wanting to get rid of them gradually. The conservative *Queensland Figaro* magazine published a cartoon showing a future Brisbane under Griffith's rule, with Chinese rampaging the streets and torching buildings as traumatized whites huddled in the gutters. McIlwraith was depicted flogging fleeing Chinese with a stockwhip from horseback, and unleashing a savage dog on Chinese in order to save fair

---

<sup>120</sup> Letter to McIlwraith, 25 May 1883, in McIlwraith papers, Oxley Library, OM64-19/20.

<sup>121</sup> Manifesto issued 8 March 1888, clipping found in Drake papers, Fryer Library (University of Queensland), 96/144.

Queensland's honour. The whole atmosphere had been inflamed the strident anti-Chinese rhetoric of the Intercolonial Trade Union Conference which had been held in Brisbane in March, by hysterical articles in all the Brisbane press, from the conservative and liberal to the populist, and by William Lane's infamous serial, "White or Yellow? A story of the race war of A.D. 1908", serialised in the *Boomerang* from 18 February to 5 May 1888, finishing on the day of the election. This led to the famous incident on election day in Brisbane when wagons rolled down Adelaide St bearing "Vote for Griffith" signs and carrying Chinese market gardeners from Enoggera and Breakfast Creek who had been inveigled into this stunt by a McIlwraith candidate. When Griffith emerged from his campaign office onto the street, he was surrounded by an enraged mob, chased into a yard, his physical safety clearly threatened. After McIlwraith's victory was announced in the early evening, the mob rampaged through Chinatown smashing windows and beating up Chinese people, and people who were mistaken for being Chinese.<sup>122</sup>

In Rockhampton, the McIlwraith candidate for North Rockhampton, RR Jones, declared at one public meeting, "the only hope of saving the country from ruin was to send the Chinkies & Griffith off by Special Train to Hong Kong."<sup>123</sup> The Liberal candidate, squatter PF MacDonald, told one of his managers to employ Chinese shearers rather than unionists, whom he cordially hated.<sup>124</sup> Needless to

---

<sup>122</sup> Raymond Evans, *Fighting words: Writing about race*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999, pp. 79-94; Harrison Bryan, "The political career of John Murtagh Macrossan", MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1954, pp. 110-111n.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from PF MacDonald (the Liberal candidate) to JG Browne, Argus Office, 22 April 1888, in PF MacDonald papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland, collection UQFL204, letter book A3, pp. 580-81.

<sup>124</sup> Letter to Geo Sutherland, his manager at Fernlees, 14 March 1888, PF MacDonald papers, Fryer Library, letterbook A3, p. 529.

say, this information was soon public, and MacDonald ruefully described the result to one of his managers:

Vans were driven about with PF Chinamen shearers as large as real Chinamen & seemed to make a strong impression upon the half tipsy voters. The same tactics were adopted at every polling place and even at Yaamba told against me.<sup>125</sup>

The end result was that working class people voted for a government that, two years later, would round up striking shearers and send them in chains to an island prison.

## Conclusion

The argument that the anti-Chinese movement possessed some anti-employer or anti-capitalist dynamic is profoundly mistaken. It rests in part on identifying the *Sydney Morning Herald* as the voice of business, whereas on this issue, the Fairfax papers were isolated from the rest of the pro-business and conservative press. It rests on presenting the *Herald* as supporting Chinese immigration (or as opposed to restricting it), where the paper's real position was one of hostility to Chinese immigration, but hostility also to the introduction of legislation at times of labour movement mobilisation. The myth of anti-capitalism also rests on the idea that the anti-Chinese movement promoted some kind of radicalism,

---

<sup>125</sup> Letter to Geo Sutherland, 13 May 1888, PF MacDonald papers, Fryer library, letterbook A3, p. 614. Yaamba was the town near the pastoral property on which MacDonald lived.

whereas it served in practice to give a radical veneer to ruling class politicians such as Sir Henry Parkes and Sir Thomas McIlwraith, and to demobilise working class opposition to them.

By promoting the idea that working class people should identify as “white”, and as part of the British empire, the anti-Chinese movement served to limit and contain the development of class consciousness in Australia – which is one reason that the conservative press of the time was happy to promote this racism, and to support the most significant mass struggle in support of it – the seamen’s strike of 1878.

Later, at a time of economic crisis, mass unrest and radicalisation, a time of the first mass union drives in Australian history and a growing rejection of the British empire, the hegemony of anti-Chinese racism enabled the ruling class to deflect working class and plebeian militants from a thorough-going critique of Anglo-Australian capitalism and a more determined mobilisation against the system.<sup>126</sup> It also enabled key ruling class leaders to construct a new hegemonic ideology of Australian nationalism that was white rather than English, and ultimately loyal to the British empire. Indeed, as numerous writers have observed, the idea of a “white Australia” was central to the Australian nationalism that emerged from the crucible of the 1890s and Federation, and it was this racial nationalism that Fisher and Hughes mobilised in winning support for Australian involvement in the bloodbath of 1914-18. Francis Adams, a radical writer, expressed this logic well in 1893:

---

<sup>126</sup> This is discussed in depth by Verity Burgmann, “Revolutionaries and racists: Australian socialism and the problem of racism, 1887-1917”, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1980.

People call McIlwraith a Tory, but when he deliberately commits himself to the exclusion from Australia of Chinese and other servile races...I feel that he has [given] some true idea of the meaning of loving the nation, and the race to which he belongs, and his Toryism troubles me not.<sup>127</sup>

Most remarkably, he wrote this in the aftermath of McIlwraith's brutal destruction of the shearers' strike. In 1909, the iconic union organiser, WG Spence, also summed this dynamic up in his classic book, *Australia's Awakening*. He lauded the "noticeable change of thought in regard to what may be termed Empire matters" brought about by Labor's rise in national politics. Where once republicanism had been a force:

The practical independence of government granted under the Australian Constitution, with the manifest advantages of being part of a big Empire and under its protection if need arose, together with the growth of the national spirit of a "White Australia" and the broad humanitarianism taught by the Labor Party, have developed a feeling of loyalty to race rather than to governments, but have abolished any talk of either republicanism or of independence.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Duncan Waterson, *Personality, profit and politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894: The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture, 1978*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984, p 24; F Adams, *The Australias: A social sketch*, London T Fisher Unwin, 1893, pp 77-8.

<sup>128</sup> William Guthrie Spence, *Australia's awakening: Thirty years in the life of an Australian agitator*, The Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1909, pp. 148-9.

## *Chapter 9*

# Towards the Chinese immigration crisis of 1888

IN JUNE 1888, representatives of the six Australian colonial governments met at a conference in Sydney and all except Tasmania agreed, for the first time, on a national policy of racial exclusion. This was a response to what they saw as a major crisis surrounding the issue of Chinese immigration.

There were five key ingredients to this crisis. The first was the impression that China was becoming a major military power. To leading figures in the ruling class, this meant that the unwanted immigrants in the north might represent a more serious Chinese beach-head on the Australian continent, and might have a powerful protector should future Australian governments attempt to restrict Chinese entry or pass discriminatory laws against them.

The second was a growing distrust of Britain as Australia's protector. The 1884 crisis over the annexation of New Guinea suggested that imperial power plays were more important for London than protecting Australian interests, an



impression reinforced by London's perceived indifference to French expansion in the Pacific. There was a widespread belief that Britain was courting China as an ally against Russia, in which case the colonies might find that Britain itself would assist China in keeping the door open to Chinese immigration.

The third element was the refusal of the South Australian parliament to pass laws restricting Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory. The result was that by 1887, Chinese people were the dominant immigrant nationality in the Territory, and politicians from the four eastern colonies became alarmed at the prospect of a Chinese-dominated north.

The fourth element was the mission sent to Australia by the increasingly confident Chinese empire, to investigate the condition of Chinese people living here. This introduced an entirely new dynamic into the Chinese immigration issue in Australia, the involvement of China itself.

The final element serving to create the Chinese immigration crisis of 1887-88 was Britain's support for the complaint made by the Chinese empire about the treatment of its subjects in the colonies, and London's demand that the colonies explain the reasons for this discriminatory treatment.

In a very real sense, this was a crisis none of the colonial governments expected, and yet they also helped create it. In 1881 an intercolonial conference had agreed that the colonies would pass laws to restrict – not prevent – Chinese immigration. All the politicians present were opposed to allowing any significant Chinese influx because of their adherence to one or more of the major ruling class agendas already discussed. They had seen two major crises involving Chinese immigrants in the preceding five years – the influx into Far

North Queensland, and the ASN dispute, centred on Sydney – and they saw themselves acting to pre-empt a future one. Yet the measures they adopted contributed significantly to the crisis of 1887-8.

In this chapter, I outline the adoption of anti-Chinese laws in 1881, and then examine the factors that led to the development of the crisis of 1888. In chapter 10, I discuss the crisis itself, and its resolution.

## The anti-Chinese laws of 1881

The year 1881 represents a significant moment in the move towards White Australia. In January of that year, an intercolonial conference of seven Australasian colonial governments met in Sydney and agreed to pass model legislation to restrict Chinese immigration.<sup>1</sup> Laws restricting Chinese immigration were subsequently passed in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand, adding to the restrictions already in force in Queensland. Only the remote and lightly populated Tasmania and Western Australia stood apart.<sup>2</sup> When the conference discovered that Western

---

<sup>1</sup> “Minutes of proceedings of the intercolonial conference held at Melbourne, November and December 1880”, NSW LA *V&P*, 1880-81, vol. 1, pp. 327-35. All Australian colonies were represented, although Western Australia attended merely in an observer capacity because it was a Crown Colony. The New Zealand representative, William Dick, arrived sometime on Wednesday 19th – he speaks at the banquet that evening – and was not reported as taking his seat at the conference on Thursday 20th, *SMH* 20 January 1881, p. 6, cols. 4-5; 21 January 1881, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Both the NSW *Chinese Restriction Act* and the Victorian *Chinese Influx Restriction Act* restricted ships to bringing one Chinese passenger for every hundred tons of their tare, and imposed a £10 poll (entry) tax; South Australia’s law covered only the colony proper, and not its Northern

Australia – still a Crown Colony – was assisting employers by importing Chinese labourers, the other six colonial delegations united in a joint protest to London, warning that a persistence in this

is almost certain to lead to the enactment of laws imposing restrictions on communication between her ports and the other Australasian ports. It cannot be expected that the people who object to receiving Chinese immigrants direct from China will submit to their arrival by way of Western Australia.<sup>3</sup>

Thus 1881 represents the point at which a growing concern about Chinese immigration, and the presence of Chinese people in Australia, led to co-ordinated legislative action. Moreover, this was legislation that was never challenged, that *never* faced a move to soften or repeal it, but was strengthened in the years following. The concerns driving that legislation were substantial, hegemonic and enduring.

A reconsideration of the specific reasons for the agreement reached at the Intercolonial Conference, and for the passage of subsequent legislation, would be a valuable exercise. It is a task this thesis has not undertaken because of the need to focus on other, more central issues.

Unlike the Queensland anti-Chinese legislation of 1876 and 1877, the various Queensland “coloured labour” laws, or the Intercolonial Conference of June

---

Territory and followed Queensland in imposing a limit of one Chinese passenger for every ten tons of a ship’s tare, plus a £10 poll (entry) tax; Queensland declared its existing 1877 law restrictive enough; while Tasmania and the Crown Colony of Western Australia decided there was no danger to them (or from them), and no reason to follow the others.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Colonial Secretary’s Office, Sydney, 25 January 1881, to Earl Kimberley, NSW State Records, Col Sec special bundles, 4/829.1.

1888, there was no immediate sense of crisis driving the decision of the 1881 conference to pass Chinese immigration laws. There was no mention of Chinese immigration in the speeches given by delegates at a banquet in their honour six days after the conference started.<sup>4</sup> Neither did the two *Sydney Morning Herald* editorials during the conference that were substantially on the Chinese question describe or convey any sense of crisis, urgency or agitation.<sup>5</sup> The major agenda of the conference was moving the colonies towards federation.<sup>6</sup> This was, for the *Herald*, the relevance of the proposal for coordinated anti-Chinese legislation; “an advance towards federal action” on an issue which “would have furnished a good subject for joint arrangements, and even for effective representations to the Imperial Government proceeding from Australia as a whole.”<sup>7</sup>

The move towards legislation in 1879-81 therefore reflected a rising, general concern over Chinese immigration in the ruling class, alongside issues specific to individual colonies. In the United States, there were serious moves within elite politics to impose restrictions on Chinese immigration. A congressional joint committee report attacking Chinese communities and recommending restriction had been released in February 1877. In February 1879, Congress passed a bill limiting Chinese immigration to fifteen passengers per ship, and

---

<sup>4</sup> *SMH*, 20 January 1881, p. 6, cols. 2-5; nor at the speeches at the Mayor’s picnic on Anniversary Day, reported in *SMH* 27 January 1881, p. 6, cols. 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 19 January 1881, p. 5, cols. 1-2; 28 January, p. 5, col. 1; nor did the brief mention of Chinese immigration in the following day’s editorial, Sat 29 January, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>6</sup> This, for instance, is not only the substance of the banquet speeches during the conference, see *SMH*, 20 January 1881, p. 6, cols. 2-5, but also of the review of the conference published in the *Victorian Review*: “The intercolonial conference and the federation of the Australias”, vol. 3, no. 17, March 1881, pp. 623-38.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 19 January 1881, p. 5, col. 1.

while it was vetoed by President Hayes, it suggested the direction of American policy. By mid-1880, Chinese immigration restriction was part of the platform of both Republican and Democrat presidential candidates.<sup>8</sup> America's move towards restriction tended to both legitimise the fears of Australian politicians, and raise the prospect that Chinese emigrants who had intended going to America would turn to Australia instead.

The arrival of 17,000 Chinese immigrants into Far North Queensland from 1874-77 had raised concern in the southern colonies at the time, and this was expressed in support for Queensland's attempts at restriction. There was a general concern that while Chinese immigrants could easily be regulated at the ports, overland migration was uncontrollable. Furthermore, the ASN dispute had shown that private businesses could suddenly choose to recruit large numbers of Chinese workers, undermining British colonisation and threatening social order.

In all colonies, there was concern about Chinese settlement in South Australia's Northern Territory, with 3000 arriving between 1878 and 1881. The politics of Chinese immigration within South Australia will be discussed later in this chapter, and in chapter 10, but it is probable that pressing South Australia to impose restrictions was one of the unstated agendas of the 1881 Intercolonial Conference. The business-dominated Anti-Chinese Committee in Brisbane wrote to South Australia in 1880 appealing for restrictive legislation, and their efforts were backed by the *Brisbane Courier*, which thought "the southern

---

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Gyory, *Closing the gate: Race, politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC), 1998, pp. 93; 138-40; 156-66; 191. The *Chinese Exclusion Act* was signed into law by President Arthur on 6 May 1882, p. 253.

colonies were faced with an expanding Chinese threat, and...the problem was made more dangerous by the encouragement previously given to Chinese people to settle in the Northern Territory."<sup>9</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* had expected South Australia to resist the push for intercolonial legislation against Chinese immigration; while Charles Henry Pearson warned the Victorian parliament, "As to South Australia favoring lighter restrictions than the Bill proposed, that was exactly what had to be guarded against."<sup>10</sup> When it came to legislating, the supposed danger to British colonisation was strongly emphasised.

The original impetus clearly belonged to Sir Henry Parkes and New South Wales. Parkes was angry at the refusal of the Legislative Council to pass his anti-Chinese bill in 1879, which had been driven by concern to prevent a future ASN dispute, as well as a belief that Chinese immigration was increasing. In May 1880, Parkes promised a deputation he would approach the other colonies to see if they could agree on an intercolonial approach to restricting Chinese immigration.<sup>11</sup> Parkes faced a general election in November 1880 and conservatives and Catholics were mobilising against his education act (which cut funding to denominational schools), while the unions and plebeian/democratic movement were mobilising against assisted immigration. A failure to take up the anti-Chinese issue again would add to the complaints against him, while the promise of an anti-Chinese bill would work to soften some of this discontent.

---

<sup>9</sup> The Anti-Chinese Committee met at the Chamber of Commerce, *Brisbane Courier* 30 April 1880, p. 3, col. 1; editorial, p. 2, cols 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 19 January 1881, p. 5, cols. 1; Pearson speaking on Tues 4 Oct 1881, *VPD* 1881 vol. 37, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 29 May 1880, p. 3, col. 3.

On 11 June 1880, Parkes wrote to the other premiers suggesting either correspondence to agree on a common measure, or a conference to discuss the issue. He raised the unfreedom of Chinese labourers, the “many social mischiefs [that] attend their introduction”, and the dangers to British colonisation, as the means of “communication between China and Australasia are daily increasing and at the same time restrictive legislation and social obstacles are likely to drive the Chinese from the Pacific states of America and from other countries.”<sup>12</sup> Alongside the official support from Victoria and South Australia, anti-Chinese bills were introduced into their parliaments as unofficial measures.<sup>13</sup> With Queensland rejecting participation, Parkes was able to expand the agenda of the conference, held in Melbourne in November 1880, to include discussions of tariffs and possible moves towards unity of the three colonies attending (as discussed briefly in chapter 4). The November/December 1880 conference seems to have been productive, but participants soon decided that effective measures would necessarily involve all the other colonies, and it was the larger conference, convened in Sydney on Thursday 13 January 1881, which decided on common action against Chinese immigration.

At the 1881 conference, Parkes proposed a model bill embodying a limitation of one Chinese immigrant per hundred tons of a ship’s tare, along with a poll (entry) tax of £10, a significantly harsher measure than his 1879 bill. Victoria supported this, while “The other colonies objected that it went too far,” and

---

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Col Sec NSW (Parkes) to Col Sec Qld (Palmer), 11 June 1880, found in NSW State Archives, Colonial Secretary’s correspondence, special bundles, 4/829.1.

<sup>13</sup> I will discuss the bills moved by Bray and Morgan in SA later this chapter; see also *Chinese Voters Bill 1880*, moved 8 September 1880 by Quick, see VPD 1880-81, vol. XXXIV-XXXVI pp. 166,, 259-60, 664, 2303-07, 2569-75, 2682-3 and 2951 (28 July 1881) where the bill was officially discharged.

South Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand met with Queensland to discuss a model bill based on its legislation.<sup>14</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* saw the difference as reflecting the needs of tropical agriculture in South Australia and Queensland:

Both these colonies have to face the question what is to be done with their agricultural lands in their tropical climate. Europeans cannot stand the work. We can occupy the whole of the north country pastorally with Europeans; but when we come to the severer labour of tillage, the complexion of the case is altered. The southern colonies are prepared to say, "we can do without Chinamen; let us keep them out for ever, as there is no industry suited to our soil for which the European race is not competent." The two colonies with a tropical territory hesitate so absolutely to foreclose their future, and, while anxious to restrict Chinese immigration, are not prepared to go so far as practically to prohibit it.<sup>15</sup>

In the end, South Australia's Legislative Council refused to allow any restriction of Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory, as discussed below, and the new law only covered South Australia proper. Tasmania's parliament rejected its bill as unnecessary.

Despite being armed with a resolution of the Intercolonial Conference, Parkes hesitated to introduce a new Chinese immigration bill. He was clearly waiting for circumstances to suit him, and by April, they did. A large number of Chinese people – some 2000 – arrived at Sydney in 17 days, and despite 500 leaving immediately, an entirely new hysteria was whipped up. Even the

---

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 26 January 1881, p. 6, col. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 29 January 1881, p. 5, col. 1.



Governor, Lord Augustus Loftus, was in favour of strident measures to stop Chinese people landing, telling Parkes:

It is evident that this Chinese invasion must be curbed or we shall be inundated by the Celestials.

The difficulties arising from Treaty Engagements may be met by indirect measures bearing a local character and of a financial nature.

I see no other means of stopping this Chinese deluge...

Severe Quarantine Measures therefore might considerably aid in preventing the Chinese incursion into this Colony...

Could not the Governor with Executive Council promulgate Regulations of a Fiscal and Provisional character in the absence of Parliament and in view of the urgency of the case as is often done in England being indemnified by Parliament when it meets?<sup>16</sup>

Within days of the Governor's memo to Parkes, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had also decided that the number of Chinese immigrants was now unacceptable.

Ann Curthoys has noted that the *Herald*:

now argued that the Chinese would continue to come and could eventually outnumber Europeans. The ratio of Chinese to Europeans, it pointed out, had changed from 1 in 83 to 1 in 40 in sixteen months. In the Assembly debate of July 1881 only Fitzpatrick insisted that the numbers arriving were still small and would continue to remain so.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Lord Loftus to Parkes, 22 April 1881, in Parkes Corresp, Mitchell Library, A974, date order, emphasis in original.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Curthoys, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973, pp. 584-5; she cited *SMH* 28 April 1881.

Newspapers and Sydney City aldermen helped build the agitation, and on 24 May, a Trades and Labour Council rally in the Domain attracted 12-15,000 people. Parkes also used an outbreak of smallpox in a Chinese child, falsely blamed on Chinese immigrants, to create a sense of crisis to force his bill through parliament.<sup>18</sup> He faced almost no resistance in the Legislative Assembly, but even in the conservative Legislative Council, the bill passed its second reading without division. The fact that the Assembly had twice voted for a Chinese immigration bill, that a proposal to limit Chinese immigration had been part of government policy at the late 1880 general election, and that restriction was the demand of the people, were the most commonly and strongly argued reasons for passing the bill.<sup>19</sup> But the Council also debated the major themes covered in this thesis. A concern that China could swamp British colonisation in New South Wales was the second most significant issue in the debate. It featured strongly in the speeches of ministers Sir John Robertson and Sir George Innes:<sup>20</sup>

I do not care whether the time is near or far remote when we are likely to be inundated by such hordes as to form a majority of the population; the liability to such a disaster renders it a politic and proper measure to limit or prohibit Chinese immigration. We are within two or three weeks' sail of this great nation of about 400,000,000 people, who are only now having their eyes opened to the advantages this country offers.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Curthoys, *Race and ethnicity*, pp. 534-47. The official Colonial Secretary's file on the 1881 legislation, 4/829.1, Chinese 1880-81, has a lot of material about this small pox outbreak.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the speech of Sir Alfred Stephen, *NSWPD* 1881, vol. 5, p. 654: "I think that a large proportion of the labouring classes of the community desire to exclude Chinamen because they undersell them in the labour market. It is impossible for me as an inhabitant of the colony, as one whose fortunes have been so long bound up with it, and whose children's fortunes are and ever will be identified with it, not to sympathise with the labouring classes."

<sup>20</sup> For Robertson, see *NSWPD* 1881, vol. 5, esp. pp. 629-31 (Wed 17 August).

<sup>21</sup> *NSWPD* 1881, vol. 5, p. 651.

Some MLCs rejected the supposed danger of being swamped; but even some of those who opposed the bill thought that the colony should be ready to restrict Chinese immigration if it were to increase rapidly.<sup>22</sup> Lucas illustrated the dominant concern when he replied to those who thought it presumptuous “for a mere handful of people...to object to the introduction of Chinese into so large a territory. But it is because there are so few people that we object.”<sup>23</sup>

In Victoria, the broad ruling class agreement on anti-Chinese legislation can be seen in the willingness of the new Conservative-backed government to introduce the measure negotiated by its predecessors just days after coming to office.<sup>24</sup> The Premier, Sir Bryan O’Loughlen, emphasised its precautionary nature, to “remove all danger of any great influx of Chinese to the colony.”<sup>25</sup> The small number of Conservatives opposed to the bill chose to argue for delay, rather than immediate rejection.<sup>26</sup> From the opposition benches, CH Pearson argued that to press ahead would be to “strengthen the hands of the Lower House in New South Wales against the amendments which the Upper Chamber of that colony seemed desirous of making”.<sup>27</sup> In the Legislative Council, the government also stressed the strategic issue. Introducing the bill, the new Solicitor-General, FS Dobson, acknowledged that:

---

<sup>22</sup> For example, LF de Salis, *NSWPD* 1881, vol. 5, pp. 636-40.

<sup>23</sup> *NSWPD* 1881, vol. 5, p. 686.

<sup>24</sup> The new Premier, Sir Bryan O’Loughlen, had been a Liberal, but had brought down the Liberal government of Graham Berry. His government was a mixture of Conservatives and Liberal dissidents, and survived only on the basis of Conservative support. See SM Ingham, “O’Loughlen, Sir Bryan (1828-1905)”, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* [online] <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050419b.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006]

<sup>25</sup> *VPD* 1881, vol. 37, p. 79.

<sup>26</sup> *VPD* 1881, vol. 37, pp. 218-23.

<sup>27</sup> *VPD* 1881, vol. 37, p. 220.

the risk of any large influx of Chinese into Victoria is not very great at the present moment; but we must remember that China is a country which has the largest population of any nation in the world...moreover, the Chinese are rapidly acquiring the arts of modern warfare and civilization.<sup>28</sup>

In a lacklustre debate, many MLCs professed to oppose the content of the bill and rejected any strategic danger, but voted for it to hasten federation and hence to fulfil the agreements Victoria had made at the Intercolonial Conference.<sup>29</sup>

But if the legislation of 1881 was designed to avoid any future crisis, it had the opposite effect. In the short term, it reduced Chinese immigration for a few years and demobilised the plebeian anti-Chinese movement, but within a few years the discrimination against Chinese immigrants had created bitterness in China itself. The anti-Chinese laws were predicated, implicitly, on continued British military and naval hegemony, but the intensified imperialist rivalries of the late 1880s created a new dynamic in which Britain was seen to court Chinese support in its rivalry with Russia. This gave the Chinese government a lever with which to protest against, and possibly act against, Australian restrictions, and when the British Government took up China's complaints, it led to a struggle over colonial immigration policy in which the colonies asserted their right to decide.

---

<sup>28</sup> Wed 30 November; *VPD* 1881, vol. 38, p. 931.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance, see N Fitzgerald, *VPD* 1881, vol. 38, p. 1243; W. Campbell, p. 1243; W Ross, p. 1245; discussion pp. 1247-8; GH Belcher rejects this argument, p. 1245. TF Hamilton argued that, "if we were to reject the Bill, the federation that we are looking forward to would be postponed indefinitely." p. 1246.

The second problem for the ruling class was that South Australia's parliament refused to enact the restrictions in full, and in particular for the one part of the colony that mattered – the Northern Territory. This led to a crisis of Chinese immigration into Darwin in 1887-8 that was only finally resolved with a measure of intercolonial coercion.

Finally, the legislation set up a system to shield existing Chinese residents from the new restrictions – a system that would also fuel the crisis of 1887-8. Chinese people rushed to seek either British naturalisation, or the new certificates which exempted them from the tonnage restrictions and the poll taxes in the 1881 laws. It was soon realised that these laws could be evaded by either forging such certificates, or buying them and using them to allow other Chinese people to enter without paying the poll tax. When the southern colonies realised the nature and scale of the fraud involved, they began to regulate the entry of Chinese people far more stringently and oppressively, and to consider even more stringent restrictions. Arguments over the fraudulent use of naturalisation and exemption certificates would also allow Victoria to arbitrarily exclude Chinese people in April 1888, unleashing the *Afghan* crisis, discussed in chapter 10.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> The only thorough discussion of exemption certificates is to be found in Robert J Lewis, "‘Strangers within the gates’: Victorian governments and non-Europeans, 1880-1908", MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1982.

## The 'awakening east': China's emergence as a military power

Right through the nineteenth century, China's military weakness was seen as temporary. Napoleon Bonaparte's view was that, with good generals, China could conquer the world. The transforming event for British/ Australian views of China was its strong showing in the undeclared war with France, from 1884-5. France had been pushing its way into Indo-China for decades, but the conflict deepened in 1882, when it moved into Tonkin, north of Hanoi and close to the Chinese border. This led to a series of modest military battles and inconclusive negotiations. Hostilities escalated sharply in 1884, when France attacked Formosa (Taiwan) and bombed the forts of Kelung; however a landing party was repulsed. According to Victor Kiernan, this hardened China's determination to fight: "The heroic spirit of 1937 was being born in China," he wrote.<sup>31</sup> The French imposed a blockade of Chinese ports, leading the British to insist that the rights of neutrals, such as themselves, be respected. Britain, France, Russia and China stood on the brink of war.

If the French government thought that an Indo-Chinese or Formosan colony could be easily acquired, they were seriously mistaken. As decrepit as its regime was, China's imperial ministers had responded to their earlier military humiliations. Sir George Bowen, the Governor of Hong Kong, wrote to London in 1883:

---

<sup>31</sup> EVG Kiernan, *British diplomacy in China: 1880 to 1885*, Octagon Books, New York, 1970 (first pub 1939), p. 149. My account and analysis is largely taken from Kiernan.

France would find China an enemy very different from what she was in the last war. Instead of the rude and ill-equipped militia of former years, there is now an army provided with the best modern weapons, and drilled by European and American officers. Instead of the clumsy “war junks” of a quarter of a century back, there is now a fleet of large ironclads, corvettes, sloops, and gunboats, built for the most part in Europe, armed with heavy cannon, and commanded by officers, many of whom have served an apprenticeship in the English and in other European navies. The approaches to the chief cities are now protected by strong and heavily-armed forts and batteries, well provided, moreover, with torpedoes and submarine mines.<sup>32</sup>

The conflict with France, and China’s new military capacity, had started raising significant concern in the Australian colonies. As early as 1881, the *Brisbane Courier* reported on the new fleet China was building, and expressed a fear that the naval power of Russia and China might be turned against Britain.<sup>33</sup> In an editorial for the *Melbourne Age* newspaper of 11 September 1883, Charles Pearson warned that:

it seems certain that any great success of China in a war with France would lead to a great settlement of Chinese colonists along all the shores watered by the Indian Ocean. Our interest undoubtedly is that nothing of the sort should take place. Next to England, an unaggressive commercial country like Holland is the best neighbour we can have...<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Despatch dated 5 November 1883 to Earl Derby, in Sir George Bowen, *Thirty years of colonial government: A selection from the despatches and letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G., etc, Governor successively of Queensland, New Zealand, Victoria, Mauritius and Hong Kong*, edited by Stanley Lane-Poole, 2 vols, Longmans, Green & Co, London & New York, 1889, vol 2, p. 286.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Terrence James O’Rourke, “Problems of Queensland defence, 1878-1901”, BA (Hons) thesis, History Dept, University of Queensland, 1969, p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in John Tregenza, *Professor of democracy: The life of Charles Henry Pearson 1830-1894, Oxford don and Australian radical*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1968, p. 191.

Pearson is not well known today, but like Sir Henry Parkes, he was a key political thinker and strategist for liberal capitalist interests in Victoria, and the most profound intellectual influence on the young Alfred Deakin.<sup>35</sup> In his editorial Pearson argued that even in defeat, China could be strengthened:

When a country has such immense natural resources as China, and is governed by such statesmen as China seems to possess at present, she is strengthened even by an unsuccessful war. She easily learns to correct her own deficiencies of organization, and she takes very accurate measure of her antagonist's weakness. If the Chinese can once establish a definite ratio of inequality to the French – can prove, for instance, that three or five Chinamen are as good as one Frenchman, the rest is a mere question of time.<sup>36</sup>

In October 1884, Chinese forces drove the French from Tansui, Formosa (Taiwan); and then in late March 1885, recaptured Langson, in northern Indo-China (Vietnam), in an historic victory for the Chinese military. The French government collapsed. Rather than declare all-out war, at immense cost to a struggling treasury, the new French government turned to negotiations. Although China made substantial concessions, the result was seen as a partial victory for its military.

While opponents of Chinese immigration pointed to China's growing military as a reason for excluding its subjects, those opposed to exclusion also pointed to its growing military power as a reason to avoid giving offence. Indeed, a ridiculously overblown estimate of the Chinese military was widespread. In the

---

<sup>35</sup> JA La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1965, p. 29; Tregenza, Professor of democracy, pp. 70-71, 102-3, 229-30.

<sup>36</sup> Tregenza, Professor of democracy, p. 192, citing editorial, *The Age*, 11 September 1883.



Queensland Parliament in 1884, WH Walsh warned that, "They could not afford to offend China; one day it might send its fleet,"<sup>37</sup> while Richard Baker, the leader of the Conservative party in the South Australian Legislative Council, pointed to:

the immense influence China was destined to have in deciding the future destinies of the world. A few years ago China had no fleet at all, but at the present time her Pacific fleet was so powerful that it could blow the combined English and French Pacific fleets out of the water.<sup>38</sup>

## Fear of British betrayal

One of the great concerns of Australia's politicians in 1887-8 was that Britain would betray Australian interests if its imperial needs dictated. A wide section of the Anglo-Australian ruling class felt Britain had betrayed it by allowing Germany to annexe the northern half of non-Dutch New Guinea, and so "betrayal" became an especially potent issue with regards to the "dangers" of Chinese immigration. Britain was believed to have a military alliance with China against Russia, and to be determined to avoid offending the Chinese empire. Australia, it was felt, would be sacrificed.

Through much of the nineteenth century, much of Britain's foreign policy had been directed towards containing the expansion of the Russian empire. Britain

---

<sup>37</sup> *QPD* 1884, vol XL, p. 114.

<sup>38</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 156.

(and France) had fought Russia in the Crimean War of 1854, and had gone to the brink of war in 1877-8 over Russia's attempt to conquer and colonise the Ottoman Empire. Each of these wars and war scares had a profound impact in the Australian colonies, leading in each case to a heightened sense of military insecurity, and to a rush of defence works and military reorganisation. Colonial newspapers and journals obsessively discussed the aims of Russian foreign policy, the strength of the British military, and the possible threat to Australian cities and trade. Again in early 1885 Britain and Russia were on the brink of war over Russia's incursion into Afghanistan, seen by the British as a direct threat to its control of India, "the jewel in the crown".

With China's unexpected resistance to France in 1884-5 came a strong push within British diplomatic circles to secure an alliance with China against Russia. In his survey of Anglo-Chinese relations in the years 1880-1885, Victor Kiernan concluded that, "in the years we have surveyed, informed opinion on the whole believed the star of the Chinese Empire to be rising and not setting."<sup>39</sup> In the House of Commons, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said that it had not been long ago that people thought China was falling to pieces. "But that day was over. The Chinese Empire in the last few years had shown an extraordinary recuperative power. It...occupied a position in Asia almost equal to the most palmy days of its history." The government was "fully aware of the great and transcendent importance of a good understanding with that country".<sup>40</sup> This view of a resurgent China lasted only until the debacle of its war with Japan in 1894, and has been largely forgotten by Australian historians.

---

<sup>39</sup> Kiernan, *British diplomacy*, p. 300.

<sup>40</sup> Kiernan, *British Diplomacy*, p. 301, citing Hansard, 3rd series, 277, 1333ff.

Sir George Bowen, then Governor of Hong Kong, summed up the potential of a British alliance with China, in a despatch to Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, written on 15 August 1885:

With the help of the ironclads and gunboats of China and Japan, our squadron at Hong Kong could easily sweep the Russians from the Pacific, and destroy their port and arsenal at Vladivostock; while the Chinese could create a powerful diversion in our favour by attacking their flank in Central Asia with a numerous army, well equipped with German cannon and rifles, and drilled by European and American officers; an army which lately held its own in Tong King and Formosa against the French. Lord Dufferin [Viceroy of India] agrees with me as to the vast importance of extending our intercourse and consolidating our relations with China and Japan, with a view not only to the increase of trade, but also to possible war with Russia in the future.<sup>41</sup>

It is entirely probable that Bowen's opinions were shared at the time with leading political figures in both Queensland and Victoria, where he had earlier been governor.<sup>42</sup>

Kiernan has shown that the idea of an alliance with China was discussed with the utmost seriousness by the British cabinet, and while no alliance was ever concluded, there was a widespread belief that it probably had.<sup>43</sup> This belief extended to Australia. When 47 Chinese residents of Melbourne wrote to the

---

<sup>41</sup> Bowen, *Thirty Years*, vol. 2, p. 379.

<sup>42</sup> We can establish, for instance, that Bowen, in retirement, called on Queensland Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, on 27 March 1887 when Griffith was in London for the Colonial Conference. See Griffith's diary for 1887 in Dixson Library MSQ 195.

<sup>43</sup> *British Diplomacy*, pp. 304-5. *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, a major intellectual journal covering Central Asia, endlessly discussed Britain's supposed alliance, or its need for an alliance.

Chinese Commissioners in 1887, they believed there was an alliance, and complained that it had not protected them from ill-treatment.<sup>44</sup> That same year, when opposing the Naval Agreement between the Australasian colonies and Britain, the protectionist politician, EW O'Sullivan, warned that if war broke out between Russia and China, and if China was a British ally, "the time may come when the ships of war which are subsidised by us may be sent as convoys of ships bringing Chinamen to the shores of Australia."<sup>45</sup> In 1888, the wealthy New Zealand businessman and politician, Josiah Firth, wrote a long letter to the Premiers of the eastern mainland colonies and New Zealand, and to the Colonial Secretary in London, arguing for the modification (rather than abrogation) of Britain's treaties with China in order to contain Chinese immigration; his reasons including that "in the probable coming struggle between England and Russia in these seas and elsewhere, China will be one of our most potent Allies".<sup>46</sup> Discussing the issue of self-government for Western Australia in 1889, the protectionist newspaper, the *Australasian Star*, feared that portions of Western Australia "might serve as a piece of territory to purchase the assistance of China with for some enterprise against Russia in Central Asia," with the result that "the security of our insularity would be gone forever."<sup>47</sup>

If China was to be a key British ally against Britain's most formidable and threatening rival, then China would be in a position to make modest demands

---

<sup>44</sup> Letter P87/1869, Premier's correspondence, PRO Victoria, filed with P88/1160 in VPRS1163/P0/141.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Mansfield, "Australian nationalism in the growth of the labour movement in the eighteen-eighties in New South Wales, with reference to Queensland", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1951, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Firth to Gillies, P88/716 found with P88/1160 in Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS1163/P0/141.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Mansfield, Australian nationalism, p. 155.

on the Empire, a situation that would inevitably be a source of concern for colonial politicians who saw China as their greatest long-term threat. That concern was magnified by a decline in Britain's economic and military dominance compared with the other great powers, and a belief amongst the colonial Australian ruling classes that the British government increasingly regarded their special interests as expendable.

This concern escalated dramatically from 1883, with very tense conflicts over British acquiescence in the German seizure of the north eastern portion of New Guinea, British reluctance to block French attempts to seize the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), French dumping of convicts at New Caledonia, and a conflict over London's demand that it exercise sole control over the proposed Australasian squadron of the Royal Navy in times of war.

The wider context for colonial fears of a British betrayal was the emergence of a new system of global rivalry between the great powers; the imperialism Lenin famously described as "the highest stage of capitalism".<sup>48</sup> The great and emerging powers pushed out into all corners of the globe to find and develop colonies for their raw materials, their potential as markets and sites for investment, and their strategic significance. One consequence of this global rivalry was the carve-up of the non-colonised world, most notoriously of Africa.

---

<sup>48</sup> This was the sub-title to the pamphlet, Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism: A popular outline*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1973. This understanding of late nineteenth-century imperialism is argued in Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, London, 1994, pp. 34-83; Chris Harman, *Explaining the crisis: A Marxist re-appraisal*, Bookmarks, London, 1984, pp. 35-8, 51-4.

But there was also a scramble to carve up the Pacific.<sup>49</sup> Where once Australian politicians had regarded their physical isolation from Europe as affording a natural security, the arrival of the telegraph, the development of steamships, and the industrial world's relentless search for markets, raw materials and colonies ended that.

Another consequence of the global rivalries of the late nineteenth century was the end of British naval and industrial supremacy. From the 1880s, the British empire was militarily under more and more strain, as London attempted to hang onto its pre-eminent position without committing too many extra resources. In 1870, faced with a unified German empire, Britain pulled all remaining troops out of the Australian colonies, which were henceforth expected to provide their own land defences. After the Russian war scare of 1877, the British government began a thorough review of defence arrangements in all its colonies, setting up a Colonial Defence Committee in 1878. Major new fortifications were built in the Australian colonies, and the colonial governments purchased modern naval vessels, new guns and torpedoes to protect their harbours. The Russian war scare also stirred colonial politicians to start discussing federation as a means of rationalising their limited military capabilities. The *Pall Mall Gazette* initiated a defence scare in 1884 by publishing a series of articles by Hugh Arnold-Forster, alleging that the Royal Navy's

---

<sup>49</sup> Luke Trainor sees the two as linked, *British imperialism and Australian nationalism: manipulation, conflict, and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1994, p. 24.

supremacy was a thing of the past.<sup>50</sup> Anxious discussions of British military power filled the pages of high-brow magazines and journals.

A third consequence of this new imperialism was repeated collisions between the great powers, and a sense that some kind of total European war was imminent. Russia's expansion into Central Asia inspired a series of alarmist books and articles arguing that Russia's aim was to take India. It was certainly true that most of the buffer states that had existed between Russia and India, or Russia and China, had now been conquered. There was also a growing concern in London and Australia over French "aggression" in seizing colonies and attempting to exclude British trade from them.<sup>51</sup> At the time of the Colonial Conference of 1887 in London, attended by representatives from all the Australian colonies, British Prime Minister Salisbury was deeply concerned at affairs in Europe, and thought there might be war that year especially given Britain's strained relations with France.<sup>52</sup> No doubt this fear was taken back to the Australian colonies by their representatives. By May 1887, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was talking of "the great war which is now impending in Europe", and seeing in this a change in British policy towards getting the colonies to consolidate "their national defences and by that means helping England to hold her own..."<sup>53</sup> Thus, the 1887-88 debates over Chinese

---

<sup>50</sup> Peter Marshall, "The imperial factor in the Liberal decline, 1880-1885" in John E Flint and Glyndwr Williams (eds), *Perspectives of empire: Essays presented to Gerald S. Graham*, Longman, London, 1973, p 142.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Kennedy, "Continuity and discontinuity in British imperialism 1815-1914" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 32-33; James Sturgis, "Britain and the new imperialism" in Eldridge, *British imperialism*, p. 89; Ronald Hyam, *Britain's imperial century 1815-1914: A study of empire and expansion*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1976, p. 105.

<sup>52</sup> La Nauze, Deakin, p. 104.

<sup>53</sup> Trainor, *British imperialism*, p. 1.

immigration, and the disputes that erupted between Britain and its Australian colonies from 1883-1888, took place in a wider environment of intensifying strategic tension.

The most important of these disputes was over Britain's refusal to annexe the eastern, non-Dutch half of New Guinea. On 4 April 1883, the McIlwraith government in Queensland declared New Guinea a British possession.<sup>54</sup> There had long been colonial demands that Britain annexe this territory, but when it happened many saw it as an attempt to guarantee indentured labour for the profitable Queensland sugar industry. Nevertheless, even those colonial politicians and newspapers who vehemently opposed the labour trade supported annexation on strategic grounds; they wanted to forestall annexation by any other European power and protect a vital shipping route to the east coast.<sup>55</sup> So there was anger when Britain vetoed the annexation in July 1883; and then hysteria in late 1884 when Britain insisted on ignoring mounting evidence of German colonisation of the northern New Guinea coast.

When German annexation was finally announced in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* on 19 December 1884, colonial ruling class anger surged.<sup>56</sup> Victoria's Conservative Premier, James Service, warned Britain that "the bitterness of

---

<sup>54</sup> Roger C Thompson, *Australian imperialism in the Pacific: The expansionist era 1820-1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1980, p. 51.

<sup>55</sup> Parkes wrote a number of letters to British government ministers on the issue, stressing the strategic aspect. See for instance, his letter to Lord Selbourne, Lord Chancellor, 15 December 1883 in Parkes corresp, A932, pp 418ff.

<sup>56</sup> However the Brisbane *Courier* correspondent in Sydney reported: "The masses do not care very much about New Guinea." Quoted in Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 95. A similar comment was made in *SMH* 5 January 1885, quoted in Thompson, p. 97.



feeling towards her will not die out in this generation".<sup>57</sup> In Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith told parliament, "it is the grossest piece of treachery on the part of the English Government to the colonies that has ever been perpetrated." The *Sydney Morning Herald's* Brisbane correspondent reported that, "If anything, I think the leading Ministerialists are angrier than the M'Ilwraithians".<sup>58</sup> And well they might have been. The Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, had written to the Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, on 30 December, eleven days after the report in the *Daily Telegraph*, to vilify Service.

I trust that you may be able to persuade Mr. Service not to be so energetic in making Australia ridiculous in the eyes of the world. The manner in which he and the newspapers have got up this German annexation scare is very amusing, and will be much laughed at.<sup>59</sup>

It was not a letter designed to build confidence in either the Governor or the British authorities. The anger was not universal – indeed the New South Wales Acting Premier, William Bede Dalley, welcomed the infusion of German capital into the region as raising the prospect of increasing trade flows through Sydney. He was supported by Premier Sir Alexander Stuart. However, most New South Wales politicians and newspapers disagreed, including Sir Henry Parkes, who would be Premier when the issue of Chinese immigration once more came to a head. There were mass meetings of protest in Sydney and other towns, and republicans gained a boost. The *Sydney Morning Herald* commented that Lord Derby "has kept us out [of New Guinea], and he has let them in... [He] has done a cruel wrong to Australia." The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* warned

---

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 92

<sup>58</sup> *QPD*, vol. 44, p. 2051; *SMH* 5 Jan 1885; both quoted in Thompson, p. 96.

<sup>59</sup> Griffith corresp, Dixson Library, DL MSQ 186, p. 68.

that “Australian loyalty cannot suffer many [more] such humiliations”.<sup>60</sup> In Brisbane, McIlwraith raised the spectre of colonial separation from Britain at the annual dinner of the Commercial Travellers’ Association where his remarks were cheered; and this was a theme taken up by others, including the Brisbane *Daily Observer*.<sup>61</sup>

With no possibility of reversing their defeat, the colonial ruling class and its politicians nursed their bitterness towards Britain over the incident. “We value the tie that unites us to the parent country,” wrote the *Age*. “But if the alternative should unhappily lie between a repetition of such criminal folly as our interests have so disastrously suffered from at the hands of the Gladstone Ministry and separation, we say deliberately that we prefer the latter.”<sup>62</sup> Lord Rosebery, soon to become British Foreign Secretary, confessed to having feared that New Guinea might have “lost” the Australian colonies.<sup>63</sup>

The second major dispute with Britain came over France’s attempt to take control of the islands of the New Hebrides group (now Vanuatu). There had been repeated attempts by the arch-expansionists of the Presbyterian Church to get the British government to annexe the New Hebrides, but it had declined. The crisis began in 1885 when the French offered to exchange the strategic island of Rapa, coveted by New Zealand, in exchange for the right to annexe the New Hebrides, wanted by French settlers in New Caledonia. Now the islands coveted by the Presbyterians were in danger due to British inactivity. There was

---

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> On 30 December 1884, see Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 97.

<sup>62</sup> 29 December 1885; quoted in Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 100.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 103.

a storm of outrage, in Victoria and New South Wales, where the French were supported by the government of Dalley and Jennings, and opposed by Sir Henry Parkes. In the middle of a campaign of public meetings, the Governor of New Caledonia, on his own initiative, sent a French warship to the New Hebrides with 200 troops and two pieces of artillery. A storm erupted in the interested colonies. Just as the agitation died down, the French were found building permanent barracks and fortresses on the islands.

Roger Thompson has commented that, "The continued failure of British diplomacy to dislodge the French troops from the New Hebrides inevitably built up a sense of frustration within the Victorian government circle, where there was a growing feeling that Australians were being left in the dark"; a frustration built on that provoked by the New Guinea affair.<sup>64</sup> The issue was raised with great intensity when colonial politicians ventured to London in April 1887 for the Queen's Jubilee and the Colonial Conference. By August 1887, a truce had been reached, and the islands were to be under the joint "protection" of a British and French naval commission. But in the eyes of colonial strategists, France still exercised partial control of islands in a region of the Pacific that the British could and should have seized for the benefit of the empire and the protection of Australia.

There were many other frictions with Britain in this period; over who should pay for the naval defence of the colonies, and who should control the proposed Australian squadron; over the selection of governors and over some of their decisions, not least in cases of capital punishment. The emergence of the

---

<sup>64</sup> Thompson, *Australian imperialism*, p. 127.

imperialist system brought an end to notions of unconditional British protection, as the British military were stretched by the confrontation with Russia and the expansionism of imperial rivals such as Germany and France.

A sense of the friction between the colonies and London can be gauged from *Sydney Morning Herald* editorials in late 1887. When discussing a trip being made by Premier Sir Henry Parkes to Victoria and South Australia, the paper emphasised the importance of the colonies showing “a common front” to London:

The anxiety of British statesmen to strengthen the bonds of union between the colonies and the mother-country is accompanied by a strong disposition to higggle about terms... In illustration of this position it is sufficient to point to the question of the mail contracts. The English Government has acted with almost contemptuous indifference to the interests of the Australian colonies. Their legitimate susceptibilities have been ignored. It is, therefore, necessary that there should be neither weakness nor variation of tone in the communications sent from this side...<sup>65</sup>

While emphasising the loyalty of the colonies to the empire, it warned that, “The fidelity of the colonies has occasionally been very much tried, not only by the indifference which has been shown by the English people and English Governments to Australian affairs, but by the neglect with which Australian interests have been treated,” citing New Guinea and the New Hebrides specifically.<sup>66</sup> When even the *Sydney Morning Herald* could write in this tone, it

---

<sup>65</sup> *SMH* editorial, 8 September 1887, p. 7, cols. 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> *SMH* editorial, 20 December 1887, p. 6, col. 6.

is not surprising that in a crisis, all but the most obsessively loyal in the ruling class would fear leaving matters in the hands of the Colonial Office.

## The danger of the open door at Darwin

The immediate cause of the crisis over Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory lay in the determination of a section of South Australia's ruling class to have indentured labour systems for plantation agriculture established in the Territory. When the Territory was annexed to South Australia in 1863, the motive was to gain a new source of pastoral land. However, with the discovery of gold and the success of the Queensland sugar industry, mining and plantation agriculture also came to be seen as keys to the Territory's future development.<sup>67</sup> As the Queensland sugar industry was embroiled in controversy over indentured Pacific Island labourers, Territory advocates promoted it as the future sugar-growing region of Australia,<sup>68</sup> prompting the government to provide extravagant and ultimately unsuccessful incentives to capitalists in the hope they would pioneer a sugar industry.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> PF Donovan, *A land full of possibilities: A history of South Australia's Northern Territory*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1981, pp. 94ff, 120-1, 126, 134ff.

<sup>68</sup> Speech by JL Parsons in William J Sowden, *The Northern Territory as it is: A narrative of the South Australian parliamentary party's trip and full descriptions of the Northern Territory, its settlements and industries*, WK Thomas & Co, Adelaide, 1882, p. 186.

<sup>69</sup> See debates on *Northern Territory Sugar Cultivation Bill, 1880*, SAPD 1880, col. 1054ff (committee stage in Legislative Assembly) and col. 1347ff (Legislative Council); Donovan, *A land full of possibilities*, pp. 120-1, 134-42.

Practical attempts to develop the Territory were hampered by the extreme climate, lack of any winter rain, poor soil, careless decision-making, naïve optimism, speculative land trading and administrative blunders. Indeed, by the early 1880s, the Territory was alternately described as a land of opportunity and South Australia's "white elephant".<sup>70</sup> The province was costing between £30,000 and £60,000 a year to administer, with insufficient revenue to offset the cost.<sup>71</sup> Adding to these problems was the distance from South Australia to Darwin; travel involved either a long trek overland of more than 2000 kilometres from the limit of the South Australian railway, or a sea journey of nearly 7000 kilometres via the east coast, the only route that was regularly serviced by steamers.<sup>72</sup> Two solutions in particular were agreed by ruling class leaders; the Territory needed a decent transport infrastructure to make large scale mining profitable, and it needed indentured "coloured" labourers to do the hard work in such a hot and oppressive climate.<sup>73</sup>

At first the issue of "coloured labour" seemed unproblematic. In 1874, the South Australian government itself imported 186 Chinese coolies to work in the mines. Then from 1878 to 1880, over 3000 Chinese people came to the Territory, mainly to work in the newly discovered gold mines. By 1882, when William J

---

<sup>70</sup> "The mistakes of South Australia in the Northern Territory", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 24, May 1881, p. 10. On the climate, Donovan, *A land full of possibilities*, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Donovan, *A land full of possibilities*, appendix E.

<sup>72</sup> Donovan, *A land full of possibilities*, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> JPM Long, "Asian immigration into the Northern Territory to 1910", Paper read to the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 22nd June 1964, Duplicated typescript in State Library SA archives, D4538(T), p. 4; Louise Renfrew, "Wilton Hack and Japanese immigration into the Northern Territory: 1876-1877", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1992, p 33; Cynthia M Atherton, *The Northern Territory – South Australian "White Elephant"/Commonwealth Prize: Perception and Reality in the Federation Era*, 1991, Occasional Paper No 22, State Library of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 1991, p 6; W Sowden, *The Territory as it is*. See also the many debates on the issue in the South Australian parliament, eg *SAPD* 1880, cols. 1652-5.

Sowden, editor of the establishment newspaper, the *Register*, visited the Northern Territory, Chinese people outnumbered Europeans by more than five to one. Palmerston (Darwin) had become a predominantly Chinese town, and was thriving. Sowden believed that, “The future population of the Northern Territory will be two-thirds Chinese”, and drew on the words of Governor Sir William Jervois to illustrate this, saying that when a visitor arrived:

he will see the boat in which he lands manned by Chinamen; his luggage will be taken to the hotel by a Chinaman; when he gets to the hotel he will find the cook a Chinaman, the butler a Chinaman; and if there is a family he will find the nurse a Chinaman, and every department of life filled by this race.<sup>74</sup>

The late 1870s saw the beginning of opposition to Chinese immigration in South Australia and enormous ambivalence within its governments, and ruling class circles more generally on the issue. Between 1880 and 1887, the South Australian Legislative Assembly voted for five separate bills to restrict Chinese immigration to the Northern Territory – twice in 1880, then 1881, 1886 and 1887 – and five times the bills were either amended in the Legislative Council to remove clauses restricting Chinese immigration to the Northern Territory, or were simply defeated.<sup>75</sup> These bills had virtually nothing to do with working class agitation in either South Australia proper, or the Northern Territory. In

---

<sup>74</sup> Sowden, *The Territory as it is*, p. 157. Jervois’ comments had been about Singapore.

<sup>75</sup> These were:

1880: all SA: defeated in LC (private member’s bill introduced by JC Bray)

1880: NT only: defeated in LC (government measure, as were all subsequent)

1881: all SA: amended to SA proper only in LC: adopted

1886: extend 1881 to NT: defeated in LC

1887: extend 1881 to NT: defeated in LC

South Australia itself, there were barely a few hundred Chinese people, and the only significant agitation had been caused by the employment of a few hundred on the Port Augusta to Quorn railway in 1878. In the Northern Territory, there were only a few hundred European workers, most either working for the government, or scattered amongst distant mining settlements or pastoral properties.

The debates on the five unsuccessful bills revealed enormous ambiguity about having a large Chinese population in the Territory. On the one hand, many felt a sense of danger as a result of the arrival of a few thousand Chinese people, and news of the recent gold discoveries seemed to threaten an even greater influx.<sup>76</sup> When William Morgan introduced the Northern Territory Chinese Immigration Bill into the Legislative Council in October 1880 – and this was the second attempt that year to restrict Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory – he raised the spectre of having to deal with 30,000 Chinese people in the Territory. In the three months since Bray’s anti-Chinese private member’s bill had been defeated, the Chinese population of the Territory had doubled to 3715 with more on the way.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, the policy of all governments had been to try to introduce “coloured labour” into the Territory, and now that a thousand Chinese people had come, they were getting the kind of labour force that most of their class had long believed the Territory needed.<sup>78</sup> Some, like Glyde, saw no problem in South Australia proper, and welcomed the arrival of Chinese people in the Territory – “the Chinese were extremely useful indeed in

---

<sup>76</sup> Speeches of Ramsay, *SAPD* 1880, col. 523; Coghlin and Glyde, col. 524; Landseer, col. 525; King, col. 530.

<sup>77</sup> *SAPD* 1880, col. 1652.

<sup>78</sup> Speeches of Rees, *SAPD* 1880, cols. 529, 592; Ross, col. 670; Glyde, col. 670; Sandover (MLC), col. 761; Scott, col. 915ff.



carrying on menial occupations, and they might be of service to us in that respect" – but wanted to prevent the Territory being "swamped".<sup>79</sup> Others, like Ross and Sandover, had the opposite opinion, arguing that Chinese labour was necessary for profitable development in the Northern Territory and that the only danger was Chinese immigration into South Australia proper.<sup>80</sup> Richard Chaffey "Bully" Baker, who was on his way to becoming South Australia's leading Conservative, also supported legislation to restrict Chinese immigration into South Australia proper, but with no restriction into the Northern Territory.<sup>81</sup>

Amidst the fog of conflicting and confused opinion, a few themes were clear. Almost all members of parliament saw economic development in the Territory as depending on the use of "coloured labour", and most saw it as needing to be cheap, indentured and unfree, and this applied to Liberals as much as Conservatives.<sup>82</sup> Baker argued that "they must either abandon it [the Northern Territory] altogether or people it by Asiatics." That did not imply an acceptance of unlimited Chinese immigration: "If there was any danger of the place being flooded with Celestials it would be another matter. There is no danger of the kind".<sup>83</sup> Indeed, "the more Chinese they got to the Northern Territory the better. Singapore and Java had grown rich and prosperous by the aid of it."<sup>84</sup> Almost all those who wanted to limit future Chinese immigration argued for

---

<sup>79</sup> *SAPD* 1880, col. 670-1.

<sup>80</sup> Ross in *SAPD* 1880, col. 670; Sandover, col. 761.

<sup>81</sup> *SAPD* 1881, col. 519.

<sup>82</sup> One exception was JC Ramsay, who became Commissioner of Public Works, and Minister representing the government in the Legislative Council, in the Bray government of June 1881-June 1884; see, for example, *SAPD* 1881, col. 290.

<sup>83</sup> *SAPD* 1880, col. 1652.

<sup>84</sup> *SAPD* 1881, col. 634.

other “coloured labour” – and the preferred option was Indian labourers.<sup>85</sup> An *Indian Immigration Bill* was passed in 1879, though not signed into law, to facilitate the recruitment of Indian labourers for sugar plantations. An amended law was passed in 1882, and a Major Fergusson sent to India to negotiate for labourers, but the Indian government insisted that 40 per cent of immigrants be women, and that special provisions be made for food and housing. The plan was deferred.<sup>86</sup>

A sense of confusion is also apparent when the debates over Chinese immigration are read alongside the almost concurrent debate over the *Northern Territory Sugar Cultivation Bill of 1880*. This authorised massive land grants and cash incentives to capitalists who succeeded in growing and crushing 500 tons of sugar. Underpinning the debate was the assumption that the sugar industry that they all desired would be organised on the back of “coloured labour”. Many assumed that the labour would be Chinese; so much so that West-Erskine, who voted for the bills to restrict Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory, argued that one of the potential sugar syndicates, led by Delissa, was serious because he had engaged 100 Chinese labourers.<sup>87</sup>

In 1882, John Langdon Parsons, Minister responsible for the Northern Territory in JC Bray’s government, 1881-84, led a parliamentary delegation to the Territory to investigate its needs. He came back convinced that as well as “coloured labour”, the Territory desperately needed a railway. A local railway from Port Darwin to Pine Creek, 250km to the south, was urgently needed for

---

<sup>85</sup> Speech of West-Erskine, *SAPD* 1880, col. 592.

<sup>86</sup> Long, *Asian immigration*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>87</sup> The major debate is in *SAPD* 1880, cols. 1054ff; West-Erskine, col. 1059.

local reasons: to cut the prohibitive cost of freighting supplies and equipment into the gold and other mines between Palmerston (Darwin) and Pine Creek. The cost of provisions meant that wages were astronomical – on average £5 per week for European and £2 10s a week for Chinese labourers:

It was, therefore, impossible to work these rich claims at the price which had to be paid for provisions and labour; and he might add that what was true of the provisions and labour was also true with regard to everything else – that if a horse was to be shod or a piece of machinery repaired it cost 300 or 400 per cent. more than at any other gold-field in Australia. Therefore this railway was necessary in order to make these surprisingly rich claims pay.<sup>88</sup>

In his book on the parliamentarians' trip, *Register* editor Sowden made the same points, arguing that the Northern Territory could never really attract population without a railway.<sup>89</sup> But boosting the mining industry was only part of the government's scheme; in their eyes it was to eventually become Australia's transcontinental railway. On his trip to the Territory, Parsons had promised to agitate in Adelaide for a decision to build a railway overland to Adelaide.<sup>90</sup> At that time, Queensland had been convulsed with a bitter conflict over a transcontinental railway proposal being pushed through parliament by Sir Thomas McIlwraith. The idea had been to both open up new land, and cut the cost of freight and the time taken for freight and passengers to reach Asia and Europe by linking Queensland, and eastern Australia's railway systems to a line that ran to a new, major port at Port Parker on the Gulf of Carpentaria. While many were excited by this bold idea, the proposal was destroyed in 1883,

---

<sup>88</sup> JL Parsons, second reading speech introducing the bill to construct the Darwin/Pine Creek Railway, 16 August 1883, in *SAPD* 1883-4, cols. 815-825.

<sup>89</sup> Sowden, *The Territory as it is*, pp. 157-64.

<sup>90</sup> See Parsons' speeches in Palmerston, in Sowden, *The Territory as it is*, pp. 181, 184.

by squatters, normally McIlwraith supporters, who opposed handing over vast areas of land to a private syndicate in return for building the railway.

Seventeen months after he left Palmerston, with the Queensland transcontinental railway proposal dead, Parsons moved a bill in parliament to construct the Pine Creek railway. For him, it was the first stage of a transcontinental line, a work that would transform Darwin into a major city, a vision that implied enormous profit for both government and those who invested in its future. But it was a vision with a twist that many in the Australian colonial ruling classes would find disturbing: a vision centred on Asia:

The first of these reasons for constructing this line was that we had a city laid out at the northern terminus of the line which just fronted the Eastern Archipelago [Indonesia] and the thickly populated cities of Eastern Asia. Every one would see who took a glance at the map that this city was destined to become the great *entrepôt* of commerce, the great port of import from the East and of export for Australian products. He believed there were two ports in Australia which were bound to be two of the greatest ports in Australia – Port Darwin in the North and Port Augusta in the South.

The government would let tenders, and it would be up to the contractor to decide what labour they used. India had approved the recruitment of “coolies” for such a project, and again, he saw this as leverage for solving the future labour needs of the Territory:

the Government had access to that class of labour by which fortunes had been made in all parts of the world – a class of labour most suited for the growth of tropical products – the Indian coolies. Colossal fortunes had

been made both in the West and East Indies by planters who had employed coolie labour.<sup>91</sup>

It would be another two and a half years before contracts were signed for construction to begin. In some ways, the remarkable thing is that the project was ever started. The 1880s in South Australia were a decade of economic crisis and stagnation, caused by the collapse of northern wheat-growing as a result of over-expansion, and the collapse of a land-boom in mid-1883. By 1884 the colony was in a depression so serious that it led to extensive emigration from the colony and by 1886, the extreme of depopulation. At a time when workers in other colonies were taking industrial action to improve conditions, the South Australian government reduced public service salaries by 20 per cent and bootmaking employers in Adelaide tried to cut their workers' wages by 30 per cent, sparking one of the few strikes of the period.<sup>92</sup> Parsons' bill to spend nearly a million pounds on the Pine Creek railway came just weeks after parliament heard that the government was £140,000 worse off than in 1882, and that a deficit of £255,000 was expected in the next financial year.<sup>93</sup> The political history of the next four years would entail bitter wrangles over raising taxes and cutting expenditure.<sup>94</sup> The first tender for the railway failed because the price was too high; and the successful tenderers, Millar Bros, offered to build

---

<sup>91</sup> 16 August 1883, in *SAPD* 1883-4, cols. 815-825.

<sup>92</sup> The bootmaking strike is mentioned in Alison M Priestley, "The 11th parliament of South Australia 1884-1887: the influence of the Depression", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1964, p. 11. These wage and salary cuts are measures reminiscent of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

<sup>93</sup> The period is well discussed in Donald Robert Beer, "South Australian politics in the 1880s", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1960; see p. 23 for the financial situation as of 30 June 1883. Also Priestley, *The 11th parliament*.

<sup>94</sup> Priestley, *The 11th parliament*, and Beer, *South Australian politics in the 1880s*.

the railway for £80,000 less if they were allowed to recruit Chinese labour. In a climate of austerity, this offer seemed irresistible.

The decision to allow the use of Chinese labour on the railway was openly and unashamedly supported by the opposition, led by Thomas Playford, despite his prior commitment in 1880 to never again using Chinese labour on public works.<sup>95</sup> Only Coghlin dissented. But with over 4000 Chinese people in the Territory, the Downer government also wanted to prevent the railway becoming the means by which more Chinese would arrive, so the contractors agreed that they would pay a quasi-poll tax of £10 for every Chinese labourer they brought into the Territory and this would be refunded when the labourer was sent home. The start of the railway would give a new impetus to gold mining, which would also potentially attract Chinese miners, so in June 1886, the Conservative Downer government introduced a bill to extend the provisions of the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1881* to the Northern Territory.

Once again, the vast majority in the South Australian House of Assembly wanted the advantages of employing Chinese (or other Asian) workers on low pay, without admitting them into the community. In introducing the bill to parliament, the Minister responsible for the Northern Territory, JA Cockburn, described it as “the natural consequence and corollary” of the Pine Creek railway tender. They “were anxious to avoid any disastrous incursion of Chinese consequent on the acceptance of that tender.” Port Darwin’s proximity to Asia, such a source of inspiration in 1883, was now seen as a source of danger:

---

<sup>95</sup> SAPD 1886, col. 126; for 1880, SAPD 1880, col. 523. The context was the debate on Bray’s private member’s *Chinese Immigration Bill*.

it was confidently expected that the construction of the Palmerston and Pine Creek railway, in the Northern Territory, would give a great impetus to the development of that part of the province; and as Port Darwin was within about 11 days' steaming from Hongkong, it was feared that a large rush of Chinese might take place to Port Darwin, in order to share in the accession of prosperity caused by the railway construction.

Indeed, with Chinese people outnumbering Europeans by seven to one:

there was a danger that unless this immigration was regulated an overwhelming number of Chinese would take possession of the Northern Territory, and there would be a possibility of the Northern Territory becoming a Chinese colony.<sup>96</sup>

In anticipation of parliament passing the legislation, the government had sent a telegram to the Governor of Hong Kong warning that in future, Chinese people arriving in the Northern Territory would be forced to pay a £10 poll tax.

Unfortunately for the government, the Legislative Council once again proved intransigent. The government's case was not helped by the fact that its minister in the upper house, JB Spence, had led the move to exclude the Northern Territory from the provisions of the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1881*. His speech introducing the legislation was short and desultory; the only significant feature of the debate was the way his (alleged) discomfort at this change of tune was so repeatedly and relentlessly commented on. The centrality of Chinese labour to the Territory economy was the main point made by members, such as Henry Scott:

---

<sup>96</sup> *SAPD* 1886, col. 124-5

It was only by Chinese work, and by the improvement of the country by Chinese labor, that the Northern Territory could be cultivated, and there were only four or five hundred Europeans who would travel by the Pine Creek railway, and it was surely not for their benefit that it was being made.<sup>97</sup>

Bright thought the Territory would have collapsed long ago without the Chinese; Baker asked why they were being asked to shut out the only people who had been able to profitably settle in the Territory; Rankine thought the Chinese should be thanked for saving them £80,000 on the cost of the railway; Glyde thought that sugar could only be grown using Chinese labour; and Wadham finished by sympathising with Spence in his task and referred again to the force of his arguments in 1881. The bill was defeated 14-6 with the chamber's most capable anti-Chinese advocate, Ramsay, failing to participate in the debate.<sup>98</sup> In the wake of this debacle, the Downer government pushed through legislation to increase import duties on items used mainly by Chinese people, such as opium, rice and Chinese oil;<sup>99</sup> and amended the *Goldfields Act* to deny "Asiatic aliens" the right to dig on "new" fields, defined as less than two years old.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, by the end of 1886, the South Australian parliament remained at an impasse in terms of developing the Northern Territory. They had tried to

---

<sup>97</sup> *SAPD* 1886, col. 205.

<sup>98</sup> *SAPD* 1886, cols. 204-9. Ramsay's failure to participate may have been due to his support for the opposition, although that did not stop Playford in the lower house emphasizing his support for the bill.

<sup>99</sup> *SAPD* 1886, cols. 1363, 1399, 1451-2.

<sup>100</sup> *SAPD* 1886, cols. 452-4, 486, 576-8, 639, 671, 732. The government had proposed that a "new" field be defined as one less than three years old; the Legislative Council amended this to one year, and both finally compromised on two. The legislation originally barred Asiatic and African aliens, but the bar on African miners was lifted in debate in the House of Assembly.



promote sugar plantations, and these had failed. They believed that fortunes could be made there using Indian labourers, but the Indian government had imposed onerous conditions on recruitment and there were no capitalists seeking to employ them, and so the government did nothing to actually organise a structure of recruitment from India. Four thousand Chinese immigrants were the only group to have made some kind of successful settlement of the Territory. Despite – or because of – this the majority in the lower house were against Chinese immigration, and the majority in the upper house in favour of it. The government had decided to start building a transcontinental railway, to make something out of Darwin's fine harbour and its proximity to Asia. Despite its opposition to Chinese immigration, it knew the railway would attract Chinese immigrants to the mines which the railway would make more profitable, and it wanted the railway built with Chinese labour in order to save money.

## A challenge to colonial control: The Chinese Commissioners' mission of 1887

In May 1886, the Chinese Minister in London informed the British Foreign Office that the Emperor planned to send a special commission to investigate the various social relations and trade of Chinese people living in the various European colonies.<sup>101</sup> This came at a time when Britain was still engaged in a

---

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Chinese Legation in London to British Foreign Office, dated 11 May 1886. Copy in Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1. It appears that the Australian colonial governments would have been informed about the visit in late July 1886; see NSW Governor Lord

stand-off with Russia over Britain's occupation of Port Hamilton on the Korean Peninsula, and at a time when China was assumed by many to be in alliance with Britain. The spectre was raised of China demanding an end to the colonies' anti-Chinese laws, and of Britain imposing their demands on the colonies.

This impression was reinforced by a major statement of China's position by the Marquis Tseng, in an article for *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* of January 1887. He reassured the European powers that China wanted nothing more than its rightful place in the world, rather than revenge for past injustices, and that it wanted only to get unjust treaties revised. But in the imagination of colonial politicians, the words of the Marquis were ominous. After demanding the moral high ground – "China has none of that land-hungering so characteristic of some other nations – hungry for land they do not and cannot make use of" – he warned that China's foreign policy would also focus on "the amelioration of the condition of her subjects residing in foreign parts":

The outrageous treatment to which Chinese subjects residing in some foreign countries have been subjected has been as disgraceful to the Governments in whose jurisdiction it was perpetrated as to the Government whose indifference to the sufferings of its subjects residing abroad invited it.

He announced the appointment of the Commission "to visit and report on the condition of Chinese subjects in foreign countries", and hoped that:

this proof of the interest which the Imperial Government has commenced to take in the welfare of its foreign-going subjects will suffice to ensure their receiving in the future the treatment which by the law of nations and the dictates of humanity is due from civilized nations to the stranger living within their gates.<sup>102</sup>

The Chinese Commissioners visited the Australian colonies from 25 April to 3 August 1887, visiting Darwin, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, a number of Victorian towns, Newcastle, Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and Cooktown.<sup>103</sup> They were received with formal politeness by most colonial governments, however the suggestion was immediately raised that they may be liable for the poll-tax levied on Chinese immigrants. While Parkes reassured a Chinese community leader that he would not subject them to this indignity, he privately telegraphed Brisbane to ask Sir Samuel Griffith “if there is any restriction on Chinese Commissioners & suite who are about to visit your Colony”.<sup>104</sup>

In the colonial media, their visit provoked alarm. They became a magnet for the grievances of Chinese people in Australia, especially the imposition of the colonial poll-tax. Colonial newspapers speculated that their visit might lead to a formal complaint from China to the British government.<sup>105</sup> The length of their visit and their extensive travels in Australia were used by newspapers to inflame public opinion. In Brisbane, the Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith, spoke bluntly to the Commissioners about the hostility of the colonies to Chinese

---

<sup>102</sup> Marquis Tseng, “China. The sleep and the awakening”, *Asiatic Quarterly*, vol. III, January 1887, pp. 4, 8-9.

<sup>103</sup> Date of departure in *SMH* 4 August 1887, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> W [Winston] G Lewis, “The 1887 visit of the two Chinese Commissioners: an episode in early Sino-Australian relations”, Paper 26/566 presented to ANZAAS Conference, 1970 (Port Moresby), pp. 12-13; telegram dated 23 May 87 in Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1.

<sup>105</sup> Lewis, *The 1887 visit*, p. 15.

immigration, a conversation that offended Commissioner Wong, and they faced anti-Chinese deputations as they sailed up the Queensland coast.<sup>106</sup>

On the day the Commissioners departed, the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that the Commissioners had come “to discover how wide a field the Australian colonies presented for the employment of Chinese labour” and “with the object of paving the way for the arrival of others.”<sup>107</sup> It also warned that in the event of an official complaint about Australia’s treatment of Chinese immigrants:

the British Government would be in a difficulty. Satisfaction could not be given to China without interfering in some way with what we should regard as our domestic affairs; and if China were persistent, trouble might arise out of the business. Whatever happened, the Australian colonies could not give way upon such a question as this. The restrictions which have been placed upon Chinese immigration have been adopted deliberately, and with the determination that Australia shall be essentially a European community. We have made up our minds not to be overrun by the Chinese or any other inferior race, and no proposal to relax the precautions which serve to keep back the threatened Chinese invasion would be listened to for a moment.

However, China was becoming more powerful, and a force in world politics; “if circumstances led her to form an alliance with Russia, she would become a very awkward antagonist for Great Britain, whose possessions in India, Burmah, and the Straits would be threatened.” Britain could be put in a position where it “had to choose between a Chinese war and a quarrel with her Australian colonies”.<sup>108</sup> The paper was not sanguine; three months later, it reported

---

<sup>106</sup> Lewis, *The 1887 visit*, p. 18.

<sup>107</sup> *SMH* editorial, 4 August 1887, p. 6, col. 6.

<sup>108</sup> *SMH* editorial, 4 August 1887, p. 7, col. 1.

second-hand accounts of the Commissioners' conclusions, and judged them "premonitory of future trouble" between China, Britain and the colonies.<sup>109</sup>

In Victoria, the *Naval and Military Gazette*, a semi-official journal for the volunteer militia, expressed a sense of imminent danger. Before August 1887, it had barely discussed the "Chinese question", but for nearly a year after the Commissioners left, their visit, China's supposed military power and the dangers of Chinese immigration would be constant points of alarm in the paper. Its fear of China and racist hatred towards Chinese people were grounded in its support for Imperial Federation – a major conservative/imperialist current in Britain and the colonies that argued for closer ties within the British empire, with a supreme imperial parliament in London ruling the whole. In the same month the Commissioners departed, the paper expressed alarm over about China's military capacity:

Her fleets and armies are organised on the European model, provided with the very best of arms, and drilled by European and American officers, and it may be a matter of importance to England, in view of possible complications in Asia, to be on good terms with her, if therefore the Chinese press their claim to be allowed to settle in Australia, and the Australians positively refuse to consent, trouble may arise.<sup>110</sup>

It was this impression of growing military power that gave the visit of the Chinese Commissioners a sense of menace for the paper. It reported, in October 1887, that many local Chinese residents "have reported to the officials in their

---

<sup>109</sup> SMH editorial, 15 October, 1887, p. 13, col. 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Australasian Naval & Military Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 7, 31 August 1887, p. 142; see also vol. 1, no. 9, 31 October 1887, p. 196.

native country that Australasia is a most eligible field for the transference of surplus Chinese labour; and it is understood that, although a marked restraint was placed upon their public utterances, the visitors [Chinese Commissioners] did not fail to make a full note of every detail which presented itself."<sup>111</sup> When "An Imperial Officer" wrote to the *South Australian Register* to argue that imperial officials had no difficulty in ruling large numbers of Chinese people in Singapore and Hong Kong, the *Naval and Military Gazette* disagreed:

[W]ill the men who have founded a great English-speaking nation in the southern seas...allow an alien race to settle on the land, and look forward to a mongrel breed, half European and half Asiatic, as the future Australian People? or to their remaining a separate foreign and isolated tribe settled in our country, a constant source of danger and annoyance?<sup>112</sup>

The idea that Britain would veto Australian attempts to keep the Chinese out was unthinkable, "and it would be a very dangerous experiment [for it] to attempt to do so."

From another side of mainstream Victorian politics came a similar political shift.<sup>113</sup> The relentlessly middle-class Australian Natives Association (ANA) also embraced the cause of excluding Chinese immigrants at the time of the Commissioners' visit. One leading member of the supposedly non-political ANA, the lawyer, Field Barret, had raised the issue in 1885 and 1886 to no effect, and an anti-Chinese article published in the ANA's paper, the *National*

---

<sup>111</sup> *Australasian Naval & Military Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 9, 31 October 1887, p. 196.

<sup>112</sup> *Australasian Naval & Military Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 11, 29 February 1888, pp. 286-7.

<sup>113</sup> The *Australasian Naval and Military Gazette* despised the nativist ANA.

*Australian*, in June 1887 had elicited criticism on "'pure Conservative' principles". The historian of the ANA, Marian Aveling, noted that:

despite the opposition in the journal, Barret's argument seems to have won immediate support in many of the branches. In August and September [1887] there were many branch debates on the subject, and almost every audience accepted both the reality of the danger he postulated, and the sectional grounds on which he argued. Richmond, home branch to two of his journal opponents, passed "without a dissentient" a motion "affirming that the only effective method of dealing with the difficulty was to introduce new legislation to prevent any further influx. International and other difficulties were mentioned, but the members were unanimously agreed that these would have to give way to the interests of Australia."<sup>114</sup>

There were many more such resolutions. Despite some conservative resistance, this upsurge of concern led the ANA to participate in a conference on the Chinese question called by the Trades Hall Council, and to begin a life-long agitation for White Australia. Two months after the Chinese Commissioners had left Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* commented that:

There can be little doubt, that the intense public feeling which has been manifested on the subject of late, is traceable to the recent visit of the Chinese Commissioners and the belief that the report upon what they have seen, is likely to be followed by a Chinese invasion of Australia.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Marian Aveling (Quartly), "A history of the Australian Natives Association 1871-1900", MA thesis, Monash University, 1970, pp. 173-4.

<sup>115</sup> *SMH* 17 October 1887, quoted in Richard Fletcher, "The role of the immigration question in gaining for the labour movement recognition by society in the period 1877 to 1890 in New South Wales", MA, University of Sydney, 1964, p. 123.

## South Australia refuses to close Darwin to Chinese immigration

In June 1887, a general election in South Australia saw a majority returned for the larger-than-life Liberal leader, Tom Playford. Eight days after the Chinese Commissioners sailed from Cooktown, never to return, the new Playford government made the fifth move to introduce legislation to restrict the entry of Chinese into the Northern Territory. The parliamentary debate brought out, once again, all the ambiguity in the positions adopted by South Australia's leading politicians. In moving the bill, on 18 August 1887, the Minister for Education, JCF Johnson, argued three different sides of the indentured labour argument; firstly, that:

It was undeniable that wherever a lower race was present to do the menial work for a higher race it was found a curse and not a blessing. This truth had been illustrated in America, North and South, and also in the colonies of South Africa.

Then, he argued, that a certain number of Chinese labourers would be good for agriculture in the Northern Territory, and finally – somewhat contradictorily – that Chinese people were no good for plantations because they were unwilling to work for masters.<sup>116</sup> He was more consistent on the strategic question: “we must always remember the pent-up torrent of humanity in China, where a small leak once allowed might become a vast stream capable of submerging Anglo-Saxondom in Australia.” Finally, he played the federation card:

---

<sup>116</sup> *SAPD* 1887, cols. 559-60.



The whole of the other colonies had passed similar measures, and Queensland had made the tax £30, and considering this, hon. members would agree with him that it would be very unneighborly on the part of South Australia if we allowed our northern country to remain open to Chinese, who might stream over the Queensland border. Queensland had again asked us to pass a measure to prevent the free entry of Chinamen, and we ought certain to do so. Surely the friendship of Queensland was worth more to us than that of the celestial empire.<sup>117</sup>

Speaking on behalf of the Opposition, JA Cockburn strongly supported the argument that South Australia had a responsibility to the other Australian colonies:

Last session the Northern Territory was not the only part of the Australias where a tax was not imposed upon Chinamen. Western Australia was then with us. Now, however, we stand absolutely alone in the matter, for Western Australia, which it should be borne in mind was a Crown colony, had seen the necessity of imposing a tax upon celestials arriving, and the Northern Territory was the only part where Chinamen were exempt from the tax. The fact of this country being free would facilitate Chinamen entering Queensland or it might be Western Australia... It was not so much a question of whether Chinese were desirable colonists as of intercolonial courtesy, and it would not be denied that Queensland had got reason to complain of us.<sup>118</sup>

Bagster supported the bill. He thought Chinese labour was needed in the Northern Territory and deplored the fact that "coolies" had not been introduced there: "notwithstanding this he believed if we did not legislate in the matter Chinese would soon overrun the place."<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 560.

<sup>118</sup> *SAPD* 1887, cols. 560-1.

<sup>119</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 561.

Caldwell made an anti-racist argument: "The stage had been reached in the progress of civilisation when distinctions in connection with the human family should cease to be recognised."<sup>120</sup> Homburg was also against the bill, his "anti-racism" reinforced by a belief that, "In the Northern Territory Chinese were the most useful people they could have, and he was convinced that the Territory could not be properly developed unless the Chinese were allowed to work there." But he would vote for the bill because the (white) people of the Northern Territory had asked for it.<sup>121</sup> For Scherk, federation was the key issue: "A great deal had been said about federation, and when the other colonies were taking steps to prevent Chinese immigration we should go hand in hand with them, and not stand apart."<sup>122</sup> Cohen raised the proximity of the Northern Territory to Hong Kong, and the danger that so many Chinese would arrive that the government would be powerless to stop them.<sup>123</sup> Landseer raised the spectre of a Chinese goldfields revolt, before again coming in behind the argument for federation: "It was our duty to aid Queensland... We should do all in our power to promote the spirit of federation by joint action with the rest of Australia."<sup>124</sup> In reply, the Minister rejected humanitarian concerns, arguing that it was the Chinese who did not respect human life, and reiterated South Australia's isolation on the issue:

The strongest argument in favor of the Bill was the fact that the Northern Territory was now the only portion of Australia where such an Act as this one was not in force, and it was owing to this fact that our friend and

---

<sup>120</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 561.

<sup>121</sup> *SAPD* 1887, cols. 562-3.

<sup>122</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 588.

<sup>123</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 588-9.

<sup>124</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 589.

neighbor Queensland had asked us to pass this legislation so as to prevent that colony from being inundated by Chinese that passed over our border.<sup>125</sup>

While the debate was brief and desultory, the mood of the House was determined. It resisted attempts to strengthen the bill, with speakers insisting that they wanted to make it as hard as possible for the Legislative Council to reject it.<sup>126</sup>

However, the Legislative Council simply wasn't listening. When the Chief Secretary, JG Ramsay, introduced the bill into the Council, he pointed out that their longstanding desire for Chinese labour to develop agriculture in the Territory had essentially failed. Over the last seven years, "It had been proved...that Chinese labor for that purpose was not particularly reliable. The Chinese like to be their own masters, and in a country like the Northern Territory where there was so much alluvial land they liked to leave their employers and go and fossick for gold on some field that had been discovered by Europeans."<sup>127</sup> H Scott again led the opposition to restriction, turning the argument of failure against successive governments:

The Chief Secretary said that source was Indian coolie labour. They had heard of the coolies every year. Why did not the Government introduce them, or give others a special inducement to bring them in? It seemed to him that the people who were working the Northern Territory had some doubt as to the desirableness of bringing in coolies, otherwise he would have thought that some of the companies would have endeavored to get

---

<sup>125</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 589.

<sup>126</sup> *SAPD* 1887, cols. 589ff.

<sup>127</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 738.

them from India. Personally he would prefer to see Indian coolies introduced into the Territory, and he would like to see arrangements made with the Indian Government to that effect rather than legislate to prevent other people who were able and willing from going there.<sup>128</sup>

West-Erskine, a large landholder in the Territory, supported the bill because the Chinese had proven themselves a “nuisance” in the United States, and he remained optimistic about Indian labour:

He granted that it was impossible for Europeans to work as laborers in the cane fields, and at that we must have colored labor of some sort. Some years ago he was in India, and he had a long conversation with Sir Philip Woodhouse, Governor of Bombay Presidency at that time, on the question of coolie labor. That gentleman spoke most highly of the coolie in connection with labor in Australia, but at that time there was no legislation in existence providing for the introduction of coolies into Australia. Since that time an Act had been passed which had received the assent of the Governor-General of India, and coolies could be introduced so soon as our Government made a move in the matter... they were a race who could be very easily managed.<sup>129</sup>

For Dunn, it was legislation of this kind that had led to the movement for separation between north and south Queensland.<sup>130</sup>

As the government lost the debate over labour for the Northern Territory, so it was also challenged in its use of the strategic question. In moving the bill, the Minister, Johnson, had warned of the danger of the Territory being overrun by

---

<sup>128</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 740.

<sup>129</sup> *SAPD* 1887, cols. 744-5.

<sup>130</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 745.

Chinese, and of the possibility that South Australia might be turned out of it.<sup>131</sup> Scott simply rejected this; he would support restriction if it were a real danger, but in his view it was not. In referring to Hong Kong, he argued, “the experience of older countries than this was that they could be very easily managed.”<sup>132</sup> Tarlton turned the strategic argument against the government:

The threat held out the other day by the Chinese Commissioners was no empty one. Professor Martin, an American, who was the head of the Pekin College, in a book published by him disclosed the enormous strides made in China in western arts, sciences, and mechanics. The French had lately got into a war with the Chinese which they were very glad to get out of, and he predicted that there were men now living who before they died would see that if we did a political wrong to China she would make it very troublesome for Australia. And very justly so.<sup>133</sup>

For Ramsay, in reply, this was a good reason to restrict their entry: “if the Chinese were going to be such an aggressive race it would be very impolitic to allow them to get a firm footing in our territory, and therefore we ought to be more cautious to prevent them from coming in in overwhelming numbers.”<sup>134</sup> But his efforts were to no avail; on Wednesday 7 September 1887, the attempt to restrict Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory was again defeated in the Legislative Council, by 14 votes to 6.<sup>135</sup> Within the next few months, the Government Resident in Darwin would report one thousand more Chinese

---

<sup>131</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 739.

<sup>132</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 739-40.

<sup>133</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 746.

<sup>134</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 786.

<sup>135</sup> *SAPD* 1887, col. 786.

people arriving in Darwin, and this would help fuel a new sense of crisis in the eastern colonies.

**Table 9.1: Population numbers by ethnicity in the Northern Territory<sup>136</sup>**

<i>Year</i>	<i>European population</i>	<i>Chinese population</i>	<i>Other non-indigenous ethnicities</i>
1878		208	
1879		1176	
1880		2154/4254 <sup>137</sup>	
1881	660	3690	30 Malays
1882	500	3585	25 Malays
1883	517	3725	20 Malays
1884	519	3703	
1885	603	4162	
1886	2000 <sup>138</sup>	4264	
1887		6388	
1888		6750	
1889		6200	

<sup>136</sup> Long, *Asian immigration*, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Long finds wildly differing numbers for this year, citing Willard as giving 3715; Parlt paper 156/1880 giving 2154; and Parlt paper 47/1885 giving 4254, from his *Asian immigration*, p. 20.

<sup>138</sup> The Hon JL Parsons, *The Northern Territory: with a glance at the east. A lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Adelaide, May 19, 1887, by the Hon J. L. Parsons (Government Resident in the Northern Territory)*, WK Thomas & Co Printers, Adelaide, 1887, p. 11. This is his figure for the European population, "fixed and floating"; he estimates the Chinese population at between four and five thousand.

## *Chapter 10*

# The making of the first White Australia policy

IN 1888, the political leaders of the four major Australian colonies created the first White Australia policy. They did this in response to the crisis they faced from March 1888 over Chinese immigration. To resolve it on their terms, they made four crucial decisions: to move their anti-Chinese policies from restriction to effective exclusion; to assert Australian control over immigration policy; to regard Chinese people racially – ignoring British citizenship; and to pressure South Australia into closing Darwin to Chinese immigration. Federation, when it came, would be racial and Australia would be “white”. These decisions were accepted by Britain, and a major legal challenge to the exclusion of Chinese people was dismissed by the Privy Council.

As noted previously, the Chinese empire had sent a mission to Australia in 1887 to investigate the conditions facing Chinese people here. Such interference from China – a China growing more powerful – was completely unacceptable to the colonial ruling class; but it was made far worse when the British government

facilitated the interference, rather than resisting it. A rapid increase in Chinese numbers in the Northern Territory and the refusal of the South Australian parliament to restrict Chinese immigration saw a doubling of the Chinese population of the Northern Territory. From Darwin, Hong Kong and London, the ruling class agendas for shaping the Australian population were being challenged, and colonial governments started discussing ways to stop Chinese immigration once and for all.

If there was one single event that transformed a growing, ruling class determination into a true crisis requiring a decisive response, it was Britain's demand that the Australian colonies justify their anti-Chinese policies. After the Chinese Commissioners had reported to their government, the Chinese Minister in London had sent a formal complaint to the Foreign Office about the treatment of Chinese people in the colonies. The Foreign Office asked the Colonial Office to answer this complaint, and thus, on 23 January 1888, Sir Henry Holland, the British Colonial Secretary (soon to be Lord Knutsford), sent a circular to all colonial governors. The circular arrived in mid-March 1888, and it sharply radicalised all the colonial governments.<sup>1</sup> The "Please explain" letter moved them to the intransigence that saw the *Afghan* and a number of other ships prevented from landing Chinese passengers at Sydney and Melbourne, amidst a wave of newspaper hysteria and mass demonstrations. In Sydney, Sir Henry Parkes rushed new anti-Chinese legislation through the Assembly, and an Intercolonial Conference was convened in Sydney in June to come to a common position on the question of Chinese immigration. The result was

---

<sup>1</sup> NSW LA V&P 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 221. The Chinese complaint was published in *The Age*, 17 March 1888; the *SMH* had to rely on a telegram from Melbourne for a summary of the Chinese letter, 17 March 1888, p. 14, col. 3.



agreement amongst all colonies except Tasmania to pass new laws that would essentially exclude Chinese immigrants.

But the real test of this national consensus would come in South Australia, where the Legislative Council had five times rejected attempts to restrict Chinese immigration into Darwin. It would now be asked, not to pass moderately restrictive laws as in the past, but laws that would terminate Chinese immigration and end the Chinese-driven development in the Territory. This battle in the South Australian parliament – a debate of major proportions – would be the decisive moment in which South Australia decided its future. Would it be part of the hoped-for federated, “white” Australia? Or would it stake its future as an independent entity, promoting economic development on the basis of either Chinese immigration or indentured “coloured labour” in its own tropical colony? It was a debate that tore at the heart of ruling class Adelaide.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of established historical accounts is the emptiness of their treatment of this pivotal period. All agree that 1888 was a year of crisis over Chinese immigration, but struggle to explain why there was a crisis and give no sense of the issues involved, or the depth of disagreement. None seem aware of the colonies’ virtual agreement to act by September 1887 and their attempts to come together to agree on a measure, nor of Parkes’ moves to legislate independently in November 1887. None shows any awareness of the depth of the dilemma facing South Australia’s politicians, the agony involved in choosing between the Northern Territory and federation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See Charles A Price, *The great white walls are built: Restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888*, The Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with the

While forced to mention the rift between some colonists and the British Colonial Office, Willard is at pains to deprive it of any significance, much less discuss the central position it had in the crisis, possibly reflecting the deep tensions over the imperial relationship in the immediate post-war period when she was writing.<sup>3</sup> The result is bewilderment. Willard confessed that, “The reason for this third movement against Chinese immigration is at first not easy to understand,” while Price saw events that year as “highly complicated and somewhat bewildering”. Nevertheless, this period produced *extreme* measures. The only authors to have given a substantial treatment of the *Afghan* crisis are those who have written histories of Chinese people – Eric Rolls and Robert Travers – and while valuable, have little of the material discussed in this chapter.<sup>4</sup>

It is in 1888 that the established historical explanation, that sees labour movement agitation as the driving force for anti-Chinese legislation, most comes unstuck. There was a profound crisis within the ruling class, and indeed, within both Liberal and Conservative politics, and not just in South Australia. Almost all wanted a strong British empire, and were torn between the strategic logic of a British alliance with China against Russia, and the dangers of that strategy for Australia. Conservatives who supported “coloured labour” in the north feared the consequences if the labour was Chinese. Liberals opposed to indentured and unfree labour, who valued the politics of free trade and the free movement of people, found themselves legislating against the free movement of

---

Australian National University, Canberra, 1974, pp. 192-3; Myra Willard, *The history of the White Australia policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first pub 1923), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Willard, pp. 95-8

<sup>4</sup> Robert Travers, *Australian mandarin: The life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst (NSW), 1981, chapter 5, pp. 70-91; Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: Flowers and the wide sea*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993, chapter 9, pp. 455-508.

Chinese people who supposedly embodied the danger of a semi-slave system in the north. They were committed to restraining government from taking arbitrary action, and yet it was only arbitrary exclusion in the *Afghan* crisis that forced Britain to accept their Chinese policy. Conservatives wanted a British-Australian nationalism, but were alarmed when white Australia nationalism became the vehicle to mobilise plebeian and working class elements. There was nothing in the timing or nature of labour movement or plebeian protests over Chinese immigration to create a crisis for colonial governments at this time; their primary effect was to provide mass backing for an exclusionist push already in motion.

After 1888, there was continuing opposition from within the ruling class to the decisions to exclude Chinese people, and later other “coloured labour”, but it was a very modest minority. The decisions made in 1888 – and the principles adopted – were extended through the 1890s and in 1901, they were expanded into the twentieth century White Australia policy. But it was in this year, 1888, that Australia first became “white”.

## A determination to legislate

In September 1887, just days after the SA Legislative Council had refused to restrict Chinese immigration to Darwin, Sir Henry Parkes set out for Adelaide to visit its Exhibition. On his way, he spent a couple of days in Melbourne discussing a range of national issues – defence, rabbits, Chinese immigration, military federation, New Guinea and French criminals from New Caledonia – with Duncan Gillies, the Victorian Premier; his Chief Secretary, Alfred Deakin;

and Defence Minister, Sir James Lorimer, a partner in the major shipping line Lorimer Rome & Co. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales were virtually in favour of prohibition, or rather in favour of steps which would amount to a virtual prohibition. What South Australia may be disposed to do in the matter has yet to be seen, but it is expected that that colony will fall in with the course agreed upon by New South Wales and Victoria. Queensland is known to be in favour of the adoption of the most stringent measures for the restriction of the Chinese.<sup>5</sup>

We have no reliable knowledge of what was said between Parkes and the South Australian ministers he met in Adelaide, least of all on the issue of Chinese immigration. According to the *Adelaide Advertiser*, the discussion revolved around the problems of naturalisation certificates; with the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting that while the South Australian ministers were in favour of virtual prohibition, when it came to the Northern Territory, "Mr. Playford thought the Chinese will have to be allowed to come in there, provided they brought their wives and families."<sup>6</sup> Back in Melbourne, Parkes avoided any hint of difference, telling a deputation from that city's Anti-Chinese Conference that "the Governments of the various colonies were entirely in accord in the matter," and that they would "unite in protecting Australia against any large influx of Chinese," and in parliament he repeated that the colonies would probably act together.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 12 September 1887, p. 8, col. 2; see also p. 7, col. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Advertiser* 16 September 1887, p. 5, col. 7; *SMH* 16 September 1887, p. 8, col. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 28, p. 79 (27 September).

In Queensland, October 1887 saw a scare caused by a rumour that about 500 Chinese people supposedly heading towards the Croydon goldfield. Premier Griffith assured parliament there had been no such “influx”, but made it clear that “this House probably will be asked to deal with the Chinese question in a very radical manner”.<sup>8</sup> Referring to an editorial from the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the Chinese Commissioners’ visit, Conservative Opposition leader, Boyd Morehead called on Griffith to

take the earliest opportunity – as I am sure he will – of informing the Imperial authorities that if they insist upon keeping friends with China on the terms suggested in that article, they had better make up their minds to part with us. If the Chinese, or rather the Chinese trade, is of more importance to the Empire than the Australian colonies are, let us understand it, and then we shall know what to do.<sup>9</sup>

A week later the issue was still alive, and the Liberal, Isambert, fulminated:

If we do not enact some cast-iron law we shall be overwhelmed by Chinese, not coming so much by sea as from the Northern Territory of South Australia; and the Government ought to bring as much pressure on the South Australian Government to take the Chinese question in hand as they possibly can. The Government there are willing to deal with it, but the Upper House, representing the capitalists who have grabbed the Northern Territory, are in favour of Chinese importation to such an extent that they have passed measures through the Legislature there permitting the importation of Chinese to the Northern Territory...both Opposition and Government supporters, [in Queensland] are all in favour of this question being dealt with, and properly dealt with.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. LII, p. 1089 (18 October 1887).

<sup>9</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. LII, p. 1091 (18 October 1887).

<sup>10</sup> *ORDLA Qld*, vol. LIII, p. 1239 (Wed 26 October 1887).

Thus it seems certain by September 1887 – long before any significant revival of public anti-Chinese agitation in the three south-eastern colonies – that the four major colonial governments shared an in-principle agreement that more stringent laws would be pursued. This impression is reinforced by telegrams between the colonial premiers in early November 1887. Duncan Gillies asked Parkes if he intended to legislate that session, and hoped that they could agree on proposals;<sup>11</sup> this prompted a circular from Parkes to all the colonies proposing new measures and asking the other colonies for their opinions:

it would be a great advantage if all the Colonies could agree upon a measure of restriction, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, of practical prohibition which should be framed in the same terms & impose the same conditions. Although in the vast extent of Australian territory, questions of climate & of the suitability of our soil for special industries must necessarily raise difficulties in the application of labour to productive capabilities much greater in some parts than in others, still the main subject cannot, I apprehend, be safely put aside by any Australian Government.<sup>12</sup>

In Queensland the government was disintegrating and a general election was due; they were not able to legislate in the short term. But both Griffith and Tasmanian Premier, PO Fysh, told Parkes that they would be happy to discuss the issue at the meeting of the Federal Council scheduled for January.<sup>13</sup> This

---

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Duncan Gillies, Premier Victoria to Parkes, 3 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary's special bundles).

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Parkes to Gillies, 4 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary's special bundles); letters to the other premiers dated 8 November.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Premier Qld Griffith to Premier, Vic, 4 November 1887, Public Records Office, Vic, Premier's correspondence, letter no. P87/3402, found at 1888/1160, VPRS 1163/P0/141; Letter from Premier Tasmania (Fysh) to Premier NSW (Parkes), 25 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary's special bundles).

was a provocative response; the Federal Council as an institution was deeply divisive for the colonies – NSW being firmly resolved against any involvement in it. For its part, the Playford government was not about to submit prohibitive legislation when it had just failed to pass mildly restrictive legislation,<sup>14</sup> though Playford did subsequently promise anti-Chinese petitioners that, “Efforts will be made to secure joint action amongst the Australian colonies in all matters relating to the Chinese question”.<sup>15</sup> Duncan Gillies concluded that immediate legislation was not practical, and that some kind of conference would be necessary.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, intercolonial cooperation was set back by a sudden, raging controversy around Parkes’ proposal to rename New South Wales, “Australia”.

On 28 November 1887, Parkes telegraphed the other Premiers, urgently requesting clarification of their views; he was now about to introduce his own anti-Chinese bill.<sup>17</sup> From New Zealand came the reply that they had “Not yet had time to consider question Chinese Immigration but should be willing to

---

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Premier SA Playford to Premier, Vic, 4 November 1887, Public Records Office Vic, Premier’s correspondence, letter no. P87/3405, found at 1888/1160, VPRS 1163/P0/141.

<sup>15</sup> Playford’s note 12 December 87 on letter from RE Rogers to Chief Sec SA, 24 November 1887, State Records SA, letter no. 87/1933, GRG 24/6, box 396.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Premier Vic (Gillies) to Colonial Secretary NSW (Parkes), 19 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary’s special bundles). On 30 November 1887, Victorian Chief Secretary Alfred Deakin replied to a letter from the Anti-Chinese Association, to the effect that, “The other colonies have been communicated with. Their replies are not encouraging... It appears doubtful if legislation can be introduced this year as the other colonies require to act simultaneously to make action effective.” Deakin’s notes on letter from GR Farlow, Secretary, Anti-Chinese Association to Chief Secretary, Vic, 19 November 1887, Public Records Office Vic, Premier’s correspondence, letter no. 87/J11155, found at 1888/1160, VPRS 1163/P0/141.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Parkes to Colonial Secretaries Victoria, SA, Qld, Tas, NZ, 28 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary’s special bundles).

join in Legislation to prevent any undue Influx of Chinese.”<sup>18</sup> Griffith in Brisbane suggested the other colonies adopt Queensland’s measures, adding “The question of requiring licenses to carry on business with substantial license fees and of refusing Miners rights have been under consideration.”<sup>19</sup> South Australia could do nothing immediate, but its Premier would be “glad to act in concert with your Government and the Governments of the other Australian Colonies regarding the question.”<sup>20</sup> Victoria’s Premier asked Parkes to deal with any emergency in as limited way as possible, so that “within the next six months the Colonies could determine a common basis for legislation.” He was “anxious Colonies should act in concert otherwise the value of any local legislation might be reduced to a minimum, and could scarcely be effective”,<sup>21</sup> and pointed to the chaos surrounding naturalisation papers as a means of restricting the arrival of Chinese people:

as there is, undoubtedly, a constant illegal traffic in these papers, I have instructed the Collector that unless he is perfectly satisfied as to the identity of the person presenting the paper with the person to whom it was issued, he must absolutely refuse under Section 5 to allow them to land.

The Collector informs me that it is practically impossible that he can be so satisfied, and therefore this instruction will have the effect of

---

<sup>18</sup> HA Atkinson, Premier NZ to Parkes, 29 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary’s special bundles).

<sup>19</sup> Telegram from SW Griffith to Parkes, 30 November 1887, Queensland State Archives, PRV 7188-1-1.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Premier SA (Playford) to Premier NSW, 30 November 1887, State Records SA, GRG 24/28, book 6 (1887), p. 393.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Gillies to Parkes, 30 November 1887, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary’s special bundles).



confining the number to those allowed by Sec. 2 [ie under the limitations by tonnage].<sup>22</sup>

This foreshadowed the tactics that Victoria would use in the *Afghan* crisis in late April/early May 1888.

The event which led Parkes to take the initiative and restate his proposal for new legislation was a rumour in late November 1887 that 200 Chinese were on their way to Sydney from New Caledonia. For its part, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was hysterical. "Whatever views may be held on the general question of Chinese immigration, there can be no two opinions as to the duty of the Government in view of the item of news...that this colony is to be menaced with an early influx of no fewer than 200 Chinese coolies at one fell swoop."<sup>23</sup> Within a week, Parkes had begun the formal procedures to bring in a new Chinese immigration bill, declaring that its provisions would be "as nearly as possible to prohibition".<sup>24</sup>

The rumoured shipload of Chinese did not materialise, and the summer of 1887-8 saw the colonies distracted by the centenary of British colonisation of Australia, with celebrations centred on Sydney. There was celebrity galore, with parades, banquets, visiting British dignitaries, and the opening of the new

---

<sup>22</sup> Gillies notes attached to letter from Secretary, Dept Trade & Customs Vic, WF Walker to Premier, Vic, 30 November 1887, Public Records Office Vic, letter no. P87/3739, found at 1888/1160, Premier's correspondence, VPRS 1163/P0/141, emphasis in original.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH* editorial, 24 November 1887, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>24</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 29, p. 1700 (Wed 30 Nov 1887); pp. 1787-8 (Thurs 1 Dec). Three weeks later, one of the leading anti-Chinese MPs in NSW moved for a Select Committee into the Chinese Influx, to investigate the arrival of Chinese, not only into NSW, but also "the neighbouring colonies"; *NSWPD*, vol. 30, pp. 2223-4 (Tues 20 Dec 1887). See also p. 2896, Tues 28 Feb 1888 when leave was sought for the select committee to sit during the recess.

Trades Hall in Sydney. But a further Chinese “scare” in mid-February put the issue dramatically back at the centre of the political agenda. A telegram from the South Australian Government Resident in Darwin, John Langdon Parsons,<sup>25</sup> announced that over a thousand Chinese people had arrived in Darwin in the past month alone, and that five hundred were soon to leave Darwin for the ruby fields in the Macdonnell Ranges. His alarmist telegram warned that:

Once landed in the centre of Australia they will spread over all the colonies. With regard to Hongkong, I am informed on undoubted authority that a powerful syndicate of Hongkong and Canton merchants exists to pour Chinese into this port so long as it is open. There seems to be a general impression in China that access to the East is about to be closed, and they are making for Port Darwin in shoals. I am further informed that this Chinese syndicate has guaranteed to the existing steamship lines full repayment of all quarantine expenses here, and has informed the heads of companies that if they will not carry Chinese they will lay on steamers loaded with Chinese, and stand all the racket of quarantine expenses.<sup>26</sup>

Parsons’ telegram had a profound effect in the rest of the Australian colonies.<sup>27</sup> For the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the prospect of a Chinese syndicate bringing labourers to Darwin was “dangerous to the best interests of the country.” The paper worried about the impact of further restriction on Britain’s global strategic position, given its desire for an alliance with China, but even the *Sydney Morning Herald* had its limits:

---

<sup>25</sup> Parsons had been Minister controlling the Northern Territory in the Bray government, from June 1881 to June 1884; as Government Resident in the NT, 1884-90, he was a de facto governor.

<sup>26</sup> *SMH* 20 February 1888, p. 8, col. 2; the telegram was dated 17 February.

<sup>27</sup> There were widespread allegations at the time that the telegram was fraudulent, but Eric Rolls argues that there is no doubt it was genuine, *Sojourners*, p. 460.

If it were a choice between English and Australian interests, there could be no doubt as to which adherence should be given, but it is a question whether prohibition of the Chinese would serve our interests best. On one thing there can be no difference of opinion – there should be no very large settlement of the Chinese among us. We should have no such thing as Chinese settlements.<sup>28</sup>

The publication of the Parsons telegram also unleashed a wave of pressure from the other Australian governments. Sir Samuel Griffith demanded that South Australia prevent any increase in Australia's Chinese population, and wrote to Gillies (Victoria), Fysh (Tasmania) and Parkes (New South Wales) asking them to pressure South Australia "to take immediate and effectual steps to restrict this introduction and if their existing legal authority is insufficient to take the earliest possible opportunity of inviting Parliament to give additional powers".<sup>29</sup> And so the protests came; from Sir Henry Parkes a private telegram to Playford outlining his apocalyptic, strategic view of Chinese immigration into the north:

For a long time I have had serious apprehensions of the growing designs of China in relation to Australia, but it would be imprudent to make these apprehensions public...

I cannot but believe that the Chinese Government is at the back of the present movement of Chinese to your Northern Territory, and I have long thought that they would seek to plant a Chinese settlement in some remote part of this continent with the view of ultimately forming a Chinese colony.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *SMH* editorial, 21 February 1888, p. 7, col. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Telegram from Premier Qld Griffith to Premier SA, 24 February 1888, Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1; also telegram from Griffith to Gillies, 20 February 1888, same location.

<sup>30</sup> Telegram 22 February 1888 Parkes to Playford, Parkes corresp, Mitchell Library, A932, p. 202.

In parliament, Parkes described this turn of events as a “very ugly” manifestation of the Chinese question, and one “over which this Government or this Parliament has no control whatever, and it rests entirely with the Government of South Australia to deal with this new phase of the question”.<sup>31</sup> Parkes had his Governor send a complaint about

the strong feeling in New South Wales caused by the news that a large Chinese settlement existed in Port Darwin, and the indignation caused by so large an influx of Chinamen having been permitted by the Government of South Australia.<sup>32</sup>

From the conservative Fysh in Tasmania, came a warning that this was not simply a South Australian question, but “a matter of Australasian concern.” He expected “to learn that joint legislature has provided or will be asked to provide for its restriction within moderate bounds.”<sup>33</sup> In response, Playford made it clear that he was counting on elections for a third of the Upper House, due in April 1888, to shift the political balance towards restriction.<sup>34</sup> The Victorian Premier expressed his concerns to CC Kingston, the South Australian Attorney-General, personally.<sup>35</sup> Did this intercolonial response create a crisis for the South Australian cabinet? It is impossible to know from this distance, but the archives record three separate cabinet meetings over just five days, on 23, 24

---

<sup>31</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 31, p. 3042 (Thursday 1 March 1888).

<sup>32</sup> The words quoted are Carrington’s, reporting back to Parkes, 21 May 1888, Parkes corresp, A977 (date order).

<sup>33</sup> Telegram from Colonial Secretary Tasmania to Chief Sec SA, 21 February 1888, State Records SA, letter 1888/234, GRG 24/6, box 397.

<sup>34</sup> Telegram from Premier SA (Playford) to Premier Tasmania, 21 February 1888, State Records SA, GRG 24/28, vol. 7 (1888), p. 54. Playford also told Parkes privately that he didn’t believe that the Chinese government was behind the arrival of Chinese people in Darwin. See letter 3 March 1888 Playford to Parkes, Parkes corresp, Mitchell Library, A926, p. 580.

<sup>35</sup> Telegram from Gillies to Griffith, 22 February 1888, Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1.

and 27 February.<sup>36</sup> The primary South Australian response was to declare that it would impose a £10 poll tax on all Chinese entering Darwin after 1 March, ask for parliamentary approval for this imposition, and then telegraph Hong Kong and Chinese ports warning of this measure. It also declared all Chinese ports infected with smallpox, which meant delaying all ships with Chinese passengers for Darwin for an extra twenty-one days at great cost to the shipping companies, in an attempt to discourage them landing Chinese people at Darwin.<sup>37</sup> When Tasmania's Fysh received Playford's reply, he reported back to Griffith – the other colonies were organising to discipline South Australia.

## Please explain

It was around 17 March 1888, into this environment of growing paranoia and determination to legislate to prohibit all Chinese immigration, that a letter arrived from the British Colonial Office which profoundly challenged the colonial governments and their anti-Chinese policies. The letter contained a protest by the Chinese Minister at London against the treatment of Chinese subjects by Australia's colonial governments. In particular, Lew-ta-Jen objected to the £10 poll tax, which was not imposed on the subjects of any other power, and complained of the Crown's failure to veto such discriminatory measures. The Chinese government therefore called on Britain to inquire into Australia's anti-Chinese laws "with a view to the elimination of any part of them which

---

<sup>36</sup> Letters 88/266 and 88/284, SA State Records, GRG 24/6.

<sup>37</sup> See Playford's telegram to Gillies, 29 February 1888, State Records SA, letter 1888/295, GRG 24/6, box 397.

may be found to be at variance with Treaty obligations and international usage".<sup>38</sup> As if to indicate its willingness to undertake such elimination, the Colonial Office demanded an explanation from each of the colonies. The replies produced by each of the colonial governments – from which I have drawn throughout this thesis – stand as classic statements of the position of the governing elites in the colonies.

There is no doubt that the "Please explain" from London sharply radicalised the colonial governments on the question of Chinese immigration. Some months later, South Australian Premier, Tom Playford, would say that this action "led to the feeling amongst all the colonies that in this matter they should act in concert," and "rendered it necessary to...give forth no uncertain sound, and to show what their desires really were."<sup>39</sup>

However, at exactly the same time that the "Please explain" letter arrived in Australia, so did news that the United States of America had signed a new treaty with China, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese labourers for twenty years.<sup>40</sup> The combination of the two was to create doubts in the mind of the

---

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Chinese Minister in London, Lew-ta-Jen to Foreign Minister, Lord Salisbury, London, dated 12 December 1887, and letter from Sec State Colonies London, HT Holland to Colonial governors, dated 23 January 1888, NSWLA *V&P* 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 221; Qld LA *V&P* 1888, vol. 3, p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 198.

<sup>40</sup> The treaty was news in Australia within days, and discussed (and dismissed) by the *SMH* in its editorial of 24 April 1888, p. 7, col. 1. The text of the treaty was published in the *New York Tribune* on 28 March, see Qld *V&P* 1888, vol. 3, pp. 201-4, and in the *SMH* on 9 May 1888, p. 6, cols. 2-4. By 22 March the new treaty was featuring in government considerations, see Letter from Gillies to Parkes, 22 March 1888, in NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary's special bundles). The treaty was discussed at the time in Sir John Pope Hennessy, "The Chinese in Australia", *The Nineteenth Century*, 1888 (cMay), pp. 617-9, found in volume, "Nineteenth century : Australasia [extracts]", Mitchell Library.

Victorian Premier, who promptly wrote to the other premiers, questioning whether their existing agreement to pass prohibitory legislation was necessarily the best approach. He thought the British government might persuade the Chinese emperor to prohibit emigration to Australia, “possibly in exchange for some small concession (such as has been recently sought in Burmah)”. By contrast, “legislative measures of sufficient stringency to effect our purpose, might engender an international bitterness which, sooner or later, might find means to express itself.” Gillies was encouraged that the Chinese had seemed willing to sign such a treaty with the United States.<sup>41</sup> Griffith thought a treaty with China would have little effect in preventing the emigration of Chinese people to Australia.<sup>42</sup> Playford too was unmoved; while in favour of seeking the cooperation of the Chinese government, he wanted local legislation: “if joint action by all Colonies cannot be secured then each should act alone at the same time[;] we purpose so soon as parliament meets taking action for restricting the influx of Chinese into Northern Territory.”<sup>43</sup>

For his part, Parkes clearly saw an opportunity to discipline the Colonial Office, and to contain a powerful argument against new legislation from within the ruling class – the argument that anti-Chinese laws threatened Britain’s international diplomacy. He allowed Britain a brief opportunity to solve the “problem” as defined by the Australian ruling class, through renegotiating its treaty with China. Where all the other colonies sent their replies by mail, which took six weeks to reach London, Parkes telegraphed his six hundred word

---

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Gillies to Parkes, 22 March 1888, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary special bundles); Letter from Gillies to Griffith, 23 March 1888, Qld State Archives, PRV7188-1-1.

<sup>42</sup> Griffith to Gillies, 7 April 1888, QSA, PRV7188-1-1.

<sup>43</sup> Telegram from Playford to Gillies, 3 April 1888, Public Records Office Vic, letter no. P88/1078 found at 88/1160, in VPRS 1163/P0/141.

reply, an exercise that must have cost around £300 – three times a labourer’s annual wages, or around \$90,000 in 2006 values. After warning that “owing to recent occurrences severer measures are now demanded throughout all the colonies” – not a message London was hoping to hear – he moved to complain that since

we have no voice in the making of Treaties it seems only just that our interests should be considered and protected by those who exercise that power. We learn by public report that the Government of the United States has entered into a Treaty with the Government of China by which Chinese immigration into America is no longer permitted. We fail to see why Australia may not be similarly protected.<sup>44</sup>

He then requested “that immediate steps be taken to open such negotiations with the Emperor of China as will result in permanent security to the Australian colonies from the disturbance of Chinese immigration in any form”, and warned:

The matter is too grave and urgent to admit of long delay. However desirable it may be to avoid the irritation and conflict of interests which may arise from local legislation of a drastic character, if protection cannot be afforded as now sought, the Australian Parliaments must act from the force of public opinion in devising measures to defend the colonies from consequences which they cannot relax in their efforts to avert.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Telegram from Parkes to Secretary State Colonies, 31 March 1888, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary special bundles); published in Qld LA V&P 1888, vol. 3, pp. 193-4.

<sup>45</sup> Telegram from Parkes to Secretary State Colonies, 31 March 1888, NSW State Records, 4/884.1 (Colonial Secretary special bundles); published in Qld LA V&P 1888, vol. 3, pp. 193-4.



Here was the sting in the tail of Parkes' moderation. For those conservatives who advocated reliance on a change in the treaties between China and Britain – such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Gillies – Parkes delivered London a formal request for negotiations. But he also demanded an immediate response, an urgency he backed by spending an enormous sum to telegraph his position, and warned London that if it did not fall into line quickly, the Australians would take matters into their own hands. In the tumult that followed, the failure of London to respond adequately, or to understand the warning they had been given, was Parkes' most effective weapon in dealing with conservatives who were subsequently outraged by his actions.<sup>46</sup> Five days after the despatch of the long telegram, he made a major statement to parliament, in which he linked the visit of the Chinese Commissioners, the story about organised Chinese migration to Darwin, and the complaint from the Chinese Minister in London:

from my observation of the course of events for some months past, I was inclined to think that Chinese settlement in Australia was assuming a form entirely new. I connected my observation with the visits of the Chinese commissioners some months ago, and... I ventured then to express the opinion that it appeared a very likely fact that the Chinese Government were privy to what was taking place in the Northern Territory, and that very probably it might be the design of a considerable number of Chinese to form a settlement in some remote part of the Australian territory – that is, remote from the European population –

---

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, the letter of the South Australian Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Way, to the President of the NSW Legislative Council, Sir Alfred Stephen, 5 June 1888. Way excoriated Parkes' actions in preventing Chinese from landing at Sydney Harbour, and ramming through his new, exclusionary, anti-Chinese bill, but also commented: "the Home Govt laid itself open to just and severe rebuke for its discourteous & apathetic negligence in sending no reply to the Telegram for over six weeks!" Way correspondence, SLSA, PRG 30/8.

where they might become strong enough to form, in the course of time, a kind of Chinese colony...<sup>47</sup>

For Parkes, therefore, the Chinese complaint was no surprise, rather “a link in the chain of events” which confirmed his belief that the Chinese were planning their own Australian colonies.

Parkes further prepared the ground for presumptuous action with an inflammatory speech given to the citizens of Wagga Wagga on Saturday 7 April 1888. He pointed to the dangerous world situation, “the extraordinary disposition on the part of the largest Powers in the world to array themselves in arms”, and the ability of European powers to put 20 million men in the field. As if this were not bad enough, “there is a Power, hitherto chiefly known as a barbarous Power, which is so rapidly creating armies and a formidable navy”. He meant, of course, “the Empire of China”,<sup>48</sup> with its new armies and formidable navy, and claimed it had agents within Australian society:

Those amongst us who have only been accustomed to regard the poor Chinaman that perhaps struggles through the streets of Wagga with his baskets filled with vegetables or fruit, and who have been accustomed to look down upon him, will, after I sit down, regard him, I think in a new light, because I shall be able to show that he represents here a great Power...which has risen up to be one of the most formidable Powers in the world.

In other words, the Chinese in Australia were a strategic threat; by extension, every extra Chinese person added to the Australian population was an agent of

---

<sup>47</sup> *NSWPD*, vol. 31, p. 3788.

<sup>48</sup> All quotes from this speech are from *SMH* 9 April 1888, p. 3.

the Chinese emperor. Parkes outlined the strategic dimension of population, pointing out that whilst the total population – and here he meant, of course, the total European population – of all the Australasian colonies was just three and a half million, the population of China was some 400 million. “That is a fact which I desire to impress upon you, so that it may be carried home by you and communicated to your acquaintances.” He compared China’s 400 million with the 241 million of the great powers of Europe, and the 50 million Americans, to show “how incomparably preponderating is the power of China in mere population.”

But China’s power was no longer purely human and Parkes outlined in detail China’s military transformation. “She has now some of the finest armour-plated ships floating on the sea”, and he went on to list tonnages, the thickness of their armour, the speed of the Chinese warships, and all the specifications of their massive guns. He described China’s new *national* army; and how China had begun the manufacture of guns, ships of war and all the materials of war. This long and detailed exposition was to make clear, “what that power is which must presumably protect Chinamen wandering about the colonies.” Parkes went on to refer to the complaint made by the Chinese Minister in London, “and the clear conception of national rights that pervades it.” In other words, if Chinese people settled in Australia in significant numbers, the colonies would soon find themselves reckoning with the great military power protecting them. He reminded his listeners that barely decades ago, England had used its military power to force China to accept the entry of English citizens, and how thinly settled the European population was in Australia; and quoted Napoleon to the effect that: “if the Chinese nation once learnt the art of shipbuilding and the use of European arms, they would be able to conquer the world.” Hence, the question of Chinese immigration was not simply a colonial one, but one “in

which the interests of the whole [British] Empire will be concerned." In all this, Parkes disdained any intention of whipping up a pogrom against the Chinese; he was at pains to ensure that his listeners knew that the Government was on the case, and warned against interfering with it. "I trust," he concluded, "you will be content to leave it in the hands of the Government."

The Governor, Lord Carrington, took the extraordinary step of publicly supporting the position Parkes had taken at the annual Commemoration of the University of Sydney. Here was assembled a considerable section of the commercial and professional classes of Sydney, watching their privileged children graduate. After a very long speech by the Chancellor, Sir William Manning, Lord Carrington rose to congratulate the new graduates, and to enthuse about the role they would play in the life and development of their young colony. This led him to the "Chinese Question":

For the first time in the history of this country, I believe, Australia is now compelled by force of circumstances to have a foreign policy, and I believe in the main that Australia on the Chinese question has come to a unanimous decision. (Cheers.) And it is with great pride and satisfaction that I have read the memorandum by our own Premier, and the memoranda of those two eminent statesmen who are the elected and recognised mouthpieces of public opinion in Victoria and Queensland. Nothing is more calculated to effect a final and satisfactory settlement of a difficult, and what might be a dangerous, question than the dignity and resolution of these utterances.<sup>49</sup>

Carrington described his role as something far beyond that of a mere colonial official; his duty was "to transmit and support the national ideas, the national

---

<sup>49</sup> *SMH* 16 April 1888, p. 4, col. 1.

aims and ambitions, and the undoubted national rights of this glorious country”.

In private, Carrington wrote to Knutsford to warn him of the dangers of inactivity. On 19 April, with the “loud cheers” of Sydney University still ringing in his ears, he warned that “All sorts and conditions of men” agree that the Chinese had to be kept out; that it was not “a cry got up for political purposes” but “a deeply founded feeling and belief of the vast majority of the Colonists”, and emphasised that he was relaying “what I know to be the view taken by the leading men of all sections of the community”.<sup>50</sup>

On 23 April, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a telegram from London which purported to summarise Knutsford’s reply to Parkes’ telegram, that “the proposal to exclude Chinese from Australia for a period of 20 years, presents a serious international difficulty.”<sup>51</sup> The paper was infuriated at this response, and dredged up a series of British slights against Australian interests, beginning with the New Guinea debacle. As far as it was concerned, the issue was not the Anglo-Chinese treaty, but “the question of protecting Australia from the threatened Mongolian invasion. We looked to the Home Government for help, and it is unsatisfactory to find so palpable an indisposition to give us assistance.” The paper could not fathom London’s inability to understand the clear warning in Parkes’ message:

---

<sup>50</sup> Carrington to Sec of State for Colonies, 19 April 1888, in “Lord Carrington’s Private Notes on the Chinese Crisis in New South Wales, 1888”, Onslow family papers, Surrey Record Office, Guildford Branch, box 173/6, item 27, in AJCP reel M1840, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> *SMH* 23 April 1888, p. 7, col. 6.

It may be imagined in official circles at home that we have been seized with a sudden attack of Chinese fever, which will subside if it is not taken too much notice of. Our Government and the Governments of the other colonies must make it their business to undeceive the Home authorities on this point.<sup>52</sup>

The *Herald* advocated immediate legislation: "Parliamentary action would show that the Australian people are in earnest, and might even induce the Imperial Government to attempt the solution of "a serious international difficulty.'" In public, Parkes presented an unflappable front but, behind the scenes, there was anxiety over these press reports. Carrington sent Parkes a series of notes on the issue; on 22 April he wrote to Parkes:

Nothing has reached me from Sec of State. If you have no news from your Agent General we may I think take it for granted it is only an [sic] newspaper sensation. As Ld Knutsford would hardly give any information on such a subject to the Press.<sup>53</sup>

Four days before the arrival of the *Afghan* in Melbourne, an even more anxious Carrington wrote to London to warn that press reports that the imperial government refused to negotiate "have caused great excitement", emphasising "how very strong the feeling is in New South Wales amongst all sorts and conditions of men with regard to the influx of Chinese." He warned Knutsford to be careful of the advice he was receiving: "The only man who does not see the depth of public feeling is Lord Normanby", he wrote, referring to the previous Victorian Governor, who had been visiting the colonies for the centenary celebrations.

---

<sup>52</sup> *SMH* 24 April 1888, p. 6, col. 6 to p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Parkes corresp, A976 (date order).

There is no fear of violence towards the Chinese who are here now; but any attempt by a contractor to land 500 of them in Australia would be certainly resisted by force. This is not my individual opinion, but every important person in every class assures me of it...<sup>54</sup>

Carrington then left for Norfolk Island, leaving the *Afghan* crisis to erupt in his absence.

## The *Afghan* crisis

The *Afghan* crisis of April/May 1888 is rightly seen as an iconic moment in the history of the White Australia policy – indeed, in the history of Australia – the moment when colonial governments used their executive power to stop Chinese people landing at Melbourne and Sydney – and, indeed, Adelaide as well.<sup>55</sup> With this action, they ushered in a new era of racial exclusion. Six weeks later, all six Australian governments would meet at Sydney and agree on new measures to virtually prohibit Chinese immigration, which were then passed into law over the next 18 months in all colonial parliaments except Tasmania.

The crisis began when the *Afghan* sailed into Port Phillip Bay on Friday 27 April 1888, with 268 Chinese people on board – 67 for Melbourne, 89 for Sydney and

---

<sup>54</sup> Carrington to Sir Robert Herbert, Principal Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 23 April 1888 in Lord Carrington's Private Notes, AJCP reel M1840, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> For Adelaide, see Margaret Patricia Rendell, "The Chinese in South Australia and the Northern Territory in the Nineteenth Century: A study of the social, economic and legislative attitudes adopted towards the Chinese in the colony", MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1952, pp. 151-53.

105 for New Zealand. Of the 67 bound for Melbourne, 58 presented naturalisation papers to customs officials. Acting under instructions from the Chief Secretary, customs refused to recognise *any* papers that the holders could not prove were theirs; effectively barring all of them. While it is certain that some were fraudulent, a great injustice was inflicted on most of the Chinese people who were indeed attempting to return to their Victorian homes. Under Victoria's 1881 law, the *Afghan*, being 1400 tons tare, was only entitled to bring 14 Chinese immigrants without valid papers, and these immigrants were then liable for a poll (entry) tax of £10 each. Government officials told the captain that he had broken the law, and was liable to a possible fine of £5300. They offered to waive any prosecution if he took all the Chinese out of Melbourne, an offer he accepted after disembarking 100 Chinese people for New Zealand and three for Tasmania. Then, on the afternoon of Thursday 3 April, the *Afghan* sailed for Sydney.

The Victorian government's action created something of a crisis for the other southern colonies; they either had to match Gillies' action, or they would be undermining it. In the meantime, the Colonial Office had telegraphed Sydney, insisting that the Chinese on the *Afghan* be allowed to land.<sup>56</sup> With the ship still in Melbourne, Parkes resisted this pressure: "I am disposed to take any step whatever to prohibit practically the introduction of Chinese into this country."<sup>57</sup> But given rising tensions in Europe, Parkes also saw the imperial complications that might arise from asserting an independent Australian position on excluding the Chinese, and warned of possible imperial interference:

---

<sup>56</sup> Knutsford telegram to Governor NSW, 1 May 1888, in Lord Carrington's Private Notes, AJCP reel M1840, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> 2 May 1888, *NSWPD* vol. 32, p. 4418.



It is obvious that as a matter of policy Great Britain has the deepest interest in cultivating an alliance with China. Any one who looks upon the affairs of the world must see that it is of great importance that Great Britain should be in alliance with China as against the barbarous power of Russia. Hence the self-imposed duty of the Australias to protect themselves in this matter will necessarily bring them, I am afraid, into conflict with one of the most important features of imperial policy.<sup>58</sup>

The window of opportunity that Parkes had so generously given Britain to take control of the issue and negotiate with China on behalf of the colonies, was rapidly closing. The colonies were taking control of immigration policy.

By this time, news of the extreme Victorian response to a boatload of Chinese people had spread, and a mass anti-Chinese meeting was called at Sydney Town Hall for the evening of 3 April. Some five thousand people turned up, with 2000 crammed into the hall itself, and the remainder holding a protest meeting outside. At the conclusion of the outside meeting, it marched up to Parliament House to demand the government follow the Victorian example and prevent any of the Chinese from landing. Participants in the official meeting followed, led by the Mayor and several MLAs. In the excitement, the protestors forced their way inside the gates around Parliament House, and even into the building itself. In subsequent debates, this attempt at “intimidating” members of parliament, and the role of the Mayor in supposedly leading the marchers, induced some fine outrage amongst legislative councillors. Sir Henry Parkes too was outraged, and refused to meet a deputation from the meeting, but eventually sent out a statement that he would prevent the Chinese landing. Just

---

<sup>58</sup> 2 May 1888, *NSWPD* vol. 32, p. 4418.

as interestingly the *Sydney Morning Herald* – unlike members of the Legislative Council – signally failed to express outrage at the behaviour of the marchers.<sup>59</sup>

It is pretty clear that the Parkes government had already decided to follow the Victorian lead and prevent Chinese people from landing in Sydney. The morning after the rally, the *Tsinan* arrived in Sydney with 144 Chinese passengers, and was forced into quarantine, with a police guard organised to stop them disembarking. The *Afghan* arrived two days later. Parkes had already warned the major shipping lines that Chinese passengers would not be allowed to land, and they had replied, accepting that they would return all Chinese to Hong Kong, provided that the government paid the passage of all the Chinese with valid naturalisation and exemption certificates. To this the government agreed; so when the *Tsinan* and *Afghan* arrived in Sydney, the Collector of Customs dutifully inspected the naturalisation and exemption certificates. Five passengers from the *Afghan* who presented “valid” naturalisation papers were allowed off the ship; as were three from the *Tsinan*, while the papers of two others were rejected.<sup>60</sup> Naturalisation conferred a limited measure of local British citizenship, something Parkes took far more seriously than Duncan Gillies in Victoria. Of the 75 passengers on the *Afghan* who presented exemption tickets, 48 were judged genuine; as were 8 of the 21 of those from the *Tsinan*. According to the deal done between Parkes and the shipping companies, this would mean the government paying for the return of 56, while the shipping companies paid for the others. Chinese passengers for New Zealand and Queensland were transferred to other ships heading for those destinations. At

---

<sup>59</sup> *SMH* editorial, 4 May 1888, p. 6, col. 6 to p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *SMH* 10 May 1888, p. 5, col. 3; 11 May, p. 4, col. 1.

the start of the crisis in Sydney, the steamship managers were pleased; they felt that:

the action of the Victorian Government in the matter of Chinese has been arbitrary and unjust, but they have no complaints to make against the New South Wales Government, which they consider has, under the circumstances, met them very fairly in the matter.<sup>61</sup>

For its part, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was hopeful that the Chinese passengers on the two ships “may be got rid of without any further trouble”, though it recognised that administrative action could only deal with problems in the short term, and it worried about what might happen if the Chinese refused to accept their fate. On Tuesday 8 May, the *Herald* optimistically declared that:

it would seem that the Chinese difficulty is temporarily overcome. The action taken by the Australian Governments may have strained the law, as we believe it has; but it has done something else – it has disgusted the steamship companies with the traffic, and they have resolved to bring no more Chinese to these colonies until the question has been definitely settled.<sup>62</sup>

In the event, it was the Chinese passengers who brought the government undone. They refused to allow themselves to be transferred to a rough hulk, the *Hero*, which lacked any decent accommodation for them; nor would they agree to be held at the Quarantine Station so that the ships could unload at the wharves. Several appeals by Sydney’s Chinese leader, Mei Quong Tart, failed to convince them. It seems that the Chinese passengers had a rather finer sense of

---

<sup>61</sup> *SMH* 8 May 1888, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH* 8 May 1888, p. 7, col. 2.

the meaning of personal freedom than the ruling class ideologists or politicians of the Australian colonies gave them credit for. After several days in which the ships were unable to unload, the government decided to mobilise dozens of extra police on the wharves to prevent any Chinese person escaping while unloading proceeded. The government's intransigence angered the two captains and led to a case for *habeas corpus* in the Supreme Court on behalf of all those with exemption certificates the government had accepted as valid. The dishonest and arbitrary action of the Victorian government, in refusing to acknowledge the validity of any of the naturalisation or exemption certificates, had protected it from such a proceeding. Moreover, its actions were later sanctioned by the Privy Council in London. One of the *Afghan* passengers, Chun Teong Toy, successfully sued the Victorian government for refusing to allow him to land, but his victory in the Victorian Supreme Court was overturned on appeal to the Privy Council, which found that aliens had no right to admission into a British colony.<sup>63</sup>

The government's inability to get the *Afghan* and *Tsinan* unloaded quickly, and the harbour cleared of Chinese passengers, and the consequent legal action, created a crisis in New South Wales. While this debacle was taking place, two more ships arrived with Chinese passengers. The *Menmuir* with 55 Chinese passengers, 27 booked for Sydney, 15 with exemption certificates, had also been turned away from Melbourne without any Chinese being allowed to land, while the *Guthrie* arrived with 163 Chinese passengers. The stakes were further raised by the arrival of another telegram from Lord Knutsford, transmitting a

---

<sup>63</sup> Willard, p. 87. The continuing relevance of this landmark decision can be seen in Kim Rubenstein, "Citizenship and the Centenary – Inclusion and exclusion in 20th century Australia", *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 24, 2000 [online] <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MULR/2000/24.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]

new complaint from the Chinese Minister in London, and demanding that New South Wales telegraph back the numbers refused permission to land, and the regulations and laws by which landing was refused.<sup>64</sup>

This was, in a sense, the moment Parkes had foreseen, and dreaded. If the Chinese were to be excluded, the British attempt to discipline Australia had to be rebuffed, and the intervention of the courts had to be prevented. He immediately warned London that:

This Government has decided at all hazards to prevent Chinese landing in this colony, except such as hold certificates of naturalisation, proved after strict examination not to be fraudulent, as many are. Three ships now in port; others expected. The Government has the almost unanimous support of Parliament and people in this urgent matter.<sup>65</sup>

He then went into Parliament and gave notice of a draconian new Chinese immigration bill. Part of this bill was the effective prohibition Parkes had been promising for six months. While the tonnage restriction would be unchanged, with one Chinese person admitted for every 100 tons of a ship's tare – this was raised to 300 tons by amendment – the colony would no longer recognise the exemption certificates it had issued, and which had been the focus of significant fraud. The poll tax would be raised to £100, a year's salary for an average worker, an onerous £20 a year fee imposed for a licence to live in the colony, and new Chinese residents would be required to carry passports, register with the authorities, and have severe limits imposed on where they could live – Sydney, Newcastle, and five other places to be gazetted, a reflection of the

---

<sup>64</sup> *NSWPD* 15 May 1888, vol. 32, p. 469.

<sup>65</sup> *NSWPD* 15 May 1888, vol. 32, p. 469.

seven cities in which British people could live in China. The penalty for bringing more Chinese to a port than the number allowed would be a staggering £500. Parkes was telling both London and Peking that forcing the colonies to respect the provisions of the treaty would not necessarily improve life for Chinese people in the colonies. Finally, in anticipation of a possible defeat in the Supreme Court, operation of the bill was backdated to 1 May and the government indemnified for all actions possibly deemed illegal taken to limit Chinese immigration since then. In the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday 16 May 1888, the bill was pushed through all stages in one night, the assembly sitting till 7am the next day.

Parkes' speech introducing the bill became one of the most controversial ever delivered in an Australian parliament. They had, he said, to deal with a crisis not of their own making:

Can this thing be allowed to go on, this gangrene in the body politic, this seed of disturbance in the midst of society? No friend of the social fabric in this country can for a moment say that this thing can be permitted to go on without danger to the peace, to the law, to the good order and stability of society itself.<sup>66</sup>

To those who attacked him for breaking the law, he was defiant:

You tell me about obedience to the law; you tell me that because I occupy the great place which I am permitted to occupy in this country, that I am to set an example of obedience to the law. I say, in reply, that there is one

---

<sup>66</sup> NSWPD vol. 32, p. 4782. For the entire speech see pp. 4781-89, or Sir Henry Parkes, *Fifty years in the making of Australian history*, 2 vols, Books for Libraries Press, Freeport NY, 1971 (orig 1892), pp. 477ff.

law which overrides all others, and that is the law of preserving the peace and welfare of civil society. Would you talk about a technical observance of the law if a plague was stalking in our midst – if a pestilence was sweeping off our population – if a famine was reducing the members of our households to skeletons?<sup>67</sup>

But of course nothing remotely so serious was happening. Parkes then raised the argument that Chinese labour competed unfairly with that of British people. This was a new rhetorical tactic for him; for decades he had championed assisted immigration which had precisely the effect of introducing competition with the labour of colonists, and since the late 1870s, he had fought a movement to get rid of assisted immigration. But now that the scheme had ended, this was a safe argument, and one that reflected the broader ruling class desire to colonise the continent with primarily British workers:

Can it be surprising to any of us that the mothers of those families, during a period of depression such as that which has passed over the country of late, look with something like aversion – with even stronger antipathy – towards the Chinaman, who is a direct competitor with her husband – the father of her children – and with the future of her household?<sup>68</sup>

He drew on the history of the crisis, starting with the Chinese minister's note to the British foreign minister: "he clearly was under the impression that he had only to make these representations to have the matters of which he complained put right." It was, he said, "because I believe that China is fast becoming a great power...that I do not wish to see the Chinese element increasing in our

---

<sup>67</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 32, p. 4782.

<sup>68</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 32, p. 4783.

midst.”<sup>69</sup> He retold the story of his long telegram to London, and London’s desultory response. It was, he declared, tantamount to negligence. The Australian colonies were

treated as if the wisest course was to let us alone and the excitement would die out, and there would be no need for anything to be done at all. I venture to say that a few other masterful displays of indifference like this on the part of the Secretary of State would do more than much more serious occurrences to sap the loyalty of these great countries. We can bear remonstrance, we can meet argument, we can make good our case against the world; but we cannot patiently stand to be treated with the frozen indifference of persons who consider some petty quarrel in a petty state of more importance than the gigantic interests of these magnificent colonies.<sup>70</sup>

The arrival of the *Afghan*, and the fuel this gave to “inflammatory influences” forced them to act, and they had no intention now of turning back from exclusion:

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 for ever, except under the restrictions imposed by the bill, which will amount, and which are intended to amount, to practical prohibition.<sup>71</sup>

Neither, he declared, would the law or the courts prevent them from keeping out the Chinese:

---

<sup>69</sup> NSWPD vol. 32, pp. 4783-4.

<sup>70</sup> NSWPD vol. 32, pp. 4785-6.

<sup>71</sup> NSWPD vol. 32, p. 4787.



I cast to the winds your permits of exemption; I care nothing about your cobweb of technical law; I am obeying a law far superior to any law which issued these permits, namely, the law of the preservation of society in New South Wales – so far as I have means, against every power that can be brought against me, I will carry out my pledge given on that night in writing to the free people of this country, and not allow these men to land.<sup>72</sup>

Right across Australia, conservatives were apoplectic at Parkes' disloyalty, and his "revolutionary" dismissal of the authority of the law. In fact Parkes was absolutely loyal to the British empire. When he had received a deputation from the Town Hall meeting of 3 May, he had challenged those in the deputation, such as the protectionist agitator, John Norton, who thought that Australia should separate from Britain:

if we separated from Great Britain to-morrow, we should be as helpless as children in regard to the Chinese... Her inexhaustible numbers, and the great advances she was making in the civilised arts, would make her a most formidable power, and she could, if she liked, make a Chinese settlement in Australia in spite of the colonies. It was a fortunate thing for ourselves, in this difficult question, that we were not separated from the great British Empire. It was preposterous to talk this way when there were only 3,000,000 people scattered over the continent, and the great Chinese Empire consisted of upwards of 400,000,000.<sup>73</sup>

To get their way on Chinese immigration, the colonial governments needed to impose their position on the British, and at the same time temper the growing tide of republicanism which had been boosted by discontent over the Chinese

---

<sup>72</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 32, p. 4787.

<sup>73</sup> *SMH* 5 May 1888, p. 11, col. 3.

and other questions. Parkes did it skifully. His one “disloyal” speech made him an icon of Australian nationalism, at the same time as he worked assiduously to maintain the imperial connection – a connection that was strengthened by the fear of China he promoted.

Given the mythology that surrounds the attitude of the *Sydney Morning Herald* towards Chinese immigration, it is interesting to note its response to these developments. “As regards its proposals for the amendment of the Chinese Restriction Act, we are with the Government in the main,” the paper declared, though it did not like the proposals oppressive of Chinese people already living in Australia, and those who might come. While it attacked Parkes’ “wild and foolish words”, it was at pains to explain them away: “The Premier was carried away by his subject, and used words that his calmer judgment will not approve.”<sup>74</sup> For his part, Lord Carrington wired London immediately asking permission to approve the proposed legislation.<sup>75</sup> Despite Australian fears, the Foreign Office agreed immediately to Carrington’s request, but he was not informed for a week.<sup>76</sup>

The reaction of the New South Wales Legislative Council to the crisis, Parkes’ speech, and the proposed legislation, was also highly discriminating. The Council refused to suspend standing orders and push the legislation through in a single day; it ended up taking three weeks to debate and amend the legislation, and several more weeks would pass before the two houses settled

---

<sup>74</sup> *SMH* 17 May 1888, p. 8, col. 5.

<sup>75</sup> “Lord Carrington’s Private Notes, AJCP reel M1840, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Kathleen J Melhuish, “Australia and British imperial policy: Colonial autonomy and the imperial idea, 1885-1902”, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1965, p. 389.

their differences over the bill. Member after member of the Legislative Council attacked the Mayor for his “leading” role in the protest of 3 May; as they did also the more populist elements of Parkes’ speech. A majority condemned the sections of the bill that imposed the licence fee on Chinese people, repudiated exemption certificates, limited where they lived, forced them to carry passports, and prevented the recent arrivals from suing the government for refusing to allow them to land. But on the broad principle of the bill – measures to effectively prohibit Chinese immigration – they were almost all with Parkes, and supported the clauses which would indemnify members of the government and the public service from loss in the case of legal action by Chinese passengers. Unlike South Australia, where the new anti-Chinese bill only narrowly passed the elected Assembly on its second reading, the unelected New South Wales Legislative Council passed it without division.

The Legislative Council of 1888 was somewhat different in composition to that of 1881. Pastoralists were less significant in its composition, while lawyers, businesspeople, politicians and even journalists had been appointed to its ranks. Its debate was, I believe, more reflective of the politics of the urban-based ruling class that had long ago emerged. There was less of the earlier, wild anti-working-class rhetoric; indeed, one of the distinctive features of the 1888 debate was a justification of the bill as one protecting the working class majority from competition with Chinese labour. The strategic, anti-slavery and homogeneity agendas also featured in the discussion. An early speaker was Andrew Garran, who had been editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for twelve years, 1873-85, elevated to the Legislative Council in 1887, and described by JA Froude in 1886

as “right-minded even to the extent of rigidity”.<sup>77</sup> His main reason for supporting the bill was:

the social argument, that is the inexpediency of having any large pariah class in the community – a class which never can, and never will, amalgamate with the rest of the community. It is an undesirable thing in a free country, with manhood suffrage, to have a large number of persons who cannot, or should not, be allowed to exercise the suffrage; who are, in fact, a sort of slave class. The Americans have gone before us in this respect. They are now suffering from the difficulties of having 7,000,000 negroes, nominally citizens, and yet socially outcasts. It is not expedient that we, beginning a new country in a new way, should expose ourselves to that evil.<sup>78</sup>

Garran was not convinced that there was any reason to panic; if the ability of Chinese people to sail to Australia was exploited to its maximum, the current shipping tonnage coming to Australia would allow only 735 new Chinese annually, hardly a major threat. While he would have preferred a more moderate measure, he was prepared to vote for more stringent restriction. His greatest concern was for Australian unity.<sup>79</sup>

The longest-serving member of the Council, Sir William Manning, agreed with the need for legislation and the dangers of allowing people to migrate who could not amalgamate. For him, racism was an inevitable part of human nature:

---

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in ADB entry on Garran by E. K. Bramsted; [online] <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040261b.htm>, accessed 7 October 2006.

<sup>78</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 33, pp. 5026ff (30 May 1888).

<sup>79</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 33, pp. 5027-9 (30 May 1888).

we all know from experience, coming, alas, too near home, the antagonism that exists between races. You cannot get races that are totally different from each other, to amalgamate. There will be a strong feeling against an alien race, an antagonism which it is impossible to suppress.<sup>80</sup>

Edmund Barton, later to become Australia's first Prime Minister, argued that the Chinese must be kept out to preserve racial homogeneity, but saw the real danger as coming, not from ships arriving in Sydney but from the "empty north", and the possibility that Chinese people entering through Darwin would then move overland:

We have on the northern coast of Australia large tracts of territory which present exceptional inducements to colonisation by Chinese; we have very little means of restricting their advance across the border; and when once the idea of colonisation is taken in hand – if it is seriously encouraged by the Government of the Chinese empire – there is no knowing to what extent the irruption of Chinese across the border might prevail unless it was checked.<sup>81</sup>

RE O'Connor, later to be appointed to Australia's first High Court, raised a common, and rising concern, that Chinese emigrants, having been excluded from the US, would now conclude that "the only outlet remaining for them is to these colonies." This danger was greatest through the Northern Territory:

It must be evident that in a part of the country so remote as the Northern Territory from the centres of government an influx of that kind means the stamping of that district as a Chinese settlement. Well, if it is possible

---

<sup>80</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 33, p. 5032 (30 May 1888).

<sup>81</sup> *NSWPD* vol. 33, p. 5101 (31 May 1888).

for China to get her foot, as it were, into the northern part of our territory in the insidious way in which this immigration has been accomplished, will any one say that there is not a serious danger in reference to the thousands of miles of sparsely populated borders separating the colonies? It will also be remembered that China herself has begun to regard these colonies in quite a new light.<sup>82</sup>

Cox was the only MLC to defend the Chinese; arguing that in his thirty years living on a goldfield, he had only seen Chinese people do a vast amount of good.<sup>83</sup> He was so isolated his comments went unanswered.

The final bill was passed on Thursday 5 July 1888, and signed into law by the Governor the following Wednesday. New South Wales had effectively shut the door to Chinese immigration, and indemnified the government for its arbitrary actions during the *Afghan* crisis.

## The significance of the anti-Chinese movements, 1886-1888

In the years since, the *Afghan* crisis has been portrayed as having been driven by a popular clamour against Chinese immigration, by pressure from the various anti-Chinese movements and in particular by trade union threats of violence made to the Victorian government during a deputation on 28 April 1888, and the wild protest action in Sydney on 3 May 1888 which invaded parliament.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> NSWPD, vol 33, pp. 5118-9 (31 May 1888).

<sup>83</sup> NSWPD vol. 33, p. 5111 (31 May 1888).

<sup>84</sup> IM Britain, "Victoria, the Chinese and the federal idea, 1887-1888", *ANU Historical Journal*, no. 6, November 1969, p. 49; Charles A Price, *The great white walls*, pp. 195, 268-9; Ann Curthoys,

There can be little doubt that the broad anti-Chinese campaign of demonstrations, petitions and meetings reflected a widespread, racist hostility to Chinese immigration, and it is clear that these actions also influenced some legislators – if in no other sense than they illustrated the extent of public feeling with which parliamentarians and governments must ultimately reckon.

Moreover, it is important to recognise that the ability of politicians, propagandists and activists to win the bulk of the population to some kind of racist worldview was central in facilitating the development of a racial, exclusionary policy. The loyalty of the mass of the population to “the empire”, “the white race”, and/or the myth of “British freedom”, was fundamental to ruling class strategies of colonisation and social control. Thus the anti-Chinese movements served to hegemonise a series of imperial strategies in the minds of ordinary people. But the argument that the anti-Chinese movements set the agenda regarding legislation or government policy in any more immediate or significant sense does not stand up to scrutiny.

As already demonstrated, the four major colonial governments had long resolved to introduce legislation to virtually prohibit Chinese immigration, and this resolve was a product of their own concerns, and not public agitation. The Chinese Commissioners’ visit, concern about British “appeasement” of China, and the various “scares” over the summer of 1887-8, created profound ruling class concern over Chinese immigration. From the liberal to the conservative, from the populist to the intellectual – the newspaper and magazine press of

---

“Liberalism and exclusionism: A prehistory of the White Australia policy” in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, culture and nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley (WA), 2003, p. 30.

Australia was overwhelmingly hostile to Chinese immigration, and supportive of further restriction, if not complete exclusion.

When we examine the individual movements against Chinese immigration, we find that they had considerable public support, but little direct impact on policy. Queensland's mass movement came first; from September 1886 to August 1887, there was a rolling series of mass public meetings, demonstrations and petitions against Chinese immigration, starting in Townsville, moving from North Queensland southwards, and culminating in an anti-Chinese conference in Brisbane in August 1887. The central activist in this movement, John Potts, claimed to have visited 29 centres of population and held upwards of 80 anti-Chinese meetings from September 1886 to October 1887, and he later visited Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, as well as other Queensland towns. The Intercolonial Trades Union Congress, held in Brisbane in March 1888, also focused heavily on the "Chinese question" and featured several hair-raising denunciations of the Chinese. Perhaps emboldened by the broader anti-Chinese campaign, whites in the north Queensland towns of Croydon (1886 and 1888), Etheridge (1888) and Normanton (1888) launched large-scale violent attacks on Chinese and Malay people.<sup>85</sup> The hysteria created over this period by the McIlwraith Conservatives' election campaign, the newspapers and the anti-Chinese movement led directly to the anti-Chinese riot in Brisbane on the evening of 5 May 1888 (briefly discussed in chapter 8).

---

<sup>85</sup> John Potts, *One year of anti-Chinese work in Queensland, with incidents of travel*, Brisbane, 1888; Andrew Markus, *Fear and hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp. 125-131, 149-151; Jacqui Donegan and Raymond Evans, "Running amok: The Normanton race riots of 1888 and the genesis of White Australia", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 71, Dec. 2001, pp. 83-98.



If we are seeking proof of widespread racism in Australian society, the Queensland movement provides it. And certainly, the anti-Chinese issue was used to win votes – primarily for the McIlwraith Conservatives at the 1888 election (as discussed in chapter 8). But there is no evidence that this movement shaped government policy. Both the rival parties in Queensland were hostile to Chinese immigration and had been for over a decade, and both were willing to cooperate with the other colonies to intensify restriction. When it came to appointing Queensland's representative to the Intercolonial Conference in Sydney in June 1888, the Liberal Premier was happy to appoint the Conservative John Murtagh Macrossan as Queensland's representative. Griffith's party had been defeated at the elections of May-June 1888, and the resumption of the Queensland parliament on 12 June, meant that until a few days before, it appeared that Queensland would be unrepresented.<sup>86</sup> At the last minute, and in consultation with McIlwraith, Griffith appointed Macrossan, telling McIlwraith, "Mr Macrossan's views have always been in the main the same as my own on this subject; & I infer...that you would be satisfied with the appointment of him alone as the representative of Queensland."<sup>87</sup>

If the anti-Chinese movement did not shape Queensland government policy before the Intercolonial conference, neither did it mobilise when the McIlwraith government's Bill for the further restriction of Chinese Immigration was reserved by the Administrator (Acting Governor), Sir Arthur Palmer, in November 1888, to the annoyance of the government. It would be another year

---

<sup>86</sup> Letters from Griffith to Playford, 1 June 1888, 4 June 1888, 6 June 1888, State Records SA, GRG 24/6 Chief Secretary inward correspondence, 399, found at 1888/0764.

<sup>87</sup> Letter SW Griffith to Thomas McIlwraith, 6 June 1888, in Papers of Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Oxley Library, OM64-19/131, no 1755.

before a bill acceptable to London was passed and approved, during which time there was no response from the anti-Chinese movement.

The anti-Chinese movement in Victoria was the next most substantial in this period, but according to Andrew Markus, from mid-1887 to mid-1888, it took all the movement's resources and energy to run a series of large and successful public meetings on the issue, in Melbourne's suburbs and various regional centres.<sup>88</sup> When the *Afghan* arrived in Melbourne, the Trades Hall Council organised a deputation to the Premier, warning that it was "quite possible that violent measures would be taken to prevent their landing."<sup>89</sup> Their ultimatum was condemned by Gillies and ineffectual anyway; Customs officers had already moved to prevent any Chinese people landing, and Gillies rejected the other demands of the delegation. To that point, the anti-Chinese movement had organised no mass protest action; its plan had been to hold a mass rally at Melbourne Town Hall as the culmination of all its local meetings, but by the time this final rally was held, all the movement could do was celebrate a victory it had had little part in shaping.<sup>90</sup> RJ Lewis has argued that the Victorian government was resolved to act independently of representations made to it by the anti-Chinese movement and the trade unions, and that the legislative action the government did take bore little resemblance to the demands of the movement.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Andrew Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp. 132-5.

<sup>89</sup> Report of deputation of members of the Trades Hall Council, Melbourne, to the Victorian Premier, Duncan Gillies, on 28 April 1888. In VPRS 1163/P0/154, letter P88/1449 with P88/2757; also IM Britain, *Victoria, the Chinese and the federal idea*, p. 49.

<sup>90</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, p. 143.

<sup>91</sup> Robert J Lewis, "'Strangers within the gates': Victorian governments and non-Europeans, 1880-1908", MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1982, pp. 59-101. This is one of the most serious and significant treatments of the *Afghan* crisis. Lewis relies almost entirely on archival

In Sydney, the anti-Chinese movement barely existed as an independent entity in 1887-88. Nor was Chinese immigration the dominant political issue. The conflict over free trade and protection was the issue that divided the Parkes government and the official opposition, led by George Dibbs, in an increasingly bitter conflict. Outside parliament mobilisation on the fiscal issue was far more sustained and extensive than mobilisation against Chinese immigration, with the singular exception of the mass anti-Chinese demonstration of 2 June 1888. There were constant public meetings and polemics on the fiscal issue, and a series of by-elections in 1887-88 provided both sides with opportunities to mobilise their supporters and continue the debate, to the point that it drowned out many other issues. On Monday 14 May 1888, for instance, both sides were campaigning for the Central Cumberland by-election, with parliamentary leaders on both sides supporting their candidates at separate meetings at which opponents were also present. On the same evening, the Premier and his Minister for Mines spoke at an outdoor meeting of 2000 people for the Balmain Free Trade Association, and faced some disruption.<sup>92</sup> Just this one day's agitation probably involved as many people (at the three events) as the anti-Chinese meeting at the Town Hall twelve days earlier.

One reason the official Sydney anti-Chinese committee was of little consequence is that it was a creature of the protectionist movement. At one of

---

sources to argue that the Victorian government acted in response to the widespread defrauding of exemption certificates. While his work has the great virtue of serious empirical research, it almost entirely ignores the broader political context in which restriction and exclusion were discussed by the ruling class. The result is that we are expected to believe that an extreme and potentially dangerous strategy was pursued by the Gillies government to solve a modest administrative problem. This is no more credible than the argument that the government was intimidated by trade union/anti-Chinese mobilisations.

<sup>92</sup> *SMH* 15 May 1888, p. 6, col. 4 and p. 7, col. 3.

its few public meetings, in October 1887, all the speakers were prominent protectionist agitators such as William Richardson, John Norton, RC Luscombe and Ninian Melville MLA. When Luscombe declared that “free traders could not conscientiously belong to the league”, there was dissension in the audience and many people walked out.<sup>93</sup> A subsequent organising meeting was small, and the chairperson lamented that while “It was not difficult to get patrons”, “what the league wanted was a hard-working committee.”<sup>94</sup> The gap between the so-called anti-Chinese League and the trade union movement can be seen in arrangements for the Town Hall meeting in early May 1888. It was called for the same evening as an important meeting of the Trades and Labour Council to discuss proposed arbitration legislation to be moved by JH Carruthers MLA. On the night, the TLC quickly ended its meeting so that everyone could go to the anti-Chinese meeting, but their leaders were unable to reach the platform. John Norton, the Vice-President of the Anti-Chinese League had to apologise, and reassure the unions that the problem had been the crush inside the hall, and that “seats were duly reserved for the Trades and Labour Council, the Trades Hall Council, the Eight-hour Demonstration Committee, and the Building Trades Council”.<sup>95</sup>

Nevertheless, the Sydney anti-Chinese movement did hold three major protest events: the Town Hall public meeting and march to Parliament House on 3 May, already discussed, a mass protest against Chinese immigration on 2 June, and another anti-Chinese rally four weeks later. The protest on 2 June was the largest of these. The march from Circular Quay involved some thousands of

---

<sup>93</sup> *SMH* 5 October 1887, p. 6, col. 4.

<sup>94</sup> *SMH* 18 Oct 1887, p. 7, col. 4.

<sup>95</sup> *SMH* 4 May 1888, p. 8, col. 2.

people and an estimated fifty thousand assembled in the Domain for speeches. However, the very advertising for the protest suggests its limited role and significance; people were asked to come along and “support Sir Henry Parkes’ restriction bill now before Parliament”.<sup>96</sup> In essence, the militantly free trade Parkes had the initiative; the protectionist-dominated anti-Chinese League was reduced to galvanising popular support for him. They had spectacular success on 2 June, but in the days afterwards, there was little apparent effect. Indeed, the *Sydney Morning Herald* ignored the protest in its editorial (as distinct from its news) columns, despite its extraordinary and historic size, except to use the peaceful nature of the protest to point out how exaggerated the Premier’s warnings of imminent social disorder had been.<sup>97</sup> Andrew Markus sees the anti-Chinese movement entering a new phase after the success of its mass rally on 2 June; “At a meeting on 7 June the league decided to secure a trade union base and each union was invited to send one delegate to sit permanently on the executive committee.”<sup>98</sup> Markus sees this move as an attempt to get the unions to pay for the extravagance of the anti-Chinese committee; but it also illustrates the distance between the official organisers of the movement, and the trade unions. The final mass rally of 30 June was also massive in size, but unlike the movement in 1878, the anti-Chinese League failed to raise enough money to pay its expenses, and was soon reduced to squabbling.<sup>99</sup>

Lastly, during the most significant struggle to impose a white Australia policy, the months it took the South Australian parliament to debate and pass its bill,

---

<sup>96</sup> *SMH* 31 May 1888, p. 14, col. 1.

<sup>97</sup> *SMH* 6 June 1888, p. 9, cols. 1-2.

<sup>98</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, p. 145.

<sup>99</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp. 147-48.

there was almost no anti-Chinese agitation of any substance in Adelaide, or anywhere else, focused on this bill.

The long tradition of seeing the anti-Chinese movements of working class people as responsible for the passage of exclusionary legislation has tended to undermine sensible discussion of them. Apart from hiding the agendas of the rich and powerful, this inherently implausible argument has tended to exaggerate the strength and significance of these movements, and the viciousness and hegemony of working class racism. For those pioneering historians who had to struggle even to put racism on the agenda as a central feature of Australian society, such an emphasis is understandable.<sup>100</sup> However, a credible history must deal with the contradictory quality of politics.

There is mounting evidence that there were varied attitudes towards Chinese people amongst working class Australians. There is extensive evidence of the pain suffered by Chinese people as a result of both Government discrimination and inhumanity and socially-sanctioned racism.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, the growth of Chinese community history is showing that, alongside occasional mass involvement in anti-Chinese petitions, meetings and demonstrations, there was

---

<sup>100</sup> Ray Evans and Kay Saunders discussed the problems of researching and writing about racism in Queensland in the early 1970s in "Preface to the 1988 edition", Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), pp. xi-xvii.

<sup>101</sup> Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1982, pp. 124-32; Kathryn Cronin, "'The yellow agony': Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland" in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland*, pp. 235-340; Raymond Evans, "The politics of leprosy: Race, disease and the rise of Labor" in Joanne Scott and Kay Saunders (eds), *The world's first Labor government*, Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane 2001, pp. 37-50.

a significant degree of tolerance, and some measure of friendship, in the towns and suburbs.<sup>102</sup> Introducing a special issue of the *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Alan Mayne criticised the tendency amongst historians to “emphasis[e] unrelenting European intolerance and aggression towards Chinese settlers,” arguing that in the process they “have tended to overlook Chinese agency and the permeability of racial boundaries.” In his own study of the Lower Turon goldfields, he found that, “Most Chinese residents in the Lower Turon were part and parcel of the broader goldfields community that was taking root,” and that whatever racist comments were made, “by and large frictions [between Chinese and European settlers] were not based upon race hatred but upon specific differences of opinion between neighbours, miners, buyers and sellers.”<sup>103</sup> The degree of acceptance of Chinese people can be seen, negatively, in the frequency with which anti-Chinese agitators attacked working class people (and especially working class women) for patronising Chinese hawkers, vegetable growers and furniture makers, suggesting that their violent rhetoric

---

<sup>102</sup> Barry McGowan, “Reconsidering race: the Chinese experience on the goldfields of Southern New South Wales”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 36, no. 124, Oct. 2004, pp. 312-331; Barry McGowan, “Chinese market gardens in southern and western New South Wales”, *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 36, July 2005 [online] <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-2005/10McGowan.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]; Kate Bagnall, “Across the threshold: White women and Chinese hawkers in the white colonial imaginary”, Paper presented to the 11th biennial conference of the Australian Historical Association, Brisbane, 2002; Kate Bagnall, “Golden shadows on a white land: An exploration of the lives of white women who partnered Chinese men and their children in southern Australia, 1855-1915”, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006; Morag Loh, “A country practice: Thomas Chong, herbalist of Bairnsdale; his place, his practice, his peers” in Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific, Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 15-25; Sue Walden, “The tin fields of north-east Tasmania—a regional variation” in Macgregor (ed), *ibid*, pp. 177-88; Cathie R May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns, 1870-1920*, Studies in North Queensland history, Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, (Townsville), 1984, esp. pp. 143-68, 192-211; *Active voices, hidden histories: The Chinese in colonial Australia*, special issue of *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 6, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Alan Mayne, “‘What do you want John’? Chinese-European interactions on the Lower Turon goldfields”, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 6, 2004, pp. 1-14; quotes pp. 2, 7, 12.

was as much aimed at disciplining the working class as influencing governments.<sup>104</sup>

Most anti-Chinese organisations were extremely short-lived. They would typically be formed at a time of hysteria in the newspapers, organise a few public meetings and mass demonstrations, and soon find themselves with only a tiny cadre of activists. In Townsville, for example, an Anti-Chinese League was formed in mid-September 1886, and called a very large public meeting in the town hall on 22 September, followed by a mass outdoor rally on 30 October. However a follow-up meeting on 21 December had been small. The committee had resigned, but been asked to continue; while on 28 December, even committee members had failed to attend. There was no money to pay bills, and a discrepancy between the amount collected and memberships sold. The viciously anti-Chinese *North Queensland Telegraph*, which promoted the movement, blamed the workers of Townsville:

the hatred of the Chinese does not seem to be so strong as people imagine... the working man will always "blow" about anything which he fancies will tend to injure him, but when it affects his pocket the wrong way he isn't there...so long as he can get his vegetables from John cheaper than anywhere else he will patronise him, howling him down all the time.<sup>105</sup>

This story was repeated in many places. John Potts' account of his anti-Chinese crusade is a story of mass meetings and forming new committees, but very little

---

<sup>104</sup> See also letter, *North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist* (Townsville), 13 Sept 1886.

<sup>105</sup> *North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist* (Townsville), 23 Sept., 1 Nov., 17 Nov., 22 Dec., 29 Dec., 30 Dec. 1886 (quote).



money to sustain the agitation; "People came to the meetings, heartily applauded our efforts, and then returned to their homes, without aiding us to pay for halls and other expenses."<sup>106</sup> In Cairns, he found the mayor hostile, in Cooktown he found support for Chinese people, and in Barcaldine he was physically attacked by the wife of a Chinese man.

The question of whether or not the working class was more accepting of Chinese people than has previously been allowed, is also raised by a fascinating incident during the middle of the *Afghan* crisis in Sydney. Two Chinese passengers escaped from the *Menmuir*, and the seriously embarrassed police were obliged to report to Premier Parkes. Sergeants McNamara and Maguire explained, at length, the difficulties in patrolling the ship, given the multi-ethnic crew, and the presence of two coaling vessels next to the *Menmuir* for much of the week. In this incident, workers were portrayed as potential conspirators with, not agitators against, Chinese migrants. The police officers reported that:

the coal lumpers having had the run of the ship from one hatch to the other, the hatches being in close proximity to where the Chinese were quartered, any Chinaman blacking his face could, with little trouble, in the night time have stepped from the ship into one of the Colliers without the Police being able to detect the difference between them and one of the Coal lumpers; but, even in that respect, the best lookout possible was kept under the circumstances, and as it is well known that many of the Coal lumpers spend much of their spare time playing fan-tan with the Chinese they might likely being in sympathy with them, have assisted in the escape of the missing men.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> John Potts, *One year*, pp. 4, 16, 22-23.

<sup>107</sup> Letter George Read, Acting Inspector General of Police to Sir Henry Parkes, 28 May 1888, NSW State Records, Colonial Secretary's Special Bundles, 4/884.1, letter no. 88/6641.

These are truly remarkable words, given the dominant view of historians, that the working class were virtually unanimous in their hostility to Chinese immigrants, and they are words that we have every right to expect that most historians of the crisis have read, and yet never discussed.<sup>108</sup> The fact that the police could argue that two Chinese were able to escape because coal lumpers – amongst the most unionised of the working class – were “likely being in sympathy with them”, suggests a very different texture to race relations than the one we have been led to believe. This impression is reinforced by Andrew Markus, who notes that in Sydney, after some initial fear, Chinese people came to feel sufficiently confident in their safety that for the third major anti-Chinese rally, on 30 June 1888, Chinese shops remained open and Chinese laundrymen and furniture makers went unmolested as they passed the protest.<sup>109</sup> This was quite unlike the violence Chinese people faced in North Queensland mining settlements, and in Brisbane’s Chinatown. Further research on the various racial-exclusionist movements before 1901 could prove valuable.

## The colonies decide: The Intercolonial Conference of 1888

Having created the *Afghan* crisis, the Victorian and NSW governments were then faced with the challenge of consolidating and extending their nascent victory in the struggle against Chinese immigration. They had previously

---

<sup>108</sup> In NSW State Records, this is one of two large bundles of papers on Chinese immigration – the other is from 1881. All historians who have written on the question of Chinese immigration in the period since these papers have been available have cited this bundle.

<sup>109</sup> Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp. 148-9.

discussed the possibility of an intercolonial conference to settle the issue; now, on 9 May 1888, the Premier of South Australia made a formal proposal for a conference.<sup>110</sup> In this he was encouraged by his governor, Sir William Robinson, who saw a conference as a means of restraining the wild spirits in NSW and Victoria.<sup>111</sup> Over the next month there would be angst and acrimony as the governments attempted to overcome practical and political obstacles to an immediate conference – Queensland's parliament was due to convene after the elections on 12 June, which made any Queensland representation seem improbable until Griffith agreed to appoint Macrossan as Queensland's sole delegate; no New South Wales minister could travel because their parliament was sitting; and Sir Henry Parkes refused to answer telegrams for several days as he waited to see if his own legislation could be quickly forced through the Legislative Council. In the end, the conference was scheduled for 12 June 1888 in Sydney. All Australian colonies were represented, and so would New Zealand have been had its representative not missed his boat.

There were four major issues debated and resolved at the conference – whether or not they would refrain from passing their own legislation while Britain renegotiated the terms of its treaty with China; and when that was resolved in favour of both treaty negotiations and local legislation; whether or not severe restrictions would apply to all foreigners, all Asian people or just Chinese; whether or not British subjects would be included in the restrictions; and whether or not the new legislation would include a poll (or entry) tax.

---

<sup>110</sup> Letter from Premier SA Playford to Colonial Premiers, 9 May 1888, NSWLA V&P 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 191; see also *SMH* 10 May 1888, p. 5, col. 4.

<sup>111</sup> Telegram from Governor SA (Robinson) to Sec State Colonies (Knutsford), 10 May 1888, State Records SA, GRG 2/6, vol. 16 (1886-9); Letter from Governor SA (Robinson) to Sec State Colonies, 14 May 1888, State Records SA, GRG 2/14/2.

The argument that the colonies should seek renegotiation of the treaties between China and Britain had been part of the debate on Chinese immigration since the late 1870s. British concern over Australian anti-Chinese laws had been partly driven by concern that they would undermine the terms of Britain's treaties with China, which gave British citizens the right to live and trade in parts of China. The belief that China had an alliance with Britain against Russian expansion gave a compelling strategic logic to arguments that Chinese immigration restriction should be negotiated rather than imposed. The treaty idea was given a major boost in April 1888, when it was announced that China and the US had agreed that Chinese labourers would not enter the United States for twenty years. From Victoria's Chief Secretary, Alfred Deakin, came a hint that there was another reason to seek a treaty – it would close the Northern Territory to the Chinese without having to convince a majority in the South Australian Legislative Council.<sup>112</sup>

As part of his effort to contain colonial reactions to Chinese immigration, Sir William Robinson asked the Colonial Office to outline various ways it thought Chinese immigration might be restricted, so that they could be discussed at the Intercolonial Conference. As was so often the case, the British reply galvanised colonial opposition. After accusing New South Wales of creating "obstacles to present negotiations with China", Lord Knutsford pointed out that the "Chinese Government especially objects to legislation for placing Chinese emigrants on different footing to subjects of any other power". His suggestion, therefore, was that the colonies "consider whether laws and regulations equally

---

<sup>112</sup> Melhuish, *Australia and British imperial policy*, p. 370.

restricting immigration into Colonies of all foreign labourers".<sup>113</sup> Far from providing an alternative agenda for the Intercolonial Conference, Knutsford's telegram was condemned. The Queensland Cabinet "unanimously disapprove[d] of his suggestion to place all foreign labourers on the same footing with power to relax the regulations in certain cases."<sup>114</sup> Knutsford appears to have thought that the issue was labour market competition. But the colonial ruling classes wanted some non-British European immigrants, and some of them wanted no impediments to the use of indentured labour. These attitudes made his suggestion impossible. Both the colonial governments and the *Sydney Morning Herald* saw the problem of endless delay at a time of "danger".<sup>115</sup> The appeal of waiting for a treaty to be negotiated would also have been undermined by comments made by Knutsford in a personal letter to Deakin, which would almost certainly have arrived before the conference:

In Australia you have not illtreated the Chinese laborers, as way too often was the case in the United States; & as the Chinese Commissioners who visited you were satisfied with what they saw in Australia as to the general treatment of their fellow subjects, there is not the same inducement for the Chinese Govt to stop the emigration.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Letter from Knutsford to Colonial governors, 6 June 1888, NSWLA V&P 1887-8, vol. 2, p. 195. When Knutsford saw press accounts of his telegram, he immediately wired to complain of mistakes in transmission; telegram from Knutsford to Governor SA, Robinson, 18 July 1888, Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1.

<sup>114</sup> Telegram from John M Macrossan to SW Griffith, 12 June 1888 and telegram from Premier Qld to John M Macrossan, 14 June 1888, QSA, PRV7188-1-1. See also *SMH* 14 June 1888, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Joint Representation of the Australian colonies to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Knutsford), agreed at the Intercolonial Conference held at Sydney, 12-14 June 1888, NSW LA V&P, 1887-88, vol. 2, pp. 177-8; *SMH* 15 June 1888, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Letter from Knutsford to Deakin, 24 April 1888, Alfred Deakin papers, NLA, MS 1540, box/volume series 9, folder 1, page 57. Letters to and from London took around six or seven weeks to arrive. The "Please explain" despatch was dated 23 January 1888, and arrived at Melbourne in time for the ministry to receive it, and *The Age* to publish its contents on 17 March.

The colonial ministers wanted a renegotiated treaty, but only to supplement their own severely restrictive legislation and not as a substitute for it. After the Intercolonial Conference, there were desultory efforts to work out a basis for possible negotiation, but the proposals from London were completely unacceptable to the colonies, and the treaty idea eventually died.<sup>117</sup>

One of the major issues debated at the conference was the status of Chinese people who were British citizens, as a result, for instance, of being born in Hong Kong or Singapore. South Australian Premier, Tom Playford, told his parliament that he argued for the effective exclusion of all Chinese people irrespective of their citizenship:

both because of the difficulty of distinguishing individuals, and because the objection is to the race. A Chinaman was not the less a Chinaman because he was born under the British flag in Hongkong or Singapore. If we allowed British-born Chinese to come in we should be flooded by immigrants holding some kind of nationalisation papers.<sup>118</sup>

Resistance to this position came from Sir Henry Parkes, who “looked on British citizenship as something sacred.” But Victorian Premier, Duncan Gillies, pointed out that for all of them, the problem with the Chinese was that – supposedly – they could not be assimilated, “so as to form a homogenous whole by-and bye; in fact, he had objected to Chinamen on the score of race.”

---

<sup>117</sup> See proposals in letter from Knutsford to Colonial Governors, 27 July 1888, Queensland State Archives, PRV7188-1-1; the outlines of possible treaty provisions as received from China in letter from Knutsford to Colonial Governors, 14 September 1888, QSA, PRV7188-1-1; Memorandum from Chief Sec Qld (McIlwraith) to Administrator of Queensland, Sir Arthur Palmer, 30 October 1888, QSA, PRV8231-1-3. This memorandum was applauded by the other colonial governments.

<sup>118</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 202.

There was also some debate about whether or not they wanted to exclude “all Asiatics”. In a draft despatch written for the conference, Deakin had used this phrase, and the conference had struck it out and referred only and specifically to Chinese. McIlwraith, too, had objected to all Asiatics being excluded; both Queensland and South Australia still wanted to recruit Indian labour for tropical agriculture.<sup>119</sup>

The model legislation agreed to by the conference was somewhat different from that which would soon pass in New South Wales. It limited the number of Chinese passengers allowed on any boat calling at an Australian port to just one per 500 tons of the ship’s tare, and it included passengers not landing at that port. The penalty for each Chinese passenger over the limit was to be £500 – a colossal sum of money. The poll tax, an issue that had irritated the Chinese Commissioners, was to be abolished, and Chinese people prevented from moving from colony to colony without permission. While the colonial ministers came to the conference with somewhat different approaches, they mostly came with a common agenda: to prohibit, as far as possible, Chinese immigration to all the colonies. Once in private discussion, there was said to be a great deal of unanimity, and at a luncheon held on Sydney Harbour in the middle of the conference, all the speeches from the ministers referred to their unanimity, and the possibility that the conference could be the first step towards real federation. Only Philip Fysh, the curmudgeonly Premier of Tasmania, dissented; he considered existing restrictions strong enough to protect the colonies until a new treaty with China could be finalised.

---

<sup>119</sup> See Playford in *SAPD* 1888, col. 203.

But near unanimity amongst colonial ministers was one thing; getting the new Chinese immigration laws passed in the colonial parliaments would be another, nowhere more so than in South Australia, where all attempts to restrict Chinese immigration into Darwin had been frustrated. The success of the Intercolonial Conference would ultimately be decided in Adelaide, not Sydney.

## Closing the open door at Darwin

When South Australian Premier Tom Playford returned to Adelaide, he wasted no time introducing a new Chinese Immigration bill, to give effect to the decisions made in Melbourne.<sup>120</sup> This was a decisive moment for South Australia's ruling class. They were facing a terrible choice. They had spent a lot of money attempting to develop their northern colony, but the growing Chinese population had been the most successful people at finding ways to make a living there. Now the rest of Australia wanted – demanded even! – that the open door at Darwin be closed. South Australia's rich and her politicians mostly wanted federation, but they were being asked to sacrifice the future prosperity of their Territory.

The gravitas of this occasion can be measured by the sheer length of this debate; it took 32 parliamentary sitting days during which the bill was debated before it

---

<sup>120</sup> The bill was read a first time on 28 June 1888, two weeks after the end of the conference, *SAPD* 1888, cols. 162-77.



was passed, amended.<sup>121</sup> The second reading debate in the House of Assembly, the lower house, ran over an astonishing ten days, and was carried only narrowly, 19 votes to 16 (with eight MPs paired).<sup>122</sup> Playford's speech introducing the bill canvassed the long history of the issue in South Australia, the debates at the Melbourne Conference, the reasons for the new laws, and concluded by asking MPs to look at the bill in terms of the interests of all of Australia.<sup>123</sup>

The first thing to emerge from the intense debate in the House of Assembly was the degree to which the politicians were deeply conflicted by the dilemma they faced. This is evidenced by the sharp changes of mind on a range of issues. For instance, the vote for the second reading of the bill in the House of Assembly was passed very narrowly indeed, but this turned into a 33-8 majority for the third reading, a massive turnaround with eight MPs reversing their vote.<sup>124</sup> In the debate in committee on the specific provisions of the bill, there was turmoil over the tonnage provisions. The bill proposed that only one Chinese person be admitted for each 500 tons of a ship's tare, in line with the conference decision. This was first struck out in committee, 23-18; then a proposal for 200 tons was defeated 23-22; then after an impassioned speech from the Premier a proposal for 250 tons was carried on the casting vote of the chair. A few days later, on 25

---

<sup>121</sup> The 32 days includes all debate on the bill, including some procedural debate, and does not include formalities such as first readings, the reading of messages from the other house, etc. Debate on the bill rarely consumed more than a modest portion of parliamentary proceedings on any one of these days.

<sup>122</sup> In his speech, early in the debate, Rounsevell suggested that previous bills were let through the House of Assembly because it was known they would fail in the Upper House, *SAPD* 1888, col. 245.

<sup>123</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 194-206.

<sup>124</sup> Handyside, Hopkins, Howe, Bews, Castine, Homburg and Giles all opposed the second reading and voted for the third; Ward supported the second reading and opposed the third.

September, Playford attempted to get the tonnage clause recommitted – an extraordinary procedure. After a bitter debate, this was agreed to overwhelmingly, 39-6, and the 500 tons clause was finally carried 23-16.<sup>125</sup> In a parallel debate, the argument for a poll tax, the position South Australia had taken to the Intercolonial Conference, was also finally defeated. These changes of mind were not a product of any local anti-Chinese organising – in South Australia it was minimal.

---

<sup>125</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1029-31; 1107-13. The nineteen who voted for the second reading were supplemented by six MPs who hadn't been present for the first vote – almost evenly divided between Downer and Playford supporters. In addition, there were seven MPs who had reversed their votes, again roughly evenly divided between government and opposition supporters. The vote on the second reading was on 21 August 1888, and the division list can be found at *SAPD* 1888, col. 651. The vote on the third reading was on 27 September, and the division list can be found at *SAPD* 1888, col. 1153. I have designated MPs as supporters of Playford (P) or Downer (D), with N=not present for the division, based on the division list for the motion of no confidence moved by Playford against the Downer government on 7 June 1887, five days after the resumption of parliament after the 1887 general election, and voted on on 9 June. Downer was defeated 29-16. The one exception to this is Rounsevell, who voted against Downer, but who described himself as a supporter of the opposition in the *Chinese Immigration Bill* debate, see *SAPD* 1888, col 245. There may also be other exceptions, but the patterns I am describing are so crude that I do not expect them to be contradicted by more definitive information on the allegiances of MPs. Those who turned up for the third reading vote, but who had been absent for the second reading vote were Sir ET Smith (D), Holder (P), Hussey (D), Kimber (P), Rees (N), and Solomon (D). Those who changed their vote from against the bill on the second reading, to for it on the third, were Bews (P), Castine (P), Giles (P), Handyside (D), Homburg (P), Hopkins (D) and Howe (D). By contrast, of the sixteen who voted against the second reading, seven were not present for the third reading vote – a result which is so extreme as to suggest a deliberate absence. This is reinforced by the quality and seriousness of those who absented themselves: Horn, Moulden, Gilbert, HE Downer and Sir Lancelot Stirling among them. Of the seven who absented themselves, at least five (and probably six) were Downer supporters. In other words, they disliked the bill, they were angry about the circumstances of its introduction, and the effect it would have, but they would not endanger federation. Perhaps, also, they realised that the Legislative Council had to be forced to finally listen to the broad ruling class consensus, and being unable to vote for the bill, at least allowed it an overwhelming majority. It is equally instructive to look at the hardline eight who held out against the third reading of the bill. Not one of them voted for Sir John Downer when he faced the 1887 no-confidence motion. Downer himself had then been still overseas, returning from the 1887 Colonial Conference in London; Dashwood, Glynn, Rounsevell and Ward had voted for Playford and Burgoyne, Caldwell and EW Hawker were not present for the 1887 vote.

The debate itself canvassed a wide range of issues, but at its centre was the polarity between “coloured labour” to develop the north, and the desire for federation. Before June 1888, South Australia’s ruling class could entertain both strategies; now they were forced to choose. At every crucial moment in debate, the desire for “Australian unity” was the government’s trump card, and it worked because most in the opposition also wanted federation. In his major speech, the Attorney-General, CC Kingston argued that he would prefer a united Australia rather than holding out for South Australia’s formula for restriction, a poll-tax. He appealed to Sir John Downer, the Leader of the Opposition, who had spoken out so eloquently on Australian union to sink party differences on the issue: “He would rather that the responsibility of breaking up Australian union should rest on other shoulders than his.”<sup>126</sup>

This did not mean that Kingston was opposed to coloured labour; when Caldwell from the Opposition pointed out that there had been net Chinese emigration from South Australia proper, and net Indian immigration, Kingston interjected, “We prefer the Indian immigrants.”<sup>127</sup> As in Queensland, politicians distinguished between the advantages and dangers posed by labourers from India, China and other states. Moreover, the government was prepared to agree that coloured labour may be needed. When JCF Johnson, the Minister for Education and the Northern Territory was accused of telling a delegation that the rigour of the regulations could be softened, he replied, “That was perfectly true, and that was the idea of the Government. If it could be shown to be

---

<sup>126</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 423-4.

<sup>127</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 338.

necessary that Chinese should be introduced the rigor of the Bill could be softened.”<sup>128</sup>

Amongst those opposed to the bill there was a variety of positions. Most however would have agreed with Rounsevell when he argued that, “With our varied climate and conditions we must have discriminative legislation suited to different districts.”<sup>129</sup> Indeed, it is probable that a majority on the government side would have supported this. Division on the Opposition side was centred on the restriction of specifically Chinese immigration. For his part, Rounsevell thought that Chinese immigration should be allowed, but restricted:

He was not an advocate for the introduction of Chinese into South Australia proper; indeed he would help to take every means to prevent the Chinese coming here at all. Our laborers had a perfect right to say that their tasks were heavy enough, and their burdens were hard to be borne, and we would all resist anything like their being brought into competition with an increased number of Chinese. But there were places in Australia where the European could not profitably labor.<sup>130</sup>

However, he insisted, “the Chinese should not be allowed to come to the Australian shores in unrestricted numbers”; on that “there could not be two opinions”.<sup>131</sup>

By contrast, Horn specifically *supported* Chinese immigration, along with better regulation of the Chinese who came.<sup>132</sup> Gilbert agreed: “if we intended to

---

<sup>128</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 575-6.

<sup>129</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 249.

<sup>130</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 249.

<sup>131</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 250.

develop that distant possession we must have Chinese labor." He was against letting them "overrun the Northern Territory", but also thought that "they were so constituted that under proper conditions they would make excellent citizens."<sup>133</sup> Ward, too, was against the bill. Like Rounsevell, he had voted for Playford against Downer in the 1887 no-confidence debate, but he was against excluding the Chinese labourer. There was probably nowhere richer on the continent, but it couldn't be developed with European labour, and he thought the Aboriginal population was not industrious.<sup>134</sup> He was in favour of some restriction and, on this basis, voted for the second reading.

it was...necessary, because of the climatic condition of the Northern Territory, as applied to Europeans and not to Asiatics, to keep a medical man in order to carry on the works at all. They must expect to have a portion of the men down with fever. We wanted to get across the unhealthy part of the country, and we could only do that by the introduction of Asiatic labor. Europeans would always be subject to illnesses which Asiatics were not, and that was one of the reasons why this Bill and the resolution arrived at by the Sydney Conference was against the development of this great continent.<sup>135</sup>

Parliament was not divided on the issue of the importance of "coloured labour" for the Northern Territory – MacDonald was the only MP to argue that white men could work in the north, a sharp contrast to opinions in the Queensland parliament. The divisions were over whether or not Chinese people were acceptable labourers, and whether or not the unity of Australia was more

---

<sup>132</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col 207.

<sup>133</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col 577.

<sup>134</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col 649.

<sup>135</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 650.

important than the admission of Chinese labourers. Bagster, for instance, was one who supported the bill. The Chinese had done “evil” on the Northern Territory goldfields, and he worried that when the railway was finished, the Chinese labourers would head for the goldfields “to the ruin of the fields and of the white population”. It was, he thought, a pity the Indian Coolie bill had not been brought into force; “He believed the importation of the Indian coolie into the Northern Territory would be a great benefit to that place.”<sup>136</sup> He also argued that if they had not had the Chinese in the Northern Territory, there would have been no development there:

There would have been nothing at Port Darwin except perhaps the telegraph station guarded by a few police. The country would not have been developed and the goldfields would not have been opened up. Still, it would be very dangerous to that part of South Australia to allow the Chinese to come there in large numbers.<sup>137</sup>

For their part, the Liberals linked the necessity for the legislation to the refusal of the Legislative Council to pass the reasonable bills of 1886 and 1887. Grayson talked of the “extreme feeling of annoyance which was known to exist, [in Queensland and New South Wales] at the ease with which huge bodies of Chinamen could gain access to our Northern Territory and become a menace to their borders.” Further:

They had...a right to treat it [this issue] from the standpoint of Australasian nationality, and not for South Australia only. Our action in connection with the matter was peculiarly responsible, seeing that in consequence of the large influx of Chinese into the Northern Territory

---

<sup>136</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 579.

<sup>137</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 580.

the New South Wales Cabinet considered it incumbent on them to institute legislation. This was distinctly stated by the Hon. J Salomans in introducing the Chinese Bill to the Legislative Council of that colony.<sup>138</sup>

The desire to hang on to a “coloured labour” strategy for the north, against the tide of feeling in the rest of Australia, was also expressed in bitterness from the Opposition that the Legislative Council had not passed the Chinese Immigration Bill of 1887. Sir John Downer thought the restrictions in force elsewhere in Australia, and similar to the legislation he had attempted to pass in 1886 and Playford in 1887, had been sufficient; “the whole difficulty of the case had arisen through the unfortunate action of the other branch of the Legislature in not extending to the Northern Territory similar laws to those prevailing in the southern portion of the province.”<sup>139</sup> But he could not resist sharing the blame with a previous Liberal administration, for letting a railway contract that “required” Chinese labour.<sup>140</sup> Rounsevell and Gilbert, both Downer supporters, also blamed the upper house: “if another branch of the Legislature had passed the Bill which the Assembly carried last session there would have been no necessity for the present legislation.”<sup>141</sup>

While many MPs were prepared to countenance the restriction of Chinese immigration, there was also a desire to do it their way – with a poll tax, rather than the 500 ton restriction passed by the Intercolonial Conference. It is difficult to understand the intensity of their attachment to the poll tax, but it seems to

---

<sup>138</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 281; see also MacDonald, col. 286.

<sup>139</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 437.

<sup>140</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 438.

<sup>141</sup> Gilbert, *SAPD* 1888, col. 576.

have been sincere.<sup>142</sup> As a result, there was bitterness towards Sir Henry Parkes in particular from members of the opposition, in both speeches and interjections through the debate. This was presumably because of Parkes' support for a tonnage restriction rather than a poll tax. Downer attacked the "subservience" of the South Australian delegation to Parkes, arguing that this would not assist Australian union.<sup>143</sup> Playford replied that it was Queensland – likewise now ruled by a Conservative administration – that had moved for the 500 ton limit at the conference, despite going to the conference with a pro-poll tax position.<sup>144</sup> The sense of dilemma facing the opposition was well expressed by Sir Lancelot Stirling: "He recognised that as we possess in the Territory a front door by

---

<sup>142</sup> In a telegram to Playford at the Intercolonial Conference, the Chief Secretary, Ramsay, had reiterated what his Premier no doubt already knew: "Very strong feeling here in favor of the imposition of a poll tax on Chinese not exceeding thirty pounds - Hope you will be able influence conference in that direction." Telegram from Chief Secretary SA to Treasurer, 14 June 1888, State Records SA, GRG 24/4, vol 65 (1888). As the debate developed, Playford asked his Agent-General in London to approach the Colonial Office for a statement on the undesirability of the poll tax, and asked Victorian Premier Gillies to do likewise, which he did. The result was an informal reassurance from Graham Berry in London that "Her Majesty's Government sees no reason why decision of conference should be departed from", and a formal statement from the Colonial Office that "H.M. Govt hope no further restrictions will be placed than those settled by conference." Letter from Premier SA (Playford) to Premier Vic, 10 August 1888, State Records SA, GRG 24/28, vol. 7 (1888); letter from Chief Sec Vic to Chief Sec SA, 11 August 1888, State Records SA, letter no. 1888/1277, GRG 24/6, box 400; letter from Premier Vic (Gillies) to Premier SA (Playford), 14 August 1888, State Records SA, letter no. 1888/0733, GRG 24/6, box 398; letter from Governor SA to Governor Qld, 17 August 1888, QSA, PRV7188-1-1. On 19 August 1888, the SA Governor wrote to London: "I am requested by Ministers to ask whether Her Majesty's Government would prefer five hundred tons limitation as proposed section five Bill, accompanied by power of relaxation as contemplated in section two without any poll tax or a twenty or thirty pounds poll tax and hundred ton limitation without any powers relaxation as contemplated subdivision three section two. Debate adjourned to Tuesday. Ministers anxious to hear your views with a view to informing Parliament if no objection." State Records SA, GRG 2/6, vol 16 (1886-9). From London came the reply: "Referring to your Telegram of 20 August Her Majesty's Government prefer abolition of poll tax and 500 tons limitation with powers of relaxation." State Records SA, GRG 24/28, vol. 7 (1888). These telegrams were made available to parliament. Letter from Premier SA (Playford) to Premier Vic, 22 August 1888, State Records SA, GRG 24/28, vol. 7 (1888).

<sup>143</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 439-40.

<sup>144</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1114.



which the Chinese may enter Australia we should bow to the wishes of the other colonies and endeavour to place some restriction on their influx." But for him, that restriction was a poll tax.<sup>145</sup>

From the Conservatives who jumped ship to push this extreme anti-Chinese bill through the House of Assembly, it is perhaps Sir ET Smith who gave the most explicit explanation. Speaking during the committee debate on a poll tax, he said that he

at one time favored a poll tax, but believing that they should work in harmony with the other colonies he would support the policy adopted by the Government... they ought to be consistent in their opinions as to federal union, and from that point of view he regretted the action of Sir John Downer.<sup>146</sup>

In the Legislative Council, the debate was equally prolonged, but more polarised, with the language correspondingly extreme. The Chief Secretary, Ramsay, introduced the bill expounding on the dangers and corruption represented by Chinese immigration; in reply H Scott described the Intercolonial Conference as meeting "for the breaking of the laws of the land and doing an injustice to one of the greatest nations of the world". Even worse, it intended to deprive them of Chinese labour, and "The Chinese are the only Asiatics who are able and willing to undertake hard labour." He excoriated:

the Darwin merchants, who found that a large part of their business was being transferred to the hands of the Chinese storekeepers, and also that

---

<sup>145</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 584.

<sup>146</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1113-4.

the Chinese were not nearly such profitable customers as the Europeans, and [who] accordingly determined if possible to get rid of them.<sup>147</sup>

Scott attacked the government for whipping up the groundless scare about the Chinese in February, and for the contempt they had shown for the Legislative Council, before turning the “awakening China” argument against the exclusionists: “Any European country would hesitate before going to war with China, and the colonies themselves will be unable to cope with China, as far as fighting power is concerned, for the next 20 years.” Hence it was important for the colonies to stay on good terms with China.<sup>148</sup>

It is interesting that there was virtually no debate over the proposed legislation for South Australia proper – the Northern Territory was the only issue. It is also amusing to see how many of these statesmen had suddenly discovered that some form of restriction on Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory was now desirable.<sup>149</sup> When the Conservative leader in the council tried to amend the bill to not apply to the Northern Territory, he was defeated nine votes to two (with two sets of pairs), a radical shift from previous votes.

Conservative resistance to the exclusion of Chinese immigrants would now take a new form – the attempt to impose a lesser restriction on immigration into the Territory. This, the decisive battle, would take place in committee. In the meantime, the principles of the bill were thrashed out over five days of debate.

---

<sup>147</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1304-6.

<sup>148</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1306-7. He was reading from an interview given by Rev G Hargreaves, a missionary from Canton.

<sup>149</sup> For example, speeches by O’Loughlin *SAPD* 1888, col. 1443 and Magarey, col. 1444.

JH Angas supported Scott, declaring himself one of those who now believed that some moderate restriction was necessary, but the proposed legislation “should be called the Northern Territory Destruction Bill”.<sup>150</sup> Addison thought the Northern Territory “a second India”. He supported the bill, but agreed that exclusion could “in the future involve England in war” with China.<sup>151</sup>

Alexander Hay was outraged at the actions of Sir Henry Parkes, but he was for closing Darwin to unrestricted immigration – it wouldn’t be fair to let Chinese people in there and have them go to the other colonies. But the climate meant they would need some Chinese to come.<sup>152</sup> Campbell was another climatic determinist; white labour was impossible in the north, and it was unreasonable for the southern colonies to legislate for the north. After federation, the tropical colonies should separate and then there would be no further aggravation over the labour question.<sup>153</sup> This was music to the ears of Richard Chaffey Baker:

It followed logically from Dr. Campbell’s remarks that the northern parts of Australia ought to be formed into Crown colonies, because if these countries were to be colonised the bulk of the people must be of a servile race with a dominant population of Europeans, such as was the case in India and Java... He would like to see the Territory peopled by a large Asiatic population – he did not say necessarily Chinese – ruled over by Europeans.<sup>154</sup>

Ramsay, the Chief Secretary, attempted to appeal to this dominant sentiment, by emphasising the possibilities under clause three of the bill: “There was no

---

<sup>150</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1307-9; interjection col. 1436.

<sup>151</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1309.

<sup>152</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1333-4.

<sup>153</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1335.

<sup>154</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1335-6.

doubt that under it the Government would allow persons in want of Asiatic labor to import them.”<sup>155</sup> This impressed Hay – so long as relaxation of the restrictions was in the hands of the Executive, he didn’t care about the extent of restriction and was happy to appease the Assembly.<sup>156</sup> But this concession was ridiculed by the hard-line element in the Council; the reactionary Samuel Tomkinson asking:

Even supposing that the white people there [in the Northern Territory] come to their senses and asked for the relaxation of the regulations, would the working men in Adelaide allow them to be relaxed? Certainly not. Would the Attorney-General’s constituents in West Adelaide allow the regulations to be relaxed? Certainly not.<sup>157</sup>

The South Australian parliament was the last major bastion of “black labour” politics in Australia. Where the debate in the New South Wales upper house was saturated with concern for the racial homogeneity of the people, the fabulously wealthy John Darling stood out as one of the few in the South Australian upper house who wanted them to turn their backs on a strategy of racial oppression as a means to profit. He claimed the backing of history:

that wherever whites and colored people mingled the weaker race was debased and enslaved. He did not wish the history of Australia to be similar to that of America...and he feared that the result of the introduction of large numbers of Chinese into this colony would result in the degradation of the European colonists by their attempts to debase and enslave the Chinese.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1338.

<sup>156</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1335.

<sup>157</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1436.

<sup>158</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1443-4.

Others pursued either an Australian, or imperial, view of the question. For West-Erskine:

They had to remember that in the old country there were thousands of their fellow people who would, in the course of a few years, be compelled to seek a home in other lands... They should, therefore, be just before they were generous, and not allow the Chinese to monopolise the land that they were in duty bound to conserve for their own people.<sup>159</sup>

Gordon thought they could not avoid supporting the rest of the Australian ruling class:

If it was true that they could not develop the Northern Territory without the Chinese they must consider the question of abandoning the Territory or else introduce Chinese. But if in introducing Celestials into that distant province there was a danger of their finding their way south in large numbers, then he thought the better plan would be to cut the Northern Territory off altogether.<sup>160</sup>

It was, however, when the bill moved into committee that the real struggle began. The Council had rejected Baker's motion to confine the bill to South Australia proper, but when Scott moved that the tonnage restrictions only apply south of the 26th parallel, his amendment was passed 11-8; the Council voting for a tonnage restriction of 100 tons for the north. This move now precipitated a crisis, into which at least two other colonial governments intervened. On 25 October, two days after the vote to reduce the tonnage

---

<sup>159</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1439.

<sup>160</sup> *SAPD* 1888, col. 1440.

restriction for the Northern Territory, came the following telegram from Queensland's Conservative Secretary for Public Works and Mines, John Murtagh Macrossan:

We regret that your Legislative Council have refused to agree to the five hundred limit in the Chinese Restriction Bill and hope for the sake of Australia's unity that you will endeavour to reserve the decision of the Legislative Council. The bill as it left our Assembly was made more stringent by majority of three to one imposing a penalty of fifty (50) pounds on any Chinese entering Queensland without permission. The feeling here is very strong as our only danger now will be from the Northern Territory if your Council persists in its amendment.<sup>161</sup>

And from Victorian Premier, Duncan Gilles, on 30 October 1888:

There appears to be some difference of opinion in your Parliament about some parts of the Chinese bill especially portion limiting the number to be carried to one for every five hundred tons of the ship especially as applicable to your Northern Territory. I think it of great importance that for the sake of unity in Australia we should all adhere to the provision in the conference bill.<sup>162</sup>

That afternoon, 30 October, the South Australian government went back to the Legislative Council and asked it to reconsider the tonnage restriction for the Northern Territory, and carried the vote 13-9. Motions to remove clauses

---

<sup>161</sup> Telegram from Macrossan (Qld) to Playford, 25 October 1888; SA State Records, letter 88/1702, GRG 24/6, box 402. There is no reflection of this "feeling" in the *Brisbane Courier* of the time, which did not editorialise on the various positions taken in the South Australian upper house, merely reporting them via telegrams from Adelaide.

<sup>162</sup> Telegram from Gillies to Playford, 30 October 1888, SA State Records, letter 88/1725, GRG 24/6, box 402.

providing for different restrictions for the Northern Territory, and the 100 ton limit for the Territory, were then removed without division.<sup>163</sup>

With the Queensland government having earlier repealed its Indian labour laws, and banned the Pacific Island labour trade from the end of 1890, this was the moment at which the Anglo-Australian ruling class finally got its first White Australia policy.

The turnaround from five days earlier came as a result of four MLCs changing their mind: Darling, Hay, Martin and Simms. The proceedings in the house give us a hint of the campaign by other colonial governments. JH Angas wondered “why the Chief Secretary should attempt to coerce the Council into passing the clause because the other colonies had acted differently.” Martin, one of those who had changed his mind, then attempted to justify himself. He had first “thought that he would prefer to see the restriction reduced from 500 to 250

---

<sup>163</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols. 1529-30. On the telegram from Gillies, Playford then minuted: “Our L.C. have reconsidered question and reinstated in Chinese bill the five hundred ton limit.” It is interesting to look for the sources in the radical change in voting. Playford had reassured his colleagues in other colonies that the April 1888 elections for the Legislative Council had solved the problem, and certainly five MLCs who voted against the 1887 bill were no longer in the Council. Of the eight legislative councillors elected at the general poll in May 1888, Ramsay and Ayres were the only ones re-elected; Ayres did not vote in the division on the anti-Chinese bill, while Ramsay was Chief Secretary, and in favour of it. Of the six new councillors, five were for the anti-Chinese bill, and one was against. Of the old group, four were against and two were for. In other words, the “against” group had lost three and the “for” group gained three – a six vote turnaround. A further member of the Legislative Council elected after the general poll due to a resignation, was against, but he replaced a member who was also against, so that involved no change. In addition, while one member previously supportive of anti-Chinese laws (Simpson) voted against the 1888 bill, three who were previously against – Bright, Salom and Simms – were now for. These were big shifts in a house of 24. In other words, there had been three votes gained as a result of the election, three as a result of the debate and one lost: seven members out of 24 had shifted, enough to turn a five vote deficit into a five vote majority. There were also three “against” MLCs not in the House for the vote – Scott (who was militant on the issue), Murray, and Ayres.

tons, but as he had since been assured that the other colonies would pass the higher limit he had decided to alter his vote on the question." Martin was immediately challenged by Copley: "Who gave you the assurance?" In reply, Martin said that he

did not think that he had to give the source of all the information that he had obtained, and it was sufficient that the assurance he received satisfied his judgment. He hoped that the Council would consider the Bill in the light of the effect it would have upon the federation of the colonies.<sup>164</sup>

Had he been shown the telegram from Queensland? Had the telegram from Melbourne arrived in time to influence the debate? Whatever had been specifically done, Richard Chaffey Baker was angry about it; "it seemed to him that the decisions of the Council were influenced by buttonholing in a most improper manner." For its part, the populist *Lantern*, Adelaide's equivalent to *Figaro*, was in no doubt that the motive was federation:

despite all Sam Tomki's hysterics, the Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill was passed. Although we do not agree with everything in it, this was perhaps the best thing that could happen in the interests of Australian federation.<sup>165</sup>

But if the Legislative Council had backed down in the interests of federation, it now put a sting in the tail of the bill, passing a clause providing that the bill would cease to apply on 1 January 1890 unless a proclamation was made by the

---

<sup>164</sup> *SAPD* 1888, cols.1529-30.

<sup>165</sup> *Lantern* (Adelaide), 17 November 1888, p. 15. The reference is to Samuel Tomkinson MLC, well-known as an extreme conservative.



Governor that two additional colonies had passed Acts substantially the same.<sup>166</sup> The Playford government had finally to agree to this clause, which caused a great deal of aggravation before it was quietly removed two years later.

On 8 December 1888, the Governor, Sir William Robinson, signed the bill, bringing it into force. The open door at Darwin was now closed. Lord Carrington had long ago signed the New South Wales law into force; Victoria's Governor, Lord Loch, followed suit on 22 December. Only Queensland held out. The Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, had died on 9 October, and the cranky Sir Arthur Palmer, Lieutenant Governor, reserved Queensland's *Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill* on 6 November 1888 for London to decide,<sup>167</sup> which it eventually did on 28 November 1889. Coincidentally, no doubt, the West Australian Governor assented to the anti-Chinese bill passed that year in his tiny colony. The Western Australian Act followed its larger compatriots in its own way by introducing the 500 ton restriction and abolishing its entry tax, but exempting British citizens and returning Chinese residents, unlike the model conference bill. This did not stop Chinese immigration into Western Australia. In December 1891, assent was given to amendments to South Australia's *Chinese Immigration Restriction Act of 1888* which continued it indefinitely, and amended it so that it did not apply to Chinese people naturalised in South Australia before 1 October 1891, or in any other Australasian colony.

---

<sup>166</sup> SAPD 1888, cols. 1530-31, 1549-51, 1604, 1624-5.

<sup>167</sup> Letter from Administrator of Qld Govt (AH Palmer) to Sec State for Colonies, 6 November 1888, QSA, PRV7188-1-1.

The passing of South Australia's *Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill of 1888* devastated the Northern Territory economy.<sup>168</sup> For the next twenty years, South Australian politicians would attempt to organise Indian labour, and discuss abandoning the Territory. Before long, they came to see federation as the opportunity to unload it onto the proposed new commonwealth, an operation completed in 1911.

## Conclusion

In 1888, Australia was given its first white Australia policy by the combined action of its colonial parliaments, parliaments peopled and controlled by businessmen, lawyers, pastoralists, and the occasional journalist – by members of the ruling class, representing the interests of their ruling classes.

A series of factors came together to drive Australia's politicians to pass extreme legislation – the perception of China as a rising military power, their growing distrust of Britain as protector of their interests, the refusal of the South Australian parliament to restrict the immigration of Chinese people into the Northern Territory, the visit of the Chinese Commissioners, which aroused profound concern in the colonies that China had plans to colonise part of the continent, British support for the complaints of the Chinese government; and

---

<sup>168</sup> PF Donovan, *A land full of possibilities: A history of South Australia's Northern Territory*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1981, p. 179; "Memorandum by the Governor to Ministers on Northern Territory Affairs", SA *V&P*, 1891, vol. IV, p. 4.

finally a series of scares in the summer of 1887-8 that large scale Chinese immigration was being actively organised.

Behind these specific factors was the enormous dilemma that the Anglo-Australian ruling class had in dealing with the 40 per cent of the land mass that is tropical: they did not want an indentured labour colony on the continent, but they could not see how white labour could develop the north. In the end, they chose to destroy the economy of the Northern Territory rather than allow Chinese people to develop it. The “emptiness” of the north made the presence of any Asian power, however weak in reality, seem a potential threat. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* argued in June 1888, in the wake of the Intercolonial Conference: “This sudden aggression on the part of our Government came, not from any special inroad of Chinese upon New South Wales, but rather from largely-increased immigration in the northern part of the colony of South Australia.”<sup>169</sup>

South Australia, Victoria and then New South Wales all took arbitrary administrative action to force a crisis on the issue of Chinese immigration. The *Afghan* crisis created the conditions for them to ram through radically more restrictive anti-Chinese legislation, and finally, in October 1888, to force the South Australian Legislative Council to choose between a thriving, Asian-dominated Northern Territory, and federation with the eastern colonies in the interest of closer economic integration with its prosperous neighbours and wider strategic security.

---

<sup>169</sup> *SMH* 18 June 1888, p. 7, col. 2.

## Conclusion

MOST HISTORIANS are agreed that by 1901, all classes supported the White Australia policy, that Australian nationalism was structured around white racism, and that dissenters were a small minority. Yet almost all histories have focused on the motives and actions of the working class. This thesis was grounded in the conviction that the colonial working class was nowhere strong enough to impose such a fundamental policy on any colonial government, and the empirical observation that in some places, Chinese immigration was restricted with minimal or no working class mobilisation. As a result of the research undertaken for this thesis it was also found that while racism was fundamental to the adoption and justification of the policy of racial exclusion, it fails as an explanation for it.

This research project tested the suggestion that White Australia was a ruling class policy. In doing so, it explored more than just the reasons given by ruling class politicians and strategists for their opposition to either Chinese immigration or indentured “coloured labour” and looked as well for sufficiently profound, structural ruling class agendas that would have led them

to oppose capitalists who supported “non-white” immigration, and to themselves embrace various forms of racial exclusion.

I concluded that the majority of the Anglo-Australian ruling class had three such agendas. The first and most fundamental was a determination that colonisation of the Australian continent would be dominated by British settlement, and that Chinese immigration (and any other large scale Asian immigration) would threaten this strategic control. While capitalist politicians frequently disagreed over whether or not Australia was “threatened” by some particular influx of Chinese people, there was minimal disagreement within the ruling class that this “danger” existed, and that restriction may well be needed at some point. Thus, the arrival of 17,000 Chinese people as part of the Palmer River gold rush galvanised ruling class opinion in Queensland behind restrictive legislation in 1877.

The second ruling class agenda was a determination to build a modern capitalist economy, and a concern that this would be threatened by any large-scale system of production based on indentured labour. This was the agenda that most thoroughly divided ruling class opinion in colonial Australia. Nearly forty per cent of the Australian land mass is in the tropics, and most leading colonial figures believed that white people could not do hard physical labour in the tropics. They therefore faced a terrible dilemma: would the north be left undeveloped, or would agriculture be based on the large scale use of dangerous “coloured labour”? This dilemma was deepened by the successful development of Queensland’s sugar industry on the basis of Pacific Islander labour. Would the immense profits being made, and the even greater profits promised in the future, be sacrificed? Would Australia risk a repeat of the catastrophic American experience of a civil war over “slavery”? As urban and industrial

capital grew in Queensland, the ruling class came to embrace a policy of tolerating, but severely containing, the use of “coloured” indentured labour. The profits of the sugar industry would be protected, but no new indentured labour industries would be allowed, and when the appalling recruitment scandals of 1884-5 erupted, the Liberal government moved to terminate Islander indenture altogether. When the sugar capitalists responded with a campaign to separate North Queensland from Brisbane’s control, they were rebuffed, and their movement contained. It was, perhaps surprisingly, in South Australia that capitalists were most attached to the prospect of using indentured “coloured labour” to develop their tropical colony, the Northern Territory. The determination of the rest of the colonial ruling class to prevent the development of a “coloured” north can be seen in the pressure they applied to South Australia in 1887 and 1888 to stop Chinese immigration into Darwin, and to do it in line with the decisions of the 1888 Intercolonial Conference.

The final ruling class agenda was that of building a culturally homogeneous population. I suggest that this agenda was legitimised by the theories of John Stuart Mill, and his argument that “free institutions” required homogeneity and fellow feeling amongst citizens. I located the source of Mill’s theory of homogeneity in the views of the anti-enlightenment Coleridgians, who gave Mill the outlines for a theory of social control in the new circumstances of a developing industrial capitalist society. The significance of the agenda of homogeneity was that the Australian ruling class was actively engaged in a massive social engineering project, as it recruited a working class population for the future. Assisted British migration and the exclusion of Chinese (and ultimately all non-white) people were two sides of this strategy for homogeneity; other elements included the limitation on the assisted immigration of Catholic Irish settlers, and the failed attempt to assimilate

Catholics through systems of free, compulsory, non-denominational education. Thus the White Australia policy was also a (mostly) Protestant White Australia policy, at least until the late 1940s.

The decisive moment in the adoption of the first White Australia policy came in 1888, when the British government responded to a complaint from China by demanding that the colonies explain and justify their anti-Chinese laws. This brought to a head a growing anxiety within the ruling class over Britain's "indifference" to their fundamental interests. At the same time, the South Australian Legislative Council had allowed significant Chinese immigration into the Northern Territory, and had refused to pass even mild restrictions. Backed by the vast majority of the mainstream press, colonial politicians asserted control of immigration policy and agreed amongst themselves to virtually prohibit Chinese immigration, imposing the policy on both London and the recalcitrants in Adelaide, who were confronted with the unpleasant prospect that the price of federation with the prosperous eastern capitalist colonies would be the probable crippling of economic development in their Northern Territory.

Both the broad agendas involved in the construction of the first White Australia policy of 1888, and the means by which that policy was adopted and imposed, are themselves illustrations of the dominance of the colonial elite in Australia. When the labour movement was challenged and decisively defeated in the great strikes of the early 1890s, there was no move to dismantle the structure of racial exclusion agreed to in the late 1880s. The singular exception was the reinstatement of Pacific Islander indenture in 1892 for the sugar industry alone, and on a basis which threatened none of the three ruling class agendas. This in

turn was ruthlessly terminated by the Protectionist government of Edmund Barton in its 1901 legislation.

There is, therefore, irony in the fact that many in the ruling class were initially reluctant to “own” their policy of racial exclusion. Whatever working class Australia believed about itself, many in the ruling class saw the anti-Chinese laws of 1888 as driven by labour movement mobilisation. In part they were clearly ashamed of their abandonment of some of the fundamental tenets of liberalism, such as the liberty of the individual and their right to free movement. Many were angry at Parkes’ strident speech in May 1888, or worried by the implications of asserting a distinctly Australian “national” right, reflecting local bourgeois priorities, above the needs of the empire as a whole, especially in a climate affected by Irish resistance to British rule. There was also anger and disbelief at the idea that Australia would abandon capitalist development in the north. But this did not imply any real sympathy for Chinese people, or any openness to large-scale Chinese immigration. The typical speech or letter from an unreconciled ruling class figure of the period attacked the mob, the anti-Chinese agitators, the inflated fears of the time, and sometimes Sir Henry Parkes, while averring a hostility to any large-scale Chinese immigration. The following extracts from two letters by Sir Samuel Way, Chief Justice of South Australia, are representative. To Sir Alfred Stephen, he wrote:

I share your views on the Chinese question. The recent agitation is a most disgraceful chapter in our history... The storekeepers lighted the flame at Port Darwin which the labour leaders – the most cruel tyrants of our time – have kept alive in the South.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sir Alfred Stephen 9 July 1888, in Papers of Sir Samuel Way, State Library of South Australia, PRG 30/8



And to Sir Henry Parkes:

I believe the Chinese have work to do for us especially in tropical Australia – but I do not yield to you in the wish to make extra tropical Australia the home of an Anglo Saxon race free from any admixture of Mongolian blood.<sup>2</sup>

British and Chinese acceptance of the 1888 decision, and the passage of time, saw this discontent abate. Once the consensus was firmly established, debates about the particular issues involved also dissipated, and the decisions taken were more often explained in purely racial terms. White Australia became a phrase that encompassed all three agendas, as did Sir Henry Parkes' famous evocation of "the crimson thread of kinship", or the *Bulletin's* "Australia for the white man". The dominant form of Australian nationalism, from the 1890s to the early 1970s, was thus, not just a product of the radical nationalist literati, but an expression of fundamental ruling class strategy, and was expressed in a form that could win the allegiance of the bulk of the plebeian social layers and the working class.

In chapter 2, I discussed a possible Marxist theory of racism, built on the methodology of base and superstructure, and drawn from the writings of key Marxist thinkers. To what extent do these theses encapsulate the development of White Australia as argued here? Certainly economic competition opened up Australian workers to accepting racist ideas (Thesis 1), and "White Australia" gave workers an identity with the illusion of power (Thesis 2). Most analyses of White Australia see this racism as having benefited the "white" working class; I

---

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Sir Samuel Way to Sir Henry Parkes, 31 May 1888, Parkes corresp, Mitchell, A913 p. 334.

offered a challenge to this (Thesis 3), and showed a mainstream media consciously promoting racism (Thesis 4). Certainly White Australia involved the real oppression of Indigenous, Chinese and other “coloured” people in a colonial context (Thesis 5). Theses 6-8 addressed strategic issues for the working class movement, and were not addressed in this project. The deliberate construction, both demographically and ideologically, of an “homogeneous” people, White Australia, was aimed at creating an hegemony that would facilitate social control; of all my tentative theses, the ninth is the one reinforced most strongly.

But there is a gap in the Marxist theory of racism I suggested in chapter 2. The strongest driver of White Australia racism was the strategic concern for British-Australian control and colonisation of the continent. This was not primarily a question of justifying oppression, although the dispossession of Australia’s Indigenous people, and the exclusion and vilification of the Chinese were profoundly oppressive. White Australia was not just a statement about the communities in which Anglo-Australian people actually lived, but about vast areas of the earth’s surface where most Australians did not live, and did not want to live. It was a statement that a southern and eastern-based ruling class would control the vast “empty north”. The north was important as a massive strategic asset. For the southern ruling class, it was a strategic buffer and source of raw materials; and for whatever empire Australia was part of, a safe place for military installations and a large part of the earth’s surface denied to its rivals. But this strategic asset was *permanently vulnerable*, in the minds of Australia’s rulers, to encroachment from Asia. There were, supposedly, rivals for possession of the north; not just states, but peoples. Those people had a number of serious advantages in the struggle for the north – their numbers, their proximity, their supposed climatic suitability, and their supposed ability to

withstand hardship, the common experience of colonisation. The assertion that Australia feared Chinese and Japanese people for their strengths was not an attempt to make Asian people feel less debased; it was a reflection of this sense of strategic vulnerability. White Australia was a reflection of that constant sense of rivalry, however unstated. Over the past century those rivals have been Japan, China, and Indonesia, and dark fears of northern invasion have haunted politicians and ruling class thinkers to this day.<sup>3</sup>

In Australia, racism was mobilised to serve a ruling class strategic objective, to galvanise popular support for the state as it promoted British immigration and excluded people whom it thought could threaten its control. The use of racism in situations of imperialist rivalry is well known; during the First World War, the German people, led by the cousin of the British King, were vilified as “the hun”. The use of racism in Australia was particularly suitable because the strategic fear was as much focused on people, as on a rival state. Australia may well be an extreme example of this dimension to racism; but it is no less valid for that.

---

<sup>3</sup> A survey of “elite” opinion in 1975 found a surprising proportion who believed that the most important problem the country would face in the year 2000 would be the threat of invasion from Asia as a result of Australia’s underpopulation. John Higley, Desley Deacon and Don Smart, *Elites in Australia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston 1979, pp. 270-75. In an interview in 2000, former Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, raised the spectre of Australia’s north being “vulnerable” if the recent chaos in Indonesia had not been resolved, with possibly “hundreds of thousands of people landing on our shores...this is a very, very, real possibility. We have got a very large coastline out there; it is very hard to stop people once the flow gets going. Australia could be faced with a crisis here...it would be a stupid government, and a stupid people, who didn’t have it in their minds as a possibility.” From David Love, *Straw polls, paper money*, Viking, Ringwood (Vic), 2001, p. 256. See also the interview with an unnamed Australian “military commander”, in the chapter, “The potential for invasion by unarmed civilians”, pp. 340-54.

This understanding allows us to see that the racism unleashed by the Howard government against Muslims and people from the Middle East, and especially against refugees, has its roots in the same agendas that led to the White Australia policy. The government's determination to prevent the uncontrolled arrival of people from Indonesia, and its attempt to impose a new form of "homogeneity" on Australians, have shaped its cruel vilification of Muslims. In the 1980s, journalist, Paul Kelly, found John Howard, then Opposition Leader, wrestling with the same dilemma faced by John Stuart Mill 150 years earlier. As Labor governments furiously deregulated and privatised, the Liberals were in disarray; they had nothing to offer the mass of the population beyond the same, increasingly disliked, agenda of neoliberalism. According to Kelly, Howard turned to xenophobia and conservative moralism as vehicles for some kind of "social cohesion":

Howard was attempting to address the central challenge for modern liberalism: how to reconcile free market economics with a system of social values that preserved community life... The issue can be stated simply – free markets have the potential to destroy the status quo. They can uproot communities, transfer capital and labour from one location to another and demolish long-established social ties and employment habits... Howard was the first Liberal to grasp that free market economics required a moral dimension and that the power of free market economics must be offset by an equally powerful theory of social order.<sup>4</sup>

It will take more than a PhD thesis to challenge that, but I hope that an understanding of our ruling class and its past can illuminate the challenges we face in the present.

---

<sup>4</sup> Paul Kelly, *The end of certainty: Power, politics & business in Australia*, revised edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1994, p. 418.

# Bibliography

## Official records

*New South Wales Government Gazette, 1888*

*New South Wales Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 1876-88*

*New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 1879-88*

*Official Record of the Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Queensland, 1876-89*

*Official Record of the Debates of the Legislative Council, Queensland, 1876-89*

*Queensland Government Gazette, 1877*

*Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 1875-89*

*South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 1878-88*

*Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 1879-88*

Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book 2002*, [online]

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/1B2D9CD17F9B4555CA2570A60083443F?opendocument>

Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, Australia, Sept 2006*  
[online]

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/e8ae5488b598839cca25682000131612/938da570a34a8edaca2568a900139350!OpenDocument>

Australian Fair Pay Commission, Wage-Setting Decision and Reasons for Decision, October 2006 [online]  
[http://www.fairpay.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/222E8249-FCA4-42BB-93CD-32B906C2662B/0/AFPC\\_Oct2006\\_Wagesettingdecision\\_Fulldocument.pdf](http://www.fairpay.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/222E8249-FCA4-42BB-93CD-32B906C2662B/0/AFPC_Oct2006_Wagesettingdecision_Fulldocument.pdf)

Crawford, J Dundas, "Notes by Mr. Crawford on Chinese Immigration in the Australian Colonies", Great Britain Foreign Office Confidential Prints, no 3742, Shanghai [sic], 1877

Parker, EH, "Report on the Chinese Question", Report no. 24867, British Foreign Office, 1888

*State Records South Australia*

Chief Secretary: inward correspondence, GRG 24/6

Chief Secretary's Office: Letters to other governments, GRG 24/28

Chief Secretary's outgoing correspondence general, GRG 24/4

Chief Secretary's Office Miscellaneous Records of Historical Interest, Papers concerning Chinese immigration into Australia, 1857-1888, GRG 24/90/223

Governor: Confidential despatches to Secretary of State, GRG 2/14

Governor: Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, GRG 2/6

*Queensland State Archives*

Colonial Secretary's Correspondence: General letterbooks of letters sent, PRV7160

Colonial Secretary's correspondence: General correspondence received, PRV7169

Governor: Correspondence: In-letters on official subjects from other Governors, special commissioners etc, PRV8234

Governor: Letterbooks of confidential despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, PRV8225

Governor: Letterbook of confidential letters sent to various persons, PRV8219 (old GOV/49)

Governor: Original despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, RSI 3382

Governor: Confidential despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, PRV8231

Governor: Letterbooks of Governor's official letters to various persons, PRV8222 (old GOV/G)

Governor: Letterbooks of minutes and memoranda, mostly addressed to the Premier, PRV8213 (old GOV/71-72)

Governor: Letterbook of confidential letters sent to various persons, PRV8219 (old GOV/49)

Governor: Central Queensland Territorial Separation Petition, RSI 1910

Department of Public Lands, Letters received 30 May-3July 1877, PRV9723-1-55

Colonial Secretary's Office: Papers and reports re restriction of Chinese Immigration, PRV7188-1-1

*Public Record Office, Victoria*

Chief Secretary: Inward registered correspondence, VPRS 3991

Governor: Special files, VPRS 1095

Premier's Department: Unregistered papers, reports, correspondence 1879-1964, VPRS 4651

*State Records, New South Wales*

Governor: Folder nos. 4/1365 to 4/1385

Governor: Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State, 4/1649

Governor: Home Correspondence vols. 37-42, 4/1645-1650

Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Annexation of Fiji, 4/788.3

Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Annexation of New Guinea, 4/849, 4/851-2

Colonial Secretary's correspondence: Confidential printed papers, 2/8095B.2

Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Deputations to the Colonial Secretary, 4/823.3

Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Immigration 1881, 4/829.2

- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Intercolonial Conference, 1878-81, 4/830.3
- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: NSW Italian immigration, 4/828.1
- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Papers from Sir Henry Parkes Room unregistered 1887-90, 4/899.2
- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Prohibition of Chinese Immigration into Australia, 4/884.1
- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Proposed prohibition of Chinese Immigration into Australia, 4/829.1
- Colonial Secretary's correspondence, special bundles: Reports on Lambton Coal disturbances, 4/817.1

## Private archives

### *Mitchell Library, Sydney*

- Trades and Labour Council of NSW, A3823-4, A3828-34
- Trades Hall, Melbourne, ML MSS 308
- Edmund Barton correspondence, ML MSS 249/3
- Sir Samuel Walker Griffith papers, ML MSS 363; DL MSQ 184-199, MSQ 145
- Henry Stuart Littleton letters, ML MSS 2376
- Lord Augustus Loftus letters, A3057
- Parkes correspondence, ML MSS 4312
- Journal of Mrs Carrie Soper, ML DOC 218
- Stephen family papers, ML MSS 777
- Quong Tart and Family papers, ML MSS 5094; ML 1527/64
- Robert Towns & Co papers, ML MSS 1279
- Windeyer family papers, ML MSS 186/8-11
- Bernhard Ringrose Wise papers, ML MSS 1327



*Mortlock Library, Adelaide*

Richard Chaffey Baker and family papers, PRG 38

James Penn Boucaut papers, PRG 1046

Coneybeer papers, PRG 22

George Charles Hawker papers, PRG 847

Newland family papers, PRG 288

Alfred Searcy papers, PRG 212

John Warren papers, PRG 23

Sir Samuel Way papers, PRG 30

*Fryer Library, University of Queensland, Brisbane*

JG Drake papers, UQFL96

PF MacDonald papers, UQFL204

George Randall papers, UQFL58

*John Oxley Library, Brisbane*

Hon John Douglas papers, OM89-3

Addresses to SW Griffith, M1194

Illuminated address to SW Griffith by citizens of Rockhampton, 10 March 1888,  
M1679

Illuminated address to SW Griffith, from the Townsville Liberal Reform  
Association, M1673

Sir John Pope-Hennessy, OM64-28/9

Sir Thomas McIlwraith, OM64-19, OM68-5, OM79-2/31, OM79-32/18

Sir Anthony Musgrave's private letters, Acc 334, tr 1863, A2/5/2

Sir Robert Philp papers, OM90-44; OM65-32

Rawson family papers, 2967

HR White papers, OM82-60

Queensland Miscellaneous Clipping book, OM95-36

Sir James Dickson's cutting book, OM90-99

White Atherton Movement, VF 305.89509436 WHI

*National Library of Australia, Canberra*

Alfred Deakin papers, MS 1540

*Latrobe Library, Melbourne*

CH Pearson papers (1830-1894), Ms 7093-7522; MF 208-212, 213

## Newspapers and magazines

*Advertiser (Adelaide), 1887-88*

*Albury Banner & Wodonga Express, 1878*

*Australasian Naval and Military Gazette (Melbourne), 1887*

*Australian Radical, 1887-90*

*Brisbane Courier, 1876-88*

*Brisbane Post Office Directory and Country Guide, 1887*

*Charters Towers Herald, 1886*

*The Christian Colonist (Adelaide), 1888*

*Daily Mirror (Sydney), 30 September 1994*

*Dalby Herald and Western Queensland Advertiser, 1876-77*

*The Echo (Sydney), 1878*

*Evening News (Sydney), 1870-88*

*Freeman's Journal, 1878*

*The Lantern (Adelaide), 1887-88*

*Life (Sydney), 1878*

*Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser, 1878-79, 1883-86*

*Mackay Standard, 1878-79, 1884, 1886-87*

*Maryborough Chronicle (Maryborough, Queensland), 1878*

- Argus* (Melbourne), 1886
- Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 1878
- North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist*, 1886-87
- The Pilgrim*, *Pilgrim supplement*, *Another Pilgrim*, *Harold Grey's Sensational Weekly Pamphlet The Pilgrim* (Sydney), 1877-79
- The Planter* (Brisbane), 1882-85
- The Planter and Farmer* (Brisbane), 1882-85
- Pugh's Almanac* (Brisbane), 1886-87
- Queensland Agriculturalist and Family Journal* (Toowoomba), 1879
- Register* (Adelaide), 1888
- Stockwhip and Stockwhip and Satirist* (Sydney), 1875-76
- Sydney Morning Herald*, 1876-88
- Table Talk* (Melbourne), 1886-88
- The Tomahawk* (Melbourne), 1880
- Townsville Herald and North Queensland Advertiser*, 1878-79
- Townsville Herald*, 1886
- The Wasp* (Sydney), 1878
- The Week* (Brisbane), 1877-79, 1884
- Young Australia* (Melbourne), 1887-88

## Contemporary books

- , *Our first half-century: A review of Queensland progress*, Government of Queensland, Brisbane, 1909
- , *The battle of Mordialloc: Or how we lost Australia*, Samuel Mullen, Melbourne, 1888
- , *The land grant railway fallacy: The latest political device for partitioning Queensland amongst speculative rings, and its exposure*, author, Brisbane, 1883 (A Muir printer)

- (A future legislator & probable Premier), *Patriotic sentiments on the Chinese and Polynesian questions*, British-Australian Publishing Company, Sydney, [1881]
- Bartlett, E. Ashmead, *Shall England keep India?* WH Allen, London, 1885
- Bernays, Charles Arrowsmith, *Queensland politics during 60 (1859-1919) years*, Government Printer, Brisbane, [nd]
- Black, George, *Why I am a republican: or, Imperial federation v. Australian nationalism*, second edition, Sir Robert Bear, Sydney, 1891
- Bowen, Sir George, *Thirty years of colonial government: A selection from the despatches and letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G., etc, Governor successively of Queensland, New Zealand, Victoria, Mauritius and Hong Kong*, edited by Stanley Lane-Poole, 2 vols, Longmans, Green & Co, London & New York, 1889
- Brassey, Lord, *Addresses on colonial questions*, Spottiswoode & Co printers, London, 1888
- Bright, John MP, *Speeches of John Bright, M.P. on the American question*, with an Introduction by Frank Moore, Little, Brown, and Co, Boston, Mass, 1865
- Britten, Mrs Emma Hardinge, *The Chinese labour question; Or the problem of capital versus labour: An extemporaneous address given by Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, at the Theatre Royal, Sydney, (N.S.W.) Sunday evening, December 1st, 1878*, Hampson and Gibson, Printers, Sydney, [1879]
- Buckle, Henry Thomas, *History of civilization in England*, Volume 1, second edition, John W Parker and Son, London, 1858
- Buley, EC, *Australian life in town and country*, George Newnes, Limited, London, 1905
- Butterworth, Arthur R, *The immigration of coloured races into British colonies: Reprinted from the Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, Rivingtons, London, 1898
- Cairnes, JE, *Political essays*, Macmillan and Co, London, 1873
- Cairnes, John E, *The slave power: Its character, career, and probable designs: Being an attempt to explain the real issues involved in the American contest*, third edition, Follett Foster & Co., New York, 1863
- Carlyle, Thomas, *Chartism*, J Fraser, London, 1840
- Carlyle, Thomas, *Past and present*, second edition, Chapman and Hall, London, 1845
- Clarke, Marcus, *The future Australian race*, AH Massina and Co, Melbourne, 1877

- Colomb, JCR, *The naval and military resources of the colonies*, bound in volume Australian Pamphlets, Mitchell Library, Sydney, nd
- Cooper, Sir Daniel, *Federal British Empire: The best defence of the mother country and her colonies*, William Ridgway, London, 1880
- Coote, William, *History of the colony of Queensland from 1770 to the close of the year 1881, in two volumes: Volume I, From 1770 to the separation of the District of Moreton Bay from New South Wales, and its constitution as a separate colony in December, 1859*, William Thorne, Brisbane, 1882
- Cromer, Earl, *Ancient and modern imperialism*, John Murray, London, 1910
- Des Voeux, Sir G William, *My colonial service in British Guiana, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Fiji, Australia, Newfoundland, and Hong Kong with interludes*, 2 vols, John Murray, London, 1903
- Dibbs, George R, *Address to the Trades and Labour Council: [October 12th 1882]*, Sydney, 1890
- Dilke, Charles Wentworth, *Greater Britain: A record of travel in English-speaking countries during 1866 and 1867*, 2 vols, Macmillan and Co, London, 1868
- Dixon, William Hepworth, *White conquest*, in two volumes, Chatto and Windus, London, 1876
- 'Figaro', *The latest political device for partitioning Queensland among southern land sharks and squatting rings*, Queensland Figaro, Brisbane, 1883
- Fletcher, Price (ed), *Queensland: Its resources and institutions: Essays issued in connection with the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886*, William Clowes & Sons, London, 1887
- Froude, James Anthony, *Oceana: Or England and her colonies*, new edition, Longmans, Green, and Co, London, 1886
- Halliwell, T, *The American war considered specially with regard to slavery*, part II, G Watson, Dunedin (Scotland), 1865
- Herald, The, *A white Australia. The Kanaka labor question. Sugar growing in Queensland. The part played by the black man. A 'Herald' investigation*, The Herald, Melbourne, 1901
- Hübner, Baron von, *Through the British Empire*, 2 vols, John Murray, London, 1886
- Hurst, J (ed), *The Chinese question in Australia, 1880-81, "The Australian"* printing works, Sydney, 1880
- Jefferis, Rev J, *Australia confederated: A lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Adelaide, by the Rev. J. Jefferis, LL.B. with speeches on the occasion by His Excellency*

- Sir W.F.D. Jeroois, G.C.M.C, C.B. Governor of South Australia; The Hon. W. Morgan, Premier of South Australia; The Hon W Giblin, Premier of Tasmania; Sir Henry Ayers, K.C.B., George Robertson, Sydney, ?1880*
- Jefferis, Rev J, *Life lessons from the career of Thomas S. Mort; A sermon, by the Rev. J. Jefferis, LL.B., at the Pitt Street Congregational Church, on Sunday Evening, May 19, 1878*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney, 1878
- Jefferis, Rev J, *The Chinese and the seamen's strike: A lecture*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney; Gordon and Gotch, Brisbane, 1878
- Jefferis, Rev Jas, *The enfranchisement of labour: A lecture delivered under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association of New South Wales, on Tuesday, June 18th, 1878, by the Rev. Jas. Jefferis, LL.B*, Foster and Fairfax, Sydney, 1878
- Jenkins, Edward (ed), *Discussion on colonial questions: Being a report of the proceedings of a conference held at Westminster Palace Hotel, on July 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1871*, Strahan & Co, London, 1872
- Johns, F, *Johns's notable Australians and Who is Who in Australasia*, F Johns, Adelaide, 1908
- Jung, KE (Dr), *Australia: The country and its inhabitants*, W Swan Sonnenschein & Co, London, 1884
- Lane, William, *The workingman's paradise: An Australian labour novel, with an introduction by Michael Wilding*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1980
- Lecky, William Edward Hartpole, *A history of England in the eighteenth century, volume 6, second edition*, Longmans, Green, and Co, London, 1887
- Mackay, Kenneth, *The yellow wave: A romance of the Asiatic invasion of Australia*, Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1895
- Meng, L Kong; Cheok Hong Cheong; Louis Ah Mouy (eds), *The Chinese question in Australia, 1878-79*, FF Bailliere, Melbourne, 1879
- Mennell, P, *The dictionary of Australasian biography*, Hutchinson, London, 1892
- Merivale, Herman, *Lectures on colonization and colonies: Delivered before the University of Oxford in 1839, 1840 & 1841*, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London, 1861
- Mill, John Stuart, *Autobiography*, second edition, Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, London, 1873
- Mill, John Stuart, *On liberty and Considerations on representative government*, edited with an introduction by RB McCallum, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1946

- Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of political economy, with some of their applications to social philosophy*, Charles C Little & James Brown, Boston, 1848
- Nelson, Wallace, *Facts, figures and arguments on the black labour question*, Metcalfe & Co, Brisbane, 1892
- Parkes, Sir Henry, *Fifty years in the making of Australian history*, 2 vols, Books for Libraries Press, Freeport NY, 1971 (originally published 1892)
- Parkes, Sir Henry, *Speeches of Sir Henry Parkes, G.C.M.G., M.P., Prime Minister of New South Wales*, Turner and Henderson, Sydney, 1888
- Parsons, The Hon JL, *The Northern Territory: with a glance at the east. A lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Adelaide, May 19, 1887*, WK Thomas & Co Printers, Adelaide, 1887
- Pearson, Charles H, *National life and character: A forecast*, Macmillan and Co, London and New York, 1894
- Perkins, George J, *Mackay. An essay upon the rise, progress, industries, resources, and prospects of the town & district of Mackay*, HB Black & Co, Mackay, 1888
- Plummer, John, *Our colonies: Being an essay on the advantages accruing to the British nation, from its possession of the colonies, considered economically, politically, & morally*, W Tweedie, London, 1864
- Potts, John, *One year of anti-Chinese work in Queensland, with incidents of travel*, Brisbane, 1888
- Reid, Sir George Houston, *My reminiscences*, Cassell and Co, London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne, 1917
- Seeley, Sir JR, *The expansion of England: Two courses of lectures*, MacMillan and Co., Limited, London, 1931
- Shapland, Robert, *The Chinese question: Or yellow agony*, Webb, Vardon and Pritchard (Printers), Adelaide, 1880
- Smith, Adam, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, edited by Edwin Cannan, MA, LLD, fifth edition, Methuen & Co, Ltd, London, 1930
- Smith, Bruce, *Liberty and liberalism: A protest against the growing tendency toward undue interference by the state, with individual liberty, private enterprise and the rights of property*, Centre for Independent Studies, St Leonards (NSW), 2005 (first published 1887)
- Sowden, William J, *The Northern Territory as it is: A narrative of the South Australian parliamentary party's trip and full descriptions of the Northern Territory, its settlements and industries*, WK Thomas & Co, Adelaide, 1882

- [Sowden, WJ], *The 'Register' guide to the Parliament of South Australia 1887*, WK Thomas & Co, Adelaide, 1887
- Spence, William Guthrie, *Australia's awakening: Thirty years in the life of an Australian agitator*, The Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1909
- The Times special correspondent (Flora L Shaw), *Letters from Queensland*, Macmillan and Co, London, 1893
- Thomas, Julian (Stanley James, pseud. "The Vagabond"), *Cannibals and convicts: Notes of personal experiences in the western Pacific*, Cassell, London, 1886
- Thomson, Robert, *Australian nationalism: An earnest appeal to the sons of Australia in favor of the federation and independence of the states of our country by Robert Thomson, a son of the soil, who fervently loves Australia, and whose highest ambition and aspiration is to be true to her and to serve her cause*, Moss brothers, Burwood (NSW), 1888
- Trollope, Anthony, *Australia and New Zealand*, authorized Australian edition, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1873
- Trouton, Capt FH; ed Harold WH Stephen, *Handbook and history of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company*, JL Holmes & Co printers, Sydney, 1884
- Turner, Henry Gyles, *A history of the colony of Victoria from its discovery to its absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia*, 2 vols, Longmans, Green, and Co, London, 1904
- Wakefield, ET, *The disaffection of Ireland; its cause and its cure. A plea for the tenant farmers of Ireland and English workmen*, Edward Stanford, London, 1881
- Wakefield, Edward Gibbon, *England & America: A comparison of the social and political state of both nations*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1834, reprinted Augustus M Kelley Publishers, New York, 1967

## Contemporary articles

- , "Review of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the English Romantic School by Alois Brandl, Coleridge by HD Traill, and Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge by Hall Caine", *Quarterly Review*, vol. 165, no. 329, July 1887, pp. 60-96



- , "The intercolonial conference and the federation of the Australias", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 17, March 1881, pp. 623-38
- , "The mistakes of South Australia in the Northern Territory", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 19, May 1881, pp. 10-24
- , "Longman's Magazine", in "The contemporary thought of Great Britain, Europe, and the United States", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 43, May 1883, pp. 99-100
- , "The contemporary thought of Great Britain, Europe and the United States", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 45, July 1883, p. 317
- A country editor, "The education of an Australian journalist", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 35, September 1882, pp. 534-39
- Adcock, WE, "The separation movement in the north", *Victorian Review*, vol. 11, no. 64, February 1885, pp. 431-37
- Alcock, Rutherford (Sir), "China and its foreign relations", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. III, April 1887, pp. 443-60
- An Old Queenslander, "In memoriam: Carl Feilberg", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. IV, no. 4, pp. 379-80
- Barton, Charles H, "The 'Juden-Hetze' at Berlin", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 19, May 1881, pp. 73-81
- Beaton, L, "Our sister cities. No. 3.--Brisbane", *Melbourne Review*, no. 37, January 1885, pp. 32-42
- Beetson, RD, "A Central Asian muddle", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no 55, May 1884, pp. 81-86
- Bell, Colonel Mark, VC ADC, "China in Central Asia", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. IX, April 1890, pp. 327-47
- Bell, Major JC, "Among the Pacific islands (concluded)", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 49, November 1883, pp. 24-38
- Bicknell, George A, "The annexation of New Guinea", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 43, May 1883, pp. 90-98
- Boulger, Demetrius, "England's two allies in Asia", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. II, Oct 1886, pp. 283-299
- Boyd, AJ, "Queensland: An introductory essay" in Fletcher, Price (ed), *Queensland: Its resources and institutions*, William Clowes & Sons, London, 1887, 20pp (book is not sequentially paginated)
- Browne, Thomas, "The progress of language", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 54, April 1884, pp. 545-55

- Burton, EW, "Considerations upon the upper chamber in the Australasian legislatures", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 37, Nov 1882, pp. 1-26
- Burton, EW, "The political destiny of the colonies", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 20, June 1881, pp. 147-62
- Carlyle, Thomas, "Occasional discourse on the nigger question" in *Latter-day pamphlets*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1858, pp. 1-28
- Carlyle, Thomas, "Signs of the times" in *Critical and miscellaneous essays*, vol. II, Chapman and Hall, London, 1857, pp. 98-118
- Carroll, A, "The Chinese difficulty", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 2, June 1888, pp. 145-54
- Carroll, A, "The dissolution of nations preventable", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 1, March 1888, pp. 69-79
- Carter, FJ (Mrs), "Some thoughts on the duties of the upper classes", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 11, Sept 1880, pp. 612-24
- Castelar, Emilio, "The affairs of Europe", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 7, May 1880, pp. 1-22
- Cavendish, Vincent, "An Australian dominion", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, January 1880, pp. 384-91
- Clashmore, TV, "The Anglo-Saxon myth", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 3, September 1888, pp. 238-44
- Colquhoun, Archibald R., "Burmah: Our gate to China", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. IV, October 1887, pp. 256-278
- Coote, William, "Proposed new colony of Northern Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 12, no. 68, July 1885, pp. 58-70
- Craig, George C, "Mackay, the sugaropolis of Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 19, May 1881, pp. 82-90
- Creighton, Robert A, "Thoughts on Australian federation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 30, April 1882, pp. 705-21
- Crichton, David A, "Politics and parties in Victoria", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 29, March 1882, pp. 592-602
- Crozier, J, "Ireland and historical comparisons", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 18, April 1881, pp. 698-707
- Crozier, J, "Scientific history", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 31 (volume mistakenly shows 30), May 1882, pp. 25-40

- Dalberg-Acton, John Emerich Edward, "Nationality" in *Essays on freedom and power*, selected, and with an introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb, The Beacon Press, Boston (Mass), 1948, pp. 166-95
- Dacey, Edward, "The federation of the Australias", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 10, August 1880, pp. 452-63
- Dick, WH, "France and her colonial interests", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 50, December 1883, pp. 187-94
- Donaldson, H Tennent, "Trade unions: Their origin, development and present position", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. VI, no. 3, September 1889, pp. 269-75
- Douglas, John, "An Australian nation", *Melbourne Review*, vol. 5, no. 17, January 1880, pp. 1-14
- Douglas, John, "Transcontinental railways in Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 28, February 1882, pp. 484-99
- Drought, CE, "A twilight reverie", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 23, September 1881, pp. 542-47
- Dunlop, William B, "The key of western China", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. VII, April 1889, pp. 290-320
- Earle, Horace, "The commerce and industries of Queensland" in Price Fletcher (ed), *Queensland: Its resources and institutions*, William Clowes & Sons, London, 1887, 28pp (book not sequentially paginated)
- Eastern Traveller, "The present and future of Asia", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. III, no. 12, December 1886, pp. 617-23
- Editor (H Mortimer Franklyn), "The true solution of the labour difficulty in Melbourne and other large centres in Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 11, September 1880, pp. 714-28
- "Editor", (H Mortimer Franklyn), "The commercial future of Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, February 1880, pp. 660-73
- Feilberg, Carl A, "Can the Chinaman be made a good colonist?", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, January 1880, pp. 363-73
- Feilberg, Carl A, "The future of north-eastern Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 5, March 1880, pp. 699-711
- Finn, Edmund, "The next transit of Venus: A prospective retrospective", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 39, January 1883, pp. 287-96
- Forster, William, "Democratic government", *Melbourne Review*, no. 28, October 1882, pp. 359-372

- Forster, William, "Personal government", *Melbourne Review*, no. 26, April 1882, pp. 169-183
- Franklyn, H Mortimer, "Greater Britain: A reply to Professor Seeley's Expansion of England", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 58, August 1884, pp. 399-410
- Franklyn, H Mortimer, "Imperial federation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 12, no. 69, July 1885, pp. 330-41
- Franklyn, H Mortimer, "'Ireland a nation'", *Victorian Review*, vol. 13, no. 73, November 1885, pp. 66-82
- Gordon, JM, "The naval and military resources of the Australian colonies", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 58, August 1884, pp. 321-26
- Grey, Earl, "Earl Grey on Victorian politics", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, April 1880, pp. 857-75
- Griffith, SW, "The coloured labour question in Australia", *Antipodean*, second edition, 1892, pp. 13-17
- Guerin, Bella MA, "Modern woman", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. IV, no. 4, December 1887, pp. 324-28
- H, "Extracts from letters written during the Indian Mutiny", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 1, March 1888, pp. 11-33
- Hamilton, George, "Colonial statesmen and their sphere of action", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 30, April 1882, pp. 722-25
- Harper, Charles, "North-west Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 11, September 1880, pp. 683-90
- Harricks, Francis M, "Coloured labour in tropical Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 36, October 1882, pp. 657-61
- Hingston, James, "A coming citizen of the world", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1879, pp. 76-93
- Hogan, James F, "Manhood suffrage in Victoria", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 10, August 1880, pp. 522-33
- Hogan, James F, "The coming Australian", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 18, November 1880, pp. 102-9
- Horsley, John F, "The Chinese in Victoria", *Melbourne Review*, no. 16, October 1879, pp. 416-28
- Ivimey, Aleck J, "Fiji", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 34, August 1882, pp. 404-21
- Jardine Smith, W, "The political situation in Victoria", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 14, December 1880, pp. 178-93

- JFN, "Strikes", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. IV, no. 1, March 1887, pp. 23-30
- JWR, "Professor Max Müller and the Chinese language", *Melbourne Review*, no. 14, April 1879, pp. 163-76
- Lansing, Gerrit L, "Chinese immigration: A sociological study", *Popular Science Monthly*, vol. XX, April 1882, pp. 721-35
- Lockhart, William, "China and its foreign relations", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. III, April 1887, pp. 460-66
- Macdonald, D, "The antecedents of existing savages: Sir John Lubbock versus Archbishop Whately and the Duke of Argyll", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 39, January 1883, pp. 241-46
- Mackay, Mangus, "Is Scotland merged into England?", *Victorian Review*, vol. 13, no. 74, December 1885, pp. 157-61
- Martin, CEM, "The works of John Ruskin", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 57, July 1884, pp. 281-303
- Martin, EW, "A federal Australian navy", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 52, February 1884, pp. 390-93
- McCarthy, John, "Land settlement in Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 37, November 1882, pp. 44-57
- McCrae, GG, "Two great men of our own time", *Melbourne Review*, no. 39, July 1885, pp. 308-17
- Meudell, George D, "An Australian protest against imperial federation", *Melbourne Review*, no. 39, July 1885, pp. 245-54
- Mill, John Stuart, "Bentham" in *Essays on ethics, religion and society, Volume X, Collected works of John Stuart Mill*, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, pp. 77-115
- Mill, John Stuart, "Coleridge" in *Essays on ethics, religion and society, Volume X, Collected works of John Stuart Mill*, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, pp. 119-63
- Mill, John Stuart, "Remarks on Bentham's philosophy" in *Essays on ethics, religion and society, Volume X, Collected works of John Stuart Mill*, University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto and London, 1969, pp. 5-18
- Montgomery, Alexander, "The backbone of the Irish question", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 29, March 1882, pp. 587-91

- Morton, W Lockhart, "Tyranny of democracy in Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 29, March 1882, pp. 603-10
- Myers, Francis, "The strength of isolation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 15, Jan 1881, pp. 289-94
- Napier, WJ, "Colonial democracies", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 31 (volume mistakenly shows 30), May 1882, pp. 80-89
- O'Brien, Joseph, "The agrarian agitation in Ireland: A reply", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, April 1880, pp. 902-14
- O'Brien, Joseph, "The confederation of the empire", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 8, June 1880, pp. 168-88
- O'Leary, MC McCarthy, "Ireland since the Land League", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 60, October 1884, pp. 575-79
- Ogilvy, AJ, "National character – Part 1: A sketch. By an evolutionist", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. III, no. 11, Sept 1886, pp. 518-49
- Parkes, Henry, "Australia and the Imperial Connection", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XV, May 1884, pp. 867-72
- Parkes, Henry, "Our growing Australian empire", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XV, Jan 1884, pp. 138-49
- Parkes, Sir Henry, "An Australian nation", *Melbourne Review*, no. 16, October 1879, pp. 325-33
- Parkes, Sir Henry, "Intercolonial agreement", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 15, Jan 1881, pp. 377-81
- Parrott, TS, "Australian defence", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 4, December 1888, pp. 317-32
- Parsons, HG, "Federation", *Melbourne Review*, no. 33, January 1884, pp. 90-95
- Pearson, Charles H, "On the land question in the United States", *Contemporary Review*, vol. 9, November 1868, pp. 342-56
- Pearson, Charles H, "The Liberal programme", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, February 1880, pp. 523-45
- Pearson, Charles Henry, "An answer to some critics", *Fortnightly Review*, no. CCCXX, New Series, August 1, 1893, pp. 149-70
- Pearson, Prof Charles H, "The education question", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 14, December 1880, pp. 141-55
- Phillips, Coleman, "The Spithead Review of 1890", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 27, January 1882, pp. 291-96

- Phillips, Walter R, "The 'Kung Yung' of K'ung-Foo-Tsze; or, The moral mean", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 26, December 1881, pp. 147-60
- Plummer, John, "Recollections of John Stuart Mill", *Victorian Review*, vol. 3, no. 17, March 1881, pp. 542-49
- Pope Hennessy, John, "The Chinese in Australia", *The Nineteenth Century*, 1888 (c May), pp. 617-9, found in volume, "Nineteenth Century : Australasia [extracts]", Mitchell Library
- Queenslander, "Colored labor and Queensland sugar", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. II, no. 8, December 1885, pp. 339-44
- 'Queenslander', "Six years of Queensland politics", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 43, May 1883, pp. 60-73 and vol. 8, no. 44, June 1883, pp. 158-69
- Ranken, George, "The crisis in the land question", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. IV, no. 4, December 1887, pp. 368-78
- Reid, J, "Australia in relation to world politics", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 1, March 1888, pp. 37-40
- Reid, J, "Considerations on the colony's defence", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. IV, no. 3, September 1887, pp. 241-49
- Reid, J, "Queensland and coloured labour", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, 1892, pp. 133-38
- Reid, J, "The campaign on the Murray", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. II, no. 7, September 1885, pp. 207-35
- Reid, J, "The defence question", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 53, March 1884, pp. 462-7
- Reid, J, "The defence question", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. VI, no. 3, September 1889, pp. 246-55
- Reid, J, "The fall of Melbourne", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. II, no. 6, June 1885, pp. 108-28
- Reid, J, "The tenure of land", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 23, September 1881, pp. 592-600
- Reid, Stuart, "A bird's-eye view of federation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 47, September 1883, pp. 545-55
- Reuleaux, Oscar Kalt, "The new German empire, and the question: Does Germany want colonies?", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 10, August 1880, pp. 478-90

- Roth, Henry Ling, "The influence of climate and soil on the development of the Anglo-Australian race", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 12, October 1880, pp. 840-49
- Rusden, HK, "Labour and capital", *Melbourne Review*, vol. 1, 1876, pp. 67-83
- Scott, J George (Shway Yoe), "The Chinese brave", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. 1, Jan 1886, pp. 222-45
- Shaw, Flora L, "The outlook in Australia", *British Australasian*, January 11, 1894
- Smith, Bruce, "Australian loyalty to the British Empire", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. V, no. 4, December 1888 (Volume has printed, vol. IV), pp. 369-77
- Smith, Bruce, "Chinese labour", *Victorian Review*, vol. 2, no. 8, June 1880, pp. 246-56
- Smith, James, "Slavery and ecclesiasticism", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 48, Oct 1883, pp. 657-68
- Smith, James, "Some social aspects of England", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 44, June 1883, pp. 109-20
- Smith, James, "The religion of the future", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 46, August 1883, pp. 325-40
- Smith, TJ, "Religious teaching in state schools", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 34, August 1882, pp. 426-32
- St George-Smyth, Ralph C, "Russia and England in Asia: The Russian occupation of Merv", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 54, April 1884, pp. 605-28
- Steel, JB, "A new world in Eastern Europe", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, April 1880, pp. 915-21
- Stewart, John G, "Mixed schools", *Victorian Review*, vol. 9, no. 52, February 1884, pp. 329-43
- Stewart, John G, "The French in Tonking", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 56, June 1884, pp. 152-61
- Stoddard, Charles William, "A bit of old China", *Victorian Review*, vol. 4, no. 21, July 1881, pp. 257-74
- Stout, Robert, "A Colonial View of Imperial Federation", *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XXI, March 1887, 351-61
- Thackeray, JR, "The coloured labour question in Queensland", *Victorian Review*, vol. 10, no. 55, May 1884, pp. 16-25



- Thomas, JP, "An embarrassment of strikes", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 40, February 1883, pp. 410-16
- Thomas, Julian, "On the war-path in New Caledonia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7 (mistakenly printed as vol VIII), no. 40, February 1883, pp. 357-66
- Thomas, Julian, "The Salvation Army in South Australia", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 38, December 1882, pp. 121-31
- Topp, AM, "English institutions and the Irish race", *Melbourne Review*, vol. 6, no. 21, January 1881, pp. 9-27
- Topp, AM, "The defence of the empire", *Melbourne Review*, no. 19, July 1880, pp. 324-29
- Tregear, Edward, "The iron grip of the future", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 31 (volume mistakenly shows 30), May 1882, pp. 69-74
- TSC, "Taxation: Direct and indirect", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 44, June 1883, pp. 176-79
- Tseng (Marquis), "China. The sleep and the awakening", *Asiatic Quarterly*, vol. III, January 1887, pp. 1-10
- Turner, Henry G, "Marcus Clarke", *Melbourne Review*, vol. VII, no. 25, January 1882, pp. 1-15
- Tyndall, B, "The French in Tonquin", *The Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, vol. I, no. 1, October 1883, pp. 101-4
- Vambéry, Professor A, "Central Asian politics", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. IV, July 1887, pp. 42-60
- Webb, Arthur J, "Fijians and civilisation", *Victorian Review*, vol. X, no. 57, July 1884, pp. 247-55
- White, H Vere, "Richard Cobden", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 48, October 1883, pp. 717-31
- Williamson, JF, "The small-farm system in the United States", *Victorian Review*, vol. 5, no. 26, December 1881, pp. 138-46
- Windsor, Arthur Lloyd, "The decay of individuality", *Victorian Review*, vol. 1, no. 5, March 1880, pp. 796-812
- Wisker, John, "Railway construction in Victoria", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 37, November 1882, pp. 74-99
- Wisker, John, "The coming revolution", *Victorian Review*, vol. 7, no. 39, January 1883, pp. 255-69
- Wisker, John, "The state and the selector", *Victorian Review*, vol. 8, no. 43, May 1883, pp. 1-15

Wisker, John, "The victim of civilisation", *Victorian Review*, vol. 6, no. 35, September 1882, pp. 540-51

Yate, AC Captain, "The British Empire in Indo-China", *The Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. VII, April 1889, pp. 343-56

## Books

Abercrombie, Nicholas; Stephen Hill; Bryan S Turner, *The dominant ideology thesis*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1980

Alexander, Peter, *Racism, resistance and revolution*, Bookmarks, London, 1987

Allen, Theodore W, *The invention of the white race: Volume 1, Racial oppression and social control*, Verso, London and New York, 1994

Allen, Theodore W, *The invention of the white race: Volume 2, The origin of racial oppression in Anglo-America*, Verso, London and New York, 1997

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised edition, Verso, London and New York, 1991

Anderson, Warwick, *The cultivation of whiteness: Science and racial destiny in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South (Vic), 2002

Andrews, EM (Eric Montgomery), *Australia and China: The ambiguous relationship*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1985

Ankersmit, FR (ed), *Knowing and telling history: The Anglo-Saxon debate*, Wesleyan University, 1986

Aptheker, Herbert, *Racism, imperialism and peace: Selected essays*, edited by Marvin J Berlowitz and Carol E Morgan, MEP Publications, Minneapolis, 1987

Atherton, Cynthia M, *The Northern Territory – South Australian 'white elephant'/Commonwealth prize: Perception and reality in the federation era*, Occasional Paper No 22, State Library of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 1991

Austin, AG, *Australian education 1788-1900: Church, state and public education in colonial Australia*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Melbourne, 1961

Back, Les and John Solomos (eds), *Theories of race and racism: A reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000

- Bailey, JD, *Growth and depression: Contrasts in the Australian and British economies 1870-1880*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1956
- Banton, Michael, *Race relations*, Tavistock, London, 1967
- Banton, Michael, *The idea of race*, Westview Press, Boulder (Co), 1977
- Banton, Michael, *The international politics of race*, Polity, Cambridge, 2002
- Barker, Martin, *The new racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe*, Aletheia Books, University Publications of America Inc, Frederick (Maryland), 1982. Originally published by Junction Books, UK
- Bauer, F, *Historical geography of white settlement in part of Northern Australia; Part 2. The Katherine-Darwin region*, Divisional Report No 64/1, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Division of Land Research and Regional Survey, Canberra, 1964
- Berkhofer, Robert F Jr, *Beyond the great story: History as text and discourse*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge Mass, 1995
- Berwanger, Eugene D, *The frontier against slavery: Western anti-Negro prejudice and the slavery extension controversy*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago and London, 1967
- Black, George, *A history of the NSW Political Labor Party from its conception until 1917*, 12 volumes, George A Jones, Sydney, c1926
- Blackburn, Robin, *The overthrow of colonial slavery 1776-1848*, Verso, London & New York, 1988
- Blackledge, Paul, *Reflections on the Marxist theory of history*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006
- Blainey, Geoffrey, *All for Australia*, Methuen Haynes, North Ryde (NSW), 1984
- Bolton, GC, *A thousand miles away: A history of North Queensland to 1920*, The Jacaranda Press, in association with the Australian National University, Brisbane, 1963
- Brass, Paul R, *Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison*, Sage, New Delhi, 1991
- Brawley, Sean, *The white peril: Foreign relations and Asian immigration to Australasia and North America 1919-1978*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1995
- Breuilly, John, *Nationalism and the state, second edition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994
- Briggs, Vernon M Jr, *Mass immigration and the national interest*, second edition, ME Sharpe, Armonk (New York), 1996

- Bryan, Harrison, *John Murtagh Macrossan: His life and career*, The John Murtagh Macrossan Memorial Lecture, 1956, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1958
- Burgmann, Verity and Jenny Lee (eds), *A most valuable acquisition: A people's history of Australia*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy and Ringwood (Vic), 1988
- Burke, Anthony, *In fear of security: Australia's invasion anxiety*, Pluto Press Australia, Annandale (NSW), 2001
- Butlin, NG, *Investment in Australian economic development, 1861-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1964
- Callinicos, Alex, *Social theory: A historical introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge (UK), 1999
- Callinicos, Alex, *The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx*, Bookmarks, London, 1983
- Callinicos, Alex, *Theories and narratives: Reflections on the philosophy of history*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995
- Calwell, Arthur A, *How many Australians tomorrow?*, Reed & Harris, Melbourne, 1945
- Campbell, Persia Crawford, *Chinese coolie emigration: to countries within the British Empire*, PS King & Son, London, 1923
- Campbell, TW, *George Richard Dibbs: Politician, premier, patriot, paradox*, The author, Braddon (ACT), 1999
- Cannon, Michael, *Who's master? Who's man? Australia in the Victorian age*, Thomas Nelson Australia, West Melbourne, 1978
- Castles, Francis, *Australian public policy and economic vulnerability: A comparative and historical perspective*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The empire strikes back: Race and racism in 70s Britain*, Hutchinson, London, 1982
- Chan, Henry, Ann Curthoys, Nora Chiang (eds), *The overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, settlement and interactions*, Interdisciplinary Group for Australian Studies, National Taiwan University, Taipei and Centre for the Study of the Southern Chinese Diaspora, Australian National University, Canberra, c2001
- Churchward, L G, *Australia & America 1788-1972: An alternative history*, Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited, Sydney, 1979

- Cilento, Sir Raphael, with the assistance of Clem Lack Snr, *Triumph in the tropics: An historical sketch of Queensland*, Historical Committee of The Centenary Celebrations Council of Queensland, Brisbane, 1959
- Clark, CMH, *A history of Australia: Volume IV, The earth abideth for ever 1851-1888*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville (Vic), 1978
- Clark, CMH, *A history of Australia: Volume V, The people make laws 1888-1915*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1981
- Cliff, Tony, *Lenin: Volume 1, Building the party*, Pluto Press, London, 1975
- Clune, David and Ken Turner (eds), *The premiers of New South Wales: Volume 1, 1856-1901*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2006
- Coghlan, TA, *A statistical account of the seven colonies of Australasia, 1895-6*, Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney, 1896
- Coghlan, TA, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From the first settlement in 1788 to the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*, 4 vols, Macmillan of Australia, South Melbourne, 1969 (first published 1918)
- Cohen, GA, *Karl Marx's theory of history: A defence*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (New Jersey, USA), 1978
- Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992
- Connell, RW, *Ruling class, ruling culture: Studies of conflict, power and hegemony in Australian life*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977
- Connell, RW & TH Irving, *Class structure in Australian history*, second edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992 (first published 1980)
- Connolly, CN, *Biographical register of the New South Wales Parliament 1856-1901*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1983
- Connor, Walker, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1994
- Corris, Peter, *Passage, port and plantation: A history of Solomon Islands labour migration 1870-1914*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1973
- Cox, OC, *Caste, class and race: A study in social dynamics*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1959 (Originally 1948)
- Cronin, Kathryn, *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1982
- Crowley, Frank (ed), *A new history of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1974

- Cryle, Denis, *The press in colonial Queensland: A social and political history 1845-1875*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1989
- Curthoys, Ann and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978
- D'Cruz, J, *The Asian image in Australia: Episodes in Australian history*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1973
- Davies, Robert H, *Capital, state and white labour in South Africa 1900-1960: An historical materialist analysis of class formation and class relations*, The Harvester Press, Brighton (Sussex, UK), 1979
- Davis, David Brion, *The problem of slavery in the age of revolution 1770-1823*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1975
- Davis, Mike, *Prisoners of the American dream: Politics and economy in the history of the US working class*, Verso, London, 1986
- de Ste. Croix, GEM, *The class struggle in the ancient Greek world: From the archaic age to the Arab conquests*, Duckworth, London, 1981
- Denoon, Donald, *Settler capitalism: The dynamics of dependent development in the southern hemisphere*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983
- Dickey, Brian (ed), *Politics in New South Wales 1856-1900*, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne (Vic), 1969
- Dimond, Glenys, *Sweet & sour: Experiences of Chinese families in the Northern Territory*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), Darwin, 1996
- Dixon, R, *Immigration and the 'White Australia' policy*, Current Book Distributors, Sydney, 1945 [online]  
[http://www.agitprop.org.au/lefthistory/1945\\_dixon\\_immigration\\_and\\_the\\_white\\_australia\\_policy.php](http://www.agitprop.org.au/lefthistory/1945_dixon_immigration_and_the_white_australia_policy.php) [accessed 1 December 2006]
- Docker, John and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000
- Donner, Wendy, *The liberal self: John Stuart Mill's moral and political philosophy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1991
- Donovan, PF, *A land full of possibilities: A history of South Australia's Northern Territory*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1981
- Doran, Christine, *Separatism in Townsville, 1884 to 1894: 'We should govern ourselves'*, History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, 1981

- Douglass, William A, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1995
- Draper, Hal, *Karl Marx's theory of revolution: Volume I, State and bureaucracy*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1977
- Draper, Hal, *Karl Marx's theory of revolution: Volume II, The politics of social classes*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1978
- Draper, Hal, *Karl Marx's theory of revolution: Volume IV, Critique of other socialisms*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1990
- du Toit, D, *Capital and labour in South Africa: Class struggle in the 1970s*, Kegan Paul International Ltd, London and Boston, 1981
- Dunbabin, Thomas, *Slavers of the south seas*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1935
- Duncan, Graeme, *Marx and Mill: Two views of social conflict and social harmony*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1973
- Dutton, David, *One of us? A century of Australian citizenship*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2002
- Eldridge, CC, *The imperial experience: From Carlyle to Forster*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1996
- Eldridge, CC (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984
- Emmer, PC (ed), *Colonialism and migration; indentured labour before and after slavery*, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht (Netherlands), 1986
- Ensor, RCK, *The Oxford History of England, England 1870-1914*, Oxford University Press, 1936
- Evans, Raymond, *Fighting words: Writing about race*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999
- Evans, Raymond, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975)
- Evans, Richard J, *In defence of history*, Granta Books, London, 1997
- Feuer, Lewis S (ed), *Marx and Engels: Basic writings on politics and philosophy*, Fontana, 1969
- Finch, Lynette, *The classing gaze: Sexuality, class and surveillance*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993
- Fitzgerald, CP, *The third China: The Chinese communities in south-east Asia*, FW Cheshire, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney, for the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1965

- Fitzgerald, Ross, *From the dreaming to 1915: A history of Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1982
- Fitzgerald, Shirley, *Red tape, gold scissors: The story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1997
- Fitzgerald, Shirley, *Rising damp: Sydney 1870-90*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987
- Fitzpatrick, Brian, *A short history of the Australian labor movement*, Rawson's bookshop, Melbourne, 1940
- Fitzpatrick, Brian and Rowan J Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia, 1872-1972: A history*, Seamen's Union of Australia, Sydney, 1981
- Flint, John E and Glyndwr Williams (eds), *Perspectives of empire: Essays presented to Gerald S. Graham*, Longman, London, 1973
- Fogel, Richard William and Stanley L Engerman, *Time on the cross: The economics of American Negro slavery*, vol. 1 (of 2), Little Brown, Boston and Toronto, 1974
- Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's unfinished revolution, 1863-1877*, Harper & Row, New York, 1988
- Foot, Paul, *The vote: How it was won and how it was undermined*, Viking, London, 2005
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth and Eugene D Genovese, *Fruits of merchant capital: Slavery and bourgeois property in the rise and expansion of capitalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983
- Fredrickson, George M, *Racism: A short history*, Sage publications, Carlton North (Vic), 2002
- Fryer, Peter, *Black people in the British empire: An introduction*, Pluto Press, London, 1988
- Fryer, Peter, *Staying power: The history of Black people in Britain*, Pluto Press, London and Boulder (Colorado), 1984
- Ganter, Regina (Guest editor), *Asians in Australian history*, special issue of *Queensland Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, November 1999
- Gates, E Nathaniel (ed), *Cultural and literary critiques of the concepts of 'race'*, Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1997
- Gellner, Ernest, *Nationalism*, Phoenix, London, 1997
- Genovese, Eugene D, *Roll, Jordan, roll: The world the slaves made*, Vintage, New York, 1976



- Gibb, D (Don), *The making of 'White Australia'*, Victorian Historical Association, West Melbourne, 1973
- Giddens, Anthony, *The nation-state and violence: Volume two of A contemporary critique of historical materialism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985
- Girvetz, HK, *Democracy and elitism: Two essays with selected readings*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1967
- Gistitin, Carol, *Quite a colony: South Sea Islanders in central Queensland 1867-1993*, Aebis Publishing, Brisbane, 1993
- Glass, Margaret, *Charles Cameron Kingston: Federation father*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1997
- Gollan, Robin, *Radical and working class politics: A study of eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, Parkville (Vic), 1960
- Gollan, Robin, *The coalminers of New South Wales: A history of the union, 1860-1960*, Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian National University, Parkville (Vic), 1963
- Grabosky, Peter N, *Sydney in ferment: Crime, dissent and official reaction 1788 to 1973*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1977
- Graham, A[ustin] Douglas, *The life of the Right Honourable Sir Samuel Walker Griffith, G.C.M.G., P.C.*, John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture for 1938, Law Book Co of Australasia, Brisbane, 1939
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-1926: with additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders*, trans & ed Quintin Hoare, International Publishers, New York, 1978
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed & trans Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971
- Grant, Alexander and Keith J Stringer (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995
- Graves, Adrian, *Cane and labour: The political economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1993
- Gray, Geoffrey and Christine Winter (eds), *The resurgence of racism: Howard, Hanson and the race debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton (Vic), 1997
- Greenwood, Gordon, *Australia: A social and political history*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1955

- Grundy, Denis, *'Secular, compulsory and free': The Education Act of 1872*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1972
- Gutman, Herbert G, *Slavery and the numbers game: A critique of Time on the cross*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago and London, 1975
- Gyory, Andrew, *Closing the gate: Race, politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC), 1998
- Hage, Ghassan, *Against paranoid nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society*, Pluto Press, Annandale (NSW), 2003
- Hage, Ghassan, *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*, Pluto Press, Annandale (NSW), 1998
- Hancock, WK, *Australia*, The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1961 (first published 1930)
- Harman, Chris, *Explaining the crisis: A Marxist re-appraisal*, Bookmarks, London, 1984
- Hartz, Louis, *The founding of new societies: Studies in the history of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, New York and London, 1964
- Higley, John, Desley Deacon and Don Smart, *Elites in Australia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston 1979
- Hirst, JB, *The strange birth of colonial democracy: New South Wales 1848-1884*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988
- Hirst, John, *The sentimental nation: The making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000
- Hobsbawm, EJ, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990
- Hobsbawm, EJ, *The age of revolution 1789-1848*, Mentor, New York, 1962
- Hobsbawm, Eric, *The age of empire 1875-1914*, Abacus, London, 1994
- Holborow, Marnie, *The politics of English: A Marxist view of language*, SAGE Publications, London, 1999
- Holmes, J Macdonald, *Australia's open north: A study of Northern Australia bearing on the urgency of the times*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1963
- Holthouse, Hector, *Cannibal cargoes*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1969
- Hornadge, Bill, *The yellow peril: A squint at some Australian attitudes towards Orientals*, second edition, Review publications, Dubbo (NSW), 1976

- Huttenback, Robert A, *Racism and empire: White settlers and colored immigrants in the British self-governing colonies 1830-1910*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1976
- Hyam, Ronald, *Britain's imperial century 1815-1914: A study of empire and expansion*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1976
- Hyams, BK and B Bessant, *Schools for the people? An introduction to the history of state education in Australia*, Longman, Camberwell (Vic), 1972
- Immigration Reform Group, *Immigration: Control or colour bar? The background to 'White Australia' and a proposal for change*, edited by Kenneth Rivett, Immigration Reform Group, Melbourne, 1962
- Jaensch, Dean (ed), *The Flinders history of South Australia: Political history*, Wakefield Press, Netley (SA), 1986
- Jayasuriya, Laksiri, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, culture and nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley (WA), 2003
- Jenkins, Keith (ed), *The postmodern history reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997
- Johnston, W Ross and Margaret Zerner, *A guide to the history of Queensland: A bibliographic survey of selected resources in Queensland history*, Library Board of Queensland, Brisbane, 1985
- Jones, Timothy G, *The Chinese in the Northern Territory*, revised edition, Northern Territory University Press, Darwin, 1997
- Joyce, Roger B, *Samuel Walker Griffith*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984
- Kahan, Alan S, *Aristocratic liberalism: The social and political thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992
- Kaye, Sir John William, *History of the Sepoy war in India, 1857-1858*, vol. 1, 9th edn, Allen, London, 1880
- Kaye, Harvey, *The British Marxist historians: An introductory analysis*, Polity Press, London, 1984
- Kelly, Paul, *The end of certainty: Power, politics & business in Australia*, revised edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1994
- Kiernan, EVG, *British diplomacy in China: 1880 to 1885*, Octagon Bookis, New York, 1970 (first published 1939)

- Kiernan, VG, *Imperialism and its contradictions*, edited and introduced by Harvey J Kaye, Routledge, New York & London, 1995
- Kiernan, VG, *The lords of human kind: European attitudes to the outside world in the imperial age*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969
- Kirk, Neville, *Comrades and cousins: Globalization, workers and labour movements in Britain, the USA and Australia from the 1880s to 1914*, The Merlin Press, London, 2003
- Kirkpatrick, Rod, *Sworn to no master: A history of the provincial press in Queensland to 1930*, Darling Downs Institute Press, Toowoomba (Qld), 1984
- La Nauze, JA, *Alfred Deakin: A biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1965
- Lack, John and Jacqueline Templeton, *Sources of Australian immigration history: Volume 1, 1901-1945*, History Department, The University of Melbourne, Parkville (Vic), 1988
- Lang, JT, *I remember: Autobiography*, McNamara's Books, Katoomba (NSW), 1980 (first published 1956)
- Lawson, Ronald, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A study of an Australian urban society*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973
- Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), *Collected works*, Progress publishers, Moscow, 1962
- Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism: A popular outline*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1973
- Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), *What is to be done? Burning questions of our movement*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964
- Lever-Tracy, Constance and Michael Quinlan, *A divided working class: Ethnic segmentation and industrial conflict in Australia*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1988
- Linge, GJR, *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing, 1788-1890*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1979
- Lockwood, Douglas, *The front door: Darwin, 1869-1969*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1968
- London, HI, *Non-white immigration and the 'White Australia' policy*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970
- Lorimer, Douglas A, *Colour, class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century*, Leicester University Press, 1978
- Love, David, *Straw polls, paper money*, Viking, Ringwood (Vic), 2001

- Loveday, Peter and AW Martin, *Parliament factions and parties: The first thirty years of responsible government in New South Wales, 1856-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1966
- Lukács, Georg, *History and class consciousness: Studies in Marxist dialectics*, Merlin Press, London, 1971
- Lunn, Kenneth (ed), *Race and labour in twentieth-century Britain*, Frank Cass, London, 1985
- Lilley, Rev W Osborne, *Life of the Hon. William Brookes*, City Printing Works, Brisbane, 1902
- Lyne, Charles E, *Life of Sir Henry Parkes G.C.M.G.: Australian statesman*, George Robertson & Co, Sydney etc, 1896
- Macgregor, Paul (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995
- Machiavelli, Nicolo, *The prince*, Translated by W.K. Marriott, JM Dent & Sons, London, 1908 (1911 reprint)
- Macintyre, Stuart, *A colonial liberalism: The lost world of three Victorian visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (UK), 1991
- McMaster, Don, *Asylum seekers: Australia's response to refugees*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South (Vic), 2001
- Malik, Kenan, *The meaning of race: Race, history and culture in western society*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 1996
- Mangan, JA (ed), *'Benefits bestowed'? Education and British imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1988
- Markey, Raymond, *The making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988
- Marks, Shula and Peter Richardson (eds), *International labour migration: Historical perspectives*, Maurice Temple Smith, Hounslow (UK), 1984
- Markus, Andrew, *Australian race relations, 1788-1993*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1994
- Markus, Andrew, *Fear and hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979
- Markus, Andrew, *Race: John Howard and the remaking of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW), 2001

- Markus, Andrew and MC Ricklefs (eds), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian immigration*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (NSW), 1985
- Martin, AW, *Henry Parkes: A biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980
- Martin, Helene Chung, *Tasmanian tin miners, addicts and merchants*, [online] <http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/henry.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006]
- Marx, K and F Engels, *The first Indian war of independence 1857-1859*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, c1959
- Marx, Karl, *Capital: A critique of political economy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, vol. I, 1954; vol. II, 1956; vol. III, 1959
- Marx, Karl, *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954
- Marx, Karl, *Preface and introduction to A contribution to the critique of political economy*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the communist party*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *Selected works in three volumes, volume 3*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970
- May, Cathie R, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns, 1870-1920*, Studies in North Queensland history, Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, (Townsville), 1984
- Mayne, AJC, *Fever, squalor and vice: Sanitation and social policy in Victorian Sydney*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1982
- Mayne, Alan, *Representing the slum: Popular journalism in a late nineteenth-century city*, History Department, The University of Melbourne, Parkville (Vic), 1990
- McCalman, Iain, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten histories and lost objects of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2001
- McConnochie, Keith, David Hollinsworth, Jan Pettman, *Race & racism in Australia*, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls (NSW), 1988
- McLachlan, Noel, *Waiting for the revolution: A history of Australian nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood (Vic), 1989

- McLellan, David, *Ideology*, second edition, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995
- McQueen, Humphrey, *A new Britannia: An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood (Vic), 1970
- Miles, Robert, *Capitalism and unfree labour: Anomaly or necessity?*, Tavistock Publications, London and New York, 1987
- Miles, Robert, *Racism*, Routledge, London, 1989 (1990 reprint)
- Miles, Robert, *Racism and migrant labour*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982,
- Moore, Clive, *Kanaka: A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1985
- Murphy, DJ and RB Joyce, *Queensland political portraits 1859-1952*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1978
- Murphy, DJ, RB Joyce and Colin A Hughes (eds), *Prelude to power: The rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton (Qld), 1970
- Murphy, John W and Jung Min Choi, *Postmodernism, unraveling racism, and democratic institutions*, Praeger, Westport (Conneticut), 1997
- Nairn, Bede, *Civilising capitalism: The beginnings of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1989 (first published 1973)
- Parkin, Frank, *Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique*, Tavistock publications, London, 1979
- Parnaby, OW, *Britain and the labor trade in the southwest Pacific*, Duke University Press, Durham (NC), 1964
- Perry, Harry C, *Memoirs of the Hon. Sir Robert Philp, K.C.M.G., 1851-1922*, Watson, Ferguson & Co, Brisbane, 1923
- Perry, Matt, *Marxism and history*, Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) and New York, 2002
- Philipp, June, *A great view of things: Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Thomas Nelson (Australia), Sydney, 1971
- Polanyi, Karl, *Origins of our time: The great transformation*, V Gollancz, London, 1945
- Pope-Hennessy, James, *Verandah: Some episodes in the crown colonies, 1867-1889*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1964

- Powell, Alan, *Far country: A short history of the Northern Territory*, 4th edition, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South (Vic), 2000
- Poynting, Scott, Greg Noble, Paul Tabar and Jock Collins, *Bin Laden in the suburbs: Criminalising the Arab other*, Sydney Institute of Criminology, Sydney, 2004
- Price, Charles A, *The great white walls are built: Restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888*, The Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with the Australian National University, Canberra, 1974
- Price, Richard, *An imperial war and the British working class: Working-class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War 1899-1902*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Toronto, 1972
- Rex, John, *Race, colonialism and the city*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1973
- Rex, John and David Mason (eds), *Theories of race and ethnic relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1986
- Reynolds, Henry, *North of Capricorn: The untold story of Australia's north*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW), 2003
- Reynolds, Henry, *Nowhere people: How international race thinking shaped Australia's identity*, Viking, Camberwell (Vic), 2005
- Richards, Eric (ed), *The Flinders history of South Australia: Social history*, Wakefield Press, Netley (SA), 1986
- Roediger, David R, *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*, revised edition, Verso, London & New York, 1999
- Rolls, Eric, *Sojourners: Flowers and the wide sea*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993
- Ross, Edward Alsworth, *The old world in the new: The significance of past and present immigration to the American people*, T Fisher Unwin, London, 1914
- Rowse, Tim, *Australian liberalism and national character*, Kibble Books, Malmsbury (Vic), 1978
- Rubin, Isaac Ilyich, *A history of economic thought*, translated and edited by Donald Filtzer from second, revised Russian edition, 1929, afterword by Catherine Colliot-Thélène, Ink Links, London, 1979
- Said, Edward W, *Orientalism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Henley (UK), 1978



- Samuel, Raphael (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity: Volume 1, History and politics*, Routledge, London 1989
- Samuel, Raphael (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity: Volume 2, Minorities and outsiders*, Routledge, London 1989
- Samuel, Raphael (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity: Volume 3, National fictions*, Routledge, London 1989
- Sargent, AJ, *Anglo-Chinese commerce and diplomacy: (Mainly in the nineteenth century)*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1907
- Saunders, K, *Indentured labour in the British Empire 1834-1920*, Croom Helm, London, 1984
- Saunders, Kay, *Workers in bondage: The origins and bases of unfree labour in Queensland 1824-1916*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1982
- Sayers, CE, *David Syme: A life*, FW Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965
- Scarr, Deryck, *Fragments of empire: A history of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967
- Schumpeter, Joseph, *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1976
- Serle, Geoffrey, *The golden age: A history of the colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville (Vic), 1963
- Shann, Edward, *An economic history of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1930
- Shlomowitz, Ralph, *Marx and the Queensland labour trade*, Working Papers in Economic History, No. 54, May 1992, Flinders University of South Australia
- Shlomowitz, Ralph, *Marx and the Queensland labour trade: A further comment*, Working Papers in Economic History, No 66, August 1995, The Flinders University of South Australia
- Shlomowitz, Ralph, *The Pacific labour trade and super-exploitation?*, Working papers in Economic History, No 24, September 1988, The Flinders University of South Australia
- Sivanandan, A (Ambalavaner), *Communities of resistance: Writings on Black struggles for socialism*, Verso, London & New York, 1990
- Smart, Paul, *Mill and Marx: Individual liberty and the roads to freedom*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1991

- Smith, J Douglas, *Managing white supremacy: Race, politics and citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC) and London, 2002
- Snyder, Louis L, *The idea of racialism: Its meaning and history*, D van Nostrand Co (Anvil edn), Princeton, 1962
- Solomos, John and Les Back, *Racism and society*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1996
- Stargardt, AW, *Australia's Asian policies: The history of a debate*, Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg, 1977
- Stevens, Frank, *The politics of prejudice*, Alternative Publishing Co-operative, Chippendale (NSW), 1980
- Stevens, FS (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia: Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971
- Stevens, FS (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia: Volume 2, Black versus white*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971
- Stevens, FS (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia: Volume 3, Colonialism*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1972
- Sutcliffe, JT, *A history of trade unionism in Australia*, republished with a foreword by GW Ford, Macmillan of Australia, Melbourne 1967
- Sydney Labour History Group, *What rough beast: The state and social order in Australian history*, George Allen & Unwin Australia, North Sydney (NSW), 1982
- Tabili, Laura, *'We ask for British justice': Workers and racial difference in late imperial Britain*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY) and London, 1994
- Tavan, Gwenda, *The long, slow death of White Australia*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2005
- Thompson, EP, *Customs in common*, Penguin, London, 1993
- Thompson, EP, *The making of the English working class*, Penguin, Harmondsworth (UK), 1968
- Thompson, EP, *Whigs and hunters: The origin of the Black Act*, Penguin, London, 1990
- Thompson, Roger C, *Australian imperialism in the Pacific: The expansionist era 1820-1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1980

- Thomson, Kathleen and Geoffrey Serle, *A biographical register of the Victorian Parliament, 1859-1900*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1972
- Thornton, AP, *The imperial idea and its enemies: A study in British power*, Macmillan & Co, London, 1959
- Thorpe, Bill, *Colonial Queensland: Perspectives on a frontier society*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1996
- Tinker, Hugh, *A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas 1830-1920*, Oxford University Press (for the Institute of Race Relations), London, New York & Bombay, 1974
- Trainor, Luke, *British imperialism and Australian nationalism: Manipulation, conflict, and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1994
- Travers, Robert, *Australian mandarin: The life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst (NSW), 1981
- Tregenza, John, *Professor of democracy: The life of Charles Henry Pearson 1830-1894, Oxford don and Australian radical*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1968
- Turk, Christopher, *Coleridge and Mill: A study of influence*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1988
- Turley, David, *The culture of English antislavery, 1780-1860*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991
- UNESCO, *Sociological theories: Race and colonialism*, UNESCO, Paris, 1980
- van den Berghe, Pierre, *Race and racism: A comparative perspective*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, London, Sydney, 1967
- van den Berghe, Pierre L, *Race and ethnicity*, Basic Books, New York, 1970
- Walker, David, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999
- Walker, Jan, *Jondaryan station: The relationship between pastoral capital and pastoral labour 1840-1890*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1988
- Walker, RB, *The newspaper press in New South Wales, 1803-1920*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, *Historical capitalism*, Verso, London, 1983
- Walsh, Kay and Joy Hooton, *Australian autobiographical narratives: An annotated bibliography: Volume 2, 1850-1900*, Australian Scholarly Editions Centre,

- Australian Defence Force Academy, and National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1998
- Walvin, James (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982
- Warren, James Francis, *Rickshaw coolie: A people's history of Singapore (1880-1940)*, Oxford University Press, Singapore & New York, 1986
- Waterson, DB, *A biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*, second revised edition, Casket publications, Sydney, 2001
- Waterson, DB, *Squatter, selector, and storekeeper: A history of the Darling Downs 1859-93*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1968
- Waterson, Duncan, *Personality, profit and politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894*, The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture, 1978, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia (Qld), 1984
- Waterson, Duncan and Maurice French, *From the frontier: A pictorial history of Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987
- Webb, Janeen and Andrew Enstice, *Aliens and savages: Fiction, politics and prejudice in Australia*, HarperCollins, Pymble (NSW), 1998
- Wells, Andrew, *Constructing capitalism: An economic history of eastern Australia, 1788-1901*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989
- Wheelright, EL & Ken Buckley, *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism*, 5 vols, ANZ Book Co, Sydney, 1975-83
- Wheelwright, Ted and Ken Buckley, *No paradise for workers: Capitalism and the common people in Australia 1788-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988
- White, Hayden, *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973
- Willard, Myra, *The history of the White Australia policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1967 (first published 1923)
- Williams, Eric, *Capitalism and slavery*, Introduction by DW Brogan, Andrew Deutsch, London, 1964 (first published 1944)
- Windschuttle, Keith, *The White Australia policy*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004
- Wright, Erik Olin, Andrew Levine, Elliott Sober, *Reconstructing Marxism: Essays on explanation and the theory of history*, Verso, London and New York, 1992
- Yarwood, AT, *Asian migration to Australia: The background to exclusion, 1896-1923*, Melbourne University Press, 1967 (first published 1964)

- Yarwood, AT (ed), *Attitudes to non-European immigration*, Cassell Australia, Stanmore (NSW) and North Melbourne, 1968
- Yarwood, AT; MJ Knowling, *Race relations in Australia: A history*, Methuen Australia, North Ryde (NSW), 1982
- Zastoupil, Lynn, *John Stuart Mill and India*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (California), 1994

## Articles and chapters

- , "Sir John Pope Hennessy", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. viii, no. 1, 1965-6, p. 110
- Aldrich, Richard, "Imperialism in the study and teaching of history" in JA Mangan (ed), *'Benefits bestowed'? Education and British imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1988, pp. 28-38
- Alexander, Malcolm, Rhondda Nicholas and James Walter, "The Queensland capitalist class: Spectator or actor in regional differentiation?", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 3, November 1984, pp. 332-47
- Ang, Ien, "Asians in Australia: A contradiction in terms?" in Docker, John and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, pp. 115-30
- Ang, Ien, "From White Australia to fortress Australia: The anxious nation in the new century" in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, culture and nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley (WA), 2003, pp. 51-69
- Armstrong, Warwick and John Bradbury, "Industrialisation and class structure in Australia, Canada and Argentina: 1870-1980" in EL Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism*, volume 5, ANZ Book Co, Sydney, 1983, pp. 43-74
- Atkins, Barbara, "Antecedents of the N.S.W. Protection Party, 1881-1891: The Protection and Political Reform League", *Journal & Proceedings (Royal Australian Historical Society)*, vol. XLIV, 1958, pp. 239-58

- Atmore, AE, "The extra-European foundations of British imperialism: Towards a reassessment" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 105-25
- Baker, Donald G, "Race and power: Comparative approaches to the analysis of race relations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, July 1978, pp. 316-35
- Bashford, Alison, "'Is White Australia possible?' Race, colonialism and tropical medicine", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, March 2000, pp. 248-71
- Ben-Tovim, Gideon, "The struggle against racism: Theoretical and strategic perspectives", *Marxism Today*, July 1978, pp. 203-13
- Ben-Tovim, Gideon, John Gabriel, Ian Law and Kathleen Stredder, "Race, left strategies and the state", *Politics and Power*, no. 3, pp. 153-81
- Blackton, Charles S, "Australian nationality and nationalism, 1850-1900", *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 9, no. 36, May 1961, pp. 351-67
- Bolt, Christine, "Race and the Victorians" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 126-47
- Boot, HM, "Debts, drought, and foreclosure: Wool-producers in Queensland and New South Wales, 1870-1905", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XXVII, no. 2, September 1988, pp. 33-52
- Bourne, Jenny, "Cheerleaders and ombudsmen: The sociology of race relations in Britain", *Race and Class*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1980, pp. 331-52
- Bowden, Bradley, "'Some mysterious terror': The relationship between capital and labour in Ipswich, 1861-96", *Labour History*, no. 72, May 1997, pp. 77-100
- Brett, Judith, "Comment: The country and the city", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 27-29
- Brett, Judith, "John Howard, Pauline Hanson and the politics of grievance" in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter (eds), *The resurgence of racism: Howard, Hanson and the race debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton (Vic), 1997, pp. 7-28
- Bridges, Barry, "Sir Henry Parkes and the New South Wales Public Instruction Act, 1880" in S Murray-Smith, *Melbourne studies in education*, 1975, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic), 1975, pp. 177-213

- Britain, IM, "Victoria, the Chinese and the federal idea, 1887-1888", *ANU Historical Journal*, no. 6, November 1969, pp. 44-60
- Burgmann, Verity, "A brand new Britannia", *Arena* [first series], no. 79, 1987, pp. 171-75
- Burgmann, Verity, "Capital and labour" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 20-34
- Burgmann, Verity, "Comment: Who our enemies are: Andrew Markus and the baloney view of Australian racism", *Labour History*, no. 49, November 1985, pp. 97-101
- Burgmann, Verity, "Writing racism out of history", *Arena* [first series], no. 67, 1984, pp. 78-92
- Burroughs, Peter, "Colonial self-government" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 39-63
- Burroughs, Peter, "The Canadian rebellions in British politics" in John E Flint and Glyndwr Williams (eds), *Perspectives of empire: Essays presented to Gerald S. Graham*, Longman, London, 1973, pp. 54-92
- Butlin, NG, "Growth in a trading world: The Australian economy, heavily disguised", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. IV, no. 2, August 1964, pp. 138-58
- Byrne, David, "The 1930 'Arab riot' in South Shields: A race riot that never was", *Race and Class*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1977, pp. 261-77
- Callinicos, Alex, "Race and class", *International Socialism* (UK), no. 55, summer 1992, pp. 3-39
- Campbell, Malcolm, "A 'successful experiment' no more: The intensification of religious bigotry in eastern Australia, 1865-1885", *Humanities Research*, vol. XII, no. 1, 2005, pp. 67-78
- Cannadine, David, "British history as a 'new subject': Politics, perspectives and prospects" in Alexander Grant and Keith J Stringer (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 12-28
- Chamberlain, ME, "Imperialism and social reform" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 148-167

- Chipp, Don, "The most delicate ground in politics" in Andrew Markus and Radha Rasmussen (eds), *Prejudice in the public arena: Racism*, Centre for Migrant and Intercultural Studies, Monash University, Clayton (Vic), 1987, pp. 1-9
- Clarke, Simon, "Capital, fractions of capital and the state: 'Neo-Marxist' analysis of the South African state", *Capital and Class*, no. 5, pp. 32-77
- Clegg, Sue, "The remains of Louis Althusser", *International Socialism (UK)*, no. 53, winter 1991, pp. 57-78
- Clegg, Sue, "Theories of racism", *International Socialism (UK)*, no. 37, winter 1988, pp. 93-117
- Cole, Douglas, "'The crimson thread of kinship': Ethnic ideas in Australia, 1870-1914", *Historical Studies*, no. 56, 1971, pp. 511-25
- Colley, Linda, "Radical patriotism in eighteenth-century England" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 1, History and politics*, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 169-187
- Comber, Jillian, "Chinese sites on the Palmer goldfield, Far North Queensland" in Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 203-12
- Connell, RW and TH Irving, "Yes, Virginia, there is a ruling class" in H Mayer and H Nelson (eds), *Australian politics: A third reader*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1973, pp. 31-47
- Connolly, CN, "Miners' rights" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 35-47
- Corris, Peter, "'Blackbirding' in New Guinea waters, 1883-84: An episode in the Queensland labour trade", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 3, 1968, pp. 85-105
- Corris, Peter, "Racialism: The Australian experience", *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 15, no. 61, October 1973, pp. 750-59
- Cotterill, Ken, "The White Atherton movement and the torching of Cedar camp", *Bulletin of The Eacham Historical Society*, Malanda (Qld), no. 249, March 2000
- Cottle, Drew, "Forgotten foreign militants: The Chinese Seamen's Union in Australia, 1942-1946" in Hal Alexander and Phil Griffiths (eds), *A few*



- rough reds: Stories of rank and file organising*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra Region Branch, Canberra, 2003, pp. 135-51
- Cronin, Kathryn, "'The yellow agony': Racial attitudes and responses towards the Chinese in colonial Queensland" in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), pp. 235-340
- Curthoys, Ann, "An uneasy conversation: The multicultural and the indigenous" in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds), *Race, colour and identity in Australia and New Zealand*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, pp. 21-36
- Curthoys, Ann, "'Chineseness' and Australian identity" in Henry Chan, Ann Curthoys, Nora Chiang (eds), *The overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, settlement and interactions*, Interdisciplinary Group for Australian Studies, National Taiwan University, Taipei and Centre for the Study of the Southern Chinese Diaspora, Australian National University, Canberra, c2001, pp. 16-29
- Curthoys, Ann, "Conflict and consensus: The seamen's strike of 1878" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 48-65
- Curthoys, Ann, "Labour history and cultural studies", *Labour History*, no. 67, November 94, pp. 12-22
- Curthoys, Ann, "Liberalism and exclusionism: A prehistory of the White Australia policy" in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race, culture and nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley (WA), 2003, pp. 8-32
- Curthoys, Ann, "Racism and class in the nineteenth-century immigration debate" in Andrew Markus and MC Ricklefs (eds), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian immigration*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (NSW), 1985, pp. 94-100
- D'Alton, SO and M Bittman, "The sociology of race prejudice" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 17-23

- Dallas, KM, "The origins of 'White Australia'", *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, March 1955, pp. 43-52
- Dalton, JB, "An interpretative survey: The Queensland labour movement" in DJ Murphy, RB Joyce and Colin A Hughes (eds), *Prelude to power: The rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton (Qld), 1970, pp. 3-27
- Davidson, Neil, "The trouble with 'ethnicity'", *International Socialism* (UK), no. 84, September 1999, pp. 3-30
- Davison, Graeme, "Unemployment, race and public opinion: Reflections on the Asian immigration controversy of 1888" in Andrew Markus and MC Ricklefs (eds), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian immigration*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (NSW), 1985, pp. 101-11
- de Lepervanche, Marie, "From race to ethnicity", *The Australian & New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 1, March 1980, pp. 24-37
- DeAngelis, Richard, "A comment on the 'Australian settlement' symposium", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 3, November 2004, pp. 657-59
- Dickey, Brian, "'Colonial bourgeois' – Marx in Australia? Aspects of a social history of New South Wales 1856-1900", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XIV, no. 1, March 1974, pp. 20-36
- Dignan, DK, "McIlwraith and the squatters", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. IV, no. 3, December 1950, pp. 412-19
- Donegan, Jacqui and Raymond Evans, "Running amok: The Normanton race riots of 1888 and the genesis of White Australia", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 71, December 2001, pp. 83-98, 164-66
- Drescher, Seymour, "Public opinion and the destruction of British colonial slavery" in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, pp. 22-48
- Dunn, Michael, "Early Australia: Wage labour or slave society?" in Wheelwright, EL and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism*, volume one, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1975, pp. 33-46
- Ehrensaft, Philip and Warwick Armstrong, "Dominion capitalism: A first statement", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (part 2), October 1978, pp. 352-63

- Eldridge, CC, "Sinews of empire: Changing perspectives" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 168-89
- Eltis, David, "Abolitionist perceptions of society after slavery" in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, pp. 195-213
- Ely, Richard, "Inglis Clark's 1888 'Memorandum' on Chinese immigration" in Richard Ely: with Marcus Haward & James Warden (eds), *A living force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the ideal of the Commonwealth*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2001, pp. 71-101
- Emmanuel, Arghiri, "White-settler colonialism and the myth of investment imperialism", *New Left Review* (London), first series, no. 73, May-June 1972, pp. 35-57
- Emmer, PC, "The meek Hindu; the recruitment of Indian indentured labourers for service overseas, 1870-1916" in PC Emmer (ed), *Colonialism and migration; indentured labour before and after slavery*, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht (Netherlands), 1986, pp. 187-207
- Encel, S, "The nature of race prejudice in Australia" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 30-40
- Evans, Raymond, "Blood dries quickly: Conflict study and Australian historiography", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 41, special issue, 1995, pp. 80-102
- Evans, Raymond, "Keeping Australia clean white" in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *A most valuable acquisition, A people's history of Australia*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy and Ringwood (Vic), 1988, pp. 170-88
- Evans, Raymond, "'Pigmentia': Racial fears and White Australia" in A Dirk Moses (ed), *Genocide and settler society: Frontier violence and stolen indigenous children in Australian history*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004, pp. 103-24
- Evans, Raymond, "The politics of leprosy: Race, disease and the rise of Labor" in Joanne Scott and Kay Saunders (eds), *The world's first Labor government*, Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane 2001, pp. 37-50

- Evans, Raymond, "The White Australia Policy" in James Jupp, *The Australian people: An encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde (NSW), 1988, pp. 44-49
- Evans, Raymond, "White citizenship: Nationhood and race at federation", *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural heritage series 2*, no 2, c2002, pp. 179-87
- Feldman, David, "Jews in London, 1880-1914" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 2, Minorities and outsiders*, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 207-229
- Fitzpatrick, John, "European settler colonialism and national security ideologies in Australian history" in Richard Leaver and Dave Cox (eds), *Middling, meddling, muddling: Issues in Australian foreign policy*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards (NSW), 1997, pp. 91-119
- Fladeland, Betty, "'Our cause being one and the same': Abolitionists and Chartism" in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, pp. 69-99
- Flint, John E, "Britain and the partition of West Africa" in John E Flint and Glyndwr Williams (eds), *Perspectives of empire: Essays presented to Gerald S. Graham*, Longman, London, 1973, pp. 93-111
- Francis, Mark, "Social Darwinism and the construction of institutionalised racism in Australia", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 51, 1996, pp. 90-105
- Friedman, Hal M, "'Races undesirable from a military point of view': United States cultural security in the Pacific Islands, 1945-1947", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. XXXII, I, June 1997, pp. 49-70
- Frost, LE, "A reinterpretation of Victoria's railway construction boom of the 1880s", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, March 1986, pp. 40-55
- Gabriel, John and Gideon Ben-Tovim, "Marxism and the concept of racism", *Economy and Society*, vol. 7, no. 2, May 1978, pp. 118-54
- Gardner, Martha Mabie, "Working on white womanhood: White working women in the San Francisco anti-Chinese movement, 1877-1890", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1999, pp. 73-95
- George, Margaret, "The annexation of New Guinea", *ANU Historical Journal*, no. 3, October 1966, pp. 17-23

- Gilding, Michael, "Entrepreneurs, elites and the ruling class: The changing structure of power and wealth in Australian society", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 127-43
- Gilmore, Dame Mary, "I was there: When Australia had lynchings", *Pocket Book Weekly*, February 18, 1950, pp. 20-25
- Gilroy, Paul, "Managing the 'underclass': A further note on the sociology of race relations in Britain", *Race and Class*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1980, pp. 47-62
- Goldberg, Barry, "Slavery, race & the languages of class: 'Wage slaves' and white 'niggers'" in E Nathaniel Gates (ed), *Cultural and literary critiques of the concepts of 'race'*, Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1997, pp. 96-115
- Graham, JM, "'A danger that no language could magnify': The *Newcastle Morning Herald* and the Chinese question", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 69, part 4, March 1984, pp. 239-250
- Graves, Adrian, "The abolition of the Queensland labour trade: Politics or profits?" in EL Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism*, volume four, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1980, pp. 41-57
- Graves, Adrian, "Colonialism and indentured labour migration in the Western Pacific, 1840-1915" in PC Emmer (ed), *Colonialism and migration; indentured labour before and after slavery*, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht (Netherlands), 1986, pp. 237-59
- Graves, Adrian, "The nature and origins of Pacific Islands labour migration to Queensland, 1863-1906" in Shula Marks and Peter Richardson, *International labour migration: Historical perspectives*, Maurice Temple Smith, Hounslow (UK), 1984, pp. 112-39
- Green, Louis F, "The Queensland squatters' attitude to federation", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 4, no. 3, December 1950, pp. 419-21
- Gregson, Sarah, "Defending internationalism in interwar Broken Hill", *Labour History*, no. 86, May 2004, pp. 115-36
- Gregson, Sarah, "'It all started on the mines'?: The 1934 Kalgoorlie race riots revisited", *Labour History*, no. 80, May 2001, pp. 21-40
- Griggs, Peter, "Alien agriculturalists: Non-European small farmers in the Australian sugar industry, 1880-1920" in Pal Ahluwalia, Bill Ashcroft and Roger Knight (eds), *White and Deadly: Sugar and Colonialism*, Nova Science Publishers Inc, Commack (New York), 1999, pp 135-55

- Haig, Bryan, "New estimates of Australian GDP: 1861-1948/9", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, March 2001, pp. 1-34
- Hall, RV, "Racism and the press" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 123-35
- Hall, Stuart, "Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance" in E Nathaniel Gates (ed), *Cultural and literary critiques of the concepts of 'race'*, Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1997, pp. 331-71 (Originally published in *Sociological theories: Race and colonialism*, UNESCO, Paris, 1980)
- Hammer, WCK, "The Australian Natives' Association's part in Australian nationalism 1871-1901", *ANU Historical Journal*, no. 4, Oct. 1967, pp. 38-44
- Harman, Chris, "Base and superstructure", *International Socialism (UK)*, no. 32, summer 1986, pp. 3-44
- Harman, Chris, "The return of the national question", *International Socialism (UK)*, no. 56, autumn 1992, pp. 3-61
- Harris, Joe, "The struggle against Pacific Island labour, 1868-1902", *Labour History*, no. 15, November 1968, pp. 40-48
- Hayden, Albert A, "New South Wales immigration policy, 1856-1890", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 61, pt. 5, 1971, pp. 1-60
- Hayden, Albert A, "The anti-immigration movement, 1877-1893", *Journal & Proceedings (Royal Australian Historical Society)*, vol. 48, pt. 1, March 1962, pp. 25-43
- Hooper, Meredith, "The Naval Defence Agreement of 1887", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 14, no. 1, April 1968, pp. 52-74
- Howard, John, "Politics and patriotism: A reflection on the national identity debate", speech given in Melbourne on 13 December 1995 [online] <http://www.ozpolitics.info/election2004/1995-ident.htm> [accessed 1 December 2006]
- Howell, PA, "Constitutional and political development, 1857-1890" in Jaensch, Dean (ed), *The Flinders history of South Australia: Political history*, Wakefield Press, Netley (SA), 1986, pp. 95-177
- Hyslop, Robert, "War scares in Australia: In the 19th century", *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1, 183rd issue, February 1976, pp. 23-44

- Jayasuriya, Laksiri, "Understanding Australian racism", *Australian Universities Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2002, pp. 40-44
- Johanson, David, "History of the White Australia policy" in Immigration Reform Group, *Immigration: Control or colour bar? The background to 'White Australia' and a proposal for change*, ed Kenneth Rivett, Immigration Reform Group, Melbourne, 1962, pp. 1-27
- Jordan, Matthew, "Rewriting Australia's racist past: How historians (mis)interpret the "White Australia" Policy", *History Compass*, no. 3, 2005, pp. 1-32
- Kellaway, Carlotta, "'White Australia' - How political reality became National Myth", *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, June 1955, pp. 7-17
- Kelly, Paul, "Comment: The Australian settlement", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 23-25
- Kennedy, Paul, "Continuity and discontinuity in British imperialism 1815-1914" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 20-38
- Kirk, Neville, "History, language, ideas and postmodernism: A materialist view" in Keith Jenkins (ed), *The postmodern history reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 315-40
- Kirkman, Noreen S, "Chinese miners on the Palmer", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 13, no. 2, May 1987, pp. 49-62
- Kneipp, Mother Pauline, "The seamen's strike-1878-1879: Its relation to the White Australia policy", *ANU Historical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1965-6, pp. 14-18
- Krisjansen, Ivan, "Australian orientalism and liberal governance: Asian labour in South Australia and the Northern Territory, 1890s", *Labour History*, no. 80, May 2001, pp. 173-90
- Lack, Clem, "Colonial representation in the nineteenth century", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. VII, no. 3, 1964-5, pp. 456-507
- Lawson, Will, "White Australia was born in Queensland", *Labor Digest*, vol. 1, no. 8, January 1946, pp. 55-8
- Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), "Draft resolution on the place of the Bund in the party" in *Collected works*, Progress publishers, Moscow, 1962, vol. 6, p. 468 (written June-July 1903)
- Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), "Preface to the pamphlet: Memorandum of Police Department Superintendent Lopukhin" in *Collected works*,

- Progress publishers, Moscow, 1962, vol. 8, pp. 202-5 (written Feb-March 1905)
- Lever-Tracy, Constance and Michael Quinlan, "Are Australian unions racist?", *Migration Action*, vol. VIII, no. 2, 1986, pp. 2-7
- Lewins, Frank, "Race and ethnic relations" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 10-19
- Lloyd, Christopher, "Capitalist beginnings in Australia: A review", *Arena* [first series], no. 81, 1987, pp. 35-55
- Lockwood, Rupert, "British imperial influences in the foundation of the White Australia policy", *Labour History*, no. 7, 1964, pp. 23-33
- Loh, Morag, "A country practice: Thomas Chong, herbalist of Bairnsdale; his place, his practice, his peers" in Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific, Proceedings of an international public conference held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 15-25
- Loveday, P and AW Martin, "The politics of New South Wales, 1856-1889: A reply", *Historical Studies*, vol. 13, no. 50, April 1968, pp. 223-32
- Lyon, Michael, "Banton's contribution to racial studies in Britain: An overview", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, October 1985, pp. 471-83
- McCarty, JW, "The staple approach to Australian economic history", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. IV, no. 1, February 1964, pp. 1-22
- McGowan, Barry, "Chinese market gardens in southern and western New South Wales", *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 36, July 2005 [online] <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-2005/10McGowan.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]
- McGowan, Barry, "Reconsidering race: the Chinese experience on the goldfields of Southern New South Wales", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 36, no.124, Oct 2004, pp. 312-331
- McGregor, Russell, "'Breed out the colour': Or the importance of being white", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 120, October 2002, pp. 286-302
- Macintyre, Stuart, "Comment: An historian's perspective", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 31-33



- Macintyre, Stuart, "The making of the Australian working class: An historiographical survey", *Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 71, October 1978, pp. 233-53
- McLean, IW, SF Molloy and P Lockett, "The rural workforce in Australia 1871-1911", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XXII, no. 2, September 1982, pp. 172-81
- McQueen, HD, "Racism and Australian literature" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 115-22
- Malik, Kenan, "Universalism and difference: Race and the postmodernists", *Race & Class*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1996, pp. 1-17
- Mangan, HA, "Introduction: Imperialism, history and education" in JA Mangan (ed), *'Benefits bestowed'? Education and British imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1988, pp. 1-22
- Mansfield, Bruce C, "The origins of 'White Australia'", *Australian Quarterly*, December 1954, pp. 61-68
- Markey, Ray, "Populist politics" in Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus (eds), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class*, Hale and Iremonger in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Neutral Bay (NSW), 1978, pp. 66-79
- Markey, Raymond, "Race and organized labour in a white settler society: The Australian case, 1850-1901" in Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen (eds) in collaboration with Dik van Arkel, Els Deslé, Fred Goedbloed, Robert Kloosterman and Kenneth Lunn, *Racism and the labour market: Historical studies*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1995, pp. 345-72
- Markus, Andrew, "Comment: Explaining the treatment of non-European immigrants in nineteenth century Australia", *Labour History*, no. 48, May 1985, pp. 86-91
- Markus, Andrew, "Divided we fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900", *Labour History*, no. 26, May 1974, pp. 1-10
- Markus, Andrew, "White Australia? Socialists and anarchists", *Arena* [first series], nos. 32-33, 1973, pp. 80-89
- Marshall, Peter, "The imperial factor in the Liberal decline, 1880-1885" in Flint, John E and Glyndwr Williams (eds), *Perspectives of empire: Essays presented to Gerald S. Graham*, Longman, London, 1973, pp. 130-47

- Martin, Tony, "C.L.R. James and the race/class question", *Race*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1972, pp. 181-93
- Mason, David, "Race relations, group formation and power: A framework for analysis", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, October 1982, pp. 421-39
- May, Roy and Robin Cohen, "The interaction between race and colonialism: A case study of the Liverpool race riots of 1919", *Race & Class*, vol. XVI, no. 2, 1974, pp. 111-26
- Mayne, Alan, "'What do you want John'? Chinese-European interactions on the Lower Turon goldfields", *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 6, 2004, pp. 1-14
- Meaney, Neville, "'The yellow peril', invasion scare novels and Australian political culture" in Ken Stewart (ed), *The 1890s: Australian literature and literary culture*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996, pp. 258-63
- Megarrity, Lyndon, "'White Queensland': The Queensland government's ideological position on the use of Pacific Island labourers in the sugar sector 1880-1901", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 52, no. 1, March 2006, pp. 1-12
- Meyerson, Gregory, "Rethinking Black Marxism: Reflections on Cedric Robinson and others", *Cultural Logic*, vol. 3, no. 2, Spring 2000 [online] <http://clogic.eserver.org/3-1&2/meyerson.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]
- Miles, Robert, "Apropos the idea of 'race' ...again" in Les Back and John Solomos (eds), *Theories of race and racism: A reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, pp. 125-43
- Miles, Robert, "Class, race and ethnicity: A critique of Cox's theory", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, April 1980, pp. 169-87
- Miles, Robert, "Marxism versus the sociology of 'race relations'?", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, April 1984, pp. 217-37
- Moles, IN, "The Indian coolie labour issue in Queensland", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 5, no. 5, 1957, pp. 1345-72
- Molesworth, BH, "Kanaka labour in Queensland (1863-1871)", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 1, no. 3, August 1917, pp. 140-54
- Molyneux, John, "What is the real Marxist tradition?", *International Socialism* (UK), no. 20, summer 1983, pp. 3-53

- Moore, Clive, "Revising the revisionists: The historiography of immigrant Melanesians in Australia", *Pacific Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 1992, pp. 61-86
- Moore, Clive, "Used and abused: The Melanesian labour trade" in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *A most valuable acquisition, A people's history of Australia*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy and Ringwood (Vic), 1988, pp. 154-69
- Moore, CR, "Queensland's annexation of New Guinea in 1883", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1984, pp. 26-54
- Moore, RJ, "India and the British Empire" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 68-84
- Moran, Anthony, "White Australia, settler nationalism and Aboriginal assimilation", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2005, pp. 168-93
- Morrison, AA, "Liberal party organisations before 1900: Presidential address", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol V, No 1, 1953, pp. 752-70
- Munro, Doug, "Revisionism and its enemies: Debating the Queensland labour trade", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1995, pp. 240-49
- Munro, Doug and Stewart Firth, "German labour policy and the partition of the Western Pacific: The view from Samoa", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1990, pp. 85-102
- Nairn, NB, "A survey of the history of the White Australia Policy in the 19th century", *Australian Quarterly*, September 1956, pp. 16-31
- Nairn, Tom, "Britain's royal romance" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 3, National fictions*, Routledge, London 1989, pp. 72-86
- Neale, RS, "John Stuart Mill on Australia: A note", *Historical Studies*, vol. 13, no. 50, pp. 239-45
- Newsinger, John, "'A great blow must be struck in Ireland': Karl Marx and the Fenians", *Race and Class*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1982, pp. 151-67
- Nikolinakos, Marios, "Notes on an economic theory of racism", *Race*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1973, pp. 365-81
- Norton, Robert, "Ethnicity and class: A conceptual note with reference to the politics of post-colonial societies", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, July 1984, pp. 426-34

- Oddie, GA, "The lower class Chinese and the merchant elite in Victoria, 1870-1890", *Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 37, November 1961, pp. 65-69
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant, "By the rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States, Part one" in E Nathaniel Gates (ed), *Cultural and literary critiques of the concepts of 'race'*, Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1997, pp. 61-95 (Originally published in *Socialist Review*, 13 (1983), pp. 31-65)
- Outlaw, Lucius, "Toward a critical theory of 'race'" in E Nathaniel Gates (ed), *Cultural and literary critiques of the concepts of 'race'*, Garland Publishing, New York & London, 1997, pp. 384-408 (Originally published in David Theo Goldberg (ed), *The anatomy of racism*, 1990)
- Overlack, Peter, "'Bless the Queen and curse the Colonial Office': Australasian reaction to German consolidation in the Pacific 1871-99", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1998, pp. 133-52
- Pickering, Paul A, "'The finger of God': Gold's impact on New South Wales" in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook and Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten histories and lost objects of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2001, pp. 37-51
- Powell, Graeme, "A diarist in the cabinet: Lord Derby and the Australian colonies 1882-85", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2005, pp. 481-95
- Quinlan, Michael and Constance Lever-Tracy, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity: Australian trade union responses to Asian workers, 1830-1988", *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, no. 14, 1990, pp. 159-81
- Reich, Michael, "Who benefits from racism? The distribution among whites of gains and losses from racial inequality", *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. XIII, no. 4, fall 1978, pp. 524-44
- Rex, John, "A working paradigm for race relations research", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1981, pp. 1-25
- Rex, John, "The future of race relations research in Britain: Sociological research and the politics of racial justice", *Race*, vol. XIV, no. 4, 1973, pp. 481-88
- Reynolds, Henry, "Inglis Clark: Some afterthoughts" in Richard Ely: with Marcus Haward & James Warden (eds), *A living force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the ideal of the Commonwealth*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2001, pp. 396-401
- Reynolds, Henry, "Racial thought in early colonial Australia", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. XX, no. 1, April 1974, pp. 44-53

- Reynolds, Henry, "Racism and other national discourses" in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter (eds), *The resurgence of racism: Howard, Hanson and the race debate*, Monash Publications in History, Clayton (Vic), 1997, pp. 29-38
- Richards, Eric, "The spectre of White Australia", *Labour History*, no. 72, May 1997, 204-11
- Richmond, Anthony, "Race, class and conflict in Britain", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1980, pp. 107-10
- Robbins, Keith, "An imperial and multinational polity: The 'scene from the centre', 1832-1922" in Alexander Grant and Keith J Stringer (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 244-54
- Roe, Michael, "An historical survey of Australian nationalism", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. XLII, no. 2, November 1971, pp. 656-78
- Roemer, John E, "Divide and conquer: Microfoundations of a Marxian theory of wage discrimination", *Bell Journal of Economics*, vol. 10, no. 2, autumn 1979, pp. 695-705
- Ross, Lloyd, "Left ideas in the eighties", *Labor Digest*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1946, pp. 41-4
- Rubenstein, Kim, "Citizenship and the Centenary – Inclusion and exclusion in 20th century Australia", *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 24, 2000 [online] <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MULR/2000/24.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]
- Rubenstein, WD, "The distribution of personal wealth in Victoria 1860-1974", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XIX, no. 1, March 1979, pp. 26-41
- Rubenstein, WD, "The top wealth-holders of New South Wales, 1817-1939", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. xx, no. 2, September 1980, pp. 136-52
- Samuel, Raphael, "An Irish religion" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 2, Minorities and outsiders*, Routledge, London 1989, pp. 94-120
- Samuel, Raphael, "Introduction: The 'Little Platoons'" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 2, Minorities and outsiders*, Routledge, London 1989, pp. ix-xxxix
- San Juan, E Jr, "Marxism and the race/class problematic: A re-articulation", *Cultural Logic*, vol. 6, 2003, [online]

<http://clogic.eserver.org/2003/sanjuan.html> [accessed 1 December 2006]

- Saunders, Kay, "The black scourge...': Racial responses towards Melanesians in colonial Queensland" in Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988 (First published 1975), pp. 147-234
- Saunders, Kay, "The Pacific Islander hospitals in colonial Queensland: The failure of liberal principals [sic]", *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 11, 1976, pp. 28-50
- Scarr, Deryck, "Recruits and recruiters: A portrait of the labour trade" in JW Davidson and Deryck Scarr (eds), *Pacific islands portraits*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970, pp. 225-51
- Schindler, Charles, "The evolution of political parties", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 1, no. 3, August 1917, pp. 130-9
- Selth, PA, "The Burrangong (Lambing Flat) riots, 1860-1861: A closer look", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 60, pt. 1, March 1974, pp. 48-69
- Semmel, Bernard, "The philosophical radicals and colonialism", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 21, no. 4, December 1961, pp. 513-25
- Sherwood, Marika, "Race, empire and education: Teaching racism", *Race & Class*, vol. 42, no. 3, January-March 2001, pp. 1-28
- Shields, Currin V, "Introduction" in John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography, with an introduction by Currin V Shields*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1957, pp. vii-xiv
- Shields, Currin V, "Introduction" in John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on representative government*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1958, pp. vii-xl
- Sivanandan, A, "Race, class and the state: The black experience in Britain", *Race and Class*, vol. 17, no. 4, spring 1976, pp. 347-68
- Sivanandan, A, "RAT and the degradation of black struggle", *Race and Class*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1985, pp. 1-33
- Smyth, Paul, "Comment: Australian settlement or Australian way?", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 39-41
- Solomons, John, "The Marxist theory of the state and the problem of fractions: Some theoretical and methodological remarks", *Capital and Class*, no. 7, pp. 141-47

- Stanner, WEH, "Introduction: Australia and racialism" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 7-14
- Stokes, Geoffrey, "A rejoinder", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 43-47
- Stokes, Geoffrey, "The 'Australian settlement' and Australian political thought", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 5-22
- Stone, Lawrence, "History and postmodernism" in Keith Jenkins (ed), *The postmodern history reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 242-43
- Stoodley, June, "Labour and gold-mining" in DJ Murphy, RB Joyce and Colin A Hughes (eds), *Prelude to power: The rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton (Qld), 1970, pp. 164-77
- Stratton, Jon and Ien Ang, "Multicultural imagined communities: Cultural difference and national identity in the USA and Australia" in David Bennett (ed), *Multicultural states: Rethinking difference and identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, pp. 135-62
- Sturgis, James, "Britain and the new imperialism" in CC Eldridge (ed), *British imperialism in the nineteenth century*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1984, pp. 85-105
- Szymanski, Albert, "Racial discrimination and white gain", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 41, June 1976, pp. 403-14
- Tate, Merze, "The Australasian Monroe Doctrine: Genesis of the doctrine", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. LXXVI, no. 2, June 1961, pp. 264-84
- Taylor, GP, "Business and politics in Queensland, 1859-1895", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1967, pp. 75-92
- Thompson, John LP, "The plural society approach to class and ethnic political mobilization", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, April 1983, pp. 127-53
- Thorpe, WL, "Class and politics in recent Queensland historiography: A Marxist critique", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1987, pp. 19-29
- Tisdale, Julie, "Inscribing essence: Figuring culture, biology, racism" in Andrew Markus, Kathy Sinclair and Julie Tisdale (eds), *Interrogating race: Studies*

- in the history of western racial thought*, Monash Publications in History (21), Clayton (Vic), 1996, pp. 3-23
- Tyler, Katharine, "Reflexivity, tradition and racism in a former mining town", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2, March 2004, pp. 290-309
- van Arkel, Dik, "Why are historical labour-market studies relevant to the understanding of racism?" in Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen (eds) in collaboration with Dik van Arkel, Els Deslé, Fred Goedbloed, Robert Kloosterman and Kenneth Lunn, *Racism and the labour market: Historical studies*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1995, pp. 21-51
- van den Berghe, Pierre, "Race and ethnicity: A sociobiological perspective", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, 1978, pp. 401-11
- van der Linden, Marcel and Jan Lucassen, "Introduction" in Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen (eds) in collaboration with Dik van Arkel, Els Deslé, Fred Goedbloed, Robert Kloosterman and Kenneth Lunn, *Racism and the labour market: Historical studies*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1995, pp. 9-19
- van Dissel, Dirk, "The Adelaide gentry, 1850-1920" in Eric Richards (ed), *The Flinders history of South Australia: Social history*, Wakefield Press, Netley (SA), 1986, pp. 333-70
- Walden, Sue, "The tin fields of north-east Tasmania—a regional variation" in Paul Macgregor (ed), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific*, Museum of Chinese Australian History, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 177-88
- Walker, David, "Survivalist anxieties: Australian responses to Asia, 1890s to the present", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 120, October 2002, pp. 319-30
- Walker, RB, "Another look at the Lambing Flat riots, 1860-1861", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 56, pt. 3, September 1970, pp. 193-205
- Walvin, James, "The propaganda of anti-slavery" in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British society 1776-1846*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1982, pp. 49-68
- Ward, Robin, "Where race didn't divide: Some reflections on slum clearance in Moss Side" in Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (eds), *Racism and political action in Britain*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Henley (UK) and Boston, 1979, pp. 204-22
- Watters, Greg, "The S.S. Ocean: Dealing with boat people in the 1880s", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 120, October 2002, pp. 331-43



- Williams, GA, "The concept of 'Egemonia' in the thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some notes on interpretation", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1960, pp. 586-99
- Williams, Jenny, "Redefining institutional racism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, July 1985, pp. 323-48
- Williams, Tim, "The anglicisation of South Wales" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 2, Minorities and outsiders*, Routledge, London 1989, pp. 193-203
- Winslade, S, "Wire-fencing investment in eastern Australia: 1858-1914", *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. XXXIV, no. 1, March 1994, pp. 22-50
- Wolffe, John, "Evangelicalism in mid-nineteenth-century England" in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The making and unmaking of British national identity, Volume 1, History and politics*, Routledge, London 1989, pp. 188-200
- Wolpe, Harold, "Class concepts, class struggle and racism" in John Rex and David Mason (eds), *Theories of race and ethnic relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1986, pp. 110-30
- Yarwood, AT, "Attitudes towards non-European migrants" in FS Stevens (ed), *Racism: The Australian experience: A study of race prejudice in Australia, Volume 1, Prejudice and xenophobia*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1971, pp. 145-55

## Unpublished theses and papers

- , Humble plea of the poor Chinese, Mitchell Library, Q301.451/23
- Anderson, D, "Queensland's Colonial Defence Policies 1860-78", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, [1968]
- André, Roger, "South Australian attitudes to the American Civil War, 1861-1865", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1968
- Anstey, Joan, "South Australia and the Federal Council, 1883-1899", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1971

- Armstrong, John B, "The question of Japanese immigration to Queensland in the nineteenth century", MA (Qual) thesis, University of Queensland, 1970
- Aveling (Quartly), Marian, "A history of the Australian Natives Association 1871-1900", MA thesis, Monash University, 1970
- Bagnall, Kate, "Across the threshold: White women and Chinese hawkers in the white colonial imaginary", Paper presented to the 11th biennial conference of the Australian Historical Association, Brisbane, 2002
- Bagnall, Kate, "Golden shadows on a white land: An exploration of the lives of white women who partnered Chinese men and their children in southern Australia, 1855-1915", PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006
- Beer, Donald Robert, "South Australian politics in the 1880s", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1960
- Bray, Kenneth WA, "Government-sponsored immigration into South Australia 1872-86", MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1961
- Bryan, Harrison, "The political career of John Murtagh Macrossan", MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1954
- Burgmann, Verity, "Revolutionaries and racists: Australian socialism and the problem of racism, 1887-1917", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1980
- Callaghan, PS, "Political alignments in the Queensland Legislative Assembly 1878-99", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1968
- Cameron, MB, "WH Groom: Agrarian Liberal", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1965
- Campbell, Craig, "Charles Cameron Kingston: radical liberal and democrat: A contribution to the study of Australian liberalism with particular reference to Kingston's career in federal politics", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1970
- Carrington, Lord, "Lord Carrington's private notes on the Chinese crisis in New South Wales, 1888", Sir William Hillier Onslow papers 1888-1905, Surrey Record Office, Guildford Branch, 173/6, copied on AJCP Reel M1840
- Cotterill, Ken, "The White Atherton Movement and the torching of Cedar Camp", typescript, John Oxley Library, VF 305.8951 COT
- Curthoys, Ann, "Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973

- Darnell, Maxine, "The Chinese labour trade to New South Wales 1783-1853 ", PhD thesis, University of New England (Armidale), 1997
- Dignan, DK, "Kanakan Political Struggle: An analysis of the attitude of conflicting groups to the introduction, and employment in Queensland, of South Sea Island labour", Third year honours essay, University of Queensland, c1949, Fryer library, University of Queensland, Fryer microfilm MIC482
- Ellis, Carlotta, "Why does the A.L.P. support the 'White Australia' Policy? (1855-1940)", MA thesis, Political Science, University of Melbourne, ?1950
- Fairlie, Robyn Judith, "Conflicts in British policy towards India 1878-1884", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1973
- Fletcher, Richard, "The role of the immigration question in gaining for the labour movement recognition by society in the period 1877 to 1890 in New South Wales", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1964
- Gillen, Helen M, "Divisions within white colonial opinion Natal: 1878-1893", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1976
- Griffiths, Phil, "The decline of free trade in Australian politics, 1901-1909", BA (Hons) thesis, Macquarie University, 1998
- Gugenberger, Louis, "The national and imperial image as projected in the teaching of history in Queensland state primary schools 1875-1975 with historical notes: An investigation of the political and pedagogic function of history in schools", MA (Qual) thesis, University of Queensland, 1975
- Gunn, Donald, "The Chinese in Queensland", typescript, John Oxley Library, OM 80-68
- Hayes, Charles Jonathon McNeill, "The Seamen's Strike 1878-79", BA (Hons) thesis, History, Macquarie University, 1970
- Horgan, Jane, "Miners and planters. A study of Chinese settlement in nineteenth century Malaya", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1980
- Hubbard, Nigel John, "Some aspects of the social and political career of George Dibbs in New South Wales", MA (Pass) thesis, University of Sydney, 1968
- Hyslop, Alexander, "Check list of South Australian serials which began publication between 1836 and 1910, held by the Public Library of South Australia", Unpublished thesis, Dip Librarianship, University of London, 1964

- Jamison, Bryan, "Blackbirding in New Guinea waters? The 1884 voyage of the *Hopeful* and the Queensland labour trade", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1990
- Larsson, Yvonne, "The political ideas of Arthur Bruce Smith", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1974
- Lethbridge, Sarah Val, " 'A pagan and inferior race': The changing nature of racist ideology towards Chinese immigrants to colonial Victoria 1840-1865", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1992
- Lewis, Glen, "The crisis years: Economic development in Queensland 1885-1895", BEcons (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1964
- Lewis, Robert J, "'Strangers within the gates': Victorian governments and non-Europeans, 1880-1908", MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1982
- Lewis, W [Winston] G, "The 1887 visit of the two Chinese Commissioners: an episode in early Sino-Australian relations", Paper 26/566 presented to ANZAAS Conference, 1970 (Port Moresby)
- Liik, George, "External Threats as a Factor in Australian Politics 1870-1900: The Background to Australian Defence", PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1971
- Long, JPM, "Asian immigration into the Northern Territory to 1910", Paper read to the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 22nd June 1964, Duplicated typescript in State Library SA archives, D4538(T)
- Lyons, Mark, "Aspects of sectarianism in New South Wales circa 1865 to 1880", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1972
- Mansfield, Bruce, "Australian nationalism in the growth of the labour movement in the eighteen-eighties in New South Wales, with reference to Queensland", MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1951
- Markus, Andrew, "The burden of hate: The Australian inter-racial experience, 1850-1901. A comparative study of the Australian mainland colonies and California, with special emphasis on the working class", PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1974
- Martin, AW, "Political groupings in New South Wales, 1872-1889: A study in the working of responsible government", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1955
- Martinez, Julia, "Plural Australia: Aboriginal and Asian labour in tropical white Australia, Darwin, 1911-1940", PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 1999

- McGrath, Ann, "Exile into Bondage: An Analysis of Asiatic Indenture in Colonial Queensland", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1976
- Megarrity, Lyndon Thomas, "Robert Philp and the politics of development in Queensland 1890-1903", PhD thesis, University of New England (Armidale), 2001
- Melhuish, Kathleen J, "Australia and British imperial policy: Colonial autonomy and the imperial idea, 1885-1902", PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1965
- Morey, GC, "The Parkes-Robertson coalition government, 1878-1883: A study", BA (Hons) thesis, Australian National University, 1968
- Morrison, AA, "Colonial Society 1860-90", Typescript, Fryer Library, University of Queensland
- Morrison, Allan A, "Liberal party organisations before 1900", Presidential address to Historical Society of Queensland Inc, 25 September 1953, Fryer Library, University of Queensland
- Nankervis, Alan R, "'The Mongolian octopus': Image and actuality: The Chinese in Melbourne, 1891-1900", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1971
- Neame, Arthur, "The Diary of Arthur Neame, 1870-1897, edited by Sydney May", bound volume, John Oxley Library
- O'Rourke, Terrence James, "Problems of Queensland defence, 1878-1901", BA (Hons) thesis, History Dept, University of Queensland, 1969
- Ormston, Robert, "The rise and fall of a frontier mining town: Cooktown 1873-85", PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1996
- Peter, Phyllis G, "Moderation and militancy: A comparative study of the trade union movements in N.S.W. and South Australia in the 1880's", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1959
- 'Philo-Sinensis', "The Chinese as colonists", privately printed and circulated pamphlet, McIlwraith papers, John Oxley Library, OM64-19/114, envelope "1889 letters", item 1847
- Priestley, Alison M, "The 11th parliament of South Australia 1884-1887: the influence of the Depression", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1964
- Rendell, Margaret Patricia, "The Chinese in South Australia and the Northern Territory in the Nineteenth Century: A study of the social, economic

- and legislative attitudes adopted towards the Chinese in the colony", MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1952
- Renfrew, Louise, "Wilton Hack and Japanese immigration into the Northern Territory: 1876-1877", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1992
- Richardson, Ronald Kent, "The signs of power: A study of English anti-slavery thought", PhD thesis, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1982 (Chifley Library, Australian National University)
- Roberts, Deborah E, "The role of Victorian state education in the development of a national identity 1872-1918", PhD thesis, Monash University, 1999
- Robertson, Christopher Rous, "A re-evaluation of three nineteenth century Queensland histories: 'History of the colony of Queensland from 1770 to the close of 1881' by William Coote, 'In the early days: A history and incident of pioneer Queensland' by J.J. Knight, 'The Genesis of Queensland' by Henry Stuart Russell", BA (Hons) thesis, History Department, University of Queensland, 1994
- Saunders, Kay Elizabeth, "Uncertain Bondage: An analysis of indentured labour in Queensland to 1907, with particular reference to the Melanesian servants", PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1974
- Selth, PA, "The Government, the Chinese, and the Europeans at the Burrangong Goldfields, 1860-1861", BA (Hons) thesis, Australian National University, 1970
- Sissons, D C, "Attitudes to Japan and defence 1890-1923", MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1956
- Sissons, DCS, "Japanese in the Northern Territory 1884-1902", Typescript duplicated, State Library SA archives, D5691(T)
- Small, Jerome, "Reconsidering White Australia: Class and anti-Chinese racism in the 1873 Clunes riot", BA (Hons) thesis, La Trobe University, 1997
- Smeaton, Thomas Drury, "Our invasion by the Chinese", ms, Mortlock Library, D 7477(T)
- Stoodley, June, "Some social aspects of early gold-mining in Queensland", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1951
- Stoodley, June, "The Queensland Gold-Miner in the Late Nineteenth Century: His Influence and Interests", MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1964
- Sullivan, RJ, "Early labour in Queensland with special reference to Albert Hinchcliffe", MA (Qual) thesis, University of Queensland, 1969
- Svensen, Stuart G, "William Lane - The Brisbane Years: 1885-1892", BA (Hons) thesis, History Department, University of Queensland, 1983

- Taam, Sz Pui, "My life and work", Translated and photocopied and bound MS from Chinese, 1925, John Oxley Library
- Tan, Robert, "The Chinese question in Queensland during the nineteenth century: A brief history of racial conflict", Third Year Honours dissertation, University of Queensland, 1958
- Tomkys, Ruth LL, "Queensland Immigration 1859-1901", MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1930
- Tweedie, Sandra M, "Between depressions: Australian dilemmas in the quest for Asian markets, 1893/1933", MComm (Hons) thesis, University of New South Wales, 1982
- van den Hoorn, R (Robert), "Richard Chaffey Baker: a colonial conservative and federation", BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1979
- van Dissel, Dirk, "The Adelaide Gentry 1880-1915: A study of a colonial upper class", MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1973
- Wadham, E J, "The political career of C. C. Kingston (1881-1900)", MA thesis, University of Adelaide, 1953
- Warburton, Graham Roger, "The Attitudes and Policies of the New Zealand Labour Movement towards Non-European Immigration 1878-1928", MA thesis, University of Canterbury (New Zealand), 1982
- Wells, Andrew David, "A Marxist reappraisal of Australian capitalism: The rise of Anglo-Colonial finance capital in New South Wales and Victoria, 1830-1890", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1985
- Welsh, Lionel Vincent, "Stories and anecdotes about Chinese in Ballarat, 1852-19—" Mitchell Library, ML MSS 1268
- Williams, Michael, "Destination Qiaoxiang: Pearl River delta villages and pacific ports 1849-1949", PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2002
- Wood, Janice L, "Chinese residency in the Haymarket and Surry Hills - 1880 to 1902", BA (Hons) thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1994
- Zastoupil, Lynn Barry, "J. S. Mill and the British Empire: An intellectual biography", PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 1985 (Chifley Library, Australian National University)