

**AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD:  
IMMIGRATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

Oration by

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This lecture is named after one of Australia's most creative and colourful politicians, Earle Page. He was the founding father of what was the Country Party, now the National Party, a party which derives its strength and resilience from what is regarded as the wholly admirable traditions and character of Australian rural life. The Country Party has given Australian politics some of its most outstanding personalities, some of them regrettably under-estimated. Examples are:

Sir Arthur Fadden was renowned as a raconteur and practical joker. He was also a courageous and patriotic statesman who earned the unqualified respect of that very stern critic, Roland Wilson.

Archie Cameron, Leader of the Country Party in 1939 and 1940 and the somewhat eccentric Speaker of the House for many years, left behind him a tradition of unqualified probity and independence which, regrettably, has not been maintained in recent times.

The Anthonys, father and son, Larry and Doug, gave two generations of outstanding service.

Sir John McEwen, still a controversial figure, played the pivotal role in developing Australian-Japanese trade relations in the 1950s when memories of World War 2 were still vivid. That trade has been vital to the Australian economy and laid the foundation for the generational changes in attitude concerning Australia as an outward-looking player in the world economy that have taken place in the past 20 years. Sir John was recognised by the Japanese Government with the Order of the Rising Sun, a rare honour. Australia has not properly recognised the importance of his contribution in this context.

It is appropriate on such an occasion as this to reflect in a disciplined way on major issues bearing upon Australia's destiny and, of all the issues that disturb the conservative side of politics, immigration is the most perplexing.

For some time, it has been on the conservative side of politics that all serious political debate takes place. Because socialism is dead, the issues deeply concerning the other side of politics are entirely the issues of office - who's in, who's out, who will stay in, who will languish in exile. In exile, most curiously, is the back bench. It is the consuming obsession with the trappings and perquisites of office and the resulting tunnel-visioned focus on the voter in marginal electorates that is the hallmark of a political party that has lost its soul.

Some of Australia's most important political contributions have been made from the back bench. During the 1960s and 1970s Bert Kelly patiently pointed out how silly were the self-improving consequences of protectionism. It was a lasting and major contribution.

The commitment in John Hewson's "Fight Back" package to an Australia essentially free of protectionism can be seen as the culmination of the Japanese-Australian trade pioneered by John McEwen in the 1950s and the arguments of Bert Kelly in the Sixties and Seventies. Merely the prospect of an end to protectionism is having the most beneficial effects on attitudes and debates within the business community and the reality will rejuvenate and transform this country.

The ideological passion which once fuelled the socialist vision, so important in the history of the Labor Party, has now been largely transformed into nature worship. Labor politicians, however, given their genetic structure, are not usually given to this. They are very much creatures of this world and socialism was a doctrine about perfection in this world rather than the next. The uneasy alliance between Tasmanian Premier, Mr Field, and Dr Bob Brown's Green independents shows how difficult, perhaps impossible, it will be to accommodate the Greenies into our political life and into the politics of Labor in particular.

Today, it is the conservative side of politics that is shaping the political agenda for the nation. We should welcome the challenge but at the same time note the responsibilities involved are heavy.

I want to begin by referring to some important events in our history. On Monday, August 3, 1914, Lord Grey, Britain's Foreign Minister, said: "The lights are going out all over Europe and we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime".

Three days before, Australia's Andrew Fisher, then Leader of the Opposition and of the ALP, had told a Colac meeting, in the context of a double dissolution election campaign, that should the worst happen in Europe, "after everything has been done that honour will permit, Australians will stand beside our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling". Fisher went on to win sweeping victories in both Houses in the ensuing election. The population of Australia was then less than 5,000,000.

Four hundred thousand Australians served in the Great War. Forty thousand were killed. Twenty thousand were wounded. Only NZ suffered proportionately more casualties. Every country town has a memorial to those who went, and those who did not come back are indicated with a star. Among those who did return was Dr Earle Page.

Twenty-five years later, on September 5, 1939, Prime Minister Robert Menzies told the Commonwealth Parliament that "Britain is at war with Germany and, therefore, Australia, too, is at war."

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese destroyed much of the US Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour. On Christmas Day, 1941, Hong Kong was taken. On New Year's Day, 1942, Prime Minister John Curtin said in a message to the Australian people:

"The Australian Government, therefore, regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the Democracies' fighting plan. Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion. We know the dangers of dispersal of strength. But we know, too, that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on. We are, therefore, determined Australia shall not go."

On February 15, the British and Australian forces at Singapore surrendered. Darwin was bombed four days later and from February 27 to March 1 the Battle of the Java Sea resulted in a major allied defeat.

Between May 4 and 7, 1942, fighter planes from American aircraft carriers engaged the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Coral Sea. The Japanese invasion of Port Moresby was blocked. The turning point of the Pacific War had taken place.

From December 7, 1941, until May 7, 1942, the prospect of a Japanese invasion of Australia appeared imminent.

Total Australian casualties in that war were 33,550 killed or died while prisoners of war. More than 14,000 escaped or were recovered or repatriated from POW camps. The Australian population in 1939 was barely 7,000,000.

Following World War 2, the vivid memories of the dangers Australia had faced formed the basis for one of the most successful immigration programs in world history. Arthur Calwell was the Minister and he enjoyed strong bipartisan support. He was a very senior minister in the Chifley Government and his appointment and the vigour with which he pursued the immigration program bore testimony to the seriousness with which the Government considered the issue. I hope that the Coalition, when it forms a government, regards immigration just as seriously and appoints one of its most senior front-benchers to the portfolio.

Today, public support for immigration is very low. More than 60% are opposed to the present immigration program and politicians as diverse as Peter Walsh and John Hewson are advocating substantial, albeit temporary, reductions in our migrant intake because of current economic circumstances. Migration policy, today, is a very hot issue.

To set the scene for my own contribution to the debate, let me cite the remarks of some non-Australians who have visited here in recent times.

- \* Dr William Dennis, a director of the Liberty Fund, an important US publisher and think tank, was driving from Adelaide to Melbourne Airport last year to catch a plane home. Listening to the radio, he was astonished to hear a litany of complaint from Sydney about the overpopulation of Australia, the environmental stress and the strain on resources. Dr Dennis totted up the population of all the towns he had driven through in eight hours. It was less than 100,000 people. He flew home convinced Australians, at least some, were mad.
- \* Greenhouse Action Australia, a body presided over by former Victorian Premier, Sir Rupert Hamer, co-sponsored a conference in Melbourne recently to discuss issues concerning the alleged CO<sub>2</sub>-induced global warming with which the greenies love to frighten us. A keynote speaker was Dr Noel Brown, Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Program for North America. In a television interview, after conjuring up a scenario predicated on rising CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere, rising sea levels in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, coupled with increasing cyclonic activity, he argued that, as a result, 300 million people within a few hours' flying time from Australia would be looking for somewhere else to live. Dr Brown claimed Australia was underpopulated, rich in resources and had plenty of space. Were we prepared, he demanded, to take on board 300 million climatic refugees?
- \* The 300 million cited by Dr Brown is an update on the 200 million people proposed in August, 1989, in an ABC interview by a Sri Lankan Catholic theologian, Father Thissa Balasuriya, described as one of Asia's foremost Christian theologians. Referring to Australia's "original sin - that of failing to share the vastness of Australia with more people from Asia", he suggested Australia "would have to show why it cannot have 200 million people here, instead of being selfish."

The day is coming when Australia will be unable to resist demands, either from international bodies such as the UN or from alliances of states in our region, for us to accept tens, if not hundreds, of millions of immigrants, the selection of whom will be totally beyond our control. They are warning us that our sovereignty will be stripped from us and that we will be unable to do anything about it.

Last year, while travelling with a business colleague in North America and Western Europe, we were engaged in conversation by a New York taxi driver about the extraordinary speed with which political developments were unfolding in the world and the concern about economic prospects in Western Europe because of worsening shortages, particularly of food, in countries throwing off the communist yoke. Fears were expressed that famine might bring starvation and death as it did during and after the war. The taxi driver, well aware of these concerns, asked how many people lived in Australia. When we told him about 17 million he whistled speculatively: "You've got a lot of land and a lot of food. Seventeen million people is peanuts. If you don't do something about it someone else will." There was no doubt we were hearing, in this taxi driver, the voice of the ordinary American citizen.

Finally, Henry Kissinger was asked a few weeks ago for a comment concerning some Australian foreign policy dilemma. He responded:

"I have to say that, when I shave in the morning, peering into the mirror, Australia's foreign policy is not something I think about."

I have sought to establish a framework of understanding which enables us to see ourselves as others around the world see us. Australia's sovereignty becomes much more reasonable when we realise that, for the rest of the world, Australia does not matter much. Our fate is, in the world scene, a matter of indifference. That indifference has increased greatly in the past 30 years and one of the reasons is that we have, in all sorts of subtle but unmistakable ways, been telling the world, particularly our Asian neighbours, we are not serious about holding this country, about justifying our occupancy, developing it and resolutely defending it if we are threatened. The thing about Australia is the combination of weakness and wealth. Australia is up for grabs.

## **POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY**

Political sovereignty is a consequence of an act of political will, an act of assertion, usually accompanied by military force. Nationhood occurs when a group of people, regarding themselves as a political community, obtain sovereignty by claiming it and then successfully defending that claim by force of arms. They are able to maintain that sovereignty while they continue to exercise it and successfully repel challenges to that claim, ultimately on the battlefield.

Australia did not obtain sovereignty on the battlefield, against the British, as the Americans did in their War of Independence. We asked for sovereignty from the British Government and it was granted on request. Colonial self-government was granted in the 1850s and the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act was passed by the British Parliament in 1900.

In the recent Gulf War, contrariwise, we sent four ships on the understanding that, as the Prime Minister and Defence Minister assured us, they would be on the periphery of the action and not subject to any likely danger. We should not be surprised, therefore, if our complaints to the US concerning the dumping of American wheat on world markets do not receive much attention.

These remarks concerning sovereignty are elementary politics. But what has it to do with hundreds of millions of immigrants who, it is claimed, will wish to come here because their homes no longer appeal to them and Australia, as they see it, has space, resources and wealth to share.

The capacity of a nation to withstand the pressures and to defend its sovereignty depends on the common beliefs that unite the people and provide the foundation for that national sovereignty. The political leaders of a nation deeply divided by language, religion, custom and different legal traditions have little means of successfully persuading citizens they should risk their lives in defence of their country. The main problem such leaders face is the avoidance of civil war.

Australia is a very large country with a long and spectacular coastline, very rich in natural resources, with an enviable climate. It has a population of only 17 million people and is now infected, to an alarming degree, by the politics of self-doubt and cultural despair. The fantastic saga of Coronation Hill and Bula has shown the world just how deeply entrapped we have become in introspective self-doubt and self-pity. The farce of the Bicentenary, which the official celebrants sought to transform into a season of sackcloth and ashes, was, likewise, a message to the world that Australia, as a nation, no longer believed in itself.

This deep-seated problem of the politics of guilt and self-doubt is all too evident in our immigration policies and that is the fundamental reason these policies have turned sour in the community. This substantial decline of support for immigration is of the most fundamental importance. Political leaders, in a democracy, cannot and should not sustain a policy against the opposition of more than 60% of the citizens, despite the almost unanimous support of the chattering classes for the present policy and its multiculturalist trappings.

If Australia had a population of 100 million, say, and a growing, dynamic economy, we would not have to worry about immigration. We would be, along with Japan and Germany, a significant world power. But that is not the case. We have the potential to

become a great nation but, apparently, no longer the will. In another generation, if we continue in our present course of drift, self-doubt and despair, this country will be up for grabs.

## **IMMIGRATION POLICY**

Because of our growing isolation within the world power structures, our long term survival as an independent nation requires a continuing and significant immigration program as a

basis of national policy. That program must be based openly and confidently on our national interest. The national interest has to be defined, defended, supported and upheld by political leaders and by the community.

It has been deeply regrettable that those who have taken up this question and sought to answer it soberly and thoughtfully have been subject to shameful attacks. Professor Geoffrey Blainey was treated disgracefully in 1984, and worst of all by some academic historians whom he had helped in their careers, but John Stone and John Howard have also been ridiculed by people who should have known better. There is now a better atmosphere for those who seek to take up this issue.

Defining the national interest requires delineating those things important to us in this country - what we wish to pass on to our children and grandchildren; what makes Australia, despite our problems and our current inability to arrest economic decline, such a marvellous country in which to live.

Australia is an English speaking society based on the rule of law, responsible parliamentary government, democratic principles and culture inherited from 19th Century Britain. It is a society where religion is not established but has been fashioned and formed by Judeo-Christian doctrines.

These are the characteristics which define Australia and the whole point of an immigration program is to seek to ensure that those who follow us will inherit a society fashioned on the same principles. The assumption of continuity and, therefore, of inheritance, is deeply entrenched in family life, as one generation after another succeeds its parents. Similarly, with respect to the nation, inheritance and continuity are fundamental. There is no point in an immigration program which introduces into Australia forces which will lead to division, disintegration and loss of cultural inheritance. As Geoffrey Blainey has put it, an Australia which is a nation of tribes is no nation and certainly it will be unable to defend itself against hostile intent from outside.

We have become accustomed to thinking of marriage and procreation - family life - as a purely private affair but as Edmund Burke told us,

"Society is indeed a contract ... It becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born".

Marriage and procreation, therefore, are of the utmost political and social consequence. The two institutions to which we find ourselves bonded in allegiance are our families and our political community - the state. These two institutions separate us from the rest of the world and give each of us that sense of personal identity which enables us to face the mirror when we get up in the morning and then the rest of the world in our daily business.

When these two sets of bonds, family and state, are in sympathy; when our allegiance to our family is in accord and integrated with our allegiance to our country; then the political resilience and durability of the state are enhanced and the bonds of family are strengthened. But if these two sets of bonds are antagonistic, then both institutions are weakened and threatened.

If a political community - be it city or nation - is comprised of two, three or more comparable groups of citizens whose young people may not, should not or cannot marry each other, then, while it is not necessarily impossible for that community to survive and prosper, it is impossible in the long run for a democratic, universally franchised, political community, particularly if placed under great political or military pressure, to do so.

## **MULTICULTURALISM**

Australia is a political community which requires the participation of all its citizens in government through compulsory voting at frequent elections and it does so regardless of any incapacity on the part of citizens to understand English, the language in which all our political debate takes place. This may seem bizarre, but there is a certain tragic logic behind it, the logic of multiculturalism as the rent-seeking face of our immigration policies.

The term "rent-seeking" was popularised by Professor Anne Krueger in her well-known study of protectionism in Turkey in the 1960s. It has since become a very fruitful concept in political economy, summarising the capacity of small, well organised groups to generate successful political clout and to use that influence to arrange for transfers of income and capital from the general community to themselves. Rent-seeking is now used to describe much more than the economically and socially destructive acid of protectionism, but one of Krueger's most useful results was the observation that rent-seeking is a process which has a positive feed-back mechanism built into it. As one group obtains a rent, other groups, inexorably, are drawn into the game. In Australia, this became popular under the slogan "protection all round", as far back as 1910. Unfortunately, the more time and energy the intellectually able members of a society spend in rent-seeking, the less time and energy are available for doing productive work.

Multiculturalism is, for politicians, one of the most tempting forms of rent-seeking as the costs, in budget terms, are not readily seen as specific attempts to buy votes. Social service payments, for example, for new immigrants under family re-union programs, are buried in welfare totals. Special benefits to new arrivals in lieu of the Age Pension have made a mockery of the requirement that 10 years' residency is required to be eligible for the Age Pension. The Opposition's policy of ending these payments is highly praiseworthy. Likewise, the Opposition's policy of refusal of social service benefits to migrants until two years of residency is long overdue. Migrants who come to Australia in order to live off social service payments are not the migrants we want or need.

There are other favours which politicians can bestow, however, which have no budget impact. The prospect, therefore, of receiving significant blocs of ethnic votes in return for

residence permits for religious leaders, for example, must be singularly tempting. In this situation the incapacity of voters to read or write English is a plus, as ethnic leaders, through their control of the ethnic press, feel much more confident that their promises to politicians to deliver blocs of voters will be credible.

Such politics might be attractive in terms of the next election but they are completely destructive of the political and social health of Australia. They have alienated public support for immigration. They sow the seeds of future defence incapacity. The whole thrust of multiculturalism is to impede, as much as possible, the acceptance of proficiency in English as the sine qua non of successful participation in Australian cultural, economic and political life. Multiculturalism is also designed to frustrate, as much as possible, intermarriage between young people from various ethnic groups into the mainstream of Australian life.

## **MARRIAGEABILITY**

The great success of the Australian immediate post-war immigration program has been demonstrated because, within one generation, intermarriage between new arrivals and native-born Australians became commonplace. Any immigration program not based upon the prospects of intermarriage, within a generation, between new arrivals and established families should be resolutely opposed.

An immigration policy based openly on marriageability and proficiency in English recognises the legitimacy of the expectations of Australian citizens. Australians who have been born here, or who have adopted Australia as their country, who have worked here, who have lost loved ones in war, are entitled to demand that their inheritance of freedom under the rule of law be respected. Such demands are absolutely justified and should be publicly and frequently defended.

Similarly, because the security of their property depends above all on political stability and on the resolution of political differences by arguments and debate through constitutional processes, Australians would be foolish if they did not insist that immigration policies promote political stability and reinforce support for constitutional processes.

Nevertheless, we are still faced with the need for a very substantial increase in our population to ensure our survival as an English-speaking, Western nation located between the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.

An immigration policy based on marriageability would lead to:

- \* Automatic right of residence to citizens of good character from Ireland, the United Kingdom, the USA and Canada. This would bring those countries into alignment with our present arrangements with New Zealand. I can see no reason for distinguishing New Zealand from the other countries I have listed.

The discrimination currently practised against would-be immigrants from the UK and Ireland is scandalous. A colleague of mine from an international agency, aged 50, with a British passport, good professional qualifications and financially well established, wished to migrate here with his family. Apart from his accent it would be impossible to distinguish him from any ordinary Australian, but because he did not fit into any of the four categories for which forms are prescribed, there was no way he could apply for residency status unless he was prepared to lie. These categories are designed to dampen any interest in migrating to Australia on the part of most of the people we should be doing our best to attract.

- \* English-speaking, educated people of good character from Asia, Latin America, Africa and, of course, Europe, would also have easy access to Australia. You will note that this implies no racial discrimination.
- \* Religious criteria should be applied in our selection processes. This follows from the way in which shared religious loyalties can overcome barriers of race and colour. Christianity has been a very powerful agent through the centuries for overcoming racial barriers. It has formed the basis for many successful inter-racial marriages, in Australia as well as overseas. We should recognise that in our immigration policies.

Successful inter-racial marriages are now relatively commonplace but marriages between people who cannot speak their partner's language, who do not share religious ties, who have no cultural affiliation, are difficult to imagine.

Successful inter-racial marriages are usually characterised, for example, by a shared language, shared religious commitment or a shared professional life. The fact that adherence to Christianity is not allowed to influence, positively, selection as a migrant to Australia is scandalous nonsense. While church attendances in Australia are low, and while the political statements of contemporary church leaders often border on the incredible, the indisputable fact remains that Australian culture, and I include its political culture, is incomprehensible except in the context of Christianity.

Every Australian, if only because of the political structure here, and setting aside other subtle but powerful cultural influences, is a shareholder in Christianity. For example, the Lord's Prayer is still said at the beginning of each sitting day in Parliament and, thank God, it is the "Authorised Version" which is used. It is from Christianity we obtain our widely-held view that it is wrong to discriminate against people on grounds of race. That view is not widely shared in the non-Christian world but we must concede many Christians have not always exhibited adherence to the principle.

Western Europe is now busy putting up the shutters against a feared avalanche of refugees from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This presents Australia with an opportunity to regain some influence in the world and benefit ourselves at the same time. We should announce a program by which people from these countries in good health and who can read, speak and write a modicum of basic English, will be eligible for residence in Australia. And we should, in the long-term interests of this country, facilitate such a settlement program.

It will be said immediately that such a policy, when official unemployment is more than 10% and real unemployment much higher, is madness. Even if there were a strong casual relationship between immigration and employment I would not resile from arguing that our national interest requires a continuing, substantial immigration program. But our unemployment problems have little to do with immigration.

Unemployment is primarily the consequence of our labour market institutions and the monopoly power and legal privilege the trade unions enjoy under this regime. Major reform of these institutions is the most pressing and urgent item on our national political agenda, and I look forward to the day when the debate about tax is over and the debate about labour market reform can really begin.

## **SUMMARY**

Let me sum up the situation.

FIRST, the time has come for our political leaders to face up to the issues of immigration openly and honestly. The Australian community now demands a policy based clearly and precisely on our national interest. We should not forget that the Fitzgerald Committee experienced a Damascan conversion in its attitude to these issues, as it made its enquiries, and the Government refused to accept its first report.

If governments continue to consider immigration with a Nelsonian telescope attached to an unseeing eye, then at some stage we will be overtaken by events and forces that will lead to unexpected, unwanted, un contemplated consequences.

The present policy is deeply resented throughout the community, and for very good reasons. The rent-seeking apparatchiks of the multicultural lobbies have become an affront to common sense and to decency.

In articulating an immigration policy based on our national interest we will be able to recover a proper sense of pride in the achievements of our forebears and a sense of purpose in our national life.

SECOND, we have to recover the sense of urgency which characterised our immigration program after the war. Time is now very important and it is not on our side. The world is now a much less stable place than during the Cold War period and it is changing very quickly. Nationalism is becoming the major stock in trade of politicians everywhere and, as Macaulay pointed out, nationalism can be a force for evil as well as for good. Australia has become isolated and vulnerable to a degree few of our political leaders understand. The economic agenda is at the forefront of political debate and we need to press on with that at maximum speed.

But we need to recover, just as urgently, our sense of national identity and purpose. We have to understand that the perceptions of our vulnerability are increasingly shared around the world. We can be sure, for example, that the perpetrators of the massacre in Dili did not concern themselves that Australia would regard their crimes with horror.

That national identity must be based on our language, our culture which includes our religion, our legal and political institutions. The requirement, for example, that ability to speak and read English as a pre-requisite for citizenship should not be placed merely into statute. It should, through referendum, be placed in our Constitution. We value our citizenship far too lightly. We tolerate the practice of Australians holding dual passports. It might be a great convenience at airports overseas but the Americans will not tolerate it and neither should we.

Within our political tradition, we have a sophisticated body of doctrine and philosophy enabling us to define and implement an immigration policy which will both satisfy our national interest and can be defended in any international forum. More importantly, it must be defended against attacks within Australia by those who promote the Grassbian nonsense of a poly-lingual social porridge. We need continuing and substantial immigration if we are to hold this country and bequeath it to our children and grandchildren. We need strong public support for such immigration. We need, therefore, to turn our backs decisively on the cant, rent-seeking and hypocrisy of multiculturalism and poly-lingualism.

We need strong, confident, political leadership and I am confident the conservative side of politics will produce that leadership.