

**New Zealand Association For Migration And Investment Annual  
Conference**

**The New Zealand Immigration Debate: Some  
Australian Perspectives**

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**AUCKLAND  
2 AUGUST 1996**

## APPENDIX

The Institute of Public Affairs, of which I was until last year the director, endeavoured with some care to advocate policies in all things that promoted:

- the rule of law;
- parliamentary democracy;
- a prosperous economy and full employment;
- high standards in education;
- stable family life;
- sound environmental management;
- security from the threat of crime and invasion;
- the freedom to associate, express opinions, own property, and practise one's religion;
- care of the disadvantaged; and
- a tolerant, peaceful society.

These are mainstream values and Australians come more nearly to achieving them than most people. For so long as Australia remains a wealthy, liberal society, millions of people from less satisfactory societies will want to come to it. Australia cannot accept all of them and still remain Australia. Migrants bring their own habits, affections and enmities, and endowments of physical and human capital. For better and worse, these inevitably change the existing (average) Australian culture and economy.

The Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, the Fitzgerald Committee, reported in 1988. It argued that newcomers should be selected in such a way as to further Australia's interests. Thus it offered a non-racialist criterion for migrant selection that has much to recommend it, but it did not adequately define Australia's interests. Even if the Australian interest is accepted as the sole or overriding criterion for migrant/refugee selection, to guide policy adequately the Australian interest as it is affected by migration policy needs to be defined in some detail.

An immigration policy is in its nature a set of rules to keep people *out*. Reasons that have been advanced for having these rules include the impact of newcomers on the economy, environment and culture of the host country, and the reasons encompass the rate of change as well as the direction.

Plainly, not all newcomers have the same effect on the host country. Their effects are, however, manifold - positive and negative - and often not well known. Some skills, age groups or even one sex may at any time be more compatible with the Australian economy, contributing more to or subtracting less from the material well-being of current citizens/residents. Similarly some cultures may be more compatible with, give more to or extract less from, the current culture. No country selects migrants randomly, and immigration policies advantage some potential classes of migrant at the expense of others. Obviously, by the country selecting people who are compatible, a greater number of migrants can be invited for any given cost. 'Cost', because, if there were not a potential cost, there would be no point in an immigration policy.

## **Aggregate Population**

Population predictions are at best indicative but, in rough terms, if we were to reduce our migrant intake to zero we could expect our population to stagnate at 19 million and decline in less than 40 years. If we maintained migration flows of 125,000 per annum, we could expect the population to peak at about 25 million in 60 years' time. Whatever we do, in the 2050s Australia would still be a relatively small and very sparsely populated nation.

Not every current Australian wants the population to rise to even 25 million and various neo-Malthusian arguments are made against increasing it to that level. However, unless trees are seen as more important than humans, in terms of aggregate welfare 25 million people enjoying the benefits of being Australian is better than 19 million, provided there are, in fact, benefits from being Australian. A more selfish, but nonetheless rational, approach is to take into account only the welfare of current citizens.

The Fitzgerald Report cited an authoritative CSIRO assessment<sup>i</sup> that estimated that even at present levels of technology, and taking purely food and water as limits to growth, some 60 million could be supported on food produced in Australia. Of course technology is not constant and it is the case that technological gains may be turned to environmental protection. Failure to give comparable weight to the benefits by way of reduced population for the environments of the countries from which the migrants come invites the assumption that the environmental case against immigration is, in fact, a cover for parochialism or worse.

## **Social Integration**

One society, sharing the means of social interaction and values of sufficient commonality to ensure internal peace and justice, willingness to defend Australia from external threat, and economic efficiency must be the government's aims. These aims do not imply homogeneity and whether they amount to a 'melting pot' policy or not rather depends on the use made of the term.

Australia is unusually free of racial, religious or ethnic tension. We are pretty much a single society, 'One Australia'. There are, nevertheless, many differences that mark Australian residents and we are richer for most of them. It is in the national interest that Australia stay that way. However, there are a few differences, such as strong dislikes, or inability to understand others' habits, reactions and language, that prevent one Australian dealing with another.

Immigration policy should be directed toward social integration. However, we need to be clear what we mean by the term. It is in Australia's interests to be one society in a functional sense but not that every Australian be the same or even similar. Australian society should not, moreover, be seen as an end in itself. The various social institutions, customs and more formal arrangements that make Australia 'a society' exist to serve Australian residents and not the other way about.

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<sup>i</sup> Gifford, R M, Kalma, J D, Aston, A R and Millington, R J (1975), "Biophysical Constraints in Australian Food Production: Implications for Population Policy", *Search* 6(6), pp. 212-223.

Enclave settlement should not be encouraged but neither can it be entirely avoided. Nor should government policies encourage separate ethnic groups, even though these are helpful to newcomers. Migrants are not museum pieces for Australians to study.

Intermarriage is an objective measure of social acceptance, harmony and thus integration. In fact, marriage of people of one ethnic background to members of another is high. By 1976, around 28 percent of all marriages were between people born in different countries<sup>ii</sup> and it is much the same today. Of second generation 'immigrants' marrying between 1981 and 1987, only 22 percent married persons of the same ethnic background.<sup>iii</sup>

Social integration happens naturally and a successful policy is very much a matter of the government getting out of the way. Those aspects of it that should concern government policy are those that apply to the conduct of public institutions and, when administering these on behalf of all Australians, a government has a *prima facie* obligation not to discriminate among its own people - more tritely, discrimination should be left at the border. (Strangely, our government maintains that its selection criteria are non-discriminatory yet some of its settlement initiatives discriminate by ethnic background.)

There is a risk in openly admitting to official discrimination in the selection of migrants that prejudices on racial, political or religious grounds will be encouraged, but I doubt that that would be the net outcome. There is already widespread resentment, but not resentment giving rise to uncivilised behaviour, that some Australians appear to be more equal than others.

- Aborigines have a special place in the law. Perhaps they should have.
- Ethnic groups, as ethnic groups, have special access to public monies and the electronic media. A sort of ethnic corporatism has developed by which so-called ethnic leaders speak on behalf of whole groups defined by ethnicity. These leaders organise tight blocks of votes, treat with Australian governments and are quite often strident defenders of foreign causes. Ethnic groups are not, of course, the only groups that behave this way but they are among the most successful, and such group power play is the bane of all democracies.

There is no need, either on grounds of equity or efficiency, for ethnic groups to receive official favours. These cause widespread resentment and reduce the numbers of immigrants that can be safely absorbed. Government funding to ethnically-based organisations should be phased out but translation, language training, work search and training services might, on efficiency grounds, continue to receive taxpayer funding. These services are unlikely to be resented.

The official rhetoric surrounding multiculturalism must change to imply only one standard of citizenship while encouraging tolerance by newcomers as well as towards them.

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<sup>ii</sup> Schubert, Mark, "Birthplace, Stratification and Intermarriage", Unpublished Masters Thesis, La Trobe University, 1989.

<sup>iii</sup> Price, Charles, "The Melting Pot is Working", *IPA Review*, December/February 1988/89.

## **Economic Considerations**

### ***Incomes***

Very many studies conclude that immigration marginally raises average per capita Australian wealth. Even if that were not the case, however, everybody involved would be better off financially as a consequence of immigration if:

- the incomes of pre-migration residents rose, albeit modestly; and
- the migrants, although initially on low, or even very low, incomes by Australian standards, were better off than they would have been in their countries of origin.

Since migrants come voluntarily and the physical and intellectual capital of existing residents become relatively rarer factors able to demand greater rewards, common sense leads to the conclusion that both existing and new residents do benefit. There may be considerable variation within the groups, however.

### ***Tax and welfare transfers***

Existing residents are compelled to support newcomers via, particularly, unemployment and sickness benefits, medicare and education. On the other hand, migrants are disproportionately of taxpaying age and are forced to contribute to the welfare of people who have been here longer, particularly via the retirement pension and health insurance. It is improbable that present Australians are made worse off materially by immigration.

On the other hand, if Australia's interest is interpreted as the interest of current Australians, then consideration should be given to adopting the same attitude to welfare for newcomers as that of almost every other nation, namely, an extended qualifying period of residence. Such a policy would:

- remove any reason for migrants who did not expect to be self-supporting, or had a culturally ingrained 'anything-goes' attitude to government benefits, to come; and
- remove a burden from existing taxpayers.

Since migration is voluntary, such a policy would not make migrants worse off than if they chose not to throw their lot in with Australians. It might, however, discourage applicants from countries with sophisticated welfare systems and people who are likely to be welfare dependent. At present, new residents qualify for welfare payments after six months residence. Eligibility for unemployment benefits and the aged pension might be extended to four years, coinciding with a more appropriate period of residence before citizenship is granted. New residents would continue to qualify for taxpayer-funded education, family allowance and health and disability benefits. The Australian policy would then still be more generous to new arrivals than that of most nations.

### ***Employment and wages***

New Zealand unemployment at 6 percent is now 2.5 percent below that of Australia. It is a widely held view that migration, by increasing the supply of labour, forces

down real wages, or in the presence of rigid real wages causes unemployment. Migration also raises demand, however, and many studies produce fairly conclusive evidence that "the impact of immigration has historically more than compensated for the consequent expansion of the labour supply".<sup>i.v</sup> It may be that, although migrants with a non-English-speaking background experience particularly high levels of unemployment in Australia's centralised, bureaucratic and lawyer-dominated labour market, unemployment is actually reduced among other Australians.

All these short-term considerations and economic modellers' dreamings are largely beside the point. The very rapid economic growth of several countries, including Australia in last century, the United States and Hong Kong recently, indicates that very high levels of migration are at least not inconsistent with rapidly escalating living standards. Rather it would seem that migration into a relatively free and open economy, such as the one New Zealand now enjoys, actually gives the economy a shot in the arm. Again, common sense is on the side of a pro-migration conclusion. If a society is able to choose the best among many skills, aptitudes and attitudes, then diversity should produce positive results. New Zealand is now even better placed than Australia to benefit from migration.

### ***The business cycle***

Matching immigration policy to the business cycle is prohibitively difficult. The cycle has only a four to six year period or two to three years from trough to peak. Since it will take at least 12 months to get the relevant data, decide upon new targets and implement them, and another year before the migrants affected by the new policy targets arrive and find work, attempts to regulate migrant flows to the business cycle are likely to be as much out of step as in. Long-term aggregate migration targets should therefore be set and adhered to, barring radical changes of circumstance or thinking.

### **Political and Cultural Considerations**

Australia is a nation that is attractive to its own population and to migrants for cultural and political reasons as well as economic.

Its advantages include democracy, security of person and the absence of civil strife, a settled system of justice and the rule of law, liberal tolerance and respect for the basic civil liberties, a market economy, and a sense of Australia-wide community, including the will to defend the nation from external aggression. It is in the Australian interest when choosing migrants to preserve these aspects of Australianness.

#### *The political and legal culture*

Robert Birrell,<sup>v</sup> who is director of the Centre of Population Research at Monash University, wrote: "The Australian identity revolves around a set of civic values. These include the notion that one person is as good as another, and everyone deserves a fair go. At their heart is the ideal that whatever a person's background this should not prevent egalitarian social relations".

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<sup>i.v</sup> Wooden, M, Holton, R, Hugo, G and Sloan, J, *op. cit.*

<sup>v</sup> *The Age*, April 15, 1994.

Australia already restricts immigration from countries where the likelihood of recruiting migrants who are unfamiliar with rule-of-law and democratic principles, and where live-and-let-live liberalism is not appreciated. It does so quietly by not supplying, or under-supplying, the necessary consular services in places where western liberal democratic civilisation is not understood. This policy is too important to be left to covert policy, yet abandoning hypocrisy in this matter has other hazards.

There is a story, which I don't think is apocryphal, of a minister for immigration who told a group of immigrants of one race who had opposed him politically that he would 'fix' them by bringing in 5,000 refugees of a different race and political persuasion. Even if this never actually occurred, its possibility should be unacceptable in a democratic state. On the ground of political probity, immigration policy ought to be taken out of the reach of ministerial whim and the only way to do that is to make the standards public so that breaches of them attract the normal political sanctions.

Immigration policy is in its nature discriminatory, and the pretence that Australian immigration policy is not discriminatory will not withstand inquiry. That little hypocrisy has, nevertheless, allowed people to get on with the business of living without feeling an obligation to take offence.

The policy's disadvantage is that the current practice of covert discrimination on cultural grounds invites claims by some people that they have been unfairly treated by officials who are reflecting their own prejudices. It invites bitterness at the micro level - white South Africans, for instance, feel that they were, at one stage, discriminated against on wrong political grounds.

It also risks the gradual but wholesale corruption of Australian immigration processes. Immigration is already rife with ugly little stories - more so than any other aspect of a Federal politician's experience. I do not blame the officers of the department who have, in the circumstances, a remarkably good record. The fact is, however, that it is impossible to dole out privileges - and the right to settle in Australia is a great privilege - without meeting the temptation to use one's extraordinary power badly and being faced with unwarranted accusation.

On balance, therefore, a policy of covert discrimination is more dangerous than open discrimination. Australia's policy should, therefore, state why some cultural traits are favoured and which these are.

Discrimination should, so far as possible, apply to individuals rather than categories determined by geographic location, but inevitably it means favouring migrants from some parts of the world rather than others.

To encourage self-selection and to facilitate later discipline should Australian law be broken, it should be made abundantly clear that newcomers will be expected to abide by the principles that govern Australians.

It is important that people coming to Australia understand the sort of society they are coming to and that they are able and prepared to fit into it. Self-selection has much to recommend it. The favoured traits, which should be clearly spelt out in the relevant legislation, are respect for and understanding of:

- democratic procedures;

- equality of citizenship, including equality of the sexes;
- civil order;
- the core civil liberties - freedom of the person, freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and private property;
- due legal process and an understanding that perceived wrongs are not to be redressed by taking the law into one's own hands - in other words, the rule of law and equality before the law;
- universal education;
- a market economy; and
- monogamy.

In return, Australia might offer every migrant the opportunity to become a full Australian citizen with all the rights and obligations associated with citizenship.

### ***Avoiding other nations' tensions***

By the same means as it avoids importing ignorance of the liberal-democratic culture, Australia already avoids importing some of the world's more passionate hatreds. Australia is relatively free from tensions of the type that cause acrimony and bloodshed in the Balkans, the Arabian Gulf region, North West India or Northern Ireland. And it is not in Australia's interests to import intense ethnic, religious or political passions. However, there is a natural bias in any migration programme in favour of people who suffer persecution and we should not want to exclude these people.

It is natural, but undesirable, that these people should pursue the political interests of their youth or even their parents. Australian foreign policy should reflect the interests of the generality of Australians - we can do without any equivalent of the Jewish lobby in the United States. We cannot, however, forbid the expression of any political opinion and remain a free society. On the other hand I believe that:

- when seeking migrants we should advertise that it is the Australian government's wish that they should leave foreign politics behind;
- it should be a condition of the granting of Australian citizenship that, once in Australia, migrants/refugees do not engage in public support for foreign political factions prior to their gaining citizenship; and
- it should be a condition of all public monies given to ethnic organisations that they do not support foreign political causes.

The above practices and rules would have the disadvantage of restricting the drawing of public attention to injustice in other nations, but only until the migrant becomes a citizen. They should be sufficient to discourage tensions, such as those between the Greek and Slav-Macedonian communities, Sikhs and Hindus, Bosnians and Serbs, as well as overt support for organisations such as the PLO and IRA.

### ***Favouring English***

In Australia, commerce, politics, education and understanding are facilitated by access to a common language, English. English has the added advantage of being as near as

there is to a global *lingua franca*. It is in the Australian interest to preserve a common language. A bias toward a command of English has, as well as its more obvious advantages, the administrative advantage of automatically selecting, albeit imprecisely, for an appreciation of the liberal-democratic political culture.

## **THE NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION DEBATE: SOME AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVES**

**by**

**John Hyde**

Why New Zealanders should get their knickers in knots about this country's few recent immigrants is beyond this citizen of a successful migrant society. Most current residents, including Maori, are descended from migrants and your proportional intake of new settlers is normally well below Australia's.

Our Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, better known as the Fitzgerald Committee, assumed that, if immigration programmes are to receive the support of the wider community, there must be a general consensus that immigration is in Australia's interest. I don't think members of the wider community are quite so selfish, but there are obviously limits to their generosity to people they have never seen.

Fortunately for migrants and refugees, who come to Australia only because they wish to, the evidence that they have afforded earlier Australians modest blessings in both wealth and culture is fairly strong. I, at least, would not like to go back to homogeneous Anglo-Saxonism where ethnic diversity meant a dash of Irish. My Italian, Greek and Vietnamese friends and their descendants are too much fun.

Those who think that migration is creating serious problems for us do not accept the evidence of the many studies of what has happened, or they think radical events that have not occurred so far are imminent, or they wish to deny their fellow Australians the opportunity to adopt 'alien' ways.

The notion, popular among anthropologists, that all cultures are equally worthy is patently silly. The Australian culture embodies respect for human life, civil liberties and property, the rule of law and democracy. In these things it is *superior* to most cultures. There are, therefore, some changes we should not tolerate, while absorbing the superior traits possessed by our minorities and

rejecting the inferior. It is axiomatic that opportunity in this is enhanced by diversity, and the ultimate cultural cringe must be to assert that Australians or New Zealanders are incapable of choosing wisely. It is surely noteworthy that after periods of high immigration, several countries, including Australia in the last century and the United States and Hong Kong recently, have enjoyed rapidly rising living standards.

Throughout my lifetime and to the present day, Australia has enjoyed truly exceptional racial harmony. Because so many have settled, become our friends and - on the weight of formal evidence, chance experience and common sense - enriched our lives, one might expect the post-war pro-migration consensus to have been maintained. But since the mid-1970s, public support for immigration has waned somewhat.

Coincidentally with its waning, discussion of the relative qualities of the various cultural and ethnic traits has been snuffed out by political correctness. The intention is, I am sure, to prevent objectionable racism but stifling debate has been counter-productive. I am not convinced, as the politically correct claim, that racism has increased, but there is today a very considerable voter backlash against something. In the recent election Pauline Hanson was endorsed by the Liberal Party to contest the seat of Oxley, the second safest Labour seat in Queensland. After she had objected that Aborigines received more taxpayer help than was reasonable or good for their well-being, the Liberal Party disendorsed her. She went on to win that solidly Labour and blue-collar seat as an independent.

However, I do not think that that extraordinary protest vote, and others less extraordinary, were against migrants as such. A more likely explanation is that voters were fed up with:

- racial favouritism involving hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money;
- a tendency for recent settlers from the Balkans, the Punjab, Lebanon, Greece and Turkey, and the Jews and Irish who have been in Australia for longer than most people, to bring their squabbles to Australia; and
- tacit prohibitions on normative discussion of racial and cultural characteristics in general.

It is plain to the eye, the ear and common sense that races and cultures are not equal nor, being unequal, that individual genetic and cultural traits are equally

good. It is by choosing superior cultural traits from among this inequality that a society benefits from immigration. I doubt that many of the good citizens of Oxley had given much thought to cultural competition, but they were tired of being told that they were racist because they would not accept nonsense.

The Howard government has just reduced Australia's migrant intake by 10,000 per year and changed the mix more to favour skilled migrants over family reunion. An editorial in *The Australian* got it right, in my opinion, by praising the government for signalling by the change in the mix that it was no longer subservient to the ethnic lobbies. But that it should now be popular to reduce the total worries me because, on the available evidence, that popularity is wrongly derived.

Three circumstances have changed since the mid-1970s. Unemployment has exploded, multiculturalism, as once understood, has been allowed to develop into tribalism or multinationalism, and the ethnic lobbies and the politically correct have stifled debate about the sort of Australia most Australians want. It is almost as though official policy set out to destroy the consensus that Fitzgerald said was necessary.

Nevertheless, by any sensible measure, immigration has been very beneficial to Australia. As New Zealand, unlike Australia, is getting on top of unemployment, it is in an excellent position to pursue a sound immigration policy and avoid even these temporary misfortunes.

John Hyde is a former Australian Federal government member of parliament and former director of the Institute of Public Affairs in Melbourne. This article is based on a speech given at the New Zealand Association for Migration and Investment annual conference in Auckland on 2 August 1996.

## **THE NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION DEBATE: SOME AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVES**

Why New Zealanders should get their knickers in knots about this country's few recent immigrants is beyond this citizen of a successful migrant society. Most current residents, including Maori, are descended from migrants and your proportional intake of new settlers is normally well below Australia's.

A visitor addressing such an emotive topic should, nevertheless, tread more cautiously than I sometimes do. I do, however, bring such expertise as accrues

naturally to one living in a country of immigrants. No less than half of Australia's post-war population growth has come from immigration.

Preparing this paper led me to look up some of the Australian literature on immigration. A surprising feature, for me, was the near absence of discussion of how much better off the migrants (or refugees) are made by coming to Australia. The benefits and disbenefits for longstanding residents are weighed and new migrants' incomes, employment, social status, and experience of adverse discrimination is studied. However, migrants' circumstances are almost always compared with other Australians rather than with the incomes, discrimination and whatever else the newcomers have left behind. Formal research thus seems to me rather to have avoided the main point of migration.

As I see it, the questions we ought in kindness to be asking ourselves are:

- how many new Australians of what type can we accept without putting at risk the sort of society, economy and environment to which people would wish to come; and
- what rules will maximise their number while meeting the no (or little) risk criterion.

Not so much with any real hope of convincing them that we ought to accept many more of the world's huddled masses, but to satisfy my curiosity as to whether they have hearts, I would like to drag some Greenies (who tend to be upper-middle class and selfishly bent upon not sharing) through a refugee camp.

Instead of using my criteria, the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, better known as the Fitzgerald Committee, assumed that, if immigration programmes are to receive the support of the wider community, there must be a general consensus that immigration is in Australia's interest. My paraphrasing is: "Australians must believe there is something in immigration for us". I don't think the wider community is quite so selfish. Nevertheless, there are obviously limits to the generosity that will be afforded to people who are so different that we cannot readily see ourselves in their shoes.

Fortunately for migrants, who come to Australia only because they wish to, the evidence is fairly strong that they bring modest blessings in both wealth and culture to earlier Australians. I, at least, would not like to go back to homogeneous Anglo-Saxonism where ethnic diversity meant a dash of Irish. My Italian, Greek and Vietnamese friends and their descendents are too much fun.

Those who think that migration is creating serious problems for us do not accept the evidence of the many studies of what has happened, or think radical events that have not occurred so far are imminent, or wish to deny their fellow Australians the opportunity to adopt 'alien' ways. Some, like the Bishop of Woolongong, merely preach against alien ways; others try to exclude Australians from contact with them, for instance by insisting on Australian content rules for TV or restricting immigration.

Nevertheless, I do not subscribe to what seems to me to be the patently silly notion, popular among anthropologists, that all cultures are equally worthy. The Australian culture embodies respect for human life, civil liberties, property, the rule of law and democracy. In these things it is *superior* to most cultures. There are, therefore, some changes we should not tolerate. Our challenge is surely to absorb the superior traits possessed by the minorities while rejecting the inferior. To assert that Australians (or New Zealanders) are incapable of choosing wisely is the ultimate cultural cringe.

It is surely no coincidence that *after* periods of high immigration, several countries, including Australia in the last century and the United States and Hong Kong recently, have enjoyed rapidly rising living standards.

In spite of our apparent success in absorbing so many migrants, we are not at all clear about many matters related to migration.

The Fitzgerald Report had this to say about the Australian immigration debate:

Australian debate about immigration, instead of addressing central issues, all too often breaks up into defence of narrow sectional interests, special pleading for or against a particular group or country, or industry or organisation, with exchanges of salvos, often abusive and colourful and amusing but contributing nothing to national needs for Australia's future. Disturbingly, few people, apart from some academics, and a few others who are paid to do so, had a sustained analysis of the national interest in immigration to offer the Committee.

The truth is that Australians have never been able to agree for long about the reasons for accepting migrants. Debate has flowed in all directions, providing employment for academics doing what they do best - that is, getting cross with each other. Surprisingly, perhaps, immigration itself has never caused levels of ethnic tension that are comparable with the academic tension it has caused. It would, indeed, be unfortunate if as much venomous spite as was directed at Professor Geoffrey Blainey by some of these chatterers were to be directed against migrants. But then, Blainey's arguments were a real threat to their posturing and sinecures, whereas migrants threaten nobody. Students of the Australian debate may have noted that I disagree with Blainey's thesis that we are approaching levels of Asian immigration that will produce ugly tensions. As I prefer the gentle, courteous and erudite professor's company above that of any of his stronger critics, I would be happier supporting him, but that's life!

People of a rationalist turn of mind might expect the absence of an enduring rationale for immigration during the past 50 years to have resulted in a complete shambles. On the contrary, since 1945:

- we have reached a point where some 23 percent of Australians were born overseas and, despite the means to return, have chosen to live their lives in Australia;
- nearly all Australians tolerate these newcomers while most (including many who worry about immigration) number a Brit, a Chinese or a Southern European among their friends, workmates, bridge partners, children-in-law and so forth; and
- many Australians, like myself, think that our own and our Anglo-Celtic children's lives have been enhanced by the post-war immigration.

It could be that governments do least harm and most good when they merely muddle through.

Because so many immigrants have settled, become our friends and - on the weight of formal evidence, chance experience and common sense - enriched our lives, one might expect the pro-migration consensus that Fitzgerald said was necessary to have been maintained. Until the mid-1970s it was, but since then public support for immigration seems to have waned.<sup>vi</sup>

Coincidentally with its waning, discussion of the relative qualities of the various racial stereotypes has also waned or been snuffed out. At the start of the post-war immigration programme, I participated, on behalf of Hale School, in a formal debate against Scotch College in which I argued, in terms that I would hesitate to use today, that those knife-wielding, uneducated, Italians were a blight on Australian society. In 1962, however, camping in the bush and absolutely knackered after a heavy day's work, I was very happy when one of them pulled a huge knife - from his boot if you

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<sup>vi</sup> Wooden, M, Holton, R, Hugo, G and Sloan, J, "Australian Immigration: A Survey of the Issues", Bureau of Immigration Research 1991, p. 1.

please - to cut me a piece of his sausage and poured me some of his rough red. I have never tasted wine I enjoyed more!

Since then East Asians have replaced Italians as the conspicuous newcomers and it would be a fair bet that at least one of the land-clearing team I employed in 1962 could now buy and sell me. That also is life in a relatively free country. The camaraderie of that bush camp is still normal, but politically correct folk have prevented us from discussing the Indo-Chinese as we once discussed Italians. I think we and they are a little poorer for that. Although the restriction is certainly resented by many, not everyone agrees with me.

Acts of objectionable racism occurred only occasionally in the '50s and '60s and they still occur only occasionally. Graffiti aside, I can recall witnessing only one. That was as recently as two years ago on a Melbourne tram. As best I could, I interposed my body between the insulting and abusive European man and the Chinese lady who maintained a dignified silence. No real harm came of it and since she could probably have given him 20 IQ points and still have maintained her intellectual superiority, a case could be made that he and not she deserved sympathy. Such people won't get it - stupidity is the one inherited trait that may still be criticised with impunity.

There is, in contrast to the evident racial harmony, a very considerable voter backlash against something. In the recent election Pauline Hanson was endorsed by the Liberal Party to contest the seat of Oxley, the second safest Labour seat in Queensland. After she had objected that Aborigines received more taxpayer help than was reasonable or good for their well-being, the Liberals disendorsed her. She went on to win that solidly Labour and blue-collar seat as an independent.

I do not, however, think that that extraordinary protest vote, and others less extraordinary, were against immigration. They were against:

- racial favouritism involving hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money;
- a tendency for recent settlers from the Balkans, the Punjab, Lebanon, Greece and Turkey, and the Jews and Irish who have been in Australia for longer than most people, to bring their squabbles to Australia; and
- the all-pervading political correctness that stifles normative discussion of these and other racial issues.

It is plain to the eye, the ear and the common sense of ordinary folk that races and cultures are not equal nor, being unequal, that individual genetic and cultural traits are equally good. It is from choosing the superior cultural traits from among this inequality that a society benefits from immigration. I doubt that many of the good citizens of Oxley gave much thought to cultural competition, but I do think they were tired of being told that, merely because they would not accept patent nonsense, they were racists.

Australia has a new political party, Australia First. Its policies seem to favour guns and to disfavour imports and immigrants. More generally, it is populist, offering an opportunity for protest to people who feel strongly that they are getting less than a fair shake. It draws its limited strength particularly from the bush.

Our Senate suffers - or enjoys if you prefer - an electoral system that delivers outcomes not unlike those expected from your impending MMP. Each State is a multi-member electorate. An Australia First that seriously entertains winning only Senate places needs only 14 percent of the vote to win a seat in each State. It is assured of some of the 14 percent from those preference votes that drift apparently randomly, and for some of the rest it can make a play for the votes of the appreciable minority who are passionately against migration. To get these, it has only to encourage existing worries about migration's effects on unemployment or identity.

As Australian children and populists know, there are fairies and a bunyip at the bottom of the garden. The Australian Democrats already have the fairies busy balancing budgets with stardust and putting moonshine into economics. They may be too busy to come to the aid of Australia First, but the bunyip who gobbles up naughty people who talk to strangers, or fail to lock the gate against foreign goods and cultures, is at its service.

Foreigners, whether presenting themselves in person or producing cheap, high-quality goods, are easy scapegoats for personal failure that are too convenient for the complaining class and populist politicians to ignore. Although we would not want our democracies to be deaf to reasonable fears or legitimate grievances, political parties that garner support substantially from the fearful and the aggrieved have a dreadful record. While I know of no current populist politician who is a potential Hitler, and I am mindful of the potential injustice of guilt by association, it is, nevertheless, a democratic duty of sorts to recall the populist content of Hitler's campaigns during the 1930s. Whipping up baseless fears and offering opportunities to duck personal responsibility is not good leadership.

I don't wish to imply that Graham Campbell, the leader of the Australia First party, is insincere in his anti-immigration views, but I believe his party could have won itself similar support by campaigning for more immigration instead of less. Either policy appeals to a political niche. A much bigger political opportunity lies with sympathising with the people who are unfairly branded racists and a very effective straddle might be achieved by coupling that approach with calls for more immigration. Although I could do both with sincerity, the party has not yet offered me a post as its campaign strategist.

When I was a politician, much of my constituent work involved people who wished their relatives to jump the migrant queue. The unfortunate truth is that immigration policy suffers more fundamental difficulties than those posed by an appreciable minority of xenophobic voters and hypocritical politicians.

Immigration policy is inherently discriminatory because its purpose is to discriminate between those who are admitted and those who are excluded. As the rewards of admission to a decent country such as Australia are high, it is inevitable that some people feel unfairly treated.

It makes matters worse that immigration rules are inherently hard to define and made more so by politically correct obfuscation of underlying goals. Unclear rules result in administrative discretion. The capacity for the coincidence of high stakes and administrative discretion to corrupt even the best politicians and officials is significant. The choice between the rule of law and the rule of man should not come down on the side of the rule of man. But to achieve a shift in the direction of the rule of law we need to define the goals of immigration - and we need to do that in public.

A government that states as clearly as it can what it is trying to achieve is:

- more likely to approach the ideal policy;
- less likely to end up selling its soul for the votes of interest groups; and
- although it will initially offend some people, it is more likely, in the long run, to build the consensus Fitzgerald said was essential.

### **Summary**

The Howard Government has just reduced Australia's migrant intake by 10,000 per year and changed the mix more to favour skilled migrants over family reunion. An editorial in *The Australian* got it right in my opinion by praising the government for signalling by the change in the mix that it was no longer subservient to the ethnic

lobbies. But that it should now be popular to reduce total entries worries me because, on the available evidence, that popularity is wrongly derived.

Australia's long-term interests lie with western, liberal democratic traditions and an expanding economy. I believe Australian migration policy mostly reflects those interests, but many Australians now think they are being undermined by too much immigration from the wrong places. Consensual support for immigration is slipping and is, I suggest, being eroded by:

- unemployment, created not by migrants but by some of the silliest industrial laws in the world operating within a sluggish economy;
- ethnic tribalism that is inimical to the goal of 'One Australia' and encouraged by multicultural grants that are also perceived as favouritism; and
- most of all, those current childish fads in political correctness.

In passing, it should be observed that public support ought never to be confused with 'bipartisanship' which is a political code word for 'let's not let the public in on this one'. The time to get partisan (in a civil manner of course) is at the moment of disagreement. Although I concede that a little hypocrisy can be indistinguishable from civility, enforced hypocrisy has no place. On the contrary, the opportunity for people such as Graham Campbell of Australia First, the Bishop of Woolongong and my friend Geoff Blainey to express points of view that others of us may disagree with is a hallmark of civil society.

Australian immigration is not yet under substantial threat. Nevertheless, too many Australians, particularly in blue-collar areas, who are still thoroughly civil to individual migrants, are irritated with something. That extraordinary vote in Oxley requires an explanation other than that there are some 40,000 racists in that electorate. Australians may occasionally make ethnic jokes but they usually offer genuine friendship to the migrants they meet. I suggest that a more credible explanation of the disquiet is that they don't like the government's approach to ethnicity.

If I am right, then there is no good reason why New Zealand should not enjoy the benefits that migrants bring while avoiding the relatively few mistakes made by their closest and friendliest neighbour.