

Editorial	In Defence of Nothing?	1
Preliminary Theses on The Reform of Philosophy	Ludwig Feuerbach	6
<i>Translated by Zawar Hanfi</i>		
Student Revolutionary Left	Warren Osmond	22
Althusser: Marxism Old and New	Alistair Davidson	28
A Race Apart	Humphrey McQueen	62
Documents		
Education versus Administration	Doug McEachern	74
Student Power — An Alternative View	{ Andra Jackson Diane Wieneke	85
Notes on the Goaling of Clarrie O'Shea	Geoff Sharp	92
Comment		
Left Action Defended	{ Doug Kirsner John Playford	97
Reply	D.W. and G.S.	98
Reviews		
New Marxist Economics	Bruce McFarlane	101
In the Fist of the Revolution	Kelvin Rowley	109

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## arena

### In Defence of Nothing?

One consequence of the period of change through which the universities are passing is the disorientation (we will call it that) of conservative ideologues.

The root of their problem lies in a belief that it is still sensible to represent the normal state of the university as one where abstract truths are pursued in scholarly calm by distinguished persons who extend to students the privilege of clinging to the nether end of a master-servant relationship. Student protest is seen as destructive to this particular ideal — as tending "to convert the university from a seat of scholarship into a privileged sanctuary for the prosecution of guerilla warfare against the community and the government". (James McAuley, *Quadrant*, No. 57, 1969, p. 50). In the face of this onslaught the task is to defend the university against the violation of that 'moral contract' into which every person enters when he associates himself with an established institution.

Effective defence requires a certain subtlety. The first thing to remember is that one cannot fully rely on the authority structure of the university. This is because occupants of key roles "do not really know what constitutes the integrity of the institutions they serve, or where and how resolute defence must be mounted". (p. 49). One should remember, too, that it is a last resort to call on state power. This is "a clumsy and excessively large weapon: it may fail if misused, and at best can succeed only at grave cost to the autonomy and normal functioning of the universities". (p. 50).

When the internal leadership is seen to be unreliable and the use of state power undesirable Professor McAuley's options are somewhat reduced. Slipping past the staff without noting their presence he opts for a student



## A Race Apart

Accusations of working-class racism usually provoke three responses. The first defends the proletarian purity of the workers, and dismisses even the possibility of racism on their part as slander most foul. The second is the direct opposite. It laments the boorishness of the workers, and helplessly awaits their embourgeoisification which will guarantee that cultured good sense so evident in the German and South African middle-classes. The third is something of a compromise; the workers are pure in themselves but are corrupted by propaganda. This last explanation simply will not do, since it treats the workers as fools who accept any kind of rubbish fed to them. The workers would not respond to the brazen rhetoric of racism if it did not strike a chord in their own experience; if it did not at least distort some aspect of their reality.<sup>(1)</sup>

And this is precisely so. Menzies, Holt and Gorton can get away with their lies about an imminent Chinese invasion, because the most important event in the lives of many Australians was the very nearly successful attempt by the Japanese in 1942 to do what the Chinese are accused of in 1969. The intricacies of relative naval strengths are ignored: what is remembered is Kokoda and the Coral Sea. If racism is to be combatted, it must be confronted face on by rigorous investigation of its historical roots.

(1) Sections I and II of this article are part of 'an exploratory essay in the formation of the Australian working class, its organizations and ideas' that will be published in book form next year.

## I

The Australian Aborigine did not offer his conquerors the degree of resistance maintained by the Maoris or the North American Indians. Indeed, pacification-by-liquidation in Australia proceeded more smoothly than in any other country. There were numberless incidents, some very serious, but the nature of the Aborigine's life before the arrival of the white man precluded a sustained collision. The earliest settlers, whether free or convict, treated the Aborigines with a mixture of paternalism, contempt, or amusement. The Aborigines were seen as inferior, but as they constituted no overriding danger they did not initiate the pathological fear that has marked Australian racial attitudes for the past 130 years.<sup>(2)</sup>

Many of the early convicts thought that China was a mere 150 miles north of Sydney—a view shared by many of their descendants. The belief that England was far off, and Asia near at hand, provides one side of the origins of 'White Australia'. Fear of external invasion provoked the first settlements in Tasmania and Western Australia. In 1813, when Blaxland and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains, they stressed the military advantages of their exploit:

"... the only pass to it, although of easy access, it through a country naturally so strong as to be easily defended by a few against the efforts of thousands."<sup>(3)</sup>

Although the source of this anxiety has varied from the French, to the Dutch, to the Russians and finally to the Germans, fear of an Asian invasion—armed or otherwise—has existed from the 1850's onwards. In the nineteenth century the external threat from the 'yellow peril' was underlined by the presence in Australia of what seemed like its vanguard. As early as 1783 Maitra's plan for a British settlement in Australia quoted Sir Joseph Banks' opinion that "we may draw any number of useful inhabitants from China."<sup>(4)</sup> Governor King echoed these sentiments in 1805,<sup>(5)</sup> and two Maoris were kidnapped in 1793 in the vain hope

(1) The crudities of Eysenck and Lipset on this subject should be judged against the work and criticisms of Christie and Zeitlin: Eysenck, H. J., *The Psychology of Politics* (London, 1959); Lipset, S. M., *Political Man* (London, 1960); Christie's two articles in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 53, November 1956; Zeitlin, Maurice "Revolutionary Workers and Individual Liberties", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72, No. 6, May 1967.

(2) See Hardy, Frank, *The Unlucky Australians* (Melbourne, 1968). I must acknowledge my debt to John Playford whose suggestions and practical assistance have been invaluable; and to Charles A. Price's *Australian Immigration, A Bibliography and Digest* (Canberra, 1966).

(3) *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 556; Roberts, S. H., *History of Australian Land Settlement* (Melbourne, 1968), pp. 33-34, n. 10.

(4) *H.R., N.S.W.*, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 3.

(5) Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 13.



that they could assist the floundering flax industry at Sydney.<sup>(6)</sup> Wakefield's 'Letter from Sydney' stressed the readiness of the poorer Chinese to emigrate, and proposed their indenture for work in New South Wales.<sup>(7)</sup>

Some coolies were introduced in the 1830's to work as shepherds; one estimate put the total at over a thousand.<sup>(8)</sup> The 165,000 convicts, however, provided most of the cheap, though not always efficient, labour. The struggle for the cessation of transportation was carried over into the battle for a 'White Australia', since the convicts shared the object of keeping out cheap labour. The 'unreliability' of colonial labourers was underlined when Henry Parkes introduced 25-30 Eurasian printers to ensure 'certainty' of work.<sup>(9)</sup> This move heightened fear of 'cheap coloured competition', such as occurred in 1870 when Peter Lalor broke a strike in the 'Grand Trunk' mine by calling in Chinese Labourers.<sup>(10)</sup> The chief defender of the Chinese in Victoria in the 1850's, William Kelly (author of *Life in Victoria*) weakened the appeal of his case by concentrating on the usefulness of a cheap and subservient Chinese work force.<sup>(11)</sup>

The gold-rushes produced a qualitative change in racial attitudes in Australia. What had been contempt and opposition turned to overwhelming fear and hatred. Disappointed miners blamed not their luck but:

... the incursions of a swarm of Mongolian locusts who have forced us to fly with our wives and families from all other diggings in the country until we are obliged to turn at bay upon this our last resting-place — our only hope of establishing a homestead — and drive the moon-faced barbarians away. (*The Miner and General Advertiser* (Lambing Flat), 3 December, 1861)<sup>(12)</sup>

Anti-Chinese riots took place on many goldfields, the most serious at Buckland and Bendigo. Juries acquitted European rioters on the grounds that since all Europeans looked alike to the Chinese, individual offenders could not be identified.<sup>(13)</sup> Race riots

<sup>(6)</sup> Blainey, G., *The Tyranny of Distance* (Melbourne, 1966), p. 35.

<sup>(7)</sup> Cited in Willard, M., *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne, 1967), p. 2.

<sup>(8)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>(9)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8; in later years Parkes became a rabid exclusionist, and was fond of quoting Napoleon on the dangers that the Chinese could present if ever they acquired a navy.

<sup>(10)</sup> Pearce, H. H., *Recorder* (Melbourne), August 1968; cf.

Kiernan, C., "Peter Lalor, the Enigma of Eureka", *Labour and the Goldfields* (Canberra, 1968).

<sup>(11)</sup> Serle, G., *The Golden Age* (Melbourne, 1963), p. 329.

<sup>(12)</sup> Cited in Ebbeles, R. N., *The Australian Labor Movement, 1850-1907* (Melbourne, 1965), p. 74.

<sup>(13)</sup> Willard, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 and 33; see also Serle, *op. cit.*, Chapter 11; for an account of the experience of gold-miners with the Chinese see Craig, William, *My Adventures on the Australian Goldfields* (London, 1903), pp. 304-312.

continued at various goldfields into the twentieth century, the last occurring at Kalgoorlie in 1934.<sup>(14)</sup>

It is difficult to imagine today that in the mid-1850's one adult male in five in Victoria was Chinese. The figure bears repeating: one in five.<sup>(15)</sup> At the Palmer River diggings near Cooktown, the Chinese outnumbered the Europeans by 17,000 to 14,000 in 1877.<sup>(16)</sup> Moreover, there was but a handful of Chinese women, a circumstance which made prostitution and buggery as inescapable as they had been for the white convicts only a decade earlier.

Animosity continued at subsequent diggings, but it also spread to other industries as the Chinese sought alternative employment. Chinese in the pastoral industry worked mainly at ringbarking and equally menial tasks. This necessitated living in camps, which affronted many whites. In Narrandera in 1883, every second man in town was Chinese, and their camp contained eighteen white prostitutes.<sup>(17)</sup> About seventy Chinese were employed as strike-breakers in the Riverina in 1891, prompting Banjo Paterson to the lines:

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 shearing-board afore I turned to go —  
There was eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-shearin' in a row.<sup>(18)</sup>

Even when the Chinese tried to oblige the Europeans, they often provided evidence of barbarism. In 1883, crates of bones for burial in China were sent from Albury via Sydney where they arrived in a 'stinking' condition. To avoid repeating this offence, the Chinese scraped and washed the next shipment. Unfortunately they did this in the Bungambrawatha Creek, which supplied fresh water to a section of Albury.<sup>(19)</sup>

There is ample police evidence that the Chinese were extremely law-abiding, usually more so than the Europeans. Chinese miners changed their style of dress so as not to offend Western customs.<sup>(20)</sup> This deference was often interpreted as something sinister and threatening. It should be remembered that Deakin was not the only advocate of 'White Australia' who feared Oriental virtues of thrift and diligence more than he did vices such as gambling and prostitution.

<sup>(14)</sup> Blainey, G., *The Rush That Never Ended* (Melbourne, 1964), p. 311.

This was an anti-Italian riot. Racist feelings towards European migrants persist, despite the tremendous militancy shown by these workers in the G.M.H. and Mt. Isa strikes for example.

<sup>(15)</sup> Searle, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>(16)</sup> Rorke, John, "White Australia — Origins", *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Vol. 20, September 1957, p. 170.

<sup>(17)</sup> Buxton, G. L., *The Riverina, 1861-1891* (Melbourne, 1967), pp. 10 & 225.

<sup>(18)</sup> Cited in Palmer, Vance, *Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne, 1963), p. 111.

<sup>(19)</sup> Buxton, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>(20)</sup> Serle, *op. cit.*, Chapter 11.



Other 'evidence' piled up against the Chinese. Cases of small-pox and leprosy were discovered amongst new arrivals around 1880; equally alarming was the deportation of Chinese criminals to Australia from 1866 to 1876.<sup>(21)</sup> Trollope's view of the Chinese in Australia as "thoroughly vicious and inhuman"<sup>(22)</sup> had its basis in reality. The miners did not invent it, and it was not invented for them. They saw examples with their eyes and, as in all cases of prejudice, they transformed the activities of some into the attributes of all. Fear of a Chinese horde, ready to rape our wives and eat our children, begins with these experiences.

The working class was not alone in its opposition to Asian migration. Merchants and landowners, whose prosperity depended on a buoyant domestic market, favoured high wages in preference to convicts or cheap indentured coolies. Class divisions, such as they were, overlapped again on this issue during the 1878 seamen's strike, when the United Labourers' Protective Society deplored the employment of:

aliens of inferior mental and physical capacity or endurance, to supersede eventually the indomitable valor of British seamen.<sup>(23)</sup>

At a protest meeting on this dispute:

The Mayor of Sydney was elected chairman, and was surrounded on the stage by many of the best known public men and leading citizens. (*The Age*, 16 December, 1878).<sup>(24)</sup>

As on so many other issues, the workers were led in their political demands by the middle-class, whose racial feelings nicely coincided with their economic interests. While employers might have welcomed the opportunity to employ low-wage coolies, they were as frightened as the workers of competition from Chinese business rivals.<sup>(25)</sup>

Anti-Chinese feeling ran deep long after the gold rushes. Under the Victorian Factories and Shops Act, a factory was defined as any place where four or more persons, or one or more Chinese was employed.<sup>(26)</sup> Eight years later female suffrage was opposed

<sup>(21)</sup> Willard, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-2.

<sup>(22)</sup> Trollope, Anthony, *Australia* (Melbourne, 1873), p. 269.

<sup>(23)</sup> Ebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>(24)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>(25)</sup> Bach, J. P. S., "The Pearl Shelling Industry and the White Australia Policy" *Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 38, pp. 203-213; cf. Oddie, G., "The Lower Class Chinese and the Merchant Elite in Victoria, 1870-1890" *Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 37, pp. 65-70; Lockwood, Rupert, "British Imperial Influences in the Foundations of the White Australian Policy" *Labour History*, Number 7, pp. 23-33.

<sup>(26)</sup> Gollan, R., *Radical and Working Class Politics* (Melbourne, 1960), p. 158; immediately this act was passed the Chinese employed in the Furniture Trade formed the Chinese Workers' Union and demanded an increase in wages. Ellis, Carlotta J., *Why Does the A.L.P. support the White Australia Policy? 1855-1940* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1950), p. 44.

in the Victorian Legislative Assembly because:

With half the voters in this country women who are naturally predisposed to peace, how are we going to maintain a defence against the hordes of Asia?<sup>(27)</sup>

Single Tax was also opposed because it would abolish the poll tax on Chinese migration.<sup>(28)</sup>

By 1890, however, the centre of concern had shifted to Queensland and the employment of Kanakas on the Sugar Plantations. The opposition to the import of Kanakas came from all sections of the working class in Queensland, and from employers in Brisbane. At one stage, the Coastal North tried to secede, and the issue looked as if it might jeopardize Federation.<sup>(29)</sup> The importance of the struggle to end Kanaka labour for the emerging Labor Party in Queensland can not be overestimated.<sup>(30)</sup> When Labor won the seat of Bundaberg in mid-1892 on a policy of "White Australia", *The Worker* greeted the victory with the headline "Bundaberg Goes White".<sup>(31)</sup> Despite the intensity of feeling that the employment of Kanakas aroused, *The Worker* felt that they were:

... not near so dangerous to the welfare of white people as the perky little Jap, the Chinaman or the coolie. Particularly the Jap, as by most accounts he is able to successfully compete with the white workers in all the skilled trades, whilst at the same time working longer hours for much less wages. (17 August, 1895)<sup>(32)</sup>

The importance given to the Japanese followed the treaty of Shimonoseki, in April, 1895, when the Chinese forces were smashed and Japan showed both military capacity and the intention to exploit its victories to the full.<sup>(33)</sup> The seal was

<sup>(27)</sup> Walker, B., *Recorder*, January 1965, p. 5.

<sup>(28)</sup> Picard, F., "Henry George and the Labour Split of 1891", *Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 21, p. 58.

<sup>(29)</sup> Harris, W. J., "The Struggle Against Pacific Island Labour, 1868-1902" *Labour History*, Number 15, pp. 40-48.

In 1891, although Kanakas made up less than 2% of the total population of Queensland they constituted more than 5% of its jail population, and 45% of those executed between 1895 and 1905. This last fact resulted in Labor men refraining from opposing capital punishment. Their more usual response was made clear in the *Worker* (1 June, 1901) "The Queensland Cabinet helped ruin the sugar industry by hanging a Kanaka on Monday and the *Courier* did not protest. If the Government go on hanging Kanakas like this, there is grave danger of Queensland becoming a white man's land," cited in Barber, R. N., "The Labor Party and the Abolition of Capital Punishment in Queensland, 1899-1922", *Queensland Heritage*, November 1968, p. 4 and p. 10, n. 11.

<sup>(30)</sup> Bolton, G. C., "Labour Comes to Charters Towers" *Bulletin of The Society for the Study of Labour History*, Number 1, p. 26.

<sup>(31)</sup> Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>(32)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>(33)</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-4.



placed upon this after the defeat of Russia in 1904. Economic competition was forgotten in the panic of possible invasion. In 1907, George Pearce told the Senate that he had broken with the anti-militarism he had expressed during the Boer War, because of the threat from Japan.<sup>(34)</sup>

Fear of a Japanese invasion was undoubtedly one of the major reasons for the defeat of the Conscription Referenda in 1916-17. The otherwise progressive editor of *The Worker*, H. E. Boote, warned his readers that:

If we vote to send the white workers out of the country, we vote to bring the coloured workers in.<sup>(35)</sup>

Maximum effect was milked from the arrival, a week before the 1916 referendum, of a boatload of Maltese, who although they were not coloured people, but still they helped to prove the point.<sup>(36)</sup>

The intensity of the fear of Japan is exemplified in the behaviour of the Federal Member for Cooke, James Catts, who left his office as Director of Voluntary Recruiting in N.S.W. (where as editor of *A Call To Arms* he had initiated Anzac Day) in order to become secretary of the 'Vote No Conscription' Campaign. He was arrested seven times under the War Precautions Act, because he "dared to tell the truth concerning the war aims of Japan".<sup>(37)</sup> The attack on Pearl Harbour came as no surprise to most Australians, but was the fulfilment of the anxieties of a century.

The full import of racism in the development of the Australian working class, can be gauged only by seeing it as part of a total ideological landscape. Firstly, it was the dominant aspect of our much vaunted nationalism, the anti-British and anti-Imperialist phases of which have been overstressed, while its militaristic connotations have been largely ignored.<sup>(38)</sup> Secondly, the appeal of racism was assisted by the paucity — most often, total absence — of marxian socialism, which would have directed attention towards class and away from racial grievances.

## II

If it is true that propaganda alone cannot create racism, it

<sup>(34)</sup> Heydon, Peter, *Quiet Decision* (Melbourne, 1965), pp. 19, 24 & 228-9.

<sup>(35)</sup> Jauncey, L. C., *The Story of Conscription in Australia* (Melbourne, 1969), p. 181; for a general account see McQueen, Humphrey, "Who were the Conscriptionists?" *Labour History*, Number 16.

<sup>(36)</sup> Lang, Jack, *I Remember* (Sydney, 1956), pp. 61-71; cf. *Century*, 20 August, 1965 & *Australian International News Review*, 30 March, 1966. Lang's fear is that miscegenation will "breed a race of mongrels".

<sup>(37)</sup> Catts, Dorothy, *James Howard Catts* (Sydney, 1953), p. 77; cf. Hughes' behaviour at Versailles.

<sup>(38)</sup> For a pleasing change see Lockwood, Rupert, "Racism and Militarism", *Australian Left Review*, December 1968, especially pp. 53-59.

is equally true that propaganda is needed to inflame and direct it. The tribunes of racism for Australian workers have not come entirely from the deranged middle-class, but from the leaders of the Labor Party. Instead of combating racism as a tool of oppression, Labor leaders have almost invariably articulated and reinforced it. Indeed, they must bear responsibility for purveying the filthiest lies, and inflaming fears.\* They compare with the Labor Party on the Rand, which was the first party in the Union of South Africa to make segregation a plank in its political platform.

Labor apologists today pretend that White Australia had a pure and simple economic motivation. This will not bear analysis. For as the Federal Labor Leader, J. C. Watson, told the House of Representatives in 1904:

The question is whether we would desire that our sisters or our brothers should be married into any of these races to which we object.<sup>(39)</sup>

In fact, Labor support for White Australia sprang from a combination of economic and racial fears, as is revealed in the following resolution which was carried unanimously at the 4th Intercolonial Trades Union Congress in Adelaide in September 1886:

That in the opinion of this Congress the time has arrived when immediate steps should be taken about the total abolition of Chinese and Coolie immigration because — first, the competition of Asiatic against European labour is entirely unfair; second, it is well known that the presence of Chinese in large numbers in any community has had a very bad moral tendency.<sup>(40)</sup>

Many early Labour leaders such as George Black and William Lane were outspoken racists. Black was a member of the Anti-Chinese Immigration League in 1883-4<sup>(41)</sup> and later a journalist on *The Bulletin*, which, in 1886, told its readers that:

when the Chinese is simply vicious the vice is destructive; when criminal, a menace to the State; when industrious, he threatens revolution of the social system.<sup>(42)</sup>

<sup>(39)</sup> Ebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 234. Watson later went to South Africa where he became an employer of native labour. *Wealth Getters in Caucasus or Socialism in Theory and in Practice* (Melbourne, c. 1910), p. 7.

<sup>(40)</sup> Ebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>(41)</sup> Black, George, *Origin and Growth of the Labour Movement in New South Wales* (Sydney, 1915), p. 10.

<sup>(42)</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

\* During the 1901 House of Representatives debate on White Australia, one Labor M.H.R. claimed that those Asians "who do raise themselves to the level of the whites get as cunning as foxes, and notwithstanding, our laws and our detective skill, they beat us at every turn." (C.P.D., Vol. 4, p. 4649.)



Lane was a fanatical racist. It has been suggested that his motive for leaving Australia to found a settlement in Paraguay was his fear of the Asian hordes. Although *A Workingman's Paradise* is his better known novel, he also wrote *White or Yellow? A Story of Race War in A.D. 1908* which was serialized in the *Boomerang* from February to May, 1888. The action takes place in Queensland, when wealthy Chinese, supported by some Europeans, have established a dictatorship which is challenged by a "revolutionary race war" for Australian democracy. Lane's distaste for capitalism was strengthened by his belief that it was the capitalists who encouraged Asian immigration.<sup>(43)</sup>

What Lane was fond of calling 'the piebald issue' dominated the early thinking of the Labor Party to such an extent, that when the Objectives of the Federal Labor Party were adopted in 1905:

the cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community took precedence over:

the securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the state and the Municipality.<sup>(44)</sup>

Moreover, 'White Australia', served as a rallying point which helped unify the first Federal Labor Party, split as it was on the fiscal issue. In 1920, election material for the Labor Party in Queensland placed 'White Australia' at the head of a list of 'wise and constructive achievements' which included Old Age Pensions and the Commonwealth Bank.<sup>(45)</sup> Labor Party racism reached its acme in a pro-war advertisement against the Japanese that appeared in *Labor Call* in April 1942:

We've always despised them — now we *must* smash them! <sup>(46)</sup>

The distinguished biographer of Chifley, Professor L. F. Crisp, documents a later example of a Labor Leader reinforcing racism amongst his followers:

To aid his appeal to Labor men to subdue their fears about unemployment and migrant competition for jobs and homes, however, Chifley shrewdly played on another traditional Labour fear—an Asian influx. "This is Australia's great opportunity," he told the A.L.P. Federal Executive . . .

<sup>(43)</sup> Hannan, Grant, *The New Australia Movement* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Queensland, 1965), pp. 3-4.

<sup>(44)</sup> Ebbels, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>(45)</sup> Pamphlets in Prendergast Collection, Latrobe Library, Melbourne.

<sup>(46)</sup> Cited in Blackburn, Susan, *Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labor Party, 1934-1943* (Canberra, 1969), p. 35.

"It may never come again. If we do not grasp it, then Asian countries will undoubtedly be looking at us and there will be increasing pressure for an outlet for their population." <sup>(47)</sup>

Whether such tactics are best described as 'shrewd' or 'vile' will depend upon one's view of racism. Calwell's glib "Two wrongs won't make a white" is more dangerous than facile, since it laid the seeds for the rejection of his 1966 Vietnam policy by an electorate which he had done so much to accustom to the danger from the North, especially from Indonesia.

Yet there is a contradiction in the very mention of Indonesia and Vietnam. If the evidence cited above was the whole of the truth concerning working-class racism in Australia, how was it possible for the Wharfies to support the Indonesians in 1947 and the Vietnamese in 1964? For once, the theory of the 'agitators' has validity.

The agitators in question are the Wobblies, Coms., and all those who sought to fulfil the command "Workingmen of all countries, unite!" To the extent that racism has been defeated amongst the Australian workers, the credit must go to those groups. Their propaganda was simple, and dealt with the economic fears that had made racism acceptable in the first place, as evidenced in the following extract:

Are the workers, say of this very country, exploited by "White" capitalists or not? Or are we exploited by the "mob of Asiatics" referred to by Mr. Gibson at the A.C.T.U. Congress?<sup>(48)</sup> Is the capitalist offensive on wages and hours in our country, at this very moment, based on the colour of our skin or on a more vital cleavage in society? Is it based on our complexion or on our class division?

The only way the Australian workers will be able to maintain and improve their standard of living is to co-operate actively with the Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and other workers in the struggle for better working conditions and against capitalism and imperialism.<sup>(49)</sup>

An opportunity to manifest this active co-operation came in 1938 when Wharfies and others refused to send war goods to Japan to be used against the Chinese. In the course of this struggle, R. G. Menzies earned his first Imperial title — 'Pig-Iron Bob'.<sup>(49)</sup>

<sup>(47)</sup> Crisp, L. F., *Ben Chifley* (Melbourne, 1961), p. 320.

<sup>(48)</sup> *White Australia* by 'Lily White' (Pure-but-not-simple), N.S.W. Labour Council Pamphlet (Sydney, 1928); Dixon, Richard, *Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy* (Sydney, 1945).

The Communist Party in North Queensland suffered some initial setbacks because it campaigned for a multi-national union movement to include Italian and Maltese while the A.W.U. stuck to the principle of 'Preference for Britishers', see Cribb, Margaret B., *Some Manifestations of Ideological Conflict Within the Labour Movement in Queensland* (Unpublished B.A. (Hons) Thesis, University of Queensland, 1964), pp. 24-25.



The A.L.P.'s abandonment of 'White Australia' is not yet complete. A breakthrough has come in Victoria, where internationalism is strongest, precisely because of the influence (ideological as much as organizational) of marxist groups, ranging from the two Communist Parties to the Labor College. The departure of most of the militant-Irish into the D.L.P. removed a mainstay of Labor's racism, to which the A.W.U. nonetheless remains heavily committed.<sup>(50)</sup>

Internationalism has had half a victory over even some of the most rabid exclusionists such as Calwell, for whom the enemy is not 'Japs' *per se*, but: "the Japanese warlords of 1969. They need watching".<sup>(51)</sup> Evatt made equally nasty asides in his 1954 policy speech, while the 1959 House of Representatives debate on the future of West Irian revealed similar attitudes from Ward and Haylen.<sup>(52)</sup> The effect of attacks on Asian warlords is to fortify fear of Asians in general. While it remains essential to expose the aims of Asian warlords, this must always be part of an overall attack on imperialism, and must accompany movements for practical solidarity with Asian revolutionaries. Allies, as well as enemies, must be identified. Working-class acceptance of revolution in Asia is a necessary precondition for revolution in Australia.

### III

Fear of cultural swamping has diminished as Europeans have made themselves more secure and numerous. Racism remains as a fear of armed invasion. The recognition of this must lead to a consideration of three of the tactics at present employed by different sections of the Australian left, namely:

<sup>(49)</sup> Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-88.

<sup>(50)</sup> See Dougherty, T. N. P., "White Australia: Policy was key to our high national standards" *Australian Workers Union Annual* (Brisbane, 1962), pp. 102-6.

<sup>(51)</sup> Calwell, A. A., *Broadside*, 1 May, 1969, p. 14.

<sup>(52)</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 8 Eliz. II, Vol. H. of R. 22, pp. 204-219 during which the following exchange occurred:

Calwell: Even if we were prepared to trust Dr. Soekarno, Dr. Subandrio and the others who are in power in Indonesia today, could we trust another Indonesian government, if the Communist party were to come to power in Indonesia? If that were to happen, of course, our plight would be grave indeed.

Haylen: What about the Japanese?

Calwell: If Indonesia took over West New Guinea, there would be nothing to prevent the Indonesians from allowing the Japanese or some other people — Chinese Communists or some other potential enemy of this country — to flood in and become a menace to the future security of the people of Australia...

An even more bizarre episode occurred during a recent debate on the establishment of repeater T.V. stations for mining towns. Senator Ormonde (Labor, N.S.W.) asked the Minister representing the P.M.G. who would have responsibility for selecting the programs. He was particularly concerned lest inflammatory material be screened during the course of a strike. Strikes were inevitable, Ormonde argued, especially where there were Japanese managers. (Senate Debate, Wednesday, 28 May, 1969.)

- a. Armed neutrality;
- b. Appeals to nationalism; and
- c. Aid to the N.L.F.

#### a. Armed Neutrality

The reasoning behind this theory is that the Australian people are so convinced that someone wants to invade them that it is pointless to advocate breaking with America unless some insurance is offered: the only chance of being 'neutral' is to be 'armed'. The most immediate objections to this are that it could entail tripling defence expenditure at the cost of social services, and that its ultimate form is the possession of nuclear weapons. (It is in this form that it has been adopted by Santamaria.)

An equally important objection, however, is that it is self-defeating, since its demand for increased armaments plays upon the fears that prevent neutrality. It underestimates the power of racism and expects that a 'rational' alternative will be seen as 'rational' through the haze of emotionalism. Not only is it self-negating in the short-term, but its long-term effect is to solidify the fear of invasion.

#### b. Appeals to Nationalism

The perennial imitateness of Australian revolutionaries manifests itself in the current belief that nationalistic appeals against American ownership of our resources will become the basis for a revolutionary alliance. Of course, it worked in China, and it is working in Vietnam. But Australia is not an Asian, feudal, agrarian society. It is a European, industrial, bourgeois democracy, in which nationalism provokes essentially reactionary responses for the historical reasons outlined above. This is not to reject nationalism out of hand, but to recognize its nature in Australia, to recognize its White Chauvinist component. This in turn makes internationalism more important, if more complex, in its application, as can be seen from an examination of the problems connected with aiding the N.L.F.

#### c. Aiding the N.L.F.

Political support for the N.L.F. is now a closed question for revolutionaries. What remains arguable is the *form* of this support: which is closely related to *why* one supports the Front. Moral compulsion to do what is right; that is, send unspecified aid, is as apolitical as the alternative of doing only what is legal by sending medical aid. The question is not what is legal, or what is pure, but what is necessary in order to do successful political work. The answer will vary from job to job, and will certainly alter as the campaign proceeds. There can be no retreat from political support for the Front, but the form of material aid must be determined, not by moral precepts, but by the tactical demands of defeating 'White Chauvinism'. Such an achievement would not simply be a tremendous blow at imperialism internationally, but would unlock dynamic forces for revolution in Australia. ★