

by military cliques. The demand was not to end war, but a call for all men to share in the fighting. Universal military service was once more the companion of universal suffrage.

The revolutionary armies of France were the first to put this ideal into practice with a *levée en masse*. It was enshrined in the US Bill of Rights, which recognised that 'A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed'. Indeed, it would appear that compulsory military service is the usual way in which new or revolutionary states bind their members together, and to the state.

Moreover, universal conscription was a radical, at times a revolutionary, demand. It existed among the Chartist: Fergus O'Connor, for example, linked his 'Land Plan' with a national militia 'who will fly to the cry of "My Cottage and my Country are in danger"'. In line with this tradition, 'The New Constitution and Order of Things', proposed in Victoria the day after the attack on the stockade of Eureka, contained three military proposals out of eight. One was that 'Every male between sixteen and sixty years of age to be at once enrolled as citizen soldiers; each man to provide and bear arms and ammunition; elect officers'. That demand had two sources. First, there was the threat of Russian attack; secondly, there was a belief, amply justified at Eureka, that a 'standing army means the military caste, altogether antagonistic to democratic practices and ideals'.

This view was strengthened by Colonel Tom Price's command to 'aim low, boys, and lay them out' during the Maritime strike of 1890, and the Queensland Rifles' suppression of the shearers' strike around Barcaldine in 1891. Shortly afterwards, when radical nationalists perceived Australia to be in need of an army they had no hesitation in choosing universal service. A democratic militarism was the logical consequence of our radical nationalism.

Militarism was the last component to be added to Australia

SIX Militarists

The martial spirit is strong in all the colonies ... Plain living and high thinking are no more popular with us than with our kinsfolk elsewhere, but plain living and hard fighting, if on horseback, come very near indeed to the ideal of thousands of young Australians ...

Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story*

The defeat of the conscription plebiscites in 1916 and 1917 nourished the legend of anti-militarism as a component of Australian radical nationalism. The defeat of the plebiscites was not an anti-war vote. An examination of militarism in Australia will define its nature more closely.

At the beginning of Chapter 1 of *The Australian Legend*, Russel Ward claimed that the legendary Australian 'hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers'. Yet he also wrote, some 229 pages further on, that 'the Australian tradition being what it is, it is natural that it should be particularly potent in wartime, because active military service reproduces so many of the conditions of life in the nomad tribe'. Moreover, he clinched his discourse on the 'Apotheosis of the Nomad Tribe' by quoting a war poem in full. This seeming contradiction can be resolved once it is realised that before 1914 anti-militarism in Australia did not mean opposition to war but opposition to wars fought

lia's radical nationalism. Although it found early support from people like Henry Lawson and Billy Hughes, it was not until after the defeat of Russia by Japan in 1904-05 that it gained almost universal acceptance. In this hesitancy, Australia was not exceptional. After the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Britain engaged in only minor wars — Crimea included — for the next one hundred years. Despite innumerable skirmishes and scares, 'total war' was absent for almost a century.

Equally important was the nature of Britain's, and Australia's, strategic requirements. It was very easy for Britain to maintain a holier-than-thou attitude towards German militarism because Britain's defence lay in its navy. Navalism has somehow never been as reprehensible. Australia in the nineteenth century was likewise dependent on naval defence, and on Britain's navy at that. Because Australia's defence was someone else's responsibility, it could avoid martial fervour, except when Britain was at war, as in Crimea, the Sudan, and against the Boers. Australia's imperial patriotism on such occasions was no less than that of Britain herself and a good deal more intense than Canada's.

Despite the predominance of navalism, even Britain showed some signs of militarism around 1870 and after. This shift was connected with the Franco-Prussian war, but was more generally the natural accompaniment to the acquisition of a new empire. Two relevant books appeared. Chesney's *Battle of Dorking* in 1871 told of the repulsion of an invasion of England and heralded a revival of British pride in her fighting men. Clausewitz's *On War* was published the following year.

Writing in 1902, Herbert Spencer observed that 'for a generation past, under cover of the forms of a religion which preaches peace, love, forgiveness, there has been a perpetual shouting of the words "war" and "blood", "fire", and "battle"', while 'certain hymns are used in a manner which substitutes for the spiritual enemy the human enemy'. The working class was not immune to this transformed theology,

thanks to the work of the Salvation Army. Henry Lawson's militarism swelled in praise of 'Booth's Drum'.

Militarism in Australia had proponents before it became a way of life. An *Age* editorial (written by Pearson) in July 1883 claimed that 'Our men are splendid material for an army; very much above the average of the line in physique and intelligence'. As Victorian Minister of Public Instruction, Pearson made every effort to prepare his charges for war: by 1890, some 14 000 state school children were taking military drill and about 2000 were being trained as cadets to form a 'reserve, from which the militia could be quickly recruited in any emergency'.

S. G. Firth argued that the pre-1914 education system gave children 'proper' ideas of conduct and "proper" attitudes to important issues: Australia's obligation to Britain, the true meaning of patriotism, the glory of war, Britain's place in history, the difference between good literature and bad, the hierarchy of races, the causes of progress'. He went on:

About subjects such as these the public schools offered their pupils something more than mere facts, they offered them the 'truth'. Moreover, the child who came to believe in the world of the *Commonwealth School Paper* would have been ... a person proud of belonging to the British race and the civilisation which it was taking to inferior races, confident that British courage and armaments held the secret of British victory, determined to do his duty and play the game like a true patriot, ready to die for his country and Empire, and aware that he might soon be called upon to make that sacrifice.

William Lane's *Boomerang* was often criticised for its militaristic utterances by the Sydney anarchist S. A. Rosa who, in 1895, published a 'novel' entitled *Oliver Spence, the Australian Caesar*, which described the coming to power of a radical military dictator.

The Boer War broke upon the new century and the new

Commonwealth with the militaristic ardour that was to stamp their characters. Chris Brennan's poetic sequence *The Burden of Tyre* expressed his horror at the appearance of the militarism he had learnt so much to dread during his years in Germany. H. B. Higgins lost his seat in parliament because of his anti-war opinions. The ambiguous response of Australian radical nationalists to the Boer War stemmed not from any anti-imperialist sentiment but from their vision of the Boer as the prototype of the Australian warrior who would eventually have to fight to keep Australia white.

Militarism in Australia was the logical outcome of the racism described above. Time and again, Labor leaders made the connection explicit. 'It is useless to say "peace"', Hughes told the House of Representatives in 1907, 'when there is no peace'. He continued:

We should be prepared for the serious contingency of warfare, which will inevitably overtake us sooner or later. Our population is less than five million, and we propose to maintain the policy of excluding coloured persons from the country, although Australia is within a few days steaming distance of countries inhabited by nearly a thousand million coloured people. We can maintain this policy only by preparing to defend ourselves by an armed force.

Senator Pearce likewise had been convinced that 'The only doctrine these races respect is the doctrine of force. Our white Australia legislation is so much waste paper unless we have rifles to back it up'. Or, as the *Worker* (15 March 1905) declared: 'Militarism is a curse of the greatest, but it is less a curse than the armed occupation of your country by invaders — possibly by invaders of an inferior race'.

This argument carried the vote in favour of conscription at the 1908 Labor Conference where the party's federal leader, J. C. Watson, stressed that Australia 'had to face the position with respect to a people who were clever and warlike and who were not governed by altruistic motives'. For good measure he invoked the prospect 'of the awakening of the sleeping giant

— China'. At the 1913 Australian Workers Association conference, a motion condemning the Commonwealth's compulsory military scheme was defeated on the grounds of the danger of an Asiatic invasion.

This fear worked against Hughes in the 1916-17 plebiscites because his success would have left Australia even more vulnerable to attack. The 'yellow peril' had a belated triumph at the 1918 Federal Labor Conference in Perth. Despite the recent departure from Labor's ranks of most of the more vociferous warmongers, the conference came out in favour of continuing with compulsory military training for service within Australia. Some delegates were converted to support when extracts from Kayahara Kwazan's *Third Empire* were read: 'Japan's Destiny lies South of the Equator ... Australia is indeed a land destined for the Japanese by God, but stolen, years ago, by the English. There is really no need for hesitation in our desire to go to Australia'. According to a letter of Don Cameron's, which was intercepted by the censors, the fear of Japan resulted in some delegates voting against continued support for recruitment for the European war because it was leaving Australia helpless in the face of a probable Japanese assault.

The rise of democratic militarism in Australia can be traced through the career of its lifelong advocate, William Morris Hughes, 'the little digger', whose military career began in earnest in England in 1884 when he joined a volunteer battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. In an interview with the *Bulletin* (13 February 1901), Hughes sketched his approach to military questions, complete with the mythos of yeoman heroes:

The standing army means the military caste, altogether antagonistic to democratic practices and ideals, as seen in the insolence and cruelty of the German officers to civilians. Citizen soldiers are cheaper, and the Boer War has proved their efficiency for defence. The whole population (male) ought to be trained to arms, every male between 18 and 21 undergoing three months training every

year, of which six weeks should be continuous. By 21, he should be a fair soldier and a respectable shot. After 21, the term might be shortened so long as he kept his shooting up to a standard. I take it this country doesn't want an offensive army, but an armed people who can shoot straight, and a regimental machine so that every man can fall automatically into his place no matter how suddenly the trouble comes. Straight shooting should be encouraged by assistance to rifle clubs and national prizes for good marksmanship. Encourage shooting till it becomes the national sport, as archery used to be in England.

In the first Commonwealth Parliament Hughes raised a lone Labor voice in his call for compulsory military training. By 1903 he had gained two supporters, J. C. Watson and W. C. Spence. The turning point came with the Russo-Japanese War. The year 1905 brought the formation of National Defence Leagues which counted among their numbers almost every Labor politician in the country, notably Hughes, Pearce, Holman, Maloney and, somewhat surprisingly, the liberal H. B. Higgins.

Thus strengthened, Hughes returned to the attack. In August 1907 he initiated a parliamentary debate on the motion

That in order to effectively defend the Commonwealth against possible enemies, it is imperative that all able bodied adult males should be trained to the use of arms and instructed in such military or naval drill as may be necessary for the purpose.

Supporting his motion, Hughes spelt out the connection between universal suffrage and conscription:

As we have gone so far in establishing an order of things in which every man and woman has an equal right to all the privileges and benefits conferred upon any person in the country, we must at least do something towards fitting ourselves to maintain this happy but unusual state of affairs. It must, then, I think, be admitted, that it is the duty of every man in a democracy to defend his country.

He concluded with an argument designed to appeal to his crit-

ics on the Left: socialists believe in compulsion and therefore should support conscription.

The socialists remained unconvinced. At the 1908 Labor Conference they were in a minority of seven against the twenty-four who supported 'the principle of compulsory training for all males ... as the only method of giving effect to the plank providing for a Citizen Defence Force'.

Armed with Labor's official sanction, Hughes' 1909 defence speech presaged his wartime oratory. He 'treated parliament to an emotional declamation of the oath of a Swiss soldier, in which he reached great heights of militaristic ardour'. So extreme had Hughes become that a week later the deputy leader of the New South Wales Labor Party, W. A. Holman, called upon all Labor men to repudiate publicly any idea that the movement to which they belonged 'was to be robbed of the opportunity of working out social reforms because of a mad spirit of jingoistic nationalism — of military extravagance'.

Holman's plea went unanswered. In 1910 the Fisher Labor government introduced compulsory military training for all young adult males. Australia was the first country in the English-speaking world to adopt such legislation in peacetime. During the three years in which Labor held office, 1910-13, defence expenditure increased fourfold, until it accounted for almost a third of Commonwealth finance.

War gave Hughes an emotional environment in which his oratory reached such peaks that the Professor of Classics at Melbourne compared it to that of Demosthenes. The don translated some of it into Greek to prove his point. By 1916 Hughes was propounding that 'War prevents us from slipping into the abyss of degeneracy and from becoming flabby ... War has purged us, war has saved us from physical and moral degeneracy and decay'. In order to maintain a steady flow of these superior types, the minimum height of re-

cruits was lowered from 5 feet 6 inches in August 1914 to 5 feet in April 1917.

The case for militarism as a component of Australian radical nationalism remains incomplete without a word from the poets. Paterson, the Kipling of the South, spent the war years as remount officer with Allenby in the desert. Lawson's devotion to militarism is explored in another chapter.

K. S. Inglis's 1965 study of C. J. Dennis's *The Moods of Ginger Mick* traced Mick's progress from a larrikin to a dead hero at Gallipoli, in the course of which Mick's 'Pride o' class' is replaced by 'Pride of Nation and Race'. Mick 'has been ennobled by warfare. He gives up the booze for his country, gets physically fitter, becomes a corporal, and reflects: "I know wot I was born fer now, an' soljerin's me game"'. As Inglis pointed out, the Bloke is redeemed through his love of Doreen and through becoming a farmer. For Mick there can be no redemption outside death. Lawson employed the same theme in 'The Ballad of the Black Sheep'. An earlier poem by Dennis, 'The Austral-aise', alluded to the armies of revolutionary France. Six years before the Great War began, Dennis was mocking the jingo:

Fellers of Australier
Cobbers, chaps and mates,
Hear the — enemy,
Kickin' at the gates!
Blow the — bugle,
Beat the — drum,
Upper-cut and out the cow
To Kingdom — come!

Although militarism was a late corner to the nationalist tradition, it was by no means incidental to it. As the machinery for keeping Australia white, its importance is immediately established. Although its acceptance in the form of conscription was delayed until 1910, its roots lay within that view of man embodied in the mythical Australian with his attention to

physical attributes. Certainly, this outlook needed a major war before it could reveal its logic, just as the mythical bushman needed the war before his ethos could be accepted by the majority as their national type. It had to be a war. Only a mass sacrifice of individuals for the nation in defence of the Empire could bind together the hitherto diverse but nonetheless complementary strands of the Australian experience. Racism, democracy, nationalism and imperial loyalty formed ranks to storm the parapets at Gallipoli. Only with their reconciliation could Australians make a nation.

Britain. The rise of an Australian navy illustrated this conviction.

Early fears were confined to the possibility of a flying raid by Russian warships. Crimea in 1854 stimulated the Victorians to purchase a 580-ton war-steamer which would serve as a floating battery in Port Phillip. So concerned were the Australian colonies with their defences that in 1859 they alone of Britain's possessions were paying more than 50 per cent of their defence costs. Victoria, with the most to protect, paid £94 000, while Britain provided another £76 000.

Britain was becoming more economy-conscious. In 1862 the Mills Committee on defence planning decided that the colonies would be responsible for internal law and order, while Britain would help with protection from external attacks. All through the 1860s, Melbourne requested additional naval defences, but none of the schemes devised suited the Victorians, the Admiralty and the British Treasury. The disputes dragged into the 1880s. In 1881, for example, the Inter-Colonial Conference decided that colonial naval defences were entirely inadequate and ought to be increased by imperial expenditure.

Britain was not being obstructive without cause. The colonial governments wanted ships that could move out into the open seas in order to seize Pacific territories. Queensland purchased the *Gayundah* with this aim expressly in mind. Britain had no objection to coming to Australia's aid if she were attacked. Whitehall resisted being dragged into a European war because some colonial premier had attacked a French or German ship in order to indenture a few more labourers.

Matters came to a head after Britain refused to ratify Queensland's seizure of New Guinea in 1883. Two years later, the leader of the Opposition in Queensland, Samuel Griffith, endorsed the view that

until the colonies take the matter to some extent in their own hands, that degree of security will not be attained which we

SEVEN Navalists

By naval predominance, and that alone, the way has been kept clear for the unimpeded development, on British constitutional lines, of a group of flourishing states forming 'one continent-isle' whose bounds are 'the girding seas alone'.

E. Scott, *Terre Napoléon* (1910)

For a country with twenty thousand kilometres of coastline and situated twenty thousand kilometres from its principal market and major defender, it was natural that Australia should become highly sensitive to naval questions. Attention has already been paid to the fear of invasion, to democratic militarism, and to racism, particularly in reference to Japan. Analysis of the naval relationships that existed between Britain and Australia before 1914 will weld these forces into a pattern, within which disagreements between Britain and Australia were worked out.

Australia would have preferred to have been able to rely completely on Great Britain. Britain had demonstrated that it was not entirely reliable, since the interests of its 'nigger empire' were not always synonymous with those of Australia. Consequently, Australia followed a seemingly contradictory policy of alternatively falling all over Britain and of breaking away from her. If Australians were trying to have it both ways, most knew that their long-term interests lay with a strong

should like to feel, and which, with our geographical position and wealth, we are entitled to expect and bound to insist upon.

Nothing could be plainer; Australia was isolated and worth attacking but it was inadequately defended and consequently resentful.

The year 1887 saw the adoption of a naval agreement which, if not entirely satisfactory, went a long way to gaining as much as could be expected from Britain. The compact was to last ten years. Britain was to supply five fast cruisers and two torpedo gunboats at a cost to the colonies of little more than £120 000 p.a. for upkeep and depreciation. Most importantly, *the ships could not be removed from Australian waters without the consent of the colonies*. This clause overcame the major source of concern, since there was no point in paying for a fleet in peacetime if it were to be taken away once an attack became imminent.

Deakin was not pleased. In a lecture to the Australian Natives Association he expressed his desire

to see the time when a powerful fleet for which Australia shall pay, will patrol our coasts and prevent the approach of any hostile cruisers; and I may perhaps even hope to see the day when Australia shall send out for the control of these seas a fleet built, manned, equipped and maintained by herself which would give her control of the Pacific.

His oratory led Deakin on to say more than he perhaps intended, if not more than he really believed. His address ended with a defiant call:

Let each say 'our community is ready for defence, and if necessary for offence'. Then let the ambassadors of Britain take the position in the courts of foreign nations which ancient Rome took up at the court of Carthage, and say, 'We yield you peace or war; have which you will' and let us in these Australian colonies take as our motto 'Advance Australia!' but let us add also that gallant motto of old Scotland, 'Nemo me impune lacesset'.

Britain was barely sympathetic to either of Deakin's objec-

tives. It did not relish the prospect of Australian imperialism or of a major war, both of which Deakin seemed prepared to take in his stride.

There were, of course, some intrepid souls who, even in 1888, were prepared to oppose the annual naval grant to Britain on the grounds that Australia should devote itself wholeheartedly to building up its own fleet. While this outcome was the conclusion of Deakin's position, very few were prepared to forego British protection in order to launch upon such a major and, in the short term, risky undertaking. Most had to be content to build within the framework Britain offered. None the less, by the late 1880s the Australian colonies were better defended than the rest of the Empire. This situation altered during the 1890s when auxiliary Australian forces were allowed to run down partly because the 1887 agreement provided protection and partly because the colonies could not afford further expenses during the depression.

The signing of the first Anglo-Japanese alliance took place, unheralded, on 30 January 1902. Its scope was limited to offering each other support in China and Korea. It was not necessarily seen as such in Australia, which had just spent so much time in its first Commonwealth parliament devising means of keeping Japanese out. This British indiscretion was compounded five months later at the conference of colonial premiers which adopted a naval agreement totally reversing the 1887 policy. The Admiralty came forth with its strategy of 'one sea, one fleet' arguing that:

- (i) Naval Defence cannot be a matter of merely local interest;
- (ii) Naval Defence consists of a general offensive designed to destroy the enemy ships wherever they may be;
- (iii) Since 'the seas are one', this offensive must be under a single control; therefore there must be a single Imperial Navy.

The New Zealand Premier, Seddon, concurred that an enemy attack on Australasian trade would centre at the Cape of Good Hope and not off the coasts of Australia or New Zealand.

Only an imperial fleet would cope with this style of engagement. The final agreement showed some sensitivity to Australian opinion. The Admiralty was bound to maintain a fleet in the western Pacific but was free to shift it anywhere in the Australian, China or East Indies stations. This power of removal was a blow at the 1887 principle under which ships on the Australian station could be moved only with the assent of the colonial governments. After 1902, as the naval historian A. W. Jose pointed out, 'The new squadron was not theirs at all; nay, it was deliberately assigned for imperial duties in the very sphere — the China seas — to which a large body of Australians had already taken grave objection'.

Responses in Australia were predictably hostile. Barton's reputation suffered irreparable damage as a consequence of his acquiescence. Reid and the Labor Party attacked, while Deakin, though in the ministry, was less than enthusiastic. The necessary Validation Act was passed only after Barton had made the vote one of confidence and with the addition of a clause whereby 'purely Australian naval defence forces' were to be maintained in addition to the new imperial squadron. 'Such Australian forces, ships and armament ... shall be maintained by the Commonwealth and be solely under its control.'

Various schemes emanated from Australia in the wake of Japan's accession to Pacific pre-eminence. These plans were the work of Captain William Creswell who had been appointed Director of Commonwealth Naval Forces late in 1904. Deakin realised that the 1902 agreement would not easily be overthrown. Since Commonwealth expenditures were restricted till 1911, an Australian navy could be financed only with Admiralty support and would attain maximum effectiveness only if the Admiralty accepted it as part of its strategic planning. Britain was not willing to agree, for reasons that Deakin explained to the House in 1907:

At the very outset [of the Conference of 1907], the Prime Minister of Great Britain met us with the frank avowal that the British

Government preferred no claim for money in relation to naval defence, and went on to add the extremely pregnant statement that the control of naval defence and foreign affairs must always go together. If honourable members appreciate the force of the axiom, they will see that it implies such both now and in the future. It implies that for the present, seeing that we have no voice in foreign affairs, we are not obliged to take any part in Imperial naval defence. It implies, also, with equal clearness, that when we do take part in naval defence, we shall be entitled to a share in the direction of foreign affairs.

This reasoning made the possession of a navy vital to Australia. Influence on foreign affairs meant influence on Britain's relations with Japan, which meant life or death to Australia.

After much negotiation, Deakin realised that Britain would give in only to action, not to mere entreaty. In 1908, he indulged in the boldest act of foreign policy and invited President Roosevelt to send his 'Great White Fleet' on a visit to Australia. Deakin's purpose was twofold: he wanted to shock London and to stimulate among Australians the demand for a local navy. In both he was successful and the *Age* (3 August 1908) publicised his view:

Without such a navy a war declared tomorrow between Britain and almost any hostile Power would infallibly involve us in the direct trouble. The Imperial Australian squadron, poor thing that it is, would be withdrawn immediately from our waters to the more distant scenes of conflict. Of this there is not the smallest shadow of doubt. Britain has repeatedly warned us that we must expect it. Our situation then would be positively hopeless, hideously helpless.

Deakin did not confine himself to propaganda. He was proceeding to build a navy for local defence purposes when he was replaced as prime minister by Andrew Fisher, who took over the plan. Deakin's initiative paid dividends. In 1909 the British government willingly agreed to Fisher's suggestion for an imperial defence conference to discuss Australia's moves and to deal with the *Dreadnought* scare.

Australian response to the *Dreadnought* scare is illustrative of the delicate, and seemingly ambivalent, balance that marked relations with Britain. Australasians wanted Britain to rule the waves. Whenever it appeared that she might no longer do so, they rushed to assist her. The matter was never simple. There were other threats, other alliances, particularly with Japan. New Zealand recognised that it could never provide itself with adequate naval protection and so did everything it could, by word and deed, to increase the power of the imperial forces. In 1909, it gave Britain a battleship for reasons which Churchill most eloquently explained to the House of Commons five years later:

In giving a splendid ship to strengthen the British Navy at a decisive point, wherever that point may be, according to the best principles of naval strategy, the Dominion of New Zealand have provided in the most effective way alike for their own and for the common security. No greater insight into political and strategical points has ever been shown by a community hitherto unversed in military matters. Two or three Australian and New Zealand *Dreadnoughts*, if brought into line in the decisive theatre, might turn the scale and make victory not merely certain but complete. The same two or three *Dreadnoughts* in Australian waters would be useless the day after the defeat of the British Navy in home waters. Their existence would only serve to prolong the agony without altering the course of events. Their effectiveness would have been destroyed by events which had taken place on the other side of the globe, just as surely as if they had been sunk in the battle.

By this time, New Zealand was not so sure of the wisdom of its action. New Zealand's attachment to Britain was not purely a matter of sentiment or climatic similarity, but the result of its total dependency. It never considered, as some Australians did, that it could stand alone. New Zealand had but one course it could follow, that of complete involvement with Britain. Australia was in a position to spend some taxes either way.

This division was apparent in Australia's reply to the *Dreadnought* scare. Deakin and the Age, both of whom had

campaign vigorously for years for a local navy, came out in favour of donating a *Dreadnought* or its equivalent to Britain, the alternative being preferable because it might mean an increase in local forces. Fisher spoke for the 'Defend Australia' faction and refused to budge from the demand for a local fleet, though he was prepared to make compromises in order to achieve it.

In his study of *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence*, Professor D. C. Gordon pointed to three problems associated with the creation of an Australian navy:

- 1 Australia was not a sovereign state yet its ships would range the high seas, making Britain responsible for their actions.
- 2 How could Australia legislate for control of its sailors once they were outside its territorial waters?
- 3 How could uniformity of training and discipline with the Royal Navy be secured so that there would be ample opportunity for promotion and integration should the need arise?

Fisher confronted these problems in 1909 when his party was in a minority and hard-pressed by the embryonic coalition of oppositions around the issue of defence. To placate British and local distress Fisher agreed to the following:

- 1 When the ships went beyond the Australian station they would be under the command of the senior officer of the Royal Navy on that station.
- 2 Naval discipline could rest with the Royal Navy.
- 3 In time of war or other emergency, all vessels would come under the control of the Admiralty.

This final point was withdrawn by Deakin in 1910, restored by Fisher in 1911, and acted upon by Cook in 1914.

When the conference on imperial defence met in July 1909 it adopted a scheme which, if it had been carried out, would

have satisfied at one extreme those Australians who wanted their own navy, and at the other extreme those New Zealanders who believed in augmented imperial forces. It was decided to establish a Pacific fleet based on three units — an Australian one to be provided wholly by Australia; an East Indies one by Britain; and a China one by Britain using the New Zealand Dreadnought as its armoured cruiser.

As it transpired, the new agreement was broken in two important respects. First, the *New Zealand* was placed in the North Sea and not in the Pacific; second, Britain failed to furnish a third vessel similar to the *New Zealand* and the *Australia* for the East Indies unit. Moreover, both were done without consultation. This failure resulted from Britain's increasing concern at German naval strength in the North Sea and Churchill's plans to station *all* the Dreadnoughts at Gibraltar where, as he told the House of Commons on 26 March 1913, they would be twenty-eight days steam from Sydney, thirty-two days from New Zealand, and 'the Channel a very much shorter time'. The message finally penetrated to New Zealand, which in December 1913 authorised expenditure on its own naval force because, the Defence Minister, Colonel Allen, pointed out, 'The Chief partner of the 1909 Agreement — namely, the Mother Country — has failed to carry out her obligation'.

Professor Gordon's conclusion was apt:

When the war came there was no Eastern Fleet of the Empire. The most powerful vessel on the China Station was of the pre-Dreadnought era, and the most powerful form of British Power in the Pacific was the Australian unit, which had alone been carried to completion along the lines of the 1909 understanding.

The *Bulletin* (2 April 1914) could lament that the Pacific was now a Japanese sea.

Australia's commitment to a 'White Ocean Policy' for the Pacific was evidenced in a speech by the Labor Member for Melbourne, Dr Maloney, to the House of Representatives on

28 August 1912. Maloney subsequently issued the speech as a pamphlet under the title 'Proposal for Building an Empire Fleet', which sums up his intention. Significantly, he began by recalling that he 'was returned to the State Parliament as an avowed republican, but returned from that visit to the East with my views modified, and with the intention, so far as I was able, by thought or speech, to keep firm and strong the links that bind us with the Home Land'.

Ever since his visit to Japan in 1904 when his 'eyes were first permitted to see something of the concentrated millions of the East ... the subject to which I propose to address myself today has occupied my thought'. Just how great this attachment to the Empire had become revealed itself when he described his proposal as 'coming from one born in Australia, and loving his native land, with the blood from an English mother coursing through his veins, and desirous of giving to the country that gave his mother birth the best of his help as far as voice, vote or hand can do it'.

In reply to an interjection, Maloney offered to volunteer himself in the event of war, if it would help. The burden of his argument was that land armies were not sufficient to the task. Only an Empire fleet could prevent Australians from 'becoming German helots or Japanese slaves'. Prophetically, he realised that, in order to attack Australia, Japan would have first to attack the Philippines, which would bring the United States to our rescue.

Maloney never became specific in his proposals, but he showed a keen recognition of the dangers to Australia inherent in the reigning naval agreement and in the weakness of the Australian fleet:

If England were to go down, the result would be disastrous to the Anglo-Celtic-Saxon race all the world over, whether they were living under the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, or our Australian flag. If England were only injured in the northern seas, we should be rendered helpless against one of the greatest fighting na-

tions the world has ever known. What could we do unaided against such a nation? We might die bravely in defence of our country — and I know that Australians would gamely face any odds — but ... victory lies in large battalions of men.

Maloney concluded with a torrent of imperial rhetoric:

The seat of the British Empire is in Europe; the heart of the race is in the capital of the English world. If that be injured or destroyed then all our hopes and ideals, the greatest the world has seen, must sink into the gloom of oblivion, and the world be the poorer, that our civilisation, with all its wider life and greater opportunities, was strangled ere it had a chance.

Not bad for a pro-Boer.

EIGHT Poets

Poetry is the true nation-maker; yea, mayhap at the Last Day the nations shall be judged by the poets they have produced!

Bernard O'Dowd, 1904

There are those whose historical good sense makes them doubt statistics, quotations, footnotes and other paraphernalia of scholarship. If any such have opened this book they will not have read any of the preceding chapters but, knowing gold from dross, will have turned to the chapter on poets who are the true measure of Australian radicalism and nationalism. Even readers who have followed the argument from the first page may be wondering what the balladists and versifiers thought about the goings on recounted, and it would be impolite to leave so many unconvinced through lack of their favourite evidence. Notice will be paid to three poets: Bernard O'Dowd, A. H. Adams and Henry Lawson.

It is difficult to disentangle O'Dowd the social reformer from O'Dowd the nationalist. Indeed, he often considered social reform as a step towards Australian greatness rather than as a good thing for its own sake. His most widely known poem, 'Australia', begins by counterposing possible futures:

Last sea-thing dredged by sailor Time from Space,
Are you a drift Sargasso, where the West
In halcyon calm rebuilds her fatal nest?

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