



THE BOSSMAN'S FUTURE.

Het racisme in Australië richtte zich tegen de Chinese migranten

BIJDRA GE

Nation, race and labour in Australia, 1850-1910

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Introduction

The period 1885 to 1910 was pivotal in the formation of a nation state on the Australian continent. The period also witnessed a flowering of cultural nationalism, and the consolidation of the organised labour movement as a major institution in Australian society. The two were closely related, since the labour movement at this time became strongly associated with an Australian nationalism whose icons overlapped with those of the labour movement, and whose political content was essentially radical.

As a white settler society, the issue of race was essential in defining the nation, and in consolidating the labour movement. In 1788 the initial European settlers confronted a relatively sparse Aboriginal population (of up to 300,000) for such a large land mass. The numbers of non-European immigrants, mainly Chinese, but also some Melanesians and Indians, were even smaller at the end of the century, but they were far more prominent in the minds of the European Australians, particularly in the labour movement, when they created their nation state in 1901. Aborigines tended to retreat from European settlement as it spread from the coastal fringes, and except in remote areas and a small number of rural occupations, such as stockmen, did not participate in the European labour market. Their numbers also declined by two-thirds up to about 1910, as the Eu-

ropean population increased to 1,526,000 in 1871, to 3,825,000 in 1901, and 4,941,000 in 1914. Europeans commonly believed that the survival of the Aboriginal race was doomed. In contrast, the white settlers were very conscious of "the proximity of reservoirs of humanity" in nearby Asia. They also regarded non-Europeans as cheap competitors in the labour market. The popular conception of non-European labour as particularly susceptible to exploitation by capitalists, reinforced by coercive forms of employment to which many non-Europeans were subjected, struck a sensitive chord in a society which had been founded as a penal colony. Convict labour was not finally abolished in Western Australia until the 1890s, although in the main eastern population centres transportation of convicts from Britain had ceased 40 years earlier.

Background

The Australian nation state was formed in 1901 with the federation of six independent colonies in the Commonwealth of Australia. These colonies were: New South Wales (hereafter NSW) and Victoria, each of which accounted for about a third of the total population; South Australia and Queensland, each of which accounted for between 10 and 13 per cent of the population between 1871-1914; and Western Australia and Tasmania each of which had about 5 per cent of the total population in 1901.

Australians enjoyed a relatively democratic political system. By 1890 all colonies had responsible self-government on the British "*Westminster model*", with four having had this for almost 40 years. This meant that the colonies enacted their own legislation subject to ratification by Britain. The British Crown retained in each colony a viceregal Governor, who assumed a predominantly ceremonial role akin to that of the monarch in Britain. The government was formed in the Legislative Assembly or lower house in a bicameral parliamentary system. This was elected by adult male suffrage. Members of the upper house or Legislative Council were nominated by the Governor in NSW. In other colonies they were elected on the basis of a propertyholders' franchise, except in South Australia, which had a full adult male franchise for its upper house.

When the colonies federated in 1901 a national political structure was superimposed over the existing structures. The colonies became six states, ceding certain limited powers to the Commonwealth. The British Crown was represented at the national level by a Governor-General. In a bicameral parliament the national government was formed in the House of Representatives, and the upper house was an American-style Senate equally representing all states. Both houses were elected on the basis of a full adult suffrage from 1902, Australia being second only to New Zealand in giving women the vote in national elections. One further reform of great significance for labour's political organisation was the introduction of payment for members of parliament from the late 1880s.

From 1850 to 1890 the Australian colonies experienced an economic boom, with rapid population growth, extensive immigration, high export income from wool and minerals, and extensive capital inflow. By 1890 the colonies had amongst the highest levels of urbanisation, labour productivity, wages, working class home ownership and

union membership in the world. They were renowned for their prosperity, egalitarianism and social mobility. Building workers in Sydney and Melbourne were the first in the world to gain an eight-hour day in the 1850s. Metal workers followed in the 1870s. This "*workingmen's paradise*" provided a fertile environment for the growth of trade unions.

However, prosperity was always qualified. Many workers lived in slums, a growing low-wage sector emerged in manufacturing, concentrated among women and juvenile workers, and underemployment was embedded in the cyclical nature of much industrial activity and the casual basis of many jobs. Working conditions came under increased pressure from the mid-1880s, as many employers adopted a tougher industrial relations stance in response to structural problems which were emerging in key sectors of the economy, notably in coal mining, shipping and wool. The changing composition of the Australian workforce reflected the structural shift towards industrial growth, with the primary sector (rural and mining) share falling from 40 to 30 per cent, secondary industry expanding from 25 to 30 per cent (mainly manufacturing, plus building), and the tertiary share of the labour force growing from 12 to 23 per cent.

Australian workers were drawn either from Britain and Ireland or were born in the colonies, where capitalist relations of production were already dominant, even in rural industry. The attraction for many immigrants lay in the possibilities for independence from wage labour, in the goldfields in the 1850s to 1870s, or on the land which seemed so plentiful in Australia compared with Europe. These dreams were more often than not shattered in the harsh realities of colonial life. Nevertheless, the ideal of independence bred a workforce imbued with a strong sense of its own worth, and a corresponding lack of deference for employers. This was complemented by the importance in colonial industry of traditional craft

workers with their expected advancement into the ranks of small masters. These tradesmen brought with them from Britain a strong consciousness of the tradition and practice of independent craft unionism, which flourished in Australia under all of the circumstances described here.

By the 1870s the union movement was well-established, particularly in the major cities and in NSW and Victoria. Most unions were based upon traditional crafts, especially in the building and metal trades. These tradesmen represented a "*labour aristocracy*" with high wages, a high degree of job control, and prospects for social advancement. Craft union strategies reflected, and reinforced, their members' relatively privileged position. They strongly supported apprenticeship which restricted labour supply, making skilled labour scarce and its unions strategically well-placed to maintain good wages and conditions through unilateral regulation.

Unionism also gained some substantial inroads amongst semi-skilled and unskilled labour in the 1870s. Coal and metal miners, wharf labourers and seamen organised at that time. In the 1880s unionism expanded dramatically amongst the less skilled, covering gas, brewery, road transport and clothing and textile workers. Perhaps the greatest organisational achievement was the formation of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (ASU) in 1886. The ASU was based predominantly in NSW but had branches in Victoria and South Australia, unlike most other unions which were more locally based at the time. The ASU organised shed hands in a separate General Labourers' Union with which it amalgamated in 1894 to form the Australian Workers' Union (AWU). A separate rural Queensland Workers' Union amalgamated with the AWU in 1904 to become the first genuinely national union in Australia. Later, organising throughout rural industry and amongst unskilled factory workers, this became a general union and Australia's largest. By

1890 the total union density in the industrialised colonies of NSW and Victoria was probably the highest in the world at about 21 per cent.

During the 1890s, however, unions were decimated by the circumstances of the great depression. The fall in wool prices and a cessation of capital inflow because of Britain's own economic difficulties, all exacerbated by the structural changes in the colonial economy, produced an unemployment level of 30 per cent. Emboldened by these circumstances, employers attempted to reverse the gains of unionism of the previous decades. This led to a series of major strikes in which employers reduced wages or working conditions and then challenged the existence of unionism itself under the slogan of "*freedom of contract*". In each case the unions were decisively defeated, with the assistance of the state in arresting strike leaders and despatching special police or troops against strikers. The lesson taken from these events was the need for independent labour political organisation to neutralise the state apparatus and use it for social and industrial gains for the working class.

In 1890-1891 Labor Parties were formed in NSW and Queensland and soon contested elections. Other colonies followed soon afterwards. In NSW the Labor Party gained over a third of the seats in parliament in 1891 and thereafter held the balance of power. In 1893 the Queensland Labor Party became the official parliamentary opposition, and in 1899 it formed a short-lived minority government, the first in the world by a Labor or socialist party. By 1910 the Labor Party had gained full majority government in NSW and at the national level.

This level of political success was based on the fact that the Party had broadened its original working class electoral base in the major cities and mining areas, to include a high proportion of rural electorates in which it relied on significant support from farmers. This strategy was particularly marked in NSW and Queensland, especially



Aboriginals werden uit de arbeidsmarkt gesloten

through the rural-based AWU (and QWU before 1904), in which small farmers who shored sheep part-time were a significant part of the membership. In these colonies/states the AWU played a dominant role within the Labor Party from the mid-1890s for many decades, because of its ability to deliver rural parliamentary seats. In this way, the Labor Party quickly became a populist style of party.

The early influence of the Labor Party also allowed it a major impact upon the terms under which the new nation state of Australia was created in the early 1900s. The Laborist policy agenda by the turn of the century consisted of three main pillars:

- protection of domestic Australian manufacturing industry with high tariffs, against "unfair" competition from overseas, to ensure employment in this sector and enable employers to pay "fair wages";
- state arbitration of industrial disputes, to minimise the incidence of industrial disputes, protect "the weak" in industrial relations, provide a "living wage" for all workers, and encourage trade unions;
- maintenance of a "White Australia", to protect Australian workers from cheap labour competition.

Labor was extremely successful in having this agenda accepted into a broad political consensus from the early 1900s, before it achieved a parliamentary majority, lasting until the last years of the twentieth century, although most of this time Labor was in parliamentary opposition at the national level. The white Australia policy was not abolished until 1972, and the other aspects of the Laborist hegemony remained until the 1990s (ironically, dismantled by a national Labor government).

White Australia was central to the establishment of this Laborist hegemony. It is notable that the Act which created white Australia was one of the first of the new Commonwealth parliament. "The

cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon racial purity" even became Labor's first national objective, before any measure for social justice for workers. Why this should be so, and what the implications were for the form of Australian nationalism supported by much of the labour movement, require further explanation.

Race and Labor

Labor's attitude towards non-European immigration was consistent with a general, craft exclusivist-style opposition to large-scale or government-assisted immigration, which potentially ameliorated the colonial labour shortage that had given unions an advantage in improving wages and conditions. However, Labor's campaigns against non-European immigration developed a separate and more intense political momentum than its general anti-immigration campaigns. The working class basis of political campaigns for exclusion of non-Aboriginal non-Europeans was also less distinct than for Labor's general anti-immigration policy. Labor's racism was shared by most of colonial society, where the concepts of Social Darwinism, a "civilising mission", and a mission to rationally develop natural resources, played as important a role in subjugating non-European races as in any of the other white settler regions. Nevertheless, the political function of racism was quite specific for Labor.

The political expression of colonial racism (directed against races other than Aboriginals) was established in the goldfields agitation, including some violent riots and persecution, against Chinese miners in the 1850s and 1860s. It was characterised by a populist alliance of miners, urban artisans, small businessmen and urban liberals. About 40,000 Chinese were attracted to the goldfields of NSW and Victoria, representing over 5 per cent of the total population, but concentrated in a small area. White gold diggers commonly blamed their own lack of fortune on "unfair" Chinese competition, which really

amounted to greater persistence once the easily won lodes had been exhausted. The end of the gold-rushes in Victoria and NSW, together with legislation to restrict immigration (in 1855 and 1861 respectively), significantly reduced the Chinese population by a quarter in all colonies (by half in NSW), but Chinese immigration rose again in the 1870s. From 1871 to 1891 the NSW Chinese population almost doubled, to over 14,000. This barely exceeded 1 per cent of that colony's total population, but they tended to concentrate in communities and within a narrow range of occupations. Although two-thirds remained in the countryside, more Chinese were settling in towns, which made them more visible. Many Chinese arrivals in NSW in 1874-7 were en route from Victoria to new goldfields in Queensland to the north, where 17,000 Chinese outnumbered the white goldfields population and comprised ten per cent of the total colonial population.

In 1878 the Chinese issue flared again with the Sydney Seamen's strike against the ASN Company's employment of non-union Chinese crew on three ships, for subunion wages. Support gathered quickly in the union movement, led by the Sydney Trades and Labour Council (TLC). Wharf labourers also struck, and miners refused to supply coal to the company. The strike soon assumed broad political proportions, with large public meetings in Sydney and Newcastle demanding restrictions on Chinese immigration. Victory was ensured when the Queensland government threatened to cancel its mail contract with the company, although in the strike settlement it was agreed that the company could gradually phase out its Chinese labour over three years, and almost half of the striking seamen were not re-employed. Thereafter, the union movement was committed to restrictions on Chinese immigration. The First (1879) Intercolonial Trades Union Congress unanimously called for a heavy poll tax on Chinese residents and for immigration restrictions, a policy which was reiterated at the

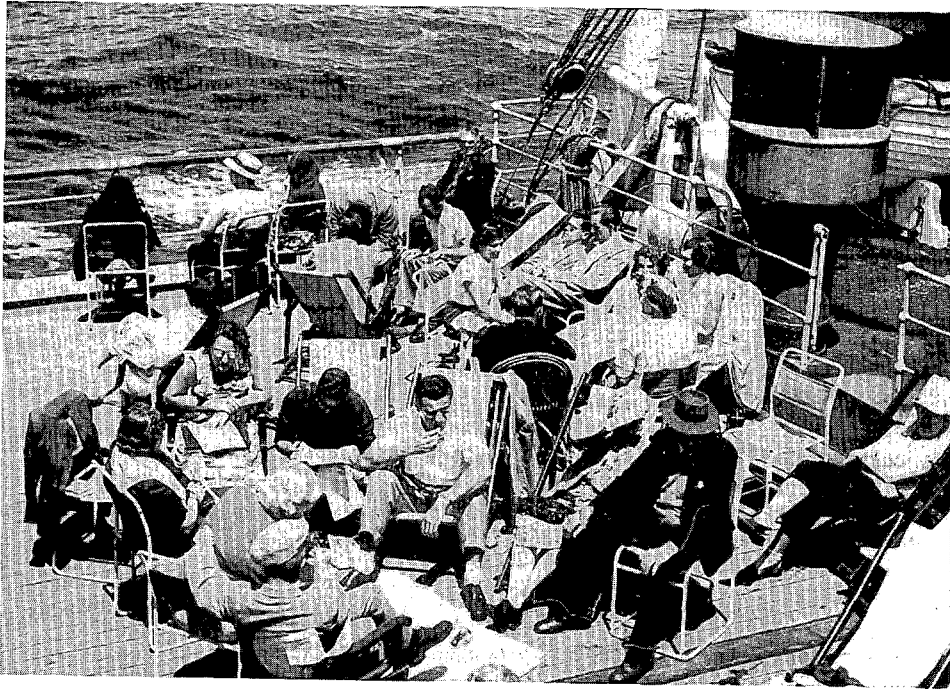
succeeding congresses of the 1880s.

In 1879 the Legislative Council (upper house) prevented the NSW government from reviving the 1861 legislation. The government was also constrained by the 1859 British treaty with China, which promised reciprocal trading rights and equal civil rights for all subjects of the British Empire, including Chinese from Singapore. Furthermore, to be effective, legislation required uniformity between the colonies. Early in 1881 an intercolonial governmental conference agreed on restriction of Chinese immigration, but since NSW and Victoria supported far harsher measures than the other colonies would agree to, no uniform policy resulted from the conference.

In 1880 the TLC and the Seamen's Union commenced a public campaign. A TLC conference, held to coincide with the intergovernmental meeting, called for restrictions far harsher than those suggested by any government representatives. In April 1881 the campaign intensified. *"One of the largest assemblies ever gathered in the Masonic Hall"* in Sydney, was repeated a week later, followed in May by gatherings in country centres, and various Sydney suburbs, and a TLC demonstration of at least ten thousand.

In 1881 the government introduced restrictive legislation which immediately lowered immigration, but this soon rose again as the Chinese learnt ways of circumventing the regulations. The Seamen took the initiative again in April 1885, over the employment of Chinese on the *Zealandia* and *Australia*. The 1878 strike had ended the use of Chinese in domestic crews, but these ships were operated between Australia and the USA by a Glasgow group. To blockade the ships, Wharf Labourers, Coal Lumpers and Marine Engineers joined the strike. The issue was complicated by the Seamen's extra demands for higher wages and a *"closed shop"*, but after a week the company conceded all but the last demand, and did not employ coloured labour again.

However, political agitation continued, as the increase in immigration coincided with a Chinese



Blanke immigranten op weg naar Australië

protest that restrictive legislation breached Anglo-Chinese treaties. *The Bulletin*, a popular radical nationalist weekly newspaper, intensified its anti-Chinese campaign from 1886. Anti-Chinese Leagues sprang up throughout the colonies over 1886-8, some urban Chinese were physically maltreated, and Queensland shearers were involved in a number of strikes over Chinese employment, peaking in 1889. In response, governments tightened entry restrictions.

This represented an unequalled level of success for working-class political action at the time. This was based upon a broadening from the industrial front into a full-scale political movement, and from a working-class movement into a populist alliance. The Chinese issue was also important to the labour movement organisationally. To a large extent, the Seamen's Union had been consolidated upon it. The Amalgamated Miners' Association was established during a dual struggle against a wage reduction and the introduction of Chinese labour in 1878.

Consistent with this working-class, base the notion of economic threat was a constant theme in anti-Chinese agitation. Allegedly, the Chinese competed for jobs, worked for sub-standard wages under poor conditions, and were unwilling to embrace unionism. Agitation in 1878-9 and 1886-8, the beginning and end of the campaign, coincided with peaks in the general union anti-immigration campaign, and with economic recessions, when fear of unemployment may have lent strong credence to the notion of the Chinese as an economic threat.

However, "the economic threat" thesis was not entirely justified. Apart from shipping, only in the furniture trade was there a clear case of competition. Where evidence is available, Chinese wages were on a par with Europeans', although they were often paid by the piece, a practice to which the unions objected. The other major Chinese occupations - storekeeping, hawking, laundering, market gardening and cooking - were unimportant areas of white employment, often provided as

services for other Chinese. They and other coloured labour had also shown a propensity for industrial organisation.

Nevertheless, economic fears might be genuine. Union evaluations of capitalists' "ulterior motives" had some basis. From the 1830s pastoralists and merchants had favoured cheap and servile convict, Chinese or Indian labour. Pastoralists remained the largest occupational group in the conservative upper house which rejected the 1879 restrictive legislation. Non-white labour had also been used to break strikes on a number of occasions. When employers or the conservative press defended coloured labour for its "docility", "industriousness" or "sobriety", union fears were only confirmed.

Yet, an overt racism ran throughout the anti-Chinese campaign, which aroused so much greater enthusiasm than anti-immigration activities generally. At meetings, the same speakers who located the issue in a class perspective of economic threat always returned to outright racial antagonism. The Chinese were linked with corruption, disease, opium smoking and the desecration of white women. If they were wayward or criminal in any way, these fears were confirmed; if well-behaved, they were cunning. Prevented from bringing their womenfolk to Australia by restrictive legislation, the absence of Chinese women became proof of Chinese workers' immorality and temporary use of Australia. Strike-breaking against non-whites was quite acceptable behaviour for otherwise good unionists. Banned from membership of the unions, non-Europeans were accused of not understanding union solidarity, and when they organised separately they were shunned. For Australia, claimed *The Bulletin*,

"the problem is one of life or living death, and her sons have to choose between the establishment of a great nation and a new life, or the founding of a mongrel community..." (2 August 1888).

Overt racism gave the anti-Chinese movement a broad social base which the "economic threat" argument could not. Descriptions of the public meetings in 1878 show clearly that many besides workers participated. The TLC vied for campaign leadership with the liberal Political Reform League, and colonial governments were obviously sympathetic. Even the establishment press offered lukewarm support to the campaign. This pattern continued in the 1880s. In 1880 many public meetings were organised independently of the TLC, and in the country included many farmers. The Anti-Chinese Leagues were also broadly-based.

Anti-Chinese feeling persisted in the early 1890s. The 1896 NSW Factory Act defined any workplace employing Chinese as a factory subject to inspection, no matter what its size. The Furniture Trade Union successfully had the stamping of Chinese-made furniture included on the Labor Party platform in 1892. In 1890 the TLC was prepared to reject affiliation of a branch of the AWU, until assured that its eight Chinese members had only been admitted under "exceptional circumstances", that is, prior to a rule being drafted to prohibit Chinese membership. Chinese shearers in NSW numbered twenty-three out of 20,000 by the 1880s, although there were 435 working as general rural labourers in 1891. These numbers were almost halved by 1901. There could be little doubt over AWU loyalty to the anti-Chinese cause.

However, Aborigines and, in 1895 Maoris and American Negroes, were specifically exempted from the ASU's colour bar, although there were few of any of these groups in the shearing workforce at the turn of the century. A black American did appear as a delegate to an ASU conference in 1895, but the largest group of black shearers was Aborigines, of whom there were probably about 150 in the eastern colonies in the 1890s. Although there had been more in the 1850s, their numbers had been reduced by a combination of

white man's diseases and employers' preference for white labour when it became more available. Largely because of the effectiveness against Chinese of the 1888 restrictive legislation, the focus of Labor racism in the Australian colonies shifted in the 1890s. The Queensland labour movement campaigned against the importation of indentured Melanesian, or "Kanakan", labourers throughout the 1880s. Kanakas were recruited, tricked or seized from the South Sea Islands to service the Queensland sugar plantations in the style of feudal serfdom. These plantations were extensive holdings requiring a large labour force. Kanakas were used because of a shortage of labour, they could be paid low wages, and they supposedly had a greater capacity for hard work than did whites under severe, tropical conditions. The unions likened the Kanaka system to slavery. Despite government regulation, abuses continued in recruitment, working and living conditions were primitive, and the Kanaka death rate was three times that for whites. Overt racism also lurked alongside these considerations. Labor men and Liberals saw the blacks as "inferior" and "uncivilised", and often treated them as such. As with the Chinese, it was also assumed that the Kanakas would not appreciate union organisation.

In the 1890s the Queensland Kanaka became an intercolonial concern because of the probability of the federation of the Australian colonies, and the growing intercolonial links in the labour movement itself. It was feared that the Kanaka system would spread throughout the colonies, to the potential detriment of all white labour, once federation was completed. From 1892 the Sydney TLC organized public meetings calling for more extensive anti-alien legislation.

The labour movement also lengthened its list of undesirable races. Japanese, Afghans and Indians began to immigrate from the 1880s. Their numbers were small, but as with the Chinese, they were concentrated residentially and occupationally. Whilst Chinese numbers decreased, total Asian immigration to Australia increased by 5,500 from

1895-1901.

Some socialists displayed uneasiness over the racial policies of the majority labour movement. They were particularly concerned with capitalist exploitation of the race issue in order to divide workers against themselves. However, these sections of the labour movement were relatively weak, and very ambiguous in their attitude towards race. In 1897 the *Australian Workman* newspaper illustrated that ambiguity:

"We have no down upon the alien as such ... We know that the Asiatic races are not what the capitalistic frauds who agitate aliens, to divert attentions from their own peculations from the workers would make them out to be." [sic]

But "as a matter of expediency", because of cultural differences, popular prejudices, and the way these "can play into the hands of the plutocracy", the *Workman* considered that, "pending the solution of social questions, ... the population should be restricted to the white, and as far as possible, the British-speaking element, for the time being." (24 Juli 1897)

Nor were either the socialists or the *Workman* consistently sympathetic to Asians.

As a reflection of the widespread support for a racist policy, the 1895 Intercolonial Premier's Conference agreed to extend entry restrictions to all coloured races. NSW legislated accordingly in 1896, but Royal Assent for the Act was refused, because of treaty considerations with Japan (which allowed reciprocal residency rights) and concern for coloured British subjects. Britain preferred the Natal Act of 1897, which restricted undesirable persons, rather than entire races. That Act prohibited entry of anybody who failed to write an application for admission to the colony in some European language chosen by authorities.

The Natal Act became the model for the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction (White Australia) Act of 1901. The Commonwealth Par-

liament was split fairly evenly between three parties: Labor, Protectionist Liberals and Free Traders, until 1908 when the last two fused to oppose Labor. These circumstances made formation of governments and legislation difficult, but the "White Australia" Act was legislated at an early stage because there was such widespread support for it.

Few parliamentarians would have quarrelled with any of the sentiments expressed by Labor's Commonwealth parliamentary leader, J.C. Watson, when he spoke in favour of the White Australia Act:

"The objection I have to the mixing of these coloured people with the white people of Australia - although I admit is to a large extent tinged by considerations of an industrial nature - lies in the main in the probability of racial contamination ... 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." (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1901-2, vol. 4, pp. 4633-6)

Nevertheless, it was the Labor leader, rather than others, who took such an extreme stance, and he emphasised overt racism rather than the economic threat. The Party campaigned vigorously over the issue in the first federal elections in 1901. There were four reasons for the importance of the race issue to the Labor Party. The first was organisational. At the parliamentary level White Australia provided the major source of unity in the first Federal Parliamentary Labor Party Caucus, which was otherwise divided over free trade versus protection, and which consisted of a mixture of representatives from separate state-based parties with quite distinct traditions.

At the level of the extra-parliamentary party, White Australia could be utilised to appeal to a broad populist base in the electorate which Labor needed to eventually form government. This was a viable strategy given the appeal of racism across all classes. It was indicated by the almost contrived manner in which Labor made race an issue

again in the 1890s, after the success of restrictive legislation in the late 1880s. In the urban centres in which the Labor Party originally had its main base in the early 1890s, there was little indication that it was a burning issue by then, because few workers had contact with non-whites or felt economically threatened by them. Only a tiny number of minor urban unions were concerned with the Chinese and other non-Europeans at this time. Even Kanaka labour was gradually being phased out. The urban labour press paid scant attention to the denial of Royal Assent to the 1896 restrictive legislation.

The only major unions for which race was an important issue were the AWU and its Queensland equivalent. *The Hummer*, journal of one of the AWU branches, peddled a particularly virulent racism:

"The camels must go; the chows must also leave; and Indian hawkers must hawk their wares in some other country. This country was built expressly for Australians, and Australians are going to run the show." (31 October 1891)

AWU political platforms called for total exclusion of all non-whites even before the Labor Party did in 1896. When restrictive legislation was passed in 1896 and 1901, it was criticised in AWU circles for not being forthright enough. This was the dominant union influence in the Labor Party from the mid-1890s because of its delivery of a large number of rural seats. Consequently, it was largely through the AWU and the QWU that the Labor Party in both colonies, and nationally, was so strongly attached to a racial policy.

AWU and QWU members had more contact with blacks and Asians in rural labour than most other Australian workers. In Queensland politics also polarised around the racial issue. Consequently, the AWU emphasised the issue when it sought amalgamation with the QWU. The Chinese were also used at times, and without justification, as an explanation for a major industrial defeat of the shearers in 1891 in NSW and

Queensland. Nevertheless, the virulence of AWU racism was out of all proportion to organisational considerations or the extent of job competition that its members faced.

In the 1890s, racism became interwoven with an emergent Australian nationalism. This ideological mixture in *The Bulletin* appealed especially to the bushworkers who made up the AWU, which was the first national union. W.G. Spence, the president of the AWU, saw in the exclusion of non-whites "a chance for the development of the Australian continent of a great nation of the white race" [sic] (*Australia's Awakening*, 243). Anti-imperialism was a subsidiary of nationalism. The AWU's *Hummer* displayed a bitter anti-monarchism, describing the young Australian nation as "chained to a corrupt and decaying corpse" (13 February 1892). Sympathy for the South African Boer, with whom some Australian bushworkers felt many affinities, also led some to oppose colonial support for Britain in the Boer War. Britain's treaty with Japan caused great resentment, as did British policy to treat all Imperial subjects equally. It seemed as if monarchical and merchant-ridden Britain would place these and commercial considerations ahead of protection of her white brothers in Australia. In these regards, the AWU was the strongest force for the Labor Party's adoption of a nationalist ideology.

Racist nationalism was also closely associated with the land policy of the AWU and the Labor Party. From the 1860s the "unlocking of the lands" had been a popular demand of liberal and radical political reform groups, based on the working class as well as farmers, merchants and urban professionals. Land reform to increase smallholding was associated with democratic reform and restrictive immigration in the platforms of pre-Labor radical political groups.

The AWU and the Labor Party largely inherited this tradition. For the AWU's membership these linkages were particularly important. A high proportion of shearers owned small farms, and shore sheep in the season to earn a little extra cash to

keep the farm solvent. The ideal of smallholding was something which many rural labourers aspired to. For its part, the Labor Party relied on their support for the large number of rural seats it held in parliament.

Various legislative attempts from the 1860s to settle large numbers of small farmers on the land had failed to redistribute the majority of land from large landholders. In response to the economic depression of the 1890s the "unlocking of the lands" revived as a political issue. A number of schemes emerged for state-aided village or co-operative settlement, with support from the Labor Party. For the AWU it was an ideal in itself.

The vision associated with the land in these quarters was a yeoman ideal. According to this vision, the strong, self-reliant, manly and morally upright bushworker or farmer provided the backbone of a proud new nation which had shaken off the yoke of class division in the "Old World". In the New World independence on the land fulfilled the dream whereby no man was another's master. The land itself also provided regenerative properties for the yeoman race of Europeans, untainted by the physical and moral diseases of the urban industrialism of the Old World. These were the nationalist and egalitarian images promoted not only by the AWU in the literature and political cartoons of its papers, but also by the popular radical democratic press, such as *The Bulletin*, and the new breed of nationalist writers, such as Henry Lawson. Ironically, Australia was already by then the most highly urbanised society in the world.

The imagery of the sturdy yeomanry was also associated with a race essence. Racial integrity, as well as the land itself was an essential source of purity and strength. Racial mixing would undermine the strength of this yeoman race, in two ways. The first was in the metaphorical sense, although it was taken literally enough by the sources already referred to, particularly by the Queensland socialist, William Lane. The second was in the more material sense that the main alternative to smallholding, towards which all large landholders were

considered sympathetic, was often seen to be the plantation style holdings of the sugar-cane planters in the tropical north, with which slave or indentured black or Asian labour was associated. For example, *The Bulletin* described the constitutional struggle against Kanaka labour in Queensland in this way:

"Should the capitalist party in the North succeed in making Queensland a plantation estate, with servile labour for its corner-stone, alas for the cause of Australian union!... Let white Australia pause and think over this: - ... If this party succeed in their designs, what will Queensland be ten years hence? The whole middle-class - small traders, artisans, white servants - will be crushed out or reduced to the condition of mean whites, and Queensland glorious Queensland! teeming with wealth... - will become a paradise of the Devil, inhabited by two classes, the [planter] capitalist and the savage with a weak constitution." (26 March 1892)

In the new Commonwealth of Australia restrictive immigration policy was combined with legislation specifically phasing out Kanaka labour, providing price protection and setting wages at a "fair and reasonable" level through a state arbitration system, to support a smallholding base for the sugar industry, which saw the breaking up of the large plantations.

The vision of a nation of smallholders remained largely unfulfilled despite legislative efforts well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, these ideological currents influenced the Labor Party substantially in its support for both racially restrictive and small land ownership policies, particularly because of the influence in it of the agrarian AWU. Whilst most of the urban working class was not actively aroused by the race issue a great deal after 1888, nor was it by any means unsympathetic to racially restrictive immigration policies. This was a latent issue throughout the population, aroused when direct threats were envisaged, such as the potential spread of Kanaka labour with federation of the colonies.

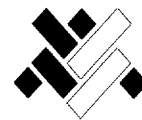
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VAN LEVENSBELANG VOOR IEDEREEN!

In 1869 werd in Fayt-lez-Manage de eerste Socialistische Mutualiteit opgericht waarvan de leden zich solidair wensten te verzekeren tegen risico's van ziekte en invaliditeit. Zij waren de eerste verenigingen in de strijd van de arbeiders voor hun politieke, sociale en economische ontvoogding.

Aan de vooravond van het jaar 2000 staat de Socialistische Mutualiteit tegenover een reeks uitdagingen. We zullen niet dulden dat geraakt wordt aan de Sociale Zekerheid. Wij blijven vechten voor solidariteit en een goed leven voor iedereen.



Socialistische
Mutualiteiten