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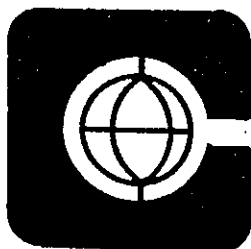


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THE BROWNING BROWNING BROWNING OF AUSTRALIA

Gareth Evans

'No red-blooded Australian wants to see a chocolate-coloured Australia in the 1980's.' *Arthur Calwell, 1972.*

Few countries have had a consistently proud record on the issue of racial discrimination. There is undoubtedly an element of hypocrisy in most governmental pronouncements on the immorality even of South Africa. But this has not stopped the visible emergence of race relations as the most important single criterion in terms of which countries judge the worth of their neighbours. Fortunately for Australia, our moral worth has hitherto been a matter of small international concern, even in our own geographic region. But the time is fast approaching, if it has not already arrived, when we shall have to stand up and be counted.

The record to date gives no cause for optimism. Our treatment of Aborigines and of Papua-New Guinea, our trading with Rhodesia and our economic and sporting relationships with South Africa are all widely known. But it is the running sore of our immigration policy that has always been at the heart of our well-deserved racist image abroad.

We have a great deal of history to apologise for. White Australia was a plank in the platform of every political party at Federation. The Immigration Restriction Act, with its pernicious charade of the dictation test, was the very first piece of substantive legislation to be enacted by the new parliament. And at the very time that J.C. Watson, the first Labor Prime Minister, was saying that his objection to coloured immigration was mainly the 'possibility and probability of racial contamination', on the other side of the House Sir Isaac Isaacs was saying: 'We will do everything necessary to keep Australia free from the contaminating and degrading influence of inferior races'.

Gareth Evans is a lecturer in Constitutional Law at Melbourne University and is completing a book on civil rights and liberties in Australia. It is of some ironic interest to note that he is campaign director for A.L.P. candidate, Ted Innes, in the Melbourne seat formerly held by Arthur Calwell.

Imigration policy has until very recently always been a bi-partisan matter. But however much the Liberal Party and its predecessor share the blame for the White Australia policy, it cannot be denied that Labor men (along with the R.S.L. and the Australian Natives Association) have been its noisiest propagandists, socialist principles of universal brotherhood notwithstanding. It is not unfair to say, with Humphrey McQueen, that the A.L.P. 'was racist before it was socialist'. Certainly this is the way it appeared in the first formal platform of the Federal Labor Party in 1905, when 'collective ownership of monopolies . . .' took second place as an objective to: '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'.

For some Labor men, those days have not yet passed. Their most conspicuous spokesman has always been Arthur Calwell. Although deserving praise as the architect of our whole post-war immigration programme, and its extension (albeit reluctantly) to non-British Europeans, Calwell administered the White Australia policy with an insensitive and unrelenting consistency, such as deporting a number of Asians who had fled here from the Japanese invasion of their homelands. His most celebrated exercise, of course, was the expulsion in 1949 of Sergeant Gamboa, a Filipino in the U.S. army (which case is still remembered vividly in the Philippines today). Out of office, in 1961 he supported the attempted deportation of two Malaysian pearl divers ('two Wongs don't make a White') and in 1962 the barring of entry to Japanese children of Australian servicemen — no doubt agreeing with the R.S.L., who saw this as a trick 'to destroy by any means possible Australia's policy of migration control'.

This was the occasion of his first real brush with Gough Whitlam who said, reasonably enough, that 'It is monstrous that the children of Australians cannot enter Australia'. More recently, in 1971, Calwell has attacked the British Race Relations Board for challenging Australia's refusal to grant an assisted passage to Jamaican-born Jan Allen. More recently still he has talked of Perth, with its few thousand recent Eurasian settlers, as the Durban of Australia: 'They live on the smell of an oily rag and breed like flies.' And of the expelled Ugandan Asians: 'A parasitic people . . . they should be sent home to India and Bangladesh'.

The most explicitly stated justification for Calwell's position (apart from the fact that he is a nationalist, and to Arthur Calwell 'nationalism and racialism are synonymous') is his conviction that Labor would never win another election if it loosened its restricted immigration policy. This view is based on Patrick Gordon Walker's defeat in Smethwick in 1964 by the Tory slogan: 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour'. The accuracy of Calwell's prediction aside, it might be conceded that this is one of the more spectacular subversions of principle to pragmatism of our time, far outstripping the alleged sins of the A.L.P. centre-right in this regard.

The White Australia — or 'racial purity' — plank remained in the A.L.P. platform right up to 1965, when replaced by the policy drafted by Fred Daly:

Convinced that increased population is vital to the future development of Australia, the A.L.P. will support and uphold a vigorous and expanding programme administered with sympathy, understanding and tolerance. The basis of such policy will be —

- (a) *Australia's national and economic security,*
- (b) *the welfare and integration of all its citizens,*
- (c) *the preservation of our democratic system and the balanced development of our nation, and*
- (d) *the avoidance of the difficult social and economic problems which may follow from an influx of people having different standards of living, traditions and cultures.*

Bland and liberalised as this may seem, clearly there was a sting in its tail-clause (d). It was perfectly consistent with the total exclusion of all non-Europeans. Daly and Calwell of course both recognised and relied upon this, as shown by their statements in the Y.L.A.-initiated controversy early in 1970.

Then, at last, at the 1971 Launceston Federal Conference the following additional clause was moved by Dunstan and Whitlam and passed without dissent:

- (e) *the avoidance of discrimination on any grounds of race or colour of skin or nationality.*

This has at least now made impossible any blatantly racist interpretation of the Party platform. About its more positive implications Labor spokesmen have maintained a conscientious silence. To the extent that they have committed themselves at all, it has been to say that the new policy will not

mean any proportionate increase in the number of non-European immigrants under a Labor Government. It will be suggested below that this is just not good enough.

The present government policy was introduced by the then Minister for Immigration, Hubert Opperman, in 1966. Apologists argue that whatever else one might think about it, it is at least an improvement on its predecessors. Up to a point this is true.

From 1901 to the end of the Second World War the policy of virtually total exclusion (enforced by the dictation test — not formally dropped until 1958) was sustained, modified only by some provisions for temporary entry by visitors, students and merchants. In 1935 it was enacted that an entrant who could establish fifteen years' residence might be allowed to stay permanently. Some further minor concessions were made just after the War, but Calwell's administration of the policy has already been referred to. In 1952, Japanese wives of Australian servicemen were admitted, but only under permits valid initially for five years.

In 1956, the government agreed to admit for indefinite stay a small number of 'distinguished and highly qualified' non-Europeans. Also, for the first time it became possible to be naturalized — after fifteen years' residence: this was the first change of any real consequence.

Then finally in 1966, after a full scale review, the government came up with the present policy. This had two main elements. First, certain long-term residents on temporary permits (but not including students) could qualify for resident status, and thus be joined by their families, after five years rather than fifteen. Second, and more important, entry with a view to permanent residence (which had to be applied for after five years) would be allowed to a limited number of non-Europeans and their wives and children, considered on the basis of 'their suitability as settlers, their ability to integrate readily, and their possession of qualifications which are in fact positively useful to Australia'.

No quota was contemplated, no doubt because the figure the government had in mind would have looked derisory put down on paper. The Minister expressed the basic aims of the new policy as being a moderate increase in the number of non-European settlers coupled with the preservation of a predominantly homogeneous society in Australia. Subsequent ministers have reaffirmed these goals.

How many non-Europeans are now coming in? Between 1966 and 1970, 2,700 applications were approved (representing, with wives and children added, about 7,000 individuals, mostly Indians and Chinese); another 2,800 applications from heads of families were refused. Until 1971, only 3,200 non-white migrants actually arrived, an average of 650 per annum. (These numbers, should, it is true, be increased by the approximately one thousand non-whites arriving each year as relatives of those granted residents' status as a consequence of the five year qualification also brought in in 1966). Since then the number of applications approved has averaged 200 per month: in the financial year 1971—2 a total of 2,700 non-Europeans were admitted.

For a complete picture, one should add those of mixed descent who are now arriving at the rate of about 6,000 per annum. Restrictions for this category of entrant were eased

progressively after the War, but it was not until 1964 that the offensive criterion of 'predominantly European appearance' ceased to be the main official guideline.

But the point remains that Australia is allowing entry to only about three thousand uncompromisingly non-white migrants each year. If this should seem more than a drop in the bucket, compared with the 140,000 European migrants now being sought for this year alone, it can hardly be said that this amounts to anything more than a token change in the White Australia policy.

That the policy as administered is tokenism of the worst kind can be seen from consideration of some of the following points. First, there is no question of any of these migrants receiving assisted passages. Immigration Department figures for 1970 show that all 281 applications from American negroes were refused: and from Britain, we have turned down all 250 applications in which the principal applicant was non-European, and all but five of the fifty applications from families where one member was non-European. Of course there is no question of assistance for immigrants direct from the Asian countries themselves.

The justification for this is explained in a revealing passage from Mr Phillip Lynch's recent pamphlet, *Evolution of a Policy*, written just before he departed from the Immigration Ministry to the greener, as it were, pastures of Labour and National Service:

It is logical that we assist with transport those we actively seek. However, it would be illogical to promote by financial assistance migration which is essentially limited or restricted by the policy of successive governments. It will also lead to greatly increased applications by persons whose applications for entry were subject to strict control and likely not to be successful, thus creating quite unnecessary embarrassment.

Second, the go-slow tactics of the Immigration Department in processing applications from non-Europeans is fast becoming notorious. The writer has discovered this at first hand in trying to help an Indian friend with a post-graduate statistics degree come to this country. From application to first approval took fifteen months. Months elapse between application and reply, between reply and interview, more months while the application goes to Canberra, more months still before the final approval is communicated to the applicant. The *de facto* requirement that the applicant has a job waiting for him is an exceedingly difficult one to meet. Employers are reluctant to hire people sight unseen, and interviews are impossible until the immigrant arrives. There is blatant, and often effective, discouragement all the way.

Third, the insensitive treatment of non-white visitors and temporary residents is a further deplorable aspect. Instances abound of arbitrary handling: one week the Filipino Ella family are deported because dance band musicians are 'of no positive value to Australia': next week Mr Ying Chan Chee is told to go, though he is a key member of a hospital heart research team.

The extent of Departmental harassment is not often known. One African student of whom the writer knows was told — before being bundled to the airport in an official

car when his time expired — of the Department's knowledge of events at private parties at which only a handful of 'friends' were present.

As a final illustration of the tokenism which the new government policy represents, it is worth quoting again from the pamphlet issued by Mr Lynch. There is no mention whatsoever of the contribution to Australia — economic and cultural — that non-Europeans might be expected to make, no recognition that Australia has a moral or any other sort of responsibility to welcome these people: only a mass of apprehensions about the possibility of 'self-perpetuating enclaves and undigested minorities' should the policy go too far, coupled with assertions that it won't. The official dream, and reality, remains the 'socially homogeneous and cohesive population'. Then finally, with rather breathtaking cynicism: 'No longer can it be said in truth or with justice that Australia totally excludes non-Europeans as settlers. This fact I believe has reduced the risks of unnecessary misunderstanding and ill-feeling and has also undercut comment that exaggerates those risks!'

Two separate questions may properly be raised at this point. First, is there a case for taking any more immigrants at all? Second: if so, should more of them be non-white?

Until two or three years ago the wisdom of the post-War mass immigration programme was never seriously questioned. It is true that the original line of justification in terms of defence had lost some credence. 'Populate or perish' or 'a bigger Australia is a safer Australia' were no longer anyone's catchcries. Much greater emphasis was being put on economic and political relations with Asia, and — for better or worse — regional defence agreements, than on simple numbers. But the usual supporting argument, that of immigration's contribution to economic growth, seemed unchallengeable

But then there appeared the 'New Critics' with arguments that are now vigorously doing the rounds of what Donald Horne calls the 'patio intellectuals'. There are two main strings to the New Critics' bow.

The first has been more prominent lately (no doubt for good tactical reasons, for it is a position with which no one can seriously disagree). It is that annual migration intake must be more responsive to the domestic employment situation.

When 120,000 or more Australians are out of work, clearly it is unreasonable — for both new settlers and old — to bring large additional numbers into the job market.

The second string claim is of far more fundamental importance, because it is in no way dependent on any temporary illness in the economy. It would, if accepted, mean a permanent substantial reduction in our migrant intake — of whites and non-whites alike. And it is a position with which Gough Whitlam has associated himself and the Labor Party.

The fundamental claim is that the migration programme has required enormous amounts of capital to be spent on 'social overheads' or the 'capital infrastructure' — houses, roads, sewerage, education amenities and so on — which would otherwise have been spent on production. This

lowering of the ratio of productive capital to labour, it is argued, has lowered output per person and accordingly the standards of living, compared with what it would otherwise have been. We might have had high total economic growth, but not growth where it matters.

The short answer to this is that it is totally fallacious. Immigration, as well as raising the demand for capital, increases our ability to increase the capital stock. There was not a given amount of capital back in 1945 — like so many marbles in a bag — which has since been spent on all the wrong people. Migrants, over half of whom are members of the work force (compared with only 40% of native born Australians) have made a prodigiously large contribution not only to output but to the total capital stock. And even if more of this capital increase is being spent on social overheads than on private production, there is no evidence for the claim that returns to the community are less per dollar of public investment than they are per dollar of private investment.

Another, associated claim of the New Critics is that any benefit in terms of economies of scale that we may have derived from a larger population of consumers, is outweighed by the 'diseconomies': that fetishistic concern with growth at all costs has been at the expense of the environment, creating sprawling urbanization and pollution. While this claim deserves a more sympathetic hearing, it is false to hold immigration and economic growth in themselves responsible for environmental problems. Most environmental problems are immediately caused by particular technologies, for example, inadequate treatment or sewage of industrial waste. To overcome them resources have to be reallocated (away from the subsidizing of unprofitable rural and inefficient secondary industries?) and more expensive technologies introduced — and this should be easier to achieve if other factors, as seems to be the case, are increasing our productivity.

One cannot go into all the economic arguments in detail here. But at worst the arguments of the New Critics are totally misconceived, and at best they are just not proven (e.g. the claim that immigration has reduced rates of productivity increase). Some clear proof one way or the other should soon emerge with the results of the full scale cost-benefit analysis of migration sponsored by the government in 1970, but not yet concluded — though it will be interesting to see how the researchers cost out such intangible but very real benefits as the increase in cultural diversity and the improved general quality of life that immigration has brought us.

Certainly the government is proceeding, and for once perhaps not foolishly or pigheadedly, on the assumption that large scale migration continues to be in Australia's interests. Although the 1971-2 target was cut back from its original 180,000 to 140,000 and maintained at that lower level for 1972-3, it is arguable that this has much less to do with the stated ground of 'economising' than with the simple non-availability of more immigrants from a now relatively affluent Western Europe — who are, reasonably enough, much less attracted to Australia than they used to be. Even from the at best marginally prosperous Britain, migration fell away from 77,000 in 1970 to 48,000 in 1971-2.

Given that there is a continuing case for high annual migrant intake, what is the specific case for a much higher proportion being non-Europeans? Three arguments are put, in ascending order of importance: that it is in Australia's interests abroad, that it is in Australia's interests at home, and that it is simply immoral for us to do otherwise.

That Australia has a racist image abroad can hardly be denied. Many things have contributed to this, not least our treatment of Aborigines, but our immigration policy has always been at the core. While it is true that in countries like India, Malaysia and Indonesia the nature of our policy has probably not penetrated the consciousness of the people at large, it undoubtedly has in the Philippines and Japan, and we are despised accordingly. The statements in the recently published book by the Japanese Ambassador to Australia, Mr Saito, did no more than confirm what every Japanese primary student reads in his text books.

It was indeed primarily for P.R. reasons, as Mr Lynch's pamphlet so conspicuously and disingenuously shows, that the policy was modified to the extent it was in 1966, but it is going to take P.R. gambits on a rather larger scale, not just the current window dressing, if Australia is going to be anything else than a rather lonely and frightened island in twenty years' time.

Second, it cannot be contested that large scale immigration has made our society more complex and less deadeningly boring. There is already here ethnic diversity on a grand scale, with non-British settlers and their children now making up almost one-fifth of the total population. The contributions of migrants — looking at it purely selfishly — to the arts, entertainment, business and whole life style of the place, particularly in the inner city areas, need hardly be laboured.

One finds it impossible to believe that Asians will not make the same kind of contribution, and perhaps an even more exciting one. Undoubtedly there will be a tendency, at least initially, for Asian immigrants — if they come in larger than purely token numbers — to concentrate into compact communities and develop distinctive sub-cultures, just as the Greeks and Italians have done without any serious conflict of loyalties. This is a necessary and inevitable way of easing the sociological and psychological traumas of integration into the larger community.

But how does this square with the prevailing official philosophy of *homogenization*? What of the claim that immediate inconspicuous merger into the larger mass is not only what all Australians want of their immigrants, but all they will stand for, and that this can only be achieved by keeping non-European immigration to a tiny trickle.

Let us deal first with the practicalities, and leave aside for a moment the moral issue. There is no question that Australians have 'stood for', without any trouble at all, the influx of large numbers of people alien in nearly every respect but their skin colour, and for the preservation over time by those people of very many aspects of their own culture. The question is whether skin colour is going to make any difference — and of course it is here that scare-

mongers drag out the American experience with its blacks, and Britain's experience with its West Indian, Pakistani, Indian and African-Asian immigrants.

It would be hard to argue that Australians on the whole, egalitarian 'mateship' myths notwithstanding, are any less latently racist than their white British and American counterparts: any time spent in Papua-New Guinea will soon divest one of residual fantasies in that direction.

It is a fascinating exercise to look at the different forms in which this Australian racism has been expressed over the years in the context of non-white immigration: in the earliest period, with the arrival of the Chinese on the goldfields in the 1850s and later of indentured South Sea island labour in Queensland, the primary impulse was probably economic — the fear of competition from cheap labour. This fear, however illfounded given the power of institutionalized unionism, has continued to be at least one element in working class responses on the issue, right through to the present day. Calwell still publicly uses the phrase 'cheap labour' almost as a synonym for the word 'Asians'.

But however much labour-sympathetic historians might wish to find otherwise, it seems clear that by the 1880's economic fear was inextricably mixed up with, and even submerged by, racial prejudice pure and simple: belief in the innate inferiority of the coloured man. Larger explanations of this phenomenon are not hard to find — perhaps it was a reaction to the fundamental insecurity felt by Australians in an exposed and isolated European outpost in the South Pacific. But whatever the cause, prejudice was very widespread and quite explicit, and was the predominant theme of the 1901 Immigration Act debates, with much attention being devoted, from all parts of the House, to the 'appalling' prospect of racial intermarriage.

However by the 1920s — largely because the spectacular achievements by the Japanese in the first two decades of the century made the doctrine of the inferiority of all coloured races rather hard to sustain — Australian publicists and politicians (if not the populous at large) were explicitly denying that the White Australia policy was based on assumptions of race superiority. Rather it was because of 'differences' between European and Oriental cultures, which militated against their fusion into one harmonious society. It is in this form that the 'homogeneity doctrine' has come down to us to the present day as the sustaining rationale of Australia's immigration policy. It is worth mentioning that in at least one obvious respect, our cohesive homogeneity is a myth. Australia has been a multi-race society since 1788.

How deep does Australian racism lie? Is it such as to make impossible from the outset any but the most token non-White immigration? Recent opinion polls have been encouraging but by no means conclusive. An Age/A.S.R.B. poll in July 1971 showed that a majority of Australians were prepared at least to 'let a few in' of all the coloured races. A follow up one year later found as many as 75% of the sample agreeing that 'coloured migrants are as acceptable as any other migrants'. This high level of professed tolerance was perhaps rather mitigated by majority support in the same survey for

the proposition that 'Immigrants should try to forget their old national customs as quickly as possible' and 'If migrants are unhappy it's mainly their own fault', and a rather marked reluctance (in the earlier survey) to actually have Chinese, Negroes or Japanese as next door neighbours. But the very least that may be said is that all the survey evidence accumulated since the War points to a steady softening of Australian attitudes toward coloured immigrants.

It may be argued that there are special circumstances here that may make non-token coloured immigration really possible. These are: first, the absence — compared with the U.S. — of a long and bitter history of oppression of a large, visible and commensurately hostile coloured minority; and second, the absence — compared with Britain — of large urban-industrial concentrations in comparatively squalid living conditions of poorly educated manual workers. There is an absence, that is, of many of the socio-economic conditions that make racial flare-ups more likely. It is true that many more factors than these were involved in, for example, the British race crises — Enoch Powell's personal contribution not least. But it is worth noting that the worst period is already passed for the first group of immigrants, the West Indians: an admittedly disconcerting illustration of this is the complete assimilation of Jamaican boys into the East End street gangs — they are conspicuous participants, with white youths, in the newer sport of 'Paki-bashing'.

There is no doubt that any large scale non-White immigration programme would have to be handled with some care. A crucial necessity, if not the most obvious one, is the diversion of large scale resources into education, for this reason if no other: that higher tolerance is a universally attested function of higher education. Of course it is the case that many professional people retain crippled moral consciences, just as many tradesmen are splendid exceptions to the other side of the coin. But the general proposition holds true.

What of the immigration policy itself? The A.L.P. policy is sound enough in a negative sense, though it still belabours 'homogeneity' considerations which, as Fred Daly has shown in commenting on the Launceston change, are perfectly capable of racist interpretation. What is now needed is an affirmative commitment to accept far more non-Whites. What form should this commitment take?

Certainly for social as well as economic reasons an 'open door' policy is out of the question. But the usually canvassed alternative of a country by country quota system is not particularly attractive either. Even if the quotas did not discriminate at large between European and non-European countries, as one would hope they would not, the figures for each country would necessarily be quite arbitrary, and give great scope for maladministration at the margins in each case. Any quota system on the basis of countries of origin of settlers already in Australia would of course give rise to the very kind of grotesque imbalance that one most wants to avoid.

It is for these sorts of reasons that the quota system has been abandoned in America in favour of ceiling totals (120,000 per annum for the Americas and 170,000 per annum for the rest of the World) operated in conjunction

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with a preferential system: the first preference being given to those with close relatives, then down through professionals and skilled workers and so on, with seventh and last preference being given to refugees. In 1969, 74,000 Asians and 6,000 Africans were admitted.

The most appropriate starting model for Australia however, is the Canadian system. It is a restricted system, and many Asian applicants undoubtedly are refused in the process. But no one ever talks about a White Canada policy. The reason is simply that colour or race does not enter into the selection criteria at any stage — applicants are chosen solely on the basis of their usefulness to Canada, and non-Europeans take their chances with no more handicaps than their white competitors.

The system works on a points basis. To qualify, an independent applicant (i.e. someone neither sponsored nor nominated) must score at least fifty of the one hundred assessment units available. The cut-off point is in fact flexible, varying with overall domestic economic circumstances. Points are awarded as follows:

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| Education and training | — | up to 20 |
| Personal assessment | — | up to 15 |
| Occupational demand | — | up to 15 |
| Occupational skill | — | up to 10 |
| <i>(10 points for professionals down to 1 for unskilled)</i> | | |
| Age | — | up to 10 |
| <i>(1 point deducted for each year over age 35)</i> | | |
| Arranged employment | — | 10 |
| Language (French or English) | — | up to 10 |
| Relative (able to help) | — | up to 5 |
| Area of destination | — | up to 5 |
| <i>(Varying with demand for particular skill)</i> | | |

It is worth noting that Canada also assists migrants by lending them their fares, repayable at a flat 6% interest. (In a neat piece of reverse discrimination, this loan system does not apply to immigrants from Australia, New Zealand, Israel and South Africa). More than three million immigrants have entered Canada since the end of the Second World War and in recent years one in six were of non-European ethnic origin. Many thousands of Asians (19,000 in 1970), Africans and West Indians have been admitted to Canada (whose population is only twenty million) with no sign whatsoever of racial tension.

The argument so far has been put in purely selfish terms, suggesting that not only will a growing coloured population here contribute in many ways to both our international and domestic interests, but that there is no reason to suppose that a properly handled intake policy should cause insuperable or even severe problems of integration. This is particularly so if immigrants were largely to be composed of the more highly skilled and educated. There is, of course, the argument that this is carrying selfishness too far, and all we are doing thereby is depriving under-developed countries of badly needed skills. But this does not stand up to scrutiny. Many thousands of graduates, particularly in India, are either unemployed or uselessly employed — not because there is no objective long-run need for their skills, but because the capital and resource infrastructure to sustain and utilize them is simply absent. But even if it were present, and one of course hopes it will be before long, the

emigration of these people is surely a matter for themselves and their own governments to work out — not for us to impose, for transparent motives, from outside.

To move away, finally, from these arguments about what is and is not in our interest. The most important argument for coloured immigration transcends these considerations. It is simply this: that whatever the difficulties, even agonies, that may turn out to be involved in turning Australia into a genuinely multi-racial society, we have an acute and overwhelming moral and humanitarian responsibility to do just that.

There are a number of dimensions to this responsibility. One is simply the urgent necessity of doing at least something to relieve the Asian population explosion, though it cannot seriously be argued that even a fantastic absorption effort by Australia could have anything more than a marginal effect in this respect. Populations just cannot be re-distributed over whole continents, except over the course of centuries. But doing a little must always be better than doing nothing.

The more central basis of our responsibility can be put in terms of the writer's conviction that racism, more so than nationalism or imperialism or any other related ideological malefactor, is the single most stifling evil of the contemporary world. The contempt of one ethnic group for another is at the core of a dozen presently raging or bubbling civil and international conflicts — in South East Asia as much as in Southern Africa, in America and Britain as much as in the Middle East. It is difficult to believe that the American Vietnam adventure could have been sustained so long without an overweening conviction of the white man's superiority and the yellow man's role as no more than that of an infinitely destructible pawn in the power game of international politics.

The only way out of this bind is for mankind, and particularly white Western man, to set about establishing those links of communication and understanding which will make this hostility and contempt impossible. And the writer contends, no doubt naively, that the only way this can seriously be achieved is by different races actually living and working in the same cities and the same countries, and ultimately intermarrying and inter-breeding to the extent that — in the long, long-run — the world community will be one made up of people with light brown skins and darkish hair. True this is homogeneity of a kind — but hardly of the dull, mindless, arrogant and irrelevant kind that we are so used to hearing about in this country. The intermingling cultures may surely be expected to feed off and reciprocally stimulate each other, with many if not all the original flavours being retained in the process. Have we not after all been experiencing something of this kind with the immigration of Italians and Greeks, even as they become more and more assimilated into the population at large?

But perhaps it is asking too much for white Australians to swallow their squalid provincial pride and their smug assumptions of racial and cultural superiority, and to set about realising this vision of a truly multi-racial society. □