

# Drawing the Global Colour Line

*White Men's Countries and the Question of  
Racial Equality*

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Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds



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For our children:

Katherine and Jessica

and

John, Anna and Rebecca

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## Introduction

In 1910, in an article published in a New York journal, the *Independent*, called 'The Souls of White Folk', W. E. B. DuBois, the distinguished black American historian and activist, wrote about his perception of a sudden change of consciousness sweeping the world: 'the world, in a sudden emotional conversion, has discovered that it is white, and, by that token, wonderful'. Suddenly, white folks had become 'painfully conscious of their whiteness', 'the paleness of their bodily skins . . . fraught with tremendous and eternal significance'.<sup>1</sup>

At the meeting of the Pan-African Congress, in London, in 1900, DuBois had memorably declared that the problem of the twentieth century was the 'problem of the color line', an observation that he elaborated in the path-breaking collection of essays called *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903. In the best-known essay, first printed in *Atlantic Monthly* as 'Strivings of the Negro People', DuBois famously defined the condition of the African-American in terms of 'his two-ness – an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings'.<sup>2</sup> White America, he insisted, had a black history of injustice, struggle and unmet longing: 'The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self'.<sup>3</sup>

*The Souls of Black Folk* has been described by an American historian, David Blight, as 'an extended meditation on racial prejudice, political leadership, the economic oppression of black labourers in the South, and the development of African American culture both before and after emancipation'.<sup>4</sup> Historians of the United States now rightly recognise

<sup>1</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, 'The Souls of White Folk', *Independent* (18 August 1910) p.339; this essay was re-published in a revised form in W. E. B. DuBois, *Darkwater, Voices from within the Veil* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. DuBois: Biography of a Race 1868–1919* (New York, Henry Holt, 1994) vol.1, pp.279–382.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.281.

<sup>4</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Belknap, 2001), p.251.

this to be a work of key significance in their national history, but DuBois was also, already, keenly aware of the global dimension of the colour line, which he had defined, in 1900, as 'the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea'.<sup>5</sup> By 1910, it was also clear to DuBois that the problem of the colour line was the problem of what he called 'whiteness', which had recently acquired the force of a charismatic religion: 'Wave upon wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time.'<sup>6</sup>

DuBois saw in this tidal wave of whiteness a new, modern, phenomenon. To be sure, colour consciousness had been present in earlier ages, but 'the discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing – a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed'. Whiteness provided a mode of subjective identification that crossed national borders and shaped global politics. 'What is whiteness', DuBois wondered, 'that one should so desire it?' Whiteness, he realised, was fundamentally proprietorial: 'Whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen.'<sup>7</sup>

This book argues, following DuBois, that the assertion of whiteness was born in the apprehension of imminent loss. Seeking a reason for white folks' sudden stridency, DuBois noted that around the world, colonised and coloured peoples were everywhere in revolt: 'Do we sense somnolent writhings in black Africa, or angry groans in India, or triumphant "Banzais" in Japan? "To your tents, O Israel!" these nations are not white. Build warships and heft the "Big Stick".'<sup>8</sup>

It was the United States president, Theodore Roosevelt, who had advocated the diplomacy of speaking softly and carrying a big stick in response to the triumphant Japanese, whose spectacular naval victory over Russia, in 1905, had deeply dismayed white men, but galvanised colonised peoples everywhere, from Africa, to Asia, to the Americas. In a bid to intimidate Japan, Roosevelt had despatched the United States fleet on a tour of the Pacific Ocean. Its rapturous reception by Australians, in Sydney and Melbourne, was reported in a long article in the New York *Independent*, the same journal that would publish 'The Souls of White Folk'. 'It is delightful to us to say', an Australian journalist, W. R. Charlton, told his New York readers, 'whether it be delusion, half-truth or the truth-absolute – that the Americans are our kinsmen, blood of our blood, bone of our bone, and one with us in our ideals of the brotherhood of man.'<sup>9</sup> We can probably assume that DuBois, by then living in

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, *W. E. B. DuBois*, p.283. <sup>6</sup> DuBois, 'The Souls of White Folk', p.339.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p.339. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.340.

<sup>9</sup> W. R. Charlton, 'The Australian Welcome to the Fleet', *Independent* (8 October 1908) p.815.

New York, was one of Charlton's readers. Perhaps he also read reports of the press luncheon in Sydney, where Rear Admiral Sperry had greeted his gratified hosts as a 'white man to white men, and may I add, very white men'.<sup>10</sup>

This book charts the spread of 'whiteness' as a transnational form of racial identification, that was, as DuBois noticed, at once global in its power and personal in its meaning, the basis of geo-political alliances and a subjective sense of self. The emergence of self-styled 'white men's countries' represented whiteness in defensive, but defiant, mode, a response to the rising power of what Charles Pearson, a Liberal politician in the colonial parliament of Victoria, had named, in *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, 'the black and yellow races'.<sup>11</sup> Pearson's prophecy challenged imperial complacency, but as one of his London reviewers noted, Pearson wrote from a different vantage point in the world:

The reader can indeed discern that Mr Pearson's point of view is not London or Paris, but Melbourne. He regards the march of affairs from the Australian point of view, and next to Australia what he seems to see most clearly is the growth of Chinese power and of the native populations of Africa. In this forecast, in fact, Europe loses altogether the precedence it has always enjoyed. It appears here as not only the smallest, but as the least important continent.<sup>12</sup>

In his arresting commentary on changing world forces, Pearson was indeed, to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's phrase, 'provincialising Europe'.<sup>13</sup>

Pearson's apprehension of a postcolonial world in which white men would be 'elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside' by peoples whom they looked down upon as servile, set alarm bells ringing around the globe. In his own alarmist tract, *The Rising Tide of Color*, published nearly two decades later, an American, Lothrop Stoddard, paid tribute to Pearson's book as 'epoch-making' and hailed the 'lusty young Anglo-Saxon communities bordering the Pacific – Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, and our own "coast" as pace-setters in declaring themselves "All White"'. Nor were their policies separate developments. 'Nothing was more striking', Stoddard noted, 'than the instinctive and instantaneous solidarity which binds together Australians and Afrikanders, Californians and Canadians, into a "sacred Union" at the mere whisper of Asiatic immigration'.<sup>14</sup> Stoddard was lobbying for what would become the Johnson Act of 1924, which has usually been

<sup>10</sup> *Age* (27 August 1908).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London, Macmillan, 1893).

<sup>12</sup> *Athenaeum* (4 March 1893).

<sup>13</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color: Against White World Supremacy* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923) p.281.

understood within the framework of US national history, but is better illuminated when placed in the larger frame of the transnational solidarities of which Stoddard himself wrote.

In recent scholarship, 'whiteness studies' have emerged as a productive new field of historical enquiry, but most investigations have conceptualised their subject within a national frame of analysis, identifying local dynamics at work within histories deemed distinctive or even exceptional.<sup>15</sup> Studies that now acknowledge the necessity for a global context still confine their own analyses within a national interpretative frame and that has been especially the case with United States scholarship.<sup>16</sup> But, as DuBois and contemporaries on the other side of the colour line saw clearly, the emergence of the 'new religion' of whiteness was a transnational phenomenon and all the more powerful for that, inspiring in turn the formation of international movements of resistance, such as the pan-African and pan-Asian alliances that threatened to bring about the very challenge to their world dominion that white men feared.<sup>17</sup>

In *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, we trace the transnational circulation of emotions and ideas, people and publications, racial knowledge and technologies that animated white men's countries and their strategies of exclusion, deportation and segregation, in particular, the deployment of those state-based instruments of surveillance, the census, the passport and the literacy test. The project of whiteness was thus a paradoxical politics, at once transnational in its inspiration and identifications but nationalist in its methods and goals. The imagined community of white men was transnational in its reach, but nationalist in its outcomes, bolstering regimes of border protection and national sovereignty. A project that took shape in international conversations about inter-racial encounters increased isolationism. Thus one somewhat dismayed observer was moved to describe the Commonwealth of Australia as a 'Hermit Democracy', cutting itself off from all international intercourse.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> On 'whiteness' see, for example, Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, Verso, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2000). On the influence of external ideas on national formations see, for example, Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Mae N. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Viator, 'Asia Contra Mundum', *Formightly Review* (1 February 1908) p.200.

<sup>18</sup> 'Australian Ideals', *The Times* (5 September 1908), Deakin papers 1540/15/2567 National Library of Australia (NLA).

In drawing the global colour line, immigration restriction became a version of racial segregation on an international scale, as Lothrop Stoddard memorably stated. Not surprisingly, the education or literacy test, first used to disenfranchise black voters in Mississippi in 1890, also became the basis of United States immigration restriction laws, promoted by Anglo-Saxonists such as Henry Cabot Lodge and the members of the Boston-based Immigration Restriction League, legislation which served in turn as a model for Natal and the other British Dominions. The republican origins of the literacy test as an instrument of racial exclusion were significant. In dividing the world into white and not-white it helped render the imperial non-racial status of British subjects increasingly irrelevant and provided a direct challenge to the imperial assertion that the Empire recognised no distinction on the basis of colour or race, that all subjects were alike subjects of the Crown. This book is also, then, about the British betrayal of the idea of imperial citizenship.

Histories of immigration policy, like studies of whiteness, have usually been told as self-contained national stories, their dynamics located in distinctive local reactions against particular groups of foreign immigrants – whether Chinese, Indian, Islanders, Japanese, Jews or southern Europeans. Some historical studies have, to be sure, identified parallel developments in Australasia, British Columbia and New Zealand and on the west coast of the United States.<sup>19</sup> Usually, however, their stories have remained parallel, rather than dynamically inter-connected and thus mutually formative. What most histories have tended to miss is what DuBois could see clearly, that is, the significance of racial identifications to the constitution of modern political subjectivities and ways of being in the world, in a process that shaped white men's sense of collective belonging to a larger community, joined together by what Theodore Roosevelt always liked to call 'fellow feeling'.<sup>20</sup>

In his influential book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defined nations as 'imagined communities' in the sense that they were composed of individuals who, though they might never meet face to face, came to identify with their compatriots and believed themselves to hold certain values, myths and outlooks in common. At the core of this process of identification was the cultural and historical imagination, its key

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Charles Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836–1888* (Canberra, ANU Press, 1974); Robert A. Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Coloured Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies 1830–1910* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1976); Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850–1901* (Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> See Theodore Roosevelt, 'Fellow Feeling as a Political Factor', in Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (London, Grant Richards, 1902) pp.71–87.

instruments the novel and newspaper. Anderson stressed the affective, as well as the imaginary, dimension of national identification, which he imagined, significantly, as 'fraternal'.<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, one outcome of Anderson's argument has been to naturalise the nation as *the* imagined community of modern times, an effect that has obscured the ascendancy of transnational racial identifications and their potency in shaping both personal identity and global politics. This book seeks to elucidate the dynamics and effects of a transnational project that sought, in effect, dominance over four continents, an ambition that led one commentator to warn that the new solidarity of white men would drive Chinese and Indians into an unprecedented pan-Asiatic alliance, led by Japan, that would ultimately see the eclipse of Western civilisation.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of the 'white man's country' emerged in the context of nineteenth-century imperialisms and the great modern migrations that saw some 50 million Chinese, the same number of Europeans and about 30 million Indians migrate to new homes around the world. A large proportion of these voyagers went to South Africa, the Americas and Australasia, to lands taken by force from their Indigenous inhabitants, who were systematically displaced or destroyed. Migration rested on and required Aboriginal dispossession.

White men claimed a special right to lands in the 'temperate zone', claims made against their Indigenous inhabitants and all those peoples they would designate as 'not-white', including Afghans, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Syrians and Pacific Islanders. Though recently established, white men's countries sought legitimacy through locating themselves in the long tradition of Anglo-Saxon race history that dated back to the mythic glories of Hengist and Horsa. They shared an English-speaking culture and newly ascendant democratic politics, priding themselves, as Anglo-Saxons, on a distinctive capacity, indeed a genius, for self-government. It was their commitment to democratic equality that made racial homogeneity seem imperative. In the tradition of J. S. Mill, they argued that democracy could only survive in the absence of distinctions of caste and colour.

White men's countries rested on the premise that multiracial democracy was an impossibility: this was the key history lesson learnt from the great tragedy of Radical Reconstruction in the United States, propounded by numerous writers including the British Liberal politician and historian, James Bryce, whose *American Commonwealth* was taken up as

<sup>21</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (revised edition, London, Verso, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Viator, 'Asia Contra Mundum', p.200.

a 'Bible' by white nation-builders in Australia and South Africa.<sup>23</sup> Bryce also wrote about the countries of Latin America, which were ineligible for membership of the white men's club: their Spanish or Portuguese ancestry, their mixed-coloured populations and political instability were regarded as regrettable, but related, disqualifications, regardless of their own aspirations.

White men's countries emerged in the radical challenge posed by democracy and trade unionism to hereditary aristocratic privilege. This was an age when 'glorious manhood asserts its elevation', in the words of New South Wales republican poet, Daniel Deniehy, when pride of manhood found expression in pride of race to enshrine the white man as the model democrat. In the New World encounters of diverse peoples, the masculine democracies of North America and Australasia defined their identity and rights in racial terms: the right of Anglo-Saxons to self-government and the commitment of white workers to high wages and conditions, against those they saw as undermining their new-found status, whether they be aristocrats or 'coolies'. In their social and political experiments in equality – and with 'state socialism' in Australasia – they were utopian in their modernist vision.

When glorious manhood asserted its elevation, white men monopolised the status of manhood itself. Coolies, Islanders, Asiatics and Blacks were cast as not simply deficient as workers, colonists and citizens, but also as men. They were docile, servile, dependent, unfree. Hence, the struggles of coloured and colonised men to achieve recognition, or restitution, of their manhood as well as national independence. For example, Indian nationalists, such as Lajpat Rai, frequently charged that British rule was 'sapping our manhood . . . polluting the very foundations of our manhood', while DuBois told the Universal Races Congress, in 1911, that 'the present Negro problem of America' was 'whether at last the Negro will gain full recognition as a man'.<sup>24</sup>

Chinese and Japanese campaigns for an end to racial discrimination were, on the other hand, more likely to invoke the equality of nations enshrined in international law. When Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, the authors of *The Chinese Question in Australia*, cited the 'illustrious Vattel' and other authorities on the equality of

<sup>23</sup> James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York, Macmillan, 1888).

<sup>24</sup> *Nationalities and Subject Races Conference Report* (London, King and Son, 1910) pp.27–8; W. E. B. DuBois, 'The Negro Race in the United States of America', in G. Spiller (ed.), *Inter-Racial Problems* (London, King and Son, 1911) p.364. See also Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1995); Radhika Mongia, 'Gender and the Historiography of Gandhian Satyagraha in South Africa', *Gender and History* (vol.18, 1, April 2006).

sovereign nations and their obligations of reciprocity under international law, local Australian democrats responded by insisting on their sovereign right to self-government, to say who could or couldn't join their political community.<sup>25</sup> Against the sovereignty of nations, or emperors, white men invoked the status of the elevated sovereign masculine subject.<sup>26</sup> International treaties, guaranteeing freedom of movement, were attacked precisely for detracting from the sovereignty of autonomous self-governing men.

Immigration restriction became the quintessential expression of the masculine sovereignty of 'self-governing communities', a popular formulation that worked to collapse the distinction between independent republics and British colonies, thereby recasting the meaning of sovereignty itself. 'It should be stated', the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* advised its readers, 'that the six separate Australian colonies, though nominally under British rule, are practically, each of them, separate republics, electing their own legislatures by universal suffrage, levying and expending their own revenues, and each one of them separately making their own laws'. In aristocratic societies, such as China, treaties might be maintained against popular wishes, advised the editor, but not so in Australia or America, where 'the power of the people' was supreme.<sup>27</sup>

In Australia, Alfred Deakin constantly intoned the mantra of Victorian and later, Australian self-government against Colonial Office interference and presumption. In 1908, he provocatively praised Theodore Roosevelt's leadership in discharging his responsibilities 'to the lasting benefit of your fellow citizens of the United States and of all self-governing people, especially this new Commonwealth of Australia', the national name chosen precisely for its American republican resonances.<sup>28</sup> The figure of the 'white man', in whose name white men's countries were forged, was produced in a convergence of imperial and republican discourse that found political expression in the late nineteenth century in talk of an Anglo-American alliance. Previous studies have charted racial discourse across the British Empire or drawn attention to the links between the anti-Chinese policies of California and the Australian colonies, but few have analysed the inter-relationship of British and American racial regimes in

<sup>25</sup> Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, *The Chinese Question in Australia 1878-79* (Melbourne, F. F. Bailliere, 1879) p.28.

<sup>26</sup> See James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2004) p.103.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin* (10 April, 29 July 1878).

<sup>28</sup> Deakin to Roosevelt, Deakin papers, NLA, MS 1540/15/3909. For the American associations of 'Commonwealth', see Marilyn Lake "The Brightness of Eyes and Quiet Assurance Which Seem to Say American", Alfred Deakin's Identification with Republican Manhood', *Australian Historical Studies*, 129 (April 2007).

the same analytical frame.<sup>29</sup> Yet, crucially, the idea of the 'white man's country' crossed and collapsed the imperial/republican divide, drawing on the discursive resources of both traditions to enshrine the dichotomy of white and not-white. The British Empire drew a distinction between ruling and ruled races; republican ideology drew a distinction between races fit and not fit for self-government. United States naturalisation law rested on the dichotomy of white and not-white.

In the figure of the white man, the imperialist became a democrat and the democrat an imperialist. The Australian prime minister, Alfred Deakin, commended the statement of the New Zealand prime minister, Richard Seddon, about the British Empire:

though united in the whole, [the Empire] is, nevertheless, divided broadly in to two parts, one occupied wholly or mainly by a white ruling race, the other principally occupied by coloured races who are ruled. Australia and New Zealand are determined to keep their place in the first class.<sup>30</sup>

When writing about the necessity of American rule in the Philippines in *The Strenuous Life*, Theodore Roosevelt pointed to the composition of the population: 'half-caste and native Christians, warlike Moslems, and wild pagans. Many of their people are utterly unfit for self-government, and show no signs of becoming fit. Others may in time become fit, but at present can only take part in self-government under a wise supervision, at once firm and beneficent.'<sup>31</sup>

One indicator of the global ascendancy of the politics of whiteness was its ability to recast the previous multiplicity of nations, races and religions – Aryan, Caucasian, Chinese, Hindus, Kanakas, Islanders, Malays, Blacks, Lascars, Moslems, Japanese – in binary terms as 'white' or 'not-white'. English-speaking countries were pace-setters in this regard. Thus, in 1902, the French government wrote to the British Foreign Office to enquire whether the Japanese should be categorised as white or not-white.<sup>32</sup> Japan considered their categorisation as not-white a grievous injury: 'The Japanese belong to an Empire whose standard of civilization is so much higher than that of Kanakas, Negroes, Pacific Islanders, Indians or other Eastern peoples, that to refer to them in the same terms cannot but be regarded in the light of a reproach, which is hardly warranted by the fact of the shade of the national complexion', wrote the

<sup>29</sup> For a recent exception see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> *Morning Post* (28 May 1906), in J. A. LaNauze (ed.), *Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post 1900-1910* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1968).

<sup>31</sup> Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, p.9.

<sup>32</sup> Foreign Office to Colonial Office, Enclosure, M. Cambon to Lansdowne, 24 September 1902. CO 885/8/1.

Japanese consul in Sydney to the Australian government in 1901.<sup>33</sup> Again, as DuBois noted, the effect of the dichotomy of white and not-white was to say that not-white was 'nothing'.<sup>34</sup>

Recent postcolonial scholarship has established the importance of viewing metropolitan and colonial formations within the same analytical frame. In our study, the binary of metropole and colony – like Europe itself – loses its analytical primacy, as we trace the circulation of knowledges and the production of identities in formative encounters in New World communities bordering the Indian and Pacific oceans, in relations between Asian powers and white men's governments, between Indian and South African imperial subjects, in Durban and London, between an American philosopher and an Australian political leader in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, between republican citizens and British colonists in Vancouver, Seattle and Washington. Our book explores the influence of key thinkers and political leaders, such as Charles Pearson, James Bryce, Lowe Kong Meng, Theodore Roosevelt, W. E. B. DuBois, M. K. Gandhi, Tokutomi Soho, W. M. Hughes and Jan Smuts. We look at the discursive frameworks that shaped race thinking and justified racial exclusion, as well as the diverse ways in which the peoples thus excluded argued the injustice of what one Chinese diplomat at the Universal Races Congress in 1911 called the 'White Policy'.

White racism was attacked on different grounds, from different vantage points, with critics drawing on different discursive resources. They variously quoted international law, cited the equality of imperial subjects, the principle of racial equality, the rights of man(hood) and the idea of non-discrimination. They organised international conferences, such as the Universal Races Congress, formed pan-African and pan-Asian movements and called for international covenants on racial equality and human rights. Importantly, international campaigns for racial equality and human rights often began as a response to the barriers to mobility and other racial discriminations enacted by New World democracies in the nineteenth century. In charting these demands our book suggests a new genealogy of human rights. It also points to the importance of the diasporic experience of Chinese and Indian colonists, patriots in exile such as Gandhi and Sun Yat Sen, in shaping nationalist agendas.

Nineteenth-century commentators were preoccupied with the implications and consequences of the unprecedented encounters of diverse peoples, made possible by new steam-powered transport technologies that,

<sup>33</sup> Eitaki to Prime Minister Edmund Barton, 3 May 1901, CO 418/10, UK National Archives.

<sup>34</sup> DuBois, 'The Souls of White Folk', p.339.

in James Bryce's words, had the effect of 'making the world small'.<sup>35</sup> In his influential Romanes lecture, published in 1902, Bryce argued that the far closer and more widespread contact of peoples in modern times, 'in particular of the more advanced and civilized races with the more backward', was so fraught with danger 'that it may be deemed to mark a crisis in the history of the world, which will profoundly affect the destiny of mankind'.<sup>36</sup> Writing from the other side of the colour line, DuBois shared this sense of urgency. In 1910, he joined other members of the newly established National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to found a magazine they named *Crisis*. 'It takes its name', declared the first editorial, 'from the fact that it is a critical time in the history of the advancement of man.'<sup>37</sup> This book explains that sense of historical crisis and the political struggles that defined, or attempted to erase, the global colour line.

One outcome of the political mobilisation of white men was the increasing dissension within the British Empire between self-governing white Dominions and the imperial subjects of India, a conflict that ultimately forced British political leaders, threatened by the prospect of the United States assuming leadership of a new white men's alliance, to 'come out', as it were, as 'white'. By 1919, at the Paris Peace conference, the leaders of the British delegation, the aristocratic A. J. Balfour and Lord Robert Cecil, followed their fellow white men – the alliance of the United States, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada – in defeating Japan's bid to have a racial equality clause included in the Covenant of the League of Nations. In support of their position, Balfour declared that he did not believe in the eighteenth-century proposition that 'all men are created equal': 'He believed it was true in a certain sense that all men of a particular nation were created equal, but not that a man in Central Africa was created equal to a European.'<sup>38</sup>

Following the Second World War, in which Japan vanquished the British fortress at Singapore and sent bombing raids over Hawaii and Australia, the conferences called to establish the United Nations and draw up a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, chose to frame their conception of human rights, not in terms of the equality of nations or races, as Japan had proposed twenty years earlier, but in the French and

<sup>35</sup> James Bryce, 'The Relations of History and Geography', *Contemporary Review* (Jan-Jun 1886) p.442.

<sup>36</sup> James Bryce, *The Relations of the Advanced and the Backward Races of Mankind*, Romanes lectures (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902) pp.6–7.

<sup>37</sup> Editorial, 'The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races', *Crisis* (vol.1, 1910).

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, cited in David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007) p.276.

American traditions of the rights of individuals and the principle of non-discrimination, enunciated in 1929 by the Institut de Droit International. Still, two decades would pass before the erstwhile white men's countries moved, in response to concerted domestic and international pressure, to abolish racially discriminatory immigration policies and outlaw racial segregation within their borders. As the recent experience of asylum seekers and refugees attests, this process is not yet complete.

Old fears now return in new forms. James Bryce's anxiety about the 'world made small', about the consequences of mobility and the unprecedented encounters of different peoples, re-awakens. The United States plans to build a fence along its Mexican border, Australia imprisons asylum seekers on offshore islands and riots engulf French cities that are home to thousands of Muslim immigrants from Africa. As Europe is drawn into the New World so multiculturalism loses its appeal in countries with immigrant minorities; everywhere there is renewed talk about national values, social cohesion and the necessity of border protection. In Iraq, the United States, Britain and Australia fight together in a 'coalition of the willing' that recapitulates the Anglo-Saxon solidarity of earlier times with devastating consequences. This book charts the emergence of the transnational community of white men in the globalised world of the late nineteenth century.

## *Part 1*

### Modern mobilities

### Inauguration

In 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was inaugurated in an act of racial expulsion when the first parliament legislated to expel several thousand Pacific Islanders – or ‘Kanakas’ – who had been brought to labour in the sugar cane fields of north Queensland during the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Further legislation – the Immigration Restriction Act – was passed to ensure that other ‘non-whites’ would be prevented from coming to settle in Australia any time in the future. ‘The two things go hand in hand’, advised the Liberal Attorney General and future Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. They were ‘the necessary complement of a single policy – the policy of securing a “White Australia”’.<sup>2</sup>

When the first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, rose to speak in support of the Immigration Restriction Bill, he held in his hand a copy of *National Life and Character: A Forecast* by Charles Pearson – ‘one of the most intellectual statesmen who ever lived in this country’ – from which he quoted Pearson’s now famous warning that ‘The day will come’ when the European observer will wake to find the black and yellow races no longer under tutelage, but forming independent governments, in control of their own trade and industry, invited to international conferences and welcomed as allies by the civilised world.<sup>3</sup> When that day came, Pearson

<sup>1</sup> On Pacific Islander indentured labour in Australia, see Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian – Pacific Indentured Labor Trade* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Deakin, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (12 September 1901) p.4806; on the White Australia policy see Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy*, first edition (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1923; reprinted New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1968); A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896–1923* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1964); Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788–1993* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Pearson, quoted by Edmund Barton, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (7 August 1901) p.3503.

had suggested, the white man's 'pride of place' in the world would be 'humiliated'.<sup>4</sup>

Pearson's unsettling prediction had become a talking point in political circles around the world, though the author didn't live to see his book's impact, succumbing to a chest infection, in London, in 1894. In the face of changing world forces, Pearson advocated stoic, manly resignation, but he thought it important that white men's countries protect themselves and thus help defend the higher civilisation.<sup>5</sup> The new Commonwealth of Australia resolved, in the words of Prime Minister Barton, 'to make a legislative declaration of our racial identity'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Australians drew a colour line around their continent and declared whiteness to be at the very heart of their national identity.

In response to Pearson's warnings that white men would wake to find themselves 'elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside', Australian political leaders framed a constitution and passed legislation to secure the new nation-state as 'a white man's country'. In fashioning a White Australia in the South Pacific, close to the heavily populated countries of South East Asia, political leaders were supremely conscious of the global context. Their policies reflected and would in turn shape new racial solidarities across the world.

Australians learnt from history, as they read it, and in nailing their colours to the mast, they embarked on a social experiment that placed them, so they thought, at the cutting edge of modern history. Across the Pacific, sympathetic Americans urged their fellow countrymen to learn from the Australian example. The Secretary of the Immigration Restriction League, Prescott Hall, obsessive in his advocacy of a literacy test, wrote to the Australian Prime Minister within a month of the passage of the new Commonwealth's Immigration Restriction Act to obtain copies of the Australian legislation that incorporated, as he noted, a 'writing test'. Soon after, a special issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* on the issue of immigration restriction included an article by Professor Frank Parsons, on 'Australasian Methods of Dealing with Immigration'.<sup>7</sup>

### American history lessons

Americans saw the Australians as exemplars in enacting progressive reforms. Australians in turn considered that American history provided

<sup>4</sup> Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London, Macmillan, 1893) p.85.

<sup>5</sup> Pearson, *National Life and Character*, p.16.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Barton, untitled speech on federation, Barton papers MS 5/977, NLA.

<sup>7</sup> Immigration Restriction League papers, Houghton Library, Ms Am 2245(1111).

crucial lessons about past mistakes. In congratulating the authors of the Australian Constitution, among whom he and Barton had been to the fore, Attorney General Deakin pointed to the significance of section 51 in equipping the new Commonwealth of Australia to deal with the 'race difficulty' in its many guises:

Our Constitution marks a distinct advance upon and difference from that of the United States, in that it contains within itself the amplest powers to deal with this difficulty in all its aspects. It is not merely a question of invasion from the exterior. It may be a question of difficulties within our borders, already created, or a question of possible contamination of another kind. I doubt if there can be found in the list of powers with which this Parliament, on behalf of the people, is endowed – powers of legislation – a cluster more important and more far reaching in their prospect than the provisions contained in sub-sections (26) to (30) of section 51, in which the bold outline of the authority of the people of Australia for their self-protection is laid down.<sup>8</sup>

In their commentary on Section 51, constitutional authorities John Quick and Robert Garran noted that whereas American legislators dealing with the 'race problem' had to reckon with the 'special inhibitions' of the 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments, Australian legislators had armed themselves with the constitutional power to make 'special laws' for their self-protection.<sup>9</sup>

Quick and Garran cited the pre-eminent United States theorist of the nation-state, J. W. Burgess, who, as we have seen, specified the obligation of 'self-preservation' and 'ethnic homogeneity' in a long section on 'The Nation' in his 1890 textbook *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law*. Burgess had written that national unity was the determining force in the development of the modern nation-states: 'The prime policy, therefore, of each of these states should be to attain proper physical boundaries and to render its population ethnically homogeneous . . . it is the highest duty of the state to preserve, strengthen and develop its national character.'<sup>10</sup>

In explaining the White Australia policy to parliament in 1901, Attorney General Deakin echoed these sentiments: 'We here find ourselves touching the profoundest instinct of individual or nation – the instinct of self-preservation – for it is nothing less than the national manhood, the

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Deakin, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (12 September 1901) p.4804.

<sup>9</sup> John Quick and Robert Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* (1901; Reprinted, Sydney, Legal Books, 1976) p.623; see also Marilyn Lake, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Studies* 34, 122 (October 2003).

<sup>10</sup> John W. Burgess, *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law: vol. 1 Sovereignty and Liberty* (New York, Ginn and Company, 1890) p.42.

national character and the national future that are at stake.<sup>11</sup> Deakin's speech, like Pearson's book, drew on the prevalent discourse on self-preservation as the basic instinct of nations and, like Pearson, he linked the future of the nation to the condition of its manhood. White Australia would secure the status of white manhood.

Burgess and his younger colleague at Columbia University, William Dunning, rested their arguments, as we have seen, about the imperative of racial homogeneity on the lessons of their national past, the most important of which was that the experiment in multi-racial democracy ushered in by Radical Reconstruction had been a disastrous mistake. Following James Bryce, Dunning wrote that the 'anarchy of Negro rule' represented the supreme historical example of 'reckless statecraft'.<sup>12</sup>

Deakin also pointed to American history lessons when he warned the first federal parliament:

We should be false to the lessons taught us in the great republic of the west; we should be false to the never-to-be-forgotten teachings from the experience of the United States, of difficulties only partially conquered by the blood of their best and bravest; we should be absolutely blind to and unpardonably neglectful of our obligations, if we fail to lay those lessons to heart.<sup>13</sup>

Bryce's *American Commonwealth* and his article on 'The Negro problem' had played a crucial role in imparting those 'lessons' to Australia's federal fathers as they went about their business of nation-building during the decade of the 1890s.

Deakin first met Bryce in 1887, when he attended the first Colonial Conference in London, and impressed the English political establishment with his erudition, good looks and remarkable oratorical gifts. As with the young Theodore Roosevelt, who was visiting London in the same year, Deakin found himself courted by the aristocracy, swamped with invitations to city clubs and country houses and patronised by leading public men and women. There is no record that the two visitors met, but their responses to British patronage were similar, though Deakin, still the colonial, was even more determinedly unimpressed by British pomp and pretension. He denounced the excess and superficiality of London life and pointedly turned down the offer of a knighthood. He also famously

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Deakin, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (12 September 1901) p.4804.

<sup>12</sup> William Dunning, *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1897), quoted in Eric Newby, *Jim Crow's Defence: Anti-Negro Thought in America 1900-1930* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1965) p.66.

<sup>13</sup> Alfred Deakin, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (12 September 1901) p.4806; for other references to American experience by members of parliament, see H. B. Higgins, *Ibid.* p.4659; Sir William McMillan, *Ibid.* p.4627; King O'Malley, *Ibid.* p.4638; H. B. Higgins, *Ibid.* p.6815.

spoke up to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, in defence of Australian interests in the Pacific. The memory of imperial condescension and Colonial Office scorn stayed with Deakin and shaped his determination to achieve Australian independence through federation. In union lay power. On matters touching self-government there had to be absolute 'unity and unanimity' he told the Victorian parliament on his return to Australia in July 1887.<sup>14</sup>

When the first Australian constitutional conference met in Melbourne, in 1890, to consider a draft federal constitution, Deakin was to the fore in recommending Bryce's *American Commonwealth* as a key source of advice and was pleased to report to Bryce that his book had been of the 'greatest possible service'. He was certain it would prove 'equally valuable' at the Constitutional Convention planned for Sydney in the following year:

When the Convention comes I have little doubt but that your volumes will form one of its chief text books & may thus contribute to a degree unsuspected by yourself to the shaping of what may prove to be the last new constitution of any great Anglo-Saxon people.<sup>15</sup>

Deakin suggested to Bryce that he write a sequel about Australia:

I trust that you will regard this proposition as suggested by a desire that my race should be as fitly and as fully studied in the Pacific as in the Atlantic & from a conviction that if you would undertake such a task it would be to the great gain of our young self-governing community.<sup>16</sup>

Deakin wrote of 'my race'. In working to build the new Commonwealth of Australia, he saw his labours as contributing not just to Australian nation-building, but to the greater glory of the larger community of Anglo-Saxon peoples, which, importantly, included the United States.

The Australians liked to send records of their constitutional deliberations to American friends as they followed 'so largely the precedent of the United States'.<sup>17</sup> Deakin sent a copy of the 1890 conference proceedings to Josiah Royce at Harvard, which also served as a letter of introduction to Andrew Inglis Clark, Tasmanian Attorney-General and co-author of the first draft of the Australian constitution. Australian-born Clark was, according to Deakin in his letter of recommendation, 'more American in tastes and feelings than many of your own citizens whom I have met'.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Deakin, *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly (6 July 1887).

<sup>15</sup> Deakin to Bryce, 27 February 1890, Bryce papers, 56, folio 91, Bodleian Library.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>17</sup> Deakin to Royce, 14 January 1898, Deakin papers 1540/1/411.

<sup>18</sup> Deakin to Royce, 8 May 1890, Royce papers, incoming correspondence, box I, HUG 1755-3-3, Harvard Archives; on A. I. Clark's admiration for the United States see Richard Ely (ed.) *A Living Force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the Ideal of Commonwealth* for (Hobart, Tasmanian Historical Studies Centre, 2001).

He formed a friendship with Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. whom Roosevelt would appoint to the United States Supreme Court in 1902. Clark's son, Conway, who later studied architecture in Boston, took up lodgings in Irvine Street, Cambridge, right next door to Royce.

Deakin also struck acquaintances as American in his tastes and feelings. Royce had described him memorably as 'an admirer of America and of good scenery, a lover of life, of metaphysics and of power'.<sup>19</sup> A journalist from the United States who was visiting Melbourne at the time of the 1890 conference was struck by Deakin's enthusiasm for her country's political traditions. Comparing his oratory with that of the great Charles Sumner and Wendell Phillips, she wrote to him, enclosing a report she had written for an American journal, confessing that it was with 'the memories of these men's lives and truth-charged burning words, fresh in mind that I write to say how great the delight I felt in hearing the Constitution and institutions of my country set before this conference of Australasia in the very hour of the conception of the Nation that is to be'.<sup>20</sup> Deakin was less pleased with her suggestion that in his dark good looks he resembled Phillip II of Spain. As an avowed Anglo-Saxonist, he would not have liked to have been mistaken for a swarthy Mediterranean type.

The Constitutional Convention that followed the Melbourne conference met in Sydney in 1891. Deakin again sent a copy of the proceedings to Royce and confessed: 'While in Sydney attending the Convention I ran up to the Blue Mountains and took my Easter by myself in the same hotel and in the same haunts as those in which we passed hours that were among the pleasantest I have ever spent'.<sup>21</sup> The delegate from New South Wales, Edmund Barton, wrote to Bryce in England, confirming that *The American Commonwealth* was in 'great vogue' among Australian politicians: 'I fancy the Convention adopted the title 'Commonwealth' from your pages'.<sup>22</sup> The choice of the name Commonwealth for the Australian nation-state was significant for its American republican resonances. Royce's history of California had been written for the 'American Commonwealth' series and he now lived in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Bryce's survey of United States institutions in *The American Commonwealth* provided extensive information on the technicalities of building a federal state and judiciary and the distribution of state and federal

<sup>19</sup> *Scribner's Magazine*, 1X, no.1 (January 1891) p.78.

<sup>20</sup> Gustafson to Deakin, 6 March 1890, Deakin papers, 1540/11/4.

<sup>21</sup> Deakin to Royce, 8 July 1891, Royce papers, incoming correspondence, box 1, HUG 1755-3-3, Harvard Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Barton to Bryce, 18 June 1891, Bryce papers, folio 27, Bodleian Library.

powers. But it also alerted Australians to the political implications of the 'Negro problem', which had become, Bryce wrote, 'the capital question in national as well as state politics'. Echoing Bryce in the first Australian parliament, H. B. Higgins, the Liberal member for North Melbourne, friend of labour and future president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, said of the race question: 'If Australia has any national question this is it'.<sup>23</sup> The decade of Australia's constitutional conventions – the federal decade of the 1890s – was also the period when the number of lynchings in the United States reached their peak. That country was experiencing 'the greatest racial trouble ever known in the history of the world', Higgins told the parliament. Australians should 'take warning and guard ourselves against similar complications'.<sup>24</sup>

### Barring all persons belonging to any coloured race

The Australian Constitutional Convention debate was framed by the motion 'that in order to enlarge the powers of self-government of the people of Australia, it is desirable to create a Federal Government'. Australian politicians never lost an opportunity to intone the mantra of their 'self-government'. It both confirmed their special status as white men in a multi-racial Empire and expressed their masculine will to sovereignty, even as they continued to subject themselves to the sovereign British Queen. From the mid-nineteenth century, Australian insistence on the rights of self-governing communities was usually most emphatic when the issue in question was race. In exercising their powers of self-government to legislate their racial identity, Australians asserted their sovereign rights in the domain that mattered most.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1880s, colonial leaders had objected to the expectation that they adhere to the terms of the 1860 Peking Convention, which guaranteed reciprocal rights of free movement between the British and Chinese Empires, when they had not been party or signatories to the international agreement. They insisted on acknowledgment of their rights as self-governing communities and their objections were duly noted. When

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in John Rickard, *H. B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984) p.131.

<sup>24</sup> H. B. Higgins, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (6 September 1901) p.4659.

<sup>25</sup> Australia remained constitutionally dependent on Britain and sovereignty remained formally with the monarch, but with effective sovereignty in matters of race, the quest for political independence lost its urgency. Not until 1926, with the Balfour Declaration, did Australia gain full power over foreign relations and the implementation of treaties. In 1931, the Statute of Westminster acknowledged the full statutory independence of the Dominions, but Australia didn't sign until 1942.

Britain negotiated a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Japan in 1894, that guaranteed 'full liberty to enter, travel or reside in any part of [the] Dominions and possessions of the other contracting party', article 19 specifically stated that the treaty did not apply to British self-governing Dominions, unless they chose to separately adhere to it within two years. In 1896, the Australian Premiers considered the matter and resolved not to sign the treaty, although Queensland, thinking that it would be to its commercial advantage, later became a contractual party, with a protocol that insisted that the terms of the treaty would not affect Queensland laws relating to immigration.

The other colonies decided not just to refuse the treaty, but to legislate against Japanese migrants. Australian attitudes towards Japan became more fearful, with the state's rise as a military and naval power and decisive defeat of China in 1895. Faced with the arrival in Australia of small numbers of Japanese, Malays, Sikhs, East Indian labourers and Pacific Islanders during the 1890s, especially in the north of the continent, colonial governments resolved to extend the earlier ban on Chinese to people of 'any coloured race' – or in the words of the New South Wales legislation of 1896 – 'all persons belonging to any coloured race inhabiting the Continent of Asia or the Continent of Africa, or any island adjacent thereto, or any island in the Pacific Ocean or Indian Ocean' – regardless of their status as British subjects or allies. The new legislation caused embarrassment to the British government but, as we have seen, produced great interest in Natal, whose parliament initially introduced legislation on the New South Wales model.

The Australian legislation of 1896, in dividing the world's peoples between white and not-white, regardless of their standing as powers or status as British subjects, marked a radical new departure in international relations. But the move was a logical development of the binary thinking that governed British imperial rule – the division between Crown colonies and self-governing Dominions or between 'advanced' and 'backward' races – and United States naturalisation law, that divided the world's peoples into white and not-white. White Australia was produced in a convergence of these binary classification systems with the result that a vast range of diverse nationalities, ethnicities and religious groups – Afghans, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Moslems, Negroes, Indians, Malays and Pacific Islanders – were lumped together in the ever-expanding category of 'not-white'. The ideal of a white man's country expressed this fusion of imperial and republican traditions of racial rule. The figure of the white man provided the common identity that underpinned Anglo-American rapprochement at the end of the nineteenth century.

The colonial legislation of 1896 encoded for the first time the division of the world into white and not-white. Because of the discrimination against Britain's new ally, Japan, and against British subjects such as Indians, the New South Wales legislation was reserved by the Governor. The Japanese government lobbied the British government incessantly for the 'abandonment of the language which classed them with others to whom they bore no real similarity and inflicted upon the nation an insult which was not deserved'. Japanese Minister Takaaki Kato, a distinguished graduate in law from Tokyo University and future Foreign Minister, suggested that the Colonial Office should persuade the Australians to adopt the so-called Natal formula, because educated Japanese could pass a literacy test, and in any case would not wish to emigrate. The same outcome 'would even more certainly be obtained with regard to other Asiatic countries where general education is less advanced than in Japan'.<sup>26</sup>

Minister Kato protested strongly to the Foreign Office against the slur on his nation, which was being relegated to the same category as the people of China, whom they had recently subjected to an ignominious defeat. Japan, too, had a deep investment in racial hierarchy, their diplomats regularly demanding recognition of their superiority to other Asian peoples. 'The point which had caused a painful feeling in Japan', he wrote, 'was not that the operation of the prohibition would be such as to exclude a certain number of Japanese from immigrating into Australasia, but that Japan would be spoken of in formal documents, such as the Colonial Acts, as if the Japanese were on the same level of morality and civilization as Chinese or other less advanced populations of Asia'.<sup>27</sup>

Immigration restriction was listed, as we have seen, as one of the main items on the agenda for the meeting of colonial premiers in London, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897. It was Joseph Chamberlain's task, as Colonial Secretary, to find a compromise between the imperial principle of the equal treatment of all British subjects and Treaty obligations on the one hand, and the determination of the self-governing colonies to implement race-based immigration restriction to preserve their national and racial character on the other. His trump card was the 'Natal formula' – the use of a literacy or education test – as the perfect method to implement racial discrimination without appearing to do so. And, crucially, he was assured that this strategy was supported by Japanese Minister Kato.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 7 October 1897, CO 418/10/145.

<sup>27</sup> Colonial Office to Australian Governors, 20 October 1897, CO 418/10/145.

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 7 October 1897; Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 4 January 1902, CO 418/10/145.

Chamberlain's victory had, however, an unforeseen consequence. As noted in Chapter 5, the final Natal legislation was based on the American Act of 1896, which had subsequently been vetoed by President Grover Cleveland. Natal had looked to the example of the 'great Republic of America', which claimed 'an absolute right... to place a restriction on the introduction of immigration into their country of persons who are regarded by the community as undesirable immigrants'.<sup>29</sup> Americans had pioneered the use of an education or literacy test as an instrument of racial exclusion, notably in Mississippi, in 1890. Crucially, the republic had no use for the imperial category of 'British subject'.

In promoting a literacy test as an instrument to effect racial exclusion in the colonies, Chamberlain thus helped dismantle that which he sought to uphold: the traditions of the Empire and the special status of the British subject. Paradoxically, the implementation of a literacy test framed to avoid all reference to race helped consolidate the new binary divide between the 'white' and 'not-white' races, a purpose made explicit in Australian parliamentary debate and the legislation passed to enact White Australia.

The effect was noticed by the perceptive Sir Charles Lucas in the Colonial Office. 'It is, I think noteworthy', he wrote in his paper 'The Self-Governing Dominions and Coloured Immigration':

That Mr Chamberlain, who was in full sympathy with the self-governing communities, was especially outspoken in protesting against giving offence in the methods of exclusion and against harsh treatment of coloured British subjects, but it will be noted at the same time that the object of avoiding giving offence in methods of exclusion militates against giving any preference to British subjects. The principle of the Natal Act, which Mr Chamberlain accepted and recommended, is not to specify any particular race, but to exclude all who cannot write a European language ie not to distinguish in any way among non-European races those who are and those who are not British subjects.<sup>30</sup>

Hence the outrage of Indian migrants who were British subjects who saw in this subterfuge one more betrayal of the idea of imperial citizenship.

But the lack of distinction drawn between different not-white races also angered Japan which, as a sovereign, civilised, imperial state, considered it the worst insult to be placed in the same category as stateless peoples such as Kanakas and Negroes. As the Japanese Consul in Sydney, H. Eitaki, told the *Daily Telegraph*, Japan was entitled to equal rights and

<sup>29</sup> Colonial Office papers, 1897, *Times of Natal*, 26 March 1897, CO 179/198; *Natal Parliamentary Debates* vol. 2, CO 179; Secret Despatch, CO 179/198, National Archives, UK.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Lucas, 'The Self-Governing Dominions and Coloured Immigration', CO 886/1/1, UK National Archives, pp.52-3.

privileges with Western nations in all matters regulated by international law. Their own regulation of Japanese emigration under passport law was one of those privileges.<sup>31</sup> The Japanese Emigration Act of 1896 specifically provided for the issue of passports as the means to regulate their own people's movement, so they would not have to suffer the ignominy of having them regulated by others.

### Outside the pale of civilised tongues

Despite their earlier endorsement of the Natal formulation, Japanese diplomats changed their position in 1901, objecting to the Australian proposal to require all immigrants to pass a dictation test in a 'European' language, because this explicitly discriminated against non-Europeans. Consul Eitaki wrote several notes of protest to the Australian government:

The Japanese belong to an Empire whose standard of civilization is so much higher than that of Kanakas, Negroes, Pacific Islanders, Indians or other Eastern peoples, that to refer to them in the same terms cannot but be regarded in the light of a reproach, which is hardly warranted by the fact of the shade of the national complexion...

Might I suggest, therefore, that your Government formulate some proposal which, being accepted by my Government would allow of the people of Japan being excluded from the operation of any Act which directly or indirectly imposed a tax on immigrants on the ground of colour.<sup>32</sup>

As the offended Japanese began to realise, the literacy test was a subterfuge. The issue was not civilisation, but 'the shade of the national complexion'. Even so, like the Chinese before them, they still tried to change Australian minds by pointing to their high educational standards that copied 'the most approved European methods'. Four months later, on 18 September 1901, as the Immigration Restriction Bill passed through the House of Representatives, Eitaki wrote again to Prime Minister Barton:

In Japanese schools and other educational establishments, the most approved methods are adopted, and the most important works on science, literature, art, politics, law etc which are published in Europe from time to time, are translated into Japanese for the use of students. Thus a Japanese, without being acquainted with any other language than his own, is frequently up to a very high educational standard in the most advanced branches of study, by means of a liberal use of these translations.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, quoted in E. W. Foxall, *Colorphobia* (Sydney, Publisher, 1903) pp.161-2.

<sup>32</sup> Eitaki to Barton, 3 May 1901, CO 418/10, UK National Archives.

Why could not the Japanese language then be put on the same footing as, say, 'the Turkish, the Russian, the Greek, the Polish, the Norwegian, the Austrian, or the Portuguese, or why, if an immigrant of any of the nationalities . . . mentioned may be examined in *his own language* (emphasis in original), the same courtesy should not be extended to a Japanese'. The Japanese government requested that their people not be marked out 'to suffer a special disability; or in other words, that they may be examined in Japanese'. This could easily be provided for by 'adding the words "or Japanese" after the word "European" in the legislation'.<sup>33</sup> They protested in vain. Reluctantly they realised that Japanese lay 'outside the pale of civilised tongues'.<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, the initial wording of the Australian legislation had prescribed a dictation test in the 'English language', which would have been more acceptable to the Japanese, because it would have discriminated equally against Europeans and Japanese: 'it paid Japan the courtesy of placing her upon an equal footing with other nations'.<sup>35</sup> Prime Minister Barton had, in fact, sought precisely to avoid making explicit distinctions on the grounds of 'race or colour'. The specification of literacy in one's national language removed the necessity to make 'racial' distinctions: 'The English language is our language', said Barton. 'Ours is the right language to use'.<sup>36</sup> It was the Colonial Office that insisted that 'European language' be substituted for 'English' on the principle of the 'equality between white men'. As the official, Bertram Cox, put it, when rejecting the proposal to pose the literacy test in English: 'Foreign (European) countries will in all probability object strongly to the restriction proposed. It is clearly contrary to the policy of equality between all white men for which the South African war is being fought'.<sup>37</sup>

The White Australia policy was supported by all sides of Australian politics from all states, Labor, Liberal and Conservative, Free Traders and Protectionists. Only two members of parliament – one a leading Free Trader, Bruce Smith – spoke against it. There was considerable division, however, over the preferred method of exclusion. The initial legislation proposed a dictation test in English, but this was opposed by the Colonial Office. Labor members and their supporters, impatient with British hypocrisy and diplomatic equivocation, wanted to drop the

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 18 September 1901.

<sup>34</sup> Governor General to Joseph Chamberlain, 12 November 1901, CO 418/10/373.

<sup>35</sup> Eitaki to Barton, 11 September 1901, CO 418/10.

<sup>36</sup> Edmund Barton, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (7 August 1901).

<sup>37</sup> Bertram Cox to Governor General, 23 August 1901, CO 418/10/81.

dictation test altogether and state in a straight-out manly manner their 'desire to see coloured people kept out', as Chris Watson, leader of the Australian Labor Party and Australia's first Labor Prime Minister, put it. Watson supported White Australia for industrial reasons, but also on racial grounds, asking 'whether we would desire that our sisters or our brothers should be married into any of these races to which we object'.<sup>38</sup>

W. M. Hughes, also a future Labor Prime Minister, argued that Australians should fear neither the wounded sensibilities of Japanese nor the possibility of political separation from Britain. Issues of national destiny were involved. Australians had 'an inalienable right', he said:

to work out our national destiny unaffected by that blot referred to by the Attorney-General as affecting America, without the leprous curse that is spreading its way through Queensland unhampered and unhindered, and which threatens to make it a country no longer fit for a white man, because it will shortly be a country where no white man can compete with our cheap, industrious and virtuous, but undesirable Japanese and Chinese friends.<sup>39</sup>

Attorney-General Deakin had politely stated that it was Japanese virtues – their business capacities, inexhaustible energy, their power of application, and their endurance – that made them such formidable competitors.<sup>40</sup> Hughes was impatient with diplomatic talk:

We object to these people because of their vices, and their immorality, and because of a hundred things which we can only hint at, and our objections are not to be met by the declaration that the Imperial Government will be embarrassed by them. We must approach this problem as the Americans did the question of the right to govern themselves – in a calm and deliberate spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Like many of the speakers in this debate, Hughes argued that this was an issue of national sovereignty.

Billy Hughes was a small, truculent, English-born working man of Welsh descent, a trade union leader and a lawyer, demagogue and raconteur, who represented the Australian Labor party in the federal seat of West Sydney. His background and personality made him 'quite one of the most unusual men I know', Secretary to the Department of External Affairs Attlee Hunt remarked to the Colonial Office. 'He is, when in the vein, an extremely amusing person and to hear him tell his experiences as

<sup>38</sup> Ross McMullin, *So Monstrous a Travesty: Chris Watson and the World's First National Government* (Melbourne, Scribe, 2004) pp.61–2.

<sup>39</sup> W. M. Hughes, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (12 September 1901) p.4822.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p.4812. <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p.4823.

umbrella mender, plumber, locksmith, sailor and wharf labourer is really amusing . . . He read up Classics and Law in his spare time'.<sup>42</sup> He and the eloquent, urbane, Melbourne-born Deakin, in many ways unlikely allies, were leading spokesmen of the Liberal-Labor partnership that inaugurated and presided over the enactment of the White Australia policy.<sup>43</sup> Hughes would continue the crusade eighteen years later at the Versailles Peace Conference in Paris.

Despite their pained and persistent protests in 1901, and their suggestion that they constituted a special case, an exception to the rule of racial difference, Japanese diplomats were unable to defeat White Australia's binary racial logic, its division of the world into 'white' and 'not-white', and its allocation of all 'Asiatics' into the category of not-white. By October 1901, a dejected Consul Eitaki had concluded that the 'educational test' was 'racial pure and simple'.<sup>44</sup>

### Enshrining the status of white labour

The Immigration Restriction Act was complemented by the Pacific Islands Labourers Act, which provided for the deportation of all Islanders (a generic term for diverse peoples from the numerous islands that now comprise Fiji, New Caledonia, New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu) who had been brought to work in the sugar cane fields of Queensland, regardless of how long they had lived in Australia and whether they had married and raised families. Later amendments rendered the application of the law less severe.

Both Bryce and Pearson had reported contemporary American discussions about 'clearing the country of the Negro' by deporting them to Africa, but with a black population numbering around eight million at the end of the century, the plan did not seem feasible. Pearson had suggested that the proposal should have been implemented earlier, when blacks were 'a mere handful'. In 1901, in introducing legislation to expel Pacific Islanders, Australian political leaders took the opportunity to do that which the United States had left too late.

Speaking on the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill, Prime Minister Barton justified the measure in terms of the radical 'difference' that separated the 'Pacific Islander' from the 'white man':

<sup>42</sup> Attlee Hunt to Sir Frances Hopwood, 3 September 1907, Hunt papers, MS 52/791, NLA.

<sup>43</sup> L. F. Fitzhardinge, *William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography* vol.1 (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1964) pp.133-8.

<sup>44</sup> Eitaki to Governor-General, 5 October 1901, CO 418/10.

The difference in intellectual level and the difference in knowledge of the ways of the world between the white man and the Pacific Islander, is one which cannot be bridged by acts or regulations about agreements. The level of the one is above that of the other, the difference being one in human mental stature - of character as well of mind - which cannot be put aside by passing 50 laws or 1000 regulations . . . He cannot be made to understand the condition of his engagement. He may be brought to a state of partial understanding, but it is impossible to say that he can have a degree of contracting capacity equal to that of the man who is dealing with him.<sup>45</sup>

Contractual relations were impossible between the 'white man' and the 'Pacific Islander': 'relations which should subsist between man and man' were in the circumstances an impossibility.<sup>46</sup> This was one of the lessons learnt from the well-meaning, but tragically misguided, experiment of Radical Reconstruction.

H. B. Higgins, Liberal member of parliament, Attorney-General in the first, short-lived Labor government of 1904, and future president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, was a key supporter of the legislation to deport Pacific Islanders: it was 'the most vitally important measure on the programme the government has put before us'.<sup>47</sup> He watched its course with the 'deepest anxiety'. Australia had to learn from the American experience. It was unfortunate that blacks had remained there after emancipation: 'So much the worse for America':

I have seen a little of America and I can say that that country, more especially the Southern States, would have been ten times better off if the Negroes had not been left there.<sup>48</sup>

The Pacific Islands Labourers Bill was so significant because its passage would determine whether 'northern Australia should be peopled by white men or not. I feel convinced that people who are used to a high standard of life - to good wages and good conditions - will not consent to labour alongside men who receive a miserable pittance and who are dealt with very much in the same way as slaves'.<sup>49</sup> Higgins spoke from personal knowledge. His brother-in-law, G. E. Morrison, the future *Times* correspondent in Peking, had exposed the slave-like conditions of Pacific Islanders on trading ships and sugar plantations in a series of articles for the Melbourne *Leader*.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Edmund Barton, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (3 October 1901), p.5503.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p.6819. <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p.6815. <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Cyril Pearl, *Morrison of Peking* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1967) pp.19-24.

In the Commonwealth of Australia, white men appropriated the discourse on civilisation for themselves, defining it in terms of wages and conditions and the standard of living. 'The civilization of the white man', declared the Liberal member for Melbourne Ports, Samuel Mauger, 'is a civilization dependent on free white labour'.<sup>51</sup> Mauger was an evangelical social reformer and temperance man, who published his book, *A White Man's World*, in 1901, in the founding year of the Commonwealth. Higgins agreed: 'We do not want men beside us who are not as exacting in their demands on civilization as ourselves'. As president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in 1907, it would be Higgins's historic responsibility to determine a living wage for Australian workers, whom he took care to define in his famous Harvester Judgment as 'civilised beings . . . living in a civilised community'.<sup>52</sup>

The project of White Australia was thus a contest over the meaning of civilisation itself. Much Labor vitriol was directed at the Japanese demand to be recognised as a civilised power. The *Westralian Worker* reported the story of a confrontation between a local Labor man determined to 'take down' 'a Jap standing outside a laundry', who dressed above his station:

There you are looking like a crow decked out with peacock's feathers thinking, I suppose, that you represent an up-to-date and enlightened nation. A great Power you call yourself, with your navy and your army, that you haven't paid for yet, and your factories and other such western civilised innovations wherein you don't earn enough in a week to keep a white man in beer and tobacco for the same period.<sup>53</sup>

The tropical north was considered White Australia's point of vulnerability. A thousand miles away from the political capitals of the south, but close to the Dutch East Indies, Singapore and New Guinea, mixed race communities, including Aborigines, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Malays and Pacific Islanders, had prospered in towns ranging from north Queensland through the Northern Territory to Broome in Western Australia. Readers in the south were regularly informed about the woe-ful consequences for 'the white man', as in the following verse on 'The Black North-West', published in the nationalist *Bulletin*, in 1898. Japanese workers were cast as 'Black labour' introduced through capitalist

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Mauger, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives (3 October 1901) p.6823.

<sup>52</sup> *Commonwealth Arbitration Reports* vol.11, 1907-8, quoted in Marilyn Lake, 'On Being a White Man, Australia, circa 1900', in Hsu Ming Teo and Richard White (eds.) *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2003) pp.107-9.

<sup>53</sup> *Westralian Worker*, 2 November 1900.

conspiracy. The *Bulletin*, which took pleasure in giving offence, regularly referred to the Japanese as 'niggers':

The white man came to the black north-west  
For the east and south were want-opprest;  
With a willing heart and a strong right hand  
In search of work in a white man's land.

He humped his drum, for his purse was low,  
And he tramped cross-tracks that the drovers know,  
Till he struck a town in the wild north-west  
Which the dark Malay and the Jap infest.

But his worn heart quailed when he learned, alack,  
That he must be cheap, and he should be black.  
For the master-men in the black north-west  
Love the white man well but the cheap men best.

For a white man owns to a white man's vice,  
He must have *meat*, but a Jap eats *rice*;  
So the master-men in the wild north-west  
Love a white man well but the black man best.<sup>54</sup>

In settler democracies, working-class identities were forged in terms of gendered, racial difference, commonly represented, as we have seen, as the difference between beef-eating men and rice-eating men, between real men and coolies.

That Asiatic and black workers, characterised as inherently servile, degraded the status of all labour, had long been a core belief of self-governing white men's countries and liberal theorists. Authorities including Charles Dilke, Goldwin Smith, Bryce and Pearson all insisted that the dignity of labour would be undermined if work in settler societies were performed by coloured races. 'From the moment that a white population will not work in the fields, on the roads, in the mines, or in factories', warned Pearson in a passage quoted by Barton, when speaking on the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill, 'its doom is practically sealed'.

In the new Commonwealth of Australia, Liberal and Labor parties agreed on the necessity of the state protecting the wages and conditions of white working men, an approach given expression in the policy of New Protection, so named because tariff protection would depend on employers paying workers a fair and reasonable wage. Deakin explicitly theorised White Australia as an exercise in social justice: 'it means the

<sup>54</sup> *Bulletin*, 2 April 1898, quoted in Henry Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: The Untold Story of Australia's North* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2003) p.135.

maintenance of conditions of life fit for white men and white women; it means equal laws and opportunities for all; it means protection against the underpaid labour of other lands; it means social justice so far as we can establish it, including just trading and the payment of fair wages'.<sup>55</sup>

It never seemed to occur to the architects of New Protection, however, that all workers might enjoy, or desire, high living standards. In *The Chinese Question in Australia*, Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy tried to make this obvious point: 'human nature is human nature all the world over; and the Chinaman is just as fond of money, and just as eager to earn as much as he can, as the most grasping of his competitors'. And of course the longer Chinese settlers stayed in the new country, the more likely they would emulate the local standard of living:

Living among people who have invested thousands of artificial wants, and thousands of means of gratifying them, the expenditure of the Asiatic will soon rise to the European level, because his habits and his mode of living will approximate to those of his neighbours; and, as it is, it cannot have escaped the observation of persons who have been brought much into contact with the Chinese in Victoria, that the diet of such of them as are tolerably prosperous becomes more generous and costly in proportion to the improvement of their circumstances, and that those who marry and settle here conform to British methods of housekeeping, and are not less liberal and hospitable than their European fellow-colonists.<sup>56</sup>

But such observations about 'human nature all the world over' counted for nothing against nationalist, racist stereotypes of unmanly, inherently servile coolies.

As one spokesman for White Australia put it, confident in his knowledge of the essential difference between the 'white man' and the 'coloured man' and the latter's 'indifference' to civilised standards: 'Coloured aliens engaging in any occupation subject white men in the same occupation to an utterly unfair and improper competition'. The secret of the coloured man's success was 'his complete indifference' to 'the moral and social standards of his white fellow citizens'. He worked from dawn to dark on seven days a week; he ate little else than rice; he clothed himself in rags; and lived in a hovel. White men through no fault of their own would be driven from employment and production, simply because they adhered to 'the most elementary ideals of civilized society'.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Frank Parsons, 'Australasian Methods of Dealing with Immigration', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* no.431 (July 1904) Immigration Restriction League papers, Houghton Library, Ms Am 2245 (1111).

<sup>56</sup> Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, *The Chinese in Victoria* (Melbourne, 1879) p.201.

<sup>57</sup> Draft paper, author unknown, Deakin papers, NLA 1540/15/2553.

As a further measure to protect white working men's jobs, the Australian parliament passed an amendment to the Post and Telegraph Act, introduced by Hughes, to permit 'white labour only' on ships carrying Australian mail. In speaking explicitly of their intention to engage in racial discrimination against the British subjects who mostly manned these ships, the government knew that it courted British rejection of the legislation. Threatened with the withholding of Royal Assent, one Senator called on his fellow politicians to assert their 'manhood and vigour' so as to give effect to national sovereignty: 'the wish and will of the people'.<sup>58</sup>

The Japanese government again protested against this proposed 'racial discrimination' to the Australian Governor-General, and the Colonial Office conveyed its censure, but white Australian manhood had its way.<sup>59</sup> Writing anonymously as a correspondent for the *Morning Post*, in London, Attorney-General Deakin described this law as 'surely the high-water mark of racial exclusiveness'.<sup>60</sup>

Legislation to provide for a uniform franchise across all the Australian states also employed racist exclusions. Under the Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902, full political rights were extended to all white women, some of whom had earlier won the franchise in the colonies of South Australia (1894) and Western Australia (1899). Aboriginal people of both sexes were expressly denied the federal vote in the same 1902 legislation, except in those states where they already enjoyed the franchise under earlier colonial legislation in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania. The original Bill had not provided for the disfranchisement of Indigenous Australians as it passed through the Senate, but did so in the House of Representatives on the basis of an amendment proposed by Higgins, who argued that it was 'utterly inappropriate' to enfranchise Aborigines.<sup>61</sup>

The Franchise Act thus effectively denied political rights to the great majority of Indigenous people who lived in the north of the country in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It also denied political rights to natives of 'Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific except New Zealand'. In recognition of their political status in New Zealand,

<sup>58</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate, 13 June 1901, p.1050.

<sup>59</sup> Eitaki to Governor-General, 5 October 1901, CO 418/10.

<sup>60</sup> *Morning Post*, 12 November 1901, in J. A. La Nauze (ed.) *Federated Australia Selections of Letters to the Morning Post 1900-1910* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1968) p.81.

<sup>61</sup> John Chesterman, '“An Unheard of Piece of Savagery”: Indigenous Australians and the Federal Vote', in John Chesterman and David Phillips (eds.) *Selective Democracy: Race, Gender and the Australian Vote* (Melbourne, Circa, 2003).

Maoris were treated in this case as honorary white men, as they were also in the 1903 law on naturalisation, that classified natives from 'Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific, except New Zealand' as ineligible for naturalisation.

Under the federal constitution, the administration and sale of land remained a matter for the state governments and, in some states, legislation was passed to prevent 'Asiatics' from taking out freehold or becoming lessees of Crown lands. Queensland employed the dictation test to achieve its aim of denying non-whites the right to own or lease land. State legislation also barred non-whites from certain employments and professions, sometimes using the device of the dictation test, as in the Queensland Margarine and Sugar Cultivation Acts.

The Australian welfare state was conceptualised and structured in racialised terms. Its racist exclusions were, paradoxically, an expression of its commitment to democratic equality and dignity of labour. Manhood asserted its elevation, as we have noted, in opposition to aristocrats and coolies. The advocates of White Australia often argued in terms of social justice.<sup>62</sup> The Invalid and Old Age Pension of 1908, paid from general revenue, excluded 'Asiatics (except those born in Australia) and Aboriginal natives of Australia, Africa, the Islands of the Pacific, or New Zealand'. Aboriginal natives of Australia came under the jurisdiction of the states, which ran reserves and implemented Protection Acts, under which the removal of 'half-caste' children was a key assimilationist practice. Whereas white 'mothers of the race' were feted and remunerated in the Commonwealth of Australia, Aboriginal women's 'race' was invoked to deny their right to and capacity for motherhood.

The keystone of the White Australia policy was the Harvester judgment on the living wage, handed down by Justice Higgins in the Conciliation and Arbitration Court in 1907, in a case brought under the Excise Act of 1906, that required manufacturers who applied for exemption from excise duties to demonstrate that they paid their workers 'a fair and reasonable wage'. In his radical challenge to the power of business and employers, warmly commended by his friend Felix Frankfurter in the United States, Higgins declared that if employers couldn't afford to pay decent wages to their workers, they had no place in Australia.<sup>63</sup> The desire for profit

<sup>62</sup> On a similar theme, see also Avner Offer, "'Pacific Rim' Societies: Asian Labour and White Nationalism', in J. Eddy and D. Schreuder (eds.) *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988); and Jonathon Hyslop, 'White Labourism Before World War 1', *Journal of Historical Sociology* vol.12, no.4 (December 1999).

<sup>63</sup> Frankfurter to Oliver Wendell Holmes, 11 November 1915, in Robert Mennell and Christine Compston (eds.) *Holmes and Frankfurter: Their Correspondence, 1912-1934* (Durham, University of New Hampshire Press, 1996).

and productivity had to take second place to the moral imperative that a living wage be paid to (white) working men. In gathering evidence of employees' needs – and listening to the testimony of a number of housewives – Higgins built up a picture of the purchases and pursuits necessary to sustain a civilised standard of living.

Central to the white worker's comfort and self-respect was his ability to maintain a family. One reason 'Asiatics' were regarded as cheap labour was because of their limited needs as single men. In the Harvester judgment, Higgins represented the average man as a breadwinner with a wife and three children and thus institutionalised the husband as breadwinner and the woman as dependent, even though many thousands of women also supported families and many thousands of men supported only themselves. Women were paid, for decades thereafter, just over half the male rate.

### White citizen mothers

Just as the white working man was the ideal male citizen, so the ideal woman citizen of the new Commonwealth of Australia was the white mother. White Australian women had won the right to vote and stand for election to the national parliament in 1902 – the first in the world to win these political rights – but political leaders urged them to concentrate their energies on producing larger families. In 1903, in New South Wales, the state government appointed a Royal Commission to enquire into the decline of the birth rate and there was much talk, following American sociologist Edward Ross's warning, of 'race suicide'. The Royal Commission placed the blame for the decline of the birth rate on the selfishness of women.<sup>64</sup> A copy of the report was sent to the United States at the request of the Department of Commerce and Labor.<sup>65</sup> White men's countries shared the preoccupation with race suicide.

Charles Pearson had drawn attention to the implications of fertility decline in *National Life and Character*, but as often as not, when Australian politicians made speeches about the necessity of an increased birth rate in the new century, they quoted not Pearson, who had died in London ten years before, but one of his most ardent disciples on this issue, Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States since 1901. In Australia one

<sup>64</sup> Neville Hicks, *This Sin and Scandal: Australia's Population Debate 1891-1911* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1978).

<sup>65</sup> Department of State to John Gray, Consul General, Sydney, 24 October 1908, Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84, Despatches from Secretary of State, Sydney, vol.56w, US National Archives.

of the most fervent populationists of the new century was a New South Wales politician, Dr Richard Arthur, who was in regular correspondence with Roosevelt, whom he quoted in numerous newspaper articles and public speeches in support of increased birth rates and large-scale immigration.<sup>66</sup>

Labor women and non-party feminists attempted to use the rhetoric surrounding motherhood to promote the rights of mothers as citizens. Drawing on eugenicist discourse, they argued for the importance of quality over quantity in reproduction and lobbied for better state services and a living wage for themselves in the form of motherhood endowment that would render them economically independent of men. White women enjoyed full suffrage rights in the new Commonwealth and thus wielded considerable electoral power. Politicians on all sides recognised that women electors were a political force to be reckoned with, a constituency to be wooed. In 1912, the Labor government led by Andrew Fisher was persuaded by women in his party to introduce a maternity allowance, a cash payment of £5 to all white mothers, including unmarried mothers, on the birth of a baby.

In the face of condemnation of this official support for single mothers – those who ‘became mothers in a dishonourable way’ as a Council of Churches Deputation to the Prime Minister put it – Labor women proudly claimed credit for what they considered to be a political victory for working-class women. At a meeting of the women’s committee of the Victorian branch of the Labor party, they passed a resolution expressing their ‘utter detestation and resentment at the foul slanders levelled at our class’ and congratulated the Prime Minister for his ‘noble and wise act’ in ‘conferring this instalment of the mothers’ maternal rights’.<sup>67</sup>

The maternity allowance was radical in offering payments to unmarried mothers, but in keeping with other legislation constituting the Australian welfare state, it explicitly excluded non-white mothers. Conceptions of racial difference were central to conceptions of maternal citizenship, but some non-party feminists were moved to protest against the racial exclusions of the Maternity Allowance Act as an example of ‘the White Australia policy gone mad’: ‘Maternity is maternity, whatever the race’, protested Vida Goldstein’s *Woman Voter*.<sup>68</sup> The universalist politics of maternalism thus had the potential to be used for anti-racist as

<sup>66</sup> Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890–1960* (St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1984) pp.155–84.

<sup>67</sup> Marilyn Lake and Katie Holmes (eds.) *Freedom Bound: 11 Documents on Women in Modern Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1995) pp.6–7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p.7.

well as racist purposes and would later be deployed by some feminists to protest against the removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers.<sup>69</sup>

### Critics of White Australia

The White Australia policy was widely supported across party and gender lines, but it also provoked spirited and persistent opposition. Challenges came from conservatives and socialists, men and women, white and not-white. In the first federal parliament, the Free Trade Liberals, led by Bruce Smith, denounced ‘race prejudice’ as a barrier to freedom of movement, commerce and trade and extolled the virtues of Chinese civilisation. Some churches worried about Australia’s racial arrogance in denying the Christian doctrine of the equality of souls: the Synod of the Church of England denounced assumptions of white race superiority and conveyed their resolutions to the Prime Minister.<sup>70</sup>

Self-styled cosmopolitans in the socialist movement, inspired by a visiting English leader, Tom Mann, called for racial tolerance and international solidarity with ‘no concern for race or frontier’.<sup>71</sup> In 1906, the Victorian Socialist Party established a Cosmopolitan Committee, that encouraged contributions from speakers from non-British backgrounds. Bertha Walker remembered an ‘International Night’ in Melbourne, attended by about twenty different nationalities and ‘huge applause for an African who worked as a bootblack in Bourke Street’.<sup>72</sup> The *Socialist* journal explained how ‘racial antipathies’ and ‘national boundaries’ stood in the way of socialism:

No narrow nationalism can satisfy our people. Nothing short of Cosmopolitanism can really satisfy a world citizen. ‘The world is my country!’ is the declaration of every Socialist. It is our mission then to speed the day when racial antipathies shall be completely obliterated, when national boundaries will exist only as indicating that certain areas were the cradles of certain peoples.<sup>73</sup>

This spirit of socialist cosmopolitanism would later be invoked at a meeting organised by the Women’s Political Association to question Prime Minister Hughes’ attack on the Japanese racial equality clause at Versailles.

<sup>69</sup> Marilyn Lake, ‘Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism, Australia 1927–57: From Maternal Protectionism to Leftists Assimilationism’, *Australian Historical Studies* 110 (April 1998); Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women’s Rights 1919–1939* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Bishop White to Deakin, 6 September 1905, Deakin papers, NLA, 1540/15/2095.

<sup>71</sup> *Socialist*, 1 September 1906.

<sup>72</sup> David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney, Harper Collins, 1999) p.111.

<sup>73</sup> *Socialist*, 1 September 1906.

Protests against the enactment of the White Australia policy were also sent to the Australian government by local Pacific Islander, Chinese, Indian and Japanese communities and their official representatives in Australia and London.<sup>74</sup> The *Tung Wah Times* was established in Sydney and the *Chinese Times* in Melbourne, both preaching the necessity to build a strong China to combat discrimination and humiliation: 'a powerful country makes a race strong'.<sup>75</sup> In 1901, Pacific Islanders gathered 3000 signatures for a petition against their imminent deportation, which they forwarded to the Colonial Office:

Many of us have been continuously resident in Queensland for upwards of twenty years, and during these years our parents and brothers in the islands have died and we are forgotten there; villages have disappeared, and some of our tribes have been exterminated; we love the land in which we live, and all our friends are here.<sup>76</sup>

But they had no official representatives who could seek international redress. With Indians it was different and increasingly an anxious British government recognised that 'the growing resentment in India at the attitude that has been adopted in Australia' – and the outrage to Indian self-respect – threatened the future integrity of the British Empire.<sup>77</sup>

In Victoria, a Chinese community leader, Cheok Hong Cheong, maintained his long protest against racial persecution when he wrote to the press in 1904 to denounce new factories and shops legislation that aimed to further curtail Chinese employment in laundries and cabinet-making. Once again he invoked the ideal of the comity of nations: 'It may be comparatively a small matter how the few Chinese sojourners make their living, but if the sense of injustice be allowed to rankle in their minds, and burn into their very souls, it cannot bode well for the future relations of two vast Empires like Great Britain and China'.<sup>78</sup> A meeting of the Public Questions Committee of the Presbyterian Church also condemned the 'cruel and oppressive' legislation, while Ah Ket published a pamphlet on *The Chinese and the Factories Act* in which he denounced the 'ignorant prejudice against the Chinese', demonstrated their compliance

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, India Office to Colonial Office, 7 August 1903, CO 886/1/172; also Robert A. Huttenback, *Racism and Empire* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1976), pp.286–8, 304–6; Margaret Allen "Innocents Abroad" and "Prohibited Immigrants": Australians in India and Indians in Australia 1890–1910', in Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake (eds.) *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2006), pp.122–5.

<sup>75</sup> C. F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia 1901–1921* (Adelaide, Raphael Arts, 1977) pp.16–19.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, p.117.

<sup>77</sup> Colonial Office to Governor-General, September 1908, and Enclosure, CO 886/1/254.

<sup>78</sup> *Argus*, 22 November 1904.

with existing legislation and industrial awards, and once more invoked 'the reciprocal treaties between Great Britain and China', calling for justice for his people who were either British subjects or legal immigrants. A Chinese Convention met in Melbourne in 1905, but political authorities in Britain and Australia had clearly decided that Chinese protest could be safely ignored. The rights of persons who were unfortunate enough to be born in that 'weak and despised Empire of the Far East', as Cheok Hong Cheong put it, could be trampled on at will.<sup>79</sup>

Two books critical of the White Australia policy, E. W. Foxall's *Color-phobia* and E. W. Cole's *The White Australia Question*, were published in Melbourne in 1903.<sup>80</sup> When F. M. Bladen, the Principal Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, sent a copy of his own book, *Peopling Australia* – promoting British immigration to 'the great sunny white man's land' – to Arthur Atlee Hunt, Secretary of External Affairs, Hunt asked Bladen in turn what he thought of Foxall's book. 'The fundamental weakness of the whole book', replied the Principal Librarian, 'is that he does not attempt to show in what possible way the influx of Japanese, Kanakas, Chinese and Negroes would benefit us'. He continued:

He generally spoils his case by his intolerance and vehemence . . . That part of the book where he threatens us with direful consequences of annoying Japan is rather humorous. I wonder whether he really thinks that the scarecrow of an angry Asiatic is likely to disturb anyone. These gentlemen are more dangerous when they smile.<sup>81</sup>

As secretary to the Japanese Consul-General, Foxall lobbied persistently for reform of the Immigration Restriction Act. At the same time the Government of India sought exemptions for certain classes of British Indian subjects.

In 1904, immigration regulations were amended 'with a view to fostering commercial relations between Australia and the East' to exempt, following the United States example, 'merchants, students and tourist travellers' from taking the dictation test provided they were in possession of passports issued by either the Japanese or Indian governments.<sup>82</sup> The acceptance of a passport issued by the traveller's own government replaced the Certificates for Exemption from the Dictation Test for Indians and Japanese, but not for the hapless Chinese.

<sup>79</sup> Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, p.104.

<sup>80</sup> See also C. H. Chomley, *Australian Pros and Cons* (Melbourne, Fraser and Jenkinson, 1905) pp.136–43.

<sup>81</sup> Bladen to Hunt, 28 July 1903, Atlee Hunt papers, NLA 52/1260.

<sup>82</sup> Immigration Restriction Act Correspondence, Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper, 1905, pp.1–4.

In 1905, an amendment to the Immigration Restriction Act replaced the requirement for a test in a 'European language' with a test in any 'prescribed language', in a further attempt to conciliate Japan. On the other hand, a clause allowing Asian Australians to be joined by their wives was cancelled, causing fresh distress and persistent protest.<sup>83</sup> Secretary of External Affairs Hunt responded impatiently: 'If the Japanese or people of any other race comment on the inhumanity of separating husband and wife, the answer is easy. We have no wish for them to be separated, and in fact would prefer to see them united – but in their own country, not ours'.<sup>84</sup>

Members of the public also wrote to the Prime Minister's office to express their dismay at his seeming heartlessness in administering the White Australia policy and in being complicit in the separation of families.<sup>85</sup> 'As an old schoolmate may I beg of you to kill the "White Australia policy" as it is now being administered', wrote James Ingham. 'Depend upon it the curse of God will rest upon us as a country unless we withdraw from an enactment, that is inhuman and cruel and God dishonouring'. He referred to the government's refusal to permit the reunion of a Chinese man, long resident in Australia, and his son, 'a respectable Chinese boy'. He continued:

In our old days at the Grammar school, if a vote had been taken in favor of the most generous & kind-hearted lad in the school, I unhesitate to say that vote would have been won by yourself & I cannot believe that you have so altered as to be party to separate father from son, simply because the skin of the latter is not white.<sup>86</sup>

Deakin was particularly embarrassed by the publicity accorded the deportation of Pacific Islanders and wrote to the Premier of Queensland asking if there were some who ought to be allowed to remain, for example, 'if by any chance a white woman has been reckless enough to marry a Kanaka we could hardly turn him out'.<sup>87</sup> Hunt was in constant correspondence with the Brisbane Immigration Office in an attempt to prevent disturbances and deprive 'enemies of the government' of occasions for criticism, but he remained a determined advocate of the White Australia policy.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Foxall to Hunt, 3 December 1908, Hunt papers, 52/1312, NLA.

<sup>84</sup> Hunt to Foxall, 8 December 1908, Hunt papers, 52/1313a.

<sup>85</sup> Church of England Synod resolutions, Deakin papers, 1540/15/2096, Deakin papers.

<sup>86</sup> Ingham to Deakin, 1 October 1906, Deakin papers, 1540/15/2200.

<sup>87</sup> Deakin to Kidston, 20 February 1906, Deakin papers, 1540/15/2155.

<sup>88</sup> Brennan to Hunt, 3 November 1906, 15 January, 26 January, 29 January 1907; Hunt to Brennan, 4 March, 2 August 1907, Hunt papers, 52/1267–1273.

### The need for population

With the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, Australians suddenly felt more vulnerable in their remote southern outpost. Recognition of the low birth rate prompted a new campaign to attract white immigrants to augment the Australian population. Numerous politicians and publicists recommended that Deakin initiate more co-ordinated action with the states, which controlled land settlement and advertise more aggressively to attract British settlers. Richard Arthur, now president of the Immigration League of Australia, was a tireless advocate of the necessity of a dramatic growth in immigration and deplored people's prejudices – against Jews and Italians – that prevented the flow of immigrants from being as strong as it might have been.

Arthur persuaded President Roosevelt to write in support of his efforts. 'The diminishing birth rate both in America and Australia is a matter which should give serious concern to every thoughtful American or Australian', wrote the American president:

But Australia should also concern herself about the need for immigration. America has plenty; her territory is already pretty well filled and is still rapidly filling, even in Alaska. Australia needs more people. She needs full cradles. She needs to open her gates; and especially to put a premium upon immigration into North Australia.<sup>89</sup>

Arthur also publicised Roosevelt's commendation of Mediterranean peoples as prospective immigrants. Whereas his Anglo-Saxonist friend Cabot Lodge had argued strongly that the category 'white' had been interpreted far too broadly in the United States, allowing millions of migrants from eastern, southern and central Europe, peoples alien in language and culture, to enter the country, Roosevelt lent his support to Arthur's campaign to widen the definition of white to embrace Italians, Spanish and Jews.

But immigration to Australia remained a trickle. Roosevelt grew alarmed and impatient, writing to his friend, the British diplomat Spring Rice, at the end of 1907: 'I very much wish that Australia would either encourage European immigration or would see a higher birth rate among its own citizens. It is not pleasant to realize how slowly the scanty population of that island continent increases'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to Richard Arthur, 10 February 1906, Arthur papers, 473/3, Mitchell Library.

<sup>90</sup> Roosevelt to Spring Rice, 21 December 1907, in Elting E. Morison (ed.) *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* vol.6 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951) p.869.

### 'A deep colour line of demarcation'

During the first decade in the life of the Commonwealth of Australia, the government legislated to enshrine the status of white men as workers and white women as mothers, proud of its position in the vanguard of modern social progress. The corollary was the deepening divide between white and non-white subjects of the British Empire. In a long article, written in his capacity as an anonymous correspondent for the London *Morning Post*, Deakin reflected on Chamberlain's earlier insistence on the equality of treatment of all imperial subjects. In fact, he noted, this equality was 'only on the surface':

In fact, and in effect, our colourless laws are administered so as to draw a deep colour line of demarcation between Caucasians and all other races. No white men are stopped at our ports . . . On the contrary. They are welcomed . . . On the other hand all coloured men are stopped unless they come merely as visitors.

Deakin commended the recent statement of the New Zealand Prime Minister, Richard Seddon, about the British Empire, in which he invoked the significance of the distinction between 'ruled' and 'ruling races':

though united in the whole, [the Empire] is, nevertheless, divided broadly in to two parts, one occupied wholly or mainly by a white ruling race, the other principally occupied by coloured races who are ruled. Australia and New Zealand are determined to keep their place in the first class.<sup>91</sup>

Their determination to maintain their position in the first class of ruling nations – to maintain 'a place parallel and equal to that of the Mother Country' – led the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers to offer sympathy and support to the other self-governing colonies of the Empire, when faced with challenges to white hegemony. They offered support to Natal and the Transvaal in South Africa, when those colonies were confronted with black insurrection and large-scale Chinese immigration and denounced British intervention in the government of these places as improper interference with the constitutional rights of responsible, self-governing communities.

In 1905, the attention of the Australian and New Zealand governments was drawn to British Columbia where, faced with renewed 'Asiatic invasions', the provincial government had been prevented once again by Ottawa from legislating to bring about effective immigration restriction.<sup>92</sup> When news arrived that Canada had disallowed the latest British Columbian law against Japanese immigration on the ground of

<sup>91</sup> *Morning Post*, 28 May 1906; La Nauze, *Federated Australia*, p.184.

<sup>92</sup> Huttenback, *Racism and Empire*, pp.170–5.

incompatibility of imperial interests, Prime Minister Seddon urged a joint expression of solidarity with the people of that Pacific province. The Wellington newspaper, the *Evening Post*, reported indignantly: 'British Columbia is not to be allowed to shape its destiny as a white man's country, because the exigencies of British policy in the Far East demand that the white man and the yellow man shall lie down together on equal terms'.<sup>93</sup>

For Prime Minister Deakin, the growth of Japanese power in the Pacific highlighted the necessity of Australia looking to secure its capacity for self-defence through building up its army and navy: 'Self-respect, self-esteem, self-assertion, whatever name is given to it, a sentiment of the duty of self-defence, strong already, is growing stronger the more we realise our strategically perilous position south of the awakening Asiatic peoples'.<sup>94</sup> He was thus very receptive to Arthur's suggestion, in the following year, that an invitation be extended to the United States government to send its naval fleet, about to embark on a tour of the Pacific, to visit Australia. Such a visit could strengthen the bonds between the kindred peoples of the Republic and the Commonwealth, and provide an object lesson in the imperative of modern naval power to national security in a dangerous world.

The great republic provided both heroic example and timely warning to their admirers building their own Commonwealth in the South Pacific. The 'racial problem' loomed large in historical memory, strengthening Australian resolve to maintain racial purity. 'As we Australians look on and note the awful racial animosities which every now and then degrade the records of the great Republic', an editorial in the *Age* newspaper concluded, 'we shall learn more perfectly the lesson of incurring every sacrifice rather than give up in the least degree our national policy of "a White Australia"'.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 May 1905, Deakin papers, NLA 1540/15/2090.

<sup>94</sup> *Morning Post*, 3 October 1906, La Nauze, *Federated Australia*, p.192.

<sup>95</sup> *Age*, 3 August 1908.