

The Inevitable Australian
Republic
and the
Unlearning of Traditional National Identity.

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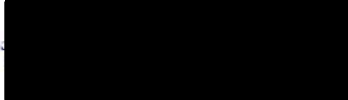
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I certify that this thesis is a product of my own original research and has not been submitted for previous academic accreditation.

Signed,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Lachlan Munro DuRinck.

12-12-1997.

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SYNOPSIS

After numerous proposals, the final decision was to write a piece which demonstrated that Australian national identity and the most recent push for an Australian republic are intertwined, and that one issue, at present cannot be discussed without the other.

As a result of such issues being at the forefront of the media for much of 1997, the methodology included keeping a close eye on the media, and watching events unfold. This included searching newspapers every day and reviewing articles, as well as watching news and current affairs, and listening to relevant radio programs. The popular media (including the internet) was an important vehicle in this piece because the ideas of the republic and Australian national identity and the surrounding debates were relevant and somewhat reflective of the views of Australians. It was also important to reflect on past academic works for the sake of an argumentative basis.

What was found was that the republican debate was not only concerned with changing the form of government in the belief that this would be an improvement, but the republicans also felt that the monarchical links with Britain should be severed in order to better represent Australia's cultural diversity. The pro-monarchy debate often seemed to be centered around the idea that the current form of government has generally served Australians well and been democratic, therefore, there is no need for change. Therefore, if Australia is to become a republic, it would likely be primarily for the purposes of better representation of cultural diversity and Australian independence, rather than simply for a change of government. An expression of new national identity as much as a political movement.

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I n t r o d u c t i o n .

Will Australia become a republic? Is the move to become a republic inevitable? If so, *which* Australia: the geographical continent, the legal/governmental system, the people, that is, the “Australians”, whatever that identity may be?

National identity is an issue that has been discussed and debated in Australia for quite some time. The ‘traditional’ identity of “Australianness” is now under particular scrutiny. Australia has one of the world’s most complex dilemmas in terms of its national identity. There is the dominant white population, the Aborigines, and the many ethnic groups that have all contributed in some manner.

In addition to the interests of these groups in the discussion of national identity, there are also numerous overlapping issues and questions that require attention. Some of these include: the role of the indigenous population and its culture, the contribution of non-British, non-European and non-Christian sectors. The emergence of a “New Right” as evidenced in the political stance of people such as Pauline Hanson provide another complicating factor – a woman whose claims of speaking for the “silent majority” have caused certainly great national controversy, as well as a degree of international outrage.

The traditional teachings of so-called Australian history needs revision to express more accurately the role of its many influences and components, and the republican issue requires serious attention and discussion.

In this paper I will argue that the move towards a republic and the unlearning of a traditional national identity are inextricably intertwined. One issue cannot be properly addressed without the other if Australia is to move successfully into the twenty-first century.

One of the underlying issues and driving forces of this paper is that national unification of all Australians will aid in greater equality, hence a better living environment. By gradually losing stereotypes within all cultural groups, disadvantage and discrimination will be lessened. Also, this will allow for a new type of national identity to arise – one which is not based on cultural purity.

Chapter 1.
*Traditional Imaginings: Historical Narrative and
 the Present.*

The Australian history which has traditionally been taught and learned in schools is undergoing change. In turn, the way we perceive the past, and teach our future descendents to perceive the past, is also undergoing change. It has been suggested that by rewriting history, the understanding of the present is also changed – and this may well be true in Australia's case. The First Fleet is not necessarily being depicted as heroes and discoverers, but sometimes as people who began a conquest of those who were, and are now recognised as the rightful owners of Australia. With this in mind, 1788 is no longer seen as the beginning of Australian history, but merely a year when Europeans began their reign of domination over the indigenous population. Australian history is now being taught as something which has its roots reaching back for an unknown period of time, far beyond mere European settlement. There will be new heroes, new villains, new stories, and most importantly, new truths in the 'revised' Australian history.

At the time of European settlement the country was being taken over by the whites, and the recognised culture, traditions, social systems and ideologies became that of the newcomers. This is when *Australian* history began, and this is generally how it is recognised and portrayed. In doing this, the indigenous population was not only nearly obliterated, but those who survived were set aside to be forgotten. Those who first "settled" than claimed to have discovered a new land. Of course, it was not new to those who had been living there for many thousands of years. The truth, of course, is that Australia was never *terra nullius* – an empty land. The High Court rejected the doctrine of *terra nullius* during the Mabo case. Australia was merely a very different culture to Europe.

It is this European notion of culture which has become the dominant criterion of being Australian. But, what constitutes an "Australian" identity? The traditional national identity is under threat from a range of perspectives. For example, the rapidly changing ethnic background of many Australian citizens, the changing focus of Australia in the world from Europe to Asia, and the growing recognition of Aboriginal culture. Bain Attwood (1996) believes that,

"the sense of national crisis provoked by Mabo was largely due to it being perceived as a profound challenge to a traditional notion of Australian nationhood and national identity".
 (100).

What we must remind ourselves of is that the so-called "traditional notion of Australian nationhood and national identity" was formed under false and since

admittedly wrong pretences. The 'crisis' is only a crisis for those who believe in and hold some value in the traditional Euro-centric notion of Australian nationhood and identity. There are obviously many people in Australia who realise the fallacies and understand that new foundations for nationhood and identity need to be laid. This will possibly emerge as a result of the new Australian history and the move towards a republic.

The traditional idea of national identity in Australia has always overlooked its indigenous population. The root of this problem lies in the stereotype that depicts Aborigines as primitive tribal people who have always lived off the land. They are rarely seen and recognised as people who are part of a modern society. White history in Australia is often depicted as something that is progressive, but indigenous Australians seem to be trapped in a pre-1788 time warp and are not seen as part of this "progression". For example, when we watch television programs about the outback, and footage of Aborigines dancing or hunting or telling stories, etc., the point is always made that this is the way that things have been done for many thousands of years. We have the means to analyse their lifestyle, and from our lounge rooms, we can see just how different the two cultures can be. It may be contended that if Aborigines were part of a modern society, there wouldn't be television programs showing how they still live in the traditional manner. The armchair viewer may have images in their mind about white people once living such a "primitive" lifestyle, but one race seemed to have *progressed* and the other not. What is often left unrecognised is that progression is, of course, merely discourse, and like any discourse, is based within its own cultural set and values. Because the indigenous population is not renowned for its technological prowess and modern scientific progression, it does not fit into that particular discourse, and as a result, they are seen as primitive. Consequently, something "primitive" is recognised as something which is not as good as something "modern".

"...Australians symbolise the modern and Aborigines the past. Consequently it is believed that Australia can only be modern (and progress) provided that its space is unambiguously [White] Australian and not Aboriginal" (Attwood, 1996:102).

Here, Attwood, ignores the vital and growing influence of the non-European sector of Australia's population; a subject to which I will return later. It may be closer to reality that Australia can only be modern provided its space is not only non-Aboriginal, but anything but White Australian. A modern nation would admit its mistakes and aim to achieve reconciliation in order to look to a coherent form of multicultural recognition for its future. Until Australia comes to grips with the entirety of its history, it could be argued that progression is a feature lacking in the white population, rather than the black.

Over the first hundred years of white settlement in Australia, a myth of

Australian nationality was taking shape. Nevertheless, the transition to this national identity took place within a predominantly British cultural setting. This growing “Australianness” had a very clear cultural definition.

“Australianness” is a constructed narrative that excludes Aborigines almost completely, and largely ignores the contribution of groups other than the dominant Anglo-Saxon sub-group. Therefore, the way in which we see Australia is in a specific fashion that does not allow Aborigines to become a part of this modern society – a modern society, which has come into being in the land which primarily, belongs to them. Australianness does not allow for a merging of “Australian”, Aboriginal, or multicultural elements, but rather “Australian” refers to a specific sub-group of people, defined within a British context, as opposed to being the name given to all people who are citizens of Australia.

“In time, a new nation was born whose defining characteristics were the landscape (‘the bush’), its Britishness (‘the crimson thread of kinship’), and a people who were typified by white racial purity, egalitarianism and mateship.” (Attwood, 1996:102).

So called characteristics of Australians such as white racial purity and mateship still linger today, however any notion of cultural purity was never existent and is particularly non-existent today given Australia’s cultural plurality. Mateship, the other great myth, is questionable in a modern society in which it could be argued that the majority of the population is urbanised, polarised, and has a materialistic and selfish attitude. The misconception of the relationship between Australians and the bush is still actively promoted abroad as if this were, in fact, the “true Australian”. (The closest most Australians get to this is by buying a Toyota Landcruiser to drive around inner suburbia, and sitting down to watch an episode of Malcolm Douglas’ Australian Adventures).

It was these characteristics that supposedly constituted an Australian. Because the land had been named Australia when white settlement occurred, the “Australians” who inhabited the land subsequently granted themselves ownership of the land. (See Attwood, 1996). If one was to ask oneself, “Who lives in Australia?”, on a linguistic basis the answer would be Australians – not Aborigines. This is an important issue given that the terms “Australia” and “Australians” give the impression that “Aborigines” are some sort of other people who simply live on someone else’s land, contrary to the truth. There is no land called, for example, “Aborigine”. If this were to become the case, it would be interesting watching the balances of power change as a result of greater world wide recognition of Aborigines.

Another way in which Aborigines can be included or further recognised as the legitimate owners of Australia is by changing the national flag.

There are a variety of reasons why a substantial number of people have called for the changing of the Australian flag. (Even though this debate has an “on and off” relationship with the media). Changing the national flag would mean a number of things. First, it would no longer signify Australian subordination to Britain. Australia is recognised as a nation on an equal par with Britain when it comes to international conventions and the like. Second, it would signify Australian independence. Third, it would make way for a flag which better represents Australian diversity. As the Australian flag stands now, the combination of the Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner and the Southern Cross depicts Australia as being a ‘little England’ in the South. This was close to the truth until immigration played a major factor in building modern Australia. The current Australian flag is quite irrelevant and misrepresentative. When a flag is raised for the benefit of national pride, it should reflect the nation. We only need to recall Cathy Freeman doing a victory lap at the Atlanta Olympic Games carrying the Aboriginal flag and the Australian flag. Those who would argue that the inclusion of the Union Jack reflects Australian history seem unwilling to include other elements which could equally be argued to form part of Australian history.

To take this point further, a person of Italian descent (for example) in Australia can be represented with two flags – Australian and Italian. Since a huge percentage of Australia’s population could claim dual nationality, this could present a peculiar problem of identity.

- Four in ten Australians are migrants or children of migrants.
- One in four Australians was born overseas.
- 13.7% of Australians were born overseas in non-English speaking countries.
- People from 160 countries live in Australia.

(Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner 1997:5).

Having the Union Jack on the Australian is clearly misrepresentative of its peoples. Obviously, many migrants are from New Zealand or England, but for the relatively high number of people who were born in non-English speaking countries, the Union Jack means little. These new Australians have not moved to a British colony, but the flag may suggest that they have.

“While native title and other Aboriginal land claims are held to endanger Australia because it threatens the temporal dream of conservatives, it also wreaks havoc in the conservative unconscious because it challenges the way they have invented Australia in spatial terms. In their historical narratives, Australia is imagined as an indivisible possessed whole, enclosed and complete, its ‘Australianness’ thus residing in its exclusive possession of the continent.” (Attwood, 1996:113).

European dominance over indigenous culture still remains. It could be argued that compassion has led to the granting of land claims to indigenous groups.

However, it is generally recognised that land titles so far granted, are of little or no economic significance to white Australians. No freehold land and most leasehold land is protected from native title. Even in the case of Wik, where dual ownership of land exists between pastoral land holders and native title holders, the native title holders remain subordinate. (Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner 1997:32). Add to this the European dominance over incoming migrants of non-European backgrounds and the problem is compounded. Until recently, migrants were expected to assimilate, this is, to become predominantly British in outlook and aspirations and to leave the “old ways” behind. Little or no value was attached to the cultural richness or traditions of the incoming migrants: they were expected to fit in by conforming to the set norm.

The context is beginning to change. High Court decisions such as that involved in the Mabo case have brought about a serious rethinking of the whole nature of identity in relation to land, culture and the very idea of “Australianness”. To have “Aboriginal Australian” areas is a contradiction in terms given that white Australians had created a narrative of nationhood exclusive only to themselves. This, in effect, would severely disrupt any idea that white Australians had of being one nation with one people. It would mean a re-writing, most likely *by* Aborigines, of Australian history since 1788 that more accurately tells Aboriginal history, and in turn, *Australian* history.

Some conservatives have constructed their arguments in a specific manner which suggests that if Aborigines get any of their land back, it will be like carving up the nation, creating unnecessary divisions. (Attwood, 1996:114). (It may be more to the point that those in power would have less control if Australia was divided in this manner.) The rationale behind this returns us to the contention that “Australian” is modern and “Aboriginal” is past. There is a fear by some non-Aboriginal Australians that if too much land is claimed, Australia – the commodity – would revert to some more primitive form, and therefore be less profitable. The conservatives are merely protecting their interests at the expense of the Aborigines. Would it be the case that Aborigines would have to turn their reclaimed land into high-profit business districts in order for them to be no longer seen as primitive? Does capitalism necessarily constitute modern? The notion of ‘modern’ is a part of the discourse of progression - a construction of Western society.

The white domination which exists in Australia is partly due to the power which they had to name and categorise. If the whites were to be called “Australians” and the indigenes “Aborigines”, in a country which was called Australia one would think that the land belonged solely to its white constituency and had a far-reaching history which was rich in culture. In this manner, the claim on the land by the Europeans was strong and has been traditionally difficult to penetrate,

particularly with the rise of the New Right.

“In the context of the birth of the new nation, ‘Australian history’ only began with Europeans, and so not only ignored the aboriginal past but also erased the indigenes’ prior presence. British colonisation was legitimised by naturalising a relationship between Europeans – who were by now called Australians – and the land Australia, thus denying any relationship between those who had been the first to be called Australians and Australia.” (Attwood, 1996:xii).

Aborigines view things in relation to place as opposed to time. However, the current discourse of Australian history has a European mind-set which sets things in time as much as place. With this in mind, there is a strong bias against any idea of an Aboriginal component to the country’s history: “Australian history” began when Europeans arrived.

“Despite battles and defeats of 200 years Black Australians today have regained a sense of pride in the complex, culturally rich and diverse, just and moderate societies to which they are heirs. They are working out their futures by honouring those traditions. And despite 200 years of being robbed of their birthright, the Western concept of land ‘ownership’ and inherited possessions, wealth and authority is as alien to Black Australia now as it was in 1788.” (Grassby, 1993:12).

It seems incongruous that the dominant culture sub-group (predominantly British) takes a great deal of pride in the depth of their pre-Australian history and traditions, but want to discount or ignore the history and traditions of others who were, or came to be, part of the nation. The days when numerical superiority was sufficient to impose their view is rapidly passing, but it may also be the case (and a kinder argument) that a growing proportion of the dominant culture is being re-educated to a wider view.

Chapter 2.

The Inevitability of the Australian Republic.

In terms of Australia's history, the changes which have occurred, particularly since 1788, have been drastic. Prior to 1788, Australia was not a monarchy. Therefore, in terms of Aboriginal recognition and reconciliation, the monarchy is a relatively new idea. However, the state of Australia today is of more significance than just its history, although history is an essential component and basis for the position we find ourselves in today.

"An Australian Republic will provide a sense of unity for all those new Australians who have arrived in Australia for the past two hundred years and for the prior occupants. We may indeed ask ourselves "Is the Republic inevitable?" but perhaps the more important question is "What benefit will a British Monarchy be for Australia in the next century?" (Gelade, 1994).

This quote by Gelade is essentially the reason why I believe that the republic should and will come into being. The reason she puts forward in this quote alone are the basis for a serious and relevant argument.

The pro-Monarchy argument may be lacking in important points. Some of these pro-Monarchy arguments include:

1. Australian politicians over the last few years have shown themselves to be completely incapable of doing beneficial things for Australia, (abusing parliamentary privileges, lowering tariffs so Australian companies can't survive, privatising everything, etc.).
2. Australia's Constitution will have to be rewritten. (Removing checks and balances, allow for dictatorship, etc.). The people involved will no doubt write it for their own benefit, not for Australia's benefit, like when Australia's founding fathers designed it in the first place.
3. Employment of a bill of rights which can be altered, so Australian's freedoms can be gradually taken away.
4. Australia's National Anthem would have to be replaced.
5. The Australian flag would have to be changed.
6. Any transition would come at great financial, social and democratic cost.
7. *A republic will not solve* Australia's unemployment, environmental degradation, crime, the national debt, etc.
8. Removing any Constitutional reference to God.
9. An Australian President will have command of the police, armed forces; and there has been no proposal as to how an Australian President can be dismissed if he starts doing dictatorship-like things.

(Unknown author 1: date unknown).

All of these points completely ignore any recognition of cultural diversity in Australia. A rewriting of the Constitution and the adoption of a bill of rights is not necessarily a negative thing. In doing these two things, Australia provides itself with the potential to improve the way Australians are governed. A change of

national anthem and a change of the national flag would be welcomed by many people. The current flag, as discussed in chapter 1, is misleading and unrepresentative of the Australian people. A new national anthem would need to be debated, however it was not so long ago that *Advance Australia Fair* replaced *God Save the Queen*. Also the removal of references to God in the Constitution would demonstrate that Australia has wide religious diversity.

Point number seven tells us that a republic will not solve unemployment, environmental degradation, crime, the national debt, etc. The simple argument against this is that these problems have not been solved by the Constitutional Monarchy. Solving such problems has little to do with the debates about the republic or national identity and raising them in this context is simply a red herring.

Perhaps the only way for Australia to leave the past behind and to comfortably adapt to its current situation is to leave the past political system behind and seek one which more properly reflects its current state. The type of republic which Australia can adopt can be of a variety of models. Australia has the choice to determine the new governmental system, and therefore the potential to improve it. But what is important is that the monarchical links with Britain are severed to illustrate respect of cultural diversity and to aim for a more egalitarian Australia. John Hirst says,

“There is a new expression coming into common use in Australia: our pride in being multicultural. What makes the expression new is not “multicultural” – that word is now twenty years old. The newness is on “pride”. The *pride* in being multicultural. When was the last time you heard that word? We haven’t been this proud for a long time, not since we were proud to be British”. (1994:29).

Without a doubt, multicultural “pride” is on the increase in Australia. Maybe “we” would still be proud to be British if “we” were British. However, “we” are multicultural. Therefore, the republic should replace the monarchy.

Chapter 3.
The Reshaping of "Australian Identity"

The idea that Australians grapple with the notion of what is actually meant by "Australian" is nothing new. However, what is new is what it means to be "Australian" as time progresses. Australianness is an ever-changing notion, and is a very current topic of debate.

It would seem that people feel a need to belong to some type of group that allows them to identify themselves, and in turn, differentiate themselves from other groups. What does it mean to be Australian, or English, or Indonesian, or any other nationality? It is assumed that people who belong to a nation have cultural similarities which act as a primary identity, more so than the characteristics of other sub-groups to which they might belong. One of the first things which we notice when meeting a new person is their racial characteristics, and we often assume that these are the same as some national characteristics. For example, a person who appears Chinese, may not be as "Chinese" as we may have initially anticipated. National identity is often synonymous with cultural purity. (Turner, G. 1994:122). More frequently, people are born from parents of different nationalities, or they live in a different country to their country of origin.

Generally, people identify with a nation, and each nation is supposed to have their own distinguishing 'culture'. Upon having a certain national identity, one shows certain characteristics of that particular nation's culture. Not only does one show characteristics of their culture, but they will usually defend or uphold it. As we know, cultures and ideologies go hand in hand.

We know that national identities are non-natural ideologies which are nothing more than human creations. Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed the idea that we know things in relation to what they are not, or else they simply would not exist. For example, if there were no black, there would be no white because there would be nothing in which black could be compared to in order for anyone to define it. The same principle applies when discussing national identities. The main trouble for the notion of national identity is that there is an assumption that "Australians" are a homogenous group. This is, of course, far from the truth.

As discussed in chapter 1, "Australianness" was a narrative which excluded not only Aborigines, but also much of the rest of the non-British newcomers. The history of the last 209 years needs to be rewritten and retaught. The past can no longer be ignored.

To be Aboriginal is has traditionally be seen by non-Aborigines as 'not quite

Australian'. Being Aborigine had, and possibly still has such connotations. Aborigines are, and always have been, part of Australian history, therefore Aborigines are a crucial element in the identity of "Australian". Subsequently, Aboriginality should have a positive connotation, not only for the benefit of Aborigines, but also for the benefit of the Australian identity.

In addition to the push for Aboriginality becoming a positive inclusion to the identification, there is of course the multicultural situation. Recognition of cultural diversity in Australia needs to come to fruition. All peoples which have settled in Australia and the indigenes have contributed to what Australia actually is. Therefore, it is not only fair and just to include cultural diversity as part of a new national identity, but without embracing this, Australia is doomed to succumb to indefinite racial bickering, while the world changes. This view is most likely utopian at present, partly because of the strengthening and polarisation of views on the racial debate as a result of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, and also because Australia has an undeniable history of racism.

It is inevitable that Australian national identity will change, and continue to change, no matter how many people write about it, speak about it, or debate it. It is something which will happen and is currently happening. The situation of the Australian identity is presently in a delicate period on a scale never seen before. This is a result of the importance of the idea of a single national identity, and the sheer amount of cultural diversity in Australia.

There are now many events which people from all cultures can participate in. Events such as cultural festivals are a fantastic means for Australians to celebrate cultural diversity, and appreciate what different cultures offer Australia. Cultural festivals in Australia are more than one culture celebrating their own culture, but allow people of all cultures to learn about, and somehow indulge in, another culture which has become a part of the wider "Australian culture". Simons (1995:277) says,

"If a politics of recognition is to bring about a stronger realisation of the values of recognition and identity, there will be a need for serious and widespread opportunities to interact and participate in those activities which are pertinent to the realisation of the common good".

Certainly in Australia, the "common good" in this context is the promotion of cultural harmony.

The forging of a new Australian national identity will, of course, include the Anglo population. These are the people who are the dominant group in Australia. It may appear as if they simply sit back and go about their business while minority groups attempt to become a part of the Australia which they have

created, and they control. For a new and more workable national identity to come to fruition, all groups, whether minorities or the dominant, need to change. However, tradition often demonstrates how fearful people are of change, and just what a slow process change can be. The word “Australian” will need to change to cater for the newly defined “majority” of Australians – those who call Australia home regardless of their ethnic background. This will then aid in helping more people participate in Australian society without being frightened of ridicule, alienation, or marginalisation. For example, people who are Japanese-Australians would ideally be known simply and unquestionably as Australians.

“Australian national identity constitutes an arena over which Anglo-Australian identity and ethnic minority identities are contested, although its strength varies according to specific economic, historical and political contexts. Australian migrants have always had a hyphenated identity – they are ethnic-Australians, that is Vietnamese-Australians, Greek-Australians, Italo-Australians etc. And on that basis they claim certain social rights. They will never be Anglo-Australians, whose political cultures and institutions have the power to set political agendas. But they are Australians. Anglo-Australians have always called themselves *the* ‘Australians’ and this ideology remains strong though it is constantly contested. But equally, many migrant Australians (both first and second generation) tend to call themselves ‘Vietnamese’, ‘Italians’ or ‘Greeks’ etc. Many Anglo-Australians and migrant Australians still believe that the ‘real’ Australian is blond haired, blue-eyed and *he* prefers to spend much of *his* leisure time on the beach”. (Vasta, 1993, 223).

It could be argued that outside of their own sub-group, the hyphenated identity of Australians is largely due to physical appearances. The immigration programs of forty years ago aimed at importing those who were seen as being able to assimilate – people who would blend in with the other “Australians”. We know, however, that this was not to be the case. There are people who do not fit into the physical mould of the mythical Australian. There are many families of Chinese-Australians who have been in Australia longer than most other Australians, however appearance leads to them still being seen as Chinese, when they are actually more “Australian” than most of the population. To have an olive complexion consigned you to being a “new Australian” regardless of place of birth or whether you were the third generation of your family to be born in Australia.

The power of names and labels is very important politically. This brings us back to the idea of the country being called “Australia”, and the “owners” of the land being “Australians”. (Refer Chapter 1). The white people have not only self-justified their claim to the land, but others recognise the whites as the legitimate owners of the land. This is an important ideological power which maintains domination and control in the hands of the Anglo-Australians.

Those who are not Anglo, are made to feel foreign. If they attempt to return to their home country after living in Australia for a number of years, they are also “foreign” in their home country, often realising how Australian they have

become. Groups in this situation are often find themselves subordinated to the major cultural identity because they may lack a strong sense of their own culture and national pride. The problem is compounded when they see themselves as being Australian, even though this may be Italo-Australian, Greek-Australian, etc.

To add contrast to this discussion of a reshaping of a new Australian identity, there is the case of national soccer in Australia, the "A" League. In terms of multiculturalism, many of the large national clubs had a close affiliation to a single ethnic group. Sydney United was a Croatia club, South Melbourne was Greek, Adelaide City was Italian. Two years ago, all clubs with an ethnic affiliation were instructed by Soccer Australia chief, David Hill, to drop their ethnic titles and ethnic logos in order to end exclusion of people who were not from or affiliated with that particular country. This move was primarily a marketing strategy to improve Australian soccer's national profile, however it also demonstrated that multiculturalism need not be separatist, but it can be unified. 1997 saw the beginning of a new era in Australian soccer and in multiculturalism with the advent of the Carlton Soccer Club. The main aim of the club was to capitalise on the markets of people who wanted to follow Australian soccer, but felt excluded by the strong ethnic dimensions which the various clubs had – even after dropping their ethnic symbols and changing their names to ethnically neutral ones. The Carlton Soccer club has marketed itself as a *family* club and is aiming to quash the link in Australia between soccer and ethnicity. The important aspect here being that the notion of the family spans all cultures, therefore, the club is culturally neutral and welcomes all types of people. Clubs like the Melbourne Knights (ex-Melbourne Croatia) have taken note of this, and have taken measures to eradicate the cultural slant which is said to be exclusive. Measures such as changing the uniforms from the Croatia red, white and blue, to the Australian green and gold.

Soccer in Australia since the large immigration programs of the 1950s and 1960s has always been seen by the dominant Anglo-Saxon sub-group as something which belong to people from non-English speaking nations. In Australian national soccer, there has never been an "Australian" club, in the sense that there were Greek, Italian, etc. clubs. Nor was there an English national club. It is one of the few arenas where the dominant group had little control. The extent of their control was to keep soccer fans at the soccer, and to prevent soccer becoming popular. This did work to some degree over a relatively long period of time. Soccer is one of the largest followed and participated in sports in Australia, however, the other Australian football codes have had the limelight all to themselves.

With the recent Australian failure to reach the World Cup finals, however, Australia saw soccer's popularity rise. (The media can take much of the credit for

this). To put it crudely, Australian soccer is losing its image as the “wog” game, and it is being recognised as a national sport for all.

Chapter 4.
Pauline Hanson and the race debate.

"Hanson is the ideal anti-politician for the media culture. She has no programme (in that she is not alone). She is not of the elites – on '60 Minutes' she wears an orange jump suit, not an Armani jacket. She opposes both cultural and economic elites – she has little time for the ABC (a symbol of middle class culture) but she is also against global capitalism and foreign investment, and she wants to keep Telstra in Public ownership. She does not so much represent a group as embody an experience of frustration – evident in the way she speaks, in her bodily ill ease, her very articulateness. She is most coherent when she is angry." (McDonald, 1996/7:5).

Pauline Hanson has been one of the most controversial political figures in Australia in 1997. Anyone who has scanned a few newspapers or occasionally glanced at the television during this past year was bound to hear her name mentioned. Most would have a brief understanding of her political agenda (as presented by the media) and know a little of her background as the supposed ordinary Australian "battler". The popular media's representation of Pauline Hanson has been strongly biased, largely due to them knowing that most people would be opposed to her, in turn keeping them in good public stead. Positive portrayals of Pauline Hanson in the popular media, if existent at all, have been few and far between.

The rise of Hanson came at a crucial time in recent Australian history. Her views came into the public spotlight in the midst of the Mabo and Wik debates and carried on into the republic debate. It can be argued that the combination of these has 'divided' the nation. It may also be quite possible that her views caught the media's attention because they knew that each of these debates was at an uneasy stage, and the controversy created by Hanson had the potential to, and probably did, polarise people's views and create more debate.

Hanson has not directly been associated with the republic debate, however, some of the main issues which she dealt with were similar to those that are being dealt with in the republic debate. Australian notions of nationalism, nation, identity and Australia's future are under scrutiny.

To begin, the 'Political Goals of One Nation' must be explored.

1. To stop all immigration except that related to investment until all Australian unemployment is resolved.
2. To treat all Australians equally and abolish divisive and discriminatory policies, such as those attached to Aboriginal and multicultural affairs.

3. To restrict foreign ownership of Australia, repeal the Native Titles Act, abolish ATSIC and reverse Wik.
4. To restore tariff protection, revitalise Australian manufacturing and initiate financial support for small business and the rural sector.
5. To take positive action on such matters as taxation reforms, education, health, unemployment, crime and the discrimination created by political correctness.

(From Pauline Hanson's Maiden Speech, 1996).

Looking at Hanson's political goals, it can be seen how One Nation has gained the amount of support that it has, even if this turns out to be a temporary phenomenon. Australia is at heart a capitalist country, and its goals are a reflection of capitalist systems in general. Hanson claims to oppose the economic elites of this system because they aren't "ordinary Australians". (However, it is interesting to note that she is herself a business owner, and therefore one of the elites rather than one of the battlers). Problems in this context arise when Hanson attacks Asians. Business dealings with Asia are of utmost economic importance to Australia, and many people are concerned that her views will damage business relations, in turn placing an unnecessary strain on the economy.

Hanson seems to find some spark of support when she speaks out on Aboriginal welfare, the abolition of ATSIC and the reversal of Wik. There are many people who agree with her that this is discriminatory against her 'silent majority/Aussie battler/average taxpayer', and it has the reverse effect when aiming for social equality. Australia could save many millions of dollars annually by withdrawing this form of welfare, but at what real cost? Attacks on Asians result in Australia standing to lose even more.

Support or lack of support often seems to be centred around economic arguments. Often the question is not whether or not Hanson is right or wrong in what she says, but how and who reacts to what she says, and in what manner. Obviously, those who Hanson attacks will be opposed to her, but there are many others who have to simply make up their minds for themselves, and their decisions will be based on their personal political stances. Ms. Hanson uses economic rationalism to her advantage (as well as the notion of Australian freedom of speech), so that she can claim that she is not a racist, and is merely defending the 'ordinary taxpayer'.

Hanson's first goal assumes that Australian unemployment can be resolved if all immigration is stopped unless it is related to investment. This is historically

incorrect. Immigrants, like any other types of people do get work, however, they also create jobs and businesses.

“Research indicates that immigration enhances Australia’s export possibilities and is also likely to increase exports through tourism. The fact that Australians speak almost every language in the world creates opportunities for economic and social development. The skills of our multicultural workforce have been cited by a number of multinational companies as a significant factor in choosing Australia for their regional headquarters.” (Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner 1997:10).

In addition to this, there is a substantial number of immigrants who are not of legal working age (and are therefore not contributing to unemployment by taking jobs). There are also those who have no intention of gaining welfare benefits, who in turn, have nothing to do with Australia’s unemployment figures. Few countries have full employment, but this is not something generally blamed on immigration. Unemployment is a result of the principles of economic rationalism.

The second goal regarding Australian egalitarianism is nothing if not insulting to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. These are the people who are the most impoverished and disadvantaged in Australia. To take away their benefits would result in further marginalisation and the continuance of white domination in Australia.

The third goal, again blatantly aims to advantage the Anglo-Australians and marginalise Aborigines. Repealing the Native Titles Act, overturning the Wik decision and abolishing ATSIC do nothing to advance the current debate on national identity, but instead return us to the position of the 1970s. Adding in a clause to restrict foreign ownership of Australia could be argued as simply being a distraction from this national identity debate. The fact is that restricting foreign ownership could be beneficial to the economy, yet at the same time may harm international business relations which, in the end, may be detrimental.

The forth goal is yet another economic rationalisation with appeal to capitalist values.

The fifth attacks political correctness and essentially characterises it as an absurd creation of intellectuals and “do-gooders”.

“We now have a situation where a type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded ‘industries’ that flourish in our society servicing Aborigines, multi-culturalists and a host of other minority groups. In response to my call for equality for all Australians, the most noisy criticism came from the fat cats, bureaucrats and the do-gooders. They screamed the loudest

because they stand to lose the most – their power, money and position, all funded by ordinary Australian taxpayers.” (Hanson, 1997:1)

Hanson assumes that most Australians are actively opposed to political correctness and cannot be bothered with it. Maybe it is seen as a type of conversational obstacle. This may or may not be true, but it seems insulting to those who created politically correct terms and ideas in an attempt of greater equality. Political correctness does not only address issues of race and ethnicity, but also of most other social stratifications.

Here, Ms. Hanson claims that she knows what the ‘ordinary’ Australian is. From this brief paragraph, she assumes that ‘ordinary Australian taxpayers’ do not promote political correctness, and do not feel that they should have to direct any funds towards Aborigines, multiculturalists and other minority groups.

The charges of racism against Ms. Hanson may have inflicted some damage on Australia’s hopes of becoming more a part of the Asian community. With Pauline Hanson being portrayed and often seen as a racist (despite her denial of this), her views have travelled around the world. Prime Minister John Howard at one point became caught up in this and was depicted in the Japanese comic book Big Comic Spirits Weekly as a Hanson supporter and an advocate of white supremacy. (See Skelton, 1997:A8). This was mainly due to Mr. Howard refusing to try to silence Ms. Hanson because he claimed it would impinge on freedoms of speech. There is a proportion of people who believe that John Howard has the power to silence Ms. Hanson, however because he refused to do so they believe that he is a racist himself. The problems of Asian relations, however, do not stop at this point.

One major problem that continues to linger in business dealings with Asia is that Australians may expect that Asians become more Westernised - more “Australian”. It would appear that the Asian experience of Australia is far greater than Australia’s experience of Asia. Fitzgerald (1997:12) outlines how Australian representatives to Asia often speak no languages apart from English, and they have no experience of a culture other than Australian culture.

Fitzgerald stresses the point that many Australians do not know about Asia simply because they do not believe that it is important enough to. (1997:12). However, this is an area where multiculturalism in Australia could be used to benefit all Australians. People who are originally from countries outside Australia, or are descendants of such people are a potential “goldmine” for Australia’s economy, and have a head start when dealing with people from their old countries. To bring this back to Fitzgerald’s discussion of Australia’s Asian representatives knowing very little about the people who they are dealing with, there are many people who

are knowledgeable in these areas. This potentially gives Australia an advantage, which few other countries have. Multiculturalism can be good for international relations, provided this resource recognised and harnessed as an integral component of Australia's human resources. The danger lies in adopting a view in which "they" deal with "their own kind".

Surprisingly, Hanson may ultimately do some good by forcing many who would not have otherwise bothered to face the issues confronting modern Australia. Are we indeed to become "One Nation"?; although perhaps not the one nation that Hanson has envisaged.

Chapter 5. *Homogenising the Republic.*

"The monarchists and the republicans generally have not fully recognised indigenous opinion or rights in determinations of the country's future." (Brady, 1993:145.)

Australia is one of the world's most multicultural nations. The links with the Commonwealth are continually changing and the idea of being a British outpost has largely disappeared. The High Court's Mabo decision in June 1992 has left many people questioning the role of land and the idea of Australian identity. The call to change to a republican system has brought a further dimension to the identity debate. These debates have reached a point where a decision must be reached on Australia's future. As stated before, Australia is no longer the white British outpost which it supposedly used to be, and it is no longer dependent on Britain. Failure to reach such a decision, or constantly delaying the decision-making process could leave Australia continually debating identity, nationalism and related topics. Major political and social changes in Australia and the rest of the world may suggest that a change to a republic is necessary and colonialism is no longer viable. As John Morton outlines,

"As historian Don Watson, the Prime Minister's adviser and speech writer, has recently argued, the logic behind the call for an Australian republic is not so much that we are a young nation which, in order to mature, needs to cut the umbilical cord with the 'motherland', but more that we are already far, far too old to maintain that tie: "The great myth about Australia is that we are young. We're not. Not only is this the oldest society on earth, this white Australia or multicultural Australia, or whatever you like to call it, is also old." (1996:118-119).

Watson suggests that Australia is ready for the republic, and has been for quite some time. This is however, merely his own opinion. The final decision in the republic debate will be heavily influenced by the perception of what current and future Australian identity is.

Whether Australia becomes a republic or remains under the banner of the British monarchy is merely a question of time. There are many reasons why or why not this should happen. In simplified terms, the republicans see the republic as a symbol of independence and maturity; the monarchists believe that the Constitution and governmental system has served Australians well for the last hundred years, therefore it should not be changed. The secondary arguments over which republic model should or should not be adopted are outside the scope of this paper and will not be addressed here.

When considering the Republic, one question of paramount significance is whether the people of Australia are any longer British subjects. In a legal sense, they are not, but it could be argued that culturally, Australia is still a British

nation. Simply looking at the cultural diversity in Australia, it can be seen that this is not the case. With this in mind, the notion of Australian citizenship is also put into question.

“The notion of citizenship in a nation of ‘subtleties and diversity’ is one that has to be associated with rights and responsibilities within a geographical space rather than loyalty to a nation that attempts the pretence that there can be singular ethnic affiliation within the boundaries of a nation-state.” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1993:135).

Kalantzis and Cope’s point here is important in its recognition that those who live in Australia are bound more by geography than ideology. Future Australian citizenship may have to take this on board and conjure a new nationalism and meaning of citizenship which recognises this diversity within this geographical space.

If the Republic of Australia is to come into being, it provides the best opportunity in our history to set things right. Aborigines will need to be empowered in order achieve a greater feeling of participation in their own land. Other cultural influences will have an opportunity to be recognised and valued. A more balanced view of who we are as a nation, rather than who we once were, should be the aim.

Aborigines have been fighting for land rights and recognition since 1788. Although obvious disadvantage still plagues Aborigines, some progress has been achieved. What will never happen however, is Aborigines getting all of the land back as well as total governmental control. It seems that no matter the what the level of racial intolerance there is in Australia, and who is right or who is wrong, Australians from all cultures are here to stay. Cultural diversity has generally been accepted, and it is becoming a new means to express national pride.

The movement towards a republic can be the vehicle for more than just a change in the legal system. It can provide the means by which Australia establishes itself as a distinct nation not only within its own mind, but also on the world stage. Not, however, as a single nation-state in the old understanding of what that meant, but rather as a nation which recognises its own diversity within a diverse world.

Conclusion

One thing of note in terms of the recognition of Aborigines and reconciliation is that part of this paper discussed how people from all cultural backgrounds who are Australian citizens should be seen as an "Australian", hence, giving the term new connotations. While there is much discussion about people being or striving to be seen as Australians, no immigrants ever wanted to become Aborigine. What this demonstrates is that Aboriginal disadvantage may be set to continue, even if all Australian citizens were seen as "Australians". (It also reflects the dominance and ownership of the land). Greater equality may not result in greater empowerment of Aborigines.

Over time, racial discrimination will gradually have no basis to exist. On a basic level of human reproduction, there are no guarantees that people in Australia from certain nations are going to have children with people from the same nations. Australia will eventually be a land where people are, for example, part-Irish, part Greek, or part-Indonesian, or any combination of any culture. (However people will always find a way to categorise one another in order to form identities for themselves).

Australia has the potential to become an example to the rest of the world of not only accepting cultural diversity, but showing pride in it. As globalisation progresses and the movement of people around the world increases, other nations may look to Australia seeking advice on dealing with cultural diversity. However, this remains merely as a potential. First, Australians have to deal with, and conquer, the outstanding issues.

The Republic of Australia is inevitable and on the verge of its birth, but events are still unfolding. Such events as the Constitutional Convention, the rapid downfall of Pauline Hanson, and of course, the advent of the year 2000. The year 2000 may bring about much reflection on where many different groups and humanity in general is at that time, and where they feel they really should be. It may well be a time of new goal being made and possibly change, but it could also be a time of procrastination.

Regardless of dates, the national identity debate will carry on for a long time yet to come. The nation remains as one of the main sources of identification, and it will take a long time for this to change (if it does change at all): even if globalisation nullifies all ideas of cultural purity worldwide.

However, for the time being, Australia remains in a critical situation of politics and identity. These are problems which can only be dealt with by Australians.

Hopefully, the rewriting of Australian history, and the teaching of this more correct history will aid Australia's future generations to understand and be compassionate towards indigenous issues, as well as cultural difference.

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