

A Weird Mob...

One thinks how it was to my parent's advantage to migrate to Australia (separately, as they met in Melbourne) on British passports as they came out to Australia before Cyprus was independent which I assume was a benefit rather than a hindrance although at the time Australia was in the midst of a population drive so as to strategically improve its national security and national economic base so at the time it was much easier to gain entry and permanent citizenship. This is not to argue against independence but rather to explore a point of view that while the British Commonwealth is seen as a relic of an imperial past it can also work as a vehicle of opportunity for those once colonised; as what the coloniser has to offer has so often come about from what it originally took from those it colonised. One actually tires of the ideological trope (or ideological 'wowerism' i.e. a paternalistic moral crusading) that those who have been colonised are always victims which no doubt is certainly the case but what is so often ignored is that ordinary people from colonized entities are not always passive but can be personally pro-active in improving their lives by earnestly seeing what the colonizer has to offer rather than always reflecting on what the colonizer has taken away. This too is politics. ('You've come to exploit us well, what can we exploit from you...?'). There are different ways to resist against the dominant paradigm or to simply outwit it. In post-war Australia, many migrants who came here to initially perform menial tasks, work in the factories etc. worked hard to build up the financial capital to acquire property so as to guarantee their economic security and in many instances encouraged their children to be well-educated to guarantee the possibility of them becoming upwardly socially mobile of which millions of migrants are appreciative of the opportunity in Australia to do so but a cultural insularity that in its worst elements was exemplified by suspicion, racism and even jealousy had to also be overcome along the way. (Something I was acutely aware of - in the 1960s and 1970s especially - being the son of a suburban milk bar proprietor in which there were many fights with this violence brought on by customers, usually youngish - eg. the bodgies - but not always, whose Saturday night 'entertainment' when bored was to vilify my father - nicknamed 'Speedie' for taking his time in serving which became adopted as a term of endearment - and as well on occasions my mother which was extraordinarily cowardly). I may also add such was the original prevalence of a mono-culture that somehow one had to explain how one could live in Australia between two cultures which as far as I was concerned was actually the problem of whoever asked such a question and what I should have asked back is how can anyone deny themselves the opportunity of personally experiencing a basic level of cultural pluralism such as entwining the best of two cultures - if not more - that can only enrich one's life experience - and not limit it as if that was what was ignorantly implied. One also notes that in Australia it is so often the case that many bilingual speakers come from a migrant background while it should be par the course for everyone to learn another language including even an Aboriginal one). Multiculturalism when initiated may have not exactly wholly overcome a superior societal power dynamic that is still mainly dominated by Anglo-Australia (and associated 'Australian values' which at times when harshly critiqued stereotypically hark back to a 'white bread' era and a mythical classless egalitarianism) but it is at least a tentative start that has somewhat achieved a cultural pluralism of sorts if not a wholly political one.

*Yet to be a little lateral in this discussion - as well as a little, somewhat light-hearted (I'm hoping that's okay) - there is also the self-effacing Australian sense of humour so with all that said here's the 1966 Australian light hearted film *They're A Weird Mob* of an Italian man's introduction to the Australian way of life back then:*

They're a Weird Mob. (1966).

https://youtu.be/yxTk2ishZJc?si=y25JDYXcV5J_ZrK4

They're a Weird Mob. Trailer.

<https://youtu.be/hUD9-RVHWig?si=xEUzAFi35S7SzFKq>

However, Australia's migration mix in the 21st century is very different as this article suggests:

Australasia rising: who we are becoming. George Megalogenis. SMH. (2019).

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/australasia-rising-who-we-are-becoming-20190122-p50ssx.html>

In this 2016 episode of the ABC's *The Minefield* if memory serves me correctly I think George Megalogenis also makes some passing comments on early 21st century migration to Australia. As for the title of the episode it is still a relevant question today.

Are our political leaders out of ideas? ABC The Minefield. (2016).

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/theminefield/waleed-aly-george-megalogenis-are-political-leaders-out-of-ideas/7471496>

There is also commentary by George Megalogenis on Australian migration in the following link:

White Australia policy. National Museum of Australia.

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/white-australia-policy>

White Australia Policy. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Australia_policy#:~:text=Competition%20in%20the%20gold%20fields,Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%20Islands

It is also of interest to discover that the rights won at the acclaimed Eureka Stockade were not extended to the Chinese gold diggers. Rather than improve the labour rights of Asian and Pacific Islander workers so all workers would receive the same wage to undermine the employer preference for overseas cheap labour (which also includes outright slavery as in the case of Pacific Islanders on the sugar fields and Aboriginal domestic workers etc. who also often had their wages stolen) it was preferred to shut non-Europeans out of Australia by way of the White Australia Policy.

The riots history erased: reckoning with the racism of Lambing Flat. Guardian. (2018).

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/aug/07/the-riots-history-erased-reckoning-with-the-racism-of-lambing-flat>

The Burrangong Affair. Jason Phu. John Young Zerunge. 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art. (2018).

<https://4a.com.au/exhibitions/the-burrangong-affray-jason-phu-john-young-zerunge>

Blackbirding: Australia's history of luring, tricking and kidnapping Pacific Islanders. ABC. (2017).

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-17/blackbirding-australias-history-of-kidnapping-pacific-islanders/8860754>

THE WAGES OF SIN: COMPENSATION FOR INDIGENOUS WORKERS. UNSW Law Journal. (2009).

<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/32-3-21.pdf>

Slavery in Australia. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_Australia#:~:text=Many%20Aboriginal%20Australians%20were%20also,a%20practice%20known%20as%20blackbirding.

A final video link:

Talking about racism: Equality and social cohesion in Australia. University of Melbourne. (2012).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbn5SCK_t9w