



CHAPTER 2

AUSTRALIAN RACISM AND IMMIGRATION

'Cultural differences . . . are used by those who have vested interest in it, to create, and then perpetuate, dissension and disunity within society'.

- Pat O'Shane (1982)

Understanding 'Race' and Racism

Some scholars analysing Australian racism argue that there is no substantial empirical data to justify a conclusion that Australian society is overtly 'racist' (Albinski 1987). But, more recently, this viewpoint has been challenged by those who point to the persistence of acts of racism and racial violence against Aboriginal, as well as in more recent times, against Jewish and Asian groups (e.g., Jakubowicz 1998; Cunneen et al. 1997; Hollinsworth 1998; Vasta and Castles 1997; HREOC 1991). Whatever be the extent and intensity of racialism,¹ it has been argued by others that 'racism as an ideology is deeply embedded in the structures of Australian society' (Encel 1971: 30). However, any evaluation of these varying assessments of Australian racism depends to a large extent on how racism is characterized and understood as an analytical construct.

This Chapter is directed towards developing an analysis of racism in Australia, especially in the specific context of Asian immigration. The intention is to apply a conceptual framework which facilitates the understanding of anti-Asian racism in Australian society from a historical and socio-political context. Over and above the crucial significance of racism in relation to the Aboriginal people, the original inhabitants, this account of Australian racism seeks to demonstrate the strong links that



exist between Australian racism, immigration, and nationalism.

To this end, it is attempted here to contrast the ‘old racism’ of an earlier era—in the formative period of Australian racism, the mid-nineteenth century—with the emerging ‘new racism’ of the twentieth century. Following Wieviorka (1995) and others, it is argued that this difference between *old* and *new* racism points to the ‘two logics of racism’: one based on the idea of *inequality*—domination, exploitation; and the other, on the idea of *difference*—unity and identity. This shift in meaning entails different forms of racial discourse, and points to the ideological continuity as well as representational differences existing between earlier and later forms of racism.

As a preamble to this analysis of anti-Asian racism, we need to clarify the meanings attached to the terms ‘race’ and racism as there is little agreement on definitional issues, let alone theorizing about ‘race’ and racism (Solomos and Back 1996; Wieviorka 1995). Essentially, what the term ‘race’ in popular usage signifies is a unit of classification, a way of categorising the world’s population in terms of inheritable characteristics (e.g., physical features, descent/blood, etc.) which are presumed to determine human abilities and other aspects of the group culture. Importantly, in the common sense popular understanding, racial groupings refer to the categories of people, hierarchically ordered and ranked in terms of superiority/inferiority. This thinking has its origin in the discredited nineteenth century views of ‘scientific racism’ which suggested that ‘human beings are separable into racial types that are permanent and enduring’, and that these types are fixed and immutable by virtue of identifiable biological characteristics (phenotypical and/or genotypical).

The current status of the concept of ‘race’ as a biological notion is much more fragile, and for all intents and purposes, ‘race’ as a label or category characterising a social group is best understood in terms of the exposition provided by UNESCO in 1981. The UNESCO Statement on Race (Eide 1987), while asserting the basic biological unity of humankind, makes the pointed observation that the genetic factors underlying ‘visible physical characteristics’ (on which much previous race theorizing

has been based) show a far greater degree of diversity than had been imagined. Furthermore, the UNESCO Statement also notes that 'the differences between the genetic structures of two individuals belonging to the same population group can be far greater than the differences between the average genetic structures between two population groups' (quoted in Eide 1987). This finding deprives the word 'race' of much of its presumed scientific biological meaning. Whatever may be the differences observed biology can in no way serve as a basis for a hierarchy between individuals or population groups. Considering that no human group possesses a consistent genetic inheritance, there is no justification for proceeding from 'the observation of a difference to the affirmation of a superiority/inferiority relationship . . .' (Eide 1987: 75).

Given that the term 'race' as a purely biological variable has no validity, it is best understood as 'a social construction based on the perceptions of some combination of pigmentation, physique, descent, historical or geographical origin, dress, language and cultural norms' (Reeves 1983:7). The ideas and beliefs about 'race' are of a socio-political nature and have reference to a particular perspective of portraying the underlying social reality of a specific human group identified as a 'race'. These meanings and interpretations are prescriptive and purposive in that they give legitimacy to particular forms of use and delimit the boundaries of meaning (Smith, 1989). In this sense, the concept of 'race, is a social construct with which people in a given situation can easily identify; it is *real*, in that—whatever its connotations, positive or negative evaluations—people can recognize what is meant by the term.

A persistent difficulty we encounter with the characterization of the concept of 'race' concerns the differentiation between '*race*' and *ethnicity*. While there are some who maintain that the term 'race' should be confined to groups differentiated in terms of biological or physical attributes and which are more immutable, there is a considerable body of literature which sees these terms as being closely related and interchangeable. Thus, there are some theorists (e.g., Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992) who, referring to 'race' as a

special case of ethnicity, prefer to regard ethnicity as the more inclusive term. But, as with the 'race' concept, ethnicity too is a contested notion shrouded in controversy (O'Sullivan and Wilson 1988).

In general, ethnicity is understood as referring to a 'sense of peoplehood', or commonality of shared experience which is helpful in identifying the distinctive character of a group. The latter is usually expressed in terms of a distinctive *culture*, language, religion or national origin; and those employing ethnicity use it as an omnibus term coming within the notion of *culture* for purposes of social categorising (Jayasuriya 1997; O'Sullivan and Wilson 1988).

The concepts of 'race' and ethnicity have in recent times been subject to a variety of interpretations and critical scrutiny from the standpoint of various disciplines, notably sociology/ anthropology, political science and cultural studies (Solomos and Black 1996; Wieviorka 1995). One dominant point of view in this literature was the 'race relations problematic' associated with the early work of sociologists such as Banton, Rex and others who employed 'race' and ethnicity as a sub-set to refer to a specific social category. Thus 'race' referred to the social relations governed by genotypical or phenotypical markers, and ethnicity to social relations influenced by one's 'distinctive culture', constituting 'ethnic relations'. By usage, the terms 'race' and ethnicity have much in common as they refer to social practices such as discrimination, negative attitudes and the domain of socio-political activities involving matters of inclusion/exclusion in the broader structures of society. From this perspective, racism may be understood not just in terms of group relations but more by focussing on the racialising group—the group constructing the racialised category of the 'other'.

Accordingly, for some theorists (e.g. Wieviorka 1995; Miles 1989), 'race' and the related notion of ethnicity have to be understood and analysed in terms of the nature of the ideology which underlies the usage of 'race' as a 'social construction' in the domain of socio-political action. Here the focus of analysis is on ideology, one aspect of which is 'racism', which affects on all aspects of social and political reality. Racism as an ideology

constructs differences which impinge on the way everyday experience is perceived, embodied and reflected in a range of social institutions (Simkin and Nicholson 1987.) The operation of this ideology in racism depends, not on 'the characteristics of the groups to be dominated but on the interests and culture of the dominant group which attaches social meaning to real or imagined physical or cultural characteristics of the groups which are dominated' (Castles 1990: 17-18). For this reason, there are many theorists (e.g., Van den Berghe 1978)² who maintain that racial ideologies such as racism are as relevant and meaningful when used in relation to either ethnic or racial groups.³

Thus, for a long time, a distinctive feature of racist ideology was the hierarchic ordering of 'races' based on racial inequalities, i.e., that some races are superior/inferior. In this sense, racism proceeds to ascribe negatively evaluated characteristics in a deterministic manner (i.e., of abilities and other cultural features) to the supposedly racially different groups. This way of analysing racist ideologies puts the emphasis on the inequality/inferiority of the racialised group. This racism linked with colonial expansion and empire building, in particular with the idea of the right of Englishmen to rule, was at one time characteristic of British racism. It was a racial ideology buttressed by the theorising of social Darwinism, implying a superiority of 'an aristocracy of nature' (Wieviorka 1995: 28).

An alternative way of understanding the ideology of racism has been in terms of what Wieviorka (1995) calls the 'logic of differentiation; where 'race' is employed to exclude or set apart racialised groups and the emphasis is placed on *difference* rather than on *inequality*. The shift of emphasis between these two logics—the logic of differentiation and logic of inferiorization—helps to account for the different manifestation of racial ideologies. For example, British racism (as was the case with German racism), from its very origins, was associated with nationalism. In the case of the Germans, they asserted that their nationalism and national unity was primarily in terms of 'a common tribal origin; a unity of descent *ius sanguinis*. In these forms of racism, what was important was the way in which the processes of racialization worked—through myths

and idea systems—in the production of an imaginary and racialising perception of the Other’ (Wieviorka 1995: 33). What this logic of racism—the logic of differentiation—achieves is to put the accent ‘on the massacre, exploitation and negation of the Other’.

In acknowledging the analytical utility of these two basic logics of racism, ‘we must also be aware that there is not historical experience of any great magnitude in which [these two logics] are not found in combination’ (Wieviorka 1995: 45). The critical point to emerge from this description of the two fundamental logics of racism—the in egalitarian and the differentialist—is that ‘racism does not conform to one single logic’ (Wieviorka 1995: 135). Racism as manifest sociologically, exhibits the interrelationship between these two logics. This linkage for instance, was evident in South Africa where difference was subordinated to inequality and translated in political expressions of exclusion and oppression. These two logics are ‘constantly interacting’ such that ‘inferiorization leads to exclusion and vice versa (Wieviorka 1995: 119). By recognising which of these logics is dominant in a given experience, we are able to understand the dynamics of the socio-political processes which maintain and sustain racism in society at any given time.

It is the dominance of one or other of these two ‘logics of racism’ at any given time of history that helps us to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of Australian racial ideologies. In short, one set of racial ideologies, characteristic of ‘old racism’ leads to a racist ideology which practises or advocates the dogma that some ‘races’ are inferior/superior for biological or pseudo biological reasons. Another set of evaluations subordinates inferiority to representations of ‘difference’ leading to criteria of inclusion/exclusion, characteristic of the ‘new racism’ of the last two or three decades.

Racism in Colonial Australia: Old Racism

Settler-Aboriginal Relations in the Early Nineteenth Century

With this brief overview of the conceptual status of 'race' and racism, we turn to examine the distinctive character of Australian racism as a form of social discourse. This racial discourse derives from the historical fact of the establishment of Australian society, as a country colonised by white European settlers of British ancestry. As a result, the relations between the new settlers and the native indigenous Aboriginal people were, as Baker (1972) and others have rightly observed, governed by the overriding influence of the ethos of an 'anglo-fragment' society (Hartz 1964). In the process of settlement, all these 'fragment' societies (e.g., the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia) fashioned their ideology of settlement on values, attitudes and belief systems (including as we shall argue, those pertaining to 'race') associated with charter groups of the cultural characteristics of these groups.

These 'charter groups', as dominant groups, exercised a degree of cultural and structural hegemony which has continued over time and become firmly ingrained in the fabric of Australian society. Baker (1972) for instance correctly maintains that the rationale, ethos and characteristics of Australian racism are to be found in what he terms 'anglo-racism', i.e., the racist ideology, beliefs and attitudes and racist practices that derive from the circumstances of the founding of Australia. These 'anglo' influences were apparent in all walks of social and political life and included the patterns of overlordship that the new settlers displayed towards the natives and other groups with whom they came into contact. Thus, the ideological origins of 'black/white' relations, characteristic of several societies are to be found in key elements of British racial ideology such as the view of pagan cultures and 'coloured' people as being morally and biologically inferior, the justification of slavery, forcible conversions, suppressions and even extermination of inferior 'races'.

Parekh (1987a) makes the interesting observation that the British racial consciousness is uniquely racial in that it espouses a viewpoint which centres on the notion of 'stock' or 'origin' as well as the convergence of race/blood with the colour of the skin. The colour of the skin, he adds, was an important component of British racism, so much so that whereas the French were 'colour-blind' and more 'cultural' in their race and ethnic relations, British racism was distinctly colour-based. Thus 'blackness' came to be perceived negatively and associated with barbarianism, primitiveness, and an untamed sexuality. The black/white differentiation in the language of racist discourse in Britain shows the extent to which British racism is colour conscious.

The colour spectrum of Australian racism is somewhat different; as it extends from black/white through yellow to brown. Besides 'black', for historical reasons 'yellow', as sanctified by the phrase 'yellow peril' has been a dominant colour associated with Australian racism built around the invasion narrative. Interestingly, it is reported that, among the Aboriginal people, the term 'yellafella' has been used in some of the remote parts of Australia to refer to mixed bloods. While there is some disagreement among scholars as to whether skin colour is as relevant for Aboriginal people as it is for the whites (see Tonkinson 1990; and Trigger 1989), there is hardly any analysis of how expressions such as 'yellafella' have arisen.

This British racial ideology when transported to settler societies was based exclusively on nineteenth century doctrines of racism. This racial discourse was couched in the language of 'scientific racism' associated with the classic and influential nineteenth century writings of people like Gobineau (1861-82), Haeckel, Chamberlain, and others who were the intellectual forebears to Hitler's vicious forms of twentieth century racism. This nineteenth century 'scientific racism' adapted Darwin's evolutionary ideas to suit its own ends by applying Darwinian principles of natural selection to social change in an attempt to account for variations in social functioning. This theory of 'Social Darwinism' was invoked by the European imperial powers to justify their accomplishments as colonial powers in

the oppression and suppression of native peoples in distant lands.

Hence, according to the principles of natural selection associated with 'Social Darwinism', only those social institutions and races which were best suited to the environment survived, and were able to achieve some degree of perfectibility. Accordingly, it was the superiority of the 'white races' and their social institutions which enabled the great achievements of European imperial conquests and colonial expansion. It has been rightly argued that this:

racial idiom has been powerful in the West because it was launched in the nineteenth century as a way of explaining the pre-eminence in world affairs attained by peoples originating in Western Europe, and it was the more plausible because race was used in a way that it overlapped with the nation. (Banton 1985: 6)

This nineteenth century racism decreed that the superior nations and races were to be admired and preserved; and hence the need for colonies, such as those established in Australia, to be fashioned as a 'white' nation based on racial exclusivity for the benefit of the British and other acceptable white settlers (i.e., those who could be easily anglicised). Social Darwinism provided a justification for the marginalisation, exclusion and dispossession of the indigenous people who were seen as an 'archaic people, destined to disappear before the racial and cultural superiority of the Europeans' (Hollinsworth 1998: 87). However, within this overall pattern of racialism, there were 'local variations and contradictory situations' (Hollinsworth 1998) in Aboriginal-white settler relations.

In this regard, perhaps one of the most interesting features of British racism was what Hartz (1964) refers to as the paradox of equality, viz. the equality applicable to the white man also implied a denial of equality for the 'coloured' on the grounds of racial superiority. This paradox is clearly reflected in Australian racism of the early period of settlement with regard to Aboriginal-white relations. During this period of White settlement, the culture and ethos of the founding settlers, the 'charter groups', had a strong influence markedly evident in organizing the social and political life of the new colonies.

As a result of this the anti-Aboriginal racialism coexisted with a strong sense of philanthropic humanitarianism, liberalism and pragmatism.⁴ The humanitarian liberal values were most evident in such activities as the movement towards the abolition of slavery in the British possessions and the encouragement of missionary activities in the colonies.

Some scholars (e.g., Stanner 1971) are prone to argue that the mixture of liberal values and racism may well account for some of the early compassionate attitudes of the white colonizers towards the indigenous Aboriginal people, which were noticeably devoid of harsh and violent racism. This was not only because of the political and historical circumstances of early settlement, but equally on account of the moral ambivalence of British racism towards the inferior natives. Some have commented that the white settlers were not deeply conscious of the Aboriginal peoples as a 'race', and in fact, there was an element of paternalism and benevolence in their attitude towards the Aboriginal people based on the image of a 'noble savage'.

There is, however, little agreement on this point, and others such as Evans et al. (1975) and Reynolds (1971, 1982) point to a high degree of antipathy and violence in white-Aboriginal relations during this early phase of settlement. As Tonkinson (1990) notes, white settlers may have been sympathetic and even prepared to write admiringly of the Aboriginal people, nevertheless 'within a few decades of the first British settlement, relations between newcomers and indigenous greatly deteriorated' (1990: 202). Interestingly, this increased racism towards Aboriginal peoples began with the emergence of self-governing, independent Australian colonies and their ability to make laws relating to the indigenous settlers. But more importantly, from our point of view, this also coincided with the influx of Chinese immigrants in the 1850s and marked evidence of anti-Chinese feelings. Anti-Asian and anti-Aboriginal attitudes and sentiments were mutually reinforcing and became consolidated as Australian racism.

Early Attitudes to Migrant Settlement

Up to about 1860, as a result of the initial waves of migration, the Australian colonies (NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland) were made up almost exclusively of British settlers of Protestant origin, among whom the landed gentry constituted the dominant group in Australian colonial society. It was these ruling élites who prescribed the criteria of 'inclusion and exclusion' for other settlers such as the Irish Catholics and non-British European migrants. Thus, the Irish settlers had to strive to overcome religious prejudices and hostility inherited from the home country, and needed to gain acceptance and legitimacy for themselves as a distinct 'ethnic group' (O'Farrell 1986; Sherington 1980). The origins of Australian racism, some argue, may be located in 'the second half of the nineteenth century [which] witnessed the construction and naturalisation of hegemonic ideas of racism, exclusivity, and superiority among British settlers' (Hollinsworth 1998: 87).

Although non-British European immigration played only a relatively minor role in the early part of the nineteenth century, it was nevertheless important in determining the key aspects of the future pattern of host-newcomer relations. The normative rules governing these relations were essentially the imperatives of Anglicisation or 'anglo-conformity', especially the strong need to preserve and maintain a racially and culturally homogeneous monocultural society. From the earliest days this philosophy of settlement prescribed the norms of behaviour pertaining to alien settlers who did not necessarily share the same social and cultural attitudes as the host society. This was rigorously applied to the scattered European groups (e.g., the Scandinavian groups, Poles and Hungarians), in determining how they should be integrated into the new society. Thus the early European settlers (barring the Lutheran German settlers in South Australia) who showed a willingness to accommodate themselves to the new society were rapidly assimilated and incorporated into Australian society. This outlook which

determined the philosophy of migrant settlement, in the form of total assimilation, prevailed for several decades until the advent of multiculturalism in the 1970s.

A notable exception to this pattern of integration was the settlement of Italian migrants in the nineteenth century, who were mainly labourers and artisans. As such, they were occupationally segregated in the mining, pastoral and agricultural industries (e.g., sugar cane) and the high degree of closure associated with this pattern of occupational segregation may have aroused the hostility of the host society. Compared with other European groups, their 'exclusion' from mainstream society appears to have been influenced by a mix of economic and cultural factors rather than racism *per se*. Importantly, it was the allegations of cheap labour and strike-breaking which occasioned or justified the occurrence of racial/ethnic conflicts such as the incidents or violence which occurred in relation to these European immigrants. These negative attitudes towards the recruitment of non-British European settlers were minimal during the nineteenth century and resurfaced only after Federation with the amendments to *The Immigration Act* (1925). These were intended primarily to exclude 'those deemed unlikely to be readily assimilable', mainly southern European groups such as the Italians.

However, it was the prospect of the immigration of indentured labour from India, China and the Pacific Islands in the 1830s that brought Australian racism to the fore and forged the link with immigration which has remained to this day as a defining feature of Australian racism.⁵ The 'racial' animosity and antagonism which was to become characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century became first evident when some pastoralists experimented with the importation of this indentured labour from India, China and the Pacific Islands in the 1830s (Yarwood 1971). Among other reasons, this early experiment did not succeed, mainly because the British colonial masters stoutly opposed the moves of the landed gentry for cheap and 'reliable' labour. The rationale for this, according to Sir James Stephen, Under Secretary for the Colonies, was on the grounds that to allow the 'immigration of "coolies" would debase . . . the noble

European race [and] introduce caste with all its evils . . . bring idolatry and debasing habits . . . [and] in addition beat down the wages of the poor Europeans . . .’ (quoted by Yarwood 1964: 174).

This mode of reasoning, as Yarwood (1971) points out, was the forerunner of the later arguments in favour of a ‘White Australia’ policy, and was significant for two main reasons. First, and importantly, it highlights the link between imperialism, colonialism and racism; this was the belief in the divine right of the ‘noble European race’ to create a ‘new world’. Secondly, it also suggested that ‘white’ superiority was to be tempered with the upper and middle class values of benevolent paternalism, reflected in such acts as the formation of the Aboriginal Protection Society. The Stephen Minute clearly shows ‘the natural compatibility of British morality, religion and profit’ (Yarwood 1971: 174), all an amalgam of motives transposed on to Australian racism in later years. From a theoretical point of view, racism is, therefore, not always or necessarily functional, as implied by some Marxist theorists (see Miles 1989, for an elaboration of this viewpoint), and, may indeed have contradictory implications in its impact on social formations (e.g., the opposition to cheap labour).

Asian Immigration and Racism. Emergence of ‘White Australia’

Although the beginnings of Australian racism, firmly anchored in its British origins, lay primarily in the racial antagonism towards Aboriginal people and encounters with pockets of non-British European migrants, it was the arrival of a large number of Chinese indentured labourers during the 1850s to work in the gold mines of Victoria and later in New South Wales that was to have a profound and lasting effect on the future course of Australian racism.⁶ It was destined to have an indelible influence in fashioning the future directions of immigration policy, and the centrality of immigration in theorizing about racism in Australian society (McQueen 1986; Curthoys and Markus 1978).

The need for labour in the flourishing pastoral Australian economy, mainly of wool and wheat production, drove some pastoralists to seek cheap 'coolie' labour from India as early as the 1820s. This initial foray into non-white labour migration was soon to be followed by the first waves of Asian migrant labour in the mid nineteenth century. This was mostly as contract indentured labour and included Melanesians (*Kanakas*) working in the sugar plantations of Queensland, and Chinese labour in the Victorian goldfields. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s there was a large influx of Chinese labour which at one time consisted of about 12% in Victoria. Unlike the early indentured labour, based on a legal contract between worker and employer, the mid nineteenth century Asian labour was on a credit ticket system of unfree labour. Consequently, the economic bond was no longer between employer and imported labour but between the latter and 'brokers' overseas who had complete control over the services of imported labour. This system of unfree coolie labour heightened economic competition with Australia's native labour which was no longer reliant on the transportation of convict labour.

These immigrants from Asia and the Pacific laid the firm foundations of an economic rationale for Australian migration policy (and one which has continued to influence and dominate all controversies about Australian immigration). It also indicates the extent of dependence of colonial capitalism on immigrant labour which was linked to a 'racist ideology in order to facilitate capital accumulation' (Burgmann 1978: 21). At first these moves were mainly promoted by employers with the support of governments and generated a class difference in the attitudes towards foreign workers; but they soon disappeared as employers too began to fear competition from Asia (Burgmann 1984), and there was cross-class support for a policy of racial exclusion.

However, racist ideology was not a simple set of ideas which were universally held, but an ideology which was manifested and articulated differently by key social groups. Thus, for example, the racism of the labour movement was distinct from middle class racism. However, the economic basis of migration, as some theorists (e.g., Castles et al. 1988; Collins 1991) have

pointed out, was a significant factor in understanding the ideological basis of racism because it provided the material foundations for the doctrine of racial inequality. Whatever the systematic status of this viewpoint, it is true that conflicts over economic and social interests did lead to antipathy and discrimination against coloured workers; and furthermore, that this hostility was unleashed with considerable vehemence against the Chinese and Kanakas in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The economic threat and associated fear—the fear of Asian hordes taking over the country—was paramount in the anti-Asian racism of the 1850s. This witnessed the beginnings of ‘a number of invasion narratives in which Asia in one form or another threatens Australia’s future as a homogenous nation’ (Walker 2003: 35). It was this sense of fear and in which culminated in several anti-Chinese riots (e.g., Hanging Rock 1853, Bendigo 1854, Buckland River 1857 and Lambing Flat 1861). The acts of racial violence against the Chinese during the 1850s and 1860s transformed negative and contemptuous white racist beliefs and attitudes into a positive hatred and contempt for Asian and all non-white settlers, and was expressed in such terms as their moral degeneracy, sexual depravity and criminality.⁷ In this context, the race riot of 1857 at Buckland River was a landmark event in the history of Australian racism, because it was an expression of ‘racial arrogance that became a model for white protest against coloured immigration’ (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 162).

Hostility to Chinese labour expansion, resulting in racial riots, mob violence and lynching, led to the introduction of the first statutory Acts⁸ relating to restrictive legislation in the colonies of Victoria (1855), South Australia (1858), and New South Wales (1861). This early legislation was also complemented by other measures discriminating against Asians already legally resident in Australia with regard to working conditions and wages. Queensland presented itself somewhat differently on the question of restrictive legislation (introduced only in 1877) because it was argued that non-white labour (mostly Kanakas) was necessary for the tropical working environment

of the sugar industry, and to a less extent, in pearling and *bêche-de-mer* fishing.

By the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s anti Asian attitudes, though focused mainly on Chinese immigration, was the universal complaint of the working class—unions, and political parties representing the working class—and the common concern of nearly all colonial governments. The economic defence of anti Chinese immigration policies, based on the grounds of security, justice and equity for native Australian workers was, in addition, heavily tinged by distinctly racist arguments. Much of this reasoning was framed in the language of the 19th century doctrines of racial superiority and social Darwinism. Accordingly, the Chinese, as a ‘race’, were ‘inferior’ because of their inherited characteristics, their moral depravity, proneness to crime and corruption. Moreover, they were likely to pollute the purity of an unmixed nation which was considered the indisputable condition of unity and social cohesion (Walker 2003).

The anti-Asian racism of the late nineteenth century based on both economic and racist grounds became the core of the pursuit of a ‘White Australia. The racist ideology of this period was more than a form of class ideology, and as a racist ideology, it had its own dynamics (MacIntyre 1989: 30). This was a critical period because it saw the climax of racial hostility against Asians. The distinctive character of this racism was nowhere better expressed than by Sir Henry Parkes, one of the leaders of Federation and architects of the ‘White Australia’ policy, in a speech to the NSW Parliament:

I contend that if this young nation is to maintain the fabric of its liberties unassailed and unimpaired, it cannot admit into its population any element that of necessity must be of an inferior nature and character . . . we should not encourage or admit amongst us any class of persons whatever whom we are not prepared to advance to all our franchises, to all our privileges as citizens, and all our social rights, including the right of marriage. (quoted in Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 187)

This candid statement conveys vividly the significance attached to Australian immigration policy and the broad consensus of aims and values that existed in the early days of Federation for a homogenous society based on 'race'. As a result of the immigration crises of the 1880s 'racial arrogance became a model for white protest against coloured immigration' (Yarwood and Knowling 1982: 162). The quest for national homogeneity, meaning racial homogeneity, in turn served as an influential factor in moves towards a Federation of the colonies which took place in 1901, largely because the British colonial masters had been reluctant 'in placing a stigma on individuals on the grounds of their colour' (Irving 1997: 115). As Irving observes, the white population of Australia which includes European settlers 'metaphorically became British' (1997: 14), and serves to 'reinforce . . . a profound belief in the superiority of the British way of life' (Curthoys 1978: 50).

Importantly, these racist attitudes and sentiments towards non-Europeans were similar to the already existing racist attitudes towards the Aboriginal people, the original settlers who were dispossessed of their land and rights as citizens (Hollinsworth 1998). However, according to Curthoys (1978) the 'colonists did not regard Aborigines and Chinese in the same light or in the same context' (56). As Irving rightly suggests, it was the Chinese, more than the Aborigines who were 'used culturally to identify the type of citizenship the future Australian nation would not embrace' (1997: 14). Thus, the opposition to non-white immigration and hostility to the indigenous residents in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both based exclusively on 'racial' grounds, laid the basis of *Australian* racism.

The controversial question is whether 'race' hatred born out of a racial ideology was the main and overriding consideration of the racial animosities characteristic of the mid nineteenth century.⁹ An alternative viewpoint places greater emphasis on the economic dynamics of immigration pointing to the crucial role of racism in the development of capitalism and imperialism in the nineteenth century (Curthoys and Markus 1978). Admittedly, there was a chronic labour shortage at this time, which generated amongst the

Australian working class ‘the fear of unarmed conquest by cheap Asian labour’ (McQueen 1986: 25). This fear of economic competition from Asia was so great and intense that it became the rallying point for organized labour, so much so that the racist doctrines of white superiority in justification of this economic threat was destined to become the cornerstone of labour ideology (McQueen 1986). What was unique about the racial ideology of this early period was the fusion of the two logics of racism—the logic of inferiority and logic of differentiation—the latter arising from immigration policies and attitudes to non-white settlers.

Anti-Asian Racism: Post-1901

The ‘White Australia’ Policy and Practice 1901-72

With Federation, immigration policy gained in salience and the logical sequel to the thinking of stalwarts of Federation like Henry Parkes was the passing of the racial exclusion legislation—the IR Act 1901—as one of the first Acts of Federation. It is of considerable significance that one of the first policy initiatives of the newly established Federation of States was to enact the racial exclusion legislation of 1901 at the time of Federation, and thereby, making immigration a Commonwealth responsibility. With the passing of the IR Act 1901, migration officers, were able to exclude Asians and others considered as undesirable aliens from entering the country. This was made possible by resort to the infamous ‘dictation test’ (sometimes known as the ‘Natal test’) relating to a European language or as later amended to ‘any prescribed language’ (the use of a language test was intended to disguise the fact that the rejection was not on the grounds of colour).

The IR Act of 1901 along with *The Pacific Island Labourers Act 1910*, preventing the use of Islanders in the Queensland sugar industry, came to be known as the ‘White Australia’ policy. These policies confirmed the racist ideology based on white supremacy and complemented the ‘laws that denied citizenship

to the Aboriginal people and ‘made many of their children wards of the State’ (MacIntyre 1989: 26). But importantly, with the passing of this legislation of racial exclusion the ‘White Australia’ policy became the symbol of Australian nationalism and imperial sentiment, thereby associating it with ‘racism’. Overall, these attitudes and sentiments served to instil a sense of national identity, linking race and colour.

Mary Willard, in her authoritative study defending the ‘White Australia’ policy, has argued convincingly that the fundamental reason for this policy was ‘the preservation of British-Australian Nationality’ (1967: 189). According to Willard, the *raison d’être* of these policies was that *racial identity was essential for national unity* primarily because of the racist belief that ‘coloured settlers were unfitted to exercise political rights and incompetent to fulfil political duties’ (1967: 193). She also defended this racism on the grounds that a diversity of races was likely to have adverse social effects on the community, especially by introducing the possibility of ‘racial strife’. Echoing the sentiments of the more recent socio-biologists, she explains the potential for racial violence on the grounds that the presence of diverse racial groups ‘would arouse a primary instinct to fight for the right to existence such as Australia conceived it’ (1967: 200). By invoking the concept of an ‘inborn instinct’ of territoriality, Willard¹⁰ proceeds to defend the racism or the ‘White Australia’ policy in the following terms:

In the view of the feeling existing in Australia—the instinctive shrinking from racial admixture with peoples’ strongly marked divergent ideals and physical characteristics—national unity would be impossibility if non-Europeans were freely admitted. (1967: 207)

Miles (1989) observes correctly that Willard’s defence of the ‘White Australia’ policy, as a legitimate expression of nationalism demonstrates the extent to which the ideology of racism crosses the boundaries of the nation and identity. In brief, race and colour¹¹ were linked with a sense of national identity; so much so, that the terms ‘race’ and ‘nation’ became indistinguishable because they overlapped in determining the criteria of

membership of the emergent nation state (Miles 1989: 91). Indeed, as Price (1974) rightly observes, the 'Chinese were the anvil on which the new young societies were strongly hammering out their national identity'. In fact, this view was put more forcefully by Willard herself in her remark that the 'validity and the morality of Australian policy seem to depend on the validity and morality of the principle of nationalism' (1967: 206).

Henceforth the IR Act (1901) became the symbol of Australian nationalism and imperial sentiment and the 'White Australia' policy came to represent a sense of British-Australian nationality (Walker 1999). A necessary condition of nation-building, it was argued, was the maintenance of racial homogeneity and to this end immigration policy until the post-World War II period was rigidly governed by the ideology of racism. National identity and racial ideology were central to the manner in which racism was constructed in the early part of this century, and was one of the basic ingredients of Laborist ideology (Bottomley 1988; McQueen 1986).

Consequently, the preferred pattern of migration in the first half of the twentieth century was from the 'home' country, i.e., settlers of Anglo-Saxon descent. According to Borrie (1955) 'the continuing feeding of British immigrants helped to keep the social and cultural pattern of Australia in a narrow groove' (1955: 85). Furthermore, as Appleyard (1971) notes:

being British in character as well as by allegiance and having their policies determined by British governments, the colonies inevitably built British types of institutions and favoured British immigrants. (1971: 206)

This thinking is clearly reflected in the migration schemes originating from *The Empire Settlement Act* (1922) which continued to promote British immigration. In brief, it was this philosophy of immigration that sustained Australian racism and nationalism throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The nineteenth century racism based on social Darwinism represented a classic manifestation of what Barker (1981) calls 'old racism'. However, this form of racism was fast becoming obsolete and repugnant to intellectuals, conservatives, politicians

and the growing middle class in Australia in post-WW II period of mass migration. As people wished to distance themselves from the horrors of Nazi racism which had obvious links with 'old racism', the 'White Australia' policy began to lose credibility. Furthermore, as the very intellectual foundations of 'scientific racism' were discredited, other historical and political events too began to weaken the dominance of this 'old racism'. In the Australian context, the decline of colonial imperialism along with the emergence of new Asian nations, especially the growing dominance of Japan in the world economy and the influx of post-war immigrants, challenged prevailing theories of racial ideology, and destroyed the credibility of old-fashioned racism.

A particularly important factor in the demise of 'old racism' was the new ideology of multiculturalism, in reality a philosophy of cultural pluralism, which for political and pragmatic reasons, replaced the orthodoxy of assimilationist thinking which had been a cornerstone of migrant settlement (see Chapter 1). In this period of mass migration of non-British Europeans the incorporation of the migrants into existing social and political institutions began to deviate sharply from the earlier Anglo-centred racial ideologies and philosophy of monocultural assimilation.

Ethnicity and its cognate notions of identity, as noted in Chapter 1, became central elements of the new doctrine of multiculturalism as a philosophy of migrant settlement. A key element of this multiculturalism was that the concept of 'culture' was seen as the unproblematic centrepiece of this new policy perspective. In brief, the language of 'racial' differences was now replaced by that of 'cultural' differences. Betts (1988) extends this argument to its limits by suggesting that intellectuals rallied to the cause of this new and intellectually respectable doctrine of multiculturalism because they feared to be labelled as 'racists'.

Influenced by these changes in migration policy and attitudes towards new settlers as well as other political and economic considerations, Australian governments in the post-World War II mass immigration period of the 1950s and 1960s, were more willing to relax the previous rigid prohibitions on non-

European migration (Jayasuriya and Kee 1999). The political initiatives on Asian immigration reform taken during this time clearly reflect the changing social and political climate of the time (Horne 1964). There is no doubt that by the mid-1960s the 'public expression of the racist strain [of the 'White Australia policy had] become weaker and weaker; [and that] scarcely anyone [was] prepared to defend the policy publicly in directly racist terms' (Horne 1998: 122). The removal by Horne of the motto of the influential magazine, *The Bulletin*, 'Australia for the White Man', on becoming its Editor in 1960 was symbolic of the growing intellectual disenchantment with the underlying racist ideology of the White Australia policy.

A first indication of the changing attitudes towards the White Australia policy was the revised *Migration Act* 1958 which dropped the blatantly racist and discriminatory 'dictation test' introduced in 1901, along with the rule that in the case of non-European applicants, a person who 'appeared to be less than 75 per cent European in appearance . . . be rejected' (Jordens 1997: 209). It was this policy shift which ultimately led to the migration from 1964 onwards of part-Europeans (those of mixed race), such as those of Dutch origin from Indonesia, Burghers from Sri Lanka, Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmese. These changes also regularised the entry of those first identified as 'distinguished and highly qualified' and later referred to as 'well-qualified' Asians.

These minimal policy changes paved the way for the most significant liberalisation of immigration entry requirements since Federation, which was initiated by the Holt Liberal government in 1966. These reforms had as one of their main features the concessions granted for the migration of non-Caucasians with professional and technical skills as well as a reduction in the waiting period for the admission of close relatives (London 1970; Palfreeman 1967). Nevertheless, 'the limited extent of the changes indicates a persistent faith in a predominantly homogenous society and an implicit belief that non-Europeans are inassimilable' (London 1970: 262). Though this liberalisation was modest, it indicated a significant shift in thinking which facilitated the final abolition of the 'White

Australia' policy by the Whitlam Labor government in 1973. *The Australian Citizenship Act* of 1973 annulled the IR Act 1901 and introduced a watertight *non-discriminatory* immigration policy. Hereafter immigration to Australia was to be free of any discrimination on grounds of race, colour, or national origin.

This bold reform measure introduced with bipartisan political support by the Whitlam government was mainly intended to remove the moral taint of racism; it was also partly a neighbourly gesture towards some of Australia's most important trading partners in the Asian region. Whatever were the motives for this change and assessment of its success as a policy, these far-reaching social and political changes heralded the demise of 'old racism', at least overtly. While the sentiments of racism associated with these conventional racial ideologies still continued to persist in the popular consciousness, they were not accorded any degree of credibility in public discourse.

Resurgence of Racism in the post Whitlam Era

Despite the radical and dramatic nature of the immigration policy changes in the Whitlam era (1972-75), allowing the entry of Asian immigrants, anti-Asian sentiments remained dormant during the 1970s when there was a 'robustness of opinion on Asian immigration' (Goot 1984). This was largely because the new non-discrimination policy was managed and regulated as a policy of selective and controlled migration. But by the 1980s the mood had changed; there was emerging a growing resistance to Asian immigration and the expression of a strong desire to keep Australia white (Goot 1984). This shift in public attitudes towards Asian immigration was largely due to the irrational fears of an Asian invasion generated by the arrival of large numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees as 'boat people' (Viviani 1984).

These negative attitudes towards Asian immigrants, especially debates about the pros and cons of immigration and multiculturalism as a social ideal, were also aggravated by the economic downturn of the 1980s, especially the recession of 1983-84. During the 1980s two events in particular stand out in the resurgence of anti-Asian racism—one was the Blainey

outburst of 1984 against Asian immigration and the other the remarks in 1988 of John Howard, then Leader of the Opposition on the nature and extent of the Asian immigration intake.

Blainey (1984) complained that Australia had committed itself to a 'Surrender Australia' policy and was in danger of being overrun by Asian immigrants who were a threat to social cohesion and cultural homogeneity of the nation. Similar sentiments were expressed in 1988 by John Howard who like Blainey, objected to what he regarded a high level of Asian immigration and proposed, among other things, to cut the family reunion component of the migration programme (Ricklefs 1997). In an implied criticism of the policy of multiculturalism, Howard also argued for the realisation of a 'One Australia' policy to emphasise national unity and social cohesion. Although there was a sharp increase in anti-Asian opinion after these anti-immigration pronouncements by leading personalities, they did not lead to violent racial conflict (Jayasuriya and Kee 1999). What is more, there was a swift response from officialdom (business corporate sectors, government and churches) denouncing these anti-Asian sentiments.

These debates about Asian immigration from the 1980s onwards, importantly, were cast in the language of a technical debate about the desirability of immigration and multiculturalism, i.e., its economic, social and ecological impact on society, and prevented them from being conceived as a matter of 'race' per se (White 1997). Although 'an explicit anti-Asian bias is intended as a part of the [anti-immigration] argument, the racist implications or character of each argument becomes clear when the argument is analysed in greater depth' (White 1997: 18). The concealed racism of these anti-immigration movements, though not cast in overtly racist terms, served to draw 'the "hard core" unashamedly racist elements out of the woodwork and give them a platform to voice their bigotry of hate' (White 1997: 18).

Consequently, we see the emergence of racist fringe groups of the far Right such as the League of Rights, National Action

(NA) in Sydney, Australian National Movement (ANM) in Perth, National Front of Australia, Logos Foundation, Queensland Immigration Control Association, and other similar organisations (for more details, see Greason 1997; Crisp 1989). Of these the Neo Nazi groups such as NA and ANM constitute the hard core racists who were responsible for acts of racial violence against Asian Australians and other minority groups such as Arab Australians and Jews (White 1997; HREOC 1991).

These anti-Asian racist groups did not confine themselves merely to propaganda against non-white immigration but resorted to committing acts of political violence against Asian settlers. Though highly reminiscent of the anti-Asian racism in the heyday of 'White Australia' in the late nineteenth century, these acts lacked the intensity and vehemence of the nineteenth century racial riots. Lacking in public support, these acts of violence and racial intimidation which included fire-bombing of homes and restaurants, damage to public property, and racial harassment were sporadic and dispersed (White 1997). Nevertheless, they had the effect of creating a state of 'moral panic' which led to a demand for concerted action on the part of the State to combat the harmful effects of overt and blatant racism. Eventually these pressures led to several Australian governments at State and Federal level introducing anti-discrimination measures as a form of protection for the victims of racism as well as a means of combating racism (White 1997; Ronalds 1979).

The anti-immigration movements of the 1980s, such as Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI), League of Rights, Australia First etc., remained relatively dormant, isolated and peripheral to the main political processes until the advent of Pauline Hanson and her political party, One Nation, in 1997. The anti-immigration forces, despite contesting State and Federal elections as minor political parties, made a negligible impact largely because the main political parties were united in their opposition to these minor parties. However, this was changed dramatically with the emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation, and they have gained added momentum with groups such as AAFI (led by Robyn Spence)

throwing in their lot with One Nation. In fact Robyn Spence of AAFI has become the spokesperson for One Nation on Immigration and related issues.

Pauline Hanson, in her maiden speech cleverly reactivated the 'race debate' (e.g., the statement: 'I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians', etc.) by placing anti-immigration and anti-Aboriginal issues as key elements of her political platform. This speech, like that of Blainey in Warrnambool in 1984, and of Howard in 1989 clearly

. . . resonated with a substantial body of opinion in Australia, and for months anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian views, some of them of a crudely racist kind filled talkback radio programs and letters to the editor. It was almost as if a dammed up flow of opinion was breaking out. Some unpleasant verbal and physical abuse, was experienced by some Asian students, tourists and Asian-Australians. (Jones 1997: 9)

Since Pauline Hanson's maiden speech of 1996, the electoral success One Nation has gained in the Queensland State Government Elections (11 seats in parliament) and at the 1998 Federal Elections, obtaining approximately 8 per cent of the popular vote, has meant that the racist views of Pauline Hanson have gained in credibility. These views now have acquired a degree of political legitimacy and ensured that they cannot be removed from the political spotlight by acts such as the bipartisan motion on racism passed by the Federal parliament in October 1996, or the 'Statement of the Four Prime Ministers' deploring racism. This new racist discourse has served to forge a strong link between two facets of Australian racism—anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian racism. What cements these is Australian nationalism.

New Racism and Nationalism

While the anti-Asian attitudes, prejudice and discrimination of the 1980s and 1990s share much in common with the discredited racist sentiments of the late nineteenth century (e.g., fears of

being swamped by aliens or being threatened by economic competition), the more recent expressions of racism are markedly different. Whereas the 'old racism' of a previous era was based largely on ideas of scientific racism and social Darwinism pointing to an innate racial superiority and racial hierarchy, the 'new racism' (Barker 1981) links 'race' not so much with biological differences such as skin colour or eye shape *per se*, but with culture and nationality, i.e., social and cultural factors such as values, attitudes and group mores. What this 'new racism' has in common with 'old racism' is the idea that it is natural and inevitable to keep 'racial' or cultural groups apart because of the naturalness of the fear or distrust of each other.

This shift from *old* to *new* racism, in essence a move away from biology to culture in depicting group identity, represents a world-wide trend indicating a change in the definition meaning and understanding of the concept of 'race' and racism (Solomos and Back 1996; Wieviorka 1995; Baker 1972). It indicates a new level of racist ideologies, a new logic in recent discourse—what Wieviorka calls the logic of differentiation. Thus, anti-immigrant movements in Europe such as Le Pen's *National Front* are portrayed as a 'new racism' which is as dangerous and threatening as the 'old racism' of scientific racism and social Darwinism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Barker 1981). Le Pen targets migrant workers (interestingly only non-European migrants) not in terms of race (i.e., racial inferiority or other shortcomings), but as a threat to cultural integrity, economic viability and social peace of the nation. What is distinctive about this new racial ideology is that it is cast not in the old style racial discourse of racial inferiority or inequalities, but in the language of discourse about culture and nationality. Consequently, this new racism emphasises the need to reconcile 'differences' arising from 'race' or culture with ideas of national unity, social cohesion and social harmony.

In almost all European countries (and Australia is no exception) 'racism' has entered a new phase and taken 'the form of a plea for the identity and respect for the rights of the majority' (Parekh 1987b: 99). Ethnic minorities are 'no longer viewed as being inferior rather that their presence poses a

threat to the cultural integrity of the indigenous community, weakens its sense of identity and dries up its source of moral and political energy' (Parekh 1987b: 99). It is this link between national identity and exclusion which is central to 'new racism', and increasingly evident in Australian racism (see Seidel 1986). Nationalism is no longer a matter of white superiority, but one of cultural uniqueness—a point of view explicitly stated by Saleam, one of the leaders of NA. Distancing himself from the old style racism of anti-semitism and neo-Nazis, Saleam expressed his version of racism by aligning himself with the thinking of the old *Bulletin* tradition, viz., 'the development of an independent Australian identity' (quoted in Crisp 1989: 43).

This mode of reasoning also dominates the thinking of Australian anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism movements represented by those such as Pauline Hanson, Graham Campbell and Bruce Ruxton. In fact, one of the first to espouse an anti-immigration viewpoint of this nature in Australia was Geoffrey Blainey (1984). Blainey 'saw the problem of Asian Immigration as a *cultural* one, a problem of maintaining certain values' (Goot 1984: 3), which were intrinsic to an Australian identity. Bottomley and de Lepervanche (1988) also have pointed out that Blainey, like Enoch Powell in the United Kingdom, was one of the first in Australia 'to conflate race with nation and culture; and also by implication, if not explicitly, ally himself with the socio-biologists who associate 'racial' homogeneity with social cohesion' (1988: 86).

White (1997) in a perceptive analysis of anti-Asian racism has shown how anti-immigration opinion, in reality a code for anti-Asian racism, revolves around such issues as the maintenance of 'social cohesion', economic consequences of immigration (e.g., wage levels, inflation and unemployment etc.) and the impact of migrant settlement on the environment. The thrust of this reasoning lay not so much in the reasonableness or validity of the arguments advanced (e.g., does immigration lead to increased unemployment, or do migrant groups form ghettos and threaten social harmony?) but in the fact that they are presented as being 'essential to the wellbeing of the nation as a whole' (White 1997: 28). The use of the concept of the

'nation', as a means of demarcating the boundaries of acceptance and rejection of group membership, is perhaps most explicitly stated in the conservative populist ideology of One Nation.¹²

This link between anti-Asian sentiments and nationalism is clearly manifest in the pleas for social harmony voiced by critics of Asian immigration on the grounds that Asian settlers are seen to be acting contrary to the ethos and values of the national culture, Australian values and norms, i.e., being 'un-Australian'. Significantly, the concept of culture, presented in this racial theorising, is an essentialist view of culture, i.e., one which transcends historical and social circumstances, and is no different in this regard from the cultural discourse of 'old racism', which regards races as being genetically different, a biological essentialism. Clearly, the new expressions of racism found in Europe and Australia indicate that racial exclusions or immigration restrictions are between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', differentiated not in terms of 'race', but culture.

Exclusion, as in matters of immigration policy, is justified in terms of grounds such as desirable cultural characteristics and/or social acceptability such as language and other personal attributes. Thus, for Pauline Hanson, the acid test of inclusion is the ability to speak English, a code for cultural assimilation. As with 'new racism' in Europe (e.g., Le Pen) in Australia too (e.g., Hanson) it takes the form of a plea for the respect of the culture of the majority and the exclusion of those who fail to meet the new criteria of belonging and identity—this includes Aboriginal people as well as Asians. Viewed in these terms the antagonism against 'Asians' is largely because they are seen to be acting contrary to the ethos and values of the nation to Australian values and norms, such as egalitarianism (for example, by working too hard, and seeking rapid advancement). In short, 'difference' is no longer constructed in biological terms, but in terms of culture and ethnicity, i.e., according to the norms and attitudes of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', and what critically distinguishes the *old* from the *new* racism is the manner in which the 'Other' is constructed.

The notion of 'race' in this characterisation of 'new racism' refers not to a monolithic concept but to 'a process ('racialization' by some) by which socially significant populations are represented as nationally constituted populations of unequal merit' (Cole 1997: 12). In his exposition of 'new racism' Barker (1981), has pointedly argued that the racial inferiority of the out-group, characteristic of 'old racism', was no longer crucial in determining the criteria of inclusion/exclusion. Accordingly the

core of 'new racism' was the naturalness of in-group preference and out-group hostility. For the new racist, it is natural for people to live amongst their own kind because 'feelings of antagonism will be aroused if outsiders are admitted: each community is a common expression of human nature; all of us form exclusive communities on the basis of shared sentiments shutting out outsiders'. (1981: 21-2)

The 'theory of human nature', implicit in this form of racism is grounded in the work of socio-biologists and other theorists like the ethnologist Desmond Morris who suggests that:

Biologically speaking man has the inborn task of defending three things, himself, his family and his tribe . . . the tendency to form distinct groups and to feel that you are somehow different, really deep down different, from members of other groups'. (Barker 1981: 810)

Stavenhagen adds that this (new) racism leads from subjective rankings of individuals according to biological traits to generalisations and value judgments about whole cultures and societies' (1987: 38), and creates a pseudo-biological culturalism. The ideology of 'new racism' is built around the concepts of culture and 'nation'; and in this sense the concept of a 'nation' denotes an 'imagined community' which provides 'a common feeling of fellowship' (Anderson 1986). This construction of the 'imagined community', Anderson says, is perceived as a boundary 'beyond which lie other "races"',¹³ and as a result, in this new language of racist discourse, racism and nationalism are inextricably interwoven. Charles Husband (1987), referring to this new theorizing about 'race', points out that:

The ideas of nation and nationality have provided a language which has allowed for a coded vicarious discussion of race. (1987: 321)

This extols, in a more acceptable language, the sentiments of a strident nationalism and provides a kind of moral justification for the need for racial exclusion by identifying those who do not belong to the nation. In short, the new racists conceptualise racism more in terms of inclusion/exclusion than the racism of inferiority/superiority, or inequalities characteristic of old racism. Reeves (1983) has referred to this as 'distinctive deracialisation which he says occurs when persons speak purposively to their audience about racial matters while avoiding overt deployment of racial descriptions, evaluations and prescriptions (1983: 4).

Conclusion

Although the origins of racism in Australian society, as an 'anglo-fragment' society, lie firmly embedded in the ideology of British racism, the nature and form of this 'old racism', cast in the logic of inferiorization or inequality, has changed markedly over the last hundred years. For a variety of reasons, the 'old racism' of the nineteenth century, steeped in the language of 'scientific racism', doctrines of biological inequality, and social Darwinism, was central to the needs of a colonial political order, especially the need for political and economic security. But, despite the obvious fact that attitudes of the new settlers to the natives, the indigenous Aboriginal people, were a key element in fashioning Australian racism during the latter half of this century, the link that exists between racism and immigration, and in particular the policies and attitudes to migrant settlement, has been central to the emergence of 'new racism' framed in the new logic of differentiation.

With the transformation of Australian society politically, socially and economically following World War II, and the near universal acceptance of the scientific falsity of old racism, there has emerged a 'new racism' which extols the virtues of distinctive cultural values and the sense of a 'nation'.

This Australian brand of 'new racism', steeped in xenophobic nationalism, reifies cultural differences (e.g., of Asians and others) to an extent that it differentiates sharply between racial and cultural groups. Indeed, these 'differences' flow from an acceptance of a common humanity which is naturally divided into different human groups and their acceptance is regarded as being 'natural'. What is more, 'difference' is no longer constructed in terms of racial or biologically determined group differences, but in terms of an essentialised culture and ethnicity.

Given that this new ideology of racism assumes the inevitability of cultural difference, i.e., that differences between national groups are *normal* and *natural*, racism appears more respectable and acceptable. Through this process of constructing nation as an 'imagined community' with a shared culture, those groups that are not seen to be a part of the 'nation' are excluded. The racist argument, when linked with the search for a unique Australian identity, borders on a xenophobic nationalism and is stated primarily though not exclusively in terms of the language or 'social cohesion' and 'national unity'.

This transformation in the thinking about racism has been characterised by a new language of public discourse, and the emergence of different forms of racialism. For instance, this 'new racism', as Husband (1987) observes, seeks to exploit for its own advantage, the liberal attitudes to cultural differences (characteristic of multiculturalism), by exaggerating the intrinsic worth of these differences. Despite these changes, in the representation of racism, there is above all a basic continuity between the old and the new, revealed in the association throughout the history of Australian racism between the ideology of racism and nationalism.

This conflation of race, nation and culture is fundamental to understanding the nature of Australian racism; and as McQueen has so perceptively remarked, 'racism was the most important single component on Australian nationalism' (1986: 129). And, we might add, continues to be so. Clearly, the ongoing debate in Australian society about racism and immigration as it has developed in the media and through the various anti-Asian lobby groups, is centred primarily on this 'new racism'.

We are witnessing a new language of public discourse and an ideology of racism, the manifestations of which are likely to be radically different from those of the past, and may have critical implications for anti-racist strategies.

Endnotes

¹ Racism is the theory that human abilities are determined by race, and racialism refers to the practice of racism in society arising from the belief in the supremacy of a particular race

² Van den Berghe (1978) states that whether it be ethnicity or 'race', what is important is that 'consciousness or a distinction between 'them' and 'us' [and adds that] these differentiations 'crystallise around clusters of objective characteristics that become badges of inclusion or exclusion' (xviii).

³ Racism is, as Miles (1989) notes, a process by which 'the Other is constructed'. Race and ethnicity simply point to this process of exchange.

⁴ Gibb (1973) rates the influential writing of the Victorian politician Pearson in the 1890s as an example of sophisticated politicians who used the intellectual ideas of nineteenth century Europe to justify the nascent racism in Australia, especially by justifying policies of immigrant restriction.

⁵ Gibb (1973) has rightly pointed out that 'Australia's geographical position near Asia may have been crucial in determining Australian attitudes' on matters of race and racist ideology, especially 'the concern that the race should be kept pure and uncontaminated', and 'the fear of invasion' (9).

⁶ See Appendix B. The increased presence of 'coolie' labour and public agitation focussed on local labour protection

⁷ See Yarwood (1968) and Gibb (1973) for an enumeration of these attitudes towards non-European settlers in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

⁸ See Appendix B.

⁹ For example, Stanner maintains that Australian racialism has 'very shallow roots', and is situationally driven. He states that in the absence of cause (mainly economic) it lapsed, or hung on 'only in fringe mentalities' (1971: 13).

¹⁰ As Miles (1989) observes, Willard (1967), in espousing this view predates Barker's (1981) concept of 'new racism' by nearly six decades.

¹¹ This was confirmed much later by the twentieth century Immigration Reform Movement (see Rivett 1970) which maintained that this policy was essentially a

'colour-bar', and argued that 'it is immoral to maintain a colour-bar, for colour-bar is something that a person cannot cross, whatever his merits, or qualifications . . . that is why we call it a colour-bar' (1970: 87).

¹² Compare a similar usage in Canada by Diefenbaker as 'One Canada'.

¹³ It is of interest to note that the original inhabitants of the country, the Aboriginal people were, as Miles (1989) notes, 'rarely considered or regarded as members of the imagined community', because of their marginalization and non-incorporation in the processes of capital production.