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## ‘He No Doubt Felt Insulted’: The White Australia Policy and Australia’s Relations with India, 1944–1964

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The Australia–India relationship in the post-war period, and indeed until quite recently, has often been characterised as one in which bouts of enthusiasm are followed by periods of neglect; a stop/start relationship, as it were. Meg Gurry has argued that there were structural reasons for this: a solid relationship between two countries required a multi-strand context to develop a depth that was lacking in the past.<sup>1</sup> The relationship was one of ‘missed opportunities, mutual incomprehension, and benign neglect.’<sup>2</sup> Gurry also recognised the importance of the lack of personal rapport between Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his Australian counterpart, R. G. Menzies, at a time when leaders put much stress on the personal factor in successful foreign relationships.<sup>3</sup> Nehru thought Menzies did not belong in the twentieth century, regarded his speeches with ‘wry amusement’ and considered him a fit subject for a Victorian museum.<sup>4</sup> Although Gurry felt that the lacklustre relationship was Australia’s fault, Australia was low on India’s list of priorities. In Nihal Kuruppu’s view, Australian views on India were dominated by out-of-date British attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Andrea Benvenuti firmly put the blame for the benign neglect on the different views of the Asian Cold War which both countries held. Australia saw in the Cold War a potential threat to Australian security and was committed to a ‘realist’ policy firmly anchored in creating alliances with great powers with the capacity for global reach. India, in contrast, was opposed to any military alliances and steered a resolutely independent path between the Cold War opponents.<sup>6</sup>

Australia worked hard to put depth into the political relationship, for instance, suggesting exchanges on strategic matters and proposing official talks between the

<sup>1</sup> Meg Gurry, *India: Australia’s Neglected Neighbour? 1947–1996* (Griffith University: Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia Relations, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Gurry, ‘Neither Threat Nor Promise: An Australian View of Australian–Indian Relations Since 1947’, *South Asia*, XIII (1), 1990, 85–101.

<sup>3</sup> Gurry, ‘Leadership and Bilateral Relations: Menzies and Nehru, Australia and India, 1949–1964’, *Pacific Affairs*, 65 (4), 1992–93, 510–26

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Chris Waters, ‘Diplomacy in Easy Chairs: Casey, Pearson, and Australian–Canadian Relations, 1951–7’, in *Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the Twentieth Century*, eds Margaret MacMillan and Francine McKenzie (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 220.

<sup>5</sup> Nihal Henry Kuruppu, *Non-Alignment and Peace Versus Military Alignment and War* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Benvenuti, ‘Difficult Partners: Indo-Australian Relations at the Height of the Cold War, 1949–1964’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (hereafter *AJPH*), 57 (1), 2011, 53–67.

two external affairs ministries. For a time it was also active in seeking solutions to the Kashmir dispute. Moreover, it posted its best and most senior diplomats to New Delhi. New Delhi responded, with very few exceptions, by posting lacklustre heads of mission. Nothing seemed to spark a deeper connection: the relationship was always full of potential but enthusiasm wasted away. The principal structural and political link between the two countries remained mutual membership of the Commonwealth. Beyond this, mutual interests hardly existed. Trade, normally a key determinant of bilateral strength, was not a major factor.<sup>7</sup> Defence links did not spark until after India's 1962 war with China, and then only briefly. There was a strong connection to Australian aid via the Colombo Plan but India seemed largely indifferent to Australia's small but effective aid program.

An under-examined factor in the historiography of the bilateral relationship is the impact of the White Australia policy throughout this period. Given that its relationship with Australia was not significant for India, it is probable that the policy did not affect the minimal ties that existed. But it was certainly an impediment to a better relationship and, in the eyes of the Indian press, the policy called into question Australia's good faith in its protestations of friendship with India. It was also an irritant in the relationship, felt keenly by Australia's high commissioners and reported at length by them, as well as by India's high commissioners in Canberra. Independence had established India as a sovereign country in the international system. White Australia seemed to imply that Indians were not equal and this offended elite opinion in India, even though it was claimed that the policy was not intended to insult overseas opinion but rather to protect an isolated, homogenous British society from external threat.

Neville Meaney has written about how the federation's ideal of a White Australia was replaced in the 1970s by a multicultural society which facilitated a positive relationship with Asia.<sup>8</sup> All governments in Australia until that time were committed to the preservation of a homogenous, white British society, one which continued the inheritance from Britain of a stable political culture. Asia was the Other, a threat to the British community created so far away from its cultural roots. Until the departure of the British from east of Suez and the United States from Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Australia saw no need to reassess these basic assumptions or to come to terms with the nations closest to it.

Some tentative first steps along these lines, in the form of a measure of Asian immigration, were being urged on the Australian government by its diplomats in India from the 1940s onwards, aware as they were of the shifts in influence and power taking place in Asia. That they had little influence says volumes about the impact of Australia's diplomats on key policy issues. What changes there were came from the quiet work of immigration officials.<sup>9</sup> The most important exception to this generalisation is the crucial work of Sir Peter Heydon who had been high commissioner to India before becoming secretary of the Department

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<sup>7</sup> Kuruppu, *Non-Alignment and Peace*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Neville Meaney, 'The End of "White Australia" and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945–1990', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (hereafter *AJIA*), 49 (2), 1995, 171–89.

<sup>9</sup> See Matthew Jordan, 'The Reappraisal of the White Australia Policy Against the Background of a Changing Asia, 1945–67', *AJPH*, 52 (2), 2006, 224–43.

of Immigration in 1961.<sup>10</sup> The specific issue of White Australia, despite public statements to the contrary, was also of considerable interest to the Indian government from the start of its diplomatic representation in Canberra in 1944.

## The 1940s

In 1944, Australia was the first country with which India established a full diplomatic relationship. All the old dominions had been asked to do this by the then British secretary of state for India and Burma, Leo Amery, as part of India's transition to independence, but Australia was the first to do so. The instructions to the first Indian high commissioner to Australia were anodyne and generalised. Significantly, the one area of policy instruction concerned Australia's immigration policy where Sir Raghunath Paranjpye, the first high commissioner, was instructed to 'educate the mind of the Australian public so that it would be reconciled in due course to the idea of admitting Indians as immigrants on an equal footing with other members of the British Commonwealth'. He was instructed to avoid public recrimination or criticism. It was expected that the number of Indians in Australia would increase after the war and Paranjpye was to stand ready to help where he saw fit.<sup>11</sup>

Dr N. B. Khare, who was responsible for Commonwealth relations in the government of India and to whom Paranjpye therefore reported, amplified the instructions in his early letters to the Indian mission in Canberra. Paranjpye was to convince Australians that India did not want mass Indian migration to Australia, but rather a token quota such as the United States was likely to grant. The point of this was to remove the racial stigma against Indians. Khare noted, however, that this was not an urgent problem and that any change in Australia would only come from better understanding between the two countries.<sup>12</sup>

Paranjpye was to report on race issues more than any other. White Australia was often raised with him and he reported on calls within Australia from religious leaders, intellectuals and journalists for it to be modified. At first, his inclination was to agree with Australia's line that the White Australia policy was not based on racial prejudice but on the wish for a homogenous society, without pockets of 'coolie labour'; one in which all workers were paid fairly.<sup>13</sup> Khare disputed this, but Paranjpye insisted that in Australia, unlike Britain, there was little evidence of racial prejudice.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, fairly soon into his posting Paranjpye began to doubt that social homogeneity was the only reason for the policy. In June 1945, for instance, he asked New Delhi to send only the top Indian scientists to Australia on tours in order to remove the misconceptions about the capabilities of Indians in Australia:

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<sup>10</sup> See Sean Brawley, 'The Department of Immigration and Abolition of the "White Australia" Policy Reflected Through the Private Diaries of Sir Peter Heydon', *AJPH*, 41 (3), 1995, 420–34.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, R. N. Banerjee to Sir Olaf Caroe, 'Instructions to the High Commissioner for India in Australia', 1 November 1944, National Archives of India (NAI): File 682(35)-FE/44.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, R. P. Paranjpye to N. B. Khare, 2 March 1945, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML): Papers of R. P. Paranjpye (hereafter Paranjpye Papers), List No.5.

<sup>13</sup> Letter, Paranjpye to Khare, 11 January 1945, NMML: Paranjpye Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Letter, Paranjpye to Khare, 2 March 1945, NMML: Paranjpye Papers.

Although it is officially stated that white Australia is based on purely economic considerations there is certainly an undercurrent of feeling among Australians that Indians are in some way inferior to the white population of the country.<sup>15</sup>

The Indian government's Standing Committee on Commonwealth Relations asked Paranjpye in 1947 to survey the extent to which Indians in Australia were discriminated against.<sup>16</sup> His report noted that at the urging of the government of India in the 1920s, legal discrimination which had existed in some of the Australian states had been removed. Some 2000 people of Indian origin lived in Australia and temporary entry for students and merchants, among others, was permitted; migration entry restrictions, of course, remained. After independence a file was opened by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs to collect material on the White Australia policy. As the official who started it noted, 'Sometime or other this question is bound to assume greater importance for us'.<sup>17</sup> The file was to contain reports on the ever-increasing calls from many sections of Australian society for modifications to be made to the policy.

In his extensive tours of the country Paranjpye made a point of meeting Indians who had settled in Australia. They were, he noted, mostly 'humble people' who did not associate with India. Many were born in Australia and reported no experience of racial prejudice. In Townsville Paranjpye reported that the Indians lived 'very shabbily' compared to Australians even though they had money. Because of this situation, Paranjpye added, 'the prejudice of Australians to any further influx of Indians appears not unreasonable'.<sup>18</sup> In a speech to Wollongong Rotary he noted that Indians permanently settled in Australia 'suffered practically no difficulties compared with those in South Africa'. Nonetheless, there was an implicit slight in the term 'White Australia' because it debarred any Indian, regardless of his or her social status, from settling in Australia. The introduction of a quota of one hundred Indian migrants by the United States had greatly increased that country's standing in India. Paranjpye's speech hardly raised any eyebrows in contrast to what was to happen when one of his successors, General H. M. Cariappa, made similar points in public speeches in the 1950s, by which time the issue of migration policy had become much more politically contentious within Australia.<sup>19</sup>

In his last report to New Delhi before his departure Paranjpye summed up his attitude to Australia: 'The people are generally friendly and hospitable though their white Australia policy is almost a fetish with all sections of the people'.<sup>20</sup> His adult daughter's memoirs of their time in Australia, written soon after their return to India, contained a chapter on 'White Australia'.<sup>21</sup> Here she described the policy as one born out of a real fear that the country would be swamped by 'the teeming millions of Asia'. There may not have been much colour prejudice in Australia but the loud cries of support for this unfortunately

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<sup>15</sup> Letter, Paranjpye to New Delhi, 14 June 1945, NAI: File 532-EPI/46.

<sup>16</sup> 'Disabilities of Indians in Australia', NAI: D-4382-IANZ/50.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of External Affairs (India), 'White Australia Policy', NAI: File 208(2) IANZ 1948.

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Paranjpye to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30 October 1947, NMML: Paranjpye Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in *Daily Telegraph*, 17 July 1946.

<sup>20</sup> Letter, Paranjpye to New Delhi, 10 November 1947, NMML: Paranjpye Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Shakuntala Paranjpye, *Three Years in Australia* (Poona: self-published, 1951).

named policy, from all sides of politics, offended Asia and would isolate Australia from the Asia-Pacific region. The policy, intentionally or not, was a slur on Asia and offended its amour-propre: 'People are prone to be offensive when terrified of extinction. Besides Australia is an adolescent country and adolescence is seldom considerate.'<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to this relatively uncritical, even bemused assessment, press coverage in India of the policy was consistently critical. The English-language press reflected elite opinion, and was the voice of those who traditionally ran India's major institutions. Various journals ran a consciously provocateur role, a kind of chorus off stage to say the things it thought the main actors would not or could not say. Some senior correspondents were close to government officials and were perhaps used by them to float a line with which the government did not wish to be associated. But, above all, the press commentary on Australian migration policy reflected the day-to-day comments with which Australian officials in India had to deal in their social interactions with members of the Indian elite.

In a series of articles in 1946 titled 'Australia Our Neighbour', the Cawnpore *Telegraph*, for instance, noted that for trade to flourish Australia would need to treat India as an equal and repudiate the White Australia policy, under which Indian merchants were only permitted entry into Australia under annual 'certificates of exemption.'<sup>23</sup> Citing Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, the *Hindustan Times*, a newspaper closely aligned with the Indian National Congress and the independence movement, warned that countries could not expect their neighbours to defend them in wartime if they had not been treated as friends and equals in peace time.<sup>24</sup> Another series of articles in April and May 1947, in the *The Statesman*, a newspaper which spoke for elite interests in Calcutta, called for an end to the policy in order to bring in more people to populate the north of Australia before it was inevitably invaded from Asia.

In a well-argued and moderately toned despatch in 1946, the Australian high commissioner, Sir Iven Mackay, recommended the introduction of a quota for Indian migrants. This was to become a regular feature of the reporting from New Delhi. Australia's policy was based on racial as well as economic and social grounds, he noted; there was no other way to explain why Australia would refuse to take such a small number of Westernised Indian professionals, which would greatly assist its economic expansion. Some thirty Indians entered for temporary residence each year under the current regulations. These, Mackay reasoned, were necessarily merchants or students. Adding twenty professional migrants would remove the resentment felt by educated Indians about the policy of complete exclusion from migration. He noted the goodwill felt towards the United States because of the introduction of an annual quota of a hundred Indian migrants. Australia's stocks stood high in India apart from the White Australia policy. Mackay's main argument was, however, that this act of goodwill would be in Australia's strategic self-interest given the likely importance of independent India and that it would make no appreciable difference to the social make-up of Australia.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>23</sup> *Telegraph*, 12 November 1946.

<sup>24</sup> Summarised in cablegram, New Delhi to Canberra, 7 April 1947, National Archives of Australia (NAA): A1066, 645/1/1.

<sup>25</sup> Dispatch 52/46, Iven Mackay to H. V. Evatt, 22 December 1946, in *Documents on Australian*

The Department of External Affairs (DEA) summarised the despatch and sent it to Sir Tasman Heyes, secretary of the Department of Immigration, in March 1948. This was by no means an endorsement of a quota system by the DEA. Its secretary, John Burton, distanced himself from Mackay's arguments, noting that they were personal views and did not represent the considered assessment of the DEA.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, Mackay's proposals made little impact on Immigration officials. In his position as post-war immigration minister, Arthur Calwell had promised that there would be no 'watering down' of White Australia and he accordingly administered the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* with an apparent disregard for the impact of his decisions on Asian opinion. If proof were needed that the White Australia policy was based on racial and not economic grounds, in January 1949 Heyes told Burton that Calwell had decided to refuse entry to 'persons not of pure European descent.'<sup>27</sup> Burton protested, knowing the kind of criticism this explicitly racial ruling would provoke in Asia were it to become known, but to no effect.

Mackay's despatch had an eye to the then-forthcoming Asian Relations Conference at which Australia was to be represented. This conference in March 1947 brought together leaders of independence movements in Asia to discuss issues of common interest. The primary concern for Australia at the conference was that its immigration policy would be attacked. R. N. Banerjee, secretary of the Indian Commonwealth Relations Office, told one of the Australian official observers at the conference that while India desired Australia's friendship, 'an adjustment of our [Australia's] migration policy would be requested at a later stage.'<sup>28</sup> Official secretary to the Australian High Commission in New Delhi, Colin Moodie, who reported on the success of the conference, highlighted the divisions within Asia over migration and the internal discrimination which existed in many Asian countries. These provided a means for Australia to avoid challenge over its immigration policy. And yet, Moodie added:

While principles on which Australian migration policy is based must remain, it may be possible to make our rules somewhat more flexible and less apparently exclusionist. Certain cultured and deserving types of Asiatics who do not fit into present categories might usefully be admitted and in such cases, the necessity for renewing their permits annually might be waived.<sup>29</sup>

The Asian Relations Conference was a success in creating a commitment to a common cause in a newly post-colonial Asia. A second pan-Asian conference, this time on the question of Indonesia's independence was called in January 1949 at which Australia was again represented and influential. A serious misunderstanding between India and Australia

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*Foreign Policy* (hereafter *DAFP*), vol. X, *July–December 1946*, eds W. J. Hudson and Wendy Way (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993), 534.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, J. W. Burton to T. H. E. Heyes, 1 March 1948, in *DAFP*, vol. XIV, *1948–49*, ed. Pamela Andre (Canberra: DFAT, 1998), 315. The text refers to the despatch but dates it a year later, in 1947.

<sup>27</sup> Heyes to Burton, 20 January 1949, in *ibid.*, 322.

<sup>28</sup> Supplementary report by Gerald Packer, 24 April 1947, NAA: A1068, M47/9/6/15 part 2.

<sup>29</sup> Colin Moodie, report on Asian Relations Conference, 11 April 1947, in *DAFP*, vol. XII, *1947*, eds W. J. Hudson and Wendy Way (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995), 802.

over immigration matters occurred shortly after it. Nehru, by now Indian prime minister, gave an interview to Australian Associated Press in which he was reported to have said that Australia's immigration policy was legitimate if based on maintaining its standard of living and 'not on a racial plane'. He noted that 'no discrimination should, however, be exercised within Australia ... against the rights and privileges of Asians living there'.<sup>30</sup> The interview was given at a time of considerable controversy in Australia over the attempts by the Commonwealth government to deport Annie O'Keefe.<sup>31</sup> The Australian minister for external affairs, H. V. Evatt, answering a question in the House of Representatives, claimed that Nehru's comments showed he supported Australia's immigration policy.<sup>32</sup> This provoked Nehru into making a statement in the Indian parliament on 23 February 1949:

It is not quite clear what Dr Evatt meant by the report attributed to him. Presumably this is based on some newspaper report which appeared in Australia. In the record of an interview with an Australian newspaper correspondent some time ago I stated that I could understand an emigration [sic] policy based on economic considerations with a view to maintaining certain standards and ways of living but that I thought a racial policy was wrong and to be deprecated. We inquired into this matter and found that Dr Evatt told our representative that he regretted he had not been quite understood.<sup>33</sup>

The English-language Indian press had a field day over the perceived incongruity of Australia being present and active in the New Delhi conference on Indonesia's freedom while at the same time announcing it would deport an Indonesian woman married to a white Australian and her children. The *Ambala Tribune* felt that the O'Keefe case was an 'index to the injustice and selfishness of high government policy' while the *Bombay Chronicle* thought Evatt, by his outrageous statement that Nehru supported White Australia, would fritter away the popularity he had gained for Australia through his support of freedom for an Asian country.<sup>34</sup>

Calwell's speech to the Australian Natives Association on 21 February 1949, in which he stated that there would 'be no quota system for the admission of Asiatics, no appeasement ... which imperils the hard won living standards which we inherited', provoked a sharp rebuke from the *Bombay Chronicle*. In a single speech, it argued, Calwell 'has very nearly destroyed all prospects of Asia and Australia maintaining friendly relations'. 'Living standards', it argued, was code for racial superiority in white skin and coloured skin was inferior no matter who its owner might be: an uncouth white criminal was clearly superior

<sup>30</sup> Cited in *SMH*, 24 January 1949.

<sup>31</sup> Mrs Annie Jacob and her husband and children were wartime refugees from the Dutch East Indies. After the death of her husband Mrs O'Keefe married an Australian citizen, Jack O'Keefe. Despite the marriage the Department of Immigration moved to deport the O'Keefe family along with about 600 other wartime refugees. The family fought this in the High Court and was allowed to stay. The case provoked strong criticism of Calwell for administering Australia's immigration policy too inflexibly.

<sup>32</sup> *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 201, 9 February 1949, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in *The Statesman*, 24 February 1949.

<sup>34</sup> 'White Australia Policy', *Tribune*, 3 February 1949; 'Australian Perversion', *Bombay Chronicle*, 11 February 1949.

to the best person from Asia.<sup>35</sup> This was not a view endorsed by the government of India, which, as we have seen, had a more nuanced view of Australia's motives, but the stridency of the commentary reflected the offence felt by many English-language speakers. Were they not the equal of the white citizens of the Commonwealth?

Most of the Indian press focused on the apparent contradiction between Australia's desire for a larger population to advance its development, and its racially exclusive policy. How was it possible for such an under-populated continent to justify holding the land with so few people when Asia had so little land and such pressing needs? This was the kind of complaint which supporters of the policy in Australia also made: no matter how many Asians Australia accepted, it would make no difference to Asia's population problem and only create for itself the possibility of racial disharmony or of racial ghettos.

The Indian high commissioner, Colonel Daya Singh Bedi, reported all the twists and turns of Calwell's administration of the policy and the disaster that was the Australian government's goodwill mission to South-East Asia in 1948 led by W. Macmahon Ball.<sup>36</sup> Much of Bedi's reporting consisted of accounts of appeals by various Australian lobby groups or newspaper clippings calling for a quota or, alternatively, arguing that a quota would lead inevitably to the racial tragedies plaguing the United States and South Africa. The high commissioner noted that a minimum quota in proportion to Australia's population 'would be infinitesimal' and would be worth considering by Australia if it removed the complaint of discrimination.<sup>37</sup> The high commissioner's political report for September 1949 noted that in private Evatt was 'bitterly critical' of Calwell's attitude and thought the issue of wartime refugees ought to be handled more diplomatically but that Australian prime minister Ben Chifley supported the hardline approach.<sup>38</sup> A month later, he noted that although there was a lot of criticism of Calwell's methods, no one seemed able to suggest an alternative approach.<sup>39</sup>

Following the Australian general election of December 1949, which brought Menzies into power as the head of a Liberal-Country Party coalition government, Bedi, after a conversation with the new prime minister, reported to New Delhi that the result of the election indicated significant shifts within Australia. Labor's policy had been to improve the living standards of the workers—restricting immigration was a part of this policy—and by so doing satisfy the trades unions. Yet Labor had lost the election.<sup>40</sup> Bedi continued that there was a mood of insecurity in the country: Calwell's policy was widely seen to have 'alienated the goodwill and inspired the enmity of all Asian people' and hence the electorate wanted a government with a complete reliance on the defence shield of the United Kingdom and the United States. At the same time, Bedi reported, the new minister for immigration,

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<sup>35</sup> *Bombay Chronicle*, 25 March 1949.

<sup>36</sup> Rather than build goodwill, the mission was the occasion for trenchant criticism of Australia's immigration policy. See Chris Waters, 'The MacMahon Ball Mission to East Asia 1948', *AJPH*, 40 (3), 1994, 351–63.

<sup>37</sup> D. S. Bedi, 'Publicity Report', February 1948, NAI.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, Bedi to Subimal Dutt, 15 September 1949, NAI: File 208 (2).

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Bedi to Dutt, 17 October 1949, NAI: File 208 (2).

<sup>40</sup> Letter, Bedi to Dutt, 23 December 1949, NAI: File 105/IANZ/50, 1949.



Harold Holt, had promised that the coalition government would take a more humane and considerate attitude towards Asians in Australia, a commitment which was manifested almost immediately in its decision to reverse Calwell's deportation proceedings against Annie O'Keefe and the other wartime refugees. To what extent 'they will allow Asians to settle in this country', he added presciently, 'remains to be seen but general feeling is against Asiatic immigration'.<sup>41</sup>

For its part the Australian High Commission in New Delhi kept up its line that a token quota of Indian immigration would do much to improve the relationship. The reporting from post was sharp and to the point. In 1949 a despatch reported that the foreign secretary, Sir Girija Bajpai, had told the High Commission that the Indian government did have an official position regarding the White Australia policy but preferred not to share it with journalists. The despatch emphasised the feeling with which Bajpai spoke about Australia's immigration policy and added that the conversation demonstrated the resentment felt by even well-disposed Indians towards Australia. Given sufficient provocation, the Indian government might be 'tempted to ventilate its objections rather more forcefully'.<sup>42</sup> A quota would remove the basis of those objections.

Within the DEA, there was an acute awareness of the difficulties that the policy caused to the relationship between Australia and India. Colin Moodie, who returned from his posting in Delhi in 1948, wrote a minute which captured much of the department's thinking about India and Pakistan in the period immediately after Partition and was to prove substantially correct for years to come: avoid acting as a mediator between the two countries as this would 'probably antagonise one side or the other'; and in determining the line to follow, 'the fundamental principle should be to cultivate Pakistan rather than India if we must make a choice'. Turning to immigration, Moodie was clear. To secure the goodwill of both countries the White Australia policy must be modified: 'All other gestures would be futile without this.' He felt that the term 'White Australia' should not be used in any official pronouncements, an objective which the Department of Immigration had been attempting to enforce with mixed success for some time. Finally, he repeated his appeal that the application of the policy be more elastic with the introduction of a quota system.<sup>43</sup>

## The 1950s

The Australian High Commission line was restated forcibly by Francis Stuart who had been posted in Singapore at the time of the Macmahon Ball fiasco.<sup>44</sup> He was sent to New Delhi to replace Moodie in early 1950 and lost no time in urging a quota which, he reported, was also the view at senior levels in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. The 'racial bias

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<sup>41</sup> Letter, Bedi to Y. D. Gundevia, 31 December 1949, NAI: File DO No. E (3) 5HC. For the coalition government's more liberal administration, see Jordan, 'Reappraisal of "White Australia"', 231–32.

<sup>42</sup> Despatch 21/49, New Delhi to Canberra, 19 May 1949, NAA: A1838, 169/10/1 part 1.

<sup>43</sup> Minute, 11 February 1948, NAA: A1838, 169/10/1 part 1.

<sup>44</sup> See his wry account of the Macmahon Ball mission in *Towards Coming of Age: A Foreign Service Odyssey* (Griffith University: Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia Relations, 1989), 147–48.