Immigration and Labor Government in Australia: 1983-95

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is to review the track record of the Labor Government (1983-95) on matters related to immigration and ethnic diversity. The article first reviews the changes in the size and composition of immigration intakes since 1983 and looks at the controversies surrounding the refugee and business migration programs. It then reviews the Labor record on multiculturalism and settlement issues, including the issues of citizenship and racism. The major immigration reports commissioned by Labor, the Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services, the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, as also critically reviewed. The major immigration debates of the period of Labor office are canvassed, as are the changing socio-economic circumstances of Australia’s immigrants over the Labor period.
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1. Introduction
Immigration, perhaps more than any other factor, has changed the face of contemporary Australian society. One of only four western societies to carry out a systematic settler immigration programme over the post-war period, Australia has more immigrants and a greater ethnic diversity than any other country in the world today. Over 100 ethnic groups have been caught in the Australian immigration net in the five decades following the launching of the post-war immigration program by Arthur Calwell, the first Minister of Immigration in the Chifley Labor government. Today, more than half of the population of Australia's major cities - such as Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide - are first or second generation immigrants. The metropolitan areas of one of the most urbanised nations of the world are home to peoples from all continents. A result of immigration, Australian cities have been transformed from predominantly Anglo-Celtic domains in the late 1940s to become vibrant cosmopolitan centres, themselves a microcosm of global ethnic diversity, in the 1990s.

While it was a Labor government which launched the post-war immigration program, other than for the brief period of the Whitlam Labor Governments (1972-75), it was the Liberal National conservative coalition which shaped Australian immigration policy until the last decade. But since 1983, when the first Hawke government was elected, immigration policy has been administered by Labor. This period has been one of great flux at a national and international level. There are many dimensions of this flux: economic restructuring of capitalist societies; political change in Eastern Europe; the emergence of Asia as an economic force in the world; war and conflict in the Middle East, Africa, the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia; and ethnic conflict in Europe and North America, from the Brixton riots in London in the early 1980s to the LA riots in the early 1990s; and the revolution in telecommunications and travel are but some of the most vivid examples of the global economic, political, social and cultural volatility that has impacted on the period of Labor in office in the 1980s and 1990s. One consequence of these dialectical processes of the globalisation of capitalism and the fragmentation of nation states has been an unprecedented international movement of peoples as refugees, illegal immigrants, legal permanent settlers, guest workers, temporary immigrants, overseas students and those on short-stay tourist visas. As Castles and Miller (1993:5) put it, "international migration is part of a transnational revolution that is reshaping societies and politics around the globe".

The aim of this article is to review Labor's track record on matters related to immigration and ethnic diversity. The next section reviews the changes in the size and composition of immigration intakes since 1983 and looks at the controversies surrounding the refugee and business migration programs. Section three reviews the Labor record on multiculturalism and settlement issues, including the issues of
citizenship and racism. The major immigration reports commissioned by Labor, the *Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services*, the *Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies*, as also critically reviewed in this section. Section four recounts the major immigration debates of the period of Labor office, while section five briefly looks at the changing socio-economic circumstances of Australia’s immigrants over the Labor period. Section six then provides a brief summary of immigration policy under Labor government.

2. Changing Patterns of Immigration

*Immigration intakes 1983-95*

Over the Labor period of office, a stream of Labor politicians held the portfolio of Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (or its variants), though the size of the annual immigration intakes responded more to economic circumstances than to any Minister's personal stamp on the portfolio. Immigration intakes of over the period 1983-95 continued to reflect the “boa-constrictor” like behaviour as immigration intakes varied in total according to the business cycle.

Following the recession of 1982-3 - which helped the election of Bob Hawke in 1983 - immigration intakes were cut by labor. The first Minister, Stewart West, immediately announced a scaling down of immigration, with the 1983-84 Labor immigration intake of 62,000 nearly half of the preceding year. When the economy recovered and unemployment rates fell, immigration intakes were increased. When Chris Hurford became immigration minister following the December 1984 federal election. It had rode the Asian immigration storm that the Blainey debate had ignited: Blainey found little support among major political parties, big business, the trade unions, the churches and other mainstream institutions of Australian political life. The Labor government began to progressively increase annual intakes, so that the 1986-7 intake was nearly double that of the first year of Labor office. Hurford wanted to increase this further the following year to a plateau of 150,000 a year, despite the unemployment rate remaining at 8 per cent. When the Hawke government won a record third term of office at the 1987 election, Mick Young was given the immigration portfolio. His first impact was to lower the 1987-88 annual intake by 10,000 to 140,000. In 1988, the Asian immigration issue was elevated to a federal election issue by John Howard, but he slipped and fell on the sword of prejudice and was replaced as Federal Opposition leader by Andrew Peacock. Young's term as Immigration Minister was short lived, and he was replaced by Senator Robert Ray, who announced that the intake would be kept at 140,000 for three years. Ray also established the Bureau of Immigration Research following the disestablishment of Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs - a product the Fraser Government - which was view by Labor as too close to the conservative opposition. In turn, the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIPR), as it is now called, has been criticised as being too close to the Labor government's immigration policy (Weekend Australian, 18-19 February 1995). Robert Ray also introduced new decision-making and review procedures for immigration applications, reducing the discretionary powers of the Immigration Minister and hence the potential to be caught in the controversy of individual immigration decisions.

Ray was replaced as Immigration Minister by Gerry Hand in April 1990, who held office until 1993, when Senator Nick Bolkus - the current immigration Minister - was
appointed. With the re-emergence of economic recession of the early 1990s, immigration policy once again followed the snake: immigration intakes were cut as official unemployment rates - which underestimated the real rate of unemployment - exceeded 11 per cent for the first time since the 1930s. The 1991 intake of 123,500 was cut to 80,000 for 1992-3. Hand was the center of controversy when in May 1982 he introduced English language tests for migrants in the concessional and independent categories and when the August 1992 budget announced that, for the first time, welfare and unemployment benefits were to be denied to immigrants for the first six months of settlement (Rubenstein 1993: 34). This broke a central tenant of the Australian multiculturalism model which allowed immigrants the same formal social rights as all other Australians. The government appeared to be accepting the claims (Blainey 1994; Rimmer 1991) that new immigrants were a drain on scarce Australian welfare resources. But as Morrissey et al (1991) has shown, immigrants make less use of welfare resources than other Australians.

Despite experiencing economic growth rates higher than most of the rest of the capitalist world in 1993-95, Australian unemployment rates have remained high, exceeding 8 per cent for most of the 1990s. Immigration intakes have began to turn upwards slightly, settling around the 80,000 mark in 93-94, although the government faces growing criticism from sections of the environmental movement who equate immigration with environmental destruction (Flannery, 1992).

**Australia's changing ethnic composition**
The "white Australia policy" was the bedrock of the new Australian nation at Federation in 1901, blocking entry for Asian and other 'coloured' people to Australia until the 1960s. Since then Australia's immigration patterns have demonstrated an increasing reliance on immigrants from Asia. Immigrants from Asian countries have dominated Australian immigration intakes since the late 1980s, with eight of the top ten source countries of Australian immigrants in 1990-91 (Inglis 1992: 25). Asians have also been the fastest growing overseas-born population group in Australia in the past decade (Khoo et al., 1993:1). Moreover, increasing numbers of Asians enter Australia as temporary migrant workers, students or tourists (Sloan and Kennedy, 1992). Asians comprise more than half of Australia's long term overseas visitors and 38 per cent of Australia's short-term visitor or tourist arrivals, up from less than 10 per cent in 1966 (Kee Pookong et al. 1993:10-12). Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore are the main sources of Australia's full fee paying overseas tertiary students who generate an income of $500 million per year (BIPR 1993a). Increasing Asian immigration has corresponded with changes that have given Australia's immigration program a sharper economic focus and produced the "new migration" with emphasis on education, qualifications and capital (Inglis et al. 1992: 224).

**Refugees**
The refugee program is one area of criticism of the Labor Government. Refugee intakes to Australia are announced annually, with Australia's refugees chosen from the almost 20 million people who are in refugee camps outside Australia. They are classified as refugees by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) because they are outside their country of origin and unable to return because of well-founded fears of persecution that occurs because of their politics, religion, culture, ethnicity or some other factor. In addition to this 'planned' refugee
intake, a number of people arrive directly in Australia and claim refugee status. These might be “boat people” who arrive directly on northern Australian shores, mostly from Asia, people who arrive in Australia illegally, or those who arrive on short-stay tourist visas and subsequently claim right to asylum once in Australia.

One criticism of Labor immigration policy centres around the size of the refugee intake. Some argue that Australia is too mean in this regard, and should increase the annual quota when the annual intakes - generally between 10 to 15 per cent of annual intakes - are compared to the number of people seeking refugee resettlement. As the Refugee Council of Australia (1993: 49) put it: “At its present level, the humanitarian intake is an inadequate response to the situation of all those who need resettling”. Others (Rimmer, 1991) who point to the refugees lack of language and educational skills and argue that Australia takes in too many refugees.

It is the case that refugees have had the greatest difficulty in gaining employment in Australia in recent years of economic recession and restructuring. This is evident in the disproportionately high unemployment rates - four to five times higher than the average - that Vietnamese experience in Australia (Viviani et al. 1993). As one recent study, which reviewed fifteen studies of the immigrant employment experience, concluded: "Refugees do the worst of all immigrant groups" (Wooden 1994: 222). However the main argument for refugee intakes is humanitarian, not economic. Critics also argue that the government does not do enough for refugees once in Australia. One study found that 80 per cent of Australia’s refugee women have experienced trauma from rape, abuse and torture prior to arrival in Australia (Pittaway 1991). Many have lost - or lost track of - their families. Yet few are provided with adequate counselling to deal with settlement difficulties that are a result of the devastating combination of trauma, broken families, settlement in a new strange land and unemployment. Acceptance of refugees on humanitarian grounds implies a responsibility to provide resources and policies to enable proper trauma counselling and labour market programs to ease the transition to Australian society and the Australian work force. Australia’s recent track record is not very good in this regard.

Another criticism of refugee policy under Labor relates to the treatment of those in custody while applying for refugee status. Refugee associations, legal representatives and welfare workers who work with asylum seekers have complained that their clients are often denied basic rights and due process. This critique emerged strongly when, under Minister Gerry Hand, the Labor Government set up a camp at Port Headland in the remote far north west of Australia to deal with boat people and other asylum seekers, including Cambodians. The first boat load of Cambodian asylum seekers who arrived in Australia in November 1989 had to wait ten months before they received independent advice. As Piper (1992: 156) argued: ‘Some subsequent boat arrivals and many who apply at the airport have had their claims completed with the assistance of officers from the Department of Immigration...In other words, their advocate was also their judge”. Some Cambodian refugees had been in detention for two years before a final decision had been taken on their status. The decision by the Australian government to reject their applications was subsequently rejected after appeal to higher court authorities and revoked. The Government then introduced new
legislation to prevent the government being sued due to this remarkable sequence of bureaucratic bungling and inhumane treatment.

The number of people seeking asylum in Australia increased dramatically in the 1990s. From 564 people in 1988-99, the number jumped to 21,653 in 1991-92 (Rubenstein 1993: 34). But very few of these - only about 500 people or 2% of the total - had arrived in Australia by boat (Piper 1992: 160), despite the sensationalist media hysteria that follows the arrival of a boat-load of refugees on Australia’s northwestern coastline. The majority of asylum-seekers were Chinese students enrolled in formal education in Australia following the push to “export” Australian education. There were 21,000 PRC students in Australia at that time, with another 45,000 arriving between 1/7/89 and 31/5/91. Many of these students claimed asylum in Australia following the massacre of pro-democracy students in Tiananmen Square on 4th June 1989. The number of Chinese refugee claimants rose from 36 in 1988 to 223 in 1989, 7,386 in 1990 and 9,120 in 1991 (Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations 1992: 181). The Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, had appeared on national television to denounce, with tears in his eyes, the Tiananmen massacre which had just been shown on Australian television screens. On 27 June 1990 he made a joint announcement, with the Minister for Immigration, that PRC nationals in Australia on 20 June 1989 - wether legally or illegally - would be able to stay for four years under a special category of temporary residence permit: “No PRC national in Australia on June 1989 will be required during the four years or subsequently to return to China against their will unless they have seriously breached Australian laws” (cited in Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations 1992: 188).

This decision, while a humanitarian response to the unrest in China, was criticised by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations (1992: 193) as leading to delay, confusion and prevarication in refugee procedures. This had the effect of aggravating the position of genuine PRC refugee and humanitarian claimants in Australia, the Committee claimed: “[The decision] has contributed significantly to the immense burden which has been placed on Australia’s refugee determination system over the past three years...[and] has led to a significant degree of uncertainty among PRC nationals in Australia”.

**Business immigration**

While immigrants with business experience and wealth have always been highly sought after by countries of immigration in the post-war period, it was not until the mid-1970s that immigration policy in Australia was changed to establish a specific business migration program to encourage the recruitment of business migrants. From 1976, the conservative Australian Government, headed by Malcom Fraser, introduced what was to be later known as the Business Migration Program to "provide for the admission of people with expertise and capital to establish worthwhile enterprises in Australia" (DIEA 1980:45).

With the election of the Hawke Government in 1983, the conditions of entry under the BMP were eased as the new Labor Government enthusiastically embraced business migration. In 1984, 1,453 people with $150 million in capital were issued visas under the BMP. In 1985-6, the government relaxed the requirements of $500,000 per business migrant by introducing a category of entrepreneurial migrant.
The entrepreneurial migrant was required to have less capital, but had to demonstrate strong business skills and abilities. In the decade following the introduction of the BMP in 1981, over 11,000 business migrants and about 50,000 of their dependent family members arrived in Australia. After 1986, the numbers entering under the BMP increased markedly. In 1986-7, 3,535 entered under the program which attracted 885 principal applicants. In 1987-8, business entrants exceeded 10,000 (including 2,458 principal applicants) for the first time, with a similar number arriving the following year. The business migration intake grew steadily over this decade, peaking in 1988-89, when 2,637 principal applicants were granted visas. Intakes then fell dramatically in the 1990s, when the integrity of the BMP began to be challenged.

For many years, the greatest problem with the BMP was in not attracting enough business migrants. While the business migration program represented only a small proportion of the total immigration intake for these years (Borowski 1992:2-3), it was smaller than the Government had wanted. The business migration intake, which averaged approximately 1,500 per year, was only half of the quota allocated to this program. But while Australia was able to attract a larger number of business migrants throughout the 1980s, the BMP came under increasing attack for not delivering new businesses to Australia.

In 1988 the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) introduced a monitoring process whereby all business migrants would be surveyed 1 year after arriving in Australia and again after 2 years. In August 1991 DILGEA reported that 45% had established businesses by one year after arrival and that 61% had done so after two years, with less than one third of these businesses claiming that they were export-oriented. The average employment generated was 6 persons per business, while half of the businesses were established in the services industry (DILGEA 1991a, 1991b). These findings were encouraging for supporters of the BMP. However, the fact that the monitoring process could only locate less than half of those who entered under the BMP is in itself a condemnation of the program: what happened to the other 55%? This highlights the general problem that the Australian government has with monitoring business and other migrants after arrival in Australia. As the first major review of the BMP put it, there are "no systematic procedures for maintaining contact with individual migrants (BMP or otherwise), after their arrival in Australia" (MSJ Keys Young 1990: xiv).

At this time the business migration program began to get bad press. Concern had been expressed that there was routing of the system. Much of this stemmed from the government's decision to use private migration agents, rather than immigration Department officials, to operate the business migration program. It was in the interest of private agents to help their clients succeed under the BMP, whatever their bone fides. Claims that migration agents were involved in supplying false documents (Lever-Tracy 1991) seemed to be verified by calls by the Australian Migration Consultants Association for the licensing of agents (Lague 1991). These concerns about the BMP were not new. In 1987 journalist Brian Toohey claimed that South African BMP applicants were merely recycling the $500,000 in capital made available by a Western Australian businessman in order to escape South Africa (Toohey, 1987). Given the restrictions on the amount of Rand that a person could legally take out of South Africa at the time - R100,000 per family plus R6,000 per
family member over the age of 12, or about $A 50,000 - such concerns seemed to have validity (Collins 1987).

Another concern raised about the business migration program relates to the bona fides of business migrants regarding their intention to settle permanently in Australia. A longitudinal survey of Australian immigrants, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Population and Immigration Research (BIPR) in 1992, interviewed a sample of 798 visaed arrivals within six months of their arrival in Australia. Of these, 13.7% had returned to their home temporarily. The bulk of these were business migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia (Hugo, 1994:70). These Asian business migrants have been tagged with the term "astronauts" because they spend most of their time in the air flying between their homes in Australia and Asian on business matters (Mak 1991). One interpretation of this fact is that these business migrants were abusing the system and never intended to settle permanently in Australia in the first place (Ellingsen 1990). Another interpretation is that business immigrants understandably take some time before finally transferring their business activities to their new countries. As Hugo (1994:70) puts it "[t]ransferring the often complex web of purchasing, manufacturing and selling activities associated with business is more difficult than transferring people", particularly in the 1990s when Australia suffered an economic recession but there was very rapid economic growth in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The Federal Government announced in July 1991 that the BMP would be fundamentally overhauled. The BMP was replaced by a new "Independent-Business Skills" category as a sub-category of the "Independent" category to become operational in February 1992. This new category was different from the BMP in that it targeted an applicants skills and business experience rather than a specific business proposal or sum of money available to be transferred to Australia. Business Skills entrants are now subject to a points test like other applicants who wish to migrate to Australia other than refugees and immediate family dependents of existing immigrant settlers. A minimum of 105 points is necessary to be accepted for settlement in Australia. Points are allocated for English language ability and age - just as they are for all applicants. In addition, points are allocated for the size of turnover of the applicants business, the number of employees and the amount of capital available for transfer to Australia. Additional points are allocated to applicants if their main business background is in areas designated to be of particular benefit to Australia, including manufacturing, traded goods and innovative technology (Borowski 1992:8). Business Skills Category (BSC) entrants are also subject to post arrival monitoring, with the threat that their permanent resident status may be cancelled in certain circumstances (The Business Skills Assessment Panel, 1993: vii).

3. Multiculturalism and Settlement Issues under Labor

*From assimilation to multiculturalism*

Multiculturalism replaced assimilation as a model for migrant settlement in Australia in the mid 1970s. The Whitlam government finally dismantled the White Australia policy that had restricted the immigration of "coloured" immigrants since Federation. It also moved to replace the discredited assimilation policy, which had denied immigrants their cultural heritage and access to specific programs and services designed to meet special immigrant needs in areas such as education, health, welfare
and the law (Collins 1991: 228-30). Whitlam’s Immigration Minister, Al Grassby, pushed for a policy and philosophy of immigrant settlement which valued the immigrants language and cultural baggage as part of their contribution to Australian society while also developing programs and services to help redress immigrant inequality. But it was Malcom Fraser, who led the conservative coalition to a victory over Whitlam in controversial circumstances in 1975, who finally cemented multiculturalism as the model for immigrant settlement. The term was borrowed from the Canadian Premier, Pierre Trudeau, who introduced it in order to resolve French/British tensions in Canada, particularly the situation in Quebec at the time (Collins 1993). This shift received Labor support as a development along Grassby’s lines, and received bipartisan political support until John Howard, then leader of the Federal Opposition, attempted to gain political support by promising to replace multiculturalism with what he called “One Australia”.

One landmark in the developing of multiculturalism in Australia occurred in 1977 when the Fraser Government commissioned an inquiry into post-arrival programs and services for migrants, chaired by Melbourne lawyer Frank Galbally. The principles on which the Galbally committee made its recommendations were: equality of opportunity and equal access to programs and services for all; the right of all Australians to maintain their culture; the need for special programs and services for migrants to ensure equality of access and provision; and that these programs should be designed and operated in full consultation with migrants (Galbally Report 1978: 4). Published in 1978, the Galbally Report made 57 specific recommendations on post-arrival programs and services involving the expenditure of $50 million over three years. Funds were subsequently provided for programs and services to aid settlement, provide English language tuition for adults and children, introduce translation services, establish multicultural resource centres, and to extend ethnic radio and to establish ethnic television (SBS Television). Galbally also recommended the establishment of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA).

By the time Hawke took office for Labor in 1983, multiculturalism had been strongly established. The Hawke government remained committed to multiculturalism, though changed some of the institutional deckchairs. Following a review, AIMA was considered to be too close to the Fraser Government, leading the Hawke Government to establish the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). Located in the office of Prime Minister and Cabinet, OMA became Labor’s main institutional arm of multiculturalism, with a brief advise the Prime Minister and to develop a ‘National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia’. The DIEA retained responsibility for immigration matters.

But in addition to changing institutional arrangements, the Labor government also redefined multiculturalism. As Stephen Castles (1992: 187-91) has argued, the value of multiculturalism for the Fraser Government was as a way of achieving national identity or social cohesion. This approach emphasised cultural pluralism and the role of ethnic communities in providing welfare services, following the Galbally Report. This fitted in with the neo-liberal agenda of the conservative government which viewed immigrant problems as stemming from individual deficiencies of immigrants themselves, be they poor English, lack of knowledge of Australian institutions or some other problem of the immigrant. This approach denied the influence of social
class in inequality and based multiculturalism on an ethnic group model. This led to a strategy of developing the ideological legitimation for an ethnically diverse society while, simultaneously, cutting government expenditure and enhancing social control over ethnic minorities.

**Reviewing Immigration and Multiculturalism**

Two other important reviews of immigration and multiculturalism issues appeared during the Labor reign. One was the *Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services*, chaired by ANU academic Jim Jupp (ROMAMPAS). The report, *Don’t Settle for Less*, concentrated on developing principles for immigration policy until the end of the century. Rejecting the Blainey critique, the Jupp Report reaffirmed multiculturalism as the appropriate government philosophy for migrant settlement until the end of the 20th Century. Multiculturalism was redefined as “equitable participation” in the spheres of Australian life, with the Jupp Report explicitly addressing the importance of introducing programs and services to help overcome the structural inequality that immigrants faced in Australia, particularly in the areas of the labour market and language education. This was an important development, since a key criticism of multiculturalism was that it concentrated on the ‘lifestyle’ or cultural trappings of multiculturalism - the so-called four D’s: dance, diet dress and dialect - to the detriment of the “life chances” of immigrants (Jayasuriya 1985; Collins 1991: 239-42).

The other major review was the report of the *Committee to Advise on Australia’s Immigration Policies* (CAAIP, 1988), chaired by Stephen FitzGerald, which reported in 1988. After widespread consultation, including 1,000 submissions and over 500 pages of consultant’s reports, the FitzGerald Committee’s report was quite scathing in its criticism of immigration policy. The report highlighted the Australian public’s ‘disquiet’ over immigration policy, which was described as being ‘off course and out of step with community needs and attitudes’. Selection methods were described as being *ad hoc* and unable to prevent a blow out of immigration targets, while the Immigration Department was roundly criticised as being ‘locked largely into immigrant networks’ and as having ‘a serious image problem’ (CAAIP 1988: 19). The committee recommended a widespread overhaul that gave immigration policy an sharper economic focus by concentrating on young, skilled and entrepreneurial immigrants. Despite this trenchant critique, the FitzGerald Report recommended an increase in immigration intakes.

Despite the fact that a review of multiculturalism was not in the terms of reference of the committee, the FitzGerald Report canvassed public views about multiculturalism and reported that for most people multiculturalism ‘discriminates against Australians’ and was generally viewed as divisive. This was despite an acknowledgment that ‘a strong and broad consensus on the part of ...business, trade unions, church and media’ supported multiculturalism (CAAIP 1988: 32). The FitzGerald Report appeared to be supporting the views of the ‘dissenting views’ on multiculturalism - Geoffrey Blainey, Bruce Ruxton, Ron Casey and others - against the views of this consensus. Thus one of the fundamental weaknesses of the FitzGerald Report was that it was inconsistent in the treatment of public opinion of immigration and multiculturalism. When public opinion was against immigration, the committee recommended that this opinion be ignored and that annual immigration intakes be increased, albeit with a more careful
eye to economic benefits. But when only 40 out of 1000 submissions opposed multiculturalism, the Committee appeared to accept the view that multiculturalism had failed and should be overhauled (Collins 1988).

Because of these weaknesses, the recommendations of the FitzGerald Report were largely ignored by the Hawke Government, which continued to strongly support and develop its philosophy and practise of multiculturalism. Some specific recommendations were taken up by the government, including one to set up a national immigration bureau and to set up a national body to improve the process of recognition of skills and qualifications obtained in other countries. These recommendations were enacted following launch by Bob Hawke of the Government’s National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia in July 1989, which further refined the principles of a multicultural society.

The National Agenda (OMA 1989) defined multiculturalism not in terms of cultural pluralism or minority rights but in terms of the cultural, social and political rights of all citizens in a democratic state. The three dimensions of multicultural policy identified in the National Agenda were: (1) cultural identity - the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion; (2) social justice - the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender and place of birth; and (3) economic efficiency - the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

Under the Labor government, multiculturalism shifted from an ethnic group model to one which stressed the importance of removing structural barriers (defined above) to participation in Australian society. In order to implement this multicultural vision, the National Agenda announced a number of measures. These included: improvements to the process of overseas qualifications recognition, leading to the establishment of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition; a campaign to improve community relations, conducted by OMA in the 1990s and reviewed by Morrissey (1993); strengthening the Governments Access and Equity strategy; extension and improvement of multicultural broadcasting; improving opportunities for leaning English; commitment to support the learning of languages other than English; and reviews of Australian law and decision making to ensure that they are appropriate to people from different cultural and language backgrounds. The Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR) was also established in 1989, with a brief to commission independent research on many aspects of immigration and immigrant settlement. In 1993, in response to criticism that the BIR was pro-immigration and ignored broader elements of population policy and impact, the Bureau changed its name to the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research. This was further changed, in December 1994, to the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR), although the division of labour between BIMPR and OMA are not yet clear.

**Multiculturalism and citizenship**

As Castles (1992:196) points out, the National Agenda also addresses the issue of national identity, cultural diversity and citizenship:
Taken together, the Hawke Government’s multicultural and social justice policies appear to provide a socio-democratic concept of citizenship for and ethnically-diverse nation. Citizenship is defined in terms of a set of civil rights to personal liberty (including the right to cultural identity), of political rights to participation in democratic institutions, of social rights of access to income, health care, education and welfare. All these are seen as elements of ‘all Australians’ - they are not tied to ethnicity or culture, and there is no expectation of assimilation as a precondition to enjoyment of the rights.

As Australia approaches the 20th Century, matters of multiculturalism, national identity and citizenship are very much on the agenda of public debate following the announcement by Prime Minister Paul Keating that Australia should become a republic, have a new flag, and complete the “unfinished business” - started with the Mabo legislation - with Australia’s indigenous peoples via the reconciliation process. Citizenship is the main category which mediates between the individual and the nation state, or, as Castles et al (1995: 31) put it, “a symbolic membership ticket to the political community”. As Australian multiculturalism has moved from the ethnic group model to the citizenship model, the relationship between immigration and citizenship requires further analysis.

Castles (1994) develops three aspects of citizenship: The first is the rules for access to citizenship for immigrants and their children, or formal citizenship. One of the key features of the Australian multiculturalism model is that citizenship is available to all immigrants - with the exception of those with serious criminal charges - after two years of settlement. This is also the case in Canada and the USA, but not in Germany and Switzerland, where immigrants face a high degree of difficulty in gaining citizenship. Other countries, like France, Britain and Sweden, lie somewhere in the middle (Castles and Miller 1993).

The second aspect of citizenship, what can be called substantial citizenship, relates to the rights and obligations connected with being a member of a state. Formal and substantial citizenship often don’t correspond. Ethnic minorities may be formal citizens, but be excluded from other rights. Others, such as permanent immigrants, may have no formal citizenship rights, yet have rights and obligations to the state. These are quasi-citizens, or, in Tomas Hammar’s (1990) words, denizens. Citizenship is incomplete when people are formally citizens but separated from others because of physical appearance, ethnicity, culture or religion. Discrimination, inequality and racism often result from such separation.

Castle’s third aspect of citizenship is termed the need for institutional change. This refers to the degree to which the content of citizenship is in fact culturally specific. In other words, the characteristics, capabilities and behavioural forms associated with being a citizen may be such that they de facto exclude or disadvantage people who have obtained formal access to the status of citizen. Hence institutional change is required to respond to the different needs of a culturally diverse society in order to achieve access and equity for all groups in society. It is this tension between universality and difference that is at the heart of the liberal-democratic model of citizenship. But persistent socio-economic disadvantage of many NESB immigrant minorities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders - as well as their lack of
representation and participation in formal and informal political structures - suggests there is in Australia today a contradiction between formal citizenship and substantial citizenship.

This requires mechanisms to achieve adequate group representation or participation in the general political system and socio-economic equality compared to other groups. The *National Agenda for a Multicultural Society* (OMA, 1989) clearly implies the need for the state to recognise group difference as part of securing universality in allocation of resources and services. One such mechanism - OMA's *Access and Equity* policy - claims to ensure access and equity for all and to be based on the principle of universal entitlement to government services. But in practice most access and equity measures are concerned with the situation of those disadvantaged through the 'barrier of language, culture, race and religion' (OMA 1992: 11-12). Once again, the tension between universality and difference is apparent. Jayasuriya (1993) points out that one problem with the model of multicultural citizenship is the relationship between individual and group needs and rights. While Canada has instituted the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, there is no Australian equivalent. As a result, Jayasuriya (1993:2) argues, the Canadian model is much more willing to accept a more 'corporate' form of pluralism, which recognises group identities and group rights:

Unlike Canadian multiculturalism, Australian multiculturalism, firmly anchored to a milder form of equality of opportunity, was decidedly individualistic; and as a result, ethnic and cultural groups were not given any formal standing in the national polity.

As a consequence, there is a problem with the Australia multiculturalism model: the potential conflict between individual rights and opportunities, and group cohesion and participation. If the state recognises the right to maintain ethnic group culture it has to devise mechanisms which permit both the exercise of cultural rights and group participation in the economic and political decision making processes. The critical issue is the extent to which multicultural and social justice policies of recent years have dismantled exclusionary social barriers which disadvantage immigrants and minorities. As we will see in later in the article, socio-economic disadvantage of many ethnic minorities seems entrenched in contemporary Australian society. Some inroads have been made in the name of access and equity, but these have been generally isolated to large, public sector enterprises.

In conclusion, multiculturalism has not yet led to fundamental changes in the most powerful institutions of the state and the economy. Multiculturalism has brought important changes, but these have been generally confined to marginal areas of society. The principles of multiculturalism policy are important because they recognise the need for the state to take special measures to guarantee full participation of various groups in society, whatever the differences in cultures, values and need. These principles are designed to resolve this tension between universality and difference and could, if taken to their logical conclusion, provide the powerful stimulus for change. But the existing embryonic form of multicultural citizenship needs considerable development before it can serve as a general political model. This is highlighted by a consideration of the relationship between multiculturalism and racism in Australia.
Multiculturalism and racism

The wheels of Australian immigration history have turned full circle: For most of its history Australia attempted to exclude Asians from Australian life, but in the last decade Asia and Asians have played a greater role in Australian society than at any time in its history. Today widespread consensus puts Australia’s future economic success as dependent on economic integration - formally or informally - with the dynamic Asian region (Garnaut, 1990). But Australia’s anti-Asian history is a fetter to such developments, with anti-Asian racism one factor complicating Australia’s new relationship with Asia and Asians.

The links between immigration and racism in Australia have deep roots (Collins 1991: 198-225). The racism that shaped and justified the barbaric treatment of Aboriginal people is linked to the racialisation of coloured immigrants. White racial supremacy rationalised and induced discriminatory treatment of coloured immigrants at the institutional and personal level. Despite these common experiences of racism, relations between Aboriginal communities and ethnic communities in Australia are uneasy. Much of this tension relates to the policy of multiculturalism, which is supposed to embrace "all Australians". Multiculturalism emerged after struggles by the ethnic communities and their supporters to retain their language, cultures and traditions and to establish programs and services to give migrants a better chance to equal opportunity. In this way, the victims of racism help shape the outcomes of racism, just as Aboriginal people have done via the Mabo decision. But to date multiculturalism in Australia has been clearly an "ethnic", rather than an "indigenous", political cause. Part of this stems from the fact that one of the weaknesses of multiculturalism in Australia has been a reluctance to deal with the issue of racism. The Office of Multicultural Affairs did introduce one important anti-racist policy initiative in the 1980s - the Community Relations Strategy - which did allow some important, diverse approaches to racism to be trialed (Morrissey 1993). However, this project has been discontinued, with no indication that the Office of Multicultural Affairs sees community anti-racism programs as a critical part of multiculturalism. This contrasts with the Canadian experience where about one half of the multiculturalism budget is linked to anti-racist strategies (Collins 1993).

Another problem simply comes from the fact that, being indigenous, Aboriginal people regard all the rest of Australians as immigrants. Multiculturalism is, in some views, a policy for immigrants, not indigenous peoples. Indigenous people regard this prior history as entitling them to both similar and different rights to all other Australians: similar in areas of citizenship, the law and social justice; different in relation to native title following the Mabo decision. In New Zealand, the official policy of biculturalism recognised the role of Maori people: one leg of the biculturalism policy is that of the indigenous people, the other leg is the rest of New Zealanders. While this has the advantage of elevating Maori rights and history to a prominent place - at least formally - the disadvantage is that all those in the other "leg" are grouped together under the other culture. This leads to the danger that coloured immigrants, for example - including Pacific Islanders - will trend to be ignored or reduced to a homogenous lump of non-Maori (Collins 1993a).
The current Keating ALP government is attempting to deal with reconciliation between Australia's indigenous peoples and others. At the same time, the republic debate and the debate about Australian citizenship and identity is gathering pace. One of the greatest challenges for multiculturalism in Australia - indeed, perhaps the critical challenge - is to embrace indigenous peoples under the multiculturalism umbrella. If this proves impossible, the philosophy of multiculturalism will come under increasing challenge from supporters of Aboriginal rights as well as from the far-right. This would threaten to undermine the many material benefits that multiculturalism has delivered to immigrants. If multiculturalism embraces anti-racist issues as more central to the multiculturalism project, it is feasible that reconciliation with indigenous peoples can occur within a multiculturalism framework.

4. Recent Australian Immigration Debates.
From the outset post-war immigration was controversial. Since then, there have been regular debates on a number of aspects of the Australian immigration program. These include: the size and ethnic composition of the annual immigration intake; the balance of categories - family, refugees & humanitarian; skilled and business - in the immigration intake; the impact of immigration on the economy, society and environment; the presence/absence of racial discrimination and inequalities; the conduct of the Immigration Department and the adequacy of principles and procedures relating to illegal immigrants and refugee claimants; and issues relating to ethnic diversity, social cohesion, and national identity. We have already dealt with the debates about multiculturalism and settlement issues, including the provision of services and programs and citizenship. In this section some of the most important of these debates are canvassed.

Following the entry of Asians in large numbers in the latter half of the 1970s, an Asian immigration debate emerged in the 1980s. Led by academic historian Professor Geoffrey Blainey, critic argued that Asian immigrants took Australian jobs, took scarce university places because they worked too hard; took handouts from the government; bludgeoned welfare payments, were part of organised crime and destroyed the neighbourhood with their language and obnoxious cultural habits (Blainey, 1984). On close analysis, these claims had little basis (Collins 1991: 212-221), though the duration of the debate is testimony to the strongly-held attitudes that stereotyped in many minds Asian behaviour in Australia through the historical prism of xenophobia and anti-Asian prejudice. Eventually Blainey received little support from mainstream institutions or political parties in Australia, while the far-right is very small - though not without influence - in Australia compared to many European countries. The Blainey debate died a quiet death after more than a year of sensationalist headlines. Yet even by the late 1980s, opinion polls continued to highlight public opposition to Asian and European immigration (Markus 1988:33), although Goot (1988) warns that caution must be exercised in interpreting the opinion polls.

Anti-Asian issues resurfaced in 1988, the Australia bicentennial of white settlement. An immigration debate was triggered by John Howard, then leader of the conservative Federal Opposition (Liberal/National Party) coalition. Howard was desperate to win an election against Labor Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, and required only a few percentage points swing his way. He played the "prejudice" card by turning
immigration and multiculturalism into a political issue prior to the election. He declared that, if Prime Minister, he would reduce Asian immigration "if necessary" and abandon multiculturalism in favour of a policy of "One Nation". Howard was clearly attempting to attract Labor voters who, because of attitudes of racism and prejudice, opposed Asians and multiculturalism. While the extent of opposition to Asian immigration is debatable - reactionary Victorian RSL president, Bruce Ruxton, claimed 80% of the population were opposed to it - a large number of Australians in the late 1980s held strong attitudes of racial prejudice. Surely the task of convincing a few percentage of labour voters to swing to Howard on this issue would be easy.

But Howard's political masterstroke backfired. He was dumped as leader before the election. The first words that his replacement, Andrew Peacock, uttered to the press conference announcing the change of leadership was that the Coalition would return to a bipartisan immigration policy, including an acceptance of multiculturalism and abandoning any suggestion that Asian immigration would be treated any different to immigration from other regions. Howard was a victim of the contradictions of racism. First, it appeared that the coalition would lose, rather than gain votes on the issue: many Asian voters - attracted to the coalition by their anti-communism and the fact that the Fraser Government had been in power during their arrival - threatened to change their alliances. Meanwhile, while many Labor voters claimed concern about Asian immigration and multiculturalism, these issues were not decisive: they were also concerned about high interest rates, unemployment, inflation and so on. But the decisive blow to Howard came from his traditional constituency - big business in Australia. Corporate Australian capital viewed the dynamism of the Asian region with eager eyes. Australia's economic future lay with improved economic and political relations with Asia. And yet Howard's stance on Asian immigration was criticised widely in the Asian media as a return of the white Australia policy. Clearly the initial appeal of Howard's attempt to gain from the politics of prejudice had backfired (Collins 1991: 302-6).

In the 1990s, the main debate on Australian immigration has been the economic and environmental aspects of immigration. Much of the economic debate about the relationship between immigration, unemployment, economic growth and living standards in Australia. Immigration intakes were cut in half as the 1990s recession led to record post-war unemployment in Australia. But despite claims that immigrants take Australian jobs (Blainey 1984), most research is clear that immigration adds jobs for the Australian-born (Withers and Pope 1985). Other claims linked immigration to Australia's growing foreign indebtedness, lowering levels of labour productivity, inflation, lowering standards of living rising house prices and almost every other economic problem. Despite these claims, the consensus of most research on the economic impact of immigration supports the conclusion that the impact of immigration on the Australian economy is either positive or benign (Wooden et al. 1994), and that the other issues are such complex issues that to single immigration as the sole/main cause merely results in scapegoating.

To this list the environmental critics added pollution, congestion, sewerage-disposal problems, acid rain, the greenhouse effect, holes in the ozone layer, species extinction, erosion and every other problem. It was not until the late 1980s that a new environmental critique of Australian immigration emerged as "green politics" became
a significant political force in Australia for the first time. Following the works of US anti-population activist and academic Paul Ehrlich (Ehrlich 1968, Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1990), groups of environmentalists began to oppose immigration on the grounds that the fragile Australian environment could not withstand the additional population that came with immigration. Groups such as Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population (AESP) and Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI) emerged, while mainstream environmental groups such as the Australian Conservation Federation debated the immigration issue. The AAFI, a Trojan horse for racist anti-immigration propaganda, recorded between 5 to 10% of votes in Federal by-elections in 1994.

These developments raise concern that, by scapegoating immigration for complex environmental problems, the impact is merely to reproduce the fabric of racism and prejudice and to distort attention from the causes of environmental destruction that are related to the market activity of private enterprise and the poor track record of government environmental legislation (Collins 1991: 316-9). Most of these claims are without validity, blaming complex problems on immigration and migrants. This diverts attention from the real causes - and solutions - while at the same time reinventing the stereotypes and scapegoating of immigrants that are part of the fabric of contemporary Australian racism (Collins 1991: 308-319).

The other main issue of the 1990s is the relationship between ethnic diversity, social cohesion and national identity in Australia. With developments in Europe and North America reported as demonstrating the apparently inevitable links between ethnic diversity and social conflict, immigration critics have raised the same concerns in Australia. This is understandable in some way, since Australia has more immigrants - and from a greater diversity - than almost any other contemporary nation (Collins 1993). Many re-echoed Blainey's predictions of blood on the streets in the frontline suburbs of immigrant settlement as neighbours try to defend themselves from (cultural) invasion. However, the reality has been the opposite: in general tolerance and social cohesion have triumphed over prejudice and social conflict. While there are always exceptions to this rule, Australia has been remarkably free from ethnic conflict. Studies have found higher degrees of tolerance in suburbs of high migrant density than in other suburbs. Other critics of immigration and multiculturalism have raised fears of the nation becoming "many tribes" rather than a unified, united nation (Rimmer 1991; Blainey 1984).

5. Australian immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s

Overall, Australia is a very unequal society, with a degree of inequality of wealth and income, similar to that of the USA and Great Britain, with the 10% of the wealthiest Australians owing 60% of all the wealth (Stilwell, 1993). How do immigrants fare in what had been called (ironically) the Lucky Country? The Australian state - unlike those in Europe - gives immigrant settlers equal rights to welfare and other government programs and services after six months settlement in Australia. Political rights come with citizenship. Hence the determining factor in the living standards of immigrants in Australia is their relationship to the labour market, and other institutions of Australian society such as education, health, housing and the law.
One of the features of post-war Australian society has been the extent to which many immigrants and their children have been able to cross class boundaries to demonstrate a similar class profile to the Australian born. A minority of post-war immigrants have managed - like a minority of the non-immigrant population - to move into the Australian ruling class. Some immigrants have made the transition from penniless migrant to millionaire. Each year an Australian business magazine, *Business Review Weekly*, issues a list of the wealthiest 200 Australians. More than one in four of these wealthy Australians are post-war immigrants, most are NESB immigrants. Many of these are captains of industry with high public and corporate profiles. For these migrants, Australia was indeed the land of milk and honey (Collins 1991: 154-6).

In addition, many NESB immigrants have turned to small business in Australia, often because they experience "blocked mobility" as wage-labourers because of individual or institutionalised racism (Castles et al 1991). The small business sector in Australia is significant, despite the dominance of large, and often multinational, corporate capital: small businesses account for just under half of the private sector employment in Australia. Data from the 1991 Australian census shows that a number of immigrant birthplace groups - such as Greece, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Taiwan and Hungary - have at least a 50% higher presence among males and females who were self-employed or employers when compared to the Australian-born. One indication of the presence of immigrants in the Australian small business sector is that one in three fruit and vegetable shops in Australian are owned by Italians, while Greeks own one in three fast food shops, despite each group representing less than 3% of the Australian population (Collins 1992). Many of these immigrants find independence and financial success in small business, with immigrant small businesses claimed to be more successful than non-immigrant businesses in Australia. But for many immigrants in small business the reality is less than "rages to riches": often the norm is a transformation from marginal worker to marginal entrepreneur: long hours of hard work involving women's and children's labour. Ethnic communities still form part of the clientele and support networks for these businesses, but to survive most have to transcend the ethnic enclave and address the broader, multicultural Australian market.

The majority of post-war immigrants were employees or wage-labourers, a reserve army of labour for Australian capitalism during the long boom from that lasted fro nearly three decades. For these immigrant men and women their socio-economic circumstances in Australia is partially governed by the job that they secure - their *private wage* - and the range of public sector programs and services available to them in the form of public health insurance (Medicare), welfare and unemployment benefits, translator services and so on - the *social wage*.

The fortunes of wage-earning immigrants is largely constrained by the patterns of labour market segmentation that has accompanied post-war immigration (Collins 1977, 1991: 78-92). NESB immigrants were concentrated in the unskilled and semi-skilled manual jobs in the male and female labour markets, sometimes called the secondary labour market (Piore 1980), with low wages, poor conditions, unstable employment and vulnerability to retrenchment the features of this segment of the Australian labour market. But recent changes to the character of Australian immigration, described in section two, break down these patterns, with NESB
immigrants from some Asian countries moving into professional and technical jobs in the primary labour market (Collins 1994, Collins and Reid 1994).

Despite these changes, unemployment during the three post-war recessions - 1974-5, 1982-3 and 1990-91 - has been much higher for NESB immigrants than for ESB immigrants or the Australian-born (Collins 1991: 114-9; Ackland and Williams 1992). Unemployment rates for immigrants born in Vietnam, Lebanon and Turkey are four to five times higher than average. Hence in May 1983, when the unemployment rate for the Australian-born was 10.2%, the rate of unemployment among Lebanese-born was 33.6% and Vietnamese-born 30.5%. Much of the burden of Australian unemployment falls on younger people. May 1993 unemployment rates for Vietnamese aged 15-34 years was 52% and Lebanese 43% (Moss 1993: 258). In 1991 there were 1 million young NESB people in Australia, while immigrant workers aged 35 years and over were at least twice as likely to be unemployed as their Australian-born counterparts (Moss 1993: 260).

Have second generation immigrants been able to achieve upward social mobility in Australia? Occupational and industrial data suggest that the second generation are more likely to be employed in tertiary sector jobs than their parents. However, this reflects the way in which economic restructuring in Australia has led to a decline of manufacturing employment and a growth of employment in the services sector (Collins 1991: 187-193). The second generation have higher educational qualifications than their parents (Holton 1994:171-2), while many immigrant groups experience a higher school retention rate and a higher success rate of entry to universities than their non-immigrant counterparts. They also have a higher rate of tertiary academic qualifications than their parents, who suffered from a structural inability to have overseas-obtained qualifications recognised in Australia (Castles et al 1989).

With increasing economic crises and the inexorable thrust of economic restructuring, the late 1980s and early 1990s have been characterised by growing inequalities in Australia, similar to other western societies. Overall living standards in Australia have fallen over the 1980s (Lombard 1991), with poverty in Australia increasing over the period of the 1980s (Saunders and Matheson, 1993: 182). NESB immigrants disproportionately represented among those in poverty and unemployment. Many NESB women - particularly those from European countries who have been in Australia for more than twenty years - have been victims as the scissors effect of recession and reduced tariffs which cut a swathe through the Australian clothing, footwear and textiles industries. While some retrenched women - 20,000 between 1988-90 - turned to part-time work or outwork, many others appear to have little hope of re-employment. The same is true for their husbands.

Meanwhile, changes to the industrial relations institutional framework in Australia has seen centralised wage decision making replaced with decentralised enterprise bargaining, while wide scale restructuring of existing award arrangements - which specify a joys scope, wages and conditions - is occurring under Labor's Accord with the ACTU. As a consequence of these changes, weaker sections of the labour movement - such as those with large numbers of NESB men and women workers - will lose out on future wage increases and improved working conditions. Baker and
Wooden (1992) found that the ability to communicate in English has become a critical screening device for entry into the award restructuring processes for women in the Australian communications industry, while Levine (1992) found that in the automobile industry it was more difficult for those workers who have poor English skills to participate in retraining under award restructuring. Moreover, technological change and restructuring have led to reforms to vocational training in Australia. Access to this job training will be critical to gaining entry of the jobs of tomorrow. However, it appears that under the new reform agenda - based on the adoption of national, industry-based, competency standards. - fluent, non-accented English appears to be a criteria for entry (Collins 1993; Kalantzis 1992).

6. Immigration and Labor Government
Overall, Labor’s immigration record is a mixed bag. It gains strong brownie points on it rejection of the critics of multiculturalism and its broad national agenda for a multicultural society. It has also refused to be distracted by persistent bellows of the economic and environmental critics of immigration and the critics of Asian immigration and ethnic diversity. Its policies have allowed increasing ethnic diversity to co-exist with social cohesion, not an easy feat when countries with much smaller and less diverse immigrant populations in Europe and North America are experiencing severe ethnic conflict. At the same time, problems emerge. One is that the position of Australian indigenous peoples under the multiculturalism umbrella is still ambiguous. Important matters of reconciliation, national identity and citizenship are still to be resolved, and present Labor with a great challenge as Keating tries to construct the new Australian republic. Another problem for Labor’s record is the persistence of direct and indirect racism which have accompanied immigration to Australia for too many NESB immigrants. Similarly, while for some immigrants Australia is a rags to riches story, for too many socio-economic disadvantage is the reality. The Labor government must link multiculturalism more strongly to anti-racist strategies in the community and labour market, and to a greater effort on social justice issues. A strong commitment to the safety net of welfare sets Labor apart from the conservative opposition: without this safety net, Australia’s major cities could begin to face the problems similar to those that emerged in the LA riots of 1992. But the spell of economic rationalism which bewitched Keating as Treasurer in the Hawke years remains a potent influence in the current Keating Government. Labor must throw of these shackles and commit more resources and energy to social justice issues if Australia’s indigenous and immigrant communities are to redress their increasing socio-economic inequalities. More specifically, a more humane treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers issues is required if Labor is to learn from its most glaring mistakes of recent years.
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