

Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Australia

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by Robert Birrell

It has been said that mistakes in the migration field are among the worst a Government can make because once made they magnify. Australia offers a cautionary tale in this regard. None of those making decisions on the size and make-up of the immigration intake in the 1950s and 1960s ever intended to lay the social base for a vigorous ethnic movement, and certainly not one powerful enough to shape immigration policy itself (Birrell and Birrell, 1987: 47-51, 67-69). Yet this is what happened, and the consequences are still ramifying.

It may help at the outset to remind readers of the scale of Australia's recent population building program. Over the five years mid-1985 to mid-1990 the overseas-born sector of the population is estimated to have grown by 526,000 of whom 294,000, or 56% came from Asia and the Middle East (ABS, 1990). This reflects net migration rates of around 0.8% per annum, far higher than Canada or the USA at the time. The effect of this has been to increase the proportion of the total population who were foreign-born to 22.1% by mid-1989 (from 21.1% in mid-1985), which is again far higher than in the USA or Canada, or for that matter any West European nation. Moreover they are concentrated in the adult age brackets and in particular locations. Of Australians aged 15 plus in 1989 26.5% were foreign-born. But in 1986 40.1% of Perth's population aged 15 plus were foreign-born, and Australia's largest city, Sydney, currently approaches this level.

The paper explores how the immigration programs of earlier years laid the foundation of

an ethnic movement which has since shaped Government cultural and immigration policies. While there has recently been a reaction against these policies, it has involved bitter and largely unresolved contestation. As this preliminary comment suggests once a Government advances down the multicultural pathway it may be difficult to turn back.

The Origins of the Ethnic Movement in Australia

As indicated, the Australian Government did not deliberately set out to recruit large numbers of 'ethnics'. Rather the influx of Italians, Greeks, Yugoslavs and other non-Western European migrants in the 1950s and 1960s reflected its larger population building targets. The goal was to maximise migration from Western Europe, particularly Britain. But as European economic conditions improved and interest in migration from Western Europe waned, migration from Southern and Eastern Europe was facilitated. This occurred via the processing of personal sponsorships from family members in Australia. For these migrants, little attention was paid to either skill or English language ability in evaluating their applications (Birrell and Birrell, 1987: 70-71). They were allowed entry up to the point they filled, or 'topped up', the annual migration target. Over the entire 1951 to 1971 period, migrants from Southern Europe made up 479,000 or 25% of the total net migration intake (Price, nd: Appendix).

Most of these migrants came from rural backgrounds. Few could speak English and hardly any possessed professional or trade skills recognised in Australia. As a result they were soon segmented occupationally, socially and residentially from the host population. Their work in low skilled manufacturing industries and in services like fruit and vegetable retailing

came to be identified as 'migrant' work. By the end of the 1960s it was common to find assembly line employment, as in Ford and General Motors plant, composed of near 100% non-English speaking background (NESB) migrants (Birrell and Birrell, 1987: 76). By this time both the work and the migrants performing it were devalued by most native Australians. As a consequence few of the latter were prepared to enter 'migrant' industries, thereby cementing work and social divisions on ethnic lines. While it is true that class was a factor here in that most NESB migrants shared a disadvantageous position in the job market, the full employment situation at the time ensured relatively good wages for unskilled workers. The really biting division was one of status, and the fact that those of NESB migrant background, who occupied low skilled positions had by this time come to be known as 'ethnics'. Ethnicity, in turn, had become a marker of inferior ranking in the status order (Collins, 1988:207-211).

Meanwhile throughout the 1950s and 1960s official settlement policy was aggressively assimilationist, and hostile to ethnic community construction (Jupp, 1965: 142-151). Yet such community building was an inevitable result of the situation just described. Australian prejudice, the lack of capacity of most of the migrants in question to relate to Australians (due to language and cultural differences), and their isolation in 'migrant' industries, all ensured this. Specialised religious, cultural (e.g. social clubs and language specific newspapers) and retail institutions evolved catering to an ethnic clientele.

For the most part the migrants involved lived in a social world of their own creation, remote from mainstream Australian institutions. However this began to change in the 1970s. The Whitlam Labor Government of 1972-75 'discovered' and redefined migrants as part of the 'disadvantaged' of Australian society, and made the rectification of this situation one of its priorities. At this stage the issue of ethnic cultural maintenance was not on the serious policy agenda. Rather the Whitlam Government

saw its task as eradicating migrant disadvantage. It addressed this by providing extra funds for schools with high concentrations of migrants and for remedial English language teaching. Its goal was to remedy class-based disabilities by improving equality of opportunity, thereby incorporating migrants into the mainstream.

Nevertheless, by highlighting migrant disadvantage, and pointing to Australians' alleged neglect of their welfare, the Whitlam Government paved the way for ethnic communities to enter Australian politics as legitimate interest groups, and to question past assimilationist policies. On immigration policy, the Whitlam Government also put an end to past British preferences. All discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity was removed, and greater emphasis was placed on family reunion. This partly reflected the nationalist stance of the Government and its desire to dispel any remnants of dependency on Britain.

The Ethnic Movement Takes Shape

In the early phases of the movement both class and status grievances were expressed, with the former often highlighted by concerned Australian professionals. But as members of ethnic communities themselves took over the articulation of their concerns during the 1970s status issues came to predominate. In essence they wanted to upgrade their standing as persons of ethnic origin. This is why they embraced multiculturalism. It offered the prospect of respect for their national or cultural origins. They wanted the Australian Government to declare that they had a valued place in Australian society and to prove this by providing financial support to ethnic communities seeking to maintain their languages and cultures. The multicultural movement was a form of group mobility whereby ethnic communities sought to use their collective political muscle to win a societal reevaluation of their standing.

It has been argued that the emphasis on status issues, especially during the conservative Fraser

Government years (1976-1983), reflected the Fraser Government's anxiety to detach the movement from the redistributive welfare framework developed during the Whitlam years (Castles et al., 1990: 66). It is true that the Fraser Government did not encourage ethnic groups to mobilise around these issues. Conversely it gave fulsome support to ethnic communities status claims - implying that their disadvantage was simply a matter of host society prejudice. To this end it provided funds for ethnic languages and cultures, including ethnic TV and radio, as well as ethnic specific welfare services. We cannot conclude from this, however, that the ethnic communities were hoodwinked.

Rather, the Fraser Government's interests coincided with the status concerns of most ethnic leaders. The Government wanted to attract political support from ethnic communities, but to do so had to offer something of value. The ethnic leaders included some first generation migrants successful in business, but in addition, by the late 1970s many from the second generation who had achieved professional qualifications in Australia. Their numbers increased rapidly during the 1970s reflecting the premium their communities placed on higher education. As such they were better equipped through language skills and contacts to enter mainstream politics, and motivated to do so through the disjunction between their educational achievement and their low status as ethnics. It was difficult for an individual of Greek or Italian origin to evade disparagement of their ethnic background. If there was to be a change it required group agitation. The multicultural package offered by the Fraser Government both reflected and addressed these concerns.

This theory does not explain all manifestations of the multicultural movement. Pride in ethnic identity has also been important. This is particularly evident with the Jewish community, which has contributed significantly to the movement, yet in Australia Jews have a record of achievement and respect (if grudging), such that few Australians regard them as inferior in

the sense described above. The Jewish attachment to multiculturalism is better explained by their intense ethnocentrism and thus anxiety to maintain their distinctiveness as a people. But the Jewish experience is exceptional. Most migrants coming from societies whose education and credentials were valued (including the Dutch and Germans) did not enter 'migrant' work and have not encountered serious prejudice on account of their national origins. Few Australians regard them as 'ethnics', and even fewer of the migrants themselves would wish to be tagged as such. They have integrated rapidly, with the best index being very high levels of out-marriage (to native-born Australians), in the first and second generation.

This is not to deny a welfare dimension within the ethnic movement. As indicated, its first manifestations during the Whitlam period were in the welfare field. But it is notable that leaders of the ethnic welfare groups were voicing their status concerns well before the Whitlam era and have continued to do so since. For example, Mr Walter Lippmann, who entered the debate via his leadership role in the Jewish welfare movement told the 1970 Australian Citizenship Convention that Australian 'homogeneity ceased the day Captain Cook landed', and that loyalty to migrants, 'social and cultural heritage is something positive which ought to be fostered through the ethnic groups' (Digest, 1970: 50). Later in the 1970s Lippmann played a leading role in promoting multiculturalism. The initial welfare link is partly explained by the fact that it was the first legitimate base (in Australian eyes) for the expression of ethnic interests.

In these terms multiculturalism was a legitimate response to status deprivation. To the extent it changed Australian attitudes towards ethnics if offered the prospect of a more tolerant and harmonious society and a strategy for incorporating previously isolated migrants into mainstream institutions. Most Australian politicians (and many of the rank and file within ethnic communities) thought of it as a transitional program which when completed would enable migrants to get on with their lives

as Australians free of prejudice on account of their origins. The expectation was that once this occurred few 'ethnics' would have any significant interest in embracing multiculturalism.

However it has not yet turned out that way. Status divisions based on ethnicity have, if anything, intensified since the 1970s. This can only be understood in terms of the dynamics of the multicultural movement.

The Evolution of the Multicultural Movement

The experience of the first Australian 'ethnics' - the Irish - indicates that ultimately multiculturalism does give way to integration. Those of Irish Catholic descent experienced widespread prejudice on account of their alleged inferior ethnic status during the 19th century. This laid the foundation for an Irish Catholic movement led by the Church hierarchy. Its main secular goal was the achievement of respect for the Irish Catholic community. This, too, was a movement built around group mobility where the Irish Catholic community was mobilised around Irish loyalties to redress its grievances. By post-World War Two the goal had been largely achieved. Australians of Irish descent were amongst the most ethnocentric of Australians, and ironically, subject to criticism (especially within the Catholic Church) for being insensitive to the distinctive cultural aspirations of Southern and Eastern European Catholic migrants.

Nevertheless it took many decades to achieve this transformation, and along the way the split between Australians of Irish and Anglo-Saxon origin became highly divisive. The key reason for this derives from the dynamics of the group mobility strategy. In order for the leadership to mobilise their community against mainstream prejudice it must first build the solidarity of its members. This requires a degree of social closure involving boundaries between ethnic and host society. The leadership must also highlight the distinctive qualities of their community, both to encourage community solidarity and justify

their claim to host society respect. This is a problematic strategy where the host community is itself ethnocentric.

This is the case for most native-born Australians. They have been encouraged to believe their society is unique and to take pride in their 'way of life' (which is widely regarded as the basis of their distinctiveness). Like other 'peoples', those who identify as Australians like to think of their nation as a community, that is, one sharing common characteristics and aspirations. As a movement claiming respect for ethnic distinctiveness, multiculturalism clearly treads in dangerous territory for in making these claims host society sensitivities about its cultural supremacy and ideals of 'one community' must be challenged.

In the case of the Irish Catholic experience the Church created its own parochial school system and separate parish institutions, in part with the goal of building the solidarity of its community. But in the process this intensified community divisions based on ethnicity. The mutual hostility resulting lasted for decades; long after Catholics had moved into mainstream institutions and long after the original Irish/English split was lost to the historical memory.

Though not with the success of the Irish Catholic movement, current ethnic leaders have also sought to build separate ethnic community institutions, where possible shielding their members from too much interaction with host institutions, especially those thought to be influential in shaping identity. Schooling, particularly as it concerns ethnic languages, has been a priority. Leaders are well aware that if community languages go into disuse then a key facet of ethnic distinctiveness fades with it. Much effort has gone into the ethnic school and community languages movement. The ideal situation from the point of view of promoting ethnic identity is to establish full-time ethnic schools. This has been achieved to a degree by the Greeks and Jews and, more recently, by Muslims. An alternative strategy, fairly successfully pursued, has been to win

Government support for community languages within the state schools and subsidies for ethnic 'Saturday' schools.

There has been a similar effort to incorporate curriculum materials showing the value of ethnic cultures. This has generally been legitimised by the claim that children from maligned origins need to have their identities as ethnics fortified if they are to compete successfully within the school system.

In the broader social context ethnic leaders have pressed for a redefinition of what it means to be Australian. They have argued its very essence should be its multicultural quality. This ideal is embodied in the repeated claim that 'we are all immigrants' and therefore all have roots in foreign cultures. Al Grassby, Minister for Immigration in the Whitlam Government until he lost his seat in 1974, became the chief advocate of this vision. According to Grassby Australia experienced a cultural renaissance in the 1970s in which most, including those from Britain, have drawn on their cultural roots to generate new excitement in diversity. 'The renaissance has been shared by older groups such as the Irish, who were the first to lose their memory of distinctive language, and in many cases completely lost contact with their background' (Grassby, 1980: 4). By implication there can be no distinctive Australian identity independent of these immigrant roots.

This celebration of ethnicity and to a degree its romanticisation was supported by elements of the Australian intelligentsia. What they had in mind was more a 'smorgasbord' notion of multiculturalism, in which all Australian communities shared their cultures, with individuals able to enjoy whatever elements pleased them. However this intermixing and the lifestyle choice implied was not favoured by ethnic leaders. If their community was to maintain its solidarity and political bargaining power then community boundaries had to be maintained and intermixing constrained. Nevertheless Australian intelligentsia support for multiculturalism gave the movement additional legitimacy.

It was but a short step from this position to the claim that Australia has been 'improved' by multiculturalism and that its culture or ethnic identity was inferior to what was now offered. To quote just one well known proponent of this view, 'Australia has neither had the time, nor the confluence of factors, nor the encounter of politics and geography to produce a remarkable history or a fascinating culture' (Bosi, 1986: 15). Needless to say such imputations quickly generated hostile opposition from the more attentive and ethnocentric of Australians (as with the Returned Soldiers League). But it was to take some time, and much public debate before this antagonism percolated down to ordinary Australians. Until the early 1980s most seem to have accepted the Government line that migrants should not be forced to assimilate against their will. This did promise greater tolerance of difference and therefore a softening of past devaluation of those of ethnic origin. However feelings were to sharpen later in the 1980s in large part because of changes in migration policy.

Multiculturalism and Immigration Policy

It would be overstating the case to assert that ethnic concerns about status have been the driving force behind the contemporary debate over migration policy in Australia. Nevertheless there are important linkages between the two. This is closely connected to the symbolic significance of immigration decisions. Many ethnic leaders regard Australia's willingness to sustain a significant migration program, particularly one generous on family reunion concessions, as a touchstone of their acceptance in Australia. True, many also have genuine concerns about family reunion opportunities and for access of fellow nationals to join the Australian diaspora. But it is notable that some community leaders continue to express passionate views on the subject long after migration flows from their homelands have slowed (as with Italians). Ethnic spokespersons interpret any opposition, no matter what the ostensible reason, as camouflage for anti-ethnic feeling. The debate has engaged their status

concerns and thus has lent a special urgency to their campaign for the liberalisation of selection criteria. For their part, many Australians see the immigration program and its linkages to the multicultural movement as threatening their ethnic identity. This helps explain the emotion generated by debates over immigration policy during the 1980s - to which we return shortly.

By the late 1970s the ethnic movement had become sufficiently powerful to prompt changes in immigration selection policy. The Fraser Government though attentive to ethnic concerns on cultural issues had been reluctant to alter the thrust of its immigration policy, which was basically to attract skilled migrants. It had inherited restrictive family reunion rules from the Whitlam Government limiting entry to spouses and retirement aged parents. But in the late 1970s it came under pressure to liberalise these rules from ethnic groups who by this time had managed to persuade the Labor opposition to offer significant concessions. In late 1981 the Government made the fateful decision to establish a separate category for brothers and sisters to be implemented from mid-1982.

These concessions were elaborated further when the Hawke Government came to office in March 1983. Most notably the Government removed the English language component from the sibling selection test. The result through the 1980s was similar to that of the 1950s and 1960s. Again there was no intention on the part of either political party to generate a new wave of migration, this time from non-European sources. The advocacy leading to the concessions just described came largely from the Southern and Eastern European ethnic groups, and throughout this period both major political parties targeted their response to these groups (Birrell, 1984: 73-74). However in the event they made little use of the new concessions. Instead there was a sharp increase in migration from Asian, Middle Eastern and other Third World source countries. Even though many had quite small pioneer communities established in Australia, such was their propensity to sponsor their relatives, and the subsequent chain linkages to further relatives that by the end of

the 1980s the majority of all family reunion categories were coming from Third World countries (Birrell, 1990: 43).

This plus the significant Indochinese refugee intake of the late 1970s and early 1980s gave renewed impetus to the multicultural movement because it resulted in new and highly visible ethnic communities, some of whose experiences of social isolation and mainstream prejudice replicated that of earlier Southern and Eastern European communities. The growth of the Muslim community was particularly significant. Though originally deriving from Lebanese refugee and humanitarian flows dating to the late 1970s, the intake of Muslims has since been augmented via family reunion from various sources including Turkey, Lebanon itself and Yugoslavia. The limited education of these migrants plus the solidarity of the Muslim religious community has given additional intensity to the expression of multicultural advocacy and Australian fears as to its consequences.

It may seem that this account gives too much weight to the multicultural input. However I write from experience on this issue. When the advisability of extending family reunion concessions was being debated in the late 1970s and early 1980s some immigration officials and academics (including myself), warned that the subsequent flows would be difficult to control and would reorient the program to new source countries, some of which would generate difficult settlement problems (Birrell, 1984). This advice was dismissed by ethnic spokesmen as animated by ethnic prejudice. In large part this reaction reflected their insecurities as persons still uncertain about their standing in Australia. Few were capable of stepping back from their ethnic community standpoint to comprehend the larger Australian interest. This may not have mattered except for the fact that by the late 1970s persons of ethnic background were powerfully located within Ethnic Affairs Commissions, ethnic advisory bodies, university migration or multicultural centres and so on, such as to form an influential chorus strong enough to drown out alternate points of view.

Mainstream Reactions

By the early 1990s multicultural policies had come under severe attack. In response, the Hawke Labour Government significantly narrowed their scope. Meanwhile influential conservatives were pressing to abandon the policy altogether.

This reaction can be traced to Australians' fears as to the way their community was being reconstituted. These concerns were first articulated on the national stage by Professor Geoffrey Blainey in 1984. Blainey's critique was uncompromisingly ethnocentric. He argued that Australians were not being consulted about immigration policy changes and about the extent official support for ethnic cultures was nurturing ethnic separatism. Multiculturalism, he asserted, had created more inter-community tensions than it resolved. Furthermore he claimed that multicultural advocates, in their zeal to propagate a new cosmopolitan vision of Australian diversity were denigrating Australians. He spoke for 'Australian Australians' and about 'cultural surrender' in an unmistakable appeal to Australian ethnocentrism. I think there was a hardening of Australian attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism as a result of this debate (Birrell, 1987: 282-285). Blainey gave an ethnocentric focus to vague public concerns about the changing nature of the immigration intake, the proliferation of ethnic groups and their advocacy of cultural pluralism. Only amongst the higher educated do we find majority support for the latter or of Government assistance to this end. In the most recent poll data on the issue only 23.5% of a general sample of Australians were prepared to agree with the statement that 'Australia would be a better place if members of ethnic groups kept their own way of life' (OMA, 1988: 146). If anything the multicultural movement has helped inflame the very attitudes it sought to dampen, by increasing the temperature of inter-ethnic issues.

At the time of the debate engendered by Blainey

this view was disputed and Blainey himself was bitterly criticised on both moral and empirical grounds. For several years the debate did subside, giving support to those claiming Blainey had exaggerated both the extent of community dissatisfaction with Australia's growing ethnic diversity and policies encouraging the expression of ethnic pride. However the issues re-emerged with the publication of the Government initiated FitzGerald Report in 1988 (CAAIP, 1988). The Report supported some of Blainey's claims including that there was public disquiet about alleged encouragement of ethnic loyalties at the expense of Australian. Indeed such was the public concern about where multiculturalism was taking Australia that according to FitzGerald the immigration program itself was in jeopardy due its loss of public support.

FitzGerald drew the startling conclusion (given the then bipartisan political support for multiculturalism), that greater emphasis should be given to migrant integration than cultural maintenance. In this spirit he recommended that migrants sign a declaration prior to taking up residence here committing themselves to certain core 'Australian' ideals, including freedom of religion and equality of women (CAAIP, 1988: 121). The latter was a fairly transparent reflection of worries about Muslim migration.

Though much of this was initially rejected by the Hawke Government, largely because of the outcry from ethnic leaders about FitzGerald's recommendations, the spirit of the Report was taken up by Mr Howard, the leader of the opposition at the time. He developed the campaign slogan 'One Australia', which followed the Blainey line that it was time to re-emphasise Australian loyalties. This again spoke in unmistakable terms to the concerns of ethnocentric Australians, by implication challenging ethnic claims that their cultures should have equal status to that of the mainstream community.

These responses probably did reflect an element of irritation at the temerity of the once

maligned ethnics in challenging for cultural supremacy. Some analysts go further and claim the reaction was a form of social closure on the part of the Anglo/Australian elite designed to keep ethnics in their place - at the bottom of the heap (Cope et al., 1991: 27). I doubt whether many felt really threatened. Conservatives amongst the Fraser Government would not have assented to the multicultural strategy in the first place if this had been the case. Rather, the current reassessment was based more on a judgement that the strategy of managing ethnic diversity via multiculturalism was becoming too costly, and in the case of the politicians a potential electoral liability.

The Financial Costs of Multiculturalism

With the increasing influence of economic rationalists in Australian politics, multiculturalism has come under critical scrutiny as a contributor to the welfare lobby. The very success of ethnic advocates in winning funds for ethnic specific services, and in gaining family reunion concessions which have allegedly generated subsequent burdens on the welfare system and for specialist English language training has drawn critical attention to the movement. While some recent claims concerning these costs are extreme the media attention resulting indicates that many on the right think multiculturalism has created a 'monster' which is in danger of getting out of hand.

The greatest costs associated with multiculturalism do not derive from the provision of ethnic specific services but from welfare benefits and remedial English training, mainly for migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds. These costs are linked to the multicultural movement in that most needing assistance arrive via the family reunion intake. For 1991 (a year of deep recession), the Commonwealth Department of Finance has estimated the combined cost of welfare benefits and English language training for the migrant cohort arriving in 1991-92 will be A\$308 million (Department of Finance, 1991).

Ethnic Divisions and Multiculturalism

Those believing that the multicultural movement had exacerbated rather than healed ethnic divisions were in receipt of plentiful ammunition by the late 1980s. The intense commitments of ethnic communities to events overseas which threatened the well-being of the homeland community were regularly featured in local news. Demonstrations of these feelings often involved local expression of the disputes at home, as between Jews and Arabs and Serbs and Croats. Whether such local conflicts were intensified by the cultivation of multiculturalism is a moot point. What matters is that critics argued that they were. One such event in 1988 involved the shooting of a youthful Croat by a member of the Yugoslavian Consulate in Sydney. This was a visually powerful event, all the more alarming to some because it implied 'old world' enmities and 'tribal' loyalties were being passed on to the Australian-born generation. It brought the following response from John Stone, a leading conservative critic of multiculturalism: 'We are also helping to maintain all the old hatreds and animosities that so often bedevilled the people of those communities in their countries of origin - countries which, be it remembered, they had chosen to leave in order to emigrate to Australia' (Sawer, 1990: 16).

Concern about ethnic divisions in Australia seem to have intensified with the severe recession beginning in 1990. The sense of national crisis resulting and the corresponding urgency this seems to have engendered that all Australians 'pull together' in finding a solution has focused further hostile attention on multiculturalism. This was strikingly manifested in a recent Liberal Party exercise inviting party members and others to communicate their worries to the Secretariat. The resulting document, 'Australians Speak', which was based on a sample of 4,000 responses indicted more concern about Australian 'disunity' and 'lack of a shared vision' than any other issue. More than 40% of the respondents commented on

multiculturalism, most connecting it to what the document refers to as 'Australians great hope that their country will achieve a clearer sense of its own cultural identity' and their 'belief that Australia has been suffering from a sense of fragmentation' (Australians Speak, 1991: 56). This is, of course, just a fragment of opinion, but it comes from the heartland of the party which first adopted multiculturalism as a political strategy, and for that reason is likely to lead to further retraction if and when the Liberals return to Government.

Meanwhile the Labor Party, though claiming to support multiculturalism, has redefined it in narrow terms largely precluding long term cultural maintenance or cultural pluralism. Its 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Society* revived the Whitlamite emphasis on equality of opportunity, free from barriers of race or ethnicity. It practically proscribes the cultivation of loyalties to the homeland when it asserts that multiculturalism is based on the premise that 'all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future, first and foremost' (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989: vii). Government officials are now quite explicit that 'Multiculturalism is not a policy to celebrate the visible contribution of non-Anglo-Celtic cultures to Australia', and is not 'a policy to encourage ethnic or cultural separatism in Australia' (Hollway, 1991: 2).

Does this mean the end of multiculturalism? This is very unlikely since the immigration intake of the 1980s has added further potential converts to the ethnic cause. Moreover we still have in place the infrastructure built since the late 1970s of ethnic community institutions and the professionals servicing them (many dependent on Commonwealth and State Government finance). However there may be fewer rewards for those ethnic communities wishing to pursue a group mobility strategy, thereby diminishing its appeal.

Has multiculturalism been a failure? My comments imply that it has. However it is impossible to prove that an alternative strategy

putting more emphasis on integration would have achieved more to remove the status deprivations at the root of the movement. The most serious and long lasting implication of the movement in my opinion has been its continuing impact on immigration policy. To this day it is difficult to rationally debate immigration policy given the sensitivities it arouses, or to get politicians to act on the issue free from worrying about the electoral consequences within the ethnic communities. Despite much criticism the Concessional component of the migrant intake (brothers and sisters, non-dependent children, nieces and nephews) continues as a separate migration category. However with recent cutbacks in the Programme, it has been contracted from a peak level of 39,000 in 1987-88, to 19,000 in 1991-92.

As to the merits of alternative strategies of coping with ethnic disadvantage, there is something to be said for integrationist policies. For instance, it is likely we would have heard less of the frequent migrant complaint that Australians are reluctant to relate to them as Australians. Many want nothing more than to be accepted as equals and are quite willing 'to do in Rome as Romans do'. When recently asked their opinion 67.6% of a sample of Non English Speaking Background migrants agreed with the proposition that 'People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like other Australians' (OMA, 1988: 148). Most Australians seem to willing to accept migrants on these terms. Thus of the general sample questioned during the same polling exercise 88% agreed that 'So long as a person is committed to Australia it doesn't matter what ethnic background they have' (OMA, 1988: 147).

While the multicultural movement continues to emphasise ethnic difference Australians can hardly be blamed from responding to their members as ethnics. It is also likely that if the energy poured into multiculturalism had been put into developing a new Australian identity, perhaps based on a sense of place which all could share, we might have avoided some of the divisions described above. Finally, I have

difficulty believing that it can be in the interests of migrant children, most of whose futures lie in Australia, to be brought up in an institutional setting which cultivates loyalties and knowledge of another land sometimes to the exclusion of their own.

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