Defining the Nation: The Wider Discussions on White Australia and the Japanese Racial Equality Clause

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Thesis Abstract

Australia’s involvement in the rejection of the Japanese racial equality clause, at the Peace Conference of 1919, has been noted by contemporaries and historians as a significant event in Australia’s nationalism. Often portrayed as Prime Minister William Morris Hughes’ struggle to preserve White Australia and therefore the nation, sources and opinions divergent from Hughes’ have not been fully explored. A contrast of these sources to the traditional legacy of the episode using a thematic framework of nation, labour and defence, demonstrates the significance that the denial of the clause had on Australia and the complexity of discussion it inspired.
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I would like to thank Glenda for her excellent supervision which motivated, encouraged and guided me;

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The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 stands as a milestone for Australian nationalism. Federation had only been achieved eighteen years earlier, so the conference was one of the first instances in which representatives of the nation participated in an international forum which extended beyond the British Empire. Australia and the other self-governing Dominions had been granted the opportunity to have their own delegates attend the Conference. This had been demanded by the Dominions, especially since they had to not been consulted about the conditions of the armistice or most specifically the acceptance of United States’ President Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points. They therefore wanted to guarantee that Dominion interests would be represented in the peace settlement.\(^1\) Hence Versailles was the first opportunity for the diplomatic expression of individualised, specific national interests.

Of critical importance to the Australian delegation was the Japanese proposal to insert a racial equality clause into the League of Nations covenant. This clause, which initially was presented as an amendment to Article 21 on religious freedom and later as an included phrase to the preamble of the covenant, advocated that a country’s foreign nationals should be given fair and equal treatment despite their race or nationality.\(^2\) As indicated in an article by the Melbourne Argus, written at the conclusion of the conference, since the proposal indicated equal treatment of races, in whatever nation they were in, a large portion of the Australian public feared that the policy of White Australia would be in jeopardy. Referring to the


\(^2\) The two versions of the clause presented to the Paris commission follow. The clause as presented to the commission on the 13\(^{th}\) February 1919: ‘The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord as soon as possible to all alien nationals of states, members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality’; The proposal as presented as an addition to the preamble on the 11\(^{th}\) April 1919: ‘...by the endorsement of the principle of equality of nations and just treatment of their nationals...’; both sourced from Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: the Racial Equality Proposal of 1919*, (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 20, 27.
wording of the original clause: that equal treatment should be given ‘making no distinction, either in law or in fact’, the reporter pointed out that White Australia as a discriminatory system of preventing immigration, especially Asiatic, by dictation test, did in fact make such a distinction and therefore the threat was credible.³

Historian Naoko Shimazu indicates that the clause was not intended to acknowledge universal racial rights, and was in fact advocated to establish Japanese nationalism. Japan’s main desire in including the clause was to ensure that it would not be humiliated in the new international order of the League of Nations; Japan did not want to be identified as an inferior coloured nation in the realm of the great white powers.⁴ Furthermore, in the period of the early twentieth century, when the Conference took place, Japan was still in the early stages of national development. It had not been until after the gunboat diplomacy of American Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and the development of the Meiji restoration, that Japan had ended its policy of sakoku (closed country) in relation to the west and began to engage as a international player as dictated by western forms of nationalism.⁵

Therefore, coincidentally Japan and Australia both saw the clause as an issue of national importance. Australians had perceived a threat to national sovereignty within the proposal, while Japan believed it to be a declaration of national rights. From this it is evident that clash between the two nations was inevitable. Contemporaries and historians have portrayed the struggle over the proposal as Australia’s, and more often than not Hughes’s, fight to preserve and establish the Australian nation by protecting White Australia. This dissertation hopes expand on this to address the question of what were the wider discussions regarding the racial equality clause in Australia? What impression did the clause have on Australians’

⁵ For ideal of sakoku see W. G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), pp. 2-3; For the end of the sakoku system and arrival of Commodore Perry see pp. 57-75; For the growth of nationalism that stemmed from the Meiji reforms and external threat from the West see pp. 56, 155; and that this continued to the Paris Conference, pp.196-7.
understandings of the nation and White Australia, given the event was also a significant aspect of Japan’s nationalism? How were these ideals discussed as Australians reflected on Australia’s new status as an international player?

To understand how the notion of a nation existed at the time of the Peace Conference this thesis takes on Benedict Anderson’s proposal of viewing the nation as an imagined community which is both limited and sovereign. A nation is limited because it is finite to a certain group of people, and it is sovereign, because sovereignty represents the freedom a state has, which is the condition for each nation and its territorial claims. However, this is expanded upon through the idea that a nation at the Peace Conference was defined by both scientific and theoretical notions specific to the intellectual context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth. Glenda Sluga’s work *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics*, is informative on this point in that she presents how scientific schools such as psychology, and theoretical doctrines such as Darwinism, were the building blocks which theorists of this period used to understand the ‘nation’. She argues that these ideas were used in an attempt to create the new, more democratic, world order that the League strove towards. However, these ideals also led to a conclusion that psychological difference existed between the races and the sexes. This along with the idea of self-determination meant that the nation was seen in terms of progress, individual direction and individualised characteristics (racial and psychological).

This thesis maintains that Australia was no exception to this form of nation: as the events of the Peace Conference were clearly defined in terms of sovereignty and progress, through themes like labour and defence. Here the Australian nation was formed as a self-determined collective with white race purity being the individualised characteristic which limited the

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community. However, it will be argued that this formation was complicated by the rise of Japan, which challenged the superiority of community based on white race purity.

The historiography of Australia’s role at the Versailles Conference, and particularly the actions taken to reject the clause, often connects the episode to the issues of the development of the ideology White Australia, Australia’s tense relationship to Japan and the idea of an Australian nation. The authors who have contributed to the most to this discussion are L. F. Fitzhardinge, W. J. Hudson, Peter Spartalis, Neville Meaney, Marilyn Lake, Henry Reynolds and Naoko Shimazu. Each of these authors deals with how White Australia, and the necessity of preserving it, contributed to the rejection of the amendment. Nevertheless, these authors fail to recognise the diversity of opinions around the clause and assume White Australia was an unmalleable idea. In fact where this thesis expands upon the current historiography is scope, focusing on sources that reveal how malleable White Australia was to Australians and how a great diversity of opinion, especially in terms of national preservation and the Japanese relationship, formed around Australia’s new international circumstances.

Fitzhardinge, in his two volume biography on Hughes, deals with the events of Paris and the rejection of the racial equality clause as a significant aspect of Hughes’ political career. This work focuses entirety on Hughes and how he interacted with the issues of Japanese relations and White Australia. In this way Fitzhardinge demonstrates how, to Hughes, White Australia was the best method by which racial conflict could be avoided, labour conditions guaranteed and defence maintained against an enemy like Japan. However, Fitzhardinge’s works are limited as they primarily serve as a biography of Hughes’ life and therefore do not focus on the larger, diverse picture of Australian discussion over the Versailles Conference, White Australia and racial equality. When Australian opinion is related it is generalised with little or no explanation of the complexity of topics, like White Australia:

8 Fitzhardinge, The Little Digger, p. 147.
Hughes attitude was by no means peculiar to him or to the Labor Party. It was shared by all parties and almost all Australians.\(^9\)

In fact, as Meaney persuasively argues, Fitzhardinge’s works strive to defend Hughes’ actions and therefore tend to dismiss views that were critical of Hughes.\(^10\) Fitzhardinge works are most useful in understanding how the events of Paris lent to the formulation of the Australian nation in that he relates the history of the struggle for Dominion self-representation.\(^11\) Nevertheless he does not explicitly focus on how a sense of nationality was created by Paris or how issues of labour and defence, or even the ideal of White Australia, were tied up in the ideas of the nation.

In contrast Hudson demonstrates how Australia’s involvement in the Paris Peace Conference was a significant advancement in Australia’s national status. He indicates that the rejection of the Japanese proposal at the Conference was greater than simply a racist assumption or even adherence to the ideal of White Australia. Indeed his work is useful to understand how the Conference helped to develop the Australian nation in reaction to the position of Japan. Hudson argues that Hughes, and the majority of Australians, viewed the Japanese amendment as a threat to both Australia’s labour conditions and security, and therefore Australian sovereignty and progress.\(^12\) However, in a similar vein to Fitzhardinge, Hudson’s work is limited by the lack of scope. As the title of main work: *Billy Hughes in Paris*, suggests, he relates the events of Paris as part of Hughes’ story. Hudson maintains Hughes was simply an agent for White Australia and uses the words of the Australian delegate John Latham to describe Australian opinion of White Australia: ‘no govt would last a day if it tampered with...

\(^10\) For Fitzhardinge’s defence of Hughes actions in regard to the racial equality clause see *Ibid*, p. 416-7; For Meaney’s criticisms see Meaney, *Australia and World Crisis*, pp. 398-9.
In fact, Hudson also generalises White Australia and the Japanese relationship with Hughes assertions:

White Australia still was almost universally revered and Hughes at Paris reflected that reverence. Concern about Japan existed and Hughes reflected that concern.  

Although Hudson relates how members of the delegation and the Australian parliament had concern over Hughes’ lack of diplomacy at Versailles, he does not directly link these with the issues of Australian-Japanese relations or even difference in understandings of White Australia, which this thesis hopes to demonstrate existed.  

In comparison Spartalis relates how the critical position of some members of the delegation and officials in Hughes’ government, was linked to the issues over the Japanese demand. Referring to the opinion of Australian delegate Frederic Eggleston and the Director of the Pacific Branch of the Prime Minister’s Department Major Edmund Piesse, Spartalis demonstrates that while they supported the idea of White Australia, these figures criticised Hughes’ methods of dealing with the Japanese as being counterproductive to Australia’s interests. However, Spartalis also generalises public Australian opinion of White Australia. He too conveys that almost all Australians supported the policy and once again relies on Latham’s quote that no election could be won by a government that ran against it. In fact, unlike Hudson, Spartalis does not even convey how deeper themes were involved in the ideal of White Australia, such as labour or defence, or how these contributed to discussion over White Australia and racial equality. 

Meaney also establishes how some Australian figures were quite critical of Hughes’ undiplomatic negotiations with the Japanese over the racial equality clause. In fact Meaney

\[13\] Ibid, p. 60.  
\[14\] For Hudson’s discussion of Hughes’ diplomacy and his critics see Ibid, pp. 60-7.  
\[16\] Ibid, pp.175-77.
dedicates a large portion of his work on the episode to the opinion of Major Piesse. Meaney demonstrates how Piesse was very critical of Hughes’ actions at Paris believing that he had needlessly antagonised the Japanese. Meaney’s work, *Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 Years*, serves as comprehensive analysis of Japanese-Australian relations from the earliest encounters through to the present era. It is therefore useful as it presents a history of how the ideal of White Australia conflicted with forming a positive relationship with Japan. Meaney’s other work, *Australia and World Crisis*, also establishes how the separate representation that had been granted to the Dominions at the 1918 Imperial Conference, the preparatory meeting of the Empire before Versailles, was a significant aspect of Australian nation building. Nevertheless, Meaney does not demonstrate how public opinion conceived the racial equality episode or its repercussions on White Australia, with his focus mostly on Piesse. This means that he does not engage with problems, which this dissertation hopes to address, like the issues surrounding the ‘Empty North’ or Australian internationalism.

Lake and Reynolds, in similarity to Hudson and Meaney, show how the formulation of White Australia as an Australian national foundation was a complex issue which involved concerns over defence, democratic labour conditions and the relationship with Japan. Indeed of all the literature which deals with the Australian involvement in rejecting the amendment, Lake and Reynolds work is the most in depth when exploring the wider history of White Australia and its position in an international doctrine of “Whiteness”. They point out how White Australia was embroiled in both defence and labour issues. In terms of defence they refer to

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18 Neville Meaney, *Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 Years* (East Roseville, N.S.W.: Kangaroo Press, 1999), pp. 70, 73.
19 Meany gives a comprehensive overview which includes an analysis of White Australia and race nationalism: *Ibid*, pp. 9-36.
the tension that developed over the military potential of the Asiatic nations with discussion of the ‘yellow peril’ and the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war. In regards to labour they show how the policy’s was established in democratic labour ideals dependent on racial exclusion, such as Justice Higgins’s harvester judgement and the end of indentured Kanaka labour. In fact they demonstrate how, throughout its history, critics challenged hard-line notions of White Australia. This establishes that this criticism was sustained from those who challenged it close to its inception into policy, i.e. the 1901 immigration restrictions act, to an interesting case at the time of the Peace Conference, where the Women’s Political Association questioned Hughes attack on the clause, unfortunately they do not expand upon this case. However, besides the afore mentioned example they do not apply this schema to the diverse range of voices who, at the time of the events and in the decade following, commented on White Australia’s place in reaction to the rejection of the clause. When they deal with the racial equality clause, Australia’s part in story is dominated by Hughes. Indeed they only briefly mention Piesse and Latham and once again rely on Latham’s quote to gauge the opinion of Australians.

Naoko Shimazu’s book: *Japan, Race and Equality*, stands as the most comprehensive account of the clause simply as it focuses solely on it and attempts to catalogue the history of all players involved. Shimazu’s work establishes how Australia played a major role in the denial of the Japanese proposal. She also demonstrates how Australia’s involvement in rejection of the clause, and the events of Paris, were significant in the establishment of the Australian nation. She further shows how the nation was formed, in part, by the new status of becoming a self- representative Dominion in a new international forum, where matters of

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22 Ibid, pp. 75-94, 163.
23 Ibid, pp. 150-7.
24 They refer to two works by of E.W. Cole and E.W. Foxall who feared provoking Japan through asserting White Australia. Both works were released in 1903: *Ibid*, p. 161.
26 Ibid, pp. 294-5.
self-determination, including immigration, were perceived as factors in maintaining national sovereignty. Yet Shimazu also pursues a limited perspective on Hughes’ particular relationship to the White Australia policy to explain Australia’s actions at the Conference. Furthermore while she does indicate that Hughes’ ‘intransigence’ over the episode was not universally approved of in Australia, she only relates those opinions that criticised Hughes in terms of the belief he was turning Paris into an ‘electioneering campaign’. She therefore does not give any indication of diversified views in Australia on White Australia or the Japanese Australian relationship on which this thesis hopes to expand.

Apart from these major works there are others which deal either with the progression of the racial equality clause at Paris or White Australia as it was formulated at the time. However, these are not as comprehensive in specifically analysing Australia’s role in the episode or the deeper ideological framework of the nation. For example Paul Gordon Lauren, while devoting a substantial amount of his work to the progression of the racial equality clause, focuses very little on what the clause or its denial meant for Australia. In Lauren’s narrative Australia is behind an unabashedly racist Hughes, who Lauren represents as the foreman of a racist nation that had a history of racial discrimination, namely towards aboriginals. Similarly Seth Tillman, while placing much of the responsibility for the amendments failure onto Hughes, refers very little to the implication this it had in Australian public opinion or for the ideological structure of White Australia. In contrast H. I. London represents how White Australia developed and evolved throughout the twentieth century as a statement of self-

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27 Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality, pp. 119-22.
29 Ibid, p. 133.
31 Ibid, pp. 90, 92, 94.
determined nationality, yet he dedicates little time to the clause mentioning it briefly as an issue of domestic sovereignty. Kenneth Rivett does mention Australia’s role in blocking racial equality as a significant development in Australian identification as a self-determined nation. Indeed, even though he downplays its significance, he indicates how this interrelated to the continuing debate over White Australia and the relationship with Japan. Nevertheless, he dedicates very little time to the events of Paris or the key figures who contributed to the discussion on these issues and specifically, what their motivations were.

It is evident that while there is scholarship dealing with the proposal’s rejection and Australia’s role in the rejection, how the event played into this international schema and the process of establishing the Australian nation, at least in an ideological sense, has not received much attention. Hughes’ personal prominence as a staunch objector to the proposal often takes over the literature dealing with the amendments rejection. This leads some scholars to argue that it was by Hughes’ own will and tenacity that the clause was blocked and that the weakness of the other Australian delegates, especially Sir Joseph Cook, meant that Hughes’ voice was the only one that had any substantial effect on Australia’s actions at the conference. Taking this even further one scholar argues that the responsibility for the clause being unsuccessful almost entirely sits on Hughes’ shoulders. In fact in almost all of the above works a common theme exists in the literature about whether a casual relation can be traced from Hughes’s actions to the actual blocking of the clause. However, this focus means that the true significance of this episode is lost. Indeed whether or not a causal relationship is ascertainable it is evident that the clause still had a substantial, sustained and diversified

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effect on Australian public opinion, especially regarding how the Australia nation came to be conceptualised in the early twentieth century.

This dissertation moves the focus away from finding any causal relationship in the episode and strives to address gaps in the historiography over the significance of Australia’s role in blocking the Japanese proposal. There will be a focus on why the clause was rejected in terms of developing the nation and, why and how, the Australian public dealt with national issues such as diplomacy, defence and labour. In actuality this episode created continued, varied discussion in Australia over the idea of the Australian nation, White Australia and the problems of the Japanese-Australian relationship, which continued for more than a decade after the episode.

In order to understand the broader range of views on the nation and why the idea of defending the nation was so important in the discussion of the racial equality clause, this study looks at a wave of Australian opinion which followed the events at Paris. Indeed the significance of this episode in Australian national history as this period is evident by how it sustained diverse debate for more than a decade after its occurrence. These discussions were formulated on the idea of the Australian nation via the issues surrounding Australia’s relationship with Japan, the international community in general, and the issues surrounding White Australia. To synthesise these discussions this thesis focuses on two themes: labour and defence, which were both deeply significant aspects in the formation of the Australian nation as an international player, which itself is stressed in the first chapter. In fact it is argued that the reason why the blocking of the racial clause was so critical was its connection to labour and defence, which were political issues particular to each nation and therefore key to a nation’s progress and sovereignty as defined by the new international schema of the twentieth century.
An active attempt has been undertaken to move the focus of the importance of the episode away from Hughes, by placing him as a part in a larger narrative. It is pointed out that many opinions existed in Australia on these issues; some that supported Hughes’ rhetoric on Japan, White Australia and the nation and others that deeply conflicted with his assertions. To show this an effort has been made to gauge the diversity of public opinion by a selected survey of public media and the opinions of public figures, just proceeding, at the time of and in the decade after, the events of Paris. This includes a broad range of articles and reports from leading Australian and imperial newspapers and periodicals of the period, ranging from state newspapers such as The Sydney Morning Herald and The Argus, to scholarly journals such as The Round Table. Furthermore evidence will be presented that several groups perceived problems with a hard-line view of White Australia, as a threat to establishing a progressive and sovereign nation, such as: internationalists, academics, tropical medicine scientists and prominent members of the religious community among others. To gain a clear perspective on these groups’ views, their specific journal articles and books have been sourced where it is clear that their opinions diverged from the conceptualisation of White Australia and Japan held by figures, such as Hughes. In fact through an analysis of their papers it is evident that even those closest to the decision making, including members of the Australian delegation and key public service figures, had divergent views in regards to the racial equality clause. These figures, despite their advocating of a White Australia, recognised the complexity of the issues that surrounded the clause and therefore doubted Hughes’ method in dealing with the Japanese proposal.

In order to fully encompass the breath of these issues this dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the sequence of events that led to rejection of the clause and the legacy this episode created for Hughes and for Australia as a nation. It will present how Australian commentators recognised a change to Australia’s national statue by its
participation in Paris and therefore questions arose about the responsibilities such independence gave. This, it is demonstrated, led to discussions over how a controversial policy, such as White Australia, should be explained or even modified, especially since it conflicted with another important aspect of securing the nation: Australia’s tenuous relationship with Japan. The episode of the racial equality proposal, and especially Hughes’ diplomatic method, was a key factor in understanding Australian identity as an international participant and hence inspired a sustained debate. The second chapter expands on how labour and economic conditions were understood as factors in establishing the nation and were greatly discussed in regard to the clauses failure and White Australia. Here a tension can be seen between those who believed that white Australian labour and the economy could only be preserved if degenerate coloured labour was excluded, and those who believed that White Australia jeopardised economic progress and was becoming irrelevant due to the proven ability of Asian peoples. Similarly, the third and final chapter examines how defence was a key part of developing the Australian nation. Here it is demonstrated how argument arose about how to secure the nation’s defence given the conflicting opinions that existed over whether White Australia was the best means to guarantee national security since it may have insulted in the growing national power of Japan.
Chapter One: Hughes, Nation and Legacy

Australia’s participation in the Versailles Peace Conference was to become an affair of great significance in realising Australia’s status as a nation. As Australia’s wartime Prime Minister, Hughes undeniably played a large part in these proceedings. Indeed it is not an understatement that a historical legacy was created at Paris for both the Australian nation and Hughes as its supposed defender and champion. This chapter develops not only how this legacy was created in reaction to the clause, by pre-setting a history of the episode, but also how it was part of the new international framework that the Conference had spurred.

However, evidence is presented that the events became the subject of debate with varied Australian opinions, which differed from Hughes and even criticised the legacy of his diplomatic method. Nevertheless these sources also show that despite advocating different views serving the nation was almost always the primary concern.

Preparing Australia for Paris

Even before the war officially ended Hughes considered the settlement of peace with Germany as a question of great national importance. At the Imperial War Cabinet of 1918 in London he was scathing in his attack of the Imperial government for what he perceived as a lack of proper consultation with the Dominions. Most specifically he criticised the adoption of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points as the basis of the peace discussions. Hughes believed that Wilson’s points conflicted with Australia’s interests regarding annexation of the Pacific ex-German colonies and therefore establishing a defence against Japan. Even at this early stage it was clear that, at least in Hughes’ criticisms, the self-governing Dominions

38 Meaney, *Australia and World Crisis*, pp. 290-300.
39 Hughes had in fact profoundly distrusted Japan’s occupation of any Pacific islands and stressed to Lloyd George that the Pacific islands were a crucial aspect of Australia defence: Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, pp. 347-349; For Hughes criticism of the Fourteen Points see *Ibid*, pp. 354-55.
were no longer passive bystanders in international affairs, especially if such international circumstances involved national interests.

However, it is also evident that Hughes’ criticisms were not wholly endorsed by the Australia public. The Melbourne *Argus* pointed out that Hughes, in language that was by no means ‘gracious’, had been unable to cool off his warlike temper and was unrepresentative of Australia when he launched his attack on Britain. Australians, the article pointed out, had been quite satisfied with the way the Armistice had been conducted and had not expected to be informed on its proceedings, since the Empire was trusted to secure Australia’s interests. Hughes was therefore charged as being disloyal, in causing a breakdown of the Empire.40

In November of 1918 the Australian press reported that an American source had revealed the seven main proposals Japan would advocate at the settlement of peace. The seventh proposal was that Japan would receive ‘reciprocatory rights’ for its citizens ‘throughout the world’. These Australian newspapers quickly linked this with immigration and White Australia. One article, which simply listed the points, was subtitled as ‘Free Entry into All Countries’ while another directly stated that White Australia, a very ‘desirable policy’ to most Australians, was brought ‘into question at once’ by the proposal. However already divergences in opinion are evident since this second article concluded that the Japanese were most likely not seeking to claim right to Australia’s empty territory and therefore the proposal should be accepted as an act of friendship.41

It is evident that Hughes also perceived this connection to the issues of White Australia, immigration and, therefore, Australian nationalism, yet he viewed such developments with a sense of dread. At a luncheon, before the conference, presented by the Australia and New

Zealand Luncheon Club, Hughes made a speech where he prophesised that the domestic policies of Australia, such as White Australia, could be challenged at the Conference. Hughes expressed that he was determined to make sure that, what Australia had gone into the war with would be maintained after the war.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed just before the first plenary session he stated that reparations, the fate of the ex-German Pacific islands and the allowance of ‘promiscuous immigration’ by the League were issues where Australian interests were inescapably bound.\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore after the conference he commented at the A.I.F and War Chest Club that he had always expected that White Australia would have to be defended and that some nation would probably ‘endeavour to wrest if from [Australia].’\textsuperscript{44}

**Racial Equality Proposed: Hughes the Australian “Stumbling Block”**

The racial equality proposal was formulated by the Japanese government under Prime Minister Hara Takeshi. Shimazu establishes how the Hara government had taken a positive stance in relation to the West and the new international order of the League. This she argues prompted discussion on racial equality since it had been included as a compromise to convince the Diplomatic Advisory Council to support Japan’s involvement in the League. Members of the DAC had been sceptical of the League as a Western institution and therefore wanted a guarantee that racial prejudice against the Japanese would not be systemic in it.\textsuperscript{45}

However, it was only at the proceedings of the Peace conference, staring in early 1919, that the racial equality proposal as a matter of international controversy was fully realised. It is evident that throughout the events of Versailles conference the Australian delegation, with Hughes at the forefront, was a major force that stood against its passing. As Fitzhardinge, and even Hughes’ himself, pointed out, at its first stages the Japanese proposal was welcomed by

\textsuperscript{42} ““Germany Must Pay”: Mr Hughes on the Terms of Peace’, *The Times*, 10 January 1919, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{43} See Meaney, *Australia and World Crisis*, pp. 341, 396.
\textsuperscript{44} ““A White Australia”: Mr Hughes and the “Diggers”’, *The Times*, 5 July 1919, p. 10.
the major powers, and most importantly the United States. Colonel House’s positive feedback on the proposal had encouraged the Japanese delegates and had given them hope that the amendment could be accepted by the League.\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, when the proposal was first suggested on the 13\textsuperscript{th} of February as an amendment to Article 21, an article that proposed to secure religious freedom, the Japanese were surprised to find that it was not accepted. Sir Robert Cecil, delegate of the British Empire, who held the position of chairman in this session, postponed the decision making on the clause stating that it was an issue of great importance and controversy for the British Dominions.\textsuperscript{47} As Hudson notes, while the proposal had progressed, in terms of convincing the Americans, the Dominions negative stance and the ‘intransigence’ of Hughes meant that the British delegation stood as the main opponent of the proposal.\textsuperscript{48}

Indeed as House indicated, the Australian delegation came to be the ‘stumbling block’ to the Japanese ambitions.\textsuperscript{49} The Japanese delegates had the greatest struggle over the racial equality with Hughes himself simply because he was unmovable on the issue.\textsuperscript{50} Shimazu exemplifies Hughes defiance by referring to how he would not change his position despite Japanese attempts to reword the clause so that it was not perceived as a declaration of unrestricted immigration. Even when the rest of the Dominions came to support the clause after rewording, Hughes would not budge from his position and defiantly left the meeting between the Empire and Japan where the rewording had been proposed.\textsuperscript{51}

At only one point did Hughes show any willingness to negotiate, stating that he would accept the clause if it contained an amendment that immigration was a domestic issue. The South

\textsuperscript{48} Hudson, \textit{Billy Hughes in Paris}, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{49} Shimazu, \textit{Japan, Race and Equality}, pp. 23-4
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 23-7; Fitzhardinge, \textit{The Little Digger}, p. 404.
African delegate Jan Smuts, who the Japanese tried to convince to persuade Hughes to accept the clause, conveyed on 31st March that Hughes might accept the proposal if it guaranteed no right to enter Australia. The Japanese in turn rejected this stating that it had taken Japan years to remove such an immigration clause from a commercial treaty with the United States. In reflection Major Piesse, as a consistent critic of Hughes’ treatment of the Japanese, attributed this refusal to the fact that excluding immigration would have angered the Japanese public and may have even jeopardised the lives of the delegates. Indeed Hughes recorded in his memoirs that Japanese delegate Baron Makino had emphasised that if he went back to Japan, without the acceptance of racial equality, he would be killed by the Japanese people. Nevertheless the Australian delegation took Japan’s unwillingness to concede an amendment to the clause as further evidence that it was the intention of the Japanese to break down immigration restrictions. Indeed both Sir John Latham, the personal secretary of Australia delegate Joseph Cook and Percy Deane, Hughes personal secretary, stated that it was because the Japanese had not conceded that Hughes was right in maintaining his opposition.

However it not often stressed how some completely rejected this point, with Hughes receiving criticism, even from members of the Australian delegation. Administrative member of Hughes’ staff, Frederic Eggleston who, it will be shown stood adamantly for a White Australia, nevertheless believed that Hughes had not dealt with the situation correctly. Eggleston, who favoured Wilsonian diplomacy, believed that Hughes had acted with a lack of

tact in the proceeding of Paris. Evidence shows that Eggleston even doubted whether Hughes would have conceded even if the Japanese had amended the clause to state it was not about immigration. In a letter to Fitzhardinge, written after Hughes’ passing, Eggleston wished to point out that Robert Garran, another Australian delegate, had made errors in recording Hughes’ actions at Paris. He rejected Garran’s claim that Hughes would have accepted the clause given an immigration amendment. Indeed Eggleston speculated that this was only what Hughes had told his staff and in fact although Hughes may have mentioned a concession it all ‘depended on what was actually said and the way in which it was put.’ Furthermore he attested that Hughes probably ‘had his mind on his enemies in Australia and was against any admission whatever, because it would be criticised.’ Eggleston claimed he had pushed for Hughes to add an amendment relating to immigration to the covenant but that Hughes had been too ‘afraid to touch it’ and that in the end it was Wilson who had ‘served Hughes’ by rejecting the clause. Therefore Eggleston’s comments reflect how those surrounding Hughes doubted his unmoving position and despite being in favour of a White Australia personally viewed the best solution in a completely different light.

**Racial Equality Rejected**

On the 11th of April the Japanese, as represented by Baron Makino, once again brought forth the issue of the racial equality clause. Here Makino argued that the institution of the League, which had presented itself as a new court of justice in international affairs, had given nations legitimate aspirations to correct what they saw as injustices of the world. It was via this new

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58 At the time when this letter was written Fitzhardinge served as Hughes biographer and was the custodian of history of the Australian National University.

59 Letter from Eggleston to L. F. Fitzhardinge dated the 18 April 1952, Eggleston Papers, Series 6, Folder 1, Box 4, MS.423, 6-7, NLA.
international framework, where the idea of nationality stood at the core that Makino hoped to justify Japan’s claims:

‘The sentiment of nationality, one of the strongest human feelings, has been aroused by the present world-wide moral renaissance, and is at present receiving just recognition in adjusting international affairs. In close connection with the grievances of the oppressed nationalities, there exists the wrongs of racial discrimination which was, and is, the subject of deep resentment to a large portion of the human race. The feeling of being slighted has long been a standing grievance with certain peoples. And the announcement of the principle of justice for peoples and nationalities as the basis of future international relationships has so heightened their legitimate aspirations that they consider it their right that this wrong be redressed.’

The delegates of the other nations were hard pressed to validate the rejection of the clause. Cecil, who it must be remembered represented Australia as the representative of the empire, was noted by David Miller, a legal adviser to the American delegation, to have seemed ‘agitated’ and ‘embarrassed’ when arguing against the clause. Indeed Cecil conceded that he ‘regretted that he was not in a position to vote for the amendment although he was personally in accord with the idea advanced by the Japanese delegation’ but that the clause had to be rejected since the commission would encroach ‘upon the sovereignty of States Members of the League’ if it found in favour. Cecil argued that either the clause was not practical, and therefore ineffective, or it was practical and therefore be controversial as it could be seen that the clause would enable the League to interfere in issues of domestic sovereignty. Japanese delegate Viscount Chinda, who clearly recognised that the objection

61 The British Empire Delegation was in a unique position in terms of the League as it severed as several states that were united under a common cause. It was decided that the Dominions would serve as separate entities but still be under the Empire, which served as a united front. As Hughes could not be convinced to alter his views the entire British Empire had no choice to support him in and maintain imperial unity. For the arrangement of the Dominions see British delegation at Paris see Tillman, Anglo-American Relations, pp.77-9 and Fitzhardinge, The Little Digger, pp. 362-9; For concern over imperial unity see Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality, p. 124.
62 Spartalis, Diplomatic Battles, p.182.
was based on the controversy over immigration and the Dominions, responded that Japan had not approached the question of race or immigration and it ‘asked for nothing more than the principle of the equality of nations’. 63

The Japanese therefore asked that a vote should be taken on the inclusion of the amendment. The result was eleven votes in favour out of a possible seventeen. However, at this point President Wilson, as chairman, indicated that the amendment had not been adopted given it had not received a unanimous vote. This decision was both controversial and significant as it meant that the United States did not have to openly reject the clause. 64 In fact when a member of the French delegation pointed out that the vote had the majority Wilson replied that this did not matter, it needed unanimous support, and that the only decision taken by the League that did not, determining the seat of league, was a special exception. 65

The general consensus of scholars is that Hughes’ threat to raise the race issue in the west of the United States and most importantly California, where anti-Japanese sentiment was rife, must have had some effect on Wilson’s decision. According to House, Hughes had planned to ‘make a speech at the Plenary Conference and to raise a storm of protest not only in the Dominions but in the Western part of the United States’ 66. Wilson had no choice but to veto the amendment or have Hughes stir up the anti-Asiatic sentiment in California which would cause problems in his administration. These arguments are usually accompanied by a reflection on the possible insincerity in the US and Wilson’s support for the Japanese amendment in the first place. Here Wilson’s commitment to white superiority and the fact that prominent Americans were happy to put the responsibility of the rejection onto Australia

64 Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality, p. 31.
65 ‘Racial Equality: The Japanese Amendment’ in Ball, Australia and Japan, p. 36.
in order to avoid directly confronting the Japanese is often stressed. Hughes also related that this was the case in that when he heard of the amendment he was shocked to find that the United States was somewhat impartial to it. He recounts how he called a press conference, telling US journalists to report to the Pacific states to ‘protest against this evil, this wicked clause…overwhelm the president with messages imploring, demanding, that it be withdrawn.’ Clearly, however, the focus on this casual relationship has tended to narrow the breadth of Australian opinion behind Hughes, with historians judging the event’s significance by Australia’s impact on the clause and almost never the other way around.

**Hughes in Paris: A Legacy**

Indeed the vote on the 11\textsuperscript{th} is where most histories place the conclusion of the racial equality clause with brief mentions of the immediate reaction. While Makino clearly stated that the Japanese would bring the issue up again at the next meeting of the League in 1920 at Geneva, the Japanese delegate stressed at that conference stated that while the question was still important, Japan would choose not to pursue it. However, Meaney makes a persuasive point that the ability of the Japanese to bring these issues up again meant that the question was still very much a prevalent issue. He stresses that at least for Hughes, and his post-war world view where he viewed the Conference’s conclusion as ‘not a good peace’, discussions over racial

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69 See for example Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 99-107; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, p.304 and Hughes own recollection where he states the clause was ‘dead and buried’ after the 11\textsuperscript{th}: Hughes, *Policies and Potentates*, p. 248.

70 ‘Japan and Racial Equality: Extract from Speech of Viscount Ishii at First Assembly of the League of Nations on 30\textsuperscript{th} November, 1920’ in Piesse Papers, Series 4, Folder 2, MS.882, 81, NLA.
equality were not seen as being over. Indeed evidence demonstrates that contemporaries, beyond Hughes, recognised this as the case and therefore contributed to the ongoing discussion of the episode in Australia.

When Hughes set out to return from his long absence at Paris he was received with an overwhelming positive response by Australians. The London *Times* reported how Hughes was greeted by rousing cheers and carried on the shoulders of Australian diggers when he visited the AIF and War Chest Club in London at the conclusion of the Conference. Similarly the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Hughes had been warmly received at Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide and that Sydney would be no different. It was claimed that the Hughes had achieved a ‘triumphal progress’ unprecedented by an Australian leader and that the ‘demonstrative enthusiasm’ he received was ‘recognition of the fact that he has deserved well of Australia’.

Meaney argues that the resolution of the Peace at Paris was ‘Absolutely Unbearable’ for Hughes. He attests that Hughes’ vision for the post-settlement of a *Pax Britannica* was defeated. Meaney points out that Hughes had lost on all of his main fronts: Australia did not receive reparations, was only given a mandate over New Guinea when Hughes had pushed for annexation and the question of racial equality could be brought up by the Japanese again. Yet it is evident that despite these apparent failures Hughes, on his return to Australia, adopted the mantle of a great victor and, most importantly, a great champion of White Australia. At the AIF and War Chest Club ‘digger’s lunch’, Hughes attested that he had guaranteed Australia’s national safety by his actions in preserving White Australia; Despite

71 Meaney, *Australia and World Crisis*, p. 396.
72 See for example: ‘The Return of Mr Hughes’, *The Round Table*, vol. 10, December 1919, pp. 179-85 in L. L Robson ed. *Australia Commentaries: Select Articles from the Round Table 1911-1942*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975), p. 100; here the ability of the Japanese to bring the clause up again and its belief that Hughes’ lack of diplomacy meant that the author considered the repercussions of the incident to be ongoing.
73 “‘A White Australia”: Mr Hughes and the “Diggers””, *The Times*, 5 July 1919, p. 10.
74 ‘Mr Hughes’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 1919, p. 16.
75 Meaney, *Australia and World Crisis*, pp. 395-6
the great ‘condemnation’ he had received for defending the ‘great heritage’ of White Australia he had, nevertheless, ‘stood up for Australia in the face of all opposition: he had set out to represent Australia, and he had done it.’

At the Parliamentary session where the Commonwealth government was to ratify the peace agreement, Hughes emphasised how the Australian delegation had served as White Australia’s champions. He displayed the struggle as a David and Goliath battle: a small nation of only 5,000,000 versus an overwhelming assembly of Asiatic peoples where the victory of White Australia was ‘the greatest thing which [Australia had] achieved’. While Australian soldiers had fought in the war for liberty and therefore the right to a White Australia, Hughes claimed that he and Cook had ‘brought that great principle back from the Conference’ and that it was now safely in the hands of Australians:

‘White Australia is yours. You may do with it as you please… Here it is, at least as safe as it was on the day when it was first adopted by this parliament.’

Hughes believed by obtaining a lack of racial mixing Australia proved it was willing to preserve its destiny of holding the continent for white Australians as a matter of liberty.

However, while this speech has been noted in histories of the episode, two important points from it have been neglected that show how Hughes himself must have recognised that White Australia, especially in regards to the Japanese amendment, was politically complicated and at least required clarification. The first point is that Hughes conceded there were those in Australia who objected to the idea of a White Australia. Hughes limited these to the ‘two extremes poles of political opinion’ but still feared them enough to have expressed how

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76 “A White Australia”: Mr Hughes and the “Diggers”, *The Times*, 5 July 1919, p. 10.
fortunate it was that their numbers and influence were ‘insignificant’. The second point is that, despite the principle of a White Australia having already been fought for Hughes found it necessary to clear up all ‘misunderstandings’ so that Australia’s ‘friends and allies’ would not ‘misconceive’ the actions taken by the Australia delegation at Paris. He stressed that Japan was recognised as an equal and that White Australia was simply a declaration of the right and the liberty of a sovereign nation to choose which people make up its populace, not a claim of superiority. Therefore, he hoped that Australia and Japan would continue to be allies, remaining ‘forever on terms of the most perfect friendship.’ While this could simply be regarded as political expediency it shows some recognition from Hughes that Japan could have been offended by his vigorous defending of the White Australia doctrine. Hence it required him to officially state that, in order to guarantee that Japan would not become hostile, that he, and by inference Australia, still hoped to maintain friendly relations with Japan. Indeed it is clear that the idea of preserving the nation was paramount throughout the events of Paris, whether by direct endorsement of White Australia or not.

**Formulating the Nation: Australia and the New International order**

Why these events and actions established as a legacy of nationhood can be explained by how they occurred within the development of the new international and transnational framework of the early twentieth century, namely the League of Nations. The League marked a new development in global affairs and reformed how the ‘nation’ itself was defined. It was the brainchild President Wilson and was designed as part of the peace settlement that institutionalised international affairs. It was to create a community of nation states utilising

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79 Hughes in *Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates*, 10 September 1919, p. 12174.

diplomacy to resolve conflict and prevent future world wars.\(^\text{81}\) In this schema it was hoped that “world interest” would win over the interests of individual nations and hence peace for all could be maintained.\(^\text{82}\) However, the League and the proceedings at the Peace Conference were heavily influenced by the doctrine of self-determinism: that a state had the right to political independence in the pursuit of becoming a progressive, and hopefully democratic, nation. In fact Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the ideas Wilson believed should guide the League, were heavily influenced by the ideal of self-determinism. For example point fourteen stated that ‘A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike’. This meant that the League was dependent on the nation and its rights as the foundation of the League was a community of nations which were units defined as sovereign and progressive.\(^\text{83}\)

This institutionalised, new, international world order was of great interest in Australian circles since it gave a new international status to nations including those in their early development, such as Australia. The League attracted critics in Australia, most notable Hughes, who saw it as a threat to sovereignty in that it might jeopardise the integrity of the British Empire.\(^\text{84}\) In fact Hughes stated to the America press in the midst of the Paris discussions that ‘Australia cannot accept a proposal that strikes at the root of a policy [White Australia] we have long maintained and which is vital to our existence’ and that the clause was dangerous as ‘no matter how innocuous it seems in form, [it] is certainly aimed at giving the League control of questions relating to immigration’.\(^\text{85}\) However, for others, such as the

\(^{83}\) Ibid., p. 46.
\(^{84}\) Meaney, Australia and World Crisis, pp. 344-7; William Morris Hughes, The Splendid Adventure: A Review of Empire Relations Within and Without The Commonwealth of Britannic Nations, (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), pp. 84-5.
League of Nations Union and Anglican Bishop George Long of Bathurst, the League was the greatest guarantor of sovereignty and peace and should be trusted.\(^{86}\)

In fact the following examples of contemporaries’ opinions demonstrate that while many Australians conceptualised the importance of the denial of racial equality and nation to the same degree as Hughes their assertions were evidently far removed from his. Indeed these examples show that even though many clearly recognised White Australia as pivotal to nationhood, it was also often conditioned on certain factors of the nation like labour and defence. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Hughes’ diplomatic method was questioned by these individuals as it did not seem to fully account for complex circumstances of the episode like Australia’s new international status or the position of Japan as a growing power.

One clear example of an opinion, which was divergent from Hughes, but still adamantly supported White Australia and the nation, is that of Latham who, as a delegate to Paris, believed in the advantages of the League and its diplomatic trappings unlike Hughes. After the Conference Latham produced a pamphlet entitled *The Significance of the Peace Conference from an Australian point of view*, where he summed up his views of the events. Latham argued that the Conference was very significant as it was an indication that Australia had ‘won nationhood’. Australians, he pointed out, would have to recognise that Australia’s ability to participate in the peace had been more than an ‘international compliment’. In this he explained that nationhood ‘brings responsibilities, duties and risks, as well as benefits and advantages.’\(^{87}\) He argued that the preservation of White Australia was a matter of sovereignty and progress as the ‘possibility of a continued white democracy’ was inexorably linked to it. For Latham it was the ‘right of every self-governing community to determine the ingredients

\(^{86}\) For idea that the league was the best machinery for peace see Sir Henry Braddon, ‘The League of Nations Speech’ delivered at a Meeting of The English Speaking Union, (Sydney, October 1924); For ideas that Australia should support the league see ‘Bishop Disappointed with Australia’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1919.

\(^{87}\) Latham, *The Significance of the Peace Conference*, p. 3.
of its own population’ and ‘If that right is surrendered, self-government disappears.’  

He also linked this to this issue of defence in that if the “open door” had applied to the South Pacific islands, they would be taken over by ‘alien immigrants’ placing White Australia and Australia in general, in a dangerous position; Latham believed that ‘a friend today may be a foe tomorrow’.  

However, while Latham had agreed with the reasoning to reject the clause to prevent any threat to White Australia it is evident that he thought that certain methods of affirmation, as given by people like Hughes, were counterproductive. Firstly Latham, unlike Hughes, believed that the League was very effective in guaranteeing Australia’s defence and sovereign rights. He indicated that Australians should trust in the League referring specifically to clause 10 of the Covenant, where it is indicated that ‘existing political independence’ will be upheld so that a policy like White Australia, which he argued was part of Australian independence, would not be infringed. Furthermore Latham was in complete opposition to Hughes’ striving for annexation of the South, ex-German, Pacific islands as a defence measure. Such a result, Latham pointed out, would have been ‘disastrous’ and would have jeopardised Australian defence by allowing Japan to annex the North, ex-German, Pacific islands and build bases there.  

In fact in a letter of thanks to Professor Alfred Zimmern, a noted English historian and internationalist, for a positive review Zimmern gave of his work, Latham expressed that due to the position of confidence he had developed with Australian ministers he had not been able to be completely honest about Hughes. Hughes,

88 Ibid. p. 8-9.
89 Ibid. p. 12.
90 Ibid. p. 11.
Latham related, was a ‘good specimen of a forceful person who had learnt hardly anything from the debacle of the past six years’. 91

Indeed in his pamphlet Latham realised how malleable White Australia was and even found it necessary to set out a clarification of the ideal. Here he stressed that White Australia must be expressed in considered terms and that some forms of affirmation were complicated by the propensity to insult another nation, like Japan:

‘It must be remembered that there are various methods of expressing a policy, and various means of applying a principle. It also should not be forgotten that the principle underlying a policy is frequently misunderstood in foreign countries. It is vitally important for Australia to understand her White Australia policy – to get at the root of it and view it in all aspects. When the policy is so considered, it will be found that it contains nothing that can justly be regarded as offensive by any foreign nation.’ 92

Similarly the Round Table: a popular imperial journal, also expressed both how the events in regards to the Japanese clause, were important as they related to the foundation of the Australian nation but also how Hughes’ affirmation of White Australia was, at times, detrimental to the nation. Although a series of articles were published in regards to Australian actions in Paris as the Conference was taking place, 93 the most pertinent example relating to the racial equality episode was written the following year. 94 The article written by ‘an Australian pen’ was self-identified as a work which made ‘an attempt to present the case

91 Letter from John Latham to A. E. Zimmern, 10 November 1920, The Papers of Sir John Latham, MS 1009, Series 22, 146, NLA.
92 Latham, The Significance of the Peace Conference, p. 10.
93 One, for example, reported that at the Peace Conference, White Australia was purported as a measure of maintaining both a cohesive society and Australian security but also pointed out that the problem of the low population in the tropics meant a ‘waring note’ was occasionally sounded in Australia: ‘The Peace Conference’, The Round Table, vol. 9, June 1919, pp. 601-11 in L. L Robson ed. Australia Commentaries: Select Articles from the Round Table 1911-1942, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975), pp. 89-96; Another example reported on the return of Hughes from Paris, it noted that he was well received in Australia as it believed he had won nationalism but that the actions of Hughes in rejecting racial equality with a lack of diplomacy may have led to ‘splendid isolation’ and that Australia’s realisation as a separate entity coincided with an ‘acute’ political situation with Japan was unfortunate: ‘The Return of Mr Hughes’, The Round Table, pp. 179-85 in Robson ed. Australian Commentaries, pp. 97-101.
for a White Australia’. The article pointed out that the White Australia policy was as much the national foundation of Australia as the Monroe Doctrine was of the United states or the policy of maintaining sea power was of the British; White Australia was ‘the first exercise of [an Australian] national consciousness.’ It indicated that two major factors for the establishment, and justification, of a White Australia on national grounds, were its usefulness in terms of Australian security and Australian economic standards. In regards to the former the article indicated that by maintaining racial purity Australia had managed to avoid any racial conflicts which were a threat to democracy. Likewise it was suggested that White Australia played a pivotal role in protecting labour and economic standards, blocking of cheap coloured labour to prevent it becoming exploited, like slaves, for capitalistic profit. The racial equality clause, which the author pointed out, had no written guarantee that it would not be used to challenge White Australia, therefore threatened a crucial aspect of Australia’s national foundation.

Indeed the writer conceded that the White Australia policy’s status as a legitimate national aspiration was exactly why there was complication and controversy about the racial equality clause. The recognition of White Australia it argued also was the recognition that the need to relieve excess population was in the ‘legitimate scope’ of Eastern nations. Therefore, the idea that White Australia was simply a denial of this right had caused resentment in other nations like Japan. However, the author also claimed that such contentions could be resolved, in that if the liberty to decide the population of one’s nation was recognised by the international community, no country could claim damage to its ‘amour propre’. Indeed the article went on to argue that Hughes’ resolve to fight the clause instead of affirming the right

95 Ibid, pp. 319-20.
96 Ibid, p. 312.
to choose one’s population was a diplomatic mistake. In concluding it was stated that Australia had to undertake certain tasks if it was to justify White Australia. Firstly, immigration would need to be dealt with through a constructive program where large portions of land could be effectively settled. Secondly, Australia could no longer rely on appeals to ‘crude nationalism’ that came with a lack of diplomatic experience. The writer argued that by not taking a considered approach Australia harmed itself and the Empire by provoking foreign nations.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, in her 1923 work the *History of the White Australia policy to 1920* Myra Willard recognised the clause’s rejection in terms of defending Australia’s wish to become a sovereign nation. Willard argued that White Australia received ‘validity’ and ‘morality’ through the recognition of Australia’s right to become a self-realised nation. She pointed out that the right of nation to preserve its identity was fast becoming an internationally accepted ideal of the rise of independent nations. Willard attested that Australia’s racial purity was therefore an attempt at forming a progressive nation; White Australia was an escape from the old world history of racial conflict and promoted self-realisation of a nation by unity of race.¹⁰¹ However, Willard conditioned the success of a White Australia on how effectively Australia was populated with suitable white immigration to help develop those areas that Australia had not yet been able to. A lack of planned immigration, she pointed out, portrayed Australia as greedy and a White Australia as simply a ‘Dog in the Manger’ policy.¹⁰²

According to Willard the general support the Japanese received from the other nations, simply increased the threat to Australia. These countries, she attests, were already well established nations and hence did not share Australia’s vulnerable position where it was

100 *Ibid* pp. 333-338.
102 *Ibid*, p. 211.
necessary to justify White Australia’s validity. Referring to an unsourced quote Willard maintained that Australia’s claim ‘to the right of self-realisation’ depended on it fulfilling its ‘duties’ to develop and extract its resources to meet the demand of the world. Australia’s ‘willingness and ability’ had to be up to par or else Australia would be unable to keep ‘her right to retain her identity’. 103

103 Ibid, pp. 131, 211-213.
Chapter Two: Labour

The legacy of national importance that the events of the Peace Conference had for Australia make it evident that discussion over the nation was themed on issues which were seen as essential to national stability. This chapter will demonstrate how guaranteeing a democratic and effective standard of labour was one such theme and was a main factor behind the establishment of the White Australia policy. It presents how the current historiography has demonstrated that the Japanese proposal for racial equality had been equated with an attack on White Australia because it was believed it would allow lower class Asiatic workers to enter Australia, subsequently downgrading labour conditions. Indeed the opinions of those Australians are soured to show not only how they believed that this was exactly what White Australia was meant to prevent, but also the arguments they used to justify such an opinion. However, this dissertation expands on this by demonstrating that discussion was sustained over racial equality and will contrast these affirmations to Australian voices that doubted White Australia was an effective way to guarantee labour standards. These Australian argued that by denying racial equality, when evidence suggested the coloured labour were more effective workers than a white, Australia was enabling a dangerous “Dog in the Manger” policy to form.

White Australia: the guarantor of labour standards

The platform that White Australia was built on was that it beneficial to maintaining good labour conditions. Lake and Reynolds show how White Australia developed out a doctrine of ‘Whiteness’. ‘Whiteness’ and race purity, they argue, was a framework for the virtuous
aspects of Australian life and nationality. When it comes to the significance of labour they refer to Justice H. B. Higgins’ Harvest Judgement in that a man’s wage was to be ‘fair and reasonable’ and the interests of the employee were placed before the employer as the cornerstone of White Australia. They point out that what Higgins viewed as a ‘fair and reasonable’ wage as the amount it would take for a white man to take care of a family with three children. Therefore, they argue that Asiatics, who were often single men, were seen as cheap labourers in Higgins’ schema as they only supported themselves and their lower living standards.

Supporting this Willard also had expressed that the development of the policy was bound to progress in labour standards. She tracked the policy from its origins in the individual states through their indentured labour experiments, the influx of Chinese workers and the system of Kanaka labour in Queensland. These, she pointed out, were all failures which led to racial conflict where white labourers feared that they would be undersold by coloured labour. For example, with the influx of Chinese workers at the time of the gold rushes, Willard indicated that calls for exclusionist policy became prevalent due to the resentment felt by whites in that the Chinese worked longer hours and sent their profits overseas. Unions and workers, she points out, feared that the competition from these labourers would jeopardize ‘industrial democracy’ as they would be ‘cheap’ and ‘uncontrolled’.

Compounding this was the idea that a system of coloured labour would degenerate democracy due to the unscrupulous Whites who would exploit them. The most striking example she gave was that of the Kanaka, indentured labour system where, she attested a relationship of exploitation had formed. Here Pacific workers were not only mistreated but

104 Lake et al., Drawing the Global Colour line, pp. 137-138.
also brought to Australia with little or no consideration of their rights, for the sake of cheap labour. Willard attested that the fear of this undemocratic circumstance impacted on the creation and maintenance of White Australia. Linking these issues directly with the events of the Conference Hudson makes a persuasive argument that White Australia at Versailles was still tied up with this these fears of exploitation and economic competition. He argues that an explanation for Hughes’ actions at Paris was the fear many Australians had that cheap and competitive coloured labour would be abused by some whites for capitalistic enterprise to the detriment of the white labourer, if White Australia was abolished. Hudson points out that this circumstance was seen as damaging to the liberal, democratic conditions of Australia.

Certainly evidence that prominent Australians believed this to be the case is gained by an analysis of the attitude of Australian delegate, Frederic Eggleston. Eggleston in an article to the New Statesmen, a British periodical, wrote on this very concern. Here he attempted to justify the White Australia policy as he believed that his British counterparts had misunderstood it as contrary to the ideals of liberalism. Eggleston explained that, in Australia, it was believed that an influx of coloured workers could only lead to a system of indentured labour. He argued that the White Australia policy maintained labour standards by stopping exploitation of coloured labour by capitalist whites. Indeed, he believed coloured labour inherently undersold itself so that when an inferior coloured race mixed with a dominant white one, a slave and master dynamic would form and ultimately result in degradation, both economically and morally. Hence, Eggleston claimed, that a system of unrestricted immigration, as apparent in the Japanese proposal, was detrimental more for the White or

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108 Ibid., pp. 135-87.
109 Ibid., pp. 194-5.
110 Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris, pp. 54-5.
dominant power and that creating a nation with a lack of morality and democracy was what Australians feared.  

In a memo entitled *Australia and the Colour Bar* Eggleston once again made this point giving particular reference to the Japanese amendment at Paris and the negative British press which Australia’s actions had provoked. As with the *Statesmen* article Eggleston argued that the White Australia policy was misunderstood in British circles as simply ‘narrow race hereditary’ prejudice. That with the mass immigration of an Asiatic race, such as the Japanese, the industrial conditions of Australia would be dominated by a system of exploited coloured labour. He argued it was inevitable that Asians, including the Japanese, gave themselves ‘a very much lower value than the Anglo-Saxon’ by a much lower real wage.

Even those who had not embraced the results of Hughes’ actions for Australia at the Peace Conference still agreed on the benefits of the White Australia policy for its ability to maintain labour standards. For example, Piesse, who is noted by Meaney as being a strong critic of Hughes and his actions at Versailles, conceded in this point. A clear example of this is found in a response by Piesse to criticisms levelled at his department by Senator Millen, the representative for Australia at the League’s Geneva conference of 1920. In a radio interview Millen charged Piesse’s department with attempting to make recommendations that would degrade White Australia. Piesse responded by arguing that no such recommendations were printed anywhere in the department. However Piesse view obviously diverged from some government officials as he conceded that there were, and that he agreed with, typed recommendations, including changing existing policy so that educated Japanese and Indians (students, merchants etc) did not have to apply annually to remain in Australia. However, he

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112 Unfortunately a precise date could not be sourced for this document, however from the subject matter it can be ascertained that it was written some time in 1919 either at the time of negotiation over the racial equality clause at Paris or soon after its rejection.
113 ‘Australia and the Colour Bar’, Eggleston Papers, Series 6, Folder 2, Box 4, MS.423, 139. NLA.
maintained that these did not constitute a ‘whittling away of existing restrictions as would result in complete abandonment of the White Australia policy’ as Millen had suggested.

Piesse added that, along with any ‘good Australian’, he had ‘no shadow of a doubt that White Australia must be maintained.’ He noted that White Australia was seen to have two functions, important to Australia: to prevent the economic competition of coloured peoples, thereby protecting Australian workers and to prevent the mixing of different races which could cause race conflict. He argued that in the first point Australia should have no trouble as many other nations had enforced a similar policy. In fact he stressed that the most notable example was Australia’s ‘principal opponent, Japan’ arguing that Japan ‘can have nothing to say to restrictions on economic grounds so long as she herself maintains similar restrictions.’\textsuperscript{115} Hence it is that even those most critical of Hughes and his actions in regards to the Japanese proposal still believed in the merits of White Australia system for retaining labour standards. Nevertheless it is also evident that despite this belief, Piesse still conceptualised what the policy was in a very different manner to the man whom the Hughes’ government had chosen to represent Australia at the 1920 League conference.

“Unequal in labour”

A common opinion expressed on the episode was that while the Japanese were not inferior to Australian whites in terms of race they were inferior in regards to their labour standards. Hughes stressed this view when he tried to justify to the Japanese press Australia’s negative position in regards to the clause. He pointed out that while ‘Australia freely admits Japan’s equality with herself as a nation’ and that ‘we can and do admit Japan and the Japanese to be our equals before the bar of nations of the world’ it was also true that ‘Australia and Japan do not enjoy equal industrial conditions.’ In this Hughes referred to Japan’s position at the

\textsuperscript{115} E. L. Piesse, Memo to Prime Minister ‘Papers Prepared in the Pacific Branch in Connection with the Geneva Assembly of the League of Nations – The White Australia Policy’, Series 2, Folder 1, MS 882, 43-6, NLA.
Hughes’ actions against the clause were legitimate as a result. The National Labour Party, Hughes’ political supporters after the split of the Labor party, pointed out that the Prime Minister should be congratulated for his actions at Paris. At the second annual conference at Kalgoorlie in May of 1919 they praised Hughes for expressing to the world, with a great
sense of tact, that the reason the clause had to be blocked was not due to the inferiority of the Japanese in race but only in their labour.\textsuperscript{119}

Furthermore, Adam McCay, a prominent Journalist who severed as a the special commissioner for the Sydney \textit{Sun}, the Melbourne \textit{Herald} and the \textit{West Australian}, wrote a series of articles regarding the industrial conditions of Japan in relation to White Australia and the rejection of the racial equality amendment. McCay reassured his readers that the White Australia policy was ‘economic wisdom’ and that Australia’s role at Paris was not openly resented by the Japanese. While he conceded Japan was beyond a ‘feudal’ stage,\textsuperscript{120} and that the Japanese were asking for more industrial rights by the ‘gleam of twilight’ of a labour movement,\textsuperscript{121} he argued Japanese workmen were less able than their white counterparts. McCay also emphasised that Japan lacked unions and that some Japanese even admitted Japan’s factory conditions were ‘evil’.\textsuperscript{122}

Indeed McCay dedicated a whole article to the horrific conditions of Japanese girls working at factories. He decried the twelve hour days that the girls at a textile factory were made to work, pointing out how these young girls slept in the daylight hours as if they were ‘babies toiling through the midnight.’ Given this and the widespread child labour in Japanese industry he witnessed, McCay scoffed that while ‘Japan claims to worship the ideals of racial equality. In the labour clauses of the peace agreement at Paris there are ideas of human equality, which may be surely dubbed equally precious.’\textsuperscript{123}

However, it critical that this ideological position left McCay in an awkward position when asked by a Japanese parliamentarian to tell Australians:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} ‘N.L.P Conference’, \textit{Western Argus}, 6 May 1919, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Adam McCay, ‘Our Policy towards Japan: “White Australia” is Economic Wisdom’, \textit{West Australian}, 20 August 1919, pp. 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Adam McCay, ‘Labour’s Twilight in Japan’, \textit{The Advertiser}, 29 July 1919, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Adam McCay, ‘Our Policy towards Japan: “White Australia” is Economic Wisdom’, \textit{West Australian}, 20 August 1919, pp. 5-6.
\end{itemize}
“that the labour conditions of Japan will improve, and that when they are like those of Australia we hope that the, race question will not prevent them from entering Australia.”

McCay confessed to his readership that:

[He] hesitated to reply, but an English friend got us all out of trouble by remarking promptly:-

"When that day arrives there will be no need to make the request.” I don’t quite know what he meant, but it served.124

This example illustrates how using White Australia to justify blocking racial equality, to preserve labour conditions, was made much more complex when the rise of Japanese industrial standards was considered.

In fact, while McCay and groups like the NLP were convinced that the Japanese labour was inherently lower, hence justifying preserving White Australia by rejecting racial equality, others believed in, and even embraced, the improvement of Japanese labour standards. For example, the Australian media dedicated a great deal of attention to the statements of the former Bishop of North Queensland Dr. George Frodsham, at the time the Paris negotiations. At first Frodsham’s comments seem to reflect the views of Hughes and McCay as he had attested that ‘it was no insult to say that the Japanese could undersell us because of the conditions under which they live’ and that ‘unrestricted immigration would destroy the new-born ideals of a White Australia.’ Nevertheless, as reported in these articles, the ex-Bishop attested that he believed that said conditions ‘were not likely to continue indefinitely’.125

Frodsham had expanded on this view in an article he wrote for the British periodical The Nineteenth Century and After. Here he referred to the Australian fear of being swamped by inferior Asiatic coolies as something he did not personally believe in. He pointed out that it

was entirely possible for the industrial conditions of Japan to become more or less equal with those of Australia. In fact he maintained that when working conditions were equal ‘the Japanese can confidently expect that racial restriction [as enacted by Australia], which naturally galls a proud nation will be removed’.  

In the same vein, at least in the early stages of the Japanese application at Paris, the writers of the *Lone Hand*, an Australian political periodical, took a similarly ideological line. It was argued that while Australia appreciated Japan’s appeal to the League as an attempt to resolve racial difficulties, it could not be successful at that time due to ‘racial differences’ in labour standards. However, the journal resolved that these conditions were already changing in Japan, and while it may take several generations, it was believed that they would eventually disappear.

In fact evidence demonstrates how Australian commentators went further arguing that the reason for the policy’s enactment was the superior labour ability of the Japanese over whites, an opinion that was clearly divergent form Hughes’ and Eggleston’s. In a letter to the editor of the *West Australian* one Australian pointed out that the Japanese should see White Australia as a compliment. The Japanese, they argued, were feared because of the virtue of their thrift. They argued that, whereas a white worker would get his wage and would then waste it on the racecourse or the local publican, a Japanese man could work for half the same wage and save enough to become a ‘small capitalist’. Even the Australia Workers Union [AWU], which adamantly supported White Australia as a fundamental policy for working standards, also stressed the greater ability of Asiatic workers. A clear example of this is the trial that took place over the employment of Asians in the sugar growing industry, in which

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the Queensland AWU attempted to obtain a court ruling that harvesting should be performed by white labour. In the trial, which coincided with finalizing of events in Versailles, the Southern district secretary of the AWU, Frederic Martyn, gave evidence to support a ban on coloured workers to the effect that they could work hours with which no white man could compete. 130

This view had a sustained historical, political background. Willard pointed out that throughout the history of White Australia it was the virtues of the Japanese and Chinese, such as endurance, energy and adaptability, which made them dangerous and in the eyes of White Australia advocates. Given that they had a lower standard of living, the increased competitiveness was unfairly balanced in their favour over white workers. 131 Even former Attorney General and Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, indicated as much at the introduction of the 1901 immigration act. Deakin argued that it was the virtues of Asiatics, like Japan, that made them feared:

[The Asiatics’] inexhaustible energy, their power of applying themselves to new tasks, their endurance and their low standard of living that make them such competitors. 132

Indeed in terms of the pearling industry many Australians conceded that Japanese labour far more suitable than white labour. Meaney points out that, even though there were calls for the repatriation of Japanese divers at the establishment of the White Australia policy an exception was made due to the dependence of this industry on Japanese labour. 133 Furthermore, Willard pointed out that the pearl industry remained a necessary exception to White Australia. She referred to an experiment where nine European divers were brought to


133 Meaney, Towards a New Vision, p. 55
see how effective they were, as white labourers, in comparison to the Asiatic pearlers.

Willard explained that these divers were not as successful as their Asiatic counterparts and it was concluded that the industry should remain the same. This, she argued, was only strengthened by the fact that white Australians were unwilling and unsuited to do such risky work.¹³⁴

Australian socialist internationalists, who are often neglected due to their minority position,¹³⁵ were even more adamant in their recommendation of the Japanese worker. In her book The Japanese Labour Movement, written a few years after the Conference, Christian Jollie Smith, co-founder of the Communist Party of Australia,¹³⁶ appealed to Australian socialists not to disregard their Japanese comrades and brand them as unequals in race or labour. She emphasised that there were small but strong social democratic movements occurring in Japan which strove to improve the conditions of workers.¹³⁷ Pointing to their endurance, thirst for knowledge and keenness to fight industrial evils, she recommended that Australian labourers should make contact with these Japanese workers for their mutual benefit.¹³⁸ In response to the ideas that the Japanese in Australia were cheap workers she asked why Australians should not ‘welcome them into the unions and make their energy part of our struggle? A strike with such men as these in it should show few signs of collapse.’¹³⁹

Therefore, far from agreeing with Hughes’ statements about the inferiority of the Japanese as workers, the above examples show that a broad section of the Australian public considered the opposite to be true. Some believed that these conditions would not be the case for long

¹³⁴ Willard, A History of the White Australia Policy, pp. 186-7
¹³⁵ The only work the makes any particular mention of these groups in Lake and Reynolds, see Lake et al., Drawing the Global Colour Line, p. 159.
¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 7-14.
¹³⁹ Ibid, pp. 14-15
while others went so far as to argue that the Japanese worker was more effective than a white worker. Furthermore, even when these groups agreed with Australia’s actions in denying racial equality it is evident that they did not conceptualise the problems it brought to White Australia in the same way as Hughes or Eggleston. To many Australians the Japanese were “unequal” but they were not the inferior.

The problem of the “Empty North”: Ineffective White Labour

In fact one of the most controversial issues that surrounded Australia’s involvement in blocking the racial equality clause, which has almost universally neglected by the current literature on the clause, was one that dealt directly with the issue of the suitability of white labour versus coloured. This was the problem of the “Empty North”. The Empty North was the ideological and practical concern that the Northern or tropical regions of Australia were not being effectively used. That due to the small size of the white population that inhabited them, these areas had suffered from extensive labour shortages and had therefore been left underdeveloped.140 The following examples demonstrate that a diverse range of views existed around labour and White Australia at the time of the Conference because of this problem. Furthermore, it is evident that the solutions which were often advocated to resolve the Empty North, by some groups, were completely opposed to how Hughes had represented “Australia’s” view of White Australia in regards to the Japanese clause.

The concern of some Australians about the suitability of the white race to populate these tropical regions is evident from federation.141 Indeed in the first years of the newly federated state a speech by Dr. J. S. C. Elkington on this very topic was published as a government

140 This issue is also of great importance to defence concerns with the charge laid of ‘Ineffective occupation’. For an in depth discussion of the defence concerns and the empty please refer to the next chapter.
paper. Elkington, the chief health officer of Tasmania, reassured that the objections to the suitability of white workers in the North were not well founded. He concluded the only problem was of instilling ‘common sense’ into white Australians to adopt the necessary hygiene to prevent tropical disease and that, once people were educated in these matters, a white population could hold the North. This, he remarked, would be preferred to coloured labour given that White Australia was the ‘national pluck’. However, he conceded that if the difficulties were not overcome the ‘alternative of a coloured population is always feasible’ and that something must be done to prevent a ‘dog in the manger’ situation.  

In contrast, later studies concluded that the white race was not suited to work in the tropics at all. In their comprehensive study, released in May of 1919: ‘Tropical Australia and its Settlement’, Dr. A. Breinl and Dr. W. J. Young of the Australia Institute of Tropical Medicine related great difficulties in populating the North with whites. An article written by the journal following the report praised Breinl and Young for contributing to a much debated subject. White Australia, its writer argued, was dependent on whether whites were able to develop the North to a sufficient degree to justify the exclusion of Asiatics. Indeed, in reference to Breinl’s and Young’s theories that a form of neurasthenia developed in whites living in tropical areas, which led them to become less productive, the writer indicated that if conclusively proved this ‘must be regarded as a very serious detriment to the carrying through of the White Australia policy’. Breinl and Young were not outsiders in this conclusion as other doctors supported their research. Dr. F Antill Pockley, which was described by one Australian newspaper as having the ‘unanimous opinion of the members of

his profession, praised Breinl and Young’s research and lamented that Australia lacked what it needed most: coloured labour to populate the North.

Dr. D. Hastings Young also evidently agreed with these ideas which he conveyed in his work: *A White Australia: Is It Possible?* Young was convinced that the conditions of the North were completely unsuitable for the whites, describing it as an ‘established fact’. Referring to the arguments that white Australian’s could work in the Northern Territory given special garments and housing, Young argued that:

> The mere fact of the white man having to use every artificial means in his power, in order to exist in an artificial environment, should be in itself evidence that he is by nature unfitted to settle in a tropical climate. The black man, with his pigmented skin, can work under a tropical sun without any covering to his head, and will not suffer from either heat stroke of sun stroke; but his pale-faced white brother dare not take such liberties.

Young argued that the failure of the White Australia to populate the North had been economically detrimental to Australia as the North had not been developed. To make this point he referenced Bishop Gilbert White’s arguments: that the North could be used for increased mining development and cattle farms, and expanded upon them by pointing out that increased development meant more jobs for white Australians.

Young proposed the solution for these problems was that a colour line be drawn with Asiatics in the North and whites in the South of Australia. He advocated for the immigration of Indians in this solution as they belonged ‘to the same Empire’ and were ‘inured to a

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149 *Ibid*, pp. 20-1
150 *Ibid*, p. 49.
somewhat analogous climate to that of tropical Australia.\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, being equal imperial subjects, Young argued that the Indian immigrants had more knowledge of the British character than any other coloured peoples and indicated that any discrimination they received was unjustified due to their intelligence.\textsuperscript{152} Indeed Young did link these problems to Japan’s clause as he believed that only by having a coloured population to fill the North effectively could Australia face the claim Japanese could have made at the Conference that Japan should be allowed the territory white Australians could not use.\textsuperscript{153} Clearly in Young’s schema at least imperial Indian subjects were racial equal to whites and possibly even more effective than white workers in certain climates.

As the following sources show the arguments were not just limited to the scientific domain but were part of widespread discussion with contributors in both political and public spheres. For example, South Australian Premier, Henry Barwell, was convinced that the White Australia policy had not served the Northern territory. A few years after the events at Paris Barwell pointed out that indentured coloured labour would be required to populate the tropical regions of Australia.\textsuperscript{154} Therefore, he stated such labour should be allowed in certain areas with those leaving the area receiving punishment.\textsuperscript{155} He attested that anyone who had worked or lived in the North recognised the need for coloured labour since white labour had failed despite the amount of time it had had to develop. Barwell believed that the White Australia policy would have to be modified, especially given the world attention it had received. Indeed he argued that blind faith in White Australia had put Australia into a

\textsuperscript{151} In fact this view was not uncommon. For example noted British activist and writer Annie Besant was reported by the \textit{Mercury} as having commented that White Australia could not last and that Indian labour would be need to work in tropical climates, which would also contribute to Australia’s defence. Interestingly the author of the article pointed out that while they disagreed with her conclusion Besant’s views were ‘interesting’ and she was very ‘fair minded’: ‘Mrs Besant and White Australia’, \textit{The Mercury}, 3 October 1923, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{152} Young, \textit{White Australia: is it possible}, pp. 44-6.

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 46-7; Young goes further into this argument but as this view lends to defence, and is shared by others, it is expanded upon in the next chapter on defence.

\textsuperscript{154} ‘Asiatics for North’, \textit{The Argus}, 7 January 1922, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{155} ‘White Australia Policy: Mr Barwell Attacked’, \textit{The West Australian}, 8 March 1922, p. 7.
dangerous position since the world’s nations observed Australia and its ineffective use of resources more ‘than ever they have been in the past’. Barwell also linked this to the population problems of Japan were he noted it was ‘unreasonable of Australia to say that no one else shall develop this land when Japan is so close with her teeming population.’

Barwell’s assertions were not isolated either. Sir Edward Lucas the Agent General of South Australia indicated that there was, in the Australian community, ‘a wide divergence of opinion on the employment of coloured labour in the Northern Territory.’

An example of this view in the public domain is found in an article published in the *Mercury* in December of 1918 where it was openly stated that the author was in favour, not only of racial equality, but also Asiatic immigration to fill the North. Having received a cable which foreshadowed the Japanese clause, the author predicted that the Japanese demand would seriously challenge White Australia and that Australia would have little excuse to deny the Japanese request, since Britain would support Japan as an ally. Furthermore, it decried the ‘supercilious’ attitude that white workers were in some way superior to educated Asiatics, as ‘ridiculous’, ‘selfish’ and ‘impolite.’ It stated such a view was incredulous since the Japanese had been a good ally to Australia and had assisted in the war effort. In addition the writer mentioned the failure to settle the Empty North and stated that White Australia was mainly responsible for it. The writer claimed it to be ‘conclusive proved’ by science and history that white labour was not suitable to work in tropical climates. The writer therefore advocated for an allowance of an Asiatic settlement established in the North, which would not only provide

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158 ‘White Australia: Mr. Barwell Defended’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1922, p. 9; In fact Barwell’s statements caused a fair amount of debate with contributors such as the acting High Commissioner of the Commonwealth, Mr M. L. Sheppard and the former Home Secretary and Treasurer of Queensland Peter Airey also weighing in to debate: For Sheppard’s criticism and stanch advocating of White Australia see ‘The Northern Territory’, *The Mercury*, 9 January 1922, p. 6; For Airey’s divided opinion between ineffective white labourers and Barwell’s ‘radical’ solutions see ‘Barwell and the Brown Brother’, *Northern Standard*, 24 March 1922, p. 1.
the necessary concession in order to thank Japan but that efficient coloured labour could exploit the resources of the North for the good of the nation.\textsuperscript{159}

In fact, evidence demonstrates that this was a common view for Australians of the North. On his return from a trip to the North Mr. J. T. Davies, secretary of the West Australian Brick and Pottery Union,\textsuperscript{160} was interviewed by the \textit{West Australian} about the development of Australia’s tropics. Davies expressed that he was shocked that he could not find sympathy with his view on White Australia. He related that many in the North were not opposed to indentured Asiatic immigration as a means of developing the North.\textsuperscript{161} Similarly a letter signed ‘Old Territorian’ published in the Adelaide \textit{Advertiser} claimed that White Australia had limited the North’s development and unless ‘suitable cheap labour’ was allowed to enter ‘it would remain undeveloped till the end of time.’\textsuperscript{162} Once again a Mr J Egerton-Warburton, who the media noted as a Territorian with the ‘authority of 28 years experience’, rejected White Australia as he believed it had left the North underdeveloped. Egerton-Warburton claimed that he held the views common to many settlers in the North and the administration of the North had been unpopular for considerable amount of time due to the lack of development.\textsuperscript{163}

Even those who were not convinced by such arguments still recognised the controversy of the “Empty North” and linked it to the sustained discussion over the rejection of the racial equality clause. Eggleston coupled the problem of the Empty North to the controversy surrounding Australia’s opposition to the proposal. Here he hoped to reassure his readers that whites could indeed populate the tropical areas. However, in an unedited draft of the \textit{Colour Bar} memo he noted that although white Australians had managed to colonise Australia in a

\textsuperscript{159} ‘Australia and Eastern Races’, \textit{The Mercury}, 2 December 1918, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{160} ‘Brick and Pottery Workers’, \textit{The West Australian}, 6 February 1924, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{162} ‘Developing the Territory’, \textit{The Advertiser}, 7 April 1920, p. 10.
satisfactory manner, the failure to settle the Northern Territory and exploit it economically was the ‘main issue outstanding’ of White Australia. Again while not in the final draft it is notable that he even wrote that White Australia was probably ‘contrary to the economic interest of the present generation of Australian workers.’

It is noted that both this quote and the previous were removed from the final draft of the memo, however it is believed that despite this they still give adequate insight into Eggleston’s thoughts and the controversies that he believed Australia had to deal with; ‘Australia and the Colour Bar’, Eggleston Papers, Series 6, Folder 2, Box 4, MS.423, 139, NLA.
Chapter Three: Defence

Defence too was a major theme in the Australian debate over the denial of racial equality and the development of the Australian nation. The ideology of self determinism, which served as the foundation for the new international order of which the League was the framework, established the nation as both a progressive and sovereign unit. Hence, whether or not a nation could remain a sovereign unit was pivotal to its legitimacy. This chapter will demonstrate that much like labour, defence was a key concern in discussions over the racial equality proposal since it was perceived as a threat to White Australia. It is shown how the current historiography demonstrates that the Australian public believed White Australia had to be maintained to preserve sovereignty. Indeed evidence does indeed show that, since it prevented unrestricted immigration of, possibly hostile, Asiatic nationals into Australia, Australians often advocated White Australia as a preventative measure to racial conflict or even invasion by an Asiatic enemy. Nevertheless this thesis will also focus on the often neglected sections of the Australian public who questioned whether White Australia was in fact the best way of guaranteeing defence, especially in relation to the proposal. That, in fact, White Australia was seen as problematic to maintaining sovereignty as a possible contributor to the problem of the Empty North and an insult to a militaristic Japan. The examples in this section illustrate the dissenting voices of many Australians who insisted on a more sombre and wise approach to the clause, White Australia and international relations in general. Australia, it was often proposed, should use diplomacy and concession in regards to White Australia to guarantee defence relations and avoid insulting Japan as Hughes had done.

The Japanese Menace: The Yellow Peril

At the time of the Peace Conference and in the decade or so after it paranoia swelled that Australia could be invaded by Japan, the nation who came to represent the growing strength
of an Asiatic menace. Sir Charles Henry Pearson, an English-born Australian liberal academic, contributed greatly to the growing fear of Asiatic races by establishing an intellectual framework where Eastern states were seen as rising in power. Pearson promoted this notion in his 1892 book: *National Life and Character: a Forecast*. As Lake and Reynolds show this work had a great impact because it challenged the dominant imperial doctrine of white race superiority.\(^{165}\) That contrary to the popular belief of Asiatic subservience to whites, Pearson had stressed that these Eastern peoples could in fact obtain independence as nation states and ‘thrust aside’ the Anglo-Saxon powers.\(^{166}\)

Furthermore Pearson’s work had a substantial effect in shaping White Australia. Australia’s first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, quoted from *National Life* at the establishment of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act as a justification for the policy. Barton embraced Pearson as a great intellectual and made particular reference to Pearson’s statements on the threat of the rising Asiatic nations when introducing the policy. Therefore, as Lake and Reynolds persuasively argue, White Australia had been formulated as a system where Australia proclaimed its white national identity as progressive and hence sought to protect it to counter the threat of the Eastern races.\(^{167}\)

The Japanese menace became more foreboding after Japan’s victory in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war. The war had begun over conflicting territorial interests in the Korean peninsula between Japan and Russia. After a series of successful battles the Japanese took the fortifications at Port Arthur (Shantung) and the Russian forces conceded defeat. This result was unprecedented as it was the first time in history that an Asiatic nation had won over a white power. Indeed it sent shockwaves all over the Western world since many Western

\(^{165}\) It should be noted that is was long after the publication of this book the Pearson passed away, Lake et al., *Drawing the Global Colour line*, p. 76.

\(^{166}\) *Ibid*, p. 75; Meaney, *Towards a New Vision*, pp. 16-17.

\(^{167}\) Lake et al., *Drawing the Global Colour line*, pp. 138-9.
leaders and political figures, including Australians, believed in the continuance of white world dominance.\textsuperscript{168} Japan, in this act of military success, believed it was established as a “great power” of the world with equal status and civilisation to that of the Western powers.\textsuperscript{169} This unprecedented victory meant that Australians now envisaged Japan as a Pacific enemy that had proven it was capable against the white powers of the world which had an advanced military capacity.

It is plain to see that these security fears were prevalent in Australia at the time of the Peace Conference and the years immediately following. Racial equality was seen as both an external and internal threat. The former related to the fear that a growing militant Japan may look to Australia to relieve its resource and population pressures; the Japanese amendment threatened unlimited immigration and could allow mass immigration of Japanese to the South Pacific islands where military bases for invasion could be established. This anxiety is exposed in a report prepared for Joseph Cook, Australian delegate to the Peace Conference and minister of the Navy, by Latham. The report deals with the mandatory system of the ex-German Pacific islands and namely how important obtaining a mandate was in terms of Australian security. Latham expresses the serious question for the Australian delegation was whether the nation holding the mandate could exert its existing immigration restriction laws on the territory mandated to it. Latham believed this was paramount since without any guarantee of maintaining these restrictions a large Japanese population could move south to these islands where upon he feared that ‘an “incident” might occur which would have the ‘gravest results.’\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid, pp. 166.
\textsuperscript{169} Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality, p. 96-7; Beasley, Modern History of Japan, pp. 172-3.
\textsuperscript{170} John Latham to Joseph Cook, ‘Mandatory System and The German Pacific Islands’, 21 July 1919, Cook Papers, Folder 1, MS.762, NLA.
The latter fear was that of internal racial conflict stemming from the co-interaction of two completely alien races. An article in the July edition of *The Bulletin* presents this fear as justification for Australia’s actions at Paris. The writer argues that if immigration restriction laws were broken down, as would occur with the acceptance of the Japanese amendment, it would mean Australia would become weak with racial conflict, fall to bolshevism and be left open to attack. The reporter stated that the completely alien living conditions of the Japanese could not possibly meld with an Australian way of life and conflict would occur. In fact using Broome as an example, it was claimed that such conflict had already resulted from this difference and a breakdown of White Australia would mean that conditions would be degraded to such a degree that a Bolshevist revolution was bound to follow.

Even Hughes; political opponents in the labour party shared this fear. Labor Premier of Queensland, Thomas Ryan, criticised Hughes for not doing enough to protect White Australia and Australia’s security, claiming that Hughes had allowed Japan to mandate the North Pacific islands and move closer to Australia. Some members of the Labor party, going against party policy, even agreed with Hughes’ calls for conscription since conscription was seen as a way to defend against Japan. At the New South Wales Labor conference of 1919, when Mr P. Brookfield set forth a motion that the delegates to the interstate Labor conference advocate for an elimination of the compulsory defence act he was met with staunch opposition by Mr Albert Gardiner and Mr James Catts. Gardiner argued that due to the Japanese ambition to dominate the South Pacific, Australia would have to be ready to fight to sustain a White Australia. Likewise Catts, who believed that Japan had designs on

171 Brookme, the author indicated, was the largest settlement of Japanese in Australia at the time.
174 ‘‘White Australia” and Other Matters’, *The Register*, 16 June 1919, p. 4.
Australia, pointed out that Brookfield had not offered any alternative for defence and that Australia could not depend on the British Navy.

“Empty North”: The Charge of Ineffectual Occupation

It is therefore evident throughout the aforementioned sources that many Australians who feared the Japanese advocated for staunch adherence to the White Australia policy to guarantee Australian security. However, as demonstrated by the following examples, many groups who held the same concerns about defence advocated against a hard-line approach to the White Australia policy. That either by their own advocating or by their reflection on the assertions of commentators on the situation, Australians recognised the problem of the Empty North was as much a concern for defence as it was for labour. These sources show how many Australians were convinced that unwavering support for a White Australia, whether it meant not allowing some Japanese or coloured workers or even “undesirable” whites, actually threatened Australia’s security. Australia was placed in a dangerous position by being the “dog in the manger”.

Australian medical professional Dr Hastings Young who, as previously mentioned, had argued the impossibility of maintaining White Australia as white labour was not effective in tropical regions, directly tied this to defence concerns and the Japanese situation. Young argued the White Australia policy had simply hampered populating the North and a staunch adherence to it only served to insult Japan and threaten Australian security. Referring to the need of the Japanese to find land to send their excess population, he questioned Australia’s right to have a completely white workforce:

This superabundant and increasing population must eventually seek elbow room in other lands and
could we blame a virile, warlike, proud people, such as the Japanese, if they were to cast longing eyes
upon a vast stretch of unoccupied country, which we possess and fail to make satisfactory use of? 177

Young connected these problems to the actions of Hughes and the Australian delegation at
the Peace Conference, expressing that these were ‘reported to have given great offence to the
Japanese delegates’. He pointed out that Australia had been lucky, since, without their
‘characteristically gentlemanly deportment’, the Japanese delegates could have responded
with a challenge, based on ‘moral right’, to Australian territory with the charge of ineffectual
occupation. Young stressed that to deny entry to Indians as imperial subjects was not only
‘selfish’ but also ‘illogical’ given that they could fill the North and create a defensive barrier
of populace to the ‘menace of the Eastern nations’. 178

Likewise, the Bishop of Willochra, Reverend Gilbert White, who stood as a frequent
commentator on the problem of the Empty North, 179 stressed the seriousness of the issue in
terms of the Japanese threat. In his opinion Australians could no longer deny that projects
designed to encourage white settlement had failed in the tropics; a dangerous position given
the rise of Eastern nations such as Japan and China. In an article to the Sydney Morning
Herald he reminded his readers that Australia lacked defence and that the League of Nations
did not sympathise with Australia’s ‘dog-in-the-manger policy’. He therefore personally
advocated that the colour line to be drawn be between the North and South of Australia. 180

Although he had previously conceded that such a policy would be unpopular, 181 White

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177 Young, White Australia: is it Possible?, p. 4.
178 Ibid, pp.46-7
179 Indeed White had written a whole book dedicated to discussion of various problems of Tropical Australia
including: the lack of development in the Northern Territory: Gilbert White, Thirty Years in Tropical Australia,
(London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1918), pp. 95-103, the unsuitability of whites in the
pearling industry: pp. 50-65, and the problems of a ‘purely selfish’ advocating of White Australia, which kept
Australia under populated: pp. 253-62.
181 In his book on tropical Australia White pointed out that it would probably be rejected by four-fifths of
Australians: White, Thirty Years, p. 256.
expressed that it would be much better for Australian to adapt a system where it could regulate a coloured workforce, as opposed to a situation where an Asiatic nation would challenge Australia’s right to its territory and simply take the North by invasion.182

Even as the dealings of Paris proceeded, Australian popular media linked issues of an “Empty North” and the Japanese alleged desire to expand, to the adoption of the clause. The monthly periodical the *Lone Hand* offers a pertinent example of this. The articles of the *Lone Hand*, which as previously mentioned, had in the early developments of the conference recognised the progress and legitimate desire of the Japanese, changed to a tone of fear headlining by the problem of the Empty North. In an article dated for the 7 April 1919 and titled ‘The Problem of the North’ the magazine feared that no Australian statesmen, including Hughes, had understood the gravity of the issue and could stand up to the charge of “Ineffectual Occupation” which the ‘court of nations’ could level at Australia.183 The article of the next month entitled ‘Our Fighting Frontier’ went further by stressing that an inherent danger was lurking by the name of “Ineffective Occupation”. The author reminded readers that the British Empire had used the term to justify the taking of lands from native peoples so unless Australian leaders were prepared to pay to occupy the North, Australia would be forfeited to Asiatics like Japan.184 In fact while editors of the *Lone Hand* were clearly not in favour of any form of Asiatic immigration to solve these problems, one article reported that a certain Melbourne paper had gone to the extreme of suggesting Asiatic immigration. Therefore, it was stressed that Australian statesmen had to act to secure the North in order to stop the development of such radical solutions.185

183 ‘The Problem of the North’, *The Lone Hand*, vol. 9, no. 4, 7 April 1919, p. 6.
184 ‘Our Fighting Frontier’, *The Lone Hand*, vol 9, no. 5, 10 May 1919, p. 7.
185 ‘Quo Vardis’, *The Lone Hand*, vol. 9, no. 6, 16 June 1919, pp. 5-6.
These problems gained imperial recognition as the opinions of foreign intellectuals were widely discussed and reflected upon by the Australian public and media, convincing Australian’s of the urgent need to solve the problems of the North. Commentators from Britain were especially interested in this issue as they saw it as not just a problem for Australia but one in which the integrity of the whole empire was involved. In an effort to convey these concerns to an Australian audience, imperial commentators often travelled to Australia. One, the respected imperial traveller Lieut. Colonel Eldred Pottinger, visited several years after the conference in order to conduct a review of Australian defences and give a lecture at Hobart about the need for defence. The press indicated that while Pottinger was well received as an advocate for the White Australian policy he had also pressed that Australia needed to populate with a greater white populace to justify such a policy.186

Pottinger released a book on this very subject: *Asiatic Problems Affecting Australia*, which was published in Melbourne in 1928, in order to drive the defence message home, that the brash diplomacy of Australia, without a filled North, had insulted Japan and continued to threaten defence. In the book Pottinger represented Japan as justified in calming racial equality as it only wished to be treated as an equal great nation of the world. He indicated that due to the problems that stem from having a large populace, Japan had a genuine need to encourage emigration and that by remaining unpopulated Australia’s security in jeopardy. Furthermore, by taking such a staunch position as they had done at the League, Pottinger pointed out that the Dominions, including Australia, had forced Japan into a position where it believed that its ‘legitimate national aspirations’ were being ‘thwarted’ . Indeed, he argued, as no nation had given ‘advice’ on how to solve its problems Japan would take its ‘own course, even if it meant war.’ He stressed that the negative position the Dominions had advocated, that immigration was simply a domestic issue, was not longer viable. Indeed he hoped that

the staunch stance of Dominions of the Pacific would be dealt with by the next Imperial conference and suggested that Australia think about how its representative would approach this question given its importance.\textsuperscript{187} The book was well received by the Australian press in that the \textit{Portland Guardian} stated that Pottinger's argument was ‘unshakable’, his reason ‘measured’ and his case ‘unanswerable’ while the \textit{Register} claimed it was a ‘book that every Australian should read.’\textsuperscript{188}

Likewise, after visiting Australia, British imperial traveller Fleetwood Chidell released a book entitled \textit{Australia: White or Yellow}, which questioned the advantages of White Australia, given how unpopular the ideal was internationally. Chidell argued that the Japanese proposal had been a missed opportunity where future conflict could have been avoided since the amendment would have forbidden ‘all un-called-for harshness in discrimination of colour.’\textsuperscript{189} He implored Australians to recognise that the build-up of the Japanese military, coupled with its need to send its excess population to the less populated lands of the world, like Australia, meant that conflict between Australia and Japan would be inevitable if White Australia was maintained.\textsuperscript{190} Chidell proposed that the tropical section of Australia, where he argued a coloured worker was far superior to his white counterpart, should be reserved for coloured settlement. This, he attested, would not only allay any negative feeling that the Japanese, or any other coloured nation felt towards Australia, but that increased productivity from exploiting the North would also mean more capital to build up aerial and naval defences.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{187} Eldred Pottinger, \textit{Asiatic Problems Affecting Australia}, (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1928), pp. 21-24, 62-8, 70.
\textsuperscript{189} Fleetwood Chidell, \textit{Australia White or Yellow?}, (London: William Heinemann, 1926), p. 121; It should be noted however that Chidell did not believe in the natural equality of races due to different racial characteristics.
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 118-119, 127-43.
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 127-58.
It is not hard to imagine how such a work inspired much discussion in Australia as it directly challenged White Australia. Indeed many Australian newspapers were openly cynical of Chidell’s arguments. The *Advertiser* reported that the book was an attempt to scare Australians into abandoning their policy. It was pointed out a concession in the form of a section of the North, as Chidell advocated, would do little to alleviate Japanese resentment as Japan would still want racial equality. This, it was argued, Australia could not agree to as it jeopardised the ideal of a nation controlling its own racial composition. Furthermore it doubted that Japanese hostility to Australia, claiming that any demand of territory made by Japan would be ‘unreasonable’.¹⁹²

However, while other newspapers were also critical of Chidell’s proposals they conceded on his point on the need to populate the North in terms of the Japanese menace. For example, an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that while many Australian’s would see Chidell as greatly exaggerating the danger from Japan, Chidell’s essential reasoning was sound and that Australia would leave itself open to a foreign challenge if it did not fill its unoccupied regions.¹⁹³ Similarly, a book review in the *West Australian* expressed that while Chidell’s proposal of a coloured settlement was impractical and would lead to racial conflict, his work was a ‘sober review’ of Australia’s dangerous position and served as a wakeup call to those of a ‘parochial mind’ who did not see the necessity for extensive immigration. It claimed that unless this could be achieved somehow the morality of White Australia would come into question.¹⁹⁴

That Chidell’s work impressed on to public minds is obvious when the statements of Reverend Canon Garland of Brisbane are reviewed. Garland, the *Brisbane Courier* reported, had given a speech to the Church of England Men’s Society where he referred to Chidell’s

¹⁹² “*Australia White or Yellow*”, *The Advertiser*, 6 December 1926, p. 8.
¹⁹³ ‘*A White Australia*,’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1927, p. 11.
book stating that any Australian who had read it could no longer be apathetic to the danger that Australia faced due to the ineffective occupation of the North. Garland pointed out that had the 1925 protocol of Geneva been passed White Australia policy would have ceased to exist as it already insulted Japan and China. Garland made particular reference to the comments of a Japanese professor, to show how Japan felt especially slighted by the fact that Australia blocked their immigration as white Australians had not been able to populate the North. He therefore advanced the point that Australia was in desperate need of white immigration, even if unsuitable, and concluded that White Australia was not guaranteed since, using the statements of a Chinese consul, the Aboriginals had lost their rights to the land since they had not effectively used it.

**Abusing an Ally: Calling for War, Preparing for Peace**

Even beyond the problems of the Empty North it is evident from the following examples that some Australians were concerned that Australia had antagonised a nation that could potentially be a great ally and friend. Indeed criticism formed that, by Australian actions at the Conference of not making some sort of concession and without taking any defence measures, Australia had simply insulted Japan and endangered its security. This concern was only further exasperated by Hughes’ very brash affirmation of the White Australia policy at the conference and the period following.

Major. Piesse stands out as a personality who exemplified this view. Piesse was at odds with Hughes because he believed that Japan could only become a threat to Australia if insulted. Hence he advocated that a concession be made to Japan in terms of immigration and racial

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195 Garland claims the article was a declaration that if a nation committed a domestic act which offended another that action could be adjudicated on by the League and the nation would be forced to overturn it.

equality. For instance, in the previously mentioned memo, where Piesse had defended his
department in light of Senator Millen’s criticisms, he questioned White Australia’s ability to
guarantee defence. Piesse stated that while he was for a White Australia in terms of
protecting labour, he was against the way the policy was enforced to stop the internal conflict
of races as this point was hard to justify without resorting to racial discrimination. Referring
to the events of Paris, Piesse pointed out that the denial of racial equality had left Hughes
with a reputation in Japan, equivalent to that of the British view of Kaiser Wilhelm.
Moreover he claimed that if restrictions that were purely racially discriminatory were not
removed, Australia would struggle to justify White Australia to the international community.
He further questioned the worth of not making concessions since he believed that the
inevitable result of insulting Japan would be war.197 In fact, as Meany shows, Piesse wrote a
series of reports at the time of the Conference in which he advocated for modifications to
White Australia in order to prevent an Australian-Japanese conflict. In these he indicated that
the Hughes’ attitude at the Conference caused a disservice to Australia as it gave more
excuses for Japan to become militant.198

In fact sixteen years after the Conference Piesse was adamant that Australian abuses towards
Japan had caused, and were still causing at that point, troubles for Australian defence. In a
pamphlet entitled *Japan and the Defence of Australia* Piesse, via the alias of ‘Albatross’,
highlighted the threat that a militant Japan caused for Australia since the Japanese military
had a large influence on the government.199 Piesse argued that Japan had no ‘major interest’
in Australia and the only point of antagonism between the nations was White Australia.
Piesse maintained that Japan saw White Australia as an insult; it seemingly brandishing the

197 Piesse, Memo to Prime Minister ‘Papers Prepared in the Pacific Branch’, Series 2, MS 882, 44, NLA.
16-7.
Japanese as inferior in race.\textsuperscript{200} He attested that any Australian who believed that White Australia caused no tension in Japan need only refer to English versions of Japanese newspaper articles around the denial of the racial equality clause to find evidence to the contrary. Indeed for Piesse the actions of Hughes at Paris had nearly caused ‘a storm of fury in Japan against Australia.’\textsuperscript{201}

Taking this further, imperial traveller and author Oliver Bainbridge travelled to Australia in an attempt to convince that Japan was an ally not an enemy. Bainbridge was invited by the Empire Literature Society of Sydney to present a speech on the position of Japan as an ally to Australia and the Empire. He attested that Japan had been a great friend to the allies during the war, having stood by Britain with no direct obligation to do so, and its claims at the League were in no way ‘unreasonable’. Bainbridge explained Japan’s territorial demands as only a demand to open up Japan’s commercial opportunities. Furthermore, he argued that the racial equality clause was not something Japan took seriously, only an obliged action, and Japan’s real intention was towards commercial enterprise which would not interfere with Australia’s domestic concerns.\textsuperscript{202} He dismissed the idea that Japan looked to Australia’s resources as ‘illogical’ given that Japan already had easy access to resources in the continent of Asia.\textsuperscript{203} Therefore, it should come as no surprise that in using the words used of William Watt, who stood as acting Prime Minister when Hughes was at Paris, Bainbridge encouraged Australia to ‘cherish the friendship of Japan.’\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid, pp. 17-21.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid, pp. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{202} Oliver Bainbridge, Our Ally Japan, address by Oliver Bainbridge to Members of the Empire Literature Society, 20th June 1919, (Sydney: Vale and Pearson, 1919), pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid, p. 12
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid, p. 10; In fact, as Meaney demonstrate, Watt too was concerned that Hughes had insulted the Japanese with his undiplomatic methods and therefore he felt it necessary to make a speech on Empire day where he stressed the need for Australians to recognise Japan as a friend (where Bainbridge’s quote is sourced): Meaney, Australia and World Crisis, pp. 373-7.
Although Bainbridge was a foreign commentator, evidence shows that Australians did reflect on his statements and agreed with his concerns and assertions about the need to remain friendly with Japan. The president of the Sydney Branch of the Empire Literature Society, the Honourable G. F. Earp, praised Bainbridge’s speech as ‘facts which have been so delightfully presented’. In relating why he had allowed Bainbridge to give this speech Earp pointed out that he agreed with Bainbridge in that Japan was a great ally and friend and that he saw no threat from Japan in terms of preserving White Australia:

\[\text{[Japan’s]}\text{ policy with regard to White Australia does not run counter to ours, but fits with it, for Japan does not encourage emigration of her people to Australia, and, in fact, refuses passports to her labourers for such a purpose}\]^{205}

In much the same vein the Reverend Lewis Radford, the Bishop of Goulburn^{206}, also praised Bainbridge for his comments. After pointing out how it was clear that Japan was an advancing nation, making particular reference to its technological achievements, Radford emphasised that a future of friendship between Australia and Japan. Although he admitted that international troubles existed between the nations he argued that these were not unsolvable. In fact he argued the any issue that arose could be overcome as long as both Japan and Australia ‘played the game.’^{207} These views are evidently removed from Hughes’ actions at the Peace Conference since, as indicated previously, it was clear that Hughes was very much convinced that Japan wished to challenge White Australia and was already the lurking enemy of the north.

Furthermore evidence from public media sources show how some Australians saw little good coming out of Australia’s denial of racial equality in that it needlessly insulted the Japanese.

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205 G. F. Earp in Bainbridge, Our Ally Japan, p. 46.
207 Radford in Bainbridge, Our ally Japan, p. 46.
Dr Monroe Anderson, a self-confessed former prejudiced Australian, related to the *Register* that after a trip to Japan he realised that Australia was greatly mistaken in its fear of the Japanese. Anderson admitted that in his opinion vast immigration of the Japanese to Australia was not acceptable as he believed racial mixing brought out undesirable racial characteristics. However, he argued that this was not the contention of the Japanese at Paris. The Japanese, he stated, were hurt only by the fact that racial equality had been denied for them and had little wish to migrate in mass to Australia instead preferring to go to Korea or Siberia. He attested that the case was, as one Japanese man related to him, that the denial of race equality had led the Japanese to believe they would be overtly discriminated against in Australia. This led Anderson to challenge such discrimination as he questioned why the educated Japanese students, travellers or any ‘decent’ Japanese ‘fellow’ should be denied entry.\(^{208}\) Anderson therefore stands as clear example of an Australian that believed that the Japanese were not deserving of any overt discrimination which the denial of racial equality may have caused.

Anderson did not leave the public eye either. In the following year the *Sydney Morning Herald* once again reported Anderson’s comments after his return from another trip to Japan. Here it is evident that Anderson had become more concerned about Australia’s defence. He referred mainly to the contradictory position of Australians who continued to claim that war with Japan was inevitable while relying on the security of a peaceful relationship. He presented the comments of the Mayor of Tokyo Baron Goto, who Anderson believed was quite likely to become prime minister of Japan, where the Baron indicated that Australia should rely on the League to protect its national aspirations. Anderson urged Australians to recognise that Japan had suffered too much abuse by those Australians who had insulted Japan declaring that they did so to protect a White Australia. The Empty North also featured in his argument where he belittled the catch cry of fighting Japan to the last man since it was

an idle threat given Australia was empty due to White Australia. Anderson attested that whether or not Australians did exclude the Japanese from entry, their actions should be performed as to not offend Japan as had been done. In sum he expressed dismay that even if he was wrong, and Japan did have malicious intentions towards Australia, Australia lacked defence and therefore the position of insulting Japan was the equivalent of committing Harakiri, Japanese ritual suicide.209

As an example of a prominent academic and historian who held these views, Harold Lark Harris, argued that the position Australia had taken at Paris of no concessions would have to be altered if Australia did not wish to offend Japan.210 Writing in The Australian Highway the journal of the Workers' Educational Association of Australia at the time of the Conference Harris pointed out that the events of the Conference had substantially increased Australia’s international responsibilities. For example, he explained, that if the ex-German South Pacific islands had been annexed as Hughes had wanted, Japan would have been granted the Northern islands to build fortifications on and tension would have manifested between the nations. Indeed he applauded the decision the League had made in regards to mandates as it would enable Australia to protect a White Australia and also meant that the League was responsible for their defence so Australian security was further guaranteed. However, he sensed that antagonism had been created with Japan by the denial of racial equality and he felt goodwill could only be acquired if the White Australia policy was modified to accommodate the Japanese and secure Australia. Although a believer in the benefits of a White Australia Harris believed the dictation test system was flawed:

209 ‘Japan, Misunderstood in the Commonwealth, Dr Anderson’s Impressions’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May 1921, p. 8.
We must find a way, if a way can be found, of avoiding the many serious social problems which follow upon the settlement of large numbers of those who, because they are members of a backward race, or because they come from the lowest station of race with very different ideals and customs from our own, endanger our social and economic well being; and we must do this without arousing the resentment of the whole race whose members are excluded. Applying this to the Japanese we may say that we should not seek to exclude the Japanese as Japanese, but only to exclude the Japanese of the lowest class. In other words the test applied to all would be migrants should be a real education test-not a dictation test, which is no test, but merely a means of cloaking our discrimination between races.211

Indeed the opinions of those who attended the Woman’s Political Association’s debate on the White Australia and the denial of racial equality, show how these concerns over insulting Japan were even prevalent in whole organisations. The Woman Voter, an internationalist periodical, reported that the topic was one of great substance by generating a debate that surrounded the internationalist ideas of universal peace, (as opposed to fears of capitalist exploitation of cheap labour), of a socialist agenda. At the debate several speakers supported the racial equality clause and went against a White Australia, arguing acceptance was a step towards morality and peace. A Mrs Paling stated that she was ‘against the White Australia policy, because the ‘arming of brothers against each other is the only way it can be preserved’. Similarly, a Mrs Singleton pointed out that Japanese clause was about equality not immigration, while a Miss Fullerton related her dismay that despite receiving Japanese help in the War ‘now Mr Hughes insults her in Paris.’212 Indeed these speakers and other Australians such as Anderson and Harris reflected an attitude that was far removed from that which Hughes had stressed at the Peace Conference but just as forcefully advocated with Australia’s best interest, as a nation, in mind; racial equality was not a clear threat to the Australians but insulting Japan was.

212 ‘White Australia Convention’, Woman Voter, 3 July 1919, p. 3.
Conclusion

The significance of the Paris Peace Conference in the politics of the world’s nations meant that the effects of actions taken at Versailles and their importance continued for both Australia and the whole of the international community. As a pivotal international event the proposal of the Japanese racial equality clause and its subsequent denial are exemplary of this. The history of the amendments rejection speaks volumes of how internationalism and the nation were defined at Versailles and in Australia. No matter how noble the clause seemed as a principle of equality, which would allow the cohesion of an international community, it was still the nation, with its sovereignty and its right to progress into a democracy, which should dictate the internationalism of the League.

Indeed as Willard pointed out it was this understanding of the nation which had led to the Australia’s general endorsement of the White Australia policy at the Conference. For Willard, Australian saw White Australia was a counter measure to unrestricted immigration. Such immigration, she attested, would leave Australia ‘with all the evils and dangers of a racial division in her community’ and might ‘prevent the growth of democracy’.213 Willard argued that the ‘trend of world ideas’ was behind Australia’s position. The sense of nationality that had developed around the world, she pointed out, was in line with Australia’s claims to a White Australia given the repeated admission of the international community to the rights self-determination.214 Hughes too had recognised that, even before it began, that the Conference was ultimately a meeting where the right to self-government would be a major issue:

Are we as Australians to come out of the Peace Conference shorn of some of our powers of self-government? ... If we as a nation emerge from that Conference with any of our rights impaired, or fall

214 Ibid, p. 207.
short of any of those things for which we have fought, we shall deserve any fate that comes upon us.

For Hughes the “great heritage” of White Australia represented the ultimate right of self-government; it indicated the right to choose what types of people made up a nation.

However, while it is evident that White Australia was the method that many endorsed for the project of forming Australia into a progressive self-governed nation, the story of the racial equality clause indicates the complexity of using such a method for forming the nation. Evidence shows that many Australians, diverse but fragmented groups and individuals, challenged an unwavering view of White Australia because it was seen counter to forming a democratic, self-determined nation. Socialists, internationalists, medical and scientific figures, politicians, academics, members of the public service, informed men of the empire and bishops were all among those who continued to question how White Australia should work and whether it was the best way to guarantee Australian nationhood. These commentators looked at the episode of the clause and, for more than a decade after the blocking of Japan’s amendment, played their part in sustaining the debate over the ideal of White Australia and the realities of becoming an international participant. They advocated for forming the same progressive institutions to further democratic nationhood, such as labour and economic standards, and the necessity to guarantee sovereignty by the defence of the nation’s borders, as Hughes had done but to justify opinions that were completely removed from his.

This raises the question of why the Japanese racial equality clause inspired such discussion in regards to Australia’s quest to become a self-determined nation and White Australia. The answer lies in the development of Japan and Japanese nationality. It must be remembered that the story of the racial equality is also the story of both Australian and Japanese nationalism.

215 The italics are my emphasis: ““Germany Must Pay”: Mr Hughes on the Terms of Peace’, The Times, 10 January 1919, p. 6.
Japan had developed rapidly in the last half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In this short timeframe it was perceived to have evolved from a secluded, feudal country to a technologically advanced and militarily capable nation. Japan had won over Russia, a white power, and had secured the position of a “great power”; At Paris and in the League Japan was considered to be the only non-Anglo Saxon power.\footnote{Lake et al. Drawing the Global Colour Line, pp. 284-85.} The clause was a Japanese declaration that, despite race, it was equal with the Western powers. Indeed when the clause was spoken of it was rarely discussed outside of being Japan’s national aspiration.

Why Japanese nationalism caused discussion over White Australia was simply because it clashed with aspects of that ideal and therefore raised doubt over the exclusionist policy. As demonstrated by the \textit{Round Table} article of March 1921, White Australia was problematic in that if it should be recognised as a justified national aspiration on what grounds did Australia have in squashing Japan’s legitimate national calls for racial equality or Japan’s right to relieve its excess population?\footnote{‘A White Australia’, The \textit{Round Table}, March 1921, pp. 332-3.}

Japan’s national progress meant that traditional notions of the superiority of the white workers and white nations were challenged. Sections of the Australian public an unwavering affirmation of White Australia might cause a breakdown labour and defence conditions which they believed guaranteed Australian nationalism. These individuals were hence inclined to abandon a hard-line view of the policy or questioned the complete negativity against the claim of racial equality.

As demonstrated, the racial equality proposal had inspired sections of Australians, almost always neglected in the histories of the episode, to questions hard-line views on White Australia. How could Australia claim progressive labour standards if its “superior” white workers did not and possibly could not, populate and effectively work in the tropical areas of
Australia? How could sovereignty be maintained if Australia was unwilling to take necessary measures to populate the land, exploit its vast resources and avert the eyes of a land hungry Japan? Had the Japanese not proven that they strove for industrial progress by the creation of labour movements? If their conditions did improve on what grounds could Australians exclude them? If Australia continued insult Japan, which was a friend and ally, by its lack of concession and diplomatic tact did it not risk turning Japan into an enemy and security threat? These questions, among others, were asked to determine how, and sometimes even if, White Australia could address the problems of progression and self-determination inherent in the formation of an early twentieth century nation.

Indeed it can be concluded that the questions surrounding White Australia continued for more than a decade after the Paris Peace Conference because of the rise of Japan as a militaristic nation. For imperial Japan the system of the League, as a regulator of international affairs, continued to conflict with what it believed were legitimate national goals. The doubts about White Australia reflect a fear that the policy may have simply backed Japan into a corner from whence to turn against the Western world, including Australia, and the conditions of Australian nationhood may have been lost via Japanese invasion.

It has even been attested that the rejection of racial equality drove Japan to its militarised state and placed it on the path to war. Shimazu notes that in 1933 when Japan decided to withdraw from the League after it was condemned for occupying Manchuria, Japanese observers claimed that the rejection of racial equality had defeated any chance to establish world peace and had been abusive enough to justifying Japan’s withdrawal.218 Similarly at the conclusion of the Second World War the Japanese emperor stated that if the reasons for the war were asked, the answer began with Versailles Conference and the denial of the

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proposal. Even Justice Radhabinod Pal, the Indian judge on the International Military Tribunal of the Far East, attested as such. Pal voted to acquit the charges placed on Japanese war criminals on the grounds that the trial was illegitimate. One point he argued was that Japan had been provoked into war and had suffered abuses from the west such as the denial of racial equality. Pal later pointed the blame directly at Australia and Hughes:

It was not Britain which stood in the way, but principally Australia; or rather it was a single Australian Mr Hughes who constituted himself champion of the cause of White supremacy. The Japanese delegation leader then had warned the world ominously of the consequences of refusing to accept the principle of equality of nations, but neither the League nor any other international organisation ever could get rid of that race feeling.

It should be noted that Hughes responded with vigour. He declared Pal’s statements were ‘fantastic’ and that the actions taken at Paris were required to preserve the Australian nation. Hughes argued that if he had accepted the clause he would have been ‘a traitor to Australia.’ He even went as far as to claim that blocking of racial equality was fundamental to the allied victory in the Second World War as it had prevented hordes of militant Japanese from entering Australia. To Hughes the blocking of the clause hence preserved Australia, and this had allowed Australians to participate in Alamein, helping to secure victory there against the Germans and therefore preventing a chain reaction which led to an allied defeat.

In sum these arguments over whether or not the denial of racial equality led the Pacific War or prevented defeat in it are but two aspects of a wider discussion, which is, whether affirmation of White Australia at Paris, when a challenge had been made to this notion by the Japanese proposal, had in fact served the development of the Australian nation or harmed it.

220 This was a tribunal held at the end of World War Two which served as the trial of Japanese war leaders as international war criminals.
221 ‘Indian Judge Blames Mr W.M. Hughes’, The Argus, 15 November 1948, p. 5.
222 ‘―Fantastic‖ Declares Mr. Hughes’, The Sun News-Pictorial, 15 November 1948.
It is ironic perhaps that in the attempt to define Australia as a nation at Versailles, and what White Australia truly meant for Australia’s international relations, a extensive debate was inspired where the confusion over Australian nationalism was only further exacerbated.
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