

IMMIGRANT WORKERS, TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION
AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

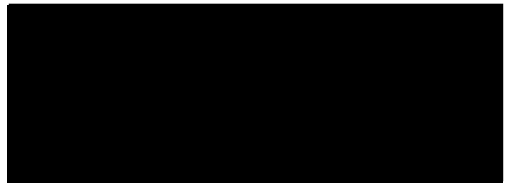
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I hereby declare that this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree. It is the result of my own independent research and all sources which have been consulted are acknowledged in the references.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.C.S.	Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics.
A.B.S.	Australian Bureau of Statistics.
A.C.I.	Australian Consolidated Industries Ltd.
A.C.M.A.	Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia.
A.C.P./C.P.A.	Australian Communist Party (later known as Communist Party of Australia).
A.C.T.U.	Australian Council of Trade Unions.
A.E.U.	Amalgamated Engineering Union.
A.F.L.	American Federation of Labor.
A.G.M.	Australian Glass Manufacturers Co. Ltd.
A.G.P.S.	Australian Government Publishing Service.
A.G.W.U.	Australian Glass Workers' Union.
A.I. & S.	Australian Iron and Steel Pty Ltd.
A.L.P.	Australian Labor Party.
A.M.W.S.U.	Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union.
A.M.W.U.	Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union.
A.R.U.	Australian Railways Union.
A.S.C. & J.	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.
A.S.E.	Amalgamated Society of Engineers (precursor of the A.E.U.).
A.S.E.	Australasian Society of Engineers (breakaway rival to the A.E.U.).
A.S.I.O.	Australian Security Intelligence Organization.
A.S.U.	Amalgamated Shearers' Union.
A.S.W.U.	Amalgamated Sugar Workers' Union.
A.T.W.A.	Australian Turkish Welfare Association.
A.W.U.	Australian Workers' Union.
B.B.S.A.	Boilermakers' and Blacksmiths' Society of Australia.
B.H.P.	Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd.
B.L.F.	Builders' Labourers Federation.
B.S.A.	Boilermakers' Society of Australia.
B.W.I.U.	Building Workers' Industrial Union.
C.A.T.U.	Clothing and Allied Trades Union.
C.H.L.	Commonwealth Hostels Ltd.
C.I.A.C.	Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council.
C.I.P.C.	Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council.
C.R.T.S.	Commonwealth Reconstruction and Training Scheme.
C.S.R.	Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd.
C.T.C.	Central Trades Committee.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(Continued)

D.L.I.	Department of Labour and Industry (New South Wales).
D.L.N.S.	Department of Labour and National Service.
D.L.P.	Democratic Labor Party.
E.P.T.	Electric Power Transmissions Ltd.
E.T.U.	Electrical Trades Union.
F.B.M.W.A.	Federated British Migrants' Welfare Association.
F.C.U.	Federated Clerks' Union.
F.E.D. & F.A.	Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association.
F.I.A.	Federated Ironworkers' Association.
F.L.A.T.U.	Federated Liquor and Allied Trades Union.
F.M.W.U.	Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union.
G.L.U.	General Labourers' Union.
H.C.R.E.U.	Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union.
I.C.F.T.U.	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.
I.T.U.C.	Intercolonial Trade Union Congress.
I.W.M.B.A.	Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Association.
I.W.W.	Industrial Workers of the World.
L.T.C.	Local Trades Committee.
M.B.A.	Master Builders' Association.
M.P.A.	Mutual Protection Association.
M.T.E.A.	Metal Trades Employers' Association.
M.T.I.A.	Metal Trades Industry Association.
N.A.W.U.	North Australian Workers' Union.
N.C.C.	National Civic Council.
N.S.F.	New Settlers' Federation.
N.U.R.	National Union of Railwaymen.
O.P.D.U.	Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union.
P.B.R.	Payment By Results.
P.K.I.U.	Printing and Kindred Industries Union.
P.P.T.U.S.	Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat.
Q.S.U.	Queensland Shearers' Union.
R.I.L.U.	Red International of Labour Unions.
R.W.U.	Rubber and Allied Workers' Union.
S.C.L.C.	South Coast Labour Council.
S.M.H.	Sydney Morning Herald.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(Continued)

S.M.W.U.	Sheet Metal Workers' Union.
T.H.C.	Trades Hall Council.
T.L.C.	Trades and Labour Council.
T.R.R.A.	Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act.
T.U.T.A.	Trade Union Training Authority.
V.B.E.F.	Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation.
W.W.F.	Waterside Workers' Federation.

PART ONE

A LABOUR MOVEMENT IN TRANSITION: FROM "WHITE
AUSTRALIA" TO "MULTICULTURAL INTEGRATION"

CHAPTER 1

IN SEARCH OF QUESTIONS. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH ON
IMMIGRANT WORKERS: THEIR INDUSTRIAL BEHAVIOUR, RELATIONSHIP TO
TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AND MANAGERIAL PRACTICE

The central question with which this thesis is concerned may be stated quite briefly. The object of the study is to examine whether immigrant workers behave differently from indigenous workers. This question underlies the large and diffuse literature which has grown up on immigrants in industry. If there are important differences which can be related to the characteristics of immigrants, these may - in turn - explain many things. On the other hand, if the supposed differences are illustory, trivial or misconstrued, then it can be argued both that a number of theoretical arguments and common-sense opinions should be toppled, and that a significant addition has been made to an understanding about workers, unions, employers and their interaction.

As will be presently shown, a number of theoretical approaches have been used in dealing with this question. In this chapter, some of the arguments developed in this literature will be explored. Nevertheless, the intention is not to generate narrow hypotheses through extraction from the work of others. Rather, the approach of this thesis is based on the exploration of a series of broad ideas.¹

The origin of the interest in this topic was the perception that there had been a significant change in both the size and characteristics of immigration and its contribution to the Australian industrial work-force. The change was of an order unmatched by most

¹In their examination of research methodology the Webbs pointed to the dangers inherent in asking questions that were too precise as opposed to testing questions which arose from a series of generally phrased hypotheses. The principal weakness of the former approach was the inherent presumption that the researcher knows much of the answer prior to undertaking investigation. While this study has clear central theme there are a number of questions which can only be answered in the course of the thesis. See Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Methods of Social Study* (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1932), pp.34-39 and pp.61-65.

other countries in the same period. The arrival of large numbers of non-British immigrants (who constituted more than half the intake) represented a radical departure from pre-war patterns of immigration where British migrants made up the overwhelming majority of settlers.² The association of immigration with rapid industrial development and the concentration of non-British migrants, especially those belonging to a number of national/regional groups, in manufacturing and building industry jobs, raised a number of questions concerning the effects this might have had on trade unions and industrial conflict. This was predicated on the assumption that language difficulties, cultural dissimilarity, the ready infusion of additional labour, inexperience with "Australian" style unions (or unions altogether) and arbitration might have exerted some effect. Nor was the possibility ignored that the immigration process itself, or British immigrants, may have, in some way, influenced the situation.

Reference to the general literature on racism, ethnicity and immigrant workers including much overseas material tended to reinforce the value of exploring this idea. This research will be discussed presently. Prior to the early 1970s there was a notable absence of research into the industrial behaviour of post-war immigrants and trade union responses to them. Some general studies of immigrants or of particular migrant groups did make fleeting references to the industrial situation.³ Within these works, and many more specific studies, the focus on the assimilation process

²Chapter 4 will include a detailed summary of the immigration to Australia during this period. For evidence relating to the British component of immigration prior to 1945 see F.K. Crowley, "The British Contribution to the Australian Population 1860-1919", *University Studies in History and Economics*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1954, pp.55-58.

³See, for instance, W.D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954); C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1963); C.A. Price (ed.), *Australian Immigration: A Bibliography and Digest* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1966 and 1970); C.A. Price, "International Immigration: Australia and New Zealand 1947-68", International Migration General Conference, *International Union for the Scientific Study of Population*, London 1969, *Proceedings*, pp.2619-2633; J.A. Hemple, *Italians in Queensland* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1959); C.E.V. Leser, "Migration and the Australian Workforce", *The Economic Record*, vol. XXXV, no. 71, August 1959, pp.264-266; and J.I. Martin, *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1975).

echoed the predominant concern of politicians and the indigenous population at large.⁴ The few articles concentrating on immigrant workers and their links with unions were mainly written by union activists.⁵

If the dearth of research interest seemed to indicate that immigrant workers were not problematic this perspective altered abruptly after 1972. A rapidly growing stream of published and unpublished research dealing with the problems and attitudes of non-British workers emerged which, in the main, suggested that large groups of immigrant workers were callously exploited by employers, stigmatized by Australian workers and felt isolated from the unions to which they belonged.⁶ Ignoring for the moment the underlying

⁴For examples of more limited studies see H.B.M. Murphy, "Assimilating the Displaced Person", *The Australian Quarterly*, March 1952, pp.46-59; J. Hammet, "Migrant Adjustment and Personal Identity", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXXI, no. 2, June 1959, pp.40-48; S. Vahl, "Some Problems of Migrant Assimilation", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXXII, no. 3, September 1960, pp.58-65; I. Kavass, "Migrant Assimilation", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXXIV, no. 2, June 1962, pp.54-66; and D.W.G. Timms, "Dimensions of Migrant Assimilation", *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 4, no. 1, February 1969, pp.41-56.

⁵See, for instance, B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement* (roneoed paper, Ruskin College, Oxford University, 1958); G. Zangalis, "Immigration and the Labor Movement", *The Australian Left Review*, vol. 5, 1967, pp.41-56; and E. Thornton, "Migrants and Unions", *The Australian Left Review*, vol. 6, 1967, pp.37-38. One exception to this was K. Grant Stevenson, "The Employment of New Australians", *The Bulletin of Industrial Psychology and Personnel Practice*, vol. VIII, no. 2, June 1952, pp.27-34.

⁶For examples of the above see P. Georgiou, "Migrants, Trade Unions and Society", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 1973, pp.32-51; K. Brown and D. Storer, *A Preliminary Survey of Migrant Women in the Clothing Industry* (Ecumenical Migration Centre and Centre for Urban Research and Action, Melbourne, September 1974); D. Cox, *Towards an Understanding of the Greek Migrant* (Ecumenical Migration Centre, Monograph No. 1, Melbourne, 1974); E. Cox, S. Jobson and J. Martin, *We Can Not Talk Our Rights - Migrant Women 1975* (New South Wales Council of Social Services and the School of Sociology, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1976); D. Storer, "Italians in Australia: A Social Overview", paper presented to the *World Conference on Italian Migration*, Rome, February 1975; Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.), *But I wouldn't want my wife to work here ... A Study of Migrant Women in Melbourne Industry* (C.U.R.A., Melbourne, 1976); Committee to Advise on Policies for the Manufacturing Industry (The Jackson Committee), *Policies for Development of Manufacturing Industry: A Green Paper* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976); J.M. Hearn, *Migrant Experiences in Trade Unions: A Study in Migrant Participation in Leadership in Victorian Trade Unions* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1974);

causes of this upsurge of interest, these studies often raised more questions than they answered. With the exception of a few, many were based on narrow attitudinal surveys or observations which, while illuminating in themselves, were divorced from any systematic attempt to discover how the work situations described arose or whether the degree of agreement with Australian-born workers outweighed disagreement.⁷ From an industrial relations viewpoint, Callus's study on managerial responses to immigrants and Hearn's detailed investigation of migrant participation in the leadership of Victorian unions did offer important insights into the interaction of immigrants, their work and unions.⁸ Callus downplayed "ethnic" characteristics as an explanation of immigrants' industrial behaviour. Instead he emphasized the character of the work-place and of employers. For her part, Hearn recognized that the Australian trade union movement was not a monolithic structure. She sought to explain why Non-British migrants were under-represented in full-time union posts and why certain unions were attempting to partly redress this imbalance.

Within this context, a broad-ranging historical study of union responses to immigrants after 1945 which took account of different levels of union action; divisions within the union movement; a variety of employment situations; and one which did not ignore immigrant responses outside traditional institutions seemed both viable and desirable. Before this can be done, however, a number of important conceptual issues have to be confronted.

Any attempt to deal with the industrial behaviour of immigrant

M.E. Buchanan, *Attitudes Toward Immigrants in Australia*, Research Report No. 3 to the National Population Inquiry (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976); John Giles, Laurie Patton and Kathi Pauncz, "Problems of Working Migrants", *Work and People*, vol. 3, no. 1, Autumn 1977, pp.28-34; Ruth Johnston, *Workers and Unions* (Finn and Collins, Perth, 1976); Ruth Johnston, *Patterns of Work: Building Workers, their Union and their Employers* (Department of Economics, the University of Western Australia, 1977); J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978); and R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions* (unpublished M.Ec. Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1978).

⁷Johnston's survey was one exception to the latter problem. See R. Johnston, *Workers and Unions*, *op cit.*

⁸R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions*, *op cit.*; and J. Hearn, *Migrant Experiences in Trade Unions*, *op cit.*

workers raises the prospect of examining a wide range of questions with complex ramifications. The most obvious and seemingly simple question is, "How is an immigrant worker to be defined?" An apparent answer is that an immigrant worker is a person not of indigenous birth who arrives in a host society as an adult and then undertakes employment. In fact, for the purposes of the study this definition will be applied to those migrants who arrived after 1945. Ignoring the problem of those who arrive as near adults, the first complexity arises when it is recognized that immigrants are not homogeneous. Indeed, they can be differentiated into many sub-groups on the basis of age, language, nationality, ethnicity or race, sex, socio-economic origins, primary reason for migrating, degree of prior industrial experience and skill, to mention only the more obvious divisions that have been drawn. Such divisions have been made because each of these characteristics, either individually or in combination, has been seen to influence the attitude and behaviour of immigrants.

A moot point is the extent to which characteristics which might be seen to differentiate immigrants from the indigenous population in the wider social situation affect relations at the work-place. It cannot be assumed that differentiating characteristics operate with equal force in all contexts.

A further complication arises when it is recognized that immigrants are in an essentially inferior position in terms of influencing social values. Even when their purported attributes are the result of pernicious stereotyping by members of the host community, this can create a climate of social distance where the perceptions appear to be fulfilled. This is particularly the case where certain biases in the immigration intake tend to stratify the immigrants or groups of them in a way clearly different to the host population. It has been a common experience that immigrant groups have become concentrated within specific socio-economic groups, industries, occupations and regions.

The above processes tend to accentuate stereotypes which are already held by the host society. Apart from sexism, perhaps the most pervasive forms of human or social stereotyping, and the ones most relevant to a discussion of immigrants, are ethnocentrism and racism. According to Van den Berghe, racism constitutes:

any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races.⁹

Kuper sees three requisite conditions for racism, namely:

the use of physical criteria, the belief that cultural, moral or intellectual differences correspond to physical differences, and social actions (of a discriminatory nature) based on those beliefs.¹⁰

To suggest that the origins and manifestations of racism are complex is to make an understatement. Race conflicts have been frequently seen to mask other social divisions and conflicts. One reason for this suggested by Kuper is that:

since race is essentially an anatomical concept with no intrinsic relevance for social structure, the forces which make for social differentiation and discrimination between the races must be sought elsewhere than in racial difference.¹¹

Such an approach is exemplified by attempts to define race relations in terms of caste relations or see it as a by-product of class struggle. In his classic study, O.C. Cox argued that modern racism arose as a direct consequence of capitalism, legitimating imperialism/colonialism and later perpetuating divisions within the industrial working-class.¹² While Kuper sees a Marxist perspective as indispensable, he is doubtful that racism can be viewed simply as an expression of class struggle.¹³ It would seem over-ambitious to suggest that racism has always served the interests of capital.

⁹Quoted in Leo Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1975), p.14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.14. The contentious nature of biological definitions of race and the historical origins of race categories and changes in them are clearly indicated by L.C. Dunn. Dunn makes the point that race, as far as it can be employed, must be seen as a dynamic concept. See L.C. Dunn, "Race and Biology", in L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society*, *op cit.*, pp.31-67.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.20.

¹²O.C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1957).

¹³L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society*, *op cit.*, p.20.

It cannot be the province of this thesis to enter into a lengthy examination of racism. The concept does have apparent relevance to the struggle by Australian unions to exclude non-European labour during the nineteenth century. The evolution of the "White Australia" policy effectively excluded more than a trickle of non-European immigrants until the late 1970s. Thus post-war immigration occurred within a context where the issue of non-European immigration was seldom raised. The evolving attitudes of unions in this regard will, however, not be ignored. While race definitions have been used in connection with various European peoples, it would seem more valuable to view stereotyping of them as constituting ethnocentrism - a concept which may include racism.¹⁴

Ethnicity, a comparative concept, offered the opportunity to identify differences in social behaviour based on culture (language, customs, religion, etc.) which need not be linked to a physical basis. Price has defined an ethnic group as "a collection of persons who for physical, geographical, political, religious, linguistic or other reasons feel themselves, or are felt by others to constitute a separate group."¹⁵ An ethnic group may span a number of national boundaries or be confined within a national boundary. For example, Chinese communities can be found scattered throughout Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, within the People's Republic of China there are a large number of distinguishable ethnic groups (55 at last count) in addition to the dominant "han" people who may, themselves, be subdivided. A complex pattern of ethnic groups may be found settled throughout Europe, the United States and indeed within many, if not most, countries.

The perceived designation of an ethnic group has often been

¹⁴Although race was frequently used to describe peoples from eastern Europe and southern Europe and distinguish them from northern (Aryan?) European peoples prior to World War Two, it has gone out of favour amongst sociologists and anthropologists. A number of reasons for this can be identified including the abuse of the term, its use by fascist states, the notions of superiority/inferiority which were embedded in much literature and popular consciousness, the contentious nature of biological distinctions and a recognition of the need to encompass cultural differences such as language and religion independent of ascribing a physical cause to this. For reference to the latter point see L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society*, *ibid.*, p.20.

¹⁵C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, *op cit.*, p.3.

accentuated by political struggles founded on rival claims to territory or power. Fundamentally, like racism, there is commonly an assumption of superiority by one group. A number of groups sharing strong cultural values may combine for this purpose. Thus, ethnicity may be perceived at different levels and in different ways at different times. One instance of this is the attitude of northern European and especially English-speaking people (including their former colonies the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), towards other European and non-European peoples. This does not preclude internal rivalries. The presumption of cultural superiority constitutes ethnocentrism.

In accounting for the origins and perpetuation of ethnocentrism Claude Lévi-Strauss stated:

Yet it would seem that the diversity of culture has seldom been recognised by men [sic] for what it is - a natural phenomenon resulting from the direct or indirect contacts between societies; men have tended rather to regard diversity as something abnormal or outrageous; advances in our knowledge of these matters served less to destroy this illusion and replace it by a more accurate picture than to make us accept it or accommodate ourselves to it.¹⁶

Ethnocentrism becomes racism when cultural superiority is seen to derive from the physical characteristics of a group and thereby provide a legitimate basis for discrimination. In practice, the distinction may be one of degree.

The relevance of ethnicity and ethnocentrism for a study concerned with post-war immigration was shown to some extent by the very selection of the topic. While not overlooking general attitudes to immigration and British migrants, this thesis will focus on non-British migrants and especially southern Europeans. The latter constituted the bulk of non-British immigration and made significant contributions to the industrial work-force in the unskilled/semi-skilled occupational categories. Prior to World War Two there was a discernible racist/ethnocentric attitude to southern Europeans.¹⁷ Northern European immigrants (non-British) were not immune from this. However, hostility never reached the scale that

¹⁶Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Race and History", in L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society*, *op cit.*, p.100.

¹⁷For evidence of this see C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, *op cit.* This will also be referred to in Chapter 2.

it did with regard to southern Europeans.¹⁸ There was a general preference for British and "Nordic" immigrants. These attitudes continued during the post-war period although some evolution in the predisposition is apparent especially after 1970. The impact of such attitudes on the responses of indigenous workers and trade unions cannot be presumed. In many work-places, immigrants displaced indigenous workers so completely that the latter became a minority group.

Of course, the notion of "southern European" immigrants masks a large number of national and regional groups with their own characteristic backgrounds. Among those migrants from Yugoslavia a number of fiercely independent groups may be discerned (Serbs, Croats, Macedonians). Particular regions within Greece, Italy and Turkey provided large numbers of migrants to Australia. Patterns of regional chain-migration were inextricably related to socio-economic factors including kinship ties, the availability of assisted passage (or rather its absence), general biases in recruitment and the local pressures that impelled people to migrate.

The socio-economic background of immigrants had a decisive bearing on their employment in Australia and this undoubtedly affected perceptions of them amongst the Australian population. As will be shown in Chapter 4, nationality biases in terms of the recruitment of skilled and professional migrants were built into the very structure of the immigration programme. This was reinforced by procedures for recognizing skills and qualifications. A significant group of migrants suffered what was, in effect, downward occupational mobility or "skidding" of either a temporary or permanent nature because of the non-recognition of their skills and training. Perhaps the largest identifiable group affected by this were eastern European immigrants who arrived in the period 1948 to 1952 (and a smaller group of Hungarian refugees in 1956), many with professional backgrounds. As political refugees, their attitudes tended to differ from other immigrants. The above complexities and others will be analysed by this study insofar as they appear to have a

¹⁸Price offers an interesting explanation of this. For a survey of one southern European nationality's and one northern European nationality's experience in Australia see W.D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954).

bearing on trade union responses and organization.

At this point it would seem worthwhile to deal with some of the theoretical/research perspectives that have been employed in an attempt to explain the industrial behaviour of immigrant workers and union/employer responses to them. There would seem to be three identifiable reasons for the impetus in research into immigrant workers. First, there has been a recognition of the growing importance of international movements of labour in the post-war period including a reversal of traditional labour shifts to former colonial centres such as the United Kingdom, the mass migration of "guest-workers" to the more advanced industrial countries in Europe and continued mass migration to emerging industrial countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Second, a felt need exists among many sociologists and others to explain the persistence of race/ethnic prejudice and divisions in societies despite the scientific refutation of racism. Sociologists such as Rex and Zubaida tried to integrate race relations within the broader ambit of sociology while Van den Berghe attempted to explain the nature of racism and the re-emergence of ethnic awareness.¹⁹ Third, there is a perceived link between large-scale ethnically diverse immigration into the United States and the failure of this country to develop a strong working-class political movement and the delayed institutionalization of trade unions.

Rather than try to assess all these developments, three aspects will be dealt with which have a particularly relevant bearing on this study. The first to be examined will be what may be loosely termed the Marxist theory of immigrant labour: a fairly generalized approach which has been applied by a number of writers to the post-1945 European situation. This approach tends to locate the perpetuation of racism and ethnocentrism within the dynamic of capitalist development and class struggle. The second area to be examined is research into the British situation, much of which has been influenced by what could be termed as the assimilationist and race relations approaches. Studies using other perspectives will be

¹⁹See John Rex, *Race Relations in Sociological Theory* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, U.K., 1970); S. Zubaida (ed.), *Race and Racism* (Tavistock Publications, London, 1970); and P.L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Ethnicity: Essays in Comparative Sociology* (Basic Books, New York, 1970).

discussed. Finally, literature on the United States situation between 1880 and 1920 will be appraised. Again, a variety of perspectives have been adopted. This intermeshing is unavoidable. The goal is to suggest some ideas which might be evaluated in the Australian situation rather than suggesting that any of the approaches can be automatically applied to it *in toto*.

MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANT LABOUR WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE POST-1945 EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Marxist analysis sought to show that the historical phases of colonialism, slavery and imperialism were intimately tied to the international development of capitalism.²⁰ This development was essentially uneven. The phenomenon of international labour migration from economically backward, overpopulated and under-capitalized regions to industrial centres has, it is argued, accentuated and perpetuated uneven development by facilitating capital accumulation in the host country. At the same time, it has been suggested that immigration has a politically stabilizing effect on both the host country and that supplying immigrants.²¹ Immigration acted as a safety valve for social pressures, buttressing capitalist institutions via a process of mystification and by legitimating inequality at both the national and international level.

In a sense, mass immigration was seen as a logical development of the earlier colonialist/slavery period of capitalism which writers such as O.C. Cox saw as playing a crucial role in the

²⁰See V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966).

²¹For examples of studies which adopt a Marxist interpretation of the role of immigration in post-war Europe see S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (Oxford University Press, for the Institute of Race Relations, 1973); M. Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggle in Advanced Capitalism: The Western European Experience", *Politics and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1975; pp.33-66; A. Gorz, "Immigrant Labour", *The New Left Review*, no. 61, May-June 1970, pp.28-31; M. Nikolinakos, "A General Theory of Migration in Late Capitalism", in K. Judat and Y. Özkan (eds), *International Conference on Migrant Workers* (International Institute for Comparative Social Studies, Berlin, June 1975); M. Nikolinakos, "Notes on an Economic Theory of Racism", *Race and Class*, vol. XIV, no. 4, April 1973, pp.365-381; and M. Nikolinakos, "Notes Towards a General Theory of Migration in Late Capitalism", *Race and Class*, vol. XVII, no. 1, Summer 1975, pp.5-17.

development of ethno-racist ideologies amongst the working class.²² An immediate stimulus to racist/chauvinist attitudes amongst the indigenous working class of advanced industrial societies was their fear that immigrants would undermine their wages and living standards. Nikolinakos contended that through racism, capitalism was able to produce a class structure suitable for capital accumulation involving technological change.²³ In turn, this modified structure increased the demand for qualified labour so that the indigenous work-force could move up the occupational hierarchy as immigrants filled lower jobs. By dividing the working class within advanced societies into an indigenous privileged group and a super-exploited foreign-born group capital accumulation is achieved and crisis avoided. Nikolinakos believed polarization could reach a stage where introspective race or ethnic conflict pre-empted class struggle.²⁴

In more detail, the economic impetus for immigration was seen as being far more profound than the apparent desire of immigrants to improve their material conditions.²⁵ Immigration provided industrial countries such as those in western Europe with a significant additional source of labour free of the normal costs of reproduction (child rearing, social welfare, health, education, etc.). Immigrants have a higher rate of work-force participation (including second jobs) than the indigenous population. This is pronounced where immigrants of working age precede their dependents and even more so in the case of European "guest-workers" where only workers (predominantly young males) enter the host country - the majority remaining as bachelors during their temporary stay, obviating the need for an extensive social infrastructure such as

²²See O.C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race*, *op cit.*

²³M. Nikolinakos, "Notes on an Economic Theory of Racism", *op cit.*, pp.365-381.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p.378.

²⁵Nevertheless, the role of this motivation is not challenged by Marxist interpretations. See T. Nichols (ed.), *Capital and Labour - A Marxist Primer* (Fontana, United Kingdom, 1980), p.107.

public housing, additional schools and hospitals.²⁶ The active role in recruiting immigrants and facilitating their arrival played by both governments and employers of advanced industrial societies is seen as indicative of the significance of "pull" factors.

A more precise interpretation of the role of immigrant labour in Europe has been open to some debate even amongst those adopting a Marxist perspective. It has been recognized that large-scale immigration could have important implications for the general level of wages and inter-industry, inter-occupational or inter-plant differentials by altering the supply conditions affecting the price of labour. The effect of the increased labour supply will depend on the relative growth of demand for labour (both in general and for particular types), the extent and effectiveness of institutional restrictions established by governments and unions (minimum wage legislation, wage-fixing procedures, entry requirements relating to education, skill, etc.) and the substitutability of immigrants for indigenous workers.

Castles and Kosack draw heavily on the Marxist concepts of "the reserve army of labour" and "the aristocracy of labour" in their analyses of European immigration.²⁷ They argued that reliance on

²⁶*Ibid.*, p.108. Nichols, who summarizes the work of many writers in this area, argues that the guest-worker scheme is particularly advantageous because the money repatriated by immigrants to their families helps reduce inflationary pressures in the host country and is an important source of income for their homelands. This runs counter to the argument of neoclassical economists that immigration has an advantageous effect on the host country not only in terms of production but also (and possibly more so) in terms of an increase in demand and consumption. Another argument in favour of the guest-worker scheme, and one of which there was evidence during the economic recession in Europe after 1975, was the possibility of sending immigrants who have been retrenched back to their homelands. This is seldom an option open to countries accepting permanent immigrants, and imbues advanced European countries with even greater flexibility in controlling their labour supply. For a more detailed Marxist interpretation of post-war European immigration, its economic and social consequences see S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, *op cit.*; M. Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggle in Advanced Capitalism: The Western European Experience", *op cit.*; A. Gorz, "Immigration Labour", *op cit.*; M. Nikolinakos, "Notes Towards A General Theory of Migration in Late Capitalism", *op cit.*; and S. Paine, *Exporting Workers: The Turkish Case* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974).

²⁷This point is made specifically by T. Nichols (ed.), *Capital and Labour*, *op cit.*, p.109. See S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism", in T. Nichols (ed.), *ibid.*, pp.117-137.

immigrant labour was not a new aspect of industrial society but it achieved a new level of importance in Europe after World War Two.²⁸ Immigrants were a substitute for the traditional reserve army which had been absorbed by the post-war commitment of western European governments to continuous economic expansion and full employment. Thus, Castles and Kosack contend, immigrants provided the labour essential to meet labour shortages and accommodate cyclical tendencies.²⁹ Immigrant workers became a permanent feature of the economic structure, filling key industrial jobs as well as the peripheral areas of employment to which they had been confined previously.³⁰

Castles and Kosack argued that, irrespective of the considerable variations according to those factors outlined above, the overall effect of European immigration has been to slow the rate of growth of wages, especially in those industries and occupations where immigrants were concentrated. It is suggested that the broad effect of immigration has been identical in all advanced European countries. There is, however, some subtlety in their case:

By restraining wage increases, immigration is a vital precondition for capital accumulation and hence for growth. In the long run, wages may grow more in a country which has large scale immigration than one that does not, because of the dynamic effects of increased capital accumulation on productivity. However, wages are a smaller share, and profits a larger share of national income than would have been the case without immigration. The best illustration of this effect is obtained by comparing the German and British economies since 1945. Germany has had large and continuous increases in the labour force due to immigration. At first wages were held back. The resulting capital accumulation allowed fast growth and continuous rationalization. Britain has had virtually no growth in the labour force due to migration (immigration has been cancelled out by emigration to Australia, etc.). Every phase of expansion has collapsed rapidly as wages rose due to labour shortages. The long-term effect has been

²⁸By 1970, they estimate, there were about 11 million immigrants living in West Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Britain and a number of other countries. This represented about 5% of the total population. *Ibid.*, p.121.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p.119.

³⁰Castles and Kosack suggest that other groups such as women had already been integrated into the work-force to the extent it was profitable for capitalist society to do so. *Ibid.*, pp.120-121.

stagnation. By the 1960s, German wages overtook those of Britain, while economic growth and rationalization continued at an almost undiminished rate.³¹

Aside from its overall impact, the effects of immigration were seen to be concentrated in a number of industries or occupations where migrants congregated. Some migrants entered into labour-intensive, low-paying and economically marginal industries to replace the child and later indigenous female labour upon which these had previously relied.³² They also made a significant contribution to the rapidly growing metal, plastic and rubber products industries.³³ Displacement of indigenous workers in these jobs was encouraged by unpleasant conditions, the incidence of shift work, overtime and low wages relative to other occupations. As already noted, economic expansion enabled "locals" to move to jobs with superior conditions of employment.

As a result, Castles and Kosack contended that the wages of indigenous workers did not coincide with those of migrants because of the latter's concentration in jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. They believed this concentration had affected the evolution of pay differentials between various sectors.³⁴ Gorz has

³¹*Ibid.*, p.131.

³²An example of this cited by Nichols was the movement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants into the British textile industry. See T. Nichols (ed.), *Capital and Labour*, *op cit.*, p.110.

³³S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism", *op cit.*, pp.124-126.

³⁴Castles and Kosack recognized the existence of variations in wage levels on the basis of work-force characteristics (age, sex, race, nationality, etc.), the nature of the work undertaken (education and skill requirements, unpleasantness, etc.) and the productivity variations between industries. They saw the latter two factors as being most important. However, they were careful to point out that trends in occupational and inter-industry differentials have not occurred in all industrial countries receiving immigrants. In fact, they did not suggest that trends in differentials which occurred during the post-war period were even primarily the result of immigration. In this regard, they refer to a study by Jones and Smith which found that migrants tended to go into growing industries with labour shortages. This is consistent with a study undertaken by Bohnig and Maillat on the impact of immigration on wage differentials - a study which, however, does not support the argument that immigrants slowed the rate of growth of wages. See S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, *op cit.*, chapter 9, especially pp.379-381; and W.R. Bohnig and D. Maillat, *The Effects of the Employment of Foreign Workers* (O.E.C.D., Paris, 1974).

argued that the contention that immigration slowed down the growth rate of wages in particular industries and occupations considerably understates its impact. He suggests that the absence of immigrants would not simply mean attracting and paying sufficient indigenous labour at its historical value. Such a dramatic improvement in wages, conditions, modes of work and status as may be necessary to do this would considerably disrupt occupational wage structures and the social ranking underpinning them. Gorz believed this would expose their "factitious nature" even if it were viable for employers to meet the costs - which he doubted.³⁵

It is a key point of the Marxist interpretation of immigration that immigrant workers occupy an inferior labour market position in comparison to indigenous workers in terms of occupation, wages, working conditions, etc. This is seen as crucial to the development of segmented labour markets and divisions within the working class itself as the latter come to see themselves as an aristocracy of labour with different interests to those of immigrants. The concentration of immigrants in semi-skilled and unskilled manual jobs means they suffer more acutely from an economic downturn. Their inferior work situation is accentuated by the immigrants' social position characterized by the absence of opportunities for language and vocational training; a high incidence of poverty; sub-standard, over-crowded and segregated housing; and social welfare and health problems. Educational disadvantages facing immigrant children tend to perpetuate socio-economic divisions. Castles and Kosack felt social isolation made immigrants more susceptible to employer pressure and scape-goating by the host community.³⁶ Widespread discrimination practised against immigrants often became semi-institutionalized in the work-place and elsewhere.³⁷

However, there is another level of discrimination practised by governments which indicates that their role is not restricted to facilitating the arrival of immigrants but includes controlling

³⁵A. Gorz, "Immigrant Labour", *op cit.*, p.30.

³⁶In Germany, for instance, they contend that employers repeatedly used control of the accommodation of immigrants to force them to act as strikebreakers. See S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism", *op cit.*, p.127.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.129.

their subsequent behaviour. Immigrants suffer from an inferior politico-legal position because of their status as aliens. Nearly all western European countries have labour market legislation (such as special work permit requirements, statutes covering contracts to bring in foreign labour, etc.) which discriminates against foreigners.³⁸ This point is taken up by Castells who argues that the majority of migrants are disenfranchised and extremely liable to repression by governments.³⁹ Castles and Kosack perhaps put it succinctly when they state:

The most serious form of discrimination against immigrant workers is their deprivation of political rights. Foreigners may not vote in local or national elections. Nor may they hold public office, which in France is defined so widely as to include trade union posts. Foreigners do not generally have the same rights as local workers with regard to eligibility for works councils and similar representative bodies. The main exception to this concerns Irish and Commonwealth immigrants, who do have the right to vote ... But the Mangrove case shows the type of repression which may be expected by any immigrants who dare to organize themselves. Close police control over the political activities of immigrants is the rule throughout Europe, and deportations of political and trade union militants are common. After the May events (1968) in France, hundreds of foreign workers were deported. Foreign language newspapers of the CGT labour federation have been repeatedly forbidden. The German Foreigners Law of 1965 lays down that political activity of foreigners can be forbidden if 'important interests of the German Federal Republic require this' - a provision so flexible that the police can prevent any activity they choose.⁴⁰

Castles and Kosack argued that immigrant workers in Europe did not constitute a "lumpenproletariat" because of the significant and permanent function they performed in the work-force. In their view:

The inferior work situation and living conditions of immigrants has caused some bourgeois sociologists to define them as 'lumpenproletariat' or a 'marginal group'. This is clearly incorrect. A group which makes up 10, 20

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129.

³⁹ M. Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggle in Advanced Capitalism: The Western European Experience", *op cit.*, pp.33-36.

⁴⁰ It is worth noting that recent changes in United Kingdom immigration legislation have brought it closer to the European situation with regard to Commonwealth immigrants. S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism", *op cit.*, p.130. See also A. Gorz, "Immigrant Labour", *op cit.*, pp.29-30.

or 30 per cent of the industrial labour force cannot be regarded as marginal to society. Others speak of a 'new proletariat'. Such terms are also wrong. The first implies that the indigent workers have ceased to be proletarians and have been replaced by the immigrants in this social position. The second postulates that immigrant workers have a different relationship to the means of production than that traditionally characteristic of the proletariat. In reality, both indigenous and immigrant workers share the same relationship to the means of production; they are excluded from ownership or control; they are forced to sell their labour power in order to survive; they work under the direction and in the interests of others. In the sphere of consumption both categories of workers are subject to the laws of the commodity market, where the supply and price of goods is determined not by their use value but by their profitability for capitalists, both are victims of landlords, retail monopolies and similar blood-suckers and manipulators of consumption-terror. These are the characteristics typical of the proletariat ever since the industrial revolution, and on this basis immigrants and indigenous workers must be regarded as members of the same class: the proletariat. But it is a divided class, the marginal privileges conceded to indigenous workers and the particularly intensive exploitation of immigrants combine to create a barrier between the two groups, which appear as distinct strata within the class. The division is deepened by certain legal, political and psychological factors ...⁴¹

In other words, immigrants and indigenous workers share a similar relationship to the production process even though there is some difference in the degree of overt deprivation. Exaggerated perceptions of this difference, however, have been seen to play an important role in splitting the working class. The social and industrial isolation of immigrants fostered by their concentration in low paid and/or low status occupations and industries has important ramifications for class consciousness. Indigenous workers are able to move increasingly into supervisory, more skilled, white collar and other preferred jobs, giving apparent credence to the notion of upward social mobility. This segregation need not be complete or static. All that is required is that immigrants leaving lower positions do so far less frequently than indigenous workers and those who leave are replaced by new waves of immigrants.

According to Gorz, the apparent mobility does not simply

⁴¹S. Castles and G. Kosack, 'Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Immigration in Western European Capitalism', *op cit.*, p.128.

neutralize sections of the working class as disenfranchised and socially vulnerable. It also encourages active hostility on the part of indigenous workers.⁴² Their promotion encourages a depreciation of the social and economic value of manual work and those who engage in it. This reinforces the desire of the indigenous workers remaining in such jobs to leave. The resulting ethnic concentrations deepen the gap between manual and technical tertiary work. Middle strata occupations are ascribed an inflated importance that belies their dependence on industrial labour and promotes an ideological association with the bourgeois. Those workers promoted respond to the perceived threat immigrants pose for their newly won privileges. Indigenous workers remaining in employment areas entered by immigrants also see them as a threat to their status and as a potential weapon in the hands of employers. Both groups may tacitly support discrimination by employers and authorities if it appears beneficial to themselves. While not refuting this argument, Castles and Kosack suggest the gains to the indigenous work-force are marginal at best and may be negative for most.⁴³

Social distance between immigrants and indigenous workers is reinforced as misunderstanding, hostility and prejudice take over. In general, Gorz asserts, the organized labour movement has not countered these tendencies because it has feared immigrants will erode its position by off-setting labour shortages. It has also reacted subjectively to the worsening housing and social conditions which accompany the increased demand for social resources. This is seen to perpetuate racist/ethnocentric and chauvinistic elements in the indigenous working class. Such divisions may disrupt industrial solidarity to the extent that indigenous workers refuse to support strike action by immigrants or attribute it to non-industrial motives (such as ethnic/race "quirks").

⁴²A. Gorz, "Immigrant Labour", *op cit.*, p.29.

⁴³See earlier discussion on the impact of immigration on wage levels and S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe", *op cit.*, chapter 9, pp.374-429.

⁴⁴There is some evidence to support this point even where unions have tried to counteract such tendencies. See S. Castles and G. Kosack, "How Trade Unions Try to Control and Integrate Migrant Workers in the German Federal Republic", *Race*, vol. XV, no. 4, 1974, pp.497-514; and S. Barkin, "Trade Union Policies and Programmes for National Internal Rural Migrants and Foreign Workers, *International Migration*, vol. IV, no. 1, 1966, pp.3-20.

At the same time, the situation is both complex and dynamic with regard to the degree of "acceptability" of different migrant groups. Allen and Smith and the Castles found evidence of a differential ranking of certain immigrant groups for the United Kingdom and France respectively.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the long-term implications of this in terms of post-1945 European experiences have not and perhaps cannot be analysed at this stage. As a result the argument tends to be left in mid air for which the temporary nature of the stay of many European migrants (i.e. guest-workers) might also be a contributing factor.

Marxist interpretations of the United States experience between 1880 and 1920 (which will be dealt with in more detail later in the chapter) do offer a guide in this respect and are based on permanent migration - something more directly comparable to the Australian situation. Perhaps the most sophisticated interpretation of the impact of successive waves of immigration on working-class consciousness in the United States is offered by Aronowitz.⁴⁶ Aronowitz argues that the immigration of ethnically diverse groups had a significant impact on working-class consciousness although he rejects it as the total explanation of why the United States failed to develop a mass working-class political movement.

The divisions between skilled and unskilled labour, mental and physical work, men and women, Blacks, whites and various ethnic groups are significant in the formation of social consciousness. These differences hide the fact that all work for wages, and the majority of salaried employees are powerless to determine the basic decisions that affect both their working lives and their private lives.⁴⁷

Aronowitz argues the evolution of apparently technologically determined job divisions is historically rooted in the need to

⁴⁵See S. Allen and C. Smith, "Race and Ethnicity in Class Formation: A Comparison of Asian and West Indian Workers", in Frank Parkin (ed.), *The Social Analysis of Class Structure* (Tavistock Publications, United Kingdom, 1974), pp.39-53; and G. and S. Castles, "Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in France", *Race*, vol. XIII, no. 3, 1971, p.310.

⁴⁶S. Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1973).

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p.9.

perpetuate such divisions socially.⁴⁸ The complex hierarchic organization of work obscures fundamental relations between members of the same class. Aronowitz sees a hierarchy of occupational rankings, different economic rewards, degrees of powerlessness and variations in consciousness as a necessary complicating aspect of the orthodox Marxist two-class model.⁴⁹ This approach which views the arrival of ethnically divergent immigrants as an addition to already complex social relations under capitalism is clearly distinct from the more economically determinist Marxist interpretations of the post-war European experience.⁵⁰

In Aronowitz's view, successive waves of immigration to the United States helped to splinter the political and industrial solidarity of the working class while providing opportunities for upward mobility amongst "indigenous" workers composed of earlier northern European arrivals and, to a lesser extent, even later groups. The individual "get ahead" ethic enshrined in its extreme by the Horatio Alger myth was apparently fulfilled. Aronowitz rejects the frontier thesis espoused by Turner⁵¹ and suggests that mobility was largely illusory, being confined to intraclass shifts - and here he is in agreement with the Castles and Kosack and Gorz assessment of European experience - rather than genuine interclass movements.⁵² While successive waves of ethnically distinct immigrants pushed preceding groups upwards this did not alter their position, contrary to the cultural "mixing pot" notion, except in terms of proximity from the bottom. Moreover, women and Blacks were

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp.155-157. This is, of course, identical to the argument of S. Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production", *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1974, pp.44-52.

⁴⁹S. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, Part Two, *op cit.*, p.146.

⁵⁰In particular, M. Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggle", *op cit.*; M. Nikolinakos, "A General Theory of Migration in Late Capitalism", *op cit.*; and, to a lesser extent, S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, *op cit.*, chapter 9.

⁵¹F.J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1920).

⁵²S. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, *op cit.*, pp.149-162.

largely excluded from even these intraclass shifts.⁵³

A further dimension of Aronowitz's argument is that the American trade union and socialist movements were ethnically restrictive during this period. Southern and eastern European immigrants and Negroes, who possessed the least resources for engaging in industrial struggles, were thereby excluded from the traditional bodies for expressing it.⁵⁴ This induced mutual antagonism which persisted in the sphere of industrial conflict. Immigrants resented the sectional interests of unions dominated by northern European skilled workers and were frustrated by the apparent job control and independent cohesion of skilled workers generally. The failure of unions to fully incorporate southern European immigrants in their struggles enabled management to more easily legitimate its mystique of control whilst institutionalizing and fragmenting conflict. Union leaders frequently saw southern and eastern European immigrants as being servile, docile and unorganizable. This reinforced their isolation.

Aronowitz's study adds a further dimension to the Marxist interpretation of the role of immigration in capitalist societies which have only been dealt with crudely in the European context. Ignoring for the moment the aspects of his argument that pertain specifically to the American situation, itself the focus of considerable debate, the general thread of Marxist thought on the impact of immigration both as an economically, socially and politically advantageous process for capitalism can now be seen. Of course, there have been variations in interpretation amongst Marxists even with regard to the same countries. It should also be pointed out that a number of the arguments presented have not been confined to Marxist researchers.⁵⁵

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp.199-213.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.151.

⁵⁵In his study of the American situation Morse, argued that indigenous workers in a similar or related position to migrants sought to maintain higher status by creating social distance. The immigrants' seeming acceptance of fitful employment, low-status jobs and arbitrary employer power was viewed as an acknowledgement of inferiority. Justifications tended to focus on the visible characteristics of ethnic groups, namely physical appearance and "ethnic" behaviour. Such explanations were bolstered by the residual historical influence of colonialism and the fear of economic

The key strength of the Marxist interpretation is its ability to combine a large number of diverse ideas/observations into an integrated argument. Simply stated, this is that mass immigration, particularly of ethnically diverse groups of immigrants, has prime economic and social advantages for capitalism. It sets in train a chain of events that tend to isolate immigrants and indigenous workers. Class perceptions are modified by the creation/maintenance of ethnic/race divisions in the working class. An exaggerated notion of social mobility is reinforced by the occupational and industrial segregation of migrants. Working-class consciousness and struggle are thereby sectionalized further promoting chauvinistic attitudes amongst indigenous workers and frustration amongst immigrants.

The generalized nature of this explanation also holds the germ of weaknesses which, if not entirely invalidating the argument, do indicate a need for considerable refinement. The suggestion that immigration has entirely positive effects for capitalism appears to be a one-sided functionalist explanation of its "role".⁵⁶ The argument as enunciated by Castells and (to a lesser extent) Castles and Kosack, tends to build down from crude economic aggregates through a series of assumptions and logical steps which are far from

competition. The apparent rigidity of the immigrants' situation in the face of an ideology stressing material accumulation and social mobility is seen by Morse to account for the evolution of a series of ethnic/craft/class divisions in American society. He found that southern Europeans suffered treatment in many ways similar to Negroes. Another point largely consistent with the Marxist interpretation is raised by Berger and Luckmann who state that prejudicial stereotypes not only affect the victim's external fate but his/her very consciousness. There is a tendency of immigrants to join groups that affirm their identity. However, in so doing, behaviour is encouraged that approximates the stereotype's pronouncements. Thus the need for group solidarity provokes a situation where the perceived split of interests becomes self-perpetuating. See D. Morse, *The Peripheral Worker* (Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.57-66; and P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973), pp.184-185.

⁵⁶The very choice of the term "function" by Castles and Kosack in the article in the Nichols book is interesting considering the frequent attack on "functionalism" by Marxists. See S. Castles and G. Kosack, "Migrant Labour: The Function of Labour Migration on Western European Capitalism", *op cit.*, p.117.

unchallengeable. The economic determinism inherent in this approach and the unresolved questions about when immigrants constitute "cheap labour" has been criticized by Burrawoy who prefers an institutional explanation of immigration. Burrawoy does not deny that immigration may have economic advantages to capitalism. However he argues this cannot fully explain the social effects of immigration and, in any case, more detailed research on the effects on wages is required before such pronouncements can be made.⁵⁷

A further weakness found in many European studies was the failure to systematically examine the impact of immigrant labour on the work situation - arguably a primal source of alienation and working-class consciousness in the Marxist sense. Evidence presented with regard to this was fragmentary and there would seem to be some danger that what was being proffered was an accommodation of evidence to theory rather than a process of mutual interaction between investigation and analysis.⁵⁸ As will be shown, the industrial behaviour of immigrant workers and the responses of indigenous workers/unions to them cannot simply be viewed within the confines of the preceding analysis.

Another contentious point is the apparent conclusion that working-class consciousness would have been less divided in the absence of immigration of ethnically diverse groups of workers. None of the European studies showed conclusively that the processes and trends they described had fundamentally fragmented the working class or interfered with industrial solidarity in a crucial way although there is certainly evidence of some friction. At the very least, more detailed investigation is required if this case is to be supported. A more convincing and limited application of this argument to the United States at an earlier period is made by Aronowitz. He saw the institutionalization of the western working class into

⁵⁷He sees Castles and Kosack as being less guilty than Castells in this regard. See M. Burrawoy, "Migrant Labour in South Africa and the United States", in T. Nichols (ed.), *Capital and Labour*, *op cit.*, pp.140-143.

⁵⁸This methodological problem is hardly confined to Marxist theorists and is not meant to suggest that "objective" research is attainable in anything but a relative sense which recognizes ideological underpinnings. The point in question here is the balance between the two.

capitalism as resting not so much on capital's ability to buy off decisive sectors of the working class as the limiting structure of the working class itself. The domination of skilled workers, reformist unions and socialist leaders (Lenin's aristocracy of labour) could not have been achieved without the acquiescence of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.⁵⁹ The powerful cultural apparatus and hierarchical organization of labour within the working class generated ideologies which vitiated the emergence of solidarity. These divisions resulted from the historical development of the American working class as an amalgam of immigrants and indigenous workers in conjunction with the underlying social structure that emerged with the increasing division of labour. In other words, during the decisive period of industrialization from 1870 onwards, the alienation of immigrant labour in combination with technological change that effectively deskilled work while the social division of labour was maintained and even elaborated upon gave a false sense of mobility and entrenched conservative unions. At the same time, the reification of technology legitimated management's pre-eminence by giving objective meaning to the ideological purposes underlying the formation of complex bureaucratic organizations.⁶⁰

This argument has not gone unchallenged. Denis Wrong contends that ethnic diversity was not "a barrier to the birth of a powerful socialist movement".⁶¹ He feels the conventional explanation smacks too much of a conspiracy thesis that may well beg the question in offering at best a partial insight into the underlying historical causes. The evidence he presents, such as the high proportion of foreign-born membership (53 per cent) in the indigenous Socialist Party in 1920 casts doubt on some of the more crude explanations but does not fully come to grips with the dynamic and complex nature of Aronowitz's assessment. Wrong's rejection of any simple linking of ethnic diversity with the failure to develop class

⁵⁹See pp.20-23 herein and S. Aronowitz, *op cit.*, pp.139-140.

⁶⁰S. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, *op cit.*, pp.155-156.

⁶¹D.H. Wrong, "How Important is Social Class?", in D.H. Wrong and H.L. Gracey, *Readings in Introductory Sociology* (Macmillan, New York, 1977), pp.480-488.

consciousness has implications for the European studies.⁶² The discovery that ethnic divisions were not disappearing in the United States during the 1960s led some sociologists to suggest that class was less important than ethnicity or race.

The final argument strikes at the very heart of the Marxist interpretation and has also been put forward by sociologists examining the European situation particularly with regard to race divisions in, say, Britain. However, to try to explain the interaction of immigrants and indigenous workers without reference to the former's concentration in particular jobs and socio-economic strata would seem to be as one-sided as an explanation which relies solely on class positioning. The relative importance of the work situation in determining the industrial behaviour of immigrants and their interaction with indigenous workers would seem to be an issue that demands attention. In their study of the British situation, Allen and Smith regard as verifiable, the premise that migrants do not share the same labour market situation as indigenous workers.⁶³ They see the relegation of West Indians to menial tasks and the concentration of Asians in ethnic work gangs as being directly relevant to the question of class formation. In their view it weakened traditional industrial organization and while they admit this might be replaced by ethno-industrial cohesion that would enable collective action, effectively the working class has been split. However, again there is only a limited amount of evidence presented to support this conclusion.

A central question is whether the relegation of immigrants to inferior employment does actually lead to evolution of an aristocracy of labour amongst indigenous workers as suggested by Castles and Kosack. The notion of an "aristocracy of labour" was derived by Lenin via reference to developments in the British union

⁶²*Ibid.*, p.488.

⁶³S. Allen and C. Smith, "Race and Ethnicity in Class Formation: A Comparison of Asian and West Indian Workers", in F. Parkin (ed.), *The Social Analysis of Class Structure, op cit.*, pp.39-53.

movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁴ It describes the emergence of a privileged stratum - largely artisans and craftsmen - of the working class which institutionalized and sectionalized the labour movement by adopting a petty bourgeois philosophy of protecting its privileges, economism and reformism. The dangers inherent in uncritically applying this concept outside the context of Britain and the period it describes have been well illustrated by Hobsbawm, who suggests its main contemporary contribution is in highlighting the problems of spontaneity and "selfish" economism.⁶⁵ Whether this understanding is amenable to the interpretation of post-war European experiences with regard to immigrants is a contentious point to say the least.

The idea that a belief in privilege has been imparted which inhibits political and industrial solidarity/militancy rests on assumptions concerning the direction and nature of industrial struggle which are open to question. Both Hyman and Westergaard state that the degree to which capitalism can buy off or mystify dissent through prevailing institutions is limited.⁶⁶ Hyman argues

⁶⁴Hobsbawm provides a fairly lucid account of the origins and application of the notion. He points out the phrase "aristocracy of labour" enjoyed wide currency in English politico-social debate during the 1880s. Lenin ascribed to it a fairly specific meaning summarized above. See E.J. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (Quartet Books, London, 1977), pp.121-129.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, especially pp.128-129. An illustrated development of the labour aristocracy with specific reference to a number of British unions can be found in H.A. Turner's *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy*. His study tended to affirm the general validity of the concept, especially the desire of unions to create an environment favourable to their own established forms of organization and action. The latter was seen to be more important than reformism, and as such was not always favourable for reformism. At the same time this could also involve a rejection of constraints whose reformist values were questionable. While Turner saw a continuation of the aristocracy of labour in white-collar technical union organization, the recent militancy and politicization of these groups apparent in the United Kingdom may well call for a re-evaluation. See H.A. Turner, *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1962), chapter 3 and pp.364-369.

⁶⁶R. Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction* (Macmillan, 1975); and J.H. Westergaard, "Sociology: The Myth of Classlessness", in R. Blackburn (ed.), *Ideology and the Social Sciences* (Fontana, 1977), pp.119-163.

that there are limits to the extent trade unions can be accommodated by capitalism. He asserts that workers are not puppets but consciously interpret their situation and act upon it.⁶⁷ With the partial exception of Aronowitz, the Marxist writers referred to employ the idea of an aristocracy of labour in a crude form that overlooks the complexity of divisions amongst workers in favour of a somewhat arbitrary division. More importantly, it belies the ability of workers - immigrants and indigenees alike - to accurately perceive their work-place circumstances. If bourgeois mystification is really that powerful then there seems little reason for capitalism to resort to ethnically diverse groups of immigrants. In short, the argument is overstated. As Hyman points out, even the pursuit of simple economic goals by trade unions during periods of economic growth may eventually lead to greater political awareness. During recessions this awareness may be intensified.⁶⁸

The Marxist studies of immigration/immigrant labour with their emphasis on economic exploitation, government discrimination and social splintering do offer significant insights. Some of these points can be evaluated in the Australian context. Nevertheless, most of this work has tended to ignore aspects of industrial conflict and managerial practices especially at the work-place. Sources of variation or alternate influences are sacrificed to the prerequisites of a general rationale. If industrial conflict is endemic to industrial societies it would seem naive to presume immigration reduces the impetus for such struggle although its form may be altered. This point has, indeed, been recognized by Allen and Smith who admit the relationship between ethnicity/race, class and industrial conflict is complex.⁶⁹ Circumstances can be envisaged

⁶⁷R. Hyman, *Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unions* (Pluto Press, United Kingdom, 1973), pp.25-26 and pp.37-63; and R. Hyman, *Strikes* (Fontana, London, 1972), p.67.

⁶⁸R. Hyman, "Industrial Conflict and the Political Economy: Trends of the Sixties and Prospects for the Seventies", in R. Miliband and J. Saville (eds), *The Socialist Register 1973* (Merlin Press, London, 1974). See also R. Hyman, "Occupational Structure, Collective Organization and Industrial Militancy", in C. Crouch and A. Pizzorno (eds), *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe Since 1968*, vol. 2 (Macmillan, London, 1978), pp.35-70.

⁶⁹S. Allen and C. Smith, "Race and Ethnicity in Class Formation: A Comparison of Asian and West Indian Workers", in F. Parkin (ed.), *The Social Analysis of Class Structure, op cit.*, p.70.

where the former characteristics may act as either mobilizing or restraining agents in the industrial situation. This is an important step towards the view that the impact of immigrants on industrial conflict can vary widely between different situations and over time.

RESEARCH ON THE INDUSTRIAL BEHAVIOUR OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS: BRITAIN AFTER 1945 AND THE UNITED STATES 1880-1920

Given what has been said about the generalized Marxist interpretation there is a need to look at more specific studies of the industrial behaviour of immigrant workers. Two countries (and two periods) have been isolated for attention, namely post-war Britain and the United States between 1880 and 1920. Although this selection is somewhat arbitrary it will enable the identification of factors which have been seen to influence the attitudes and behaviour of immigrant workers, their interaction with indigenous workers, trade unions and employers. There can be no pretence that the survey presented is comprehensive or that the research findings are not often contradictory. The latter is hardly surprising given the divergent methodologies and approaches employed, and this in itself has been the cause of considerable debate.⁷⁰

In Britain, the studies of Patterson and others which emphasized the accommodation/assimilation process with regard to immigrant workers were heavily based on a consensus model of society, something incompatible with the Marxist perspective discussed.⁷¹ This represented not so much an intentional attack on Marxist interpretations as the desire to focus on the specific processes making for or restricting integration at the work-place, industry or regional level. These studies highlighted specific influences on the

⁷⁰See, for instance, S. Bentley, "Industrial Conflict, Strikes and Black Workers - Problems of Research and Methodology", *New Community*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1976, pp.127-138.

⁷¹See Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Study of West Indians in London* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965); and Sheila Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry* (Oxford University Press, 1968).

industrial behaviour of immigrants. A number of related factors commonly identified as salient included the immigrants' cultural and socio-economic background; the motivation for migrating; language difficulties and ignorance of local industrial norms; the effect of race and ethnic stereotyping; and the scale and rapidity with which immigrants enter a work-place, industry or occupation.

The focus on accommodation by Patterson partly reflected the period at which her research was undertaken (i.e. about the mid-1960s) when the number of immigrants was too small to lead to the complete displacement of indigenous workers. Rather they remained a minority in many factories although they did come to dominate some work-places and regions.⁷² The physical characteristics of British immigrants (Asians and West Indians constituted a high proportion of the total immigrant intake) led to a growing emphasis on race characteristics in research. From the late 1960s onwards, Rex and Moore initiated a shift away from the assimilation approach to one focusing on the plurality of race relations.⁷³ Their work and later studies rejected the assumption that there is an inevitable progression to absorption which is inherent in the immigrant/host approach.

Patterson found language had a key influence on the integration of migrants. Language difficulties precluded the immigrant from making close contact with work-mates and fluency was important in establishing the degree of acceptance by local workers. Communication problems made organization difficult, created training problems and accident risks and muted political activity. One response to this was the formation of ethnic work gangs or kinship groups that permitted low-cost hiring and induction policies. In turn, such groups segregated the work-force and often restricted communication to a one-way communication process via a bi-lingual leading hand or foreman. This could make immigrant workers more

⁷²S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit*.

⁷³J. Rex and R. Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict* (Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1967). See also S. Zubaida (ed.), *Race and Racism* (Tavistock, London, 1970); and W.W. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971).

vulnerable to managerial discretion. Misunderstanding over acceptable work rates (either slowness or rate-busting) created tension with management or local workers or both, especially if earnings were geared to some form of piece rate, bonus system or informal effort bargain. Moreover, Patterson argued language difficulties excluded immigrants from the more complex jobs and could become important as the ostensible reason for their relegation to the simplest, most monotonous and lowest paid jobs.⁷⁴ In turn, this discrimination could act as a further source of tension.

One problem with the above analysis is that it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish the ignorance that simply results from language problems from that which was a consequence of cultural misunderstanding or a specific ignorance of customary modes of industrial behaviour. Language may merely exacerbate more fundamental differences or alternatively exaggerate small differences. It has been frequently contended that immigrants from rural or non-industrial backgrounds are ignorant of the exercise of power through industrial bureaucratic channels and informal efforts on the part of workers to circumscribe this.⁷⁵ In her study, Patterson argued the core of long-term employees in a work-place played a crucial role in establishing group norms including those which formed the basis for inducting and possibly rejecting newcomers. Chadwick-Jones found that such rules or values had a critical impact on the introduction of minority groups and their subsequent participation in collective action.⁷⁶ The conventions established with regard to satisfactory work performance may differ substantially from those enunciated by management.

If a group is particularly cohesive and/or work is paid according to a bonus or piece-rate system, its notion of rate-busting may be of prime significance in appraising the acceptability of immigrants. Management is more immediately concerned with

⁷⁴S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry, op cit.*, pp.221-223 and pp.253-255.

⁷⁵Probably the classic study on rural immigrants is that by W.I. Thomas and I. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe* (R.O. Badger, Boston, 1920).

⁷⁶J. Chadwick-Jones, "The Acceptance and Socialization of Immigrant Workers in the Steel Industry", *Sociological Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, July 1964, pp.169-183.

slowness, inefficiency and carelessness. Even small differences in the concept of a fair day's work may provoke friction. Patterson saw the relationship of immigrant expectations and work performance as a prime determinant of their degree of acceptability. This appeared to vary markedly between different immigrant groups. She found evidence of a higher work motivation amongst some immigrant groups, notably the Dutch. However, for other groups such as West Indians, higher expectations in combination with low work performance led to conflict and friction with other workers and management.⁷⁷

The notion that the distinctive attitudes of immigrants may influence responses on the part of indigenous workers was also highlighted by Chadwick-Jones. In a study of the introduction of Italians into the British steel industry he found that the major obstacle to social learning and integration was the tendency of these immigrants to see their employment as a temporary prelude to something better.⁷⁸ Allen, who adopted a Marxist perspective, challenged the view that immigrants have a distinctive set of attitudes to work. In her survey of Pakistan workers she found that they were not more disposed to work overtime than indigenous workers as was frequently alleged. Their attitudes to work were primarily industrial, not ethnic in origin, although they did perceive some exclusion from trade unions.⁷⁹ This highlights the real danger of exaggerating the impact of immigrants on the pattern of industrial relations. Where possible, the social relations normally carried on in an industry or work-place must be examined before the modifications, if any, that immigrants make in this are analysed.

A study undertaken by McPherson examined the inter-industry correlation of unionization and the proportion of the work-force that was immigrant. Accounting for extraneous factors such as firm size and sex, McPherson found a high degree of unionization was

⁷⁷S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit.*, p.202, pp.257-258.

⁷⁸J. Chadwick-Jones, "The Acceptance and Socialization of Immigrant Workers in the Steel Industry", *op cit.*, p.178.

⁷⁹S. Allen, "Immigrants or Workers", in S. Zubaida (ed.), *Race and Racism*, *op cit.*, pp.99-126.

associated with a low proportion of immigrants and *vice versa*.⁸⁰ Allen's study offers some insights into the degree to which the low level of migrant unionization reflected a lack of interest in unions or a failure on the part of unions. In attempting to link the industrial and occupational structure to the degree of unionization, Allen found that while coloured workers were significantly less unionized than indigenous workers (16.2 per cent as opposed to 46 per cent), there was great similarity in the ranking of industries in order of the degree of unionization for both groups. This indicated that industry was an influential factor in explaining this discrepancy. An additional explanatory factor was the occupational distribution of immigrants and specifically their concentration in jobs where union coverage was traditionally weak. Part of the discrepancy remained unexplained and Allen concluded that where union organization was low immigrant unionization was lower. The defensive membership policies of weak unions who relied on customary differentials to transmit improvements from stronger to weaker sections of their ranks perpetuated this gap. Allen rejected the view that ethnic or race factors significantly influenced the predisposition of workers to join together.⁸¹

Many of the British studies suggested that responses to immigrants involved a learning process. Patterson saw the early phase of migrant arrival as one of accommodation rather than integration.⁸² Immigrants learned to equate tolerable levels of outward behaviour. Considerable social distance remained in less formal/more intimate relationships which might, however, represent the cornerstone of plant-level organization. A study undertaken by Wright⁸³ found that immigrants were accepted by work-mates but this still entailed a preference for indigenous workers. Even so, an established and accepted migrant was preferred to a native newcomer. The degree of acceptance was also influenced by the level of skill

⁸⁰K. McPherson and J. Gaitskell, *Immigrants and Employment: Two Case Studies in East London and Croydon* (The Institute of Race Relations, London, 1969).

⁸¹S. Allen, "Immigrants or Workers", *op cit.*, pp.106-121.

⁸²S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit.*, pp.7-8, pp.206-209.

⁸³P. Wright, *The Coloured Worker in British Industry* (Oxford University Press, London, 1968).

and state of a trade. Wright concluded that immigrants were most acceptable as a minority occupying the lower skill/status jobs in the work-place. Despite language and skill obstacles the immigrant worker could achieve a high degree of integration inside the work setting. Social interaction outside the work setting was minimal. Wright did not evaluate how much this was due to cultural exclusion and how much simply resulted from the rigid division of work and leisure activities which is characteristic of some groups of workers. Wright felt that cultural differences offered only a partial explanation and saw low social status, skill capabilities role expectations and labour shortages as more significant influences.⁸⁴

Brooks, whose study of the London Transport Authority made use of the immigrant/host approach, contended that race and cultural differences aggravated conflict already inherent in the work situation.⁸⁵ The introduction of coloured labour was associated with a perceived loss of status by indigenous workers. They also expressed fears that immigrants would prove to be unorganizable. When the latter fear proved to be groundless this acted as a significant step in winning acceptance for immigrant workers. Prolonged exposure enhanced the acceptability of immigrant workers, especially in those areas where status was not an important consideration. Patterson found evidence supporting the notion that the extent to which divisions created by the introduction of immigrant labour will gradually erode depended on the size and rapidity of the influx.⁸⁶

In some employment areas immigrants have been employed in groups which would make this learning process difficult. While this could disrupt customary modes of job regulation, the effect might be only temporary. In his study of Pakistani foundry workers, Rimmer found that after an initial period of disruption immigrants evolved their own pattern of job regulation.⁸⁷ Rejecting the

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pp.210-219.

⁸⁵D. Brooks, *Race and Labour in the London Transport Authority* (Oxford University Press, 1975), pp.322-327.

⁸⁶S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit.*, pp.231-232.

⁸⁷M. Rimmer, *Race and Industrial Conflict* (Heinemann, London, 1972).

cruder exponents of both the immigrant/host and race relations approaches, Rimmer emphasizes the importance of analysing the social relations at work and features of this which give rise to conflict/prejudice and accommodation.⁸⁸

Patterson's study offers some insights into the operation of customary barriers in Britain with regard to immigrants. An attempt was made to assess policy and practice both at the formal union level, local branch and amongst the settled labour core in each work-place. Not surprisingly, she found craft unions were generally more restrictive than industrial [sic] or general unions.⁸⁹ To a degree this reflected different strategies with regard to job regulation.⁹⁰ Some craft unions used the pre-entry closed shop to exclude immigrants. Strict qualification standards when combined with the immigrants' disadvantages regarding age and nepotism in apprentice hiring made it almost impossible for them to join a trade. Even when there was no conscious discrimination the immigrant was unlikely to be capable of meeting entry requirements.

Patterson found that trade union opposition varied according to a number of factors. There was evidence that early opposition declined particularly when it was seen that immigrants were commonly drawn into industries where labour shortages were sufficient not to pose a threat to local labour. The union response also varied according to the level involved. Patterson found that the formal policy enunciated by the Trade Union Congress was antidiscriminatory. However the attitude amongst industrial unions [sic] varied and opposition was most intense at the local branch and work-place level. In some unions such as the Transport and General Workers' Union, the response varied widely at different levels while for others, such as the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, there was growing evidence of solidarity amongst workers.⁹¹ Overall, there were few overt obstructions to migrant participation in union hierarchies. At the same time language problems and lack of familiarity with union

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pp.68-72.

⁸⁹S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit.*, p.243.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p.243.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p.242.

conventions represented considerable obstruction to this.⁹²

While many of the foregoing studies suggest that the introduction of immigrants may be associated with a degree of hostility and (perhaps) the disruption of pre-existing industrial practices, this is hardly an unqualified demonstration of the argument that such effects break down industrial solidarity. Patterson did find evidence of the implementation of quotas on the number of migrants at the work-place level. These measures were generally undertaken without the official sanction of unions.⁹³ While there is evidence that union officials often held stereotyped views of immigrants, the implications of this for union organization are uncertain.⁹⁴ The failure of immigrants to form their own unions is a crude indication of their acceptance of the prevailing situation. However, the inferior legal and political status of immigrants in this regard cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, the studies tend to indicate that migrants do strive to win acceptance and their isolation from unions has not reached the stage of direct confrontation. This is consistent with Allen's view that the attitudes of immigrants are primarily a consequence of the employment situation and not fundamentally dissimilar to those of indigenous workers.

Overall, what is also evident from many of the studies is the complexity of the interaction between immigrant and indigenous workers and the operation of an accommodation process whereby immigrants progressively learn local values and are increasingly accepted, though some divisions remain. The significance of both temporary and residual divisions for industrial action is not made

⁹²Daniel was sceptical of the commitment of British unions to eradicating discrimination. In his study he found the incidence of perceived discrimination to be higher amongst immigrants who were union members than those who were not (39-44 per cent as compared to 35 per cent respectively). This may merely indicate, however, that immigrants who join unions are, or become, more aware of their rights or the absence thereof. W.W. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England*, *op cit.*, p.133.

⁹³Patterson argued quota and redundancy provisions could have positive effects in promoting the progressive acceptance of immigrants. S. Patterson, *Immigrants in Industry*, *op cit.*, pp.214-215.

⁹⁴See, for instance, S. Allen and J. Bornat, *Unions and Immigrant Workers and How They See Each Other* (Runnymede Industrial Unit, London, 1970); and Beryl Radin, "Coloured Workers and British Trade Unions", *Race*, vol. VIII, no. 2, July 1966, pp.157-174.

clear by the studies discussed apart from Rimmer's. He found that even where the introduction of immigrants was of sufficient scale to disrupt traditional methods of job regulation, new modes were evolved.⁹⁵ Significantly, the above studies suggest that some misunderstanding and friction are an inevitable by-product of the immigration of culturally distinct groups and one not necessarily advantageous to employers. In short, to see such divisions purely in terms of exploitation is unduly limiting. This is not to say that exploitation will not occur.

It is not apparent that ethnic divisions directly challenge union solidarity. It can also be postulated that even when immigrants are dissatisfied with the union leadership this needs to be compared to that of indigenous workers if assessment is to be meaningful. Allen's argument that the attitudes of immigrants are predominantly a product of their employment situation and Patterson's finding on the divergent responses of unions suggest questions which demand such a comparison. Without denying that language, culture and stereotyping may contribute to immigrant workers' isolation, the line between this and frustration related to the failings of a particular union needs to be examined - even if a line may be difficult to draw with precision. Another, and related possibility, not really investigated, was that if there is a lower level of immigrant involvement in union affairs this could - far from disrupting pre-existing patterns of conflict modification - actually tend to reinforce institutional arrangements including the union leadership's industrial strategy by insulating it from the likelihood of rank and file challenge. Both these propositions will be explored in the course of this study.

The British studies discussed do make contributions to explaining the likely influences on the industrial behaviour of immigrant workers, especially the progressive process of accommodation. There appears to have been less emphasis on the changes in organizations and the strategies of both unions and management which could be brought about by the wholesale displacement of indigenous workers by immigrants. One apparent reason for this is the relatively smaller scale of immigration to the United

⁹⁵M. Rimmer, *Race and Industrial Conflict*, *op cit.*, chapter 5.

Kingdom than say post-war Australia or the United States between 1880 and 1920. A further distinction is that immigration in the latter two cases involved no significant influx of coloured immigrants as occurred in Britain. The race relations emphasis in British studies appears somewhat out of place in Australia or at least requires lengthy reinterpretation.

The apparent similarity of the patterns of migration after 1945 in Australia and that of the United States between 1880 and 1920 (roughly), namely the large-scale introduction of southern and eastern European immigrants into a populace until then dominated by those of northern European and particularly British (including Irish) origin has not escaped the attention of writers. Several have gone so far as to suggest a similar response on the part of indigenous workers.⁹⁶ Whether this broad similarity in the ethnic content justifies comparison between countries at different historical periods (arguably a critical stage of industrial development for both), is open to question. However, the extensive research on this period in the United States does offer an opportunity for raising ideas which may be explored in the Australian context, even if the findings are largely ones of contrast.

It is worth noting that the comparisons have not been one-sided. At an earlier period American studies of the labour movement used the Australian experiences as a basis for comparison. During the very peak phase of the U.S. migration, Commons and Andrews sought to explain the better industrial conditions of Australian labourers *vis à vis* their American counterparts in the following terms:

In the United States labor is divided both politically and industrially by the negro and the immigrant. During the last twenty years the bulk of our immigration is from people receiving relatively low wages even for Europe. The immigration into Australasia has been comparatively light. It has almost all come from the

⁹⁶In her article, "Migrants and Trade Unions", June Hearn makes this point and cites Kurt B. Mayer who wrote: "Since native Australians look down upon immigrants and non-British migrants in particular, this threatens the working class claims to equality. The parallel with the United States, in the 1880s is quite striking." Quoted in June Hearn, "Migrants and Trade Unions", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation* (Monograph No. 2, Clearing House on Migration Issues, Ecumenical Migration Centre and Centre for Urban Research and Action, Melbourne, 1975), p.68.

British Isles, from a people receiving the highest wages in Europe. There have been no difficulties presented by conflicting races and different language. There has been no large body of disenfranchised and unnaturalized labourers ... The entire labor force, not merely the skilled workmen, as in some of our eastern and southern states, can be mobilized at the polls.⁹⁷

The latter power was seen by Commons and Andrews to be crucial in enabling the introduction of compulsory arbitration/wages boards following the disastrous industrial defeats of the 1890s. This created institutional protection for the union movement. The wage boards introduced in some states rapidly extended their coverage to include all manual workers. In effect, arbitration created minimum wage levels for unskilled workers.

In contrast to this, Commons and Andrews argued that continuous large-scale immigration to the United States contributed to the competition amongst labour which, as they put it, meant there was little competition for workers amongst employers. This, in combination with language difficulties and the divergent customs of immigrants, put a further barrier in the way of already beleaguered unions.⁹⁸ At the same time they felt unions would have to play a prime role in instituting "the same standards as the American [sic]."⁹⁹

Thirteen years later, when the peak phase of U.S. Immigration had passed, Carter L. Goodrich made a further and in many ways intriguing attempt to compare the Australian and American labour movements. As part of his assessment of their relative strengths and political influence he stated:

Moreover, if we turn from the importation of particular ideas and of particular leaders to the importation of people in general, neither Australian nor American eyes are likely to miss the significant difference. To Australia 'immigrants have come in comparatively small numbers; to America in a flood-tide of immigration.' Indeed there was almost no net immigration in the 20 years during which the Labor Party climbed from nothing to the Treasury benches, and in the same period

⁹⁷J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1915), p.144.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p.170.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p.74.

the United States received an influx of twice the present population of Australia. Still more important is the matter of sources from which newcomers came. With the exception of the Chinese and Kanakas, whose presence served more as a stimulus to labour organization than as permanently serious competition, immigrants to Australia have come not merely from the more advanced European areas where trade unionism was well known but almost exclusively from the British Isles alone. To America, on the other hand, the great bulk of immigrants have always come from non-industrial countries with little knowledge of industry and less of unionism. And in recent decades, until the post-war 'quota' restrictions most have come from Southern and Eastern Europe, and have been cut off, not merely from the older settlers, but from each other as well, by all manner of social, cultural, religious and linguistic barriers. The excitement over the presence of a few thousand Italians and a handful of Maltese in North Queensland can give Australians only the slightest realization of the effects of this amazing mixture of races; but its bearing on the present question may be suggested by the problem of the labour organizer who must frequently post his strike notices in 6 or 7 languages. The contrast with the homogeneous working class of Australia can not be exaggerated.¹⁰⁰

The interpretation of Commons and Andrews and Goodrich raises interesting questions about the pre-1945 response of Australian trade unions to immigration which was hostile in general and included a particularly strong antipathy to non-European (especially when indentured) immigrants. This subject will be dealt with in some depth in Chapter 2 because it forms an essential basis for understanding reactions after 1945. There was strong hostility to Asian and other non-European immigration to the United States both inside and outside the labour movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Legislation was passed excluding "Orientals" in 1882 and again in 1924.¹⁰¹ Unlike Australia, the United States already had a significant non-European population in the Negroes. However, these were not used as a major source of industrial labour until well into the twentieth century. One may

¹⁰⁰Carter L. Goodrich, "The Australian and American Labour Movement", *The Economic Record*, vol. IV, no. 7, November 1928, pp.203-204.

¹⁰¹J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation*, *op cit.*, p.67; and R.M. Pavalko, "Racism and the New Immigration: A Reinterpretation of the Assimilation of White Ethnics in American Society", *Sociology and Social Research*, vol. 65, no. 1, October 1980, p.70.

question Goodrich's somewhat glib assertion that immigrants had always come from non-industrial backgrounds. As Taft notes, prior to the 1880s the majority of immigrants came from northern Europe (the British Isles, Germany, France and Scandinavia) and those possessing industrial work skills were specifically sought through contract arrangements.¹⁰²

Of more immediate importance is the character of U.S. immigration between 1880 and the First World War. This involved the introduction of millions of immigrants from southern, central and eastern Europe.¹⁰³ The nature of this infusion has been succinctly stated by Taft:

Immigrants provided an almost inexhaustible supply of labour for the burgeoning economy of the later decades of the nineteenth century and the years before World War I. Inevitably they found jobs in industries employing large numbers of native born workers and earlier arrivals. During the last decades of the last century Slovaks and Magyrs replaced native workers and those of German, Irish and English origin in the iron and steel industry; in slaughtering and meat packing German and Irish workers were ousted by Lithuanians, Bohemians and Moravians. Native born and German and English workers were replaced in the bituminous coal industry by Slovaks, Poles and Italians; and Poles and Italians were substituted for English, French Canadians and Irish workers in the woollen and worsted and other kinds of textile mills. Large numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants moved into the clothing industry and metalliferous mining. In many other industries the native workers and earlier immigrants were pushed out of the semi-skilled and unskilled jobs and they became concentrated in the skilled and supervisory positions.¹⁰⁴

It has been generally accepted that the great majority of later immigrants came from rural backgrounds and possessed little or no prior industrial experience. The degree of disparity of this group in terms of culture, customs, values, norms of behaviour and socio-economic background with the pre-existing population (native-born and earlier arrivals) and indeed amongst

¹⁰²P. Taft, *Organized Labor in American History* (Harper and Row, New York, 1964), pp.299-300.

¹⁰³Over the longer period 1860 to 1920 Brecher states a total of 28.5 million immigrants arrived in the U.S. See J. Brecher, *Strike!* (South End Press, Boston, 1977), p.xxiii.

¹⁰⁴P. Taft, *Organized Labor in American History*, *op cit.*, p.300.

themselves (at least in terms of language) has frequently been seen to have had a critical effect on their subsequent behaviour within industry and their relations with indigenous workers and the unions which the latter dominated. While there has been considerable variation in the chain of causation and factors emphasized by labour historians and sociologists, the majority agreed that the effect was significant. Even Aronowitz, who emphasized the work situation itself as the key determinant of industrial behaviour, nevertheless made the point that Italian and Polish peasants made an ideal disciplined work-force given their humble pre-industrial origins and aura for established authority.¹⁰⁵ This view is shared by Brody whose study of steelworkers also stressed the instrumental attitude of immigrant workers which flowed from patterns of chain migration and their belief, at least in the first instance, that migration was essentially a temporary venture for economic improvement.¹⁰⁶

Goodrich and Commons and Andrews were, in fact, merely enunciating a conventional view amongst contemporary analysts of the American labour movement - and one supported, modified and elaborated upon by many more recent studies of the period - when they argued that the large-scale arrival of southern, eastern and central European immigrants seriously undermined and fragmented the American labour movement in its formative stages of evolving to a mass basis, hindered trade union organization and action and eroded working conditions.¹⁰⁷ In his classic *Theory of the Labor Movement* Selig Perlman contended that the heterogeneity of the American working class contributed to the evolution of a job-conscious union movement with the limited objective of wage and job

¹⁰⁵S. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, *op cit.*, p.300.

¹⁰⁶Brody did, however, suggest that these attitudes did change, thereby influencing the industrial behaviour of immigrants. D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Non Union Era* (Harper and Row, New York, 1969), pp.96-111.

¹⁰⁷For another example of a more detailed work undertaken under the auspices of Commons which makes continuous reference to the adverse impact of immigration on unions see J.R. Commons and Associates, *History of Labor in the United States* (A.M. Kelley, New York, 1966, reprint), vol. I and vol. III. For examples of more recent studies (other than those already mentioned), see G. Rosenblum, *Immigrant Workers: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism* (Basic Books, New York, 1973); and T.R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble: A History of American Labor* (Delacorte Press, New York, 1971).

control.¹⁰⁸ Numerous more specific studies have modified or even challenged some presumptions of the above argument.¹⁰⁹

As elsewhere, the American union movement was generally hostile to non-European and European immigration, especially when it was "assisted", or involved direct recruitment by U.S. employers via contract arrangements. In 1868 the efforts of the Knights of Labor and craft unions were largely responsible for the repeal of a law passed in 1864 to encourage immigration.¹¹⁰ While immigration did slow in the 1870s this trend reversed in the next decade when southern, eastern and central European immigrants began to arrive in large numbers. Unions were powerless to stop this and their only victories were confined to preventing the introduction of immigrants under contract to local employers - frequently at rates of pay lower than those prevailing in the United States. In 1885, 1887 and 1888 Alien Contract Acts were passed by Congress which tried to exclude those "who had provided themselves with means of support in advance."¹¹¹ The introduction of immigrant labour under contract or indenture was also a source of considerable concern to unions in Australia at this time and will be referred to in Chapter 2.

Taft did not see racism to be the central reason for the antagonistic attitudes of indigenous workers and the efforts at restriction by unions, although racist/ethnocentric doctrines held

¹⁰⁸This is quoted by M. Harrington who supports Perlman's view about the impact of immigrants. This notion also forms the basis of Rosenblum's study. See M. Harrington, "Old Working Class: New Working Class", in *Dissent*, Winter 1972, p.144; and G. Rosenblum, *Immigrant Labor: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism*, *op cit.*

¹⁰⁹For instance see D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*; V.R. Greene, *The Slavic Community on Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); M.G. Kasni and D.J. Ollila Jnr (eds), *For the Common Good: Finnish Immigrants and the Radical Response to Industrial America* (Tyomies Society, Wisconsin, 1977); C. Ross, *The Finn Factor in American Labor, Culture and Society* (Parta Printers, New York, 1977); G. Kolko, *Main Currents in American History* (Harper and Row, New York, 1976), chapter 3; and Almot Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike* (University of Chicago Press, 1942).

¹¹⁰J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation*, *op cit.*, p.70.

¹¹¹P. Taft, *Organized Labor in American History*, *op cit.*, p.305; and J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation*, *op cit.*, p.71.

wide sway in the community:

The attitudes of organized labor towards immigration and minorities have not been based on racial doctrine or feelings. Whether opposition was expressed to Chinese or southern or eastern European immigrants, the basis of the view was fear of the effect of a constant inflow of new workers upon the supply of labor and wages. The children and grandchildren of the immigrants of the 1880s have not welcomed Negro and Puerto Rican workers into their industries and unions with greater enthusiasm than was shown to their ancestors by older settlers. The immigrant question can be understood by reference to the attitude of minorities, as they sprang from the same fear - increasing the supply of labor.¹¹²

Commons and Andrews state the argument more boldly:

It cannot be denied that the newer immigrants were as a rule more willing to work for less wages, to endure harder conditions, and to lower the general plane of living of unskilled laborers. It is on account of this displacement of American [sic] labor by immigrants, a phenomenon which has been at times emphasized to the point of exaggeration, that the working class so eagerly desired the restriction of immigration and the contract labor laws were the first attempt to do this.¹¹³

Inadvertently Taft and Commons and Andrews do betray that ethnocentrism certainly helped fuel the fears of competition. This is hardly surprising given that all were contemporary witnesses and thereby prone to adopt the prevailing prejudices of the time - even if Taft wrote some forty years after the events. At the same time, they do give an insight into the perceptions of union members and officials which is supported by the latter's own statements.¹¹⁴ Some at least recognized that commitment to restriction was not enough. Alice Henry, a contemporary union activist, probably summed

¹¹²p. Taft, *Organized Labor in American History*, *op cit.*, p.xix.

¹¹³The latter is a direct reference to the Alien Contract Acts. These were further enlarged in scope in 1907. Commons and Andrews compared the latest amended Act to similar legislation passed in Australia in 1905. They suggest the Australian legislation was less stringent because it empowered the Minister for External Affairs to permit admission so long as this did not affect an industrial dispute and that wages and conditions under the contract were not inferior to those prevailing locally. J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation*, *op cit.*, pp.72-73.

¹¹⁴For instance, the miners' leader, John Mitchell. See J. Mitchell, *Organized Labor* (American Book and Bible House, Philadelphia, 1903), pp.176-185.

up the views of a number of her colleagues when she suggested that earlier indignant attempts at restriction were always in vain, and experienced trade unionists, admitting this, were better advised to devote all their energies towards organizing these "unwelcome arrivals".¹¹⁵ Significantly, she suggested that irrespective of the overall support for restriction of immigration, there were wide differences of opinion amongst trade unionists.¹¹⁶

As noted earlier, Aronowitz argues that divisions based on period of arrival and ethnic background, race and sex became institutionalized within the occupational hierarchy and labour market of the U.S.A. and rivetted within the consciousness of the working class, weakening the potential for united action.¹¹⁷ The diverse arrivals after 1880 were relegated to the lowest paid, most menial tasks and subjected to the most intense exploitation through mechanisms such as out-work, piece-work, "welfare plans" and shift-work aside from the time-honoured long hours, supervisory harassment and speed-ups. Montgomery suggests that immigrants did not require sophisticated managerial control. While they soon learnt the value of output restriction they always faced competition from new arrivals.¹¹⁸

Pavalko suggests there was a direct connection between the introduction of "scientific management" and immigrants:

"Classical" organizational theory or "scientific management" emerged during this period as a partial solution to the problems of organizing illiterate, inexperienced immigrant workers. The main point of scientific management was to simplify the job, break work tasks down into their smallest components, and assign workers to specialized, repetitious jobs that could be easily and closely supervised. Under these conditions the ability of workers to speak and understand English became less relevant. 'Scientifically managed' work tasks could be learned through imitation. In this regard it is no accident that Taylor's most famous experiments which formed the basis of the theory of scientific management were done in steel mills (Midvale and Bethlehem), an industry where immigrant

¹¹⁵Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman* (D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1915), p.127.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.128.

¹¹⁷See pp.21-22 herein.

¹¹⁸David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979), chapter 2, especially pp.42-43.

workers were concentrated (Taylor, 1911a, 1911b). While most analyses of scientific management assess it in terms of its assumptions about human motivation and its internal validity as a theory (Tansky, 1970; Moore, 1951; Schneider, 1969), the contention here is that it also served as a practical plan for organizing and maximizing the productivity and profit of an immigrant labor force.¹¹⁹

This is consistent with Brody's analysis of the connection between immigration and the rationalization of steel production in the U.S. involving the introduction of new technology, more intensive work patterns, the deskilling of craftsmen and breakdown in craft unionism which left a vacuum in union organization for many years - something that should not be overlooked in connection with Taylor's experiments.¹²⁰

At the same time, Brody emphasized the development of informal hiring, selection and accommodation systems amongst immigrants.¹²¹ Montgomery makes a similar point with regard to hiring networks amongst immigrants generally.¹²² He also argues that immigrants adopted their own forms of output restriction and other modes of dissent such as absenteeism and labour turnover. Foremen and ethnic gang bosses were sometimes active leaders in the former. On the New York wharves, where many immigrants were employed, the availability of labour discouraged the introduction of labour-saving machinery such as cranes. The absence of unions contributed to a casual, even dangerously simple, approach to safety.¹²³ Finally, most American employers still believed in simple piece-work and saw no need to introduce the more elaborate methods advocated by Taylor.

Montgomery does not deny that immigrants made a valuable contribution to the large and rapidly growing industries based on

¹¹⁹R.M. Pavalko, "Racism and the New Immigration: A Re-interpretation of the Assimilation of White Ethnics in America", *Sociology and Social Research*, vol. 65, no. 1, October 1980, p.70.

¹²⁰See David Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*, chapters II, III, IV and V.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, especially pp.98-105.

¹²²David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, *op cit.*, p.36.

¹²³In his study, Brody found immigrants were particularly susceptible to injury and suffered extreme deprivation after it. David Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*, pp.100-101.

mass production and a loose association with Taylor's philosophy at least at its most basic level of job splintering and deskilling. Immigrants from rural backgrounds formed the bulk of the intake. Even so, large numbers did arrive with artisan skills but were obliged to abandon these for want of suitable employment opportunities. In the building trades where the reorganization of production methods was not so dramatic as elsewhere, and migrants came to dominate some of the smaller specialized trades such as marble cutting (Italians), nearly half the foreign-born carpenters left the trade in the first decade of the twentieth century. The availability of immigrants discouraged metropolitan employers from training apprentices, thereby eroding the apprenticeship system which was vital for craft unions.¹²⁴ Montgomery argues that for the great mass of immigrants the skill and knowledge required for manufacturing occupations were embodied not in their training but in the technical organization of the factory itself.¹²⁵ However, he adds a note of caution with regard to a presumption of all-pervasive rationality on the part of management:

On the other hand, the experience of immigrants within these vast incarnations of science in the service of capital made a mockery of Taylor's appeals for scientific selection and training of workmen. In general, immigrants were assigned to their tasks and even transferred from one work group to another, by the absolute authority of their foremen. They learned what to do and how to do it from their workmates ... In short, the immigrants' encounter with the factory impressed them not so much with system and rationality as with arbitrary, petty tyranny wielded by gang-leaders, foremen and skilled hiring bosses.¹²⁶

The foregoing discussion of the interaction of immigrants with managerial practices offers some insights which could be explored in the Australian context.

A seemingly crucial factor in the amount of arbitrary authority exercised by various levels of management was the absence of any effective countervailing force. In coal mining and the Chicago packing works immigrants encountered strong unions who were also

¹²⁴D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America, op cit.*, p.34.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p.34.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, pp.35-36.

open to them and they demonstrated no reluctance in using these bodies to frustrate employer pressure.¹²⁷ These instances, however, were exceptional. Craft unions, which formed by far the most stable and entrenched part of the American union movement, practised ethnic exclusion in an effort to retain their control over trade skills which many were unable to uphold by strict adherence to the traditional methods, namely enforcing apprenticeship and skill recognition criteria. According to Brooks:

The craft unions came into existence during a period of heavy immigration. Frequently, the immigration of unskilled workmen was encouraged by employers to break down high labor costs. The unskilled immigrants were also seen as a threat to established skills. To protect their jobs, their crafts and skills, skilled workmen frequently formed unions based on exclusion of recent immigrants, or other ethnic groups. Autonomy, in part, was developed to prevent any likelihood of the national labor centres insisting that a trade should be open to all qualified workmen.

Needless to say, each group protected its own as it organized its trade. The process - and results - were markedly different in industries where employers followed a deliberate policy of putting one immigrant group against another as means of forestalling unionization ... This deliberate policy is one reason why unions failed to secure an early foothold in industrial plants. Among the skilled trades ethnic lines reinforced craft solidarity. But among the unskilled in the factories worker solidarity was defeated by the babel of tongues.¹²⁸

Again, the question of craft unions, skill recognition and immigrants would seem to be worth examining in the Australian context.

Exclusion was not really an option for the embryonic unions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers such as the miners, who were unable to erect a barrier of occupational expertise reinforced by ethnocentrism, but who saw their members' wages and living standards as being threatened by immigrants.¹²⁹ Commons cites considerable public debate with regard to the impact of additional labour and its dubious necessity to meet local requirements:

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹²⁸ T.R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble*, *op cit.*, pp.75-77.

¹²⁹ For an example of their views see John Mitchell, *Organized Labor*, *op cit.*, pp.170-185.

Employers, during the period of industrial development after 1898 wanted labor - abundant labor, cheap labor, strong backed labor, in large measure common labor and always docile labor. The wage earners, not denying that some immigration was necessary, wanted protection against labor that would undercut wages, flood the labor market, and be difficult to organize.¹³⁰

Leaving aside the allegation of docility for the moment, there can be little, if any, doubt that the ready supply of additional labour and multiplicity of different languages, customs, etc. posed real difficulties for union organizers. On occasion, recently arrived immigrants were used as strike-breakers.¹³¹ Yet such actions were hardly confined to immigrants, and contemporary accusations of this appear to have been exaggerated.¹³²

Of greater importance, it would seem, was the absence, in many instances, of an organized core of more experienced workers to help immigrants adjust as in the British case. As already mentioned, immigrants frequently entered industries where there was little effective unionization of workers. The high level of labour instability hindered attempts at collective action. A number of writers have also pointed to inter-ethnic rivalry and friction. In her study of the garment industry, Kessler-Harris argued ethnic antagonism amongst women workers interfered with the efforts of organizers who were themselves often guilty of favouritism.¹³³ Whether such divisions were a cause of the union's weakness, a consequence of it, or perhaps a combination of the two is a moot point for which no clear evidence emerges.

At times, immigrant workers amply demonstrated a capacity to engage in militant industrial action and even took a leading part in

¹³⁰J.R. Commons and Associates, *History of Labor in the United States*, *op cit.*, vol. III, p.25. See also chapter II for a lengthy discussion of the immigration question.

¹³¹See, for instance, D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*, p.137.

¹³²This has been demonstrated by R.L. Erlich, "Immigrant Strike-breaking Activity: A Sampling of Opinion Expressed in The National Labor Tribune 1878-1885", *Labor History*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1974, pp.529-542.

¹³³A. Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and their Union", *Labor History*, vol. 17, no. 1, Winter 1976, pp.11-12.

some struggles, especially when they were able to make use of ethnic/community ties to secure support for the strike.¹³⁴ The central cause underpinning these revolts was the industrial exploitation of immigrants "which ignited culturally shaped responses in the absence of a clear identification with the established union movement."¹³⁵ During the peak years of its activities the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) or "Wobblies" who saw themselves as the champion of groups of workers neglected by other unions, particularly unskilled immigrants, and whose predisposition for direct action could easily be appreciated by recent arrivals, made significant inroads into organizing foreign-born workers. Moreover, the economic boom after 1910 created an environment that helped unleash a rash of strikes.¹³⁶

Just how exceptional militancy was on the part of immigrants is obviously crucial in coming to some understanding of the impact they had on union organization. Unfortunately, it appears no historian has attempted this massive and difficult task. What can be said is that the inferior legal and political status of immigrants made those who became political/industrial activists extremely vulnerable to intimidation.¹³⁷ As early as 1903 the U.S. government had moved to screen out dissidents from amongst immigrants when legislation was passed excluding anarchists.¹³⁸ For those immigrants already resident there is strong evidence to show that those seen as agents of division and class struggle received particular attention. It can hardly be viewed as merely coincidental that the suppression of the I.W.W. and the wave of "anti-red" hysteria which followed the

¹³⁴For evidence of this see V.R. Greene, *The Slavic Community on Strike*, *op cit.*; D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*; and D. Brecher, *Strike!*, *op cit.*, pp.119-123.

¹³⁵S.M. Miller, *The Radical Immigrant* (Twayne Publishers, New York, 1974), pp.117-118.

¹³⁶D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, *op cit.*, p.43.

¹³⁷Attempting to distinguish between political and industrial activists would be a futile exercise since the two were commonly inextricably intertwined. For a good "grass roots" discussion of activism amongst immigrants by a foreign-born activist see E. Goldman, *Living My Life* (Dover Publications, New York, 1970), volume 1.

¹³⁸J.R. Commons and J.B. Andrews, *Principles of Labor Legislation*, *op cit.*, p.69.

Russian revolution culminated in the arrest and later deportation of thousands of immigrants (mostly eastern European) in 1919 and 1920.¹³⁹ According to Pavalko:

By and large, these arrests and deportations were the result of participation in strikes and political demonstrations... These events should be viewed as one aspect of a more general official policy of persecution and harassment of immigrants, especially those suspected of radical political and economic views and activities. During the first three decades of the century the abrogation of civil rights and due process by the U.S. Department of Justice in dealing with aliens was extensive. The discretion given by the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in the handling of deportation cases made them virtually omnipotent. In addition, the use of the U.S. Army and state militias as well as local vigilante groups to protect strike breakers and harass, attack and arrest striking workers represented the exercise of physical power in the control of 'radical' immigrants.¹⁴⁰

Frequently, the industrial actions of immigrants and their socio-economic conditions were seen to derive, somehow, from the characteristics of immigrants themselves. Alice Henry, a contemporary union observer already referred to, gave a more astute interpretation:

The immigrant problem [sic] is only a slightly varied expression of the general social and economic problem. It focuses public attention because the case of the immigrant is so extreme. For instance, whatever conditions, industrial and civic, press hardly upon the American workers, these conditions press with yet greater hardship upon the alien ... The immigrant has hitherto been used as an excuse to permit the dehumanizing of our cities, he has been used industrially as an instrument to make life harder for the hardly pressed classes of workers whom he joined on his arrival here.¹⁴¹

The evolving public, union and employer attitudes to southern, central and eastern European immigrants are worth examining briefly.

¹³⁹Not all those arrested were deported. However, 2,635 were deported during 1919 alone. R.M. Pavalko, "Racism and the New Immigration", *op cit.*, p.71. For a more general discussion of government actions against immigrants and anti-communist hysteria see D. Caute, *The Great Fear* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1978).

¹⁴⁰R.M. Pavalko, "Racism and the New Immigration", *op cit.*, p.71.

¹⁴¹A. Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, *op cit.*, pp.118-119.

By the turn of the century when immigration was at its height, strong moves for restriction were beginning to emerge. The union movement continued to stress the adverse effects of unrestricted immigration on domestic wages, living standards and unemployment. This was well illustrated by the findings of the federal Immigration Commission established in 1907 and the submission put to it by American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) president, Samuel Gompers.¹⁴² Pavalko, nevertheless, argues there was a strong racist component both in the Commission itself and more particularly in bodies such as the Immigration Restriction League and the Eugenics Movement who joined the A.F.L. in putting submissions before it.¹⁴³ These and several other bodies - all largely composed of professionals, academics, authors, politicians and other elements of the middle class - argued that southern Europeans and "slave" races were inferior and would dilute Anglo-Saxon/Nordic American stock and its energetic characteristics. According to Pavalko there was close co-operation between the League and the Eugenics Movement in popularizing racist ideas and giving it a "scientific" basis. As such, he sees them as playing a crucial role in securing the implementation of the Immigration Commission's recommendations in the form of restrictive legislation passed in 1917 (the introduction of a language test for adult immigrants), 1921 (the implementation of a quota for each nationality), 1924 (reduction of the quota) and 1927 (alteration of the quota).¹⁴⁴ This would seem to explain at least partly the achievement of restriction which had proved beyond the powers of the American union movement.

Imminent success in restriction diverted attention to the assimilation of immigrants already resident under the banner of the "Americanization Movement". Bodies such as the National American Civic League saw the immigrant as being highly susceptible to becoming involved in disorder at the behest of radicals.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²R.M. Pavalko, "Racism and the New Immigration", *op cit.*, pp.59-60.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p.62.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p.69.

Promoters of the movement included employers who found it increasingly difficult to control immigrant involvement in industrial troubles. Referring to the Pennsylvania coal mining industry one such promoter stated:

The Slavs dominate in the mines. Strikes are not less frequent [than before their entry into the mines] but more difficult to control, and the necessity of frequent state control by militia, the riots and bloodshed, mark the failure to Americanize this growing class of aliens.¹⁴⁶

Pavalko saw arrest and deportation as another means of exerting this control.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, systematic personnel practices and grievance handling, paternalistic policies and welfare benefits interspersed with nationalist evocation were also used increasingly by a number of industrial firms in an effort to counter massive labour turnover and output restriction.¹⁴⁸ According to Montgomery, the American Plan grafted easily onto scientific management.¹⁴⁹

The A.F.L. supported "Americanization" in keeping with the assimilationist ethos induced by World War One. Meanwhile, the increasing contact between immigrants and unions gave them an inroad into American society although it was some years before the full effect of this was evident.¹⁵⁰

This discussion of the United States experience between 1880 and 1920 cannot be regarded as a comprehensive survey of the literature dealing with the interaction of immigrants with union organization and management. This was not its purpose in any case. The primary goal was to present some ideas and arguments which may be explored in the Australian context. Throughout this brief survey a number of themes recurred including the breakdown or forestalling of collective organization amongst workers; the restrictive response of craft unions and the interaction of ethnicity with this; the capacity of immigrants to take part in industrial struggles and some problems they faced with regard to this; the management strategies

¹⁴⁶Quoted in Pavalko, *ibid.*, p.69.

¹⁴⁷See p.51 herein.

¹⁴⁸See, for instance, D. Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*, pp.187-192.

¹⁴⁹D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, *op cit.*, p.44.

¹⁵⁰T.R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble*, *op cit.*, p.242.

devised for controlling labour and the association of immigrants with this evolution; and the relative importance of cultural/socio-economic background and language problems *vis-à-vis* the determination of the immigrant workers' attitudes and behaviour. It cannot be said that these form more than a very generalized basis for comparison with the post-war situation in Australia. Nevertheless, some questions are raised which will give a focus to the study. Perhaps the most apparent relates to the effects of immigration on Australian trade unions, their strategies and organization. Have they been in any way comparable to the American case (as argued) and if not, why not? Other questions relate to more specific areas such as the response of craft unions to skill recognition and general union hostility to non-British immigrants. While some aspects of the answer to the first question appear self-evident, research may shed light on hitherto unrecognized effects. Of equal importance is the light that may be shed on the structure and operations of Australian unions, the relationships between the leadership and membership, and the employment situations with which those unions with large foreign-born memberships had to deal. To these can be added points raised with regard to the British studies discussed earlier and Marxist literature on the European experience.

THE APPROACH AND STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Having surveyed some of the existing literature on immigrants and trade unions the broad approach of this study can be outlined. Attention will focus on the responses of Australian trade unions and the employers with which they dealt in the years 1945 to 1978, both at the general and individual levels. Union attitudes prior to 1945 will be examined in Chapter 2 as a necessary background to this. The historical context is crucial in enabling an appreciation of the changes, if any, which took place. Nor can it be assumed that either employers or unions are homogeneous bodies.¹⁵¹ Since the emphasis of the thesis is on trade union organization, discussion of management

¹⁵¹ Although self-evident, this point needs to be made because of the danger of over-generalizing. See J. Hearn, "Migrants and Trade Unions", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation*, *op cit.*, p.65.

strategies will be largely dealt with in this framework apart from Chapter 4. In this chapter it will be shown that there was little debate amongst employers with respect to the desirability of immigration even though firms adopted a range of strategies in dealing with their migrant employees. On the union side, the impact of political, industrial, skill and other divisions on attitudes and policies, including their timing, will be examined both within the formal structures of peak councils and in the more general sphere. This will be succeeded by an analysis of a number of individual unions. An attempt will be made to identify the traditions, structures and operations of each so that responses to immigrants can be seen within this framework.

At the same time, the reactions of immigrants themselves will be assessed. An adequate historical interpretation of this is made difficult by the dearth of research prior to 1972. Even after this time, much of the ensuing research was problematic for reasons which will be more fully outlined in later chapters. Suffice it to say that investigation was often pre-occupied with exposing the problems of immigrants and little time was spent in trying to assess how these came about or how they related to indigenous workers in the same jobs. Comparisons were made difficult where immigrants had almost completely displaced locals from a work-place. Attitudinal surveys encountered a further problem in that they were frequently measuring the attitudes of immigrants who were recent arrivals to a factory which had relied on foreign-born workers for thirty years. For the purposes of this study, interviews were conducted to try to gauge evolving responses. Logistics in this regard meant that any information thus derived could not be used to make definitive statements.

Apart from instances where the actions of immigrants captured the attention of government reports, newspapers and other records, the primary sources of information are the institutions (unions and employers) themselves and their former and current representatives. Attempts to find other sources of information were not wholly unsuccessful. Chapter 7 gives a detailed account of immigrant activism outside the traditional union sphere. However, it cannot be pretended that the analysis is perfectly balanced. Since the

thrust of the study was largely framed in terms of the impact of post-war immigration on trade unions, their organization and strategies, this imbalance need not be seen as a critical weakness.

Another problem must be stated at the outset. Any assessment of the attitudes and, more especially the industrial behaviour of immigrant workers must, by necessity, deal with their immediate work situation and the labour process itself. It is axiomatic that these have a crucial bearing on the actions of any particular group of similarly placed workers. Yet it is equally apparent that there is a considerable research gap in this area both in Australia and elsewhere. At the broad level, questions of control, power and authority at work, including the goals, operations and strategies of management and worker/union attempts to exert a countervailing influence, have received insufficient attention.¹⁵²

As a consequence, there is a limited, if growing, body of research into the adverse implications of specific methods of labour control such as various payment systems, sub-contracting, shift-work, productivity bargaining, job redesign, technological innovation and the various forms of industrial democracy, welfare, paternalism and human relations.¹⁵³ It goes without saying that this disinterest has carried over to the ramifications of the above for patterns of industrial conflict - itself a neglected area outside the more overt forms of organized and collective protest. For instance, there is almost no research on the linkages between the incidence of occupational illness, various production methods and industrial conflict. Such research would help set up a context within which the impact of immigrant labour could be assessed.

Many of the above areas do come into the perceived sphere of trade unions in their strategic relations with management. The

¹⁵²Referring to the United Kingdom situation where there has been far more research on industrial relations, Theo Nichols quotes the findings of a working party report to the British Social Science Research Council presented in 1978. The report stated that apart from the dearth of research into control, power and authority, most existing research was ahistorical. See T. Nichols (ed.), *Capital and Labor*, *op cit.*, pp.11-19.

¹⁵³According to Nichols, industrial sociology is having a desirable effect on industrial relations research in this regard, although many areas remain neglected. *Ibid.*, p.18.

following analysis will, by necessity, be confined to dealing with these phenomena within the framework of the unions/employers/work-places studied. Following a general discussion in Chapter 4, each case-study chapter will deal with specific types of managerial control and the interaction of immigrants with this.

The chapter outline of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 will analyse trade union responses to immigration from 1830 to World War Two. The argument will deal not only with general attitudes but also the response of individual unions which varied according to region, membership base and a number of other factors. Important debates regarding the relative importance of certain forces operating on unions must be dealt with if the post-1945 responses are to be understood. In addition, a number of themes will be developed (including the evolving union stance on racism) which can be explored in later chapters.

Chapters 3 to 7 give an overview of post-war developments. Chapter 3 briefly summarizes the political and administrative context of post-war immigration including recruitment priorities and the exclusion of non-Europeans. Chapter 4 will elaborate upon employer attitudes to immigration; their involvement in the planning and operation of the programme; the industrial and occupational characteristics of migrant employment; and management strategies with regard to migrant labour. Chapter 5 will present an overview of evolving union responses to immigration/immigrants at the peak council level. The attitude of, and debates before, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (A.C.T.U.) and Labor Council of New South Wales will be examined in some depth. Chapter 6 will consider two prominent sources of controversy with regard to immigration which highlight divisions within the union movement. The first concerns union reactions to the arrival of large numbers of political refugees between 1948 and 1952. The second part of the chapter deals with craft union responses to the arrival and subsequent recognition of migrant tradesmen. Chapter 7 will identify more general aspects of the immigrant/union relationship. Some remarks will be made regarding the broad effects of immigration upon trade union organization and immigrant responses to unions. It will also address itself to evidence of migrant worker organization and action outside trade unions. The latter area has received little research attention, yet is important, if only because it demonstrates the inherent weakness of such organization. As part explanation of

this, the effect of inferior political and legal status upon foreign-born activists and their organizations will be highlighted. The role of the government in screening out "undesirable" immigrants will also be discussed. These points add a further dimension to the relationship between immigrants and trade unions.

Chapters 8 to 11 deal with specific case studies. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the most significant area of employment for what may be loosely termed non-English speaking migrants (according to the native tongue of their homeland) and especially those from southern Europe, the Middle-East and South America was in the manufacturing industry. A large number of British migrants were also employed in this area, particularly in the tradesmen category where they predominated in comparison with other migrant groups. Nevertheless, their anonymity in the eyes of Australian union leaders suggests both difficulties in analysis and their rapid unproblematic absorption into local bodies.

Given the foregoing, it is only appropriate that the case study section should focus on unions covering secondary industry. Three of the unions studied had memberships which were concentrated in this area. Nevertheless, given the occupational coverage of most Australian unions, their membership extends over a number of manufacturing industries as well as other areas of employment. The Federated Ironworkers' Association (F.I.A.) enrolls semi-skilled workers in iron and steel, metal manufacturing and fabricating, together with a wide range of other industries such as construction, the railways and electricity generation. However, by far the single largest group is located in the iron and steel industry. While this union will be dealt with on a general level, attention will focus on iron and steel making. The production of steel in Australia is controlled by B.H.P. and its subsidiaries. The Australian Iron and Steel (A.I. and S.) steelworks at Port Kembla, New South Wales was particularly dependent on migrant labour and has been selected to document the interaction of immigrant workers with their union and employer. This is the subject matter of Chapter 8.

The Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union (A.M.W.S.U.) and its precursors had a membership largely composed of skilled tradesmen. Since these were scattered throughout a wide range of employment situations, generalizing about management strategies and so on was impossible. At the same time, the union

has dominant characteristics reflecting its craft traditions and militant reputation. The character of the A.M.W.S.U. and its precursors has affected the integration of immigrants in a number of ways that can be analysed. The Sheet Metal Workers' Union (S.M.W.U.), which merged with the Boilermakers' and Blacksmiths' Society (B.B.S.) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.) to form the Australian Metal Workers' Union (A.M.W.U.) in 1972, did enrol an increasing number of semi-skilled operatives (a policy accentuated by the A.M.W.S.U.), many of whom were immigrants. Union responses to this group have not been ignored. Despite the problems of generalization, reference has been made to a number of specific employment situations. One factory isolated for particular attention illustrates a unique experiment undertaken to help different national groups play a stronger role in union activity. This will be the subject matter of Chapter 9. Reference will also be made to the A.M.W.S.U. in other chapters, particularly Chapters 8 and 11.

The Australian Glass Workers' Union (A.G.W.U.) was a relatively small membership consisting of semi-skilled and unskilled production workers in a limited number of factories - the majority of them subsidiaries of one company, Australian Consolidated Industries Ltd (A.C.I.). Much more so than the F.I.A., the A.G.W.U. was almost a single-company union. The overwhelming majority of its members were foreign-born after 1952. Following a general discussion of the union and its dealings with A.C.I., attention will focus on a specific factory, namely the Crown Corning Ltd plant at Waterloo, Sydney. This is the subject matter of Chapter 11.

The other union (dealt with in Chapter 10), the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union (F.M.W.U.), is one of only two unions in Australia which lay claim to a general membership coverage. Prior to World War Two, the bulk of its membership was concentrated in a small range of occupations, notably cleaners, watchmen and semi-skilled paint and varnish industry workers. After 1954 coverage (and recruitment) of predominantly non-skilled workers in various service occupations and miscellaneous manufacturing (most with a high proportion of immigrant workers) expanded dramatically. Unlike the unions discussed in Chapters 8, 9 and 11, a large proportion (about half) of the F.M.W.U. membership is female. Much of the membership expansion took place in areas of employment which

had been previously unorganized or grew up in the post-war period including many semi-casual jobs characterized by frequent employer abuses, minimal wages and conditions. The F.M.W.U.'s role in this regard is epitomized by its early (and to some extent current) reputation as a "battler's" union. In a number of areas employers strongly resisted unionization. The impact of immigrants on union recruitment problems and the strategy of both unions and employers are examined in some detail with regard to plastics factories and contract cleaning. However, other employment situations, some of which were less problematic, are also dealt with.

The unions and employment situations studied cannot be treated as examples of all possible sources of variation. Nevertheless, it can be argued that they are representative both in the sense of appreciating general responses and the differences to be found amongst unions with distinct industrial philosophies, structures and operational modes. The case-study chapters also act as a vehicle for analysing a range of management strategies with regard to labour and the distinct implications, if any, these had for immigrant workers.

Research concentrated on the New South Wales branches (including regional divisions) of the unions concerned, although reference has been made to national bodies and other states inasmuch as they influenced the situation in New South Wales or offered an instructive basis for comparison. As a result of this, the emphasis is also on New South Wales employers, although some comparisons are made in the course of discussion. The reason for the focus on New South Wales is essentially logistical.

To avoid unnecessary repetition, conclusions have been given at the end of each chapter. Chapter 7 offers an interim conclusion to the first section of the thesis. In the four case-study chapters some comparisons with preceding findings are made. Chapter 12, however, attempts to draw significant themes together and put the analysis within a broader context.

CHAPTER 2

IMMIGRATION, RACISM AND THE AUSTRALIAN WORKING CLASS 1830-1945

Historically, immigration has been a recurring source of concern to the Australian labour movement. Prior to 1945, working-class organizations, leaders and members in general displayed an uncompromising hostility to large-scale immigration. In the post-war period, while this attitude underwent some modification, a fundamental suspicion of imported labour remained. The following is an attempt to critically assess the genealogy of working-class responses to immigration and its impact on trade union organization and strategy.

The origins, evolution and ramifications of working-class racism and hostility to immigration have been the subject of considerable debate amongst Australian historians. While opposition to immigration need not involve a racist stance, the development of an implicitly racist government immigration policy sanctioned by the population at large suggested to many researchers that there was a strong link between the two which could not be overlooked.

A principal source of controversy amongst labour historians has been the interpretation of working-class opposition to the importation of Chinese, Pacific Island, Indian and other non-European labour. In particular, the racist foundations of hostility to Chinese immigrants has been the focus of recent work by writers such as McQueen, Price, Burgmann, Markey and Markus.¹ In part, their work represents a response to earlier labour historians such as Coghlan, Sutcliffe and, more recently, Fitzpatrick, Gollan and Nairn, who tended to locate such hostility in the fear that cheap

¹Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia* (Penguin, Australia, 1970); C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls are Built* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974); V. Burgmann, "Capital and Labour", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who are our Enemies? Racism and the Working Class in Australia* (Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978), pp.20-34; R. Markey, "Populist Politics", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who are our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, pp.66-79; and A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901* (Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979).

non-European labour would undermine the wages and conditions of workers.² According to the former group there has been a tendency by the latter to underplay the extent and significance of racist attitudes which pervaded Australia during the nineteenth century and continued to hold sway well into the twentieth century. The arguments of McQueen and others have enabled a more thoughtful integration of the role of the labour movement in the evolution of the "White Australia" policy - a process left largely unexplained by cruder exponents of the economic competition argument.

Nevertheless, there are considerable internal divisions within the economic competition *versus* racism debate. McQueen, whilst recognizing an economic component in early opposition to the Chinese during the 1850s gold rushes, argues that this antagonism gradually acquired an independent racist dynamic.³ He sees this dynamic as fundamental to the nationalist ideal enunciated by the Australian Labor Party. It was ensconced in the "White Australia" policy which was to become a cornerstone of Australian federation and independence. The prime elements of racism discerned by McQueen were destruction of the Aborigines, dominance of the Pacific and fear of unarmed conquest by cheap Asian labour. These arguments are central to his contention that the Australian working class was *petit bourgeois* in outlook and more racist than radical.⁴

²T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia* (Oxford University Press, London, 1918); J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* (Macmillan, London, 1921); B. Fitzpatrick, "Indentured Labour in Australia", *Labour History*, no. 9, November 1965, pp.3-5; R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics* (Melbourne University Press, 1967); and B. Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Labor Movement in NSW, 1870-1900* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973).

³McQueen argues that racism became, in turn, "The most important single component of Australian nationalism." H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.42.

⁴According to McQueen, "The tribunes of racism in Australia have largely come from the leaders of the Labor Party. Instead of combating racism as a tool of oppression labour leaders have almost invariably articulated and reinforced it." The later moralization is typical of the "new left" critique of working-class racism. The body of this paper contains an assessment of the weaknesses of this argument in relation to trade unions. *Ibid.*, p.50.

Burgmann, who also adopts a Marxist perspective, disputes that the labour movement could have had such a critical effect on the exclusion campaign.⁵ Since the prevailing ideas of any age are the product of the ruling class, the evolution of a racist ideology in a capitalist society and restrictive immigration controls must derive from the interests of capital and not of labour. Ignoring this monolithic view of ideology, and the methodological weaknesses inherent in the Marxist theory of immigration (elaborated in Chapter 1), there are two substantive features of Burgmann's argument which merit attention. The first is that racism was the root of fears with regard to competition from coloured labour. Racism split the working class and encouraged a collaborationist - or at least less confrontationist - stance amongst Australian workers to capital. Thus, according to Burgmann, the exclusion of Chinese from trade unions perpetuated the wages gap between European and Chinese workers which served employer interests.⁶ At the same time labour wasted much effort in attacking coloured immigrants rather than mounting a general campaign to improve the living standards of all workers. The second strand of Burgmann's argument is that the ultimate exclusion of coloured labour owed more to changing labour requirements in the sugar industry (which relied on indentured Pacific Island labour for the second half of the nineteenth century) and employer disillusion with non-Europeans in other areas than to working class opposition.⁷

While refuting McQueen's contention that the Australian working class was essentially *petit bourgeois*, Burgmann does see it as falling victim to the false consciousness of racism.⁸ This argument avoids the *post-hoc* moralizations of McQueen while at the same time not subscribing to the idealized views of early Australian labour

⁵V. Burgmann, "Capital and Labour", *op cit.*, pp.20-34.

⁶*Ibid.*, p.22.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp.29-32. An associated reason might be the unsuitability of much of Australia for the intensive sort of agriculture requiring a large rural labour force and the introduction of mechanical equipment from the late nineteenth century onwards in those areas where such labour might have been employed. The average size of farm undertakings could have also played a part.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.21.

radicalism propounded by Coghlan and others. However, her assumption that the adoption of a racist ideology by the labour movement in the nineteenth century could not have been in its interests denies the working class an independent assessment of its own circumstances. This would seem to constitute a crude Marxist inversion of the structuralist/functionalist position (see Chapter 1) suggesting that exclusion had to favour the interests of capital and not labour.

A more refined argument might suggest that the working class did exert some influence; that exclusion did not severely damage the interests of capital although neither was it a particular advantage; and that employers and the bourgeoisie were just as imbued with a racist outlook as the working class. Hence, racism could not be merely viewed as an ideological tool of ruling interests to propagate economic exploitation but must be portrayed as a widespread phenomenon of the nineteenth century legitimating colonialism and imperialism but also impeding the free movement of coloured labour to countries with largely European populations. The attitude of labour in the nineteenth century was founded on immediate perceptions of the use of non-European immigrants as servile labour (as in the United States, the West Indies, the Pacific and elsewhere), and the appreciably lower living standard of their homelands. Opposition was not based on the potential long-term disadvantages racism posed for working-class unity.

Certainly, union leaders and members in Australia viewed the influx of assisted European immigrants as a direct threat to wages and living standards. In the case of non-European labour there was added the pressing issue of indenture or contract status. This undercut existing wage rates and precluded effective organization, especially in the light of employment and union inexperience. Critically, the proximity and abundance of Asian labour and its exploitation elsewhere hardly made such fears appear unfounded. The use of racist dogma broadened the basis of objection to non-European immigrants. This was necessary even for craft unions not directly threatened by unskilled labour. In retrospect, the hostility appears hysterical but this, ironically, is partly attributable to the success of exclusionism. The significance of the working class in the exclusion campaign at a time when

politicians were seeking to establish a formal national identity should not be discounted. This point is made by Yarwood who notes the critical role of the "White Australia" policy in the harmonious evolution of social and political institutions.⁹

Once achieved, "White Australia" became a tenet of Australian society which did not require massive union or Labor Party resources to uphold. In the light of this, and the general direction of Marxist arguments concerning the desirability of introducing immigrant labour to promote racial splits in working-class organization and maintain a reserve army of unemployed, it is difficult to see how exclusion could be perceived by employers as advantageous unless they were subject to irrational racism, historical conditions did not require large inputs of labour or they had to compromise their strategies with broader political considerations. These questions are not really addressed by Burgmann.¹⁰

Another weakness is the link Burgmann draws between the development of colonial capitalism and the expropriation of Aboriginal lands as the basis of the racist ideology in Australia which was to pervade the labour movement. There are instances of inconsistency in the attitude of unions to Aborigines, Chinese and other non-European groups. For instance, in 1890, at the height of its campaign for Chinese exclusion, the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (A.S.U.) debated the introduction of free trade union membership for Aborigines and the union potential of Maoris was praised.¹¹ This would seem to indicate that a separate set of factors, apart

⁹A.T. Yarwood, *Attitudes to Non European Immigration* (Cassell Australia, Melbourne, 1968).

¹⁰Although acknowledging that employers were not shy in requesting immigrants if they felt "wage levels were too high, or their workers misbehaving" (p.27), Burgmann notes that, apart from two doctrinaire free traders, all elected members of the first parliament supported "White Australia". V. Burgmann, "Capital and Labour", *op cit.*, p.33.

¹¹The proposal to the A.S.U.'s annual conference was held to be contrary to union rules. Nevertheless, the entrance fee was waived for Aborigines. The favourable attitude to Maoris was expressed by the A.S.U. general secretary D. Temple who said they were potentially "staunch and enthusiastic trade unionists who would willingly enrol once they could read the union's rules in their own language" (*Shearers Record*, November 1890). Temple's comments followed

from some monolithic notion of racism, was at the core of opposition to the Chinese. Notably, one may point to the use of Chinese as non-union or "blackleg" labour, the belief among union officials that it would be impossible to exclude native labour and also the potential size of the Chinese influx. Yarwood, in particular, sees the last reason as crucial to the distinctive discrimination against the Chinese. For Yarwood the underlying cause was a fear of economic competition translated into a marketable form of nineteenth-century prejudice - racism.¹² As Curthoys notes, racism was not logically necessary for an objection to cheap labour.¹³ Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century it was a useful adjunct to strengthen opposition.

This argument has been taken up by Markey.¹⁴ He argues that the Anti-Chinese Leagues held a broad basis of support in colonial society. Nor was the union response always either immediate or enthusiastic:

Only some unions directly participated in them and some were quite slow to respond to the League's invitation for delegates. The Australian Natives' Association with predominantly professional, business and farming membership, gave the Leagues unqualified support and the government was sympathetic throughout the 1880s.¹⁵

Markey, like Burgmann, views racism as deeply ingrained in the Australian labour movement. Unlike Burgmann, he sees racism as an additional overlay on economic fears rather than the logical and historical precedent for such fears.

attempts by the A.S.U. to organize New Zealand shearers. This point has also been taken up by Curthoys and Markus who argue "The stance of the labour movement towards Aborigines was an ambiguous one. They were rarely made the target of racist propaganda and moves were made in the 1890s to provide meaningful opportunities to join trade unions." See A. Curthoys and A. Markus, *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.xvi.

¹²A.T. Yarwood, *Attitudes to Non European Immigration*, *op cit.*, pp.3-6 and pp.70-77.

¹³A. Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus: The Seamen's Strike of 1878", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.50 and pp.64-65.

¹⁴R. Markey, "Populist Politics", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, pp.66-79.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.71.

Markus also presents a contrary view to Burgmann.¹⁶ Markus offers a refined version of the economic competition argument which acknowledges, nevertheless, a strong racist component in the attitude of labour organizations. In contrast to Burgmann, he sees fears of eroded living standards as the source of racial antagonism rather than *vice versa*. Markus examines the competitive threat posed by Chinese labour in the furniture trade, maritime and pastoral industries. He concludes that union reactions were often exaggerated but does not dispute their perceived economic basis. Burgmann sees the attitude of the working class to coloured labour as misdirected and the product of racism. However, at the same time, she is critical of Willard and Kellaway for not seeing the racist basis of economic fears.¹⁷ This contention and the preceding interpretations indicate an evolution in the racism/ economic competition debate from simply evaluating the relative significance of the two explanations to an examination of the links between them. Ultimately even this revised disagreement has become confused as the combatants have variously argued that economic fears prompted racist attitudes or *vice versa*.

This question need not represent a sterile controversy if the significance of motives underlying actions are to be recognized and the evolution of perceived "causes for concern" is to be traced over time. However, it would not be unfair to say that the controversy has become increasingly divorced from broader questions concerning the organization of the trade union movement and the impact of immigration upon this. Markus, one of the few to appreciate this, has expressed the view that:

it is important to realise that for the labour movement the campaign against non European immigration was part of a broader battle to maintain established standards by restricting access to the labour market.¹⁸

¹⁶A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901*, *op cit.*

¹⁷The works to which Burgmann is referring are Myra Willard's *The History of White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1923); and C. Kellaway's "'White Australia' - How Political Reality Became National Myth", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXV, no. 2, June, 1953, pp.7-17. V. Bergmann, "Capital and Labour", *op cit.*, p.21.

¹⁸A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, .256.

The struggle to restrict labour supply involved immigration in its broadest sense - European and non-European, assisted and unassisted, indentured, contracted or free - in combination with work-force divisions based on craft or occupation, region and industry. Other strategies designed to reduce competition amongst workers included the enforcement of apprenticeship and trade recognition, opposition to piece-work and contract labour, together with attempts to reduce standard working hours and limit overtime. Ultimately, sectional interests within the union movement were reflected in differing attitudes, priorities and strategies with regard to inhibiting competition for jobs at the local level. The question of racial exclusion was but one aspect of this - a significant one in the nineteenth century - but intermeshed with other factors.

The general union support for "White Australia" must be examined within this context. Apart from Markus, many historians appear to isolate themselves from the traditional goals and organizational needs of trade unions, their internal structure and the distinctive characteristics of some types of unions together with the historical environment in which they operated. With regard to the latter, it can be argued that in a period when racist sentiments were largely accepted without question, it is hardly surprising that trade unionists should propound such ideas. The moot point is the impact of such beliefs on the industrial and political activities of unions. To settle this point an historical assessment of union responses in the nineteenth century and up to 1945 is necessary. This will establish a necessary context for evaluating post-war responses to immigration.

IMMIGRATION AS BOTH THREAT AND STIMULUS TO TRADE UNION AND WORKING-CLASS POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The birth of labour hostility to immigration can be traced back to the very infancy of trade union organization. In fact, Thomas, in her pioneering work on the formation of trade unions prior to 1848, sees the issue of imported labour as a significant rallying

point for such organization.¹⁹ Thomas argues the convict era had been a privileged economic period for the labourer with the relative labour scarcity generating high living standards. With the end of convict transportation to most states in 1840, the issues of immigration and of working class hostility to it crystallized into two distinct but often temporally related themes.²⁰

The first issue related to the importation of Indian, Pacific Island and Asian labour, particularly when it was indentured or under contract. Such labour was generally unskilled, although there were several instances when this was not the case. The second involved government or privately assisted European immigration. At times, unions (in general or individually) expressed opposition to unassisted European immigration although this was less an issue in the nineteenth century for reasons that will be outlined subsequently. The arrival of skilled or unskilled European labour under contract was not welcomed by unions and there is some evidence of particular European groups, notably Italians, being subjected to stigmatization.

While both these perceived threats did occasionally endanger union organization and a number of specific unions in particular, the overall effect appears to have been one of stimulus. This is, of course, a retrospective judgement which union leaders of the time could not envisage. Certainly, immigration influenced the pattern of working-class industrial and political organization and strategy.

¹⁹A study of the early labour movement in Victoria and New South Wales by Hume is less emphatic than that by Thomas. Nevertheless, much of his evidence is supportive of Thomas's view. See Leila Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW* (M.A. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1919, roneoed by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, June 1962); and L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860* (unpublished M.Ec. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1950).

²⁰*Ibid.* Both Thomas and Hume acknowledge that early unions strongly resisted any attempt to re-introduce convict transportation, the assignment of which they saw as indentured labour verging on slavery.

Non-European Labour

Proposals to import indentured Asian labour were enunciated even prior to colonization.²¹ In 1829 the potential for coolie immigration was reaffirmed by E.G. Wakefield in his "Letter from Sydney". Wakefield pointed to the close proximity of Asian labour reserves and the skilful and industrious nature of the Chinese. In the 1830s small numbers of non-Europeans began to be employed in the pastoral industry. In 1837, a New South Wales Legislative Council Select Committee recommended a small experiment with 300 to 500 Indian labourers under a six-year indenture.²² The question of Asian, Indian or Pacific Island "coolie" labour assumed greater importance with the suspension of convict assignment in 1840. Squatters, pastoralists and merchants advocated additional immigration - European or "coolie" - and even a return to transportation.²³ Employers obviously saw "coolies" and convicts as desirable because of their relative cheapness (wages being set below market rates) and servile status.

Such proposals met immediate resistance from workers and early unions anxious to protect living standards.²⁴ This resistance was reinforced by the colonial administration. In 1841 the Broughton Committee on Immigration, whilst recognizing that the acute labour shortage and inability of the government to subsidize British immigration would promote the importing of Asian and Pacific Island workers, argued:

no coolie immigration system could prevent Indians remaining once the period of indenture was terminated, leading to competition with European labour and lower

²¹Matras plan of 1783.

²²K. Willey, "Australia's Population: A Demographic Summary", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.2.

²³See Leila Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.70; and H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.44.

²⁴Thomas gives an account of the response in Sydney. McQueen notes that in 1842 a motion was presented to the Melbourne Town Council expressing opposition to the importation of cannibals and coolies. L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.70; and H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.44.

living standards which in turn would place a check on British immigration.²⁵

Despite official opposition some pastoralists acted on their own initiative although, according to Price, such labour did not prove particularly cheap or pliable.²⁶

Rising levels of unemployment from 1843 onwards intensified working-class hostility to coloured immigration.²⁷ In Sydney, delegates of the trades societies called two public meetings, "one to petition the government that convict labour within the city should be abolished, and the other to petition Queen Victoria against the importation of coolie labour."²⁸ A Mutual Protection Association, consisting largely of unemployed workers and those anxious for their jobs, was formed to put a case in defence of free immigrants.²⁹

²⁵A.P. Elkin, "Re-thinking the White Australia Policy", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XVII, no. 3, September 1945, p.10.

²⁶C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-88* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974), pp.38-52.

²⁷This point is made both by Hume and Thomas. The growing degree of union organization may well be associated with joint resistance. According to Thomas, there is proof of four unions (cabinet-makers, typographers, coach-makers and shipwrights) being in existence in 1839. By 1840 this number had expanded to ten. Subsequently the ambiguous Committee of Trades was formed. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.212; and L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.68.

²⁸Quoted by L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.72.

²⁹The aims of the Mutual Protection Association were frankly restrictive since its leaders felt indentured labour would lead to unemployment and depress wage levels. Lockwood notes that the worker-artisan lobby in Sydney had sufficient force to place a petition signed by 4,129 persons before Governor Gipps protesting the employment of coolies. The petition argued that coolie employment would degenerate into slavery. Lockwood, nevertheless, attributes strong British Imperial influence to the development of the "White Australia" which preceded the much vaunted racist nationalism of the 1880s. Rivett also sees the experience of 1843 as establishing a paranoid fear of competition of cheap unskilled immigrant labour. See P. Loveday, "New South Wales", in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920* (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1975), p.15; R. Lockwood, "British Imperial Influences in the Foundation of the

These events demonstrate the association of immigration with early union activities and the formation of working-class political organizations. Further, the strong link between hostility to convicts and coloured immigrants indicates that the indentured status of such labour could not have been an insignificant component in the opposition. Hume notes further working-class hostility to coloured labour in 1848 and 1849 although he sees this as less obviously associated with existing unemployment.³⁰ Nevertheless, the intensity of the campaign against coloured (and European) immigrants in the nineteenth century appears to have closely corresponded to the existing employment situation.

Irrespective of its effectiveness, the events of the 1840s set the pattern for future working-class agitation. For their part, pastoralists and other employers waged a long struggle to introduce Asian or Pacific Island labour. In 1847 Ben Boyd initiated the traffic in Pacific Island labour to New South Wales. However, it was not until 1863 (the Indian Coolie Act) and more particularly 1868 (the Polynesian Labourers Act) that recruitment of "Kanaka" (Pacific Island) labour for sugar plantations in Queensland began in earnest. As Fitzpatrick states succinctly, over the next forty years more than 60,000 would be "blackbirded, cajoled or otherwise contracted on to plantation work in Queensland."³¹

The series of acts passed in 1868, 1880, 1884 and 1892 granted extensive powers to employers of Pacific Island labour to determine their working conditions.³² These powers were incremental to the

White Australia Policy", *Labour History*, no. 7, November 1964, pp.23-33; and K. Rivett (ed.), *Australia and the Non White Immigrant* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975).

³⁰In 1848 an "Anti-Coolie Society" requested mechanics and labourers to attend its meetings. In October 1849 the Fellmongers and Woollsorters called a meeting to consider the immigration of Chinese and suggested an association of the working classes be formed. Neither of these moves appears to have generated much enthusiasm. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.162.

³¹B. Fitzpatrick, "Indentured Labour in Australia", *op cit.*, p.3.

³²K. Saunders, "Masters and Servants", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.97.

already pernicious Master and Servant Acts passed in each of the colonies - acts which early working-class bodies had fought doggedly.³³ Such discriminatory laws, which were abhorrent to the principles of union organization, provided a basis for working-class hostility in the 1890s and early twentieth century.

In the same year that Boyd began his small venture with Pacific Island labour, South Australian landed proprietors sought Asian labour. However, it was not until the arrival of large numbers of Chinese after the discovery of gold in 1851 that they were perceived to pose an actual threat to local living standards. The Chinese were not (commonly) indentured to European employers although many were under contractual arrangements with regard to their passage and others were subsequently employed by their fellow countrymen at wage rates below those prevailing for European workers. The Chinese were by no means the only non-European immigrants to reach the goldfields. However, they were by far the most numerous. By 1857 the Chinese population of Victoria reached 40,000.³⁴

Connolly states that the number of Chinese in New South Wales goldfields was negligible until after 1858.³⁵ This probably explains why early anti-Chinese riots were largely confined to Victorian diggings. All riots were preceded by an infusion of Chinese onto the particular digging. There has been considerable controversy regarding the underlying causes and implications of these riots among historians. While a strong racist component cannot be ignored, the size of the Chinese influx and their distinctive patterns of social and work behaviour at a time when the finite nature of gold reserves was becoming apparent would appear to explain why they should be isolated for particular treatment.³⁶

³³Thomas records early union opposition to the Master and Servant Bill of 1840. L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, pp.66-67.

³⁴C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls are Built*, *op cit.*, p.71.

³⁵Connolly provides a detailed analysis of the various anti-Chinese disturbances and offers an explanation for the intense hostility. See C.N. Connolly, "Miners' Rights", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.41.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp.35-47.

The most serious anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat (New South Wales) in 1861 were accompanied by the formation of a Miners' Protective League. The links between the anti-Chinese actions of gold-miners, the formation of the above body and the industrial and political organization of the working class have been subject to much debate. McQueen sees the League and its pledge to police the goldfields and hand over criminals as typifying the stance of those workers united by Spence into the Amalgamated Miners' Union.³⁷ His contention that this is consistent with the conformist, *petit bourgeois* and racist predisposition of the Australian working class is, surely, a highly selective interpretation. Hume agrees that the miners were primarily struggling for what they saw as their birth-right and the right to equal opportunity for individual production.³⁸ However, he sees little connection between this and the general evolution of working-class organization. Ross rejects the notion that the anti-Chinese actions of gold-miners had any significant bearing on the formation of mining unions.³⁹ His view is supported by Gollan, who nevertheless recognizes an anti-Chinese element in the formation of mining unions a decade later.⁴⁰

The passage of discriminatory legislation designed to restrict Chinese immigration in Victoria (1855), South Australia (1857) and New South Wales (1961) temporarily eased anti-Chinese agitation.⁴¹ Hostility revived in the 1870s. Markus argues hostility in the 1870s and especially the 1880s corresponded with working-class struggles to maintain previously favourable conditions.⁴² The use or attempted use of Chinese workers as strike-breakers at the "Grand Truck" mine in the 1870s, Clunes in Victoria in 1873 and Queensland

³⁷H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.206.

³⁸L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.121.

³⁹E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia* (The Australasian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1970), p.17.

⁴⁰R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967), p.78.

⁴¹A less severe act which simply imposed a higher licence fee on Chinese was passed by the Queensland government in 1876. See C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls are Built*, *op cit.*, p.157.

⁴²A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, chapters 5, 6 and 8.

in 1875, together with their threatened use for this purpose in the pastoral industry certainly exacerbated anti-Chinese animosity.⁴³ The employment of Chinese coolies by Chinese employers during the 1873 Queensland gold rush is viewed by Burgmann as indicating disillusion with them amongst European employers.⁴⁴ Yet it is at least as plausible to construe the employment of Chinese by Chinese as constituting a more direct threat to local working conditions given the likelihood that Chinese would be paid lower wages by their fellow countrymen. At this level Chinese labour could even be seen to pose a threat to European employers.⁴⁵ In 1871 the Sydney Trades and Labour Council called for the prohibition of Asian immigration arguing that they would not accept Australian industrial standards.⁴⁶ In 1875 there was union opposition to Chinese workers arriving in Queensland.⁴⁷

Unlike other non-Europeans, the Chinese were employed as urban labour. This, the size of Chinese immigration and the unfavourable economic conditions prevailing in the late 1870s and late 1880s would appear to explain why they faced the brunt of working-class hostility. The work of Markus elucidates the economic basis of trade union hostility - a hostility which in times of job shortage was transformed from a begrudging acceptance into overt agitation and virulent racism.⁴⁸ Markus does not dispute that the Chinese were seen as racially inferior. However, he argues that the perceived

⁴³For reference to these and other instances where Chinese workers were used as strike-breakers see A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, pp.76-77; H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.45; *History of Capital and Labour* (Oceanic Publishing Company, Sydney, 1888), chapter 3; and G. Weir, *50 Years of Labor in Politics* (A Standard Book, Melbourne, undated), p.21.

⁴⁴V. Burgmann, "Capital and Labour", *op cit.*, p.31.

⁴⁵There is evidence to suggest such fears were manifest. In October 1889 a meeting of leading business people in Darwin protested the government's issuing of contracts to Chinese for the construction of the telegraph and policy buildings. See the *Sydney Morning Herald* (S.M.H.), October 5, 1889, p.12.

⁴⁶N.B. Nairn, *A Survey of the History of the White Australia Policy in the Nineteenth Century*, *op cit.*, p.25.

⁴⁷A. Dowling, *History of the Trade Union Movement with Special Reference to the Newcastle Region* (unpublished manuscript, Newcastle Trades Hall, 1976).

⁴⁸A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, chapter 9.

threat they posed for wages and living standards was the key determinant of organized union opposition. A similar view of working-class racism is proffered by Murphy:

In the last third of the twentieth century, the racial basis of White Australia has come under popular fire, but if the working man of the last third of the nineteenth century was racist, he was doing no more than reflecting what he thought were his own observations and the attitude of his educators in accepting, without doubt, the superiority of the white race and especially the British section of that, of which he was a significant though distant part.⁴⁹

To sustain a critique of this it must be shown that working-class racism was clearly contrary to the perceived interests of labour at the time.

In 1878 the recently formed Seamen's Union (1874) went on strike over the employment of Chinese crews by the Australasian Steam Navigation Co. at wages half those paid to European seamen. The dispute occurred at a time of growing unemployment and was consistent with the union strategy of opposing cheap labour (i.e. wages below the standard rate for the job). The Sydney and Brisbane Trades and Labour Councils and unions in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia took an active part in the struggle. Coal-miners in Newcastle and Bulli also played a prominent role. The strike received massive financial and popular support.⁵⁰ At a meeting called by the Sydney Trades and Labour Council to protest against Chinese immigration, the president of the Seamen's Union pointed to the unfair competition of Chinese labour in the furniture trade and maritime industry and accused the Chinese of ignoring British institutions by settling disputes amongst themselves.⁵¹

Support for the company's action came from large employer interests. Curthoys states that the Sydney Chamber of Commerce supported the Australasian Steam Navigation Co. on the basis of the

⁴⁹D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.162.

⁵⁰In May 1878 the Sydney Trades and Labour Council had re-affirmed its opposition to the presence of Chinese. See the *S.M.H.*, May 7, 1878, p.5.

⁵¹Quoted by A. Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus", *op cit.*, p.56.

need for cheap labour.⁵² Markus records the *Sydney Morning Herald* as suggesting that Europeans could imitate the industrial qualities of the Chinese.⁵³ Such remarks were hardly likely to engender working-class sympathy for the Chinese. The threat of the Queensland government to deprive the Australasian Steam Navigation Co. of a mail contract was to prove decisive in altering the company's stand. Curthoys argues that the strike weakened capitalist interest in importing cheap labour for exploitation and broadened the basis of opposition to include small employers.⁵⁴ The 1879 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress affirmed its opposition to Asian immigration because of its perceived threat to labour conditions. Markus states that the issue of non-European crews flared again in 1885 and 1888. Although the union was defeated in the latter strike, the company removed Chinese firemen from its ships the following year.⁵⁵

Another area where the introduction of Chinese labour was believed to constitute a threat to working conditions was the furniture trade.⁵⁶ During the 1870s and 1880s small numbers of Chinese had entered the trade, being mainly employed by fellow countrymen. This, and the specialization of Chinese producers in cheaper mass-production furniture could be seen to entail several risks, namely an erosion of the market for quality or craft-produced merchandise, the dilution of traditional craft skills, and the under-cutting of wages and conditions. In 1880 the success of a Chinese tender for the supply of seating at the Melbourne Exhibition Building led to a mass meeting of local unions.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p.60.

⁵³A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.97.

⁵⁴A. Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus", *op cit.*, p.56. See also Footnote 45.

⁵⁵A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.168.

⁵⁶The following information is largely gleaned from Markus, although some of the interpretations are my own. For instance, Markus pays little attention to the issues of deskilling and piece-work which were prominent issues facing craft unions in the nineteenth century. Nor does Markus, like Burgmann, really appreciate the threat posed by the employment of Chinese by their fellow countrymen. *Ibid.*

According to Markus, the Melbourne Furniture Trade Society successfully moved for the re-establishment of the Victorian Anti-Chinese League. The Sydney Trades and Labour Council responded in a similar fashion and justified its action on the basis of prevailing levels of unemployment, the employment of Chinese in the furniture trade and their use as brick-layers.⁵⁷ While Chinese labour stimulated union formation in Melbourne, Markus found no evidence to indicate that the issue played a part in the setting up of a Sydney Furniture Trade Union in 1882. Nevertheless, anti-Chinese demonstrations in Sydney the year before had been promoted by trade unions.⁵⁸

Anti-Chinese agitation by unions tended to fluctuate according to economic conditions. Markus sees this link as instrumental in the formation of anti-Chinese leagues in the 1870s and early 1880s.⁵⁹ However, he acknowledges that anti-Chinese campaigns were not always supported by the union movement in general:

While seamen and members of the furniture trade were active in the anti-Chinese cause, the central trade union bodies displayed a lack of interest in the period 1882-1886. On three occasions the Sydney Trades and Labour Council rejected motions calling for action against Chinese; the Sydney and Melbourne councils protested but feebly after the South Australian government granted contractors permission to import Chinese navvies on the Pine Creek railway. Nevertheless, largely due to the delegates of the Melbourne Furniture Trade Society, at the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses held over the years 1884-6 the Chinese question received prominent consideration.⁶⁰

The impact of a prolonged drought in Queensland revived agitation in 1887. Unions, however, played a less vigorous role than a decade earlier.⁶¹ By 1888 legislation by various states effectively precluded further large-scale Chinese immigration. Markus argues

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p.93.

⁵⁸*History of Capital and Labour, op cit.*, chapter 3.

⁵⁹A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred, op cit.*, p.176.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p.123. A motion advocating the denationalization of Chinese in 1885 was felt to be too extreme by the general body of unions and thrown out. At the 1886 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress a motion calling for the abolition of coolie immigration was passed unanimously.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p.130.

an awareness of this, and the emergence of the Labor Party to take up the anti-Chinese cause politically, largely explains the infrequency of union involvement in anti-Chinese leagues in the 1890s.⁶²

The policy platform of the first Labor Electoral League inaugurated in October 1890 at a meeting of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council included a provision for the stamping of all Chinese-made furniture.⁶³ The first Labor government elected in New South Wales passed an Exclusion of Inferior Races Act after making this a major political issue.⁶⁴ "White Australia" became entrenched in Labor philosophy - to be enunciated as "The cultivation of an Australian national sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity."⁶⁵ This view was promulgated in all states - including Western Australia and Tasmania which had little to fear from Chinese immigrants - and acted as a national rallying point for the political arm of the labour movement.⁶⁶

The success of this stance may be traced to the broad community appeal of racial exclusion, the vigorous activities of a number of individual unions and the depression of the 1890s involving widespread unemployment and a decline in real wages (especially for unskilled labour).⁶⁷ In retrospect the racist dogma appears hysterical and unwarranted, while economic fears seem at least exaggerated. Coghlan stresses that the introduction of Asian labour

⁶²*Ibid.*, p.170.

⁶³Quoted in G. Weir, *50 Years of Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.14.

⁶⁴P. Loveday, "New South Wales", in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.60.

⁶⁵The motion was sponsored by Queensland Premier, W.A. Holman, and was formally adopted by the Labor Party in 1905. *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁶⁶For a survey of the situation in various states see chapters by Murphy, McQueen, Gibbney and Davis in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, especially p.133, p.150, pp.153-154, p.314, p.331, p.352 and p.402. See also the New South Wales Political Labor League *Policy Platform* (The Workers Print, Sydney, February 1912), p.2.

⁶⁷Markey offers an elaboration of the latter point. He also identifies as pertinent, structural shifts in the economy which rendered some skills redundant. R. Markey, "Populist Politics", *op cit.*, p.70.

at public expense was seen by the working class as a deliberate employer strategy to reduce wages.⁶⁸ As Markey recognizes, the fact that prohibition occurred in the 1890s in the absence of large-scale immigration of any kind suggests that the influence of the Labor Party with regard to racial exclusion may have been more apparent than real.

Despite the rapid decline in Chinese immigration by the early 1890s individual unions continued to wage a fierce campaign to eliminate Chinese labour. Markus records that a furniture trade union formed in Sydney in 1888 crusaded against the Chinese in 1889, 1891-1892, 1894-1896 and 1899, and was successful in having Chinese-made furniture stamped.⁶⁹ Similar action was taken by the union in Melbourne where Chinese also constituted a significant proportion of the furniture trade work-force. In the latter city Chinese cabinet-makers took industrial action on their own behalf. In September 1885 approximately 350 Chinese workers struck in order to obtain piece rates as opposed to time payment.⁷⁰ Excluded from European unions, these workers formed their own union in 1888 to enforce minimum wage rates and a 50 hour week. In 1890 a donation to the Maritime strike was rejected by the Melbourne Trades Hall Council after objections were raised by European cabinet-makers. Further, their attempts to resist wage cuts in 1892-1893 were ignored by European trade unionists.⁷¹

Although this would seem to indicate a clear breach of worker solidarity on the basis of racism a note of caution must be

⁶⁸T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, *op cit.*, p.134.

⁶⁹A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.164.

⁷⁰A newspaper reported that on average Chinese labour was being employed between ten and eleven hours per day for a wage ranging from 30 shillings to 50 shillings per week. See the *S.M.H.*, September 8, 1885, p.7.

⁷¹McQueen states that a Chinese Workers' Union was formed as a consequence of the Victorian Factories and Shops Act. This body immediately demanded higher wages. While it received assistance from the Furniture Trades Union the Chinese Workers' Union was refused affiliation with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.50. See also A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.165.

registered which, if not entirely excusing the actions of European unionists, may put them into the broader context of union strategy and organization. First, the acceptance of piece-work by Chinese workers was contrary to general union policy. Second, the different work organization of the Chinese was probably seen as a direct threat to craft standards. This issue is clearly brought out in a deputation from the Sydney Furniture Trade Society and Sydney Trades and Labour Council to the New South Wales Premier in May 1889. The union delegates complained that Chinese workers, being employed on the commonest articles and with part of the planning work completed for them, were endangering the entry of young men to the cabinet-making trade.⁷² Finally, given the sectionalism of trade unionism the Chinese body was probably viewed as a scab union irrespective of their exclusion from European unions. More evidence about the basis of entry to the craft and whether the provisions of the Victorian Factories and Shops Act (1896) discriminating against Chinese (in the definition of a factory) were the result of union and/or employer lobbying is required.⁷³ Nevertheless, the above

⁷²S.M.H., May 31, 1889, p.4.

⁷³Statistics of the Victorian Chief Inspector of Factories indicate that Chinese workers constituted a significant proportion of the furniture trade work-force. In the years 1886 to 1913 (excluding the years 1887-1888, 1890-1892 and 1894-1899 for which there are no figures), they accounted for an average of 33 per cent of total employment. In 1889 there were 1,241 Europeans and 584 Chinese employed at the trade. The peak year was 1905 when 708 Chinese (41.2 per cent of the total work-force) were employed. While Chinese employment fluctuated from year to year, it grew slowly until 1913 when 735 were engaged in furniture-making (818 in 1912) as opposed to 2,126 Europeans. A contemporary study by Collier suggested that Chinese were generally involved in the production of cheaper, low-quality items and this was an important reason behind the compulsory stamping of Chinese-made furniture. Collier argues that the Wages Board established in 1902 to enforce minimum wage rates in the trade faced greater problems in overcoming "sweating" than Boards covering other trades because of the large number of smaller factories engaged in fierce competition. Between 1902 and 1913 898 cases of underpayment resulted in a 71 per cent conviction rate. In one year (1908), 73.7 per cent of the 38 acquittals resulted from Chinese witnesses contradicting evidence previously given to inspectors and Collier implies this was a consequence of intimidation. The official statistics supplied by Chinese employers indicated that they were paying their employees, on average, one shilling and eightpence per week more than European employees received. Collier was sceptical of these figures, but is unable to disprove them apart from the reference to minimum rate

points cast doubt on whether the action amounted simply to racism rather than some combination of this and traditional union concerns.

Whether justified or not, the fear of Chinese competition appeared to stimulate union organization in the 1890s. In 1891 a Gardeners' and Gardeners' Assistants' Union was formed in Sydney. Upon affiliation to the Sydney Trades and Labour Council it focused on the employment of Chinese nurserymen. Its delegates also raised the question of Italian immigrants. This resulted in a labour council inquiry. The Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Society expressed similar reservations on the exploitation of indentured Italian labour. In Melbourne, women who established a White Women's Laundry in 1892 requested labour council and union support against Chinese competition.⁷⁴

Undoubtedly the most prominent and influential opposition to Chinese and non-European labour originated amongst the pastoral unions which were eventually to form the Australian Workers' Union - the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (A.S.U.), the Queensland Shearers' Union (Q.S.U.) and the General Labourers' Union (G.L.U.). The campaigns of these unions were associated with attempts by squatters to enforce "freedom of contract" from 1888 to 1889 by introducing non-union labour. Non-European immigrants were identified as the primary source of scab labour with the Chinese in particular gaining a reputation as strike-breakers.⁷⁵ However, Chinese were not perceived as the only threat. In August 1887 at a meeting of stock-holders in Adelaide it was proposed that "Kaffir" shearers be introduced in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand at a rate to make the industry competitive with South America where women were employed at fifteen shillings per 100 sheep.⁷⁶

At its 1888 Annual Conference the A.S.U. excluded most non-Europeans from membership. In 1890 this was extended to Melanesians

evasion. See P.S. Collier, "Minimum Wage Legislation in Australasia", Appendix VIII in the State of New York, *Fourth Report of a Factory Investigating Commission* (J.B. Lyon and Co., Albany, 1915), vol. IV, pp.1948-1952.

⁷⁴H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.48.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p.45.

⁷⁶*S.M.H.*, August 30, 1887, p.8.

although, in contrast, free membership was proposed for Aborigines.⁷⁷ In 1891 the G.L.U. excluded Asians and Pacific Islanders. In the same year the Q.S.U. adopted discriminatory membership rules. Markus states that these were not the only unions to identify freedom of contract with the employment of non-Europeans.⁷⁸ According to McQueen the Q.S.U. rules not only excluded Chinese but also those who had dealings with them.⁷⁹

The employment of Chinese as shearers and cooks, and the identification of this with poor working conditions, was a major issue of the 1890 Maritime strike. At the 1891 conference between the Pastoralists' Federal Council and the A.S.U., the union refused to concede the use of Chinese and "Kanakas" as shearers or shearers' cooks.⁸⁰ This condition was later incorporated into the pastoral industry agreement of 1890-1893. The union secretary Spence claimed the union's stand had been made not only against a reduction in wages and freedom of contract but principally against the introduction of Chinese labour.⁸¹ Discriminatory membership rules were retained when the southern bush unions amalgamated to form the Australian Workers' Union (A.W.U.) in 1894. In 1895 they were extended to all non-European aliens apart from Maoris, Negroes and Aborigines.⁸² In the next few years, the A.W.U. was to assume a dominant position within the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) and the union's stance on the question of racial exclusion was to have a profound impact on the party's philosophy.⁸³

The activities of the pastoral unions in the 1890s also mark a renewed broadening of working-class objections from Chinese

⁷⁷A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.173.

⁷⁸Markus points to contemporary statements by the Secretary, Wharf Labourers' Union and the President of the Boot Trades Union. *Ibid.*, p.173.

⁷⁹H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.125.

⁸⁰W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening* (Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1909), p.9.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp.229-230.

⁸²A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.173.

⁸³R. Markey, "Populist Politics", *op cit.*, p.75.

immigrants to non-European labour in general. In the main, this was linked to the use of indentured Pacific Island labour in Queensland. This, of course, lay outside the provisions of anti-Chinese legislation. Unions likened the "Kanakan system" and its use in the sugar industry to slavery.⁸⁴ This is hardly surprising given their traditional attitude to indentured or contracted labour. McQueen sees the struggle to end Melanesian labour as crucial to the emergence of the Labor Party in Queensland.⁸⁵ As with Chinese workers in the pastoral industry, Island labour was identified as a causal factor in the poor working conditions prevailing in the sugar industry.⁸⁶ Such perceptions probably proved to be self-perpetuating. For their part, employers labelled Europeans as being inferior and unstable employees. The depression of the 1890s induced increasing numbers of local Europeans to seek work in the industry. Irrespective of this, in 1891 employers imported 4,000 Italian labourers with the assistance of the Queensland government.

Hunt links the exclusion of Pacific Island labour following Federation and their replacement by Europeans with the formation of unions in the sugar industry from 1905 onwards.⁸⁷ This did not result in an immediate improvement in conditions. Like the pastoral unions, the Amalgamated Sugar Workers' Union sought to prohibit alternative sources of labour. However, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (C.S.R.) continued to import Italian workers.⁸⁸ As with Islanders, Italian labourers were indentured under the Master and Servant Act (1861) despite union (now the Amalgamated Workers' Association) attempts to persuade them not to sign.⁸⁹ Saunders argues that the

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p.73.

⁸⁵H. McQueen, in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.52.

⁸⁶D. Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.87.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p.88.

⁸⁸K. Saunders, "Masters and Servants", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, pp.105-106.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p.105.

introduction of Italian labour was part of an employer strategy to use them as strike-breakers. Her evidence suggests that during the first major strike in 1911 Italians did display a reluctance to join the union.⁹⁰

In 1915 the union (now the A.W.U.) began a series of strikes aimed at ousting the remaining "Kanakas" and the large number of Italians because of the latter's alleged willingness to work long hours and their potential use as strike-breakers.⁹¹ This undoubtedly resulted in Italian workers being treated as inferior unionists. Nevertheless, it would be well to remember Saunders's point that the indentured status of immigrant workers tended to pervade employer attitudes in their dealings with all workers.⁹² As Borrie argues, immigrants were judged largely on their ability to conform to local standards of behaviour.⁹³ It was generally assumed that northern Europeans could meet these more readily. The introduction of indentured Italian peasants was clearly viewed as a direct threat by unskilled unions lacking apprenticeship or other craft controls on the supply of labour. Local Italian workmen also came to view indenturing with hostility. In the 1920s the A.W.U. modified its stance to one of imposing quotas of not less than 75 per cent British and Australian-born workers on all jobs - a customary practice achieved by informal negotiation with cane-growers at the annual "sign-on".⁹⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century non-European labour was seen

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p.105.

⁹¹D. Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", *op cit.*, p.94.

⁹²K. Saunders, "Masters and Servants", *op cit.*, p.111.

⁹³Borrie found that while Germans did cling to their customs and traditions they usually sought occupations not placing them in direct competition with Australians. In contrast, Italians settling in Western Australia and Queensland showed little tendency to conform to local standards and competed with Australian wage-earners by working as labourers in low-paid occupations. Borrie does not deny a racist component in Australian thinking but argues the strength of organized opposition was primarily a function of economic factors. W.D. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954).

⁹⁴B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.30.

to constitute the greatest single threat to local living standards although other groups were not ignored, particularly if they were employed under contract or indenture. In 1901 the Immigration Restriction Act and the Pacific Island Labourers' Act were passed by the first Australian federal government. The "White Australia" principle was enshrined in the face of general public agreement and isolated employer opposition. The Immigration Restriction Act achieved this principle by requiring that intending migrants must be able to read a passage written in English. In 1905 to appease Japanese criticism, a dictation test in any prescribed European language was introduced. In 1925 in order to restrict southern European migration, the legislation was amended to empower the Governor-General to exclude persons of any race, nationality, class or occupation if they were deemed to be undesirable immigrants. The infamous dictation test was used not only to exclude non-Europeans but also political undesirables such as Czech author and linguist, Egon Kisch, in 1934, who was given a test in Gaelic.

In the early twentieth century the notion of "White Australia" was accepted without question by the bulk of the Australian labour movement. Socialist elements, however, slowly began to question the validity of an explicitly racist position in the light of aspirations toward international working-class solidarity.⁹⁵ It was not until the 1920s that the issue was widely debated by the union movement.

In 1921 the All Australian Trade Union Congress reiterated the general opposition of unions to immigration. In the following year the New South Wales Labor Council, then under a leadership strongly influenced by the Communist Party and led by J.S. Garden, affiliated to the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat (P.P.T.U.S.). The P.P.T.U.S. had close links with the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U.) or Profintern. The P.P.T.U.S. was committed to the abolition of racial barriers both at the level of wages for work done and at the broader level of trade union unity. It viewed the "White Australia" policy as a tool of capitalism (which divided

⁹⁵For an account of this see G. Osborne, "A Socialist Dilemma: Racism and Internationalism in the Victorian Socialist Party 1902-21", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, pp.112-128.

workers) and argued that militants should draw all migrants who entered the country into the union movement.⁹⁶ In 1927 the newly formed Australian Council of Trade Unions (A.C.T.U.) affiliated with the P.P.T.U.S. but almost immediately informed it of difficult economic conditions prevailing in Australia. Farrell states the affiliation nevertheless prompted a strong reaction from right-wing elements in the labour movement, especially the powerful A.W.U.⁹⁷ The A.C.T.U. response was predictable for a fledgling organization seeking to retain its basis of support. A.C.T.U. president W.J. Duggan stated that the Council stood solidly for "White Australia" despite its affiliation with the P.P.T.U.S.⁹⁸

Rejection of "White Australia" did not necessitate an advocacy of large-scale immigration. Hence an acceptable stance was possible which did not compromise the anti-racist principle of international working-class unity. Farrell concludes that "issues of practical self interest mingled with theory to shape a qualified though significant challenge to the entrenched racist assumptions of right wing sections of the organised trade union movement."⁹⁹ However, P.P.T.U.S. criticism of the A.C.T.U.'s support for arbitration and its failure to denounce "White Australia" led to a growing breach between the bodies. This was exacerbated by growing unemployment and increasing conservatism amongst union officials. In 1930 a motion expressing unconditional support for P.P.T.U.S.

⁹⁶R. Pierce, *Arbitration 1918-1933* (unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1978), p.58.

⁹⁷F. Farrell, "International Solidarity? White Australia and the Australian Council of Trade Unions", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, p.31.

⁹⁸Despite this opposition, affiliation was overwhelmingly endorsed at the 1928 Congress. Farrell points out that this endorsement did not resolve the controversy over whether White Australia was a contravention of internationalism, whether the emphasis on coloured immigration had permitted British immigration to undermine living standards and whether P.P.T.U.S. affiliation implied an acceptance of large-scale immigration. Farrell states these debates within the union movement disclosed attempts by union leaders to accommodate pragmatic considerations of labour restriction with principles of international solidarity. *Ibid.*, pp.131-133.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p.133.

affiliation was lost narrowly while a motion affirming the A.C.T.U.'s allegiance to "White Australia" was passed.¹⁰⁰ Farrell interprets this as indicating a complete abandonment of anti-racist internationalism which reduced Communist Party opposition to "White Australia" to a minority status.

This setback, however, was temporary in the context of a long, and as yet incomplete, process of evolution. As Luckham states, this was the only time an A.C.T.U. congress endorsed "White Australia."¹⁰¹ In 1931, the A.C.T.U. supported a strike by Japanese and Malayan pearl divers in Australian waters. Furthermore, in 1939, Council argued that unions and workers should see the influx of Jewish refugees as bolstering the case for the 40-hour week. To this issue some employers demonstrated less tolerance. Nevertheless, there was no clear renunciation of "White Australia" by Council.¹⁰² The post-World War Two immigration policy as initiated by the Labor government was organized firmly in the tradition of racial exclusion. It continued under successive Liberal governments although there was progressive blurring in the notion of which source-countries were deemed to be European. The maintenance of "White Australia" must be seen as a product of the underlying racism of Australian society and not merely the labour movement.

European Immigration

As with reactions to the importation of non-European labour, organized working-class responses to European immigration can be traced back to the very infancy of trade union development in Australia. In the nineteenth century the two issues were commonly

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.135.

¹⁰¹ B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.17.

¹⁰² It is difficult to interpret the frequent motions debated and passed at congresses calling for better treatment for Aborigines in the post-war period as indicating an altered stance on "White Australia" given the ambiguous relationship Aborigines always had to the union movement. Nevertheless, the post-war congresses are notable in that no motions that could be construed as racist were placed on the agenda.

linked to down-turns in economic activity and higher than normal levels of unemployment. Nevertheless, the intensity of union hostility to European immigration hinged upon a number of qualifications besides the prevailing economic climate. These included the size of the overall intake, the degree of government or private assistance, the trade skills and socio-economic status of immigrants, the contractual basis of their employment and nationality or ethnic origin. In contrast, the general union stance on non-European labour eventually evolved into one of almost unequivocal condemnation by the turn of the century.

The initial phase of union formation and growth occurred from the early 1830s in New South Wales and slightly later in Victoria.¹⁰³ British emigrants played a prominent part in the development of these early trade societies.¹⁰⁴ According to Thomas, infant craft societies and the association they formed with labourers were largely concerned with European immigration in the form of convict transportation. With the official suspension of transportation in 1840 these bodies diverted their attention to assignment of labour within the colony and vigorously opposed proposals to re-introduce convict immigration throughout the decade.¹⁰⁵

While Thomas sees the struggle against assisted European immigration as developing in the 1840s, Hume points to some earlier evidence of working-class hostility. At a public meeting in 1833, the Society of Emigrant Mechanics attempted to keep discussion centred on assisted immigration although other speakers introduced the issue of competition from assigned servants and ticket-of-leave

¹⁰³ See Leila Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*; and L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Thomas indicates that the earliest union which she was able to trace was the Cabinet Makers' Society formed amongst emigrant mechanics in 1833. Other bodies mentioned by Thomas include the Typographers (1836), Shipwrights (1839), Coachmakers (1837), Seamen (1837), Carpenters and Joiners (1840), Engineers, Millwrights, Founders and Smiths (1840 and 1845), Operative Cordwainers (1840), Assistant Drapers (1840), Journeyman Plasterers (1842), Sawyers, Bakers and Tailors (1846). L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.29.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.74.

holders.¹⁰⁶ Some unions attempted to discourage immigration more directly. In 1839, the Compositors' Society in Sydney sent to England a statement of wages and conditions pertaining to the colony. Hume reports that the stonemasons and coachmakers in Victoria also sent information to English unions "in order to stop workmen from emigrating."¹⁰⁷

Such actions were to set the pattern for craft union responses throughout the nineteenth century. Irrespective of when such actions originated, agitation against assisted immigration (and unassisted immigration for that matter) and convict transportation were both primarily directed at easing competition for jobs. Amongst craftsmen the desire to restrict entry to the trade and exclude unskilled labour was the basis for forming trade societies. Thomas argues this was the expressed aim of the Slaters and Shinglers (1842), the Painters, Plumbers and Glaziers (1840) and the Fellmongers (1845). The latter provided for the issue of certificates and protested against the employment of 18-20 Chinese at the Waterloo mills in November 1849.¹⁰⁸

Thomas argues that in the 1840s immigration both provoked and endangered union organization:

the immigration flux with its sudden pressures and its great irregularity provided a constant menace for the labourers who once had monopolised a market. Thus the desire to maintain the old monopoly led unionism to a consideration of the central question of assignment and immigration, and economics became politics.¹⁰⁹

The convict problem was essentially a temporary one as the supply gradually became exhausted. The question of immigration, which Thomas sees as the more vital, was less a struggle with the government than with the squatting party. She sees the issues as a rallying point

¹⁰⁶L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.107.

¹⁰⁷Such correspondence was also carried on between societies in the various colonies. *Ibid.*, pp.56-57.

¹⁰⁸L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, p.44.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p.82.

for the union movement until the economic crisis of 1843 when the sectional action of craft unions restricting entry (as mentioned above) led to bitterness and dissension.

Hume's interpretation of the impact of immigration is slightly more complex. He notes the activities of the Mutual Protection Association (M.P.A.) which campaigned against the Master and Servant Act, assignment and immigration.¹¹⁰ At the same time he suggests the most commonly suggested remedy for unemployment prior to 1860 was access to land, not restriction of immigration.¹¹¹ Craftsmen, however, demanded employment at their trade at the standard wage rate rather than rural work.¹¹²

While Thomas and Hume both acknowledge union hostility to assisted immigration, Hume is less certain of the impact of immigration on union organization. He points to a number of factors influencing union growth and survival during the 1840s:¹¹³ first, the use of the Master and Servant Act against unions already weakened by the economic climate; second, while unions did not entirely depend on new arrivals for members or leaders, many early leaders were moving out of the working class and the structure was shaken by the collapse of the M.P.A. in 1844; third, the decline in assisted immigration did not halt the demise of unions; and finally, while Thomas argues unions revived in the mid-1840s due to an increase in immigration, she could find no evidence to show that immigrants formed or joined unions or that local workers were forced to organize in defence against the competition of newcomers.

¹¹⁰L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, pp.147-148. See also Footnote 29.

¹¹¹There is little evidence for this during the 1843 recession and Hume admits criticism of assisted immigration was a permanent feature of the labour movement in the period covered by his study (1830-1860). *Ibid.*, p.121.

¹¹²Hume quotes Benjamin Sutherland who, in a submission to the Select Committee on the petition of distressed labourers (1843), stated, "The mechanics, having been induced to come here as such, consider it would be unjust to drive them into the interior, where their trade would be of no use to them, after they have been at considerable expense and loss of time to acquire a knowledge of it, and compel them to work as labourers." *Ibid.*, p.125.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p.90.

Irrespective of any ambiguity about the effect of fluctuations in immigration on union growth, there is ample evidence to indicate that assisted immigration was seen as a menace by workers, particularly during periods of job shortage. From the early 1830s, the governments of the colonies and Britain, shipping agents and employers had been encouraging the flow of free immigrants to Australia. Thomas argues that the information presented to prospective immigrants was often exaggerated.¹¹⁴ From the mid-1840s the inflow of free immigrants increased rapidly, prompting working-class agitation in Sydney.¹¹⁵ By 1851 the European population of the Australian colonies had reached 430,000, of whom less than 15 per cent had arrived as convicts.¹¹⁶ The discovery of gold in this year led to a dramatic increase in population over the next decade, especially in Victoria. At the same time there was a new phase of union development. Hume notes that many unions were formed in Victoria with some collapsing as their members left for the gold-fields and most having dissolved prior to 1856.¹¹⁷ By 1861 the total population of the colonies was 1,130,000. During the preceding decade 70,000 immigrants had arrived with government assistance.¹¹⁸

According to Gollan, the effects of this influx were that:

the migrants of the late 1850s and 1860s entered communities in which there were always some unemployed, the number of whom were, at times, very large indeed.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴L. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of NSW*, *op cit.*, pp.15-16.

¹¹⁵Hume notes that in 1849 a distress meeting of the unemployed in Sydney attacked assisted immigration and urged that a representative be sent to England to counteract the propaganda of emigration agents. In March 1851 William Maxwell, a "radical agitator", urged workers to join the recently-formed Political Association because of its stance on immigration. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, pp.162-164.

¹¹⁶Over the next decade immigration totalled 602,000 persons. See C.A. Price, *The Great White Walls are Built*, *op cit.*, p.29 and p.33.

¹¹⁷L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.90.

¹¹⁸In the period up to 1901 approximately 600,000 assisted immigrants reached the Australian colonies.

¹¹⁹R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, *op cit.*, p.77.

From 1857 onwards vocal elements in the working class responded with demands for government works and the cessation of assisted immigration.¹²⁰ Gollan and Coghlan both attribute considerable hostility on the part of labour organizations to the issue of assisted immigration in general as well as indentured non-European labour.¹²¹

Hume, who gives an insight into the underlying motives, states:

It seems true to say that only rarely did the workers request straight-out restriction of immigration: but they did object to the efforts made by the government to encourage people to migrate to Australia. The relative importance of assisted immigration into Eastern Australia enabled the workers' spokesmen to claim that all they wanted was the application of free trade principles.¹²²

Thus the labour movement was able:

to represent its anti-immigration stance not so much as an attempt to restrict competition, as an effort to inform potential migrants of the real position in Australia.¹²³

¹²⁰Hume states that the political programme of the Victorian labour movement between 1857 and 1860 included the partial prohibition of immigration. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.179.

¹²¹R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, *op cit.*, p.76; and T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, *op cit.*, p.874.

¹²²Hume records the address of J.G. White to the New South Wales Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of the Metropolis held in 1859 as evidence of this. White argued that the need for propaganda and assisted passages indicated that the labour market was already stacked. Henry Parkes was the prime instigator behind the establishment of the Select Committee following public demonstrations by the unemployed. In its report, the committee recommended that New South Wales industry be given tariff protection in order to bolster employment. This proposal was anathema to the "free trade" principles then pervasive amongst the colony's influential persons, and it was promptly rejected by the Legislative Assembly. This helps explain why workers' advocates such as White adopted a "free trade" argument in their efforts to curb assisted immigration. It was to be 40 years before the causes of immigration restriction and protectionism were to join forces at federation. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, pp.122-123.

¹²³Hume goes on to say that "This was the attitude taken by the Society of Emigrant Mechanics in 1833, and by the Constitutional Association in 1849: it ran through the Victorian agitation of the 1850s and it appeared again in New South Wales toward the end of the period." *Ibid.*, p.123.

Union statements to this effect can be found throughout the nineteenth century and up to the present. Nevertheless, as Hume argues, the clear aim of opposition to assisted immigration was a reduction in the competition for jobs. As he so succinctly puts it, "The craft union ideal of the 'closed shop' was extended to become the concept of the 'closed economy'."¹²⁴

Opposition to assisted immigration from the British Isles remained a recurring policy proposal of the labour movement, particularly during periods of abnormal unemployment. At a meeting of the Eight-Hour System and Short-Hour League of New South Wales in June 1871 the response to a question concerning the possibility of further emigration from England was that "we consider the present supply of the labour market of the colony is more than equal to the demand for both mechanics and labourers."¹²⁵ Upon its formation, the Sydney Trades and Labour Council called for the control and restriction of assisted immigration. In 1874 the Working Men's Political Association in Melbourne expressed opposition to assisted immigration.¹²⁶ These were but foretastes of bitter working-class dissatisfaction with this policy and the political organization it was to help foster.

Loveday sees 1877 as a peak year of hostility to government sponsored immigration.¹²⁷ In this year a Working Men's Defence Association was formed in New South Wales. At a meeting between this body, the Reform League and the Sydney Trades and Labour Council (T.L.C.) prior to the New South Wales elections, a joint policy plan was prepared on this issue. The Sydney Trades and Labour Council was active in canvassing public support in its own right. In December delegates from the Plasterers', Carpenters', Coachmakers' and Quarrymen's Societies sought a special council

¹²⁴In support of his contention Hume cites statements made by the Victorian carpenter, Strichland, in 1857 alleging that imported labour was primarily directed at lowering wages and a petition of unemployed workers presented to the Legislative Assembly in 1859 which called for the suspension of all immigration. *Ibid.*, p.123.

¹²⁵Minutes of the Eight-Hour System and Short-Hour League of New South Wales, June 30, 1871. The League was the precursor to the Sydney Trades and Labour Council.

¹²⁶E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia*, *op cit.*, p.97.

¹²⁷P. Loveday in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.16.

meeting to consider organising a public meeting in opposition to the expenditure of public money for the introduction of immigrants.¹²⁸ In January 1878 Council agreed to a public meeting the following month in order to petition the parliament against the expenditure of any sums of money for bringing immigrants to the colony in that year.¹²⁹

The fear of competition from European immigrants became a dominant feature of council debates. At a meeting later in January, the chairman drew attention to the importation of foreign workers by "English Capitalists" to replace striking masons during a recent dispute in that country.¹³⁰ It was argued that the same thing might occur in Australia, particularly as the Agreements Validation bill endowed local employers with great advantages in this area. This obvious reference to the contracting of immigrants demonstrates that such problems were not seen to be reserved to non-European labour. The use of contract labour aroused union hostility at any time. When such workers were foreign-born and unaccustomed to local working conditions the perceived hazards were exacerbated.¹³¹

¹²⁸Delegates of the societies alleged that "in many instances old hands were put off to make room for them." It was resolved that council seek the view of all affiliated bodies. Reported in the *S.M.H.*, December 14, 1877, p.4.

¹²⁹*S.M.H.*, January 11, 1878, p.4.

¹³⁰*S.M.H.*, January 25, 1878, p.5.

¹³¹Numerous instances of union agitation against contract labour can be found throughout the nineteenth century. A number of cases involving migrant labour may also be cited. In March 1859 the Victorian Labour League adopted a provision into its platform that "any agreement made by individuals for labour out of the colony be not binding on parties and of no effect till the said parties have resided 30 days in the colony of Victoria, and the agreement has been re-signed after 30 days." In February 1890 a meeting of members of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners discussed the sub-letting of joiners' contracts to German firms by the Building and Contractors' Association. It was claimed that German workmen were employed at seven shillings and sixpence per day (which was below the prevailing wage rate) and the matter was referred to the Building Trades Council. In July of the same year the Ironmoulders' Union called a special meeting to communicate to unions in England and Scotland that they should caution workmen engaging with any colonial firm under an agreement to work nine hours per day as the eight-hour day was recognized by the iron trades throughout the colonies. See L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, p.82; and the *S.M.H.*, February 5, 1890, p.5 and July 9, 1890, p.8.

At the same meeting reference was made to a proposal before parliament that £75,000 be allocated for assisted immigration. Adding a note of bitter sarcasm to proceedings, delegate F. Dixon said he hoped that the vote would be carried and he would support the importation of as many immigrants as possible:

because it would not be until the workingmen were starved into action that they come face to face with this question and grapple with it in earnest.

He strongly condemned working-class inaction and cynically concluded:

If every working man in the colony were to sign a petition against immigration, the House would still pass the vote because the influence of employers and the press is stronger than that of the people.¹³²

Despite the opposition of the Quarrymen's Society delegates - who felt it would be a waste of time - a public meeting was held in February 1878. At the meeting speakers pointed to the depressing effect of additional labour supply on wages, the existence of unemployment and short working weeks amongst masons and iron-workers and argued this would be exacerbated by the immigration intakes clamoured for by employers and merchants. As in earlier struggles, the rhetoric revealed not only the traditional restrictive outlook of labour but also appeals to free trade principles (the expenditure of public money financing immigration) and small-scale capitalism in the form of more equitable land distribution. One speaker argued that "the capitalist simply wanted immigrants to swamp the labour market and reduce wages which would degrade labour and encroach on its rights." He also expressed the view that advertising for immigrants was necessary in the absence of liberal land laws such as in the United States.¹³³

Interpreting such statements requires some degree of caution. First, as Hume notes, appeals to liberalism - which like racism was a pervasive ideology in the nineteenth century - broadened the basis

¹³² S.M.H., January 25, 1878, p.5.

¹³³ The speaker referred to was T. White. Reported in the S.M.H., February 12, 1878, p.3.

of opposition by presenting it as something more than narrow protectionism.¹³⁴ Such appeals were necessary to mount maximum support behind the anti-immigration stance (see Footnote 122). This also helps to explain why unions seldom called for a prohibition of all immigration. Union leaders either accepted the liberal stance or (more likely) knew that overt hostility to unassisted immigration would be ineffective and might even damage the case against assisted immigration. Second, the question of land allocation may be viewed as similar to the frontier myth propagated in the United States (see Chapter 1). Even if the land issue represented a strong aspect of working-class consciousness rather than a deliberate strategy, such an individualized philosophy occurred alongside an even stronger class identity. To label the working class as *petit bourgeois* as McQueen has done is tantamount to isolating workers from their historical context - a context where explicit class terminology is employed in defence of wage standards in conjunction with a good deal of political pragmatism.¹³⁵

Finally, the intensity of expressed hostility offers an interesting counterfoil to those writers who have viewed the attitude of the labour movement to immigration largely in terms of its stance on non-European labour.

At the first Intercolonial Trade Union Congress (I.T.U.C.) held in October 1879, both European assisted immigration and Asian immigration were discussed. Motions expressing opposition were passed on each - the latter unanimously and the former with only two dissenting votes.¹³⁶ This indicates a considerable degree of unity on both issues. Public meetings expressing opposition to

¹³⁴Hume also points to the danger of viewing working-class organizations as homogeneous since many contained middle-class sympathizers and political opportunists whose publicized statements did not always accurately reflect the feelings of those they sought to represent. L.J. Hume, *The Labor Movement in NSW and Victoria 1830-1860*, *op cit.*, pp.147-148.

¹³⁵It is worth noting that predisposition of Australian labour at this time appears to equate quite closely with that in Britain as disclosed by the Webbs. Yet in order to justify his argument McQueen is compelled to stress the uniqueness of the Australian working class. See H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, chapter 16; and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (Longman's, Green and Co., London, 1896).

¹³⁶*S.M.H.*, October 9, 1879, p.3 and October 10, 1879, p.6.

migration were held in Sydney in February 1880 and December 1881.¹³⁷ In 1882 E.W. O'Sullivan, leader of the organized printers and delegate of the Typographical Association to the Sydney Trades and Labour Council unsuccessfully contested the seat of West Sydney on a labour policy platform that included strong opposition to immigration.¹³⁸

The Victorian situation was little different, strong hostility being expressed towards both publicly and privately sponsored immigration - particularly when the latter involved contracted labour as it frequently did. For instance, in 1882 a deputation from the Chamber of Manufacturers urged the Victorian government to legalize engagements between employers and workers entered into outside the colony. The Melbourne Trades and Labour Council perceived this as an attempt to bring in foreign workers who, being ignorant of Victorian conditions- would interfere "with the principles of trade societies."¹³⁹ The matter was referred to the council's revision committee which was to monitor and report on the progress of this move by employers. In the following year council refused to participate in a conference on immigration proposed by the Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers. In reply a motion was carried which stated that in council's view, "it was undesirable that State funds should be applied for the purpose of assisted immigration to Victoria."¹⁴⁰

At the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress held in 1885 a motion calling for the abolition of state-assisted immigration sponsored by the tailoresses, ironworkers, Amalgamated Society of Engineers (A.S.E.) and operative masons was passed unanimously.¹⁴¹ It was alleged that up to £150,000 had been spent on the importation

¹³⁷S.M.H., February 3, 1880, p.5 and December 5, 1881, p.5.

¹³⁸P. Loveday in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics, op cit.*, p.18.

¹³⁹The Melbourne Trades and Labour Council, minutes of meeting held on September 22, 1882.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on March 9, 1883.

¹⁴¹*History of Capital and Labour, op cit.*, p.62.

of European labour in a single year. Again, the threat this posed for prevailing wage rates was stressed. In 1886 there was determined agitation by the Sydney Trades and Labour Council and other organs.¹⁴² In March, the Melbourne Trades and Labour Council's attention was drawn to an imperial government proposal for the emigration of large numbers of mechanics from England. A motion was placed on notice which alleged that the suggestion "was calculated to disarrange the labour market and produce injury to the wage earners of this colony."¹⁴³ At its April meeting council passed the motion without discussion.¹⁴⁴ Council also supported the action of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council which had decided to send a representative to England "to represent the job situation so as to forestall further immigration."¹⁴⁵

Later the same month (July) the Melbourne council reaffirmed its opposition to the imperial government scheme.¹⁴⁶ In May 1887 it was resolved that the council secretary would write to the Premier of New South Wales:

expressing surprise and indignation at the NSW Government in bringing immigrants from Europe and sending them to Victoria because there is no employment in NSW.¹⁴⁷

The Brisbane Trades and Labour Council was similarly engaged. In April of the same year it had decided to seek returns on the number and occupations of immigrants arriving within the last year from the Colonial Secretary. This was preparatory to the tabling of a motion:

to the effect that all immigration except for direct land settlement, should be discontinued, and that all members of parliament who refused to support this plan would be refused support at the next election.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, p.49.

¹⁴³The Melbourne Trades and Labour Council, minutes of meeting held on March 21, 1886.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on April 9, 1886.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on July 18, 1886.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on July 23, 1886.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on May 13, 1887.

¹⁴⁸Like its Sydney and Melbourne counterparts the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council alleged that the system of introducing labourers and artisans was paralysing labour and bringing down

During 1878-1879 and 1886-1887, which were both periods of job shortages in the Australian colonies, the union movement strove to ensure that immigration did not undermine the relatively privileged conditions of local workers. Yet it could hardly be suggested that they looked upon European immigration with sympathy at other times. Furthermore, there was an intense animosity to any proposal to import labour under contract.

The broad context of union hostility can be well illustrated by the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress held in Brisbane in early March 1888. Listed amongst the subjects for debate were:

- i the total prohibition of state-aided immigration unless due provisions were made for settling people on the land;
- ii the abolition of Chinese and coolie immigration and the insertion of a clause in all government contracts prohibiting the employment of Chinese and coloured labour;
- iii all Chinese-made goods to be stamped as such and thus specially brought under the supervision of a Factories and Workshop Act;
- iv the regulation of apprentices; and
- v current wages to be paid by government contractors.¹⁴⁹

The motion on assisted immigration indicates that workers saw land settlement less as opportunity for themselves than as a safeguard against competition from immigrants. Both this motion and that calling for the exclusion of Chinese were passed. With regard to the latter, attention was directed at the entry of Chinese and

wages. Delegates also pointed to cases of unemployment in the engineering trade. The policies of council's parliamentary committee included abolition of Chinese and coolie immigration, regulation of apprentices and industrial legislation. These policies are typical of the various strategies adopted by unions to restrict labour supply and maintain or improve the standard of working conditions. Reported in the *S.M.H.*, April 12, 1887, p.8.

¹⁴⁹Reported in the *S.M.H.*, March 2, 1888, p.5.

"coolie" labour into Northern Australia.¹⁵⁰ It was alleged that syndicates were introducing "coolie" labour which, on completing their contract, passed into other states.¹⁵¹

The views of all unions were not identical when it came to deciding which restrictive strategies would be most effective or best suited their own individual interests. As has already been pointed out, non-European labour largely competed with unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Thus the issue of Chinese immigrants was far more significant to unions representing shearers, labourers, seamen and miners than those with craft-based memberships (with the exception of the furniture trades societies). In an obvious reference to this, one delegate (presumably from a union in the former group) warned that although one section of the working class:

had not so much sympathy with the movement as they have because Chinamen were not bricklayers, stonemasons or foundrymen, but he would remind them that the Chinamen are very imitative, and would, if allowed, interfere greatly with every trade and ultimately crowd them out.¹⁵²

The problem of sweated labour, however, was not merely seen to derive from the employment of Chinese; the employment of women and children, the link between sweating and occupational illness and the need for protection of local industry from cheap-labour European imports were also discussed.

The Australian union movement could hardly call openly for an end to all European immigration given the dependent status of the colonies, imperial government policy (see Footnote 29), and the possibility that such a stand might breach the growing consensus of coloured immigration - the latter being perceived as a greater threat to living standards. Yet the antagonistic disposition of labour to all possible sources of competition is unmistakable.

¹⁵⁰*S.M.H.*, March 3, 1888, p.14.

¹⁵¹A number of delegates proposed discriminatory restrictions. These included an entry tax and the banning of Chinese from government employment. See the *S.M.H.*, March 6, 1888, p.5 and March 7, 1888, p.7.

¹⁵²Reported in the *S.M.H.*, March 7, 1888, p.7.

Evidence of it can be found even amongst those who propound the case that rampant and unmitigated racism amongst the working class was the key dynamic in its organization. McQueen, for instance, refers to Engels's view that massive Australian donations to the London dockers' strike of 1889 was less a display of generosity or working-class solidarity than a desire to ward off a mass importation of English workers which could follow the strike's failure.¹⁵³

The broad tone of anti-immigration hostility can also be detected in the 1889 policy plank of the Melbourne Trades and Labour Council which included the introduction of a bill to prevent the introduction of "criminal, pauper and Asiatic labour."¹⁵⁴ In March of the same year a special meeting of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council was called to consider the British government's decision to establish a committee to promote emigration from England. A vigorous debate ensued during which the union movement's opposition to state-aided immigration was re-iterated strongly. Council called for a protest from the New South Wales government and it was decided to inform the British union movement and press of the dangers of such schemes for introducing "pauper labour".¹⁵⁵ This activity was in response to a provision in the Imperial Local Government Act which empowered county councils to borrow money to assist people to emigrate to the colonies. The New South Wales premier assured a labour council delegation that he was similarly opposed to the emigration of "feeble, idle people or inmates of workhouses".¹⁵⁶

The notion of poor, criminal or pauper immigrants took on new meaning with General Booth's proposal to foster the transfer of London poor to the colonies. This suggestion induced a fierce reaction from the union movement. In November 1890 the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council debated a motion that the Melbourne and London Labour Councils be contacted so that a strong protest could be registered against the scheme.¹⁵⁷ Later the same month the

¹⁵³H. McQueen, *A New Britannia*, *op cit.*, p.209.

¹⁵⁴J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, *op cit.*, p.110.

¹⁵⁵Reported in the *S.M.H.*, March 29, 1889, p.5.

¹⁵⁶See the *S.M.H.*, April 6, 1889, p.11, report.

¹⁵⁷The Ballarat Trades and Labour Council, minutes of meeting held on November 7, 1890.

motion was carried that labour councils in the various colonies be written to. It was also agreed that the "true state of the labour market should also be made clear to the labouring classes in the old country."¹⁵⁸ At the same time the Bathurst Trades and Labour Council wrote to its Sydney counterpart expressing its hostility to Booth's scheme and calling for united opposition throughout the colonies.¹⁵⁹ At a special meeting of the Sydney body opposition was firmly established.¹⁶⁰ The Australian Labour Federation of Queensland and the Auckland Trades and Labour Council both expressed like views about Booth's scheme.¹⁶¹

The 1890s witnessed the emergence of permanent political organization on the part of the labour movement in the Australian colonies. Restriction of immigration occupied a prominent place in the policy platform of almost all early associations. The 1891 platform of the early political organization of labour in Queensland included opposition to assisted immigration. In 1893 the Workers' Political Association of this state advocated the exclusion of coloured, Asiatic and contract or indentured labour.¹⁶² The early policy statements of the United Labour Party in South Australia made no mention of Chinese but did express hostility to free and assisted immigration.¹⁶³ However, by 1893 the United Labour Party urged the prohibition of "the influx of Asiatic and servile races and restricting the introduction of immigrants bound to service before arrival in Australia."¹⁶⁴ In Tasmania, Davis records early attempts by labour sympathizers to restrict assisted immigration and tax Chinese residents.¹⁶⁵ A policy similar to that advocated by the Workers' Political Association in Queensland was adopted by a meeting of the Victorian Trade Union Congress and United Labour and

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on November 21, 1890.

¹⁵⁹*S.M.H.*, November 21, 1890, p.5, report.

¹⁶⁰*S.M.H.*, November 29, 1890, p.7, report.

¹⁶¹*S.M.H.*, January 8, 1891, p.6, report.

¹⁶²D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.146.

¹⁶³Dickey, in D. Murphy, *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.240.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p.243.

¹⁶⁵R.P. Davis, in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.391.

Liberal Party in 1896.¹⁶⁶

The disfavour expressed with regard to contract labour remained a fundamental tenet of trade unionism. That this was often, though not always, accompanied by denunciations of non-European labour in the nineteenth century should not obscure this. The racist component most strongly emerged in the attitude to immigrants once they arrived in Australia. While such stigmatization cannot be overlooked, neither can those factors influencing its emergence and intensity.

In 1891 *The Bulletin* attributed the strong electoral support given the Labor Party to its desire to:

wipe out the great art and swindle of politics by taking the direct vote of the whole of the people on all important questions; it wants no imported governors nor borrowed generals nor hollow military pomp, no foreign titles nor foreign capitalists, no more foreign loans, no cheap labour nor low-priced and diseased from the slums of Europe and Asia, no more religious feuds, no National Anthem or similar doggeral, no Upper House and no party government. It wants co-operation in place of capitalism, national insurance instead of relief works and benevolent asylums, a universal eight hour system.¹⁶⁷

This neat piece of rhetoric encapsulates a burgeoning nationalist sentiment and desire on the part of the labour to protect (and if possible enhance) local living standards. As Markus has argued:

The derogatory stereotyping of European immigrants demonstrates the way in which fear of losing a privileged position in the labour market was able to produce a virulent denunciation of even the 'kith and kin' of Australian unionists.¹⁶⁸

Again the ferocity of the reaction can be linked to a period of high unemployment.

The key distinction between the attitude of the labour movement to European and non-European immigration was the identification of

¹⁶⁶J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, *op cit.*, p.112.

¹⁶⁷*The Bulletin*, July 11, 1891 quoted in G. Weir, *50 Years of Labor in Politics*, *op cit.*, p.15.

¹⁶⁸The local press which advocated a permanent over-supply of labour undoubtedly exacerbated the response. See A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.255.

the latter as a more dangerous threat. This perception was based on the size and proximity of non-European immigrant sources, their more deprived economic conditions and assumed willingness to migrate, their visibility and ignorance of British institutions including trade unions, the reputation of the Chinese in particular as non-union labour or strike-breakers and their frequent employment under contract at conditions below those prevailing for European workers. As Markus notes, stigmatization carried over after the arrival of non-European migrants and had the perverse effect of encouraging such workers to adopt the behaviour patterns the stereotype allotted them.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, some of the above perceptions were not just the product of idle speculation but a reaction against employer tactics for which - given the weakness of unions particularly amongst unskilled workers - there was little effective recourse but political lobbying.

Non-Europeans, however, were not the only victims of this group typification. There are instances where local workers accused European immigrants of acting as scab labour or accepting inferior conditions. In October 1887, during an eight-hour day dispute on the Hawkesbury railway bridge construction project, strikers alleged that foreign-born workers including Scots, English, Nova Scotians, Americans, Italians and Swedes had refused to join the strike and were working a ten-hour day under a payment-by-results system.¹⁷⁰ This refusal was in spite of the strikers' success in persuading replacement workers brought in by employers not to commence work on the job. Again the situation was complicated by the contractual basis under which immigrant workers were employed.

A far more common phenomenon was the stereotyping of a particular nationality or ethnic group. In May 1891 the Sydney Trades and Labour Council wrote to the Colonial Secretary lodging its opposition to a proposal to colonise Pacific Islands with

¹⁶⁹On occasion unions expressed sympathy for the plight of European immigrants at the hands of immigration agents. Such sympathy seldom, if ever, extended to non-Europeans. *Ibid.*, p.252 and p.256.

¹⁷⁰*S.M.H.*, October 26, 1887, p.12, report.

exiled Russian Jews.¹⁷¹ Southern Europeans, and Italians, in particular, were also looked on with suspicion possibly because of their concentration in unskilled occupations (as suggested earlier) and strong group identification.¹⁷² As already mentioned, the importation of indentured Italian labour into the Queensland sugar industry initiated a strong union response. However, this response was not confined to unions, but also included local Italian residents. Responding to a proposal to introduce Italian labour into sugar plantations in the Bundaberg district, a meeting of Italian residents in Brisbane established a committee to publicize the minimum conditions under which jobs should be accepted.¹⁷³

In September of that year (1891) the Melbourne Trades and Labour Council heard a report from a Mr Sceusa of the New South Wales Societa Operaia Italiana D'Mutuo (Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Association or I.W.M.B.A.) on the employment of Italian children and immigrants. Council commended the actions of the I.W.M.B.A. and expressed the hope that all Italian working men in Victoria would unite with it:

in its patriotic efforts to spare the Italian name from humiliation which would undoubtedly follow ... should the Queensland capitalists succeed in manning their tropical plantations with Italian peasants at Mongolian wages.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹The Colonial Secretary denied any knowledge of the proposal. See the *S.M.H.*, May 12, 1891, p.5.

¹⁷²Although they were sometimes accused of acting as strike-breakers or non-union labour, Italians took part in and even initiated industrial action on occasion. For instance, Italian charcoal burners at Montalbion in North Queensland struck prior to the closure of the smelters in February 1890. In August of the same year Italians employed on the Cairns railway joined a strike and two Italians acted as delegates for the strikers. J.D. Kerr, unpublished research notes on the Queensland railways (correspondence with the author, November 6, 1979).

¹⁷³*S.M.H.*, March 3, 1891, p.5, report.

¹⁷⁴*The Melbourne TLC*, minutes of meeting of September 4, 1891. The I.W.M.B.A. was formed in February 1891 by about 80 Italian workmen with Sceusa acting as secretary. By August the I.W.M.B.A. was claiming 150 members out of the estimated 1,200 Italians living in New South Wales. Its stated aims were to protect Italian workers from sweating, keep up wages and ensure Italians were not used in competition with local labour. The I.W.M.B.A. had explicit labour sympathies. Sceusa also attempted to isolate Italians from other

The I.W.M.B.A. did its utmost to dissuade Italian peasants from accepting engagements from Queensland sugar planters and prevent Italian immigrants from coming out under contractual arrangements. In September of the previous year a meeting of 300 Italian residents in Sydney, chaired by Sceusa, repudiated a statement published by the Labour Defence Committee stating that Italians were to be imported as strike-breakers.¹⁷⁵ In August 1891 a joint deputation of Members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the I.W.M.B.A. called on the New South Wales Premier (Henry Parkes) to do something about the employment of Italian children as sweated labour.¹⁷⁶

These events, and the decision of the Melbourne Trades and Labour Council in particular, indicate a complex interaction of union labour, perceived organizational threats, co-operation with a migrant organization and outwardly racist (anti-Chinese) attitudes. Anti-Italian feeling manifested itself in a number of instances in the sugar and mining industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁷⁷ While bitter and at times violent, such outbreaks were isolated and lacked the vehemence of labour struggles against coloured labour. Nevertheless, there was an undeniable preference for British immigrants among Australian unions.

Throughout the nineteenth century the overwhelming majority of immigrants arrived from the British Isles. The rate of intake proved highly responsive to changes in economic conditions in Australia.¹⁷⁸ The depression of the 1890s brought immigration to an almost complete stop. Between 1891 and 1910 the net increase in population by immigration was only 3,267. After 1910 the intake rose rapidly to 91,000 in 1912, receded to 63,000 in 1913 and

migrants employed as hawkers, etc. who had been subject to labour hostility. See the *S.M.H.*, February 2, 1891, p.6 and August 13, 1891, p.5.

¹⁷⁵*S.M.H.*, September 30, 1890, p.5, report.

¹⁷⁶*S.M.H.*, August 7, 1891, p.2, report.

¹⁷⁷Instances relating to mining will be dealt with in a later section of this chapter dealing with the responses of specific unions.

¹⁷⁸Working-class agitation against assisted immigration reinforced this tendency. See also R.B. Madgwick, "Immigration", *The Economic Record*, vol. XII, no. 22, 1936, pp.71-82.

remained at about this level prior to World War One.¹⁷⁹ In the first quarter of the twentieth century the British character of immigration was maintained with the Immigration Restriction Act excluding non-Europeans. Even the proposed importation of several thousand Maltese induced a strong reaction during the 1916 anti-conscription struggle.

In 1922 the Empire Settlement Scheme involving the co-operation of the United Kingdom, Australian Commonwealth and various state governments (New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia) initiated a bold attempt at assisted immigration from Britain. Over the next decade this scheme accounted for 180,000 of the 400,000 net gain in population through immigration.¹⁸⁰ The labour movement and its political arm, the A.L.P., retained its traditional hostility to large-scale immigration of any description. The 1921 All Australian Trade Union Congress stated that organized labour was opposed to all further assisted immigration.¹⁸¹ Labor politicians were unconvinced by Prime Minister Bruce's attempt to link assisted immigration with employment rather than unemployment.¹⁸² The passage of restrictive immigration legislation in the United States in 1921 encouraged a growing level of southern European immigration. The arrival of relatively small numbers of Greeks and Italians led to an exaggerated community reaction. Even the passage of special legislation in 1926 and an agreement by the Italian and Greek governments to curtail emigration did not appease Labor hostility. These immigrants were again perceived as a particular threat to living standards, union

¹⁷⁹D. Jones's speech on immigration given before the Federal Institute of Accountants in December 1935 and fully reported in the *Manufacturers' Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 1, January 1936.

¹⁸⁰H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration* (unpublished paper prepared under an Australian National University Fellowship, Canberra, 1969).

¹⁸¹Quoted in B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.16.

¹⁸²In his speech Bruce revealed that the unemployment rate did not drop below 7 per cent in the 1920s. In the absence of significant industrial development there was little avenue for creating new job opportunities for migrants. See S.M. Bruce, *Migration: The Trade Balance and Unemployment* (published copy of a speech delivered to the Commonwealth Parliament, Canberra on February 23, 1928). Source: Wollongong University Archives.

organization and awards.¹⁸³ The Empire Settlement Scheme did not live up to expectations and the onset of the depression reduced the flow drastically. One of the first moves of the Scullin Labor government elected in 1929 was to suspend assisted immigration. In 1930 the immigration of all European aliens (non-British) was confined to close relatives.¹⁸⁴

In 1935 the possibility of assisted British immigration was resurrected by the now conservative federal government. In May 1936 Prime Minister Lyons stressed the need for immigration if Australia were to be capable of defending itself.¹⁸⁵ However, as with the ill-fated Empire Settlement Scheme, the Commonwealth government refused to directly implement an immigration programme.¹⁸⁶ Despite the support of employer groups, the New South Wales premier and leading economists for the mooted wholesale redistribution of British population and industry, there was little public sympathy for the proposal.¹⁸⁷ Rather, profound fears were expressed that the

¹⁸³In at least one instance the Bruce Nationalist government was accused of trying to foment trouble. In October 1928, in the midst of a waterfront dispute over the Transport Workers' Act, the Australian Council of Trade Unions executive and representatives of maritime unions involved adopted a policy which opened: "This Conference, realising that the Bruce Government and the Shipowners have united their forces to smash the Marine Transport Unions per medium of 'scab' labour (large numbers of whom are Italians and Czecho-Slovakians imported by the Bruce Government for the purpose) and the iniquitous Transport Workers' Act, which is only equalled by Mussolini's worst laws, and believing that we have done our utmost to avert an industrial upheaval, despite unprecedented attacks, having no other alternative but to fight for our freedom and liberty ...". "Policy Adopted By Members of the Executive of the ACTU and Representatives of Unions Involved, To Control The Dispute on the Waterfront", Tabled before the Melbourne Trades Hall Council on October 11, 1928.

¹⁸⁴This restriction was not lifted until 1935. H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration*, *op cit*.

¹⁸⁵Reported in the *S.M.H.*, May 27, 1936, p.13.

¹⁸⁶On April 24, 1935 Prime Minister Lyons stated that, apart from Commonwealth territories, settlement was a matter for the states. Quoted in H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration*, *op cit*.

¹⁸⁷Employer groups supporting increased immigration included the New South Wales Graziers' Association and the Associated Chamber of Manufacturers of Australia (A.C.M.A.). The A.C.M.A. played an active role on the United Immigration and Development Council. While Lyons publicly recanted his position in the face of public hostility other prominent conservative politicians such as

re-introduction of large-scale assisted immigration would exacerbate still abnormal levels of unemployment and undermine living standards.

As with earlier periods the advocates of immigration were firmly identified as representing the interests of employers. The Chamber of Manufactures urged the linking of immigration to industrial development.¹⁸⁸ While the (then) British firm John Lysaghts did establish a factory at Newcastle in the early 1920s, there was no wide-scale movement of either industry or people to Australia. In fact, between 1930 and 1936 Australia suffered a net loss of nearly 30,000 people of British stock.¹⁸⁹ Assisted British immigration did not recommence until 1938. Between 1934 and 1939 net migration was 13,748 - mainly composed of Greeks, Italians, Yugoslavs and German refugees.¹⁹⁰ Despite a vigorous press campaign for renewed immigration spurred by growing world political tension, the isolation of Australia and its vulnerability to external aggression, the inflow of British immigrants remained miniscule.¹⁹¹

From March 1938 onwards the possibility of obtaining migrants from the "Nordic" and other desirable north European countries was raised.¹⁹² Nevertheless, it was becoming apparent that the only

R.G. Menzies, E. Page and Stevens were not so disposed to retreat on the issue. The redistribution of the Empire's population was widely advocated prior to the 1937 Imperial Conference. Redistribution was envisaged as the only way of maintaining the pre-eminence of the white population of the British Commonwealth after the next European war. For evidence of the above see correspondence from the A.C.M.A. to the United Immigration and Development Council, July 15, 1936; the *S.M.H.*, February 2, 1936, May 15, 1936, July 8, 1936, August 17, 1936, October 6, 1936, June 30, 1938 and August 8 and 19, 1938; and *The Sydney Sun and Guardian*, May 23, 1937.

¹⁸⁸See letter by the President of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufacturers published in the *Sydney Sun* on January 20, 1936 and correspondence between the New South Wales Secretary and Federal Secretary of the A.C.M.A. dated January 21, 1936. Source: Records of the A.C.M.A. held in the Wollongong University Archives.

¹⁸⁹Reported in the *S.M.H.*, November 29, 1937, p.10.

¹⁹⁰See H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration, op cit.*; and the *S.M.H.*, March 8, 1938, p.11.

¹⁹¹For a contemporary discussion of this problem see the *S.M.H.*, January 26 and 30, 1937, February 26, 1937, March 5, 1937, August 30, 1937, March 12, 1938, June 20, 1938 and August 5, 1939.

¹⁹²See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, March 9, 1938, p.17 and March 10, 1938, p.11.

readily available sources of migrants were those countries of southern Europe with surplus populations - Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. Public attitudes to the latter groups were not favourable. Even the arrival of very small numbers of Jewish refugees from Germany created considerable controversy. Stigmatization of the latter group was prominent amongst some employers and right-wing political organizations. The Associated Chamber of Manufacturers received a number of complaints from members, particularly in the knitting industry, that German Jews were being employed (or offering themselves for employment) at wage rates which under-cut those established in awards.¹⁹³ This was seen to threaten the competitiveness of those employers paying award rates. It is perhaps a little ironic to hear employers complaining about the sweating of employees. The right-wing Sane Democracy League also cautioned the federal government on the dangers posed by southern European and Jewish immigrants.¹⁹⁴ The debate over refugee sweating and desirable immigrant groups was cut short by the onset of World War Two. Nevertheless, both debates helped establish policy guidelines for the post-war immigration policy.

Throughout the public and political debate of the 1930s the predisposition of Labor politicians and union leaders remained one of uncompromising hostility to the re-introduction of large-scale immigration - British or otherwise.¹⁹⁵ A survey of contemporary Australian attitudes to immigration revealed a diversity of opinion apart from the labour movement which was critical of immigration *per se*.¹⁹⁶ The introduction of large numbers of

¹⁹³For evidence of this see correspondence between T. Curtis Pty Ltd and the New South Wales Chamber of Manufacturers dated February 13 and 15, 1939 and correspondence between the Chamber and its federal parent dated February 20, 21 and 27, 1939. See also the *Sun*, February 13, 1939.

¹⁹⁴See correspondence between the League's president and secretary and the Minister for the Interior, J. McEwan, dated October 15 and 27, 1938 and November 5, 1938.

¹⁹⁵For public statements by the Queensland premier, Western Australian president of the A.L.P. and J. Curtin, leader of the A.L.P. federal opposition expressing this hostility see the *S.M.H.*, March 8, p.11, March 9, p.17 and March 10, 1938, p.11.

¹⁹⁶H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration, op cit.*, quoting The Diggers' Association in *Round Table*, vol. XXIV, December 1938-September 1939.

immigrants from southern and central Europe was regarded as a particular menace by labour council leaders because of these groups' slender resources, their inability to recognize that non-observance of award conditions tended to undermine local working standards and their alleged liability to collusion with employers to disregard awards.¹⁹⁷

IMMIGRANTS AND INDIVIDUAL UNIONS

Apart from those unions which were prominent in the struggle to exclude non-European labour, the attitudes of individual unions to immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are not well documented. It cannot be assumed that the public statements of certain union officials and politicians always accurately reflected the feelings of all union members. As has been pointed out previously, the union movement was itself sectionalized along regional, industry, occupation and craft lines. Such differences could be expected to manifest themselves in the intensity and nature of opposition to immigration. In fact, some evidence with regard to this has already been presented. In general, unions with a largely unskilled or semi-skilled membership saw the importation of indentured non-European labour more as a direct threat than those unions which had erected apprenticeship or other craft barriers to regulate entry to the trade. Although both opposed assisted immigration, reactions were probably influenced by the occupational composition of immigrants, the strategies of particular employers and the incidence of contractual arrangements together with the vulnerability of the particular union's membership to economic fluctuations.

¹⁹⁷Even the present level of immigration evoked a fierce response. On August 26, 1937 the Melbourne Trades Hall Council passed a resolution which stated (in part) "That this Council realising that foreign workers are ignorant of our language, laws and customs and the extent to which they are being exploited by sweating employers of labour, to reduce the living standards of Australian workers, refuses to accept the statement of the Minister for the Interior - Mr Paterson, that the number now arriving in Australia is not excessive. Further, that this Council is strongly of the opinion that cheap foreign labour is being deliberately encouraged and assisted to come to Australia solely in the interests of the employers referred to." The Melbourne Trades Hall Council, minutes of meeting held on August 26, 1937.

The mining unions provide an instructive example of the strategy employed by organizations of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. They waged a continuous struggle to organize a work-force that always had a large immigrant component. The reduced availability of convict labour in the 1830s and 1840s encouraged the AA Company to import British labour. According to Gollan the employer's aim was both to increase the work-force and introduce workers who would be more settled and docile.¹⁹⁸ However, these goals proved difficult to attain. The general shortage of labour induced widespread desertion from the pits and encouraged a high propensity towards strike action amongst those who remained. In the decade up to 1860 organization of workers in the Newcastle region formalized into a union.¹⁹⁹ In August 1861 the colliery owners initiated a joint action against the miners. The proposed introduction of 400 British miners did not eventuate. However, mine proprietors sought labour in Victoria and South Australia with which to flood the market, reducing the hewing rate and destroy the union. Despite the use of a "Yellow dog" contract this threat was successfully resisted by workers.

In Victoria early organization amongst gold-miners acquired strong anti-Chinese flavour.²⁰⁰ Amongst New South Wales coal-miners expressions of anti-immigrant hostility were closely linked to the prevailing employment climate. Ross argues that the victory of northern New South Wales miners in 1872 led to a policy of welcoming migrants from the "old country".²⁰¹ However, in 1875 and 1876, unemployment provoked meetings that expressed opposition to the introduction of Chinese. In the latter year, a meeting of union delegates called for an end to assisted immigration.²⁰² In 1878 a

¹⁹⁸Agents in Britain were instructed to ensure that recruits were of a type unlikely to cause trouble when they arrived in the colony. R. Gollan, *The Coalminers in NSW: A History of the Union 1860-1960* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963), p.27.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp.38-40.

²⁰⁰R. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, *op cit.*, p.78.

²⁰¹E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, *op cit.*, p.35.

²⁰²R. Gollan, *The Coalminers in NSW*, *op cit.*, p.58.

series of strikes against the employment of Chinese led to the formation of a union in the south-coast district. The 1878 Seamen's strike provoked a strong reaction against Chinese "cheap labour" amongst northern New South Wales miners who were desperately resisting wage cuts. Despite this common stance, a proposal by the northern miners for unity in the struggle against Chinese labour was rejected by the south-coast union.²⁰³

As bodies largely composed of workers without formal trade qualifications, the early mining unions took a stand against immigration of any description because any immigrant was likely to pose a competitive threat. This often took the form of overt political agitation since few other strategy options were open. In 1877 the Wallsend Lodge formed a political league which campaigned for land reform and the cessation of assisted immigration.²⁰⁴ In November 1885 Wallsend miners instructed their general secretary to request the Sydney Trades and Labour Council to make it known to immigrants landing in Sydney that the Lambton men were on strike. The meeting also resolved to prepare a petition to government expressing opposition to assisted immigration.²⁰⁵ Miners' delegates to the 1884, 1885 and 1886 Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses strongly advocated immigration restriction. This stance carried over to the twentieth century and was most forcefully expressed during periods of unemployment. Ross records that in 1907 district mining unions combined to agitate against assisted migrants who, they claimed, were being misled with regard to local wage rates. This hostility continued prior to World War One.²⁰⁶

In the late 1920s the intermeshing of economic fear and ethnic chauvinism recurred in a way reminiscent of the anti-Chinese struggles in the 1870s and 1880s. Ross argues that statements by the Miners' Federation Central Council voicing disapproval of immigration degenerated into an attack on foreign-born workers, especially Italians. In Broken Hill, the issue of foreign workers

²⁰³E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, *op cit.*, p.48.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p.97.

²⁰⁵*S.M.H.*, November 16, 1885, p.10, report.

²⁰⁶E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, *op cit.*, p.162 and p.197.

divided the union and threatened to precipitate anti-Italian riots. The intervention of federal and local union officials, who denounced anti-foreign sentiment as anti-working class, averted the danger.²⁰⁷ In Western Australia the issue of Italian labour was of greater importance than the Chinese question. The discovery of gold in this state in the 1890s led to the arrival (importation?) of Italian and Slav peasants who were employed under contract. According to Gibbney, it was asserted that these men were being employed at below union rates and that they were also used as strike-breakers.²⁰⁸

Gibbney cites an example of the latter at the Paddington Consols Mine where southern European strike-breakers were employed at the mine in May 1901 after workers refused to accept a wage cut.²⁰⁹ The dispute was resolved only when the union employed a number of southern European unionists to persuade the immigrant labourers to join the strike. However, Italians and Slavs remained unpopular with Western Australian miners. Many Italians were employed as firewood cutters. In 1919 the A.W.U. initiated strike action by the cutters which tied up the mining industry and caused considerable hardship in Kalgoorlie and Boulder.²¹⁰ Anti-Italian feeling amongst miners degenerated into a serious riot when a fight between an Australian and an Italian resulted in the former's death. In 1920 elements in the Miners' Federation induced the Italian and Slav firewood cutters to organize separately. A prolonged strike was ended only by the intervention of the Italian Consul.

The situation of craft unions and their strategy with regard to restricting labour competition were not identical to those unions such as the Miners' Federation, the A.W.U. and the Seamen's Union

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p.330.

²⁰⁸H.J. Gibbney, *Working Class Organization in Western Australia from 1880 to 1902* (Unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis, University of Western Australia, Perth, 1949), p.156.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

²¹⁰H.J. Gibbney, "West Australia", in D. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics, op cit.*, p.375.

(and their predecessors) whose membership lacked formal trade skills. During the nineteenth century the great majority of unions were small, urban-based craft societies. The A.W.U. with its rural membership base and broad occupational coverage was atypical. It would be surprising if the bulk of craft unions entirely replicated the attitudes of the A.W.U. leadership either to immigration or to political as opposed to direct industrial action.

Just as there has been a tendency amongst historians to focus on the question of non-European immigration, so there has been an emphasis on those unions most involved in the struggles against Chinese and other non-European labour - the A.S.U., Furniture Trades Unions, Gardeners' General Labourers', Miners' and Seamen's Unions. With the possible exception of the furniture trades societies all these unions enrolled non-tradesmen. In short, they constitute an unrepresentative sample of the union movement of the time.

Craft unions represented attempts by skilled workers to retain a measure of control over their trade or calling. Unlike unskilled unions, they were not subject to competition from all labour although a general labour surplus or changes in production technology could induce substitution or even permanent skill dilution by employers. To control the entry of labour into a trade a number of restrictive devices were employed. The primary control was an elongated training programme in the form of an indentured apprenticeship with limited-entry provisions on the basis of age, family connections, low pay and enforced apprentice/tradesmen ratios in each establishment. Such provisions had to form the basis of an accepted qualification or standard for employment at the trade to be effective.

The craft identity present amongst tradesmen and their desire to protect skill-based privileges, enabled many societies to impose strong discipline on their membership. Such discipline in the area of work behaviour would permit further limits to be imposed on the supply and use of labour including a set ratio of tradesmen to non-tradesmen, restrictions on the amount of overtime worked, non-acceptance of piece-work or contract labour, rules upon

machine operation and manning and the limiting of trade admission to those apprentices likely to secure employment.²¹¹

For Australian unions, able to erect such barriers and have them recognized by employees, the only alternative source of labour was the importation of tradesmen with acceptable qualifications. Given the distinctive training procedures and trade demarcations evolved in Europe and elsewhere, not all countries could be viewed as a source of skilled workers. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the source of immigrant tradesmen was almost entirely confined to the United Kingdom. The strong immigration ties between both countries was also reflected in the close relationship between some trade societies and their counterparts in England. Such links allowed local bodies to actively dissuade immigration by sending correspondence and statements of existing wage rates to Britain. This was augmented by communication between unions in the various Australian colonies, although in both cases parochialism was not uncommon.

One example of a craft union's response to immigration - assisted and otherwise - which has been documented was that of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (A.S.E.). Emigrants from the United Kingdom established branches of this union in Australia from 1952 onwards.²¹² As with other English unions, the rules of the A.S.E. provided for an emigration benefit. However, the parent body never explicitly encouraged emigration of its members and Buckley could find no

²¹¹Markus, one of the few recent historians in this area to appreciate the significance of the distinctions between craft-based and other occupational unions, points to the formalization of such practices within the rules of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the opposition of the Typographical Association and Tailors to the employment of females and children as evidence of these restrictions. Restrictions were also applied to prison labour, institute labour and interstate labour. Hagan provides a brief analysis of the reaction of unions to child, apprentice and female labour. See A. Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, *op cit.*, p.250; and J. Hagan, "Employers, Trade Unions and the First Victorian Factory Acts", *Labour History*, no. 7, November 1964, pp.3-11.

²¹²The formal links between the United Kingdom parent body and its Australian offshoot were retained until 1969. The local Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners also enjoyed a formal relationship with its United Kingdom parent until the 1920s. While there were close ties between many Australian unions and their British counterparts such formal arrangements were rare.

evidence of the benefit being paid.²¹³ This was not surprising given the hostility of Australian branches to immigration.²¹⁴ The Monthly Report of the United Kingdom body frequently published warnings from overseas branches of the difficulty of obtaining work in their particular area or alleging inaccuracy with regard to government or employer propaganda about local conditions. Buckley found that the bulk of these complaints emanated from Australian branches in the period surveyed. The hostility was partly based on a fear that British tradesmen could be employed under contract at wages and conditions below those prevailing in Australia. This was quite possible given that local conditions were superior to those in the United Kingdom. Buckley states that, while the fears expressed by local branches were often exaggerated, there was a real unemployment problem in the decade after 1876.²¹⁵ The United Kingdom parent union reacted to this by refusing to register travelling cards. Hostility to immigration did not carry over to immigrants themselves. Buckley argues that immigrant members were treated as equals, often took an active part in the union and were quick to adopt the restrictive outlook to immigration of the local branches.²¹⁶

The largely internal tactics of immigration control outlined above are a far cry from the strategies employed by mining unions discussed earlier. Masses of unskilled non-European labour did not

²¹³The benefit was eliminated in 1885 after a vote in which the Australian ballot papers arrived too late to be counted. The Webbs stated that such funds had been a prominent feature of English trade societies since the 1840s. They were seen as a method of keeping local demand for labour high (especially during the period 1850-1860) and as an alternative to strikes. However, unions in Australia and the United States did their utmost to discourage emigration for the same reasons and frequently addressed vigorous protests to British unions. See K. Buckley, "Emigration and the Engineers 1851-1887", *Labour History*, no. 15, November 1968, pp.31-39; and S. and B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, *op cit.*, pp.181-184.

²¹⁴K. Buckley, "Emigration and the Engineers 1851-1887", *op cit.*, pp.31-33.

²¹⁵In 1886 A.S.E. delegates to the Intercolonial Trades Union Congress successfully moved a resolution calling for the abolition of state-assisted immigration throughout Australia. *Ibid.*, p.36.

²¹⁶Buckley could find only one instance of anti-immigrant friction. This occurred at the Port Adelaide branch in September 1879 during a period of high unemployment. *Ibid.*, p.38.

present a direct threat to the A.S.E. although the union, nevertheless, instructed its delegates to Britain not to travel by P. & O. steamer because of that line's use of Asian labour.²¹⁷ As Buckley relates, in one case when "White Australia" impinged on the union's membership rules, the A.S.E. refused to permit a member to be discriminated against on the basis of his colour.²¹⁸ This stand represented a stringent adherence to craft union principles rather than a moral objection to "White Australia".

The opposition of craft unions to immigration was tempered by pragmatic considerations. Some craft unions sought to perform the function of employment agencies by corresponding with unions in other states to discover the availability of labour. If need be they even advertised for workers in English trade journals.²¹⁹ This collaboration was undertaken to pre-empt independent action by employers to import labour and otherwise circumvent local shortages of tradesmen. Overall it would appear that assisted immigration seldom threatened the organizational survival of craft unions after 1870 although it continued to be vigorously opposed. Gibbney records a possible exception to this with regard to the Boot Trades Union which was formed in Western Australia in 1886 in order to agitate against government assistance for the immigration of skilled tradesmen.²²⁰ Failing to have any effect, the body went out of existence in the same year.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing analysis has attempted to sketch the history of trade union and working-class responses to the issue of immigration

²¹⁷K. Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia 1852-1920* (A.N.U. Press, Canberra, 1970), p.189.

²¹⁸After the member was repeatedly refused admission to Australia the Sydney District Committee succeeded in obtaining an exemption from the "White Australia" policy for him. *Ibid.*, p.189.

²¹⁹For evidence of both these practices see correspondence between the secretary of the New South Wales Process Engravers' Association and his Victorian counterpart dated March 1915 and March 19, 1919.

²²⁰H.J. Gibbney, *Working Class Organizations in Western Australia from 1880 to 1902*, *op cit.*, p.67.

before World War Two. Much, though not all, of the evidence was derived from secondary sources. Nevertheless, this summary was undertaken for three reasons. First, much of the published research confines itself to a specific group of immigrants, a specific union or group of them, or a particular historical period. Few works have sought to place union responses within a broad historical context - a context in which racism went largely unchallenged and non-European labour was employed in a subservient fashion both in Australia and elsewhere. It has been shown that the genealogy of union opposition to immigration (including convict transportation) can be traced back to the earliest period of worker organization. It was also shown that hostility to non-European labour and the racism accompanying it must be seen as part of a broader opposition to immigration in general, and assisted immigration in particular. Hostility reflected a general concern with protecting living standards and became most intense during periods of perceived job shortage or when contractual arrangements involving immigrants under-cut local conditions.

A second limitation of existing literature, which this chapter has highlighted, was the failure to integrate anti-immigration policies with the traditions and imperatives of unions including the total array of strategies devised to restrict competition amongst workers. The available evidence presented, although limited, indicates that union responses varied both in intensity and in the tactics adopted according to economic conditions; the development of labour-political representation (including the nationalist fervour accompanying federation); internal divisions amongst unions on the basis of skill/occupation and region; the status of immigrants (indentured, assisted or unassisted); employer strategies and the evolution of racist/ethnocentric stereotypes produced by the interaction of the above factors, prevailing notions of social ranking and other influences less easy to isolate. More research is required on the reactions of individual unions and their members as opposed to the pronouncements of peak councils and political associations. This is especially true with regard to the urban-based craft unions if a balanced picture is to emerge.

The third and final reason for the approach taken in this chapter is that an integrated analysis of pre-1945 experience is an

essential prelude to examining post-World War Two union responses. After 1945 some dominant themes continued such as hostility to contracted immigrant labour; the significance of prevailing economic conditions and sensitivity to the threat of immigration posed to wage rates, working and living conditions; and the different strategies adopted by craft unions. In addition, some new themes emerged or existing themes took on new forms. These included the dropping of explicit racism from union arguments against immigration, the influence of political philosophy on the stance of particular union leaderships, the progressive broadening of immigration sources and the development of strategies designed to attract and retain the loyalty of migrant members. While the union movement accepted the necessity (inevitability?) of post-war immigration, support was begrudging, liable to change and riven by internal divisions of thinking.

In the light of the above it is now possible to offer an answer to the controversy surrounding trade union and associated working-class responses to immigration/immigrants posed at the beginning of the chapter. As was noted, there has been a recent shift in research towards a view that working-class responses can be largely explained in terms of racism which either incorporates or displaces economic fears. The independent racist element as disclosed by some labour historians has been critically assessed and a number of questions raised with regard to their treatment. McQueen, who was the precursor of much of this re-evaluative work, made no attempt to define racism as such. In later studies, such as that of Burgmann, explanation of the origins of racism has been restricted and mechanistic (see earlier comments made in this and the preceding chapter). A racist component in working-class thinking cannot be denied - even if its exact role is unclear - and it is impossible to completely disentangle this from economic fears. However, it is not enough to show that accusations made about the pliability of non-Europeans and the threat that they posed to indigenous workers were, in retrospect, exaggerated in order to prove that racism was the logical precedent to arguments based on economic criteria. Nor is there compelling evidence that racist exclusion vitiated the interests of workers, in general, at this time. Further, the presumption that, by overcoming prejudice, workers would have been

able to extract greater concessions from employers would only have been valid if unions, then fairly weak, could have restricted entry into the calling they covered. It is apparent that the leaders and members of most non-craft unions felt even limited restrictions would have been broken down in the face of large-scale non-European immigration.

Non-Europeans met the brunt of intense criticism but they were not the only immigrants that Anglo/Australian workers would have rather done without. Non-British (European) migrants, particularly those from southern Europe, were accepted in small numbers but certainly not welcomed by workers or the bulk of Australian society for that matter. Opposition occasionally reached the stage of open confrontation on the remote mining, cane-cutting and construction projects where they were frequently employed. At the same time, there is also evidence of co-operation between the foreign-born workers and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in industrial action. The leadership of the Miners' Federation, at least, eventually took a stand against overt friction following violence in Broken Hill. As a whole, the union movement had no official policy on southern Europeans although the A.C.T.U. and other peak councils generally argued that their numbers should be restricted.

Even British migrants, themselves largely free of stigmatization, were, nevertheless, frequently unwelcome particularly when a shortage of work existed or threatened. The proposed assisted immigration of "paupers" from the United Kingdom in the early 1890s evoked a fierce reaction from central union councils. Assisted immigration *per se* was never looked on with enthusiasm. Opposition was never really successful although the level of British immigration proved to be very responsive to fluctuations in the local economic climate, especially the rate of unemployment.²²¹ Assisted British immigration was

²²¹Prior to World War Two almost all assisted migrants were British (including Irish). Assisted immigration of free settlers (as distinct from convicts) commenced in 1793. Between 1829 and 1860 63 per cent of total "free" arrivals were assisted. The corresponding figure for the period from 1861 to 1940 was 56 per cent. See M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1978), p.16.

regarded as something of a compromise, being preferred to non-European immigration and seen to be unavoidable if this was to be forestalled.

The need to offer financial assistance to boost British migration and its sensitivity to prevailing economic conditions was indicative of the lesser threat posed by this source. The close links between the countries bolstered by official union and informal correspondence ensured that those contemplating emigration were not entirely reliant on idealized information about their prospects. At times, the British working-class press campaigned strongly against emigration to Australia.²²² Even when emigration was endorsed, there was little imminent threat of a flood of arrivals given the remoteness of Australia and cost such a venture entailed for the average working man.²²³ In these circumstances assistance was essential.²²⁴ The provision of assistance was generally curtailed in periods of job shortage by opposition in Australia and greater reluctance on the part of British workers to

²²²In a study of the British working-class press between 1841 and 1851 Beever found that papers such as the *Northern Star* campaigned strongly against emigration in the early 1840s. The *Northern Star* argued that emigrants faced "horrible destitution". It also contended that there was no surplus population in Britain. Another paper, the *Spirit of the Age*, alleged that emigration undermined an internal solution of social problems in Britain by removing the pressure of the poor and providing labour to be exploited in the colonies. This argument thus predicted Marxist interpretations of the role of immigrant labour outlined in Chapter 1. However, by the end of the decade the attitude to emigration had become very supportive. See A. Beever, "British Working Class Attitudes to Australia 1841-1851", *Labour History*, no. 40, May 1981, pp.1-15, especially pp.3-6.

²²³This point has been well documented by Blayney. Both he, and Buckley (in a more restricted study of the emigration of engineers), found that intending emigrants were more likely to choose the United States as a destination on the basis of cost and distance. See G. Blayney, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Sun Books, Melbourne, 1971), pp.148-174; and K. Buckley, "Emigration and the Engineers 1851-1887", *op cit.*, p.39.

²²⁴In general, British immigration met the needs of local employers although there was, occasionally, strong bidding for immigrants. On February 7, 1881 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a guide to assisted immigration. For instances of the former see the *S.M.H.*, September 27, 1881, January 20 and July 5, 1882 and October 4, 1883.

"try their luck". This is well evidenced by the virtual cessation of immigration after 1890 and the only partially successful British Empire Settlement Scheme. Such forces were not seen to operate with equal effectiveness where other immigrant groups were concerned.

Within this framework a more compelling explanation of the character of union and working-class responses to immigration can be discerned. There is no doubt that the nature of labour movement responses must be linked to the strategy and direction of labour importation. In this context it is useful to remember that immigration to Australia possessed a number of distinctive characteristics. First, labour requirements were not large given the perpetuation of Australia's status as a dependent primary economy within the British Empire at least up until 1920 (and arguably the Second World War). There was no real demand for mass migration to feed industrial growth, as in the U.S.A. between 1880 and 1914, until after World War Two. Second, the limited requirements of a slowly growing capital-intensive pastoral and mining economy could be largely fed through British immigration. While Australian economic growth could be met by British labour, the foundations of "White Australia" were laid. Strains occurred only in exceptional areas where special labour requirements for tropically adjusted sugarcane-cutters or where labour demand exceeded supply induced labour transportation outside the Anglo-Australian axis.

The Australian labour movement developed gradually between 1830 and 1901 - when "White Australia" was endorsed federally - in a context where a delicate balance existed between labour supply and demand under the shadow of a feared inundation of a tiny labour market from closer and more populous non-Anglo-Saxon regions. Subsequent developments, both in immigration and labour movement responses - even after World War Two - were conditioned by strategies formed during the long period of labour-force formation in the nineteenth century. The relative stagnation of immigration after 1890 (excluding the period just before and just after World War One) tended to reinforce the labour movement policies developed many years earlier to suit the small and quite unstable Australian work-force.

If labour movement responses to immigration may be explained largely in terms of labour market protection, the relative value of purely racist-based explanations seems unclear. While there is little doubt that xenophobia came to characterize both the labour movement and the wider Australian society, it is probable that this arose largely as an effect rather than a cause of the main features of labour-force formation. It is important to realize that xenophobia was built into the very structure of Australian society, the labour movement and the work-force by the peculiar origins of Australian colonization and economic development. This chapter has merely observed the routine responses toward further European immigration which ensued and the less routine, defensive gestures which organized labour threw out to prevent a major change in the character of Australia's population and employment, perhaps leading to plantation economy status.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICS OF POST-WAR IMMIGRATION

As pointed out earlier, the union movement came to see immigration as a menace to living standards and employment opportunities. The most influential arguments advanced in favour of immigration were those based on the perceived need for development and the not unrelated need to establish a population sufficient to defend Australia from foreign aggression. Historically, these arguments were often linked to the notion of redistributing the white population of the British Empire. Influenced by this logic, a major attempt was made by the Commonwealth, state and British governments to foster immigration under the Empire Settlement Scheme in the 1920s. This failed partly because of the lack of prospective British migrants and partly because of the onset of the depression. In the latter half of the 1930s there was renewed interest in migration as a source of population increase. Again, the growth of a military threat to Australia seems to have been a significant factor in discussion. However, community opposition was at this stage far too strong given prevailing levels of unemployment. The Second World War and the threat of Japanese invasion set in motion a chain of events which were to make mass immigration appear essential.

As Brooke records, from 1940 onwards the question of immigration was raised continuously in federal parliament.¹ The impetus for debate was the threat to Australian independence posed by foreign invasion. In 1943 in response to opposition pressure, H.V. Evatt stated that the Labor government intended to initiate a large-scale immigration programme after the war. An inter-departmental committee was established to consider all matters

¹Brooks refers to speeches by Senator Collings (A.L.P.) on May 17, 1940, the Minister for the Interior in October 1941, A.A. Calwell on May 1, 1942, former C.P. Minister for Home Secretary in March 1943 and P. Spender on September 28, 1943. The speech by Collings reflected traditional labour concern with the employment situation. That of Calwell stressed defence needs. H.G. Brooks, *Australian Immigration*, *op cit*.

pertaining to the proposal. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Curtin stressed that the Immigration Restriction Act 1901-1935 - the bulwark of "White Australia" - would not be subject to review by the committee.²

Looming large in the post-war considerations of the Labor government was the need for post-war reconstruction and economic development. Given the depression experience, any attempt at mass immigration required, in the opinion of Curtin, Chifley and other prominent members of the federal government, industrial development and the maintenance of full employment brought about by the war. The war had enabled the government to build up close links with industry and union leaders and foster a spirit of co-operation. As early as 1941, plans for post-war reconstruction were being drafted. In late 1942 the Department for Postwar Reconstruction was established to oversee plans for economic development, a larger and more prosperous population and economic security.³ The necessity for such changes was accepted by the union movement in general. In 1943 the Australian and New Zealand trade union leaderships met to discuss post-war reconstruction. Like the government, employers also wished to build on the expansion of manufacturing industry which had been a by-product of wartime restrictions on imports.⁴

The avowed commitment of both major political parties to immigration was accompanied by an increasing degree of public debate in the press upon the source of immigration, the size of intake and

²At the first meeting of the inter-departmental committee four sub-committees were established to recommend the line the government should take with regard to "racial types", the capacity to absorb immigrants, where they were to be settled and "White Australia". See the *S.M.H.*, November 25, p.7 and November 26, 1943, p.5.

³See B. McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labour Movement 1850-1975* (Drummond Australia, 1979), p.163. An essential but seldom discussed element of the linking of immigration to industrial growth and employment was the maintenance of tariff protection to secondary industry. This point has been taken up by Ben Smith, "Immigration Policy: A Survey of the Issues", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 2, June 1971, pp.8-15.

⁴See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, June 2, 1944, p.2.

so on from 1944 onwards.⁵ It was apparent that the climate of public opinion was changing although support for immigration was far from universal. In November 1944 it was announced that a Ministry of Immigration would be established with A.A. Calwell acting as Minister. In the following year the federal government created a Department of Immigration - the first time such a body had been brought into existence at the Commonwealth level.⁶ Calwell faced a union movement which, while agreeing on the need for post-war economic development, demanded safeguards to ensure that immigration would not endanger employment opportunities. The government response was to issue a White Paper on full employment pledging its commitment to this along with its plans for expanding industry and establishing new industries, especially those concerned with the manufacture of motor vehicles and heavy electrical products together with large-scale public works.⁷

On August 2, 1945 Calwell formally announced the government's immigration plans in a speech to federal parliament. The primary justification for undertaking a mass immigration programme was the inability of Australia to defend itself given the Pacific war experience.⁸ However, this was seen to be inextricably linked to

⁵In December 1944, R.G. Menzies (leader of the federal opposition) stated that the government "must go all out for migrants." A number of church groups also came out in support of immigration. For evidence of this and debates as to sourcing, size of the intake and the defence argument see the *S.M.H.*, January 6 and 27, September 9, October 6, December 6 and 9, 1944; and R. Morginson, *Population Crisis* (Discussion Bulletin, Army Education Service, Current Affairs Bulletin, reprint, Melbourne, 1944).

⁶Previously immigration had largely been viewed as a state concern. While state governments generally supported the federal government's plans, individual ministers were not above expressing misgivings. See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, February 11, 13, 14, 15 and 28, 1947.

⁷See the *S.M.H.*, May 15, 1945, p.1.

⁸A.A. Calwell, Minister for Information and Immigration, *Immigration - Government Policy* (Ministerial Statement, August 2, 1945, Government Printer, Canberra). Calwell also pointed to the reduced birth rate resulting from the depression and the long-term prospects of population stagnation if not decline. These points were reiterated in later statements made before parliament such as that made on November 28, 1947. The government's stance was also publicized in pamphlets such as *Australia's Future: This or Extinction?* (Department of Immigration, Melbourne, January 31,

industrial development. To allay fears, Calwell also promised that the government would take cognizance of the local employment situation in deciding the intake of immigrants. A further assurance was given with regard to the availability of housing. Potential threats to the latter were to be safe-guarded by a system of priorities in the selection of immigrants. Preference was given to nominated migrants who could be accommodated by their nominators. Cabinet also created a sub-committee on the housing and building industry to act in association with an inter-departmental committee.

The sources of potential immigrants were subject to a number of considerations. First was the maintenance of "White Australia"; and second was the traditional preference for British migrants and the preference ranking of other European nationalities. The first consideration basically involved adherence to the traditional policy of racial exclusion. The second consideration manifested itself more subtly in the volume of resources devoted to recruitment in various countries and the degree of assistance offered to intending migrants.

"WHITE AUSTRALIA"

The government's immigration plans were ensconced within the "White Australia" tradition. Indeed, the defence rationale for mass European migration was that an increased population would enable Australia to better defend itself against the "Asiatic hordes" to its immediate north.⁹ This stance was supported by all major political parties. In its efforts to maintain this policy the government went so far as to exclude Anglo-Indians and deport non-

1947); A.A. Calwell, *Immigration Policy and Progress* (Melbourne, 1949); A.A. Calwell, Minister for Immigration and Information, *Australians of Tomorrow* (Department of Immigration, Melbourne, June 27, 1947); and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: the Remarkable Growth of Australia's Secondary Industries - she has jobs, wants people ...* (Department of Immigration and the Secondary Industry Division of the Ministry of Postwar Reconstruction, June 27, 1947).

⁹Government spokesmen made this point clear as early as 1944. See the *S.M.H.*, January 6 and 27, 1944. See also A.A. Calwell, *Immigration - Government Policy* (Ministerial Statement, November 22, 1946, Government Printer, Canberra).

European aliens who found refuge in Australia during the war.¹⁰ Such actions have been interpreted either as a reflection of Calwell's personal attitude or in terms of his and the government's desire not to prejudice its migration programme by pre-empting public controversy on the "White Australia" issue.¹¹

Open criticism of "White Australia" was largely confined to some church leaders, the Australian Communist Party (A.C.P.) and communist trade union officials. Church organizations such as the Australian section of the World Council of Churches called for a more liberal immigration policy based on anti-racist humanitarian grounds. For its part, the A.C.P. did not espouse the cause of mass migration. It opposed unrestricted immigration which would provide employers with a cheap labour supply to undermine living standards. The Communist Party advocated that immigration be controlled by a quota system - the quotas being determined without reference to racial origin.¹² Racism was viewed as a tool of capitalists designed to splinter working-class solidarity and turn workers against each other.

¹⁰The latter was carried out under the Wartime Refugees' Removal Act. For evidence of adverse responses to this action see the *S.M.H.*, January 28, 1948, p.2, editorial and July 7, 1949, p.2.

¹¹Calwell was publicly criticized not so much for his stance on "White Australia" as the extreme vigour with which the policy was pursued. C. Kiernan (Calwell's biographer) argues that the desire not to prejudice the government's immigration programme was the pre-eminent reason for Calwell's stringent approach. The fact that Calwell continued to hold strong views on this question long after the A.L.P. had lost office and mass immigration was well established casts doubt on this interpretation. In 1954, for instance, Calwell criticized the then Immigration Minister, Harold Holt, for his laxity with regard to "White Australia". See the *S.M.H.*, May 6, 1948, p.2, editorial, September 9, 1949, p.2, editorial and April 1, 1954, p.2; F. Farrell, "International Solidarity", *op cit.*, p.136; and B. McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labour Movement 1850-1975*, *op cit.*, p.182.

¹²This policy was advocated in a number of pamphlets and the party's newspaper *Tribune*. See *White Australia - Read the ACP's Sensible Immigration Policy: Anti-Communist Misrepresentations on our Immigration Aims Answered* (A.C.P. Central Committee, Prestige Print, Sydney, undated); *Mr Beasley and White Australia* (A.C.P. Central Committee, Prestige Print, Sydney, undated); and *Tribune*, February 14, 1948, March 2, 1949, April 9, 1949, January 11, 1950 and February 8, 1961.

The party also vigorously opposed attempts to deport non-European aliens by the Labor government in the late 1940s.¹³ With some justification it pointed to the double standards of rejecting general Asian immigration on the grounds of their potential threat to living standards while permitting the limited arrival of indentured Asian workers for particular occupations - notably as pearling divers and restaurant employees. Being tied to a specific employer - often under conditions worse than those prevailing for Australian workers - such workers were extremely vulnerable to exploitation.¹⁴ Any protest on their part could and did bring dismissal and liability to immediate deportation.

The A.C.P. argued that "White Australia" was not in the Labor tradition but rather part of capitalist policy aimed at making Australia an imperialist outpost to help in the exploitation of Asia. Early strikes against the use of cheap immigrant labour had been converted into a struggle for a colour bar and racial homogeneity.¹⁵ The party argued that general restriction of immigration, together with measures to ensure that immigrants were paid prevailing wage rates, would more effectively maintain the living standards of Australian workers than the "White Australia" policy.¹⁶

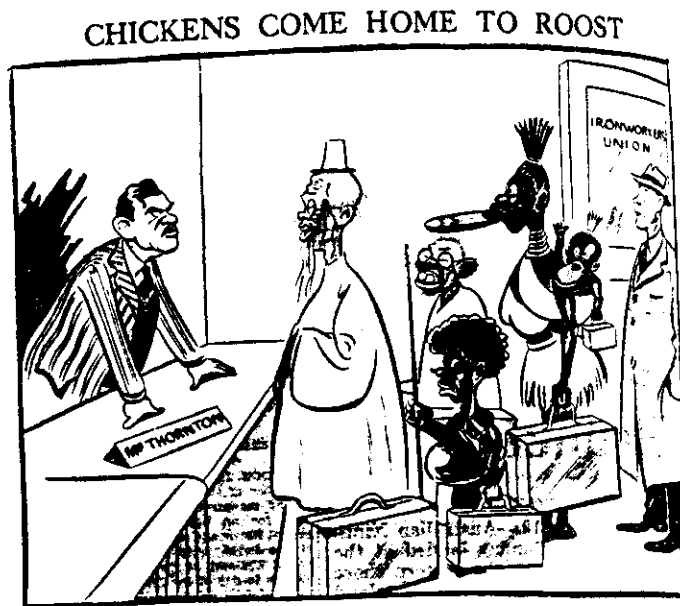
¹³The policy of deportation continued after the election of the Menzies Liberal government in 1949. *Tribune* continued to criticize this and other instances of racial discrimination and anti-Semitism. It also applauded occasions where unions acted against such prejudice. See *Tribune*, November 26, 1947, January 31, 1948, March 6, 1948, April 10, 1948, January 12 and 19, 1949, June 4, 1949, October 12, 1949, February 1 and 20, 1951, August 5, 1953, September 16, 1953 and January 15 and 22, 1964.

¹⁴*Tribune*, June 11, 1949 (which cited a number of actual cases), June 1, 1953 and November 11, 1953. A similar point was made in a letter to the *S.M.H.*, April 14, 1954, p.2.

¹⁵The A.C.P. rejected early anti-Chinese riots by miners (see Chapter 2) as being a reflection of working-class opinion. Rather it saw the origin of these disturbances in petty capitalist resentment at the influx of Chinese onto the gold diggings. *Tribune*, March 2, 1949.

¹⁶Reporting the communist party's 15th National Congress *Tribune* argued that the present policy permitted the admission of "fascist leaning Balts who are prepared to break down trade union standards by working for starvation wages but evicts Malaysians who have good work and trade union records." *Tribune*, March 2, 1949.

Despite the persuasive nature of these arguments and some minor internal dissension within the Labor Party's ranks, the response of the A.L.P. and the bulk of unions was predictably hostile. The vice-president of the New South Wales A.L.P., C. Anderson, and the president of the A.C.T.U., P. Clarey, both expressed the view that "White Australia" was essential to the maintenance of wage standards.¹⁷ The Minister for Immigration, A.A. Calwell, reacted to the attacks by issuing a pamphlet reiterating the anti-cheap labour basis of the country's additional immigration policy.¹⁸ This stance had considerable backing outside the labour movement. In 1945 the general secretary of the F.I.A., E. Thornton, was ridiculed by a racist cartoon in the conservative *Sydney Morning Herald* after he publicly criticized the "White Australia" policy.¹⁹



(News Item: Criticising the White Australia policy, Mr E. Thornton said that no working-class man could tolerate discrimination based on colour or religion.)
 "We much appreciate your views on the White Australia policy. How about a jab with the Ironworkers' Union?"

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Sub-headings within this document such as "Brides - Black, White or Brindle" indicate more than a hint of explicit racism. While highlighting the danger posed by indentured non-European labour, Calwell failed to mention that the government was permitting such a system to continue on a limited scale or that indentured European migrants were also being introduced. A.A. Calwell, Minister for Immigration and Information, *Danger for Australia* (Government Printer, Canberra, 1949).

¹⁹ *S.M.H.*, February 20, 1945, p.2.

The defeat of the federal Labor government in 1949 brought no changes in Australia's immigration plans. The incoming Liberal government, which was to remain in power for 23 years, publicly affirmed the "White Australia" principle.²⁰ This may be seen as an attempt by the Liberal Party not to challenge prevailing public opinion. In July 1954, the Minister for Immigration, H. Holt, stated that the government was "four square" behind "White Australia".²¹ It is apparent that the Liberal government accepted the assimilation, nation-building and defence arguments established by its predecessor.²² Although individual groups continued to attack "White Australia" it was not until the mid-1970s that the principle was brought openly into question.²³ So long as immigration occurred within the confines of "White Australia" there was little explicit need for union leaders to examine their attitude to non-European workers.

British and European Migrants

Labor philosophy and the mood of the electorate dictated that Calwell pledge to take the majority of migrants from the United Kingdom - the principal source of migrants prior to World War Two.²⁴ Calwell publicly stated that he hoped British immigrants would out-

²⁰See the *S.M.H.*, January 22, 1950, p.2, February 21, 1950, p.2, February 24, 1950, p.2 and April 6, 1951, p.2.

²¹*S.M.H.*, July 8, 1954, p.2.

²²Holt's arguments indicated that there was little chance of large numbers of non-Europeans being absorbed. *Ibid.*

²³In September 1955, for instance, the Students' Representative Council of Sydney University called on the government to re-examine "White Australia". The Whitlam Labor government elected in 1972 formally disavowed "White Australia" but in the context of a general reduction in the immigration intake. The infamous dictation test was omitted from the Migration Act of 1958 which replaced the Immigration Restriction Act (1901). See the *S.M.H.*, September 29, 1955, p.7.

²⁴For evidence of public debate with regard to British preference see the *S.M.H.*, November 22, 1946, p.4, February 13, pp.1-2, February 14, p.1 and p.4 and February 15, 1947, p.5.

number all others by a ratio of ten to one.²⁵ In fact, this widely touted ratio was never anything more than a public relations exercise. It was soon apparent that the British alone could not provide Australia with sufficient immigrants. Nor did the British government wish to see the loss of its youngest and most skilled workers - precisely those most desirable to the Australian government.²⁶ Faced with this, the Australian government adopted a formal policy of taking a cross-section of immigrants backed up with an informal arrangement with regard to the recruitment of nurses, miners, boilermakers and carpenters.²⁷ Nevertheless, priority was given to selecting skilled workers. The first assisted British migrants to arrive in 1947 were building tradesmen - this choice being largely determined by the acute housing shortage following the end of hostilities.²⁸ Throughout the post-war period and more especially in the first twenty years there was a heavy reliance on the United Kingdom for skilled workers.²⁹

Even though Britain could not provide sufficient migrants to meet the envisaged target of a 1 per cent population growth per annum through immigration, the economic and political turmoil in post-war Europe created an environment favourable for migration to Australia.³⁰ This situation was conveniently combined with the felt obligation to accept some of the thousands of refugees

²⁵*S.M.H.*, January 29, 1947. See also J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, *op cit.*, p.15.

²⁶*S.M.H.*, January 3, 1947; and M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, pp.33-34.

²⁷Quotas were imposed on the number of nurses and boilermakers recruited. The Australian government also agreed not to send recruiting agents into mining towns.

²⁸The arrival of these workers was widely reported in the press. See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, August 1, 1946, p.3, January 8, p.4, January 16, p.3, March 24, p.1, April 1, p.3 and August 6, 1947, p.3.

²⁹This dependence is made explicit in reports to the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (C.I.P.C.). See, for instance, C.I.P.C. minute no. 374, September 1956.

³⁰Again this was widely reported in the press. See the *S.M.H.*, December 6, 1945, p.3, September 23, p.4, December 3, p.2 and December 20, 1946, p.1.

displaced by the war in Europe.³¹ In 1947 the federal government signed an agreement with the International Refugee Organization by which it undertook to accept a large number of stateless persons, mainly from eastern Europe, who did not wish to return to their former homelands.³²

The first group of displaced persons arrived in December 1947. Up until 1951 displaced persons represented the major source of non-British migrants. By 1952 about 170,000 had reached Australia. Their passage was paid by the government subject to the condition that they could be directed to employment chosen by it for a period of two years. Displaced persons were largely selected on the basis of their physical health and little account was taken of any professional or technical skills that applicants possessed. They were seen primarily as an unskilled work-force which could be directed to basic secondary industries, remote construction projects, rural industries and other areas where bottlenecks in production occurred owing to a shortage of labour. Displaced persons were used extensively in the steel industry, foundries and major public construction projects designed to facilitate industrial development. The latter included the construction of coal-fired power stations in Victoria and New South Wales and the Snowy Mountains hydro-electricity and irrigation scheme. Women were mostly employed as nursing aides and domestics in hospitals.

In this respect the displaced persons scheme formed a useful adjunct to the British assisted-passage scheme with its emphasis on skilled workers. Salter states that the success of the former method of industrial conscription led to the insertion of similar clauses in the first major agreements with European countries.³³

³¹Calwell had enunciated this obligation and its pre-war foundations in a statement to parliament on March 6, 1947. A.A. Calwell, *Immigration - Government Policy* (Ministerial Statement, March 6, 1947, Government Printer, Canberra).

³²The International Refugee Organization was established in December 1946. Amongst displaced persons, the national groups reaching Australia (in order of size) were Poles, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Latvians, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Czechs and Estonians. See H.B.M. Murphy, "Assimilating the Displaced Persons", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXXIV, no. 1, March 1952, pp.46-59.

³³M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, p.43.

The major distinction here was that account was taken of immigrants' skills and qualifications in directing them to a particular occupation. The wind-down of the displaced persons scheme coincided with major efforts to obtain skilled and unskilled labour from Europe. The success of the displaced persons scheme made such immigrants more acceptable. From 1950 onwards other European countries were, in combination, a more significant source of migrants than the United Kingdom.³⁴

While the displaced persons scheme provided a usefull supply of immigrant labour, it was always recognized that this source was strictly limited. In late 1945, the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee - a body composed of government, employer and union representatives - despatched a delegation to investigate the prospects for non-refugee immigration from Europe. The general secretary of the A.C.T.U., A.E. Monk, and R.A. King, secretary of the New South Wales Labor Council, canvassed the views of trade union leaders in various European countries with regard to emigration of workers to Australia.³⁵ From 1947 onwards immigration agreements were signed with European countries such as the Netherlands for the assisted emigration of allied ex-servicemen.³⁶

³⁴Nevertheless, politicians felt compelled to stress that the Anglo-Saxon character of Australia's population was in no danger of being swamped. The stance of the Liberal government (1949-1972) on British immigration was essentially similar to that of the preceding Labor government. Immigration was seen as a non-party issue. However, given their employer bias, the Liberals tended to be more fervent supporters of the programme. See the *S.M.H.*, August 30, 1945, p.5, January 24, 1950, pp.1-2, July 25, 1951, p.4 and August 2, 1953, p.1.

³⁵Monk and King found little enthusiasm for such proposals among the French, Belgian and Danish union leaderships. The opposite was the case with their Dutch, Swiss and Norwegian counterparts, although the need to provide unemployment and sickness benefits was stressed. The leaders of the Swedish trade union movement felt that few of its nationals would wish to migrate. See *Report of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee to A.A. Calwell, Minister for Immigration, February 27, 1946* (Government Printer, Canberra), Appendix A, p.27.

³⁶Agreement was reached with the Dutch government in November 1947. The agreement contained provisions with regard to the two-year direction of workers.

In 1952 Australia became a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (I.C.E.M.) - successor to the International Refugee Organization. The early 1950s witnessed the signing of immigration agreements - including the provision of assisted passage - with northern European countries such as Holland, Austria, Denmark and Germany.³⁷ Immigration agreements were also signed with southern European countries - Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Yugoslavia. Later, agreements extended to Turkey, and some Middle Eastern and South American countries as Australia was forced to cast a wider net for immigrants in response to the economic recovery and rapid growth which occurred in Europe during the post-war period.³⁸

Nevertheless, a definite nationality ranking became apparent with regard to the desirability of migrants from particular sources. The hierarchy of preference was reflected in the degree of effort devoted to recruitment in particular countries, the extent of assistance (passage, housing on arrival, etc.) offered and the type of labour sought. On top of the hierarchy were British immigrants, followed by those from northern Europe, then those from southern Europe, the Middle East and South America with Asian migration receiving least attention. The deliberate focus of the immigration policy was, in turn, a reflection of community attitudes to migrants from specific regions and countries and the relative availability of occupational skills.³⁹

³⁷The decision to encourage mass immigration from Germany engendered much local hostility and controversy. For an example of this see J. Stone, "Mass German Immigration and Australia's Future", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. XXXII, no. 2, June 1951, pp.18-28. See also the *S.M.H.*, August 12, 1950, p.6 and November 1, 1950, p.15.

³⁸The significance of economic factors in the motivation to migrate is well documented. For a discussion of this and the decline of immigration from northern Europe see R.T. Appleyard, "The Economics of Recent Emigration to Australia from Germany and the Netherlands", *International Migration*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1963, pp.29-37.

³⁹This ranking is by no means all-inclusive. Migrants from English-speaking countries such as the U.S.A. and New Zealand were also looked upon more favourably than those from southern Europe. Such preferences were the product of historical factors and the imagined degree of cultural similarity. Tobin and Johnson contend that evidence has disclosed a similar set of rankings in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S.A. Another study by Buchanan revealed that community attitudes favoured northern Europeans over southern Europeans and both these groups over non-European immigrants. The

Community attitudes were carefully monitored by the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council (C.I.A.C.), a body composed of politicians, academics, union leaders (the secretary and president of the A.C.T.U., the secretary of the New South Wales Labour Council and the president of the A.W.U.) and representatives of the major employer associations (the Australian Council of Employer Federations, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Australian Chamber of Manufactures) which was established in 1947 to study and report on the sociological aspects of immigration such as the assimilation of foreigners. The C.I.A.C.'s assessments fed directly into the government's recruiting priorities. Another advisory body critical to conducting the immigration programme was the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (C.I.P.C.). The C.I.P.C., which was established in 1949, was also composed of prominent union, employer, academic and government representatives. Its function was to oversee and advise on the economic and industrial aspects of immigration planning.

During the post-war period immigration planners placed a deliberate emphasis on recruiting migrants - especially those with skills and professional qualifications - from the United Kingdom and northern Europe. By the mid 1950s there were no fewer than four separate schemes offering assistance for intending British migrants,⁴⁰

late 1970s witnessed a growing influx of Asian immigrants (mainly refugees). There is little evidence to suggest that this has altered traditional community attitudes. See A.D. Trlin and R.J. Johnson, "Dimensionality of Attitudes towards Migrants", *Australian Journal of Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 3, December 1973, pp.183-189; and M.E. Buchanan, *Attitudes towards Immigrants in Australia*, Research Report No. 3, National Population Inquiry (A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1976), p.2.

⁴⁰These schemes were as follows:

- i) personal nomination;
- ii) state (group) nomination whereby employers including state instrumentalities undertook to supply accommodation. Employers could nominate British migrants as individuals or a class of worker;
- iii) Commonwealth nomination of British tradesmen and their families. Recruitment followed regular Department of Labour and National Service surveys of local labour requirements;
- iv) the "Bring out a Briton" scheme designed for British workers without friends or relatives already resident in Australia.

while similar though less comprehensive schemes operated in other northern European countries. At the September 1957 meeting of the C.I.P.C. it was recognized that it would be unrealistic to attempt to increase the British component to half the overall intake.⁴¹ The European migration programme was relatively cheap given I.C.E.M. contributions toward passage costs. Further, it was conceded that any attempt to increase British arrivals would not only forego this cost saving but also involve substantial increases in direct (passage) and indirect (infrastructure such as recruitment, hostel accommodation, etc.) costs. For instance, the standard of hostel accommodation provided by the government to British immigrants was superior to that offered to other migrant groups. It was also perceived that, given the limited availability of skilled workers, any attempt to boost the British intake would mean excluding non-British tradesmen who were more readily obtainable. The emphasis on skilled migrants is demonstrated by proportion of skilled workers receiving passage assistance. Salter records that of the 1.7 million assisted migrants arriving between 1947 and 1970, 42 per cent were skilled, 40 per cent semi-skilled and only 18 per cent unskilled.⁴²

Unlike British and northern European immigrants, the majority of migrants from southern Europe did not receive financial assistance from the Australian government.⁴³ There was a strong impetus to migrate from the economically backward regions of these countries to Australia. As had occurred earlier both in Australia and the U.S.A., many unassisted southern Europeans (particularly those from Greece, Italy and Malta) arrived through a chain

⁴¹At the meeting it was decided that the optimal national/ethnic group composition in terms of cost, skill requirements and community sentiment was 35 per cent British, 40 per cent northern European and 25 per cent southern European. It was also stated that the actual full-fare paying proportion of British immigrants was quite small. This indicates the significance of assistance for maintaining the flow from the United Kingdom. The Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council, minutes of meeting held on September 24, 1957, pp.2-6.

⁴²M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, p.15.

⁴³In his study Price found some 62 per cent of migrants, predominantly British and northern Europeans, received assistance. C.A. Price, *Australian Immigration: A Review of the Demographic Effects of Post War Immigration on the Australian Population*, Research Report No. 2, National Population Inquiry (A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1975), table 3, p.11.

migration process whereby original migrants would act as nominators or sponsors and in other ways assist relatives and friends from the same locality to migrate.⁴⁴ This movement was facilitated by strong kinship ties and localized settlements.

In contrast to British and northern European migrants, many of the immigrants from southern Europe, Turkey and the Middle East lacked prior industrial experience and skills. This was reinforced by the recruitment practices of the government and employers. southern Europe, the Middle East and South America were viewed primarily as being sources of unskilled labour. This bias was also reflected in the propensity of government, employer, union and professional institutions to recognize the qualifications of migrants from particular regions.⁴⁵ There is also evidence to suggest that unskilled non-British immigrants were seen to be more adaptable than their British counterparts. In 1956 it was reported to the C.I.P.C. that unskilled aliens [sic] were easier to place than British-born labourers.⁴⁶ There were three possible explanations for this view:

- (i) the attitude and expectations of unskilled workers differed according to their country of origin and industrial experience;
- (ii) the attitude and expectations of employers of unskilled

⁴⁴There is evidence of this process occurring amongst Greek and Italian migrants to Australia from the late nineteenth century onwards. In the post-war period it occurred on a far greater scale than previously. A similar process occurred amongst southern and eastern European immigrants to the U.S.A. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This was also often tied into employment within certain industries upon arrival. See David Brody, *Steelworkers in America*, *op cit.*, pp.96-111.

⁴⁵Studies by Salter, the Australian Population and Immigration Council and others have pointed to the existence of a large number of foreign-born workers who have been forced to seek unskilled employment because their skills and qualifications, obtained overseas, have not been recognized in Australia. A survey by Callus and Quinlan found that language difficulties were not the primary reason for non-recognition. The question of non-recognition of skills will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6. M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, pp.84-103; Australian Population and Immigration Council, *A Decade of Migrant Settlement, Report on the 1973 Immigration Survey* (A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1976), pp.45-59; and R. Callus and M. Quinlan, "The New Unskilled Worker", *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 6, 1979, pp.74-84.

⁴⁶The Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council, minutes of meeting no. 374, September 1956.

labour differed on the above basis;⁴⁷ and (iii) the conditions under which labour could be directed to particular places of employment differed, particularly between those of British nationality and those with alien status.

The evidence relating to the first two arguments is fragmentary but will be discussed later in the thesis. Nevertheless, the contention concerning the significant contribution of displaced persons and, more importantly, southern Europeans to the low-skilled, low-paid, dirty (sometimes remote), dangerous and menial tasks avoided by other workers but essential to modern industrial societies cannot be overlooked, particularly in the light of the latter's industrial inexperience and economic deprivation prior to migration. Concerning the third reason it is apparent that the C.I.P.C., itself, was well aware of the advantages associated with readily directable labour. For instance, reviewing the intake in 1951 the C.I.P.C. assessed the degree of government control over various classes of migrants and concluded that it was desirable that aliens should be induced to enter specified industries.⁴⁸ Assisted alien migrants were particularly subject to direction. This was the case with unskilled single Italian labour introduced during the early 1950s. However, as will be noted later, such labour did not always prove as tractable as the government and employers would have hoped. The three possible explanations mentioned cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive.

⁴⁷There is some evidence that employers displayed a preference for specific national and ethnic groups. See, for instance, correspondence between the state manager and employment officer of Humes Ltd, November 14, 1949. Source: A.N.U. Archives.

⁴⁸The Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council estimated that half the British migrants receiving assistance could be directed on the basis of their accommodation in Commonwealth hostels. The power of direction ended when these migrants found their own accommodation. The remainder of assisted British migrants entered as private or group nominees. British migrants paying their own fares in full were not under an obligation to the government or employers. With regard to non-British migrants it was noted that they could be required to undertake approved employment in return for admission under the landing permit provisions of the Immigration Act. Even so, it was recognized that such a control would be difficult to police. Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council, minutes of meeting, agenda item 11, minute no. 100, 1951.

The foregoing analysis has sought to outline the broad direction of the immigration programme established in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These ground rules were not to change dramatically in the following two decades although some modifications were made with regard to the public definition of "White Australia" and the progressive broadening of the notion of "European" immigrants (to include Turkey, Lebanon, South America and so on) as early sources were exhausted.⁴⁹ Although the need for a mass migration programme remained largely unchallenged until the mid-1970s a number of subtle changes were taking place throughout the period. The defence rationale, so critical in rallying the community consensus initially, became increasingly less potent. In its place, economic justifications assumed much greater significance. Of particular importance was the notion, never conclusively proved and sometimes verging on an article of faith amongst Liberal politicians, that large-scale immigration was the corner-stone of Australia's continued economic growth and unprecedented prosperity.⁵⁰ This predisposition was

⁴⁹For an analysis of the reason for declining immigration from northern Europe see R.T. Appleyard, "The Economics of Recent Emigration to Australia from Germany and the Netherlands", *op cit.*, pp.29-37.

⁵⁰The extensive research and debate on the economic impact of immigration have yielded little conclusive evidence. While immigration undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the work-force in general, and specific industries in particular, the need to take into account other variables such as capital investment and inflation rates has meant that most studies have reached indeterminate findings. An early study by Laffer concluded that while immigration had ameliorated production bottlenecks in some industries it had exacerbated the housing shortage. A study by Appleyard highlighted the responsiveness of the immigration intake to the prevailing unemployment level. Research by Jolley was essentially inconclusive and a cost-benefit analysis of immigration commissioned by the federal government in 1971 was so disappointing that it was not even tabled in parliament. The failure of orthodox analysis to reach any definitive findings must cast doubt on the stance adopted by Liberal politicians. It also attracted criticism from radical economists. A Marxist study by Collins made use of the notion of labour market segmentation to argue that immigration had enabled employers to extract a greater economic surplus from the work-force. See K. Laffer, "The Economics of Australian Immigration", *Pacific Affairs*, December 1952, pp.360-377; R.T. Appleyard, "The Effect of Unemployment on Immigration to Australia", *The Economic Record*, vol. 39, no. 85, March 1963; A.N.E. Jolley, "Immigration and Australia's Post-War Economic Growth", *The Economic Record*, vol. 47, March 1971, pp.47-59; and J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian*

retained by the Liberal government throughout its period of office although the intake was cut back during times of economic recession and abnormal unemployment such as 1952-1953 and 1961.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the government sought to maximize immigration at other times.

For its part, the Labor Party in opposition maintained its support for immigration although this was contingent on the absence of anything but minimum levels of unemployment. A small increase in the level of unemployment in late 1956 resulted in the federal Labor parliamentary caucus calling for a cut in the intake.⁵² Opposition to active recruitment of migrants was again voiced in 1961.⁵³ Upon regaining government in 1972, the A.L.P. progressively reduced the immigration intake despite vociferous employer opposition.⁵⁴ By 1975 the traditional Labor hostility to large-scale immigration had firmly reasserted itself given the collapse of the post-war boom.

Immigration: A Marxian Interpretation (Unpublished M.Ec. Thesis, Department of Economics, University of Sydney, 1976), p.19.

⁵¹In July 1952 the government cut the intake of single migrants in an effort to reduce the competition with local unemployed for jobs. On July 24 the Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, announced that the 1953 intake would be halved (to 80,000) and the number of arrivals would be reduced for the remainder of 1952. The recession induced a re-alignment of the composition of the intake in the direction of family reunion, personal sponsorship and national need and away from short-term labour requirements. These initiatives established a pattern for later responses to abnormal unemployment levels. H.E. Holt, M.P., Minister for Immigration, *Press Release* dated July 27, 1952. See also the *S.M.H.*, July 9, 1952, p.8, September 23, 1952, p.1, September 24, 1952, p.5, September 26, 1952, p.5 and October 22, 1952, p.3.

⁵³Apart from public statements, the A.L.P. position on immigration, employment and living standards was made clear in pamphlets. See the *S.M.H.*, November 1, 1956, p.5; Senator J.P. Toohey, "Employment and Immigration", *Labor Speaks No. 3* (A.L.P. undated); and A.A. Calwell, "Immigration and Development", *Labor Speaks No. 4* (A.L.P., undated).

⁵⁴See the *S.M.H.*, June 23, 1961, p.1, July 22, 1961, p.5 and September 14, 1961, p.6.

⁵⁵See the *S.M.H.*, June 13, 1973, p.6, August 3, 1973, p.1, August 20, 1973, p.4 (refers to the Australian government's decision to quit the I.C.E.M.) and December 31, 1973, p.1.

Despite this, and other evidence of wide-scale community disaffection with any proposal to re-introduce the intake targets of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Liberal government which assumed power in 1975 displayed every intention of doing this.⁵⁵ In March 1977 the government announced its intention to introduce a points system for assessing prospective migrants.⁵⁶ Reasserting the time-honoured arguments that migrants were an economic asset and created jobs, and that there was a shortage of skilled labour (the particular skills required were not specified), the Immigration Minister, M.J.R. Mackellar, outlined plans to boost the intake in the following year.⁵⁷ This proposal sparked an antagonistic response, not only from the A.L.P., but also from community organizations, the migrant press and other diverse elements.⁵⁸ Even the introduction of some thousands of Asian refugees on humanitarian grounds, while tolerated, was hardly greeted with enthusiasm given the high levels of unemployment.⁵⁹ The situation reached was strikingly reminiscent of that prevailing before World War Two.

The major distinction between the late post-war period and earlier times was the failure of ethnocentric/racist stigmatization to emerge amongst the A.L.P. spokesmen. Such propaganda could well have a detrimental effect given the large numbers of naturalized non-British foreign-born persons already resident. In the 1950s the party had feared that newly enfranchised eastern Europeans with strong anti-communist sentiments would see Labor as identical to

⁵⁵For evidence of public hostility to a boost in immigration see the *S.M.H.*, November 9, 1977, p.2.

⁵⁶*S.M.H.*, March 3, 1977. See also the *S.M.H.*, May 23, 1978 and September 14, 18 and 21, 1978.

⁵⁷*S.M.H.*, April 15, 1978, June 7, 1978, June 8, 1978, June 13, 1978 and June 24, 1978. See also *The National Times*, week ending June 2, 1978, p.11.

⁵⁸From March 1978 onwards A.L.P. spokesmen initiated a number of stinging attacks on the proposals. In the same month (March) the Italian language newspaper *Nuovo Paese* added its weight to the barrage. Employer and church groups were the main supporters for the proposals. See the *S.M.H.*, March 2 and 3, 1978; June 10 and 20, 1978, September 30, 1979, October 17 and 19, 1979; *The National Times*, February 27-March 4, 1978 and the week ending June 10, 1978; *The Australian*, June 6, 1978; and *Nuovo Paese*, March 18, 1978, p.9.

⁵⁹*S.M.H.*, February 1, 1978 p.7.

communism.⁶⁰ This view had been fostered by anti-communist elements within the A.L.P. which hived off to form the Democratic Labor Party (D.L.P.) and actively sought migrant support. The traditional anti-socialist/private enterprise parties also raised the spectre of communism before the migrant voter and took full advantage of the "cold war" environment.⁶¹ By the mid-1960s the A.L.P. had discarded its threat response and was actively engaged in wooing the migrant voter. It was recognized that the working class which formed the traditional basis of the A.L.P.'s support had acquired a distinctly ethnic character. In particular, southern European migrants formed a significant component of the industrial proletariat. This was reflected in the formation of bodies by Greeks and Italians designed to build a bridge between the A.L.P. and particular national groups.⁶² At its election in 1972 the party went into office championing the cause on non-British migrants. During its period in government it introduced special aids for migrants, financed and commissioned research into migrant problems and needs and attempted to eliminate discrimination on the basis of nationality or ethnic extraction.⁶³

⁶⁰The A.L.P. also alleged that preference was given in selection to those migrants expressing anti-communist viewpoints. See the *S.M.H.*, March 14, 1952, p.2, March 19, 1957, p.2, June 30, 1957, p.11 and March 15, 1959, p.2.

⁶¹See the *S.M.H.*, March 15, 1957, p.5, March 19, 1957, p.4 and March 12, 1958, p.4. It has been suggested that the D.L.P. served as a bridge from the labour movement for upwardly mobile workers of Irish descent while the more recent migrant arrivals from southern Europe have tended to support the A.L.P. For evidence of research on immigrant involvement in politics see J. Hearn, "Migrant Politics: Myth or Reality?", *Ekstasis*, no. 5. March 1973, pp.3-8; and Lyn Richards, *Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in the Australian Political Context* (Department of Sociology Paper No. 45, La Trobe University, Victoria, May 1978).

⁶²These associations first emerged in the mid-1950s. For evidence of their more recent activities and A.L.P. monitoring of the migrant vote at federal elections see G.F. Richardson, general secretary, *A.L.P. Campaign Director's Report - 1977 National Election* (roneoed); and the *S.M.H.*, December 20, 1978, p.3.

⁶³During its period in office, the Whitlam Labor government established a National Committee on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation which was composed of representatives from government, employers and unions. The first report of the committee in 1975 disclosed that complaints on the grounds of nationality and

The remainder of this section of the thesis will deal with: first the patterns of migrant employment and employer responses; second the attitudes and strategies adopted by trade unions in general; and third the attitudes and responses of migrant workers (including those independent of formal union organization).

At this point it is sufficient to note that the ethnic homogeneity of the Australian work-force began to collapse more rapidly in the post-war period than at any other time in its development. The diffuse sources of immigration that developed were accepted largely because of the incapacity of Britain to meet Australian work-force requirements as manufacturing industry grew. "Dilution" took place, surprisingly, without major political controversy to the point that by the 1970s "White Australia" itself was beginning to lose credibility.

ethnicity were the second most frequent matter dealt with. However, the small number of cases handled, the success rate of complaints made and the fact that most foreign-born complainants were long-term residents of Australia cast doubts on the efficacy of the body in the wider context. Similar criticisms have been levelled at the Anti-Discrimination Board established by the New South Wales government. To be effective such bodies require that discrimination is recognized by the employee who then lodges a complaint to which the employer has no reasonable explanation. It is an understatement to say these conditions are idealized especially for manual workers with little command of English and who may lack basic information as to their rights. It can be argued that for the bulk of workers protection from victimization rests with their ability to develop (jointly) rules, customs and procedures governing employment. This need not even be specifically directed at eliminating racial/ethnic prejudice but rather may operate against discrimination at a more general level. For evidence of this see R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, *Well at least it's Better than the Line - An Examination of the Working Lives of Migrant Employees in Three State Government Instrumentalities* (Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, February 1979), p.58.

CHAPTER 4

THE PATTERN OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT AND POST-WAR IMMIGRATION:
EMPLOYER ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES

From its very inception the mass migration policy was strongly backed by Australian employers. Employer associations and industry leaders played a significant role in propagating the policy through publicity, government lobbying and participation on advisory bodies established by the state and federal governments. Immigration was seen, not only as an additional source of workers during a period of almost uninterrupted labour shortage, but also as a source of skilled labour (thereby reducing local apprenticeship training costs); as a means of counteracting the declining work-force participation rate brought about by higher living standards, longer periods of education and earlier retirement; as a way of providing labour to basic industries such as building and construction, power supply, railways, iron and steel or particular projects and thereby overcoming specific bottlenecks with regard to labour supply; and as an additional source of consumer demand. Employer organizations such as the Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia (A.C.M.A.) carefully monitored the economic impact of immigration.¹

1. Support for the Policy

The response of major employer organizations to the government's immigration proposal was immediate and favourable. The A.C.M.A.'s official journal *Canberra Letter* devoted considerable attention to discussing the desirable characteristics of planned immigration.²

¹The A.C.M.A. journal *Canberra Letter* regularly reported the size of the intake, its effect on population trends and the proportion of qualified/skilled immigrants. Overall, immigration-related topics constituted the second most numerous item reported in *Canberra Letter*. See *Canberra Letter*, September 12, 1951, October 17, 1955, October 25, 1955, November 7, 1955, April, 16, 1955, August 30, 1955 and October 10, 1956.

²Moreover, suggestions that immigration would lead to undue capital imports and exacerbate the housing shortage were refuted. *Canberra Letter*, November 1945, June 12, 1946, October 21, 1947, July 19, 1950, September 20, 1950 and November 10, 1950. In addition to its vocal support, bodies were established to aid the chamber in this

At its annual conference in 1946 the A.C.M.A. declared that "Australia's urgent need is more population, firstly to assist in the defence of our great inheritance and secondly to develop those industries to which war has given stimulus".³ This support was periodically reaffirmed.

The semi-independent *Australasian Manufacturer* was also an early advocate of immigration. In a series of editorials it argued immigration was needed to increase production and called for more initiative on the part of government and individual employers.⁵

The *raison d'être* for immigration and industrial mobilization was economics rather than defence. Economic advantages were also the prime reasons put forward by the Metal Trades Employers' Association (the M.T.E.A.) which later became the Metal Trades Industry Association (M.T.I.A.) and the Employers' Federation of New South Wales - two other major employer organizations which came out strongly in support of immigration.

Throughout the 1960s the *Metal Trades Journal* decried the

regard. In 1947 the South Australian chamber appointed an immigration sub-committee. See correspondence between the South Australian chamber secretary and his federal counterpart, May 27, 1947.

³*Canberra Letter*, December 7, 1946.

⁴At its annual meeting in 1955, for example, the A.C.M.A. resolved "That this annual meeting entirely supports the Federal Government's immigration policy, particularly in view of the increasing scarcity of skilled tradesmen in Australia and their essentiality to the maintenance and development of Australian society." This view was reiterated in the following three years. In November 1959 the A.C.M.A. federal director issued a press release ("The Case for Large Scale Migration by Australia") which urged that the immigration must be maintained during periods of economic "strain" and expanded at other times. Again this view was reiterated at the 1965, 1967 and 1968 annual meetings. In 1969 the A.C.M.A. called for a renewed drive to obtain migrant labour for key industries and suggested new sources of recruits be tapped by the government. See *Canberra Letter*, July 4, 1956, p.2 and January 23, 1957, p.4; and records of the A.C.M.A. held at Wollongong University Archives. See also the *S.M.H.*, January 9, 1958, p.6 and December 29, 1969, p.4.

⁵*The Australasian Manufacturer*, vol. XXXIII, April/June 1948 and April/June 1949. Banks also lent their public backing to immigration. In October 1951, for instance, the quarterly survey of the ANZ Bank advised that there was an urgent need for unskilled labour. See the *S.M.H.*, October 3, 1951, p.7.

recurring labour shortage and advocated greater immigration to meet this shortfall.⁶ Labour shortages were seen to be responsible for the increasing use of strike action by unions and the growth of overaward payments.⁷ Annual reports of the New South Wales Employers' Federation invariably contain statements from the federation president affirming the significance of immigration; calling for greater efforts by individual employers to recruit, select, place and house immigrants; and bemoaning any real or imagined government move to reduce the intake target.⁸ This attitude was echoed by other state federations and the national body.⁹ Like the M.T.E.A., the Employers' Federation perceived a continual situation of "overfull" employment which induced labour instability and which required increasing levels of immigration to counteract.¹⁰ In a poignant response the *Employers' Review* revealed a more specific rationale for immigrant labour:

Additionally, the critics have ignored the large numbers of heavy manual jobs now undertaken by male migrants and of the many menial tasks now undertaken by female migrants. One need only look at the labour force employed on waterboard, public works and railway construction to realize that the numbers of Australian born in those forces is lacking. In hotels and hospitals, housemaids and wardmaids are very often the wives of migrants. In all published criticisms, no answer is proffered as to the alternative supply of this type of labour.¹¹

⁶Official organ of the M.T.E.A. See, for instance, *Metal Trades Journal*, January 15, 1965, p.437, June 15, 1965, p.352, January 17, 1966 (editorial) and July 1, 1968, p.319.

⁷In his review of the year, the M.T.E.A. president stated that overaward disputes had accounted for 112 of the 222 strikes which occurred at member work-places during the previous 12 months. *Metal Trades Journal*, June 15, 1965, p.352.

⁸See the *Employers' Review* (official organ of the New South Wales Employers' Federation), 1959-1978 and New South Wales Employers' Federation *Annual Reports*, 1963/64 to 1976/77.

⁹In May 1970 the *Employers' Review* reported that "The Australian Council of Employers' Federations and its constituent state federations have consistently supported planned immigration ... in order that the Australian demand for labour might be satisfied." See also the *Employers' Review*, November 1959, April 1962, February 1972 and August 1973.

¹⁰*Employers' Review*, August 1973.

¹¹The possibility that it was poor working conditions that was causing Australian-born workers to desert these jobs was not discussed. *Employers' Review*, July 1970.

The logical extension of employer advocacy of immigration was a denunciation of any criticism of the policy and proposals for reduction or curtailment in particular. Even in periods of relative job scarcity or inflation such proposals were greeted with unremitting hostility. In December 1955 the A.C.M.A. president stated his organization would oppose any serious cut in immigration on the basis of temporary economic difficulty.¹² In the face of statements from the Victorian Institute of Public Affairs (and other sources) that immigration should be reduced, the chamber rushed to publicly defend immigration both in the press and by writing directly to the Prime Minister.¹³ The decision of the federal Labor government to restrict immigration in 1973 and 1974 provoked a similar response from the New South Wales Employers' Federation and individual employers such as B.H.P. The government was accused of pandering to sectional union interests.¹⁴ Following the election of the Liberal government in 1975 employers reiterated their support for a greater migrant intake.¹⁵

¹²Reported in the *S.M.H.*, December 3, 1955, p.8.

¹³The January 4, 1956 issue of *Canberra Letter* declared that "Migration must continue" and outlined the economic virtues of immigration. On the same day the A.C.M.A. federal director wrote a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressing the same view. The financial editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* rejected the A.C.M.A.'s stance by pointing to the bleak economic climate and prospects of unemployment. This did not deter the federal director who publicly reiterated the need for sustained immigration, its significance to industry, and suggested its long-term price might be low. On February 2, 1956 the A.C.M.A. released a press statement entitled "The Alleged High Cost of Migrants" which refuted critics and restated the economic benefits of immigration. This was duly reported by the press. On March 9, 1956 the A.C.M.A. federal director wrote to the Prime Minister conveying an executive resolution reaffirming the necessity of maintaining a vigorous migration policy. Source: Records of the A.C.M.A., Wollongong University. See also the *S.M.H.*, January 6, p.6 and February 3, 1955, p.19; and the *Australian Financial Review*, January 12, p.3 and February 19, 1956, p.19.

¹⁴See statements made by the New South Wales director published in the *Employers' Review*, August 1974 and the New South Wales Employers' Federation *Annual Report* for the year 1973/74. See also the *S.M.H.*, August 13, 1973, p.1 and December 31, 1973, p.1.

¹⁵See *The Australian*, June 6, 1978 which reported the views of various employer groups.

Apart from their concern with the general level of immigration employer organizations were also deeply concerned with the type of labour being introduced. In particular, the intake of skilled tradesmen was viewed as crucial by the New South Wales Employers' Federation, A.C.M.A. and M.T.E.A. While the A.C.M.A. had sounded warnings about the shortage of skilled labour (including apprentices) in the building and metal trades as early as 1951, it was not until the late 1950s and more particularly the 1960s that a real note of panic was sounded by the three bodies.¹⁶ By 1964 all were expressing considerable concern at the difficulty of obtaining sufficient qualified tradesmen.¹⁷ The effects of this shortage were seen to be growing union pressure for increased skill margins, the necessity to institutionalize overtime and over-award payments and problems of excessive labour instability.

Paradoxically, while immigration of craftsmen had served to cushion the effects of the shortage - and was strongly applauded for this reason by employer groups - it had also set in motion a chain of events which endangered industry's ability to generate an adequate supply of indigenous tradesmen. The availability of migrant tradesmen induced apathy amongst some local employers with regard to training apprentices. In combination with the low wages paid to apprentices which discouraged potential applicants, and lags in Australian apprenticeship training, this engendered a situation where industry was in no position to train workers for future requirements. In 1955 the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council had noted the shortage of local apprentices. By the mid-

¹⁶ *Canberra Letter*, no. 569, July 27, 1951, p.3. At its annual meeting in 1955 the A.C.M.A. noted that the contribution of immigration with regard to tradesmen was more significant than those being supplied by the local apprenticeship system.

¹⁷ For evidence of concern about shortages of skilled metal and electrical tradesmen see the *Employers' Review*, September 1959, March 1960, March 1961, May 1961, July and November 1962 and August 1964; New South Wales Employers' Federation *Annual Reports*, 1965/66, 1969/70 and 1970/71; Report of A.C.M.A. Annual Meeting held on November 26, 1963; and the *Metal Trades Journal*, June 1, 1964, October 15, 1964, December 1, 1965, July 1966, August 1, 1966, January 1, 1967, February 2, 1967 and September 16, 1968. See also *Metal and Engineering* (the M.T.I.A. national newspaper); the M.T.I.A. submission to the *Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry into Immigration Policies and Australia's Population* (a Green Paper) in 1972; and the *S.M.H.*, August 27, 1960, p.7.

1960s the increasingly intense competition for skilled workers brought about by economic prosperity in Europe threatened the only source of labour to make up for this shortfall.¹⁸

The employer response to this predicament took several forms. In New South Wales the Employers' Federation urged individual employers to directly recruit overseas in consultation with the Immigration Department. Further, employer organizations including the Chamber of Manufactures, Metal Trades Employers' Association, Employers' Federation and Printing and Allied Trades Employers' Association collaborated in organizing and financing a number of immigration missions to the United Kingdom and Europe. These missions, which occurred under the auspices of the New South Wales government (they included the state Minister for Labour and Industry and senior representatives of employer bodies), enabled a study of overseas training methods as well as the fostering of immigration. In 1969 these employer groups joined with the state government to establish a New South Wales Immigration Advisory Council.¹⁹ Employers were encouraged to advise the government of their exact requirements in terms of numbers in each skill classification, job description, wages and conditions so the government could arrange direct advertising.²⁰

¹⁸One possible solution to this problem was the upgrading of semi-skilled workers to trade jobs. In May 1961 the *Employers' Review* reported a 1959 survey which disclosed that one in every six workers paid as tradesmen possessed no formal recognized qualification. The provision of the Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act (see Chapter 6) limited these practices in the metal and electrical trades where shortages were most acute.

¹⁹Reported in the New South Wales Employers' Federation *Annual Report 1969/70*.

²⁰*Ibid.* A seeming paradox in employer calls for a greater overall intake and skilled workers in particular was that the ready sources of additional migrants (such as southern European countries) were countries which were not ready sources of skilled tradesmen. This point was noted by Appleyard. See R.T. Appleyard, "Population and the Workforce", *The Economic Record*, vol. XLII, no. 97, March 1966, p.58.

2. Industrial Deployment, Employer/Government Liaison and Direct Recruitment

Besides their strong advocacy of immigration, employers also actively participated in the programme both through the direct recruitment of immigrants by some companies and the liaison of large employer and industry representatives with bodies established by the government to oversee the policy. Major employer organizations took part in the Immigration Advisory Committee's investigations of the prospects for European immigration. These associations including the Australian Council of Employers' Federations, Associated Chambers of Commerce of Australia and A.C.M.A. also became members of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council (C.I.A.C.).

Perhaps the single most important planning and advisory organ was the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (C.I.P.C.). The C.I.P.C. was initially chaired by Sir John Storey and counted the nation's major industrialists and employer representatives amongst its members.²¹ The functions of the council were: i) to advise on the long-term control of the immigration flow (setting priorities for recruitment, screening, selection, sourcing and so on) and its composition (occupation, age, skill, family or single) in connection

²¹Storey had headed the War Production Board. Other prominent employer representatives included the Chairman of Directors, Repco Ltd, the General Manager of Port Pirie Smelters Ltd, the Assistant General Manager of B.H.P. Ltd, the Chairman of Australian National Airways, the Chairman of the Australian Shipbuilding Board, the President of the F.C.B.I.C. and the Managing Director of the *Sunday Times*. Government and academic representatives included the Chairman of the Secondary Industry Commission, the Chairman of the Public Service Board, the Chancellor of the Australian National University and a Professor of Agriculture at Melbourne University. Essington Lewis (B.H.P. Director) was to act in a consultative capacity. At its first meeting it was agreed that the C.I.P.C. establish consultants in the agricultural and pastoral industry; agricultural machinery; building, construction and materials producing; chemicals and fertilizers; clothing and textiles; engineering, electrical and metal industry; food processing, canning, etc.; footwear; furniture and household equipment; minerals and mining; the motor industry; paper and timber; rope, cordage and fibres; rubber; sugar refining; and tanning. Trade union representatives included A.E. Monk, president of the A.C.T.U., T. Dougherty, general secretary of the A.W.U. and R.R. Broadby, secretary of the A.C.T.U. See C.I.P.C., minutes of first meeting, November 18, 1949; and the *S.M.H.*, October 13, 1949, p.2.

with achieving a desirable pattern of industrial development; ii) to report and advise on the employment distribution of immigrants including problems arising from this (such as housing) and the recognition of skills and qualifications possessed by overseas-born workers; and iii) to monitor the economic consequences of a rapidly increasing population and inform the government of the implications of this in terms of investment and development expenditure.

In line with government policy, the C.I.P.C. initially resolved that economic benefits could be maximized if substantial placements of migrants were made in all basic industries and developmental projects designed to increase industrial capacity.²² Of particular importance was the building and building materials industry (bricks, tiles, cement, glass and so on), given the housing shortage which had arisen in the wake of wartime production priorities. Immigration planners were also aware that immigrants would place an additional strain on available accommodation which, if not rectified, could engender considerable anti-immigrant hostility on the part of the union movement and public in general.²³ At the March 1950 meeting of council it was agreed that the work-force of the building industry needed to be increased by no less than 50 per cent or 70,000 workers.²⁴ Even at this stage there were 18,000 unskilled and 5,000 skilled migrant workers employed in the industry. By

²²As early as March 1947, Immigration Minister Calwell stated that immigrants would be selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to the economic welfare of Australia. The positive role migrants could play in job creation was emphasized nearly a year before this. Such arguments continued to enjoy wide currency throughout the post-war period amongst politicians and especially those representing the Liberal Party. In October 1955, for instance, a Liberal government spokesman, Earl Page, argued that immigration could double output by facilitating the introduction of double shifts in industry to make better use of capital investment. See the *S.M.H.*, August 12, 1946, March 7, 1947 and October 24, 1955.

²³This did in fact occur and its implications will be dealt with in the following chapter on union responses. Laffer argued that while migrants' labour did help to break down production bottlenecks in basic industries, their arrival exacerbated the housing shortage. See K. Laffer, "The Economics of Australian Immigration", *op cit.*, p.365.

²⁴C.I.P.C., minutes of meeting, March 1950, agenda item no. 18.

December of the same year it was estimated that there would be more than 5,000 displaced persons engaged in producing building materials as the government took full advantage of its powers of direction.²⁵

For information pertaining to the labour requirements of particular industries, the C.I.P.C. relied on close contacts with individual employers (where these were sufficiently large), employer and industry groups and employment surveys periodically conducted by the Department of Labour and National Service (D.L.N.S.) and Commonwealth Employment Service. Where industry groups were not directly represented on council it was necessary to establish informal links. Nevertheless, such relations were close and cordial. The building industry is indicative of the latter association. For instance, in September 1957, the Master Builders' Association (M.B.A.) federal executive wrote to T.H.E. Heys, head of the Immigration Department, requesting an increase in the migrant intake.²⁶ The M.B.A. stated that existing unemployment amongst building tradesmen was both small and temporary. Further it alleged the Building Trades Group of unions was taking full advantage of this to press for wage increases. The New South Wales M.B.A. was fiercely resisting these pay claims. The M.B.A. justified its stance on the grounds of maximizing production efficiency and preventing an escalation of building costs. The explicit economic rationale for close relations between the council and the building industry is typical of the pattern found in

²⁵The C.I.P.C. report concluded that immigrants would make a considerable contribution to the industry by reducing employment vacancies. This finding was borne out. Of those migrants arriving in 1950, 7,039 were employed in manufacturing building materials and a further 2,318 as building workers. Between February and November the number of displaced persons employed in building and associated undertakings grew from 1,300 to more than 5,000. By March 1957 migrants constituted 14 per cent of the work-force in the brick-making industry and 25 per cent of employees engaged in cement production. The migrant contribution to building tradesmen, semi-skilled and unskilled labour was at least equally significant, if not more so. See official figures quoted in *Canberra Letter*, no. 576, September 12, 1951 and February 21, 1952; and the *S.M.H.*, February 16, 1950, p.4, November 12, 1950, p.5 and March 23, 1957, p.2.

²⁶The M.B.A. was trying to forestall any reduction in the intake on account of unemployment rates amongst unskilled workers. See correspondence between D.C. Kennedy, federal secretary, M.B.A. and T.H.E. Heyes, secretary of the Commonwealth Immigration Department, September 24, 1957. Source: C.I.P.C. records of I.M. McLennan, Newcastle University Archives.

key secondary industries. The government proved particularly responsive to the declared needs for additional building tradesmen.²⁷

The iron and steel industry (including coal production associated with this) was also an early recipient of priority attention by immigration planners. In essence, the government had only to deal with one company - the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd (B.H.P.) - which monopolized local iron and steel production and operated its own coal mines, not to mention an extensive number of subsidiaries in the steel finishing and products area. B.H.P. was directly represented on the C.I.P.C. through its Acting General Manager (later Chief General Manager) I.M. McLennan with Essington Lewis acting in a consultative capacity. The government viewed the expansion of steel production as a prerequisite for building up the manufacturing sector.

The size and influential position of B.H.P. permitted its management to establish close contact with the Department of Immigration and the Department of Labour and National Service (D.L.N.S.). In fact, the operations of these bodies, together with those of the C.I.P.C., tended to intermesh with the company's own recruitment practices to the extent that it might appear to the casual observer that the former were there solely for B.H.P.'s benefit - providing a constant supply of foreign labour both skilled and unskilled. The close, almost informal, relationship is made clear in the extensive correspondence between McLennan and other members of B.H.P. management with the C.I.P.C. and departmental heads on matters of migrant recruitment and selection, and the provision of hostel accommodation near steel-works located at Newcastle, Port Kembla and Whyalla.²⁸

In the immediate post-war period the company was faced with the concomitant problem of under-utilized productive capacity and

²⁷By the mid-1950s more than 30,000 building tradesmen had entered Australia. For evidence of this and the government's responsiveness see the *S.M.H.*, August 5, 1954, p.4, July 1, 1955, p.14, May 15, 1957, p.3 and May 16, 1957, p.2.

²⁸Voluminous evidence of this can be found in records of the C.I.P.C. and correspondence of I.M. McLennan. Source: Personal file on the C.I.P.C., 1949 to 1966, held in the University of Newcastle Archives. Further evidence can be found in the Personnel and Industrial records of the B.H.P. Co. Ltd held in its archives and head office located in Melbourne.

acute shortages of skilled and unskilled labour. From 1948 onwards the government began directing large numbers of displaced persons to the Port Kembla and Newcastle steelworks.²⁹ This source of unskilled labour was augmented and finally superseded by non-refugee European immigrants, particularly Greeks, Yugoslavs and Italians. Early recruitment priorities ensured that the bulk of arrivals were single and could be accommodated either at Commonwealth hostels or those which the company built such as Karingal and Steelhaven on the south coast of New South Wales. In line with the overall preference ranking of immigration sources, skilled labour was sought in Britain, Holland and Germany. B.H.P. appointed an agent in the United Kingdom to supervise and encourage the recruitment of tradesmen under the group nomination scheme.³⁰

By January 1953 more than one-fifth of the steel industry work-force was made up of migrants from Europe.³¹ In July 1956 the secretary of the Immigration Department was able to report to the Minister that steel industry output had nearly doubled since 1949-1950. This was largely due to the fuller use of existing plant (70 per cent) rather than expanded capacity (30 per cent). At this time foreign-born workers represented approximately one-third of the

²⁹The combined number for both plants increased from less than 400 in 1949 to 2,263 by November 1950. Displaced persons were channelled into areas of the steelworks (such as the spun pipe plant, open hearth and blast furnaces and coke ovens) where labour shortages were most critical, instability highest and working conditions least favourable. According to Wills, the introduction of migrant labour had a stabilizing influence in these areas. See N.R. Wills, "The Iron and Steel Industry and the Commonwealth Immigration Programme", *Twentieth Century*, Spring 1953, pp.5-19; and the *S.M.H.*, November 12, 1950, p.5.

³⁰This arrangement gave the company a say in the selection of prospective British migrants. Although the government reserved the right of final approval, it received the names of individuals selected by the B.H.P. representative. *Tribune* and other working-class organs frequently accused B.H.P. of practising deception by exaggerating the pay, conditions and amenities provided to workers. For evidence of the company operations and criticism of it see B.H.P. Co. File G8-6-5c, "Housing and Hostels" (source: B.H.P. Archives, Melbourne); and *Tribune*, October 7, 1964.

³¹*S.M.H.*, January 25, 1953, p.2. In August 1954 McLennan reported to the C.I.P.C. that migrants constituted one-third of the work-force (22 per cent British) at Whyalla, 41 per cent (11 per cent British) at Port Kembla and 25 per cent (13 per cent British) at the Newcastle steelworks. I.M. McLennan, "Some Notes on the Commonwealth's Immigration Programme", Report to the C.I.P.C., August 3, 1954.

total industry work-force - having supplied more than 70 per cent of the additional workers taken on in the post-war period.³²

B.H.P. management directly communicated the company's labour needs (overall requirements, skilled component, the shortage at particular steel plants and progressive needs in the future) to the Immigration Department and C.I.P.C.³³ They even asked the D.L.N.S. to provide statistics to support such requests.³⁴ This pattern of close and regular interaction was maintained throughout the post-war period.

The provision of additional financial assistance, accommodation and other agreements entered into between the company and migrants as part of, or in addition to, the group nomination scheme enabled B.H.P. to tie these workers to its establishments for some time after their arrival. This was important because wages and other conditions of employment at the steelworks were generally inferior to those found in other parts of the Australian industry. Nevertheless, such restraints had a limited span and the company geared its employment policies to the short-term employment of a large number of recent arrivals. High turnover was not a critical problem while ready replacements could be obtained. The role of an *entrepôt* employer of migrant labour was adopted by other major Australian industries, notably the motor vehicle building and glass production. The implications of this practice will be taken up in the next section.

³²The Secretary of the Department of Immigration reported that Australia was now producing steel at a price below that of imported steel. Further, he noted that production surpluses had enabled some exports. Correspondence, Secretary, Department of Immigration to H.E. Holt, Minister for Immigration, July 25, 1956. Source: Records of the C.I.P.C.

³³For evidence of this, see correspondence General Manager, B.H.P. to Secretary, Department of Immigration dated April 10, 1951 (in this letter the company suggested that the government obtain a special ship-load of migrants for it), and I.M. McLennan, "Some Notes on the Commonwealth's Immigration Programme", Report to the C.I.P.C. dated August 31, 1954. For its part, the C.I.P.C. kept the company informed of relevant matters. See, for instance, correspondence to I.M. McLennan, Chief General Manager, B.H.P.) from the C.I.P.C. dated September 29, 1950. Source: C.I.P.C. records, Newcastle University Archives.

³⁴B.H.P. memorandum to Chief General Manager from Executive Officer, Personnel and Training dated February 12, 1965.

In the early stages particularly, the company stressed the recruitment of young single workers. With regard to British immigrants this predisposition ran counter to the government's policy of emphasizing family migration. There is evidence to indicate that B.H.P. received special treatment under the group nomination scheme and was not subject to the same stringent conditions governing accommodation as were other employers.³⁵ Such provisions did not apply to non-British immigrants which partly explains the company's policy of obtaining unskilled labour outside Britain.³⁶ Another reason for this preference was the degree of explicit direction exerted by the government on non-British migrants under the two-year contract incorporated in many early immigration agreements. These contracts were not part of the immigration agreement with Britain and, as already stated, the government readily acceded to B.H.P. requests for directable labour. As a result of these powers, the language difficulties and limited job market knowledge of non-British migrants, the company anticipated greater stability from such workers. This, in fact, proved to be the case.³⁷ The strong predilection for southern European migrants also appears to have been based on the view that they were readily available, eager to migrate and less reluctant to undertake hazardous, dirty and enervating jobs with a low rate of remuneration

³⁵*Ibid.* In this letter the Executive Officer informed McLennan that the D.L.N.S. advised all other employers using group nomination to find accommodation for married couples, single migrants and families (limited to six months normally). This requirement was not placed on B.H.P. He also indicated that workers at Newcastle and Port Kembla were permitted to stay at Commonwealth hostels for up to two years. Again, this was exceptional.

³⁶While B.H.P. was quick to advocate a greater intake of skilled workers from outside Britain, and Germany in particular, its influence was limited by the firm policy preference for British immigrants.

³⁷Wills sees this as being a significant benefit to the company. In May 1956 it was noted that while the proportion of non-British migrants at the Port Kembla steelworks exceeded their general work-force representation, the reverse was the case with regard to British migrants. This was taken to indicate a desire on the part of the latter to avoid the steel industry because of inferior working conditions. N.R. Wills, "The Iron and Steel Industry and the Commonwealth Immigration Programme", *op cit.*, pp.5-19.

(partly boosted by overtime and shift-work allowances.)³⁸

The amount of influence exerted by B.H.P. on immigration planners was in some respects unique. Because of its size and strategic importance the company did not have to work through employer associations. B.H.P. was not above publicly lobbying the government when it seemed appropriate. However, this was seldom necessary.³⁹ Other major secondary industry employers established close links with government bodies and geared their employment policies to the continued availability of migrant labour. There was close liaison on the placement of displaced persons and other directable labour,⁴⁰ overall manpower needs and specific skill requirements. Nor was B.H.P. the only firm to build hostels to accommodate its foreign-born workers.⁴¹ While the provision of accommodation by employers was critical during the early years of immigration, its relative significance gradually declined as housing became more readily available and the government expanded its own hostel facilities.

Apart from building and iron and steel production, the early phase of post-war immigration also witnessed an emphasis on placing migrant labour in foundries and factories, primary production and

³⁸At one C.I.P.C. meeting McLennan described Italians as "a hardworking race, especially those in the unskilled category", and argued local antipathy to them was unfair. The ascribed behaviour of particular nationalities and ethnic groups will be taken up later. This point can be related to the immigrants' prior industrial experience and motivation in migrating. C.I.P.C. minutes no. 242, agenda item 27, p.8, 1953.

³⁹For evidence of public lobbying see the *S.M.H.*, March 4, 1964, p.1, April 14, 1964, p.4, December 14, 1972, p.3 and April 3, 1973, p.1.

⁴⁰*S.M.H.*, May 15, 1949, p.4. See also Humes Ltd internal correspondence dated November 14, 1949 concerning the employment of displaced persons at its Maribyrnong factory. In September of this year the Victorian Housing Commission requested priority from Commonwealth Employment Service in labour allocation. Source: Australian National University Archives.

⁴¹*S.M.H.*, June 18, 1949, p.4.

public works.⁴² As in the steel industry, the work was frequently arduous. Early recruitment was biased in favour of young fit males, although women were selected for sectors of manufacturing (clothing, textiles and food processing) and public employment (hospitals) which had been traditionally dominated by female labour.

The contribution of migrant workers to public works was significant if only because such projects underpinned the expansion of private sector industry. From 1949 the federal and state governments undertook massive capital expenditure programmes including the construction of coal-fired power stations and irrigation/water conservation and hydro-electric power generation installations. Many of these projects were located in remote regions with no readily accessible supply of labour. Non-British migrants provided a mobile and directable labour source. By 1957 they constituted 20 per cent of the workers engaged on major public works.⁴³ On particular projects their contribution was far more significant. Foreign-born employees made up more than half the work-force engaged on the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme.⁴⁴

The government-run railways in each state also sought large numbers of British (through group nomination) and other European (particularly those under contract) migrants.⁴⁵ As with the steel industry, poor working conditions and better employment prospects elsewhere - partly as a result of economic expansion - had induced indigenous workers to desert railway jobs. Immigrants represented a

⁴²Evidence pertaining to the exact numbers involved is fragmentary prior to the 1961 census. The D.L.N.S. conducted periodic surveys of the proportion of foreign-born workers in particular industries. Information can also be found in C.I.P.C. records. Nevertheless, the significant contribution of migrant workers to industrial expansion is apparent. See, for instance, "Migrant Labour Steps up Industrial Output" in *Tomorrow's Australians* (Bulletin, Department of Immigration), no. 21, Canberra, 1949, p.15; "Mr Holt outlines Immigration Programme" in *Commonwealth Jubilee Citizenship Convention* (Canberra, January 22-26, 1951), *Report of Proceedings*, pp.16-17; and *Canberra Letter*, no. 576, September 12, 1951, p.5. See also the *S.M.H.*, February 16, 1950, p.4, November 12, 1950, p.5, March 23, 1957, p.2 and March 25, 1957, p.2.

⁴³See A. Townley, Minister for Immigration, *Australia Unlimited: Immigration Builds the Nation* (issued by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and printed by Congress, Sydney, 1957).

⁴⁴*Ibid.* See also the *S.M.H.*, October 6, 1952, p.1.

⁴⁵For evidence of this see the *S.M.H.*, January 22, 1950, p.4 and November 24, 1951, p.3.

solution to this problem. Initially, thousands of displaced persons were directed to the New South Wales and South Australian railways. By 1957 foreign-born workers had contributed 68 per cent of the additional labour taken on in railways and transport.⁴⁶

In sum, during the initial years of large-scale immigration, the government attempted to establish the industrial base for a vigorous manufacturing sector. Close links were forged with major employer groups. Immigrant labour was directed into basic industries and major construction projects. Priorities in the allocation of labour to particular industries were reinforced by the provision of hostel accommodation. The 170,000 displaced persons introduced constituted a vital source of mobile unskilled labour. Nevertheless, they tended to drift rapidly out of industries once their contract was completed.⁴⁷ From 1951 onwards the C.I.P.C. had to discover other sources of directable unskilled labour.⁴⁸ Workers were required not only for basic industries but also for the large number of miscellaneous manufacturing employers clamouring for labour. Moreover, while local demand for labour grew almost without interruption throughout the 1950s, the economic recovery in Europe

⁴⁶In Victoria and South Australia migrant workers constituted 20 per cent of the work-force in the railways. In the latter state they comprised 80 per cent of the labourers and 30-40 per cent of those employed in the traffic department. Other industries/activities employing a large number of non-British migrants (on an Australia-wide basis) included paper-making (16.5 per cent of the total work-force), wool-carding (21 per cent), hosiery (17 per cent), smelting (30 per cent), chemical fertilizers (19 per cent), agricultural machinery (23 per cent), machine tools (18.7 per cent) and motor vehicle manufacturing (38 per cent). Official figures quoted by A. Townley, *Australia Unlimited*, *op cit.*; and A.E. Monk, Address to the Australian Citizenship Conference, *Australian Labour*, vol. 2, no. 2, January 1957.

⁴⁷A Department of Labour and National Service survey disclosed that 57 per cent left their job as soon as the contract expired. Quoted in the *S.M.H.*, April 6, 1952, p.2. See also J.A. Bell, "New Australians in Industry", *Manufacturing and Management*, October 1951, pp.86-89.

⁴⁸At the C.I.P.C.'s October 1951 meeting it was suggested that the D.L.N.S. list of employers requiring directable labour was too extensive. For evidence of the discussion about new sources of directable labour see C.I.P.C. minutes no. 148 (agenda item 15) and no. 151 (agenda item 57), 1951.

made it progressively more difficult to obtain sufficient skilled labour from northern Europe. Council had to periodically revise its recruitment priorities and extend the number of countries from which migrants (both skilled and unskilled) were drawn.⁴⁹ While southern European countries provided a ready pool of prospective immigrants, most were unskilled and recognition problems existed for those claiming technical skills.

Nevertheless, such problems were not fundamental to the continuation of large-scale immigration, and were met expediently by policy modifications on the part of immigration planners. The economic rationale for immigration was firmly established and questions of sourcing were less critical than they had been at the outset. Council pointed to the economic contribution of migration in four areas. First, a greater proportion of migrants were workers than was the case for the population in general. Second, migrants had proved to be an invaluable source of skilled tradesmen. By November 1958 more than 164,616 tradesmen had migrated to Australia. This represented 29 per cent of the total male intake and raised the overall representation of tradesmen in the Australian work-force.⁵⁰ Third, the provision of assisted passage enabled the direction of migrants to specific areas of employment. Fourth, migrants provided a useful mobile surplus labour force.

The 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the increased penetration of migrant workers into all sectors of secondary industry. The C.I.P.C. ensured that the government was made fully aware of both the general and specific labour requirements of employers.⁵¹ Moreover, employer organizations continued to deal with the Immigration

⁴⁹For instance, the question of Yugoslav immigration was raised in 1958 and the possibility of Turkish immigration in 1964. Both national groups were seen primarily as sources of unskilled labour. C.I.P.C. minutes, agenda item 15, 1958 and meeting held on July 29, 1964.

⁵⁰C.I.P.C. minutes, agenda item 55, meeting held in November 1958.

⁵¹In 1973, for instance, the C.I.P.C. urged an increase of 20,000 in the migrant intake at the behest of employers. See the *S.M.H.*, December 31, 1973, p.1. See also the *Metal Trades Journal*, November 15, 1968, pp.553-557.

Department and its minister directly.⁵² By the mid-1960s the increasing competition for European immigrants had induced a larger number of individual employers to recruit labour overseas on their own behalf. Further, employer associations pooled their resources for joint labour-seeking ventures in Europe.⁵³

The convivial government/employer relationship upon which B.H.P., in particular, had come to rely received a major jolt in late 1972 when the newly elected federal Labor government decided to curb the overall immigration intake. The Minister for Labour, Clyde Cameron, stated that the government would not facilitate further recruitment by B.H.P. until it did more to attract local workers by negotiating on improved wages and conditions.⁵⁴ Ignoring this, the company made further applications for migrant labour. A fierce public debate ensued between the government and its union supporters, on the one hand, and B.H.P. and employer organizations on the other.⁵⁵ In South Australia unions accused B.H.P. of exploiting migrant labour. They alleged that the company had done nothing to attract indigenous workers to remote areas because the wages, bonuses and allowances offered were no better than those paid in capital cities. It was also claimed that the housing assistance offered to migrants was superior to that provided for local workers.⁵⁶ Cameron reiterated his view that the company's difficulty in securing labour was a consequence of the arduous, dirty and low-paid work and the absence of employment opportunities for wives and children.⁵⁷ For its part, the New South Wales Employers' Federation

⁵²In November 1969, for instance, the A.C.M.A. conducted correspondence with the Department of Immigration about getting employers more closely involved in the immigration programme. Source: Records of A.C.M.A., Wollongong University Archives. See also the *S.M.H.*, May 20, 1966, p.7 and January 10, 1974, p.2.

⁵³As referred to earlier, in New South Wales the Employers' Federation, Chamber of Manufactures, Metal Trades Employers' Association and Printing and Allied Trades Employers' Association collaborated with the state government in organizing recruiting missions. See New South Wales Employers' Federation *Annual Reports*, 1966/67 and 1967/68.

⁵⁴*S.M.H.*, December 14, 1972, p.3.

⁵⁵For evidence of this see the *S.M.H.*, April 4, 1973, p.6, June 16, 1973, p.3, August 14, 1973, p.9 and August 20, 1973, p.4.

⁵⁶*S.M.H.*, April 3, 1973, p.1.

⁵⁷*S.M.H.*, April 7, 1973, p.8.

argued that the government was aiding union moves to improve their bargaining position while "overfull" employment contributed to labour instability.⁵⁸ The government deprived B.H.P. of the power to nominate migrants for assisted passage although the company was permitted to resume "employer nomination" in September 1973.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the government stance meant that B.H.P. and other employers got little relief from their acute labour shortage until the onset of economic recession in 1975. Apart from this temporary rebuff, employers and the state acted in close harmony with regard to immigration throughout the post-war period. Indeed their goals appear to have been almost identical.

Some idea of the increasing significance of migrant workers to Australian secondary industry can be ascertained by comparing Tables 1 and 2 which show the foreign-born component in particular industries between 1954 and 1971. Between 1947 and 1972 immigration contributed 61.2 per cent of the work-force increase including 75.5 per cent of the male and 44.6 per cent of the female employment growth.⁶⁰ Migrants not only provided additions to the work-force. They also tended to progressively replace Australian-born employees in a number of industries and occupations as the latter retired or found work elsewhere and new local work-force entrants avoided such jobs in favour of better paying positions in the tertiary sector. This process occurred until at least the mid-1970s.⁶¹

By 1971 overseas-born employees constituted 26.8 per cent of the total Australian work-force and 36.9 per cent of all tradesmen. However, as Collins argues, the significant contribution of post-war

⁵⁸ *Employers' Review*, August 1973.

⁵⁹ *S.M.H.*, June 16, 1973, p.3 and September 19, 1973, p.15.

⁶⁰ Quoted in J.H. Collins, "The Political Economy of Post-War Immigration", in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism* (Australian and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1975), p.121.

⁶¹ With the onset of large-scale unemployment there is some evidence that Australian-born workers have been forced to take on occupations they traditionally shunned. This process has been fostered by greater selectivity in recruitment on the part of employers. See R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, "Well at least it's better than the Line", *op cit.*; and R. Callus and M. Quinlan, "The New Unskilled Worker", *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 6, 1979, pp.74-84.

TABLE 1

MIGRANT WORKERS AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL WORK-FORCE IN AUSTRALIA,
BY SELECTED INDUSTRY, 1954-1966

Industry	Migrant workers as percentage of work-force		
	1954	1961	1966
Agriculture	12.3	13.2	11.4
Forestry and Fishing	14.45	15.5	13.9
Mining	20.0	24.5	24.6
Textiles	30.5	38.7	44.7
Clothing	26.7	41.6	49.4
Footwear	18.1	18.2	35.7
Wood, Wood Products and Furniture	17.6	22.7	23.7
Paper and Paper Products	16.7	21.8	23.9
Chemicals	22.2	28.2	30.7
Petroleum Products	34.4	42.7	40.6
Glass, Clay, Non-metallic Mineral Products	29.4	35.5	37.1
Basic Metals	28.8	37.1	40.4
Fabricated Metal Products	23.6	32.1	36.5
Transport Equipment	27.0	34.0	38.1
Other Machinery and Equipment	26.5	34.0	37.0
Leather and Leather Goods	21.2	34.0	38.7
Other Industries	28.4	35.3	40.3

Source: Derived from Census Reports, 1954, 1961 and 1966. Quoted from J.H. Collins, "The Political Economy of Post War-Immigration", in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism* (Australian and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1975), p.112.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF OVERSEAS-BORN IN MANUFACTURING SECTOR,
BY INDUSTRY, MALE AND FEMALE, 30 JUNE 1971

Industry	Male	Female
Food, Beverages and Tobacco	27	34
Textiles	45	46
Clothing and Footwear	47	52
Wood, Wood Products and Furniture	26	29
Paper, Paper Products and Printing	27	26
Chemicals, Petroleum and Coal Production	36	30
Non-metallic Mineral Products	39	36
Basic Metal Products	44	34
Fabricated Metal Products	40	38
Transport Equipment	47	48
Other Machinery and Equipment	42	46
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	43	46
Total Manufacturing	38	42

Source: Derived from Industries Assistance
Commission, *Annual Report 1974-75*, pp.58-73.
Quoted from J.H. Collins, *The Political
Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*,
op cit., p.128a.

immigration to the work-force cannot be measured simply in terms of overall numbers, but must take account of the concentration of migrant workers in particular industries and occupations.⁶² As is apparent from Tables 1 and 2, the manufacturing industry was an important recipient of immigrant labour. Within certain undertakings and work-places the distribution of foreign-born workers was far in excess of the industry average. An example of this is motor vehicle construction (as distinct from servicing, distribution and parts supply). By 1957 migrants represented 40 per cent of the work-force for this area. At G.M.-H.'s Fisherman's Bend plant in Victoria, the figure was closer to 65 per cent while at the company's Woodville factory in South Australia half the work-force was foreign-born. The situation at G.M.-H. and Ford car plants in New South Wales was similar. By the early 1970s immigrants constituted more than 80 per cent of the work-force at some plants.⁶³ A survey of three Sydney car factories conducted in 1977 indicated that non-English speaking migrants constituted between 75 per cent and 87 per cent of the semi-skilled work-force in each plant.⁶⁴ This concentration was even more pronounced in particular sections of the factory such as the paint, body and press shops.

The building and construction industry also became increasingly dependent on foreign-born workers throughout the post-war period.

⁶²Collins sees economic factors as the *raison d'être* for post-war immigration. As indicated earlier in the chapter, the specific industries and occupations most in need of additional labour were a major concern of immigration policy planners from the very outset. The Jackson Report provided additional information on the proportion of foreign-born labour in particular industries. See J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*, p.19; and the Committee to Advise on Policies for Manufacturing Industry (Jackson Report), *Policies for Development of Manufacturing Industry: A Green Paper* (A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1976), vol. IV.

⁶³For instance, the Leyland Australia factory at Waterloo. Evidence supporting this, the particular ethnic representation and intra-plant concentrations can be found in M. Quinlan, *Management Policy and Industrial Relations* (unpublished B.Ec. Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1975), Appendix 1.

⁶⁴Compiled from membership records of the Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation, June 23, 1977. The plants covered were G.M.-H. Pagewood, Ford Homebush and Leyland Australia Enfield.

By 1971, non-British foreign-born workers constituted more than half the non-casual labourers and almost one-third of the bricklayers, plasterers and construction operatives.⁶⁵ As with manufacturing, the migrant representation was far higher on particular projects and types of work.⁶⁶

The contribution of immigrant workers is even more marked when representation or participation rates are disaggregated according to nationality and occupation. As this has been well documented by Collins, Lever and Callus the evidence will be only briefly elaborated.⁶⁷ Table 3 indicates the industrial distribution of male workers by major nationality groups as disclosed in the 1971 census. Table 4 presents the industrial distribution of female workers.

Collins makes use of national census data and Lever's study of the changing composition of the Victorian work-force (1966-1971) to show that Italian- and Yugoslav-born migrants are disproportionately concentrated in building and construction (male workers) and manufacturing (male and female workers).⁶⁸ The pronounced contribution of particular national groups to the industrial work-force is made even clearer when the occupational distribution is considered. Tables 5 and 6 present the situation for male and female workers respectively.

Similarly, Collins found that non-British migrants were concentrated in a limited number of occupations - notably labouring, unskilled and semi-skilled manual jobs for men and unskilled and

⁶⁵C. Lever, *Migrants in the Australian Workforce*, Paper No. 14 (Department of Sociology, La Trobe University, July 1975).

⁶⁶Mention of the significant contribution of migrants to the work-force in building and on construction projects has already been made. For later evidence relating to the building industry see J. Sutton, *Contract Labour in the Building Industry* (unpublished B.Ec. Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1979).

⁶⁷J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*; C. Lever, *Migrants in the Australian Workforce*, *op cit.*; and R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions* (unpublished M.Ec. Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1978).

⁶⁸J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*, p.126.

TABLE 3

INDUSTRY GROUPS, MALES BY BIRTH-PLACE CATEGORIES, CENSUS 1971

Industrial Group	Australia %	U.K./Eire %	Italy %	Greece %	Germany %	Yugoslavia %	Other %
Primary	10.7	2.7	8.3	2.2	2.2	3.1	3.0
Mining	2.0	2.1	0.9	0.5	2.6	1.7	2.0
Manufacturing	21.3	31.0	33.8	44.0	35.3	47.9	33.4
Construction	9.9	11.6	20.6	9.1	15.7	16.9	11.8
Transport	7.0	5.9	4.1	4.6	4.8	3.0	5.5
Commerce	23.2	21.8	14.8	19.8	18.7	9.2	20.1
Public Services	11.3	10.0	5.1	3.6	8.0	4.2	7.9
Recreation, etc.	9.2	10.4	5.1	6.7	7.9	4.1	10.3
Other	4.0	2.9	6.2	7.6	3.2	8.0	4.2
Unemployed	1.4	1.6	1.1	1.9	1.6	1.9	1.8
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number (thousands)	2643.7	380.2	127.2	66.4	45.5	57.4	318.2

Source: The Borrie Report (1975), p.132. Quoted from J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class", in E.L. Wheelwright and K.D. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, vol. 3 (Australian and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1978), p.64.

TABLE 4

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE WORK-FORCE OF MAJOR BIRTHPLACE GROUPS: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION
AND TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYED PERSONS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, CENSUS 1971

Industry	Australia %	U.K./Eire %	Italy %	Greece %	Germany %	Yugoslavia %	Other %	Total over- seas-born %	Total %
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4.8	1.6	5.2	1.6	1.8	2.7	1.8	2.1	4.1
Mining	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.3
Manufacturing	14.8	21.7	46.0	54.9	27.2	55.1	28.1	30.8	18.9
Electricity, Gas and Water	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.5
Construction	1.3	1.2	0.9	0.2	1.7	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.2
Wholesale and Retail Trade	24.4	24.4	17.4	17.9	21.3	9.5	19.2	20.5	23.4
Transport and Storage	2.1	2.0	0.9	0.9	2.1	1.0	1.9	1.7	2.0
Communication	1.7	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.9	0.2	0.9	0.9	1.5
Finance, Business Services, etc.	10.3	8.7	4.9	3.6	7.4	2.9	7.9	7.3	9.6
Public Administration, Defence	4.6	4.0	1.4	0.7	3.3	1.0	3.4	3.1	4.2
Community Services	21.5	22.1	8.5	4.6	18.8	9.4	21.1	18.1	20.6
Entertainment, Recreation, etc.	9.8	9.5	6.7	5.7	11.1	7.5	9.4	8.9	9.6
Others, Not Stated	3.8	3.1	7.7	10.0	3.9	9.7	4.5	4.9	4.1
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Employed	1,229,503	166,881	44,452	33,280	24,244	22,869	132,673	424,399	1,653,902
Percentage	74.3	10.1	2.7	2.0	1.5	1.4	8.0	25.7	100.0

Source: Quoted from J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class",
op cit., p.66.

TABLE 5

OCCUPATIONS OF MAJOR BIRTHPLACE GROUPS: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION AND TOTAL NUMBERS
OF EMPLOYED MALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, CENSUS 1971

	Australia %	U.K./Eire %	Italy %	Greece %	Germany %	Yugoslavia %	Other %	Total over- seas-born %	Total %
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	8.7	10.3	1.8	1.1	9.5	2.0	11.3	8.4	8.6
Administrative, Executive, Managerial Workers	8.9	8.4	5.2	6.9	7.7	2.2	8.6	7.6	8.6
Clerical Workers	9.4	7.8	2.0	1.4	6.3	1.3	6.6	5.8	8.4
Sales Workers	6.4	6.4	4.1	7.7	4.1	1.5	4.9	5.3	6.1
Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Timber-getters, etc.	11.5	3.5	9.2	2.6	2.7	3.7	3.5	4.1	9.6
Miners, Quarrymen, Related Workers	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.3	1.3	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.9
Workers in Transport and Communication	7.7	6.1	4.5	4.5	4.6	3.2	5.1	5.2	7.0
Tradesmen, Production Process Workers, Labourers, etc.	36.3	46.4	61.7	61.3	55.1	73.6	49.0	52.2	40.6
Service, Sport and Recreation Workers	3.7	5.0	4.4	6.5	3.6	3.7	4.8	4.8	4.0
Members of Armed Forces	1.9	2.0	0.3	0.1	2.0	0.1	0.9	1.2	1.7
Occupation Inadequately Described, Not Stated	4.5	3.1	6.3	7.6	3.1	7.5	4.4	4.5	4.6
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number (thousands)	2,601.7	174.0	125.7	65.2	45.8	56.2	312.4	979.4	3,586.5

Source: The Borrie Report (1975), p.129. Quoted from J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class", *op cit.*, p.65.

TABLE 6

OCCUPATIONS OF MAJOR BIRTHPLACE GROUPS: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION AND TOTAL NUMBERS
OF EMPLOYED FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, CENSUS 1971

	Australia %	U.K./Eire %	Italy %	Greece %	Germany %	Yugoslavia %	Other %	Total over- seas-born %	Total %
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	14.7	13.3	2.0	0.9	12.5	2.6	14.3	10.9	13.7
Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers	2.6	2.7	1.3	1.1	3.1	0.8	3.1	2.5	2.6
Clerical Workers	34.6	33.4	12.0	4.3	27.7	5.8	25.3	24.4	32.0
Sales Workers	13.0	12.1	9.7	11.8	10.4	3.8	9.2	10.4	12.3
Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Timber-getters, etc.	4.4	1.5	5.2	1.6	1.7	2.7	1.7	2.0	3.8
Miners, Quarrymen, Related Workers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Workers in Transport and Communication	2.7	2.5	0.4	0.3	1.6	0.4	1.3	1.6	2.4
Tradesmen, Production Process Workers, Labourers, etc.	9.3	14.1	44.8	55.9	20.0	54.7	23.0	25.9	13.5
Service, Sport and Recreation Workers	14.1	16.8	15.2	12.9	18.4	17.7	16.8	16.4	14.7
Members of Armed Forces	0.2	0.1	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	0.2
Occupation Inadequately Described, Not Stated	4.4	3.5	9.4	11.2	4.5	11.5	5.3	5.8	4.8
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number (thousands)	1,229.5	166.9	44.4	33.3	24.2	22.9	132.7	424.4	1,653.9

Source: The Borrie Report (1975), p.129. Quoted from J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation
of the Working Class", *op cit.*, p.67.

semi-skilled jobs in the clothing, textile and food processing industries for women. Again, the case was most pronounced for those migrants of Italian, Greek and Yugoslav birth. There was some evidence to suggest that these groups were being partially displaced by more recently arrived immigrants from Turkey, Lebanon, the Middle East and South America.⁶⁹ While there has been no disaggregated analysis of the 1976 census data, as yet, to confirm this segmentation process, it appears such changes have occurred throughout the post-war period.

Collins sees the disproportionate concentration of certain immigrant groups in particular industries and occupations as indicating the historical segmentation of labour markets each reflecting a different set of employment conditions (wages, skill, hygiene, interest, hours of work, susceptibility to unemployment and so on). He discerns six broad segments within the Australian labour market: i) males born in Australia, the United Kingdom, Eire, Northern Europe, the U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand; ii) males born in southern Europe (Greece, Malta, Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia, Turkey), the Middle East and South America; iii) females born in (i); iv) females born in (ii); v) Aboriginal males; and vi) Aboriginal females.⁷⁰

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp.129-142. Again, Collins is heavily reliant on Lever's study.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp.169-178. There is a considerable body of supporting evidence consistent with all or part of Collins's contentions about labour market segmentation. Research by Power has examined labour market stratification on the basis of sex, race and ethnic origin. A study by Lancaster-Jones found a high degree of correlation between the proportion of non-British foreign-born persons in an area and socio-economic status. The poorer the area the more non-British immigrants it contained. Another survey by Henderson, Harcourt and Harper found that 7.9 per cent of the Melbourne population lived below the poverty line but the figure for Greek- and Italian-born immigrants was 16.2 per cent and 15.3 per cent respectively. They concluded that these groups were poor because of their concentration in low-paid unskilled jobs. Data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reinforce this pattern by indicating that a far higher proportion of southern Europeans (relative to Anglo-Saxon immigrants) arrive without formal skills; that workers from southern Europe earn on average less than their northern European (including British) and Australian-born counterparts and suffer from higher rates of unemployment (especially Greeks and Yugoslavs); that southern European migrants are far more concentrated in a narrow band of occupations and industries than the population in general; and that overseas-born persons are more highly represented amongst workers engaged in night work, shift-work and overtime in the manufacturing

Despite the crude nature of these categories, and slight changes which have occurred over time, there are strong similarities in the occupational and earnings distribution of groups within each classification. The representation of native English-speaking persons (Australian-, British- and Irish-born) in low-paid manual jobs is below what it would have been in the absence of massive immigration by unskilled and semi-skilled southern Europeans. Blandy argued that the average earnings of migrants was more closely linked to their period of arrival than any notion of labour market segmentation. However, his own findings were consistent with Collins's analysis.⁷¹ The apparent "success" of some immigrant groups in achieving an occupational and earnings profile similar to that of the indigenous population can be largely, though not totally, explained in terms of special factors associated with their recruitment, the government's discriminatory policy of seeking

industry. See M. Power, "Cast-Off Jobs: Women, Migrants and Blacks May Apply", paper presented to the *First Australian Political Economy Conference, Sydney, June 18-20, 1976*; F. Lancaster-Jones, *Dimensions of Urban Structure* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1969), chapter 5, especially p.101; R.F. Henderson, H. Harcourt and E.J.H. Harper, *People in Poverty: A Melbourne Survey* (Cheshire Press, Melbourne, 1970); Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Australian Immigration Consolidated Statistics* (Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, 1971), table 29; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Statistics 1976* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1977), p.29 and p.71; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migrants in the Labour Force 1972-76* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, June 23, 1977), table 10, p.28; and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Evening and Night Work*, November 1976 (New Issue, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, February 22, 1978), tables 9 and 10.

⁷¹Blandy's study revealed that the average earnings of some northern European migrant national groups were at least equivalent to those of Australian-born workers. However, Greek-, Italian- and Yugoslav-born immigrants received considerably lower earnings, on average, than their Australian-born counterparts. Such comparisons take no account of the number of hours worked to reach a particular level of earnings. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the discrepancy is understated, accordingly. Significantly, there has been no noteworthy tendency for this pattern to change over time as Blandy's argument would suggest. An earnings survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1979 revealed a pattern identical to the above and earlier surveys (see previous footnote). R. Blandy (ed.), "Migrant Workers in Australia - Industrial Cannon Fodder?", the *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 3, no. 2, April 1977, pp.20-39; and the *Sun Herald*, June 24, 1979, p.15 (report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey results).

skilled and other qualified workers from particular countries and the procedures for obtaining local recognition of such skills.⁷²

For workers in group (i) upward mobility has largely been confined to lower supervisory positions and (more significantly) the shift into tertiary sector employment. With regard to southern Europeans and so on there is little evidence of a similar shift despite the fact that many have been resident in Australia for over 20 years.⁷³ The mobility of unskilled labour appears to have been largely confined to intra-occupational shifts. In general, the

⁷²With regard to the first reason it may be noted that many of the early refugee immigrants possessed skills, education and other qualifications. Their apparent promotion in the occupation/earnings hierarchy was less a reflection of upward mobility than the often partial recovery of job status they had held in Europe prior to the war. In general, the economic and political turmoil in Europe following the war had encouraged the emigration of skilled and educated workers from northern Europe. Even those who did not migrate as political refugees from northern Europe were not immune from problems in having their qualifications recognized. More importantly, there is little evidence to indicate widespread upward mobility amongst migrants from countries which were viewed primarily as sources of unskilled labour. Those claiming qualifications or skills frequently had little chance of utilizing them in Australia because of prejudice on the part of employers and professional bodies, or an absence of effective recognition/upgrading procedures. For evidence of these points see M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, pp.46-50, p.158 and p.171; R. Johnston, "The Immigrant Worker", in A. Bordow (ed.), *The Worker in Australia* (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1977), pp.67-112; J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, *op cit.*; and evidence cited in Chapter 3, Footnote 45.

⁷³Apart from the problem of non-recognition of skills obtained overseas disclosed by the survey conducted by the Australian Population and Immigration Council and other studies (see previous footnote), another element of less apparent discrimination which cannot be attributed to language difficulties must also be recognized. Johnston, whose work draws on both her own research and other studies, offers a sensitive account of the origins and impact of this discrimination. A further study of migrants employed on construction and maintenance in public instrumentalities by Callus *et al.* found that southern Europeans were frequently stereotyped as being particularly suited for the least desirable jobs while Australian-born employees were promoted in an effort to retain their services. It was also noticed that the infusion of Australian-born employees to these jobs as a result of the recession accentuated discrimination in hiring and promotion. See R. Johnston, "The Immigrant Worker", *op cit.*, pp.67-112; and R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, "Well at least it's better than the line", *op cit.*, pp.44-51, pp.108-114, pp.160-162 and pp.199-204.

most recently arrived group was relegated to the worst paid, most physically demanding, dirty and hazardous jobs both at the level of particular industries (e.g. steel and iron production, foundries, motor vehicle construction), particular companies which acted as *entrepôt* employers (B.H.P., G.M.-H., Ford, etc.) of migrant labour and at the level of the job hierarchy within factories (for instance, labouring in the coke ovens, open hearth and blast furnaces in steelworks and the body and press shops in car factories). In turn, this group would achieve some mobility to less onerous jobs either within the factory, in another factory which relied on less inexperienced workers, another manufacturing industry or public employment where slightly better conditions and pay could be found for similar work. The evolving recruitment policy of the government which meant that certain national groups tended to arrive at different times has made this displacement process more apparent than it might have otherwise been.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, for most workers in group (ii) this did not involve fundamental changes in either occupation or average earnings. Low levels of education, skills and language difficulties precluded a shift to the tertiary sector.⁷⁵ A similar process of segmentation and displacement to that described above seems to have occurred amongst groups (iii) and (iv) complicated by the traditional occupational segmentation of female workers.⁷⁶ The patterns of Aboriginal employment and earnings (both male and female) were

⁷⁴Roughly speaking, the period of arrival for unskilled/semi-skilled immigrants can be ranked as displaced persons (until 1952), followed by Italian and Greek migrants through to the mid-1960s when there was an increasing level of migration from Yugoslavia, the Middle East, Turkey and finally South America. For a fuller discussion of the evolving pattern of sourcing by nationalities see R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions*, *op cit.*, pp.4-14.

⁷⁵South American migrants, especially those who arrived as political refugees, often possessed skills and education but suffered a similar fate to displaced persons 20 years earlier.

⁷⁶For a discussion of the place of women within contemporary Australian capitalism see B. Cass, "Women's Place in the Class Structure", in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism* (Australian and New Zealand Book Co., Sydney, 1978), vol. 3, pp.11-41.

uninfluenced by post-war immigration.⁷⁷ The evolution of segmented labour markets within capitalist societies characterized by internal displacements that did not disrupt the class structure but rather modified it to include new permutations on the base of race, sex and ethnicity has been identified in other countries. Aronowitz, in his study of the United States (see Chapter 1), found a pattern of ethnic, racial and sex-based occupational/class stratification which strongly resembled that suggested by Collins.

The segmentation process was a direct consequence of employer/government recruitment policies with regard to immigrant labour. The United Kingdom and northern Europe were viewed primarily as sources of skilled labour. On the other hand, southern Europeans were deliberately selected on the basis of their contribution as unskilled and semi-skilled manual industrial workers. This bias partly reflected the availability of skilled workers in particular countries and the relative difficulty of accommodating overseas training systems to Australian standards. However, at least equally important was the readiness of economically motivated workers in backward regions of southern Europe to migrate - to the extent of paying their own fares in the majority of cases. Such workers, often lacking prior industrial experience, accepted the poor working conditions, shift-work and mandatory overtime which prevailed in many sectors of Australian industry. Given language difficulties and an absence of recognized skills they had little choice in the matter and little prior employment with which to compare conditions.

Some employers, notably B.H.P. and major car manufacturers, recruited migrants directly both prior to and after their embarkation for Australia. They acted as *entrepôt* employment situations.⁷⁸ Unscripted arrivals drifted to areas where continuous labour shortages made work easy to find. Immigrant communities grew up close to industrial belts or individual employers in some cases.

⁷⁷Collins offers a fuller discussion of the various dimensions of labour market segmentation not immediately relevant to this study. Research by Castles and Hagan also sheds additional light on the patterns of Aboriginal employment. See J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class", *op cit.*, pp.42-85; and R.G. Castles and J.S. Hagan, "Dependence and Independence: Aboriginal Workers in the Far South Coast 1929-75", in A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds), *Who Are Our Enemies?*, *op cit.*, pp.158-171.

⁷⁸For reported instances with regard to car companies see the *S.M.H.*, January 10, 1974, p.2.

New arrivals were often able to obtain jobs on the basis of intelligence supplied by relatives or the information networks which operated amongst particular ethnic groups. For *entrepôt* employers and even those less reliant on recent arrivals, high rates of labour instability did not present a fundamental problem so long as a ready supply of new recruits was available. Continuous economic expansion enabled earlier arrivals to seek other jobs. Yet, as already noted, for the bulk of southern European workers such shifts occurred within occupational categories (rather than between them), and in most cases the work remained unskilled, poorly paid and insecure by the standards of other occupations. To employers, immigrant labour became an accepted part of the workforce-planning. By the mid 1970s as many as six major waves of post-war immigrants had passed through some factories or sections of them. In this sense, the most recently arrived group represented not so much the infusion of alien workers into the local environment as the latest batch of slightly differentiated recruits in a factory whose labour experiences had been "coloured" by more than 20 years of the same process.

3. Managing the Work-force: Employer Strategies with Regard to Immigrant Labour

It verges on the obvious to state that employers viewed immigrants principally as an additional source of labour. For some, migrants came to represent almost their whole work-force. Irrespective of this, a number of crucial advantages were seen to derive from the availability of foreign-born workers in a period of economic expansion and full employment. By countering labour shortages, and thereby keeping the bargaining power of workers in check, immigration assisted employers in restraining wages. Such benefits were apparent from the outset. In 1946 the A.C.M.A. strongly advocated large-scale immigration while bemoaning the campaigns of communist controlled unions to raise wages, introduce equal pay for women and reduce standard hours of work.⁷⁹ Two years later the same body attacked union attempts to restrict the entry of

⁷⁹ *Canberra Letter*, December 7, 1946.

migrants into industry.⁸⁰

As immigration became progressively more significant to secondary industry, employers saw it as the logical solution to labour shortages, high levels of employee turnover and the growing resort to direct action by unions seeking over-award payments and other improvements in working conditions.⁸¹ The link between labour shortages, high turnover and the level of industrial disturbances was made explicit by companies such as B.H.P. in their submissions to the government for additional migrants.⁸²

Encapsulating the employer viewpoint, the New South Wales Employers' Federation stated:

Industry and government attempts to develop a full employment situation have expressly turned their goals away from a pool of unemployed. In its turn, this worthwhile achievement has lent untold bargaining strength to trade unions and workers everywhere, with the result that additional wage costs are enforcing inflation upon our economy. How much worse would this position be if something like a million migrant workers were not contributing their skills and experience within our workforce?⁸³

The precise impact of immigration on wage levels, inter-industry and occupational relativities and regional differentials is difficult to ascertain. There has been little systematic research into the question and what evidence exists is fragmentary. In assessing wage trends amongst male employees between 1954 and 1969 Horn argued that the shortage of professional, administrative and managerial skills, in combination with the large-scale immigration of blue collar workers, were factors explaining the observed

⁸⁰ *Canberra Letter*, October 22, 1948. In February 1950 employers sought a conference with the F.I.A. and the minister to discuss the union's restrictive outlook. See the *S.M.H.*, February 11, 1950, p.3.

⁸¹ See, for instance, statements made at the A.C.M.A. Annual General Meeting in 1955; and the New South Wales Employers' Federation, *Employers' Review*, December 1959 and March 1960.

⁸² *S.M.H.*, March 4, 1964, p.1. This link was also drawn by the Metal Trades Employers' Association (M.T.E.A.). See, for instance, *The Metal Trades Journal*, November 15, 1968.

⁸³ *Employers' Review*, July 1970, editorial, p.123.

widening in the gap between wage and salary earnings - a process which occurred in the face of countervailing forces such as the rise in educational levels and the equalizing tendency of the basic and total wage systems.⁸⁴ Isaac discerned a more specific effect on regional differentials:

Immigration also avoided the need for significant differential payments to labour in more outlying areas engaged in developmental works such as roads, electricity and dams. That is, less attractive because of the distance and amenities so that there would be a need to pay a premium if employers had to depend on a local labour force faced with adequate employment opportunities in cities. But immigrants especially those from countries with a lower standard of living and no social ties to a particular region, provided a less discriminating source of labour.⁸⁵

The preceding evidence is fragmentary and the authors demonstrate only a generalized awareness of the contribution of immigrants to particular industries, undertakings and occupations. Orthodox economists have displayed little interest in the impact of immigration on wage levels and earnings despite its profound effect on the supply of labour in the post-war period.⁸⁶ Collins has been less reticent. In keeping with his labour market segmentation hypothesis, Collins argues that "evidence tends to strongly support the hypothesis that immigration has led to the creation of 'low wage' segments, dominated by Southern European male and female workers."⁸⁷

The evidence in Table 7, the earnings surveys conducted by Blandy and the Australian Bureau of Statistics data referred to earlier confirm that southern Europeans do, on average, earn less

⁸⁴R.V. Horn, "Wages Drift and Salary Trends (Male Employees Australia 1954-1969)", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 12, no. 3, November 1970, p.344.

⁸⁵J.E. Isaac, *Wages and Productivity* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962), p.32.

⁸⁶This is in keeping with the indeterminate nature of their analysis of immigration's economic ramifications discussed earlier (see Chapter 2, Footnote 50). See also J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*, p.147.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p.187.

TABLE 7

AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: MALE AND FEMALE (1976)

Country of Origin	Numbers Employed	Average Wage \$
<u>Men</u>		
Australia	2,177,600	152
Britain	323,300	162
America and Canada	17,100	175
New Zealand	23,500	189
Italy	95,600	138
Greece	49,500	127
Yugoslavia	52,700	140
<u>Women</u>		
Australia	880,900	114
Britain	121,700	117
America and Canada	8,300	146
New Zealand	11,900	121
Italy	37,200	95
Greece	20,700	99
Yugoslavia	24,800	103

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Quoted in J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class", *op cit.*, p.74.

than their Australian, British and northern European counterparts.⁸⁸ The earnings distribution closely corresponds to the industrial and occupational distribution of workers by nationality discussed earlier. This supports Collins's view that southern Europeans are disproportionately concentrated in jobs characterized by inferior employment conditions. A moot point is the extent to which such disparities would exist in the absence of large-scale immigration. That is, has the additional supply of labour to particular sectors inhibited the bargaining power of labour, restricted the growth of earnings in absolute terms and widened differentials with other sectors? Given the need to weigh up a large number of variables including the growth rate of particular industries; the relative scarcity of labour in particular industries and occupations; rates of capital investment and the influence of immigration upon this; and the influence of historical/social factors (such as the arbitration system and the effectiveness of individual union strategies) on pay differentials it is hardly surprising that no conclusive evidence has been presented with regard to this question. Certainly, such an effect is intuitively plausible. It is consistent with Horn's findings⁸⁹ and employer arguments that immigration was essential to forestall "undue" competition for workers and union claims for higher wage payments, particularly over-awards. Further evidence on this question will be presented in Chapters 8 to 11. Among other things, it will be shown that *entrepôt* employers such as B.H.P. were acutely dependent on a steady supply of new recruits because the inferior wages and conditions they offered induced many migrants to seek work elsewhere once they became established. Nevertheless, this critical question demands further research.

The foregoing analysis has focused on generalized employer attitudes and strategies with regard to post-war immigration. However, the economic advantages of large-scale immigration were not confined to an increased labour supply and the inhibiting effect this might be expected to have on wage movements in particular

⁸⁸See Footnotes 70 and 71 of this Chapter.

⁸⁹R.V. Horn, "Wages Drift and Salary Trends (Male Employees Australia 1954-1969)", *op cit.*, pp.331-347.

industries, firms or occupations. There is also a need to examine employer policies at the work-place. The introduction of immigrant workers influenced the evolution of specific managerial practices designed to maximize the productive contribution of labour. In so doing, this elicited both organized and unorganized responses on the part of workers as they sought to modify such practices or escape their influence, even if only temporarily, through frequent job shifts. Such practices and the negative responses by workers to them, represent the core of industrial conflict - a central theme of this thesis.

Most of the management strategies were not directed at immigrants as such but rather represented the historical development of capitalist policies for disciplining and motivating the work-force. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that immigrant workers indirectly influenced the character and impact of management policies. This question will be examined in a general sense in the remainder of this chapter. Chapters 5 to 7 will examine the organized response of trade unions and immigrant workers, while Section 2 will attempt to integrate the reactions of specific unions and employers which highlight both the diversity of approaches adopted and unifying themes.

In developing his Marxist interpretation of Australian immigration Collins argued, "Immigration has not only provided an inexhaustible pool of cheap labour for Australian capitalism, it has also provided workers who are subject to the worst working conditions and greatest intensity of labour."⁹⁰ In a later paper he reiterated the *prima facie* case for this contention:

Unfortunately, there are not any systematic studies of the actual labour-process: the job hierarchy, conditions of work, intensity of labour etc. that would allow a full development of the labour market segmentation thesis. The evidence that is available, however patchy supports the notions of the secondary labour markets as having worse working conditions and greater intensity of exploitation, and of the 'Southern European-born' segment dominating this secondary labour market. The Jackson Report into the manufacturing industry of Australia found that 'Migrant

⁹⁰J.H. Collins, "The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration, *op cit.*, p.188.

workers predominate in those industries, plants and jobs where conditions are worst and where jobs are physically hardest' (Jackson Report, 1975:84). Similarly, a study of migrant women in the clothing industry testified to their appalling working conditions:

Descriptions of poor working conditions and of women being treated with no dignity abounded in our talks with these ladies. Conditions in many factories is [sic] stiffling; ventilation is poor and there are no lunch rooms, cool water fountains or other amenities. Women often have to sit at work benches to have lunch or eat it in the street (Brown and Storer, 1974:13).

A recent strike at Ford Broadmeadows, Victoria, by migrant workers hinted at the greater intensity of labour of these Southern European migrant-dominated secondary jobs. One of the Greek-born workers located the main source of worker discontent at the speed of the line: 'People are upset working on the line,' he said. 'They work like a horse because of the speed of the line. Conditions are not good. Foreman are always telling the men to hurry and hurry. Sometimes there are ten or fifteen men away from the line and the speed is still the same and production is just the same. We work like the horse in bad conditions.' The workers got six minutes tea time, and when people left to go to the toilet the line continued. Little wonder the labour turnover was 200 per cent in a year and the absentee rate 10 per cent. And, little wonder that migrant workers have a higher work accident rate than Australian-born workers.

A recent survey of over 1,000, mainly Southern European migrant women in the Sydney local government areas of Marrickville and South Sydney, has thrown some light on the workforce situation of this section of the industrial reserve army who occupy the 'secondary' labour market. For most of these women, job mobility was found to be minimal: 'There is no evidence from the women's job histories of any progression from one type of job to a more pleasant one.' Most of the women worked in semi-skilled or unskilled blue collar occupations, primarily as production-process workers and in the garment industry. Further, most of these women did not stay in their jobs for periods much longer than one year - a characteristic one would expect of the industrial reserve army. Systematic study is required to further establish the nature of 'secondary jobs' and of the Southern European migrant segment, male and female, who are increasingly represented in them.⁹¹

⁹¹J.H. Collins, "Fragmentation of the Working Class", *op cit.*, pp.74-75.

Crucial to Collins's analysis is the notion of the labour process - the struggle between workers and capitalism at the point of production - a term which has come into vogue following the work of Braverman, Marglin, Aronowitz, Gorz and others and is indicative of a renaissance of interest in management practices at the workplace on the part of Marxist researchers.⁹² This research largely aimed at incorporating the historical development of managerial philosophies and practices designed to extract a greater labour surplus within the broader logic of capitalism. Thus far, there have been a number of omissions from and problems with this work.⁹³

⁹²H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974); S. Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production", *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1974, pp.60-112; S. Aronowitz, *False Promises*, *op cit.*; A. Gorz, "Technical Intelligence and the Capitalist Division of Labour", *Telos*, no. 12, Summer 1972, pp.27-41; K. Stone, "The Origin of Job Structures in the Steel Industry", *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1974, pp.113-173; and D. Dunkerly, "Work and its Control in Industrial Society", *Social Alternatives*, vol. 1, no. 4, April 1979, pp.38-46.

⁹³For instance, while Braverman's work examines the impact of scientific management, later additions and refinements such as human relations, industrial psychology, job redesign and workers' participation have received scant attention. Sensitive critiques of the theory and practice of management such as that offered by Rose and Carey have remained largely untapped by research on the labour process. Braverman's work also tended to ignore the response of workers to management practices and imply that through the historical process of deskilling, the impact of technology was both unambiguous and inevitable. That this overstates the situation has been recognized by later American writers such as Gartman, Edwards and Aronowitz who (in a special issue of the *Insurgent Sociologist*) attempted to link emerging patterns of rank and file dissent and union organization with management strategies for manipulating the technological and social relations of work, labour market segmentation and the role of the state. In the United Kingdom, the work of Beynon and Nichols and Armstrong has documented the responses to management structure and strategies in particular work-places. It is worth noting that these practices are not confined to avowedly capitalist countries. Rose notes that the principles of scientific management were readily applied in the U.S.S.R. The exploitation of workers through piece-work payment systems (and their responses to this) in socialist Hungary has been documented by Haraszti. The evolution of such techniques under regimes eschewing capitalism is seen by Castoriadis (Cardan) and Baudrillard to derive from contradictions within Marxist economics notably the acceptance of the work/production ethic necessitating bureaucratic control structures and suppression of worker self-management. See (in order of reference) H. Braverman, *Labor and*

The techniques devised by capitalism in order to maintain and, where possible, extend its control over worker behaviour can be seen to operate on a number of levels.

At the societal level, the historical evolution and perpetuation of the Protestant work ethic has established and legitimated the importance of work both in the eyes of employers and, to a large extent, workers. Extending and reinterpreting the earlier writings of Weber and others, Anthony has attempted to document this process.⁹⁴ He argues that attitudes to work have been intensified in order to match the process of industrialization. In turn, prevailing attitudes to, and organization of, work influence patterns of leisure.⁹⁵ The commitment to work is reinforced through stigmatization of those groups or individuals unable or unwilling to undertake it.⁹⁶

The effort to motivate workers to adopt modes of behaviour consistent with employer goals is not confined to such broad social conditioning. Management have created a plethora of strategies

Monopoly Capital, *op cit.*; M. Rose, *Industrial Behaviour* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978); A. Carey, "The Hawthorne Studies: A Radical Criticism", *American Sociological Review*, no. 32, 1967, pp.403-416; *Essays on the Social Relations of Work and Labor: A Special Issue of the Insurgent Sociologist*, vol. VIII, nos 2 and 3, Fall 1978, especially articles by D. Gartman ("Marx and the Labor Process: an Interpretation", pp.97-108), R. Edwards ("Social Relations at the Point of Production", pp.109-125) and S. Aronowitz ("Marx, Braverman and the Logic of Capital", pp.126-146); H. Beynon, *Working for Ford* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973); T. Nichols and P. Armstrong, *Workers Divided* (Fontana, London, 1976); M. Haraszti, *A Worker in a Workers' State* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977); Paul Cardan, *The Meaning of Socialism* (Solidarity Pamphlet no. 6, London, July 1972); C. Castoriadis, "The Social Regime in Russia", *Telos*, no. 38, Winter 1978-1979, pp.32-47; and J. Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (Telos Press, St. Louis, 1975).

⁹⁴Like Baudrillard and Castoriadis (see previous footnote), Anthony concludes that the prevailing Marxist critique of capitalism accepts the necessity of the work ethic and in so doing shares more with the latter than many Marxists would like to imagine. P.D. Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* (Tavistock Publications, London, 1977).

⁹⁵For a discussion of this see S.R. Parker, R.K. Brown, J. Child and M.A. Smith, *The Sociology of Industry* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1975), chapters 13 and 14.

⁹⁶An obvious case in point is the unemployed. See K. Windschuttle, *Unemployment* (Penguin, Ringwood, 1978).

designed to reinforce this process at the work-place including the methods of scientific management, human relations and other techniques. As Bendix notes:

Apparently, such ideologies [of management] interpret the facts of authority and obedience so as to neutralise or eliminate the conflict between the few and the many in the interest of a more effective exercise of authority.⁹⁷

These controls are built into the very structure of the factory or work-place, leading Flanders to assert, "The source of power of management is not ownership as such but organisation."⁹⁸ The origins and exercise of managerial power have received greater attention from industrial sociologists and others interested in work-place behaviour in recent years.⁹⁹ Such studies demonstrate a delayed recognition of the long-term trend to more intensive usage and manipulation of workers on the part of management.

The precise techniques introduced in order to intensify patterns of work are at least as numerous as the variety of tactics devised by workers in response to them. The historical introduction of technology, bureaucratic control devices and elaborate job hierarchies aimed at maximizing worker productivity while at the same time securing managerial control and minimizing effective dissent has been partly documented by Braverman and others.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷R. Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (Harper and Row, New York, 1962), p.13.

⁹⁸A. Flanders, *Management and Unions* (Faber, London, 1970), p.135.

⁹⁹Apart from that work already cited see A. Fox, *Beyond Contract: Work, Power and Trust Relations* (Faber, London, 1974), chapter 7; J. Tedeschi (ed.), *Perspectives on Social Power* (Aldine Publishing Co., Chicago, 1974), chapter 4; R. Weisselberg and J. Cowley, *The Executive Strategist: an armchair guide to scientific decision-making* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1969), chapter 17; R. Hyman and I. Brough, *Social Values and Industrial Relations* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975), chapter 8; C. Crouch, *Class Conflict and the Industrial Relations Crisis* (Heinemann, London, 1977); and S. Clegg, *Power, Rule and Domination* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1978), chapter 3.

¹⁰⁰As noted in Footnote 93, there has been a tendency amongst early researchers (such as Braverman) to underplay worker responses to deskilling and bureaucratization and the emergence of new groups of highly skilled workers in strategic positions within industry. The growing militancy of professional and technical workers has led to controversy over the nature of class boundaries, consciousness and changes therein. For instance, the technological

Associated with this has been a number of more specific changes in the nature of work itself and payment systems. One group of changes relate to the timing of work and structuring of tasks in relation to this. Historically, there has been a gradual interrupted decline in the standard hours worked by labour in industry since about the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ This reduction indicated a shift away from the extensive usage of labour resources and towards the more intensive utilization of employees during working hours. The duration of physical exertion was reduced but the intensity of work grew in conjunction with the increasing division of labour. Work rhythms became increasingly tied to machinery as epitomized by assembly-line mass production. Job functions and their speed were closely monitored by evolving devices such as time and motion study.

The specialization of tasks accompanying mass production, while reducing some aspects of physical effort, tended to concentrate the mental and physical energies of workers into rapid repetitive processes. Even the reduction in average standard hours has been offset to some extent by the need of many manual workers to work overtime or take on second jobs in order to

determinism implied in Mallet's explanation of these developments has been effectively criticized by Gallie who also rejects the notion of instrumentation popularized by Goldthorpe *et al.* See H. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, *op cit.*; S. Mallet, *The New Working Class* (Spokesman Books, United Kingdom, 1975); S. Mallet, *Essays on the New Working Class* (Telos Press, St. Louis, 1975); D. Gallie, *In Search of the New Working Class* (Cambridge University Press, 1978); A. Gorz, "Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle", in A. Gorz (ed.), *The Division of Labour: The Labour Process and Class Struggle in Modern Capitalism* (Harvester Press, United Kingdom, 1978), pp.159-189; and J.E. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer and J. Platt, *The Affluent Worker* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968), Vols I and III.

¹⁰¹A study by Hardie offers not only a general account of the historical struggle for reduced hours in Australia but also more recent developments in the banking industry and other areas where the intensification of work patterns accompanying the introduction of new technology has induced further efforts by unions to reduce standard working hours in an effort to safeguard employment levels. See C. Hardie, *Struggles for Shorter Hours* (unpublished B.Ec. Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1978), especially pp.180-186.

supplement their income.¹⁰² The more recent introduction of continuous production technology requiring "round the clock" supervision has fostered the expansion of both shift-work and night work. Other measures which have enabled the more intensive usage of labour include early retirement, flexi-time, the employment of workers on a part-time basis and job-sharing arrangements.

It is difficult to assess the exact ramifications of these trends in terms of additional stress, economic exploitation, monotony, etc. Nevertheless, while reductions in the hours of work have commonly been seen to benefit labour there is evidence to indicate that modern industry and methods of production have had considerable adverse effects on the mental, physical and social well-being of workers.¹⁰³ Even early writers such as Durkheim, who regarded the increasing division of labour as an inevitable and not unwelcome process, questioned the supposed physical and physiological benefits to labour that were seen to accrue to it.¹⁰⁴ Research by Kornhauser, Ferguson and others has documented the detrimental

¹⁰²There has been little systematic investigation into overtime working in Australia. The extensive British study of Whybrew, however, probably offers a guide. In Australia, a number of craft unions have strenuously opposed habitual overtime not only because they saw it as counter-productive to efforts to reduce standard working hours and the physical well-being of members, but also because they believed overtime earnings were used by employers to counter claims for increased pay. At worst, they feared overtime would be counted as part of the normal earnings package to the detriment of workers. See, for instance, the *A.E.U. Monthly Journal*, May 1961, p.8 and December 1967, p.16. See also E.G. Whybrew, *Overtime Working in Britain: a study of its origins, functions and methods of control*, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Research Paper No. 9 (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1968).

¹⁰³The last decade has witnessed a growing interest in the adverse (both direct and indirect) effects of production methods on workers' health. Frequently this work has challenged the belief that work hazards are gradually being eliminated. See, for instance, L. Doyal with I. Pennell, *The Political Economy of Health* (Pluto Press, London, 1979), especially chapter 2; H.P. Dreitzel (ed.), *The Social Organization of Health* (Macmillan, London, 1975); J.M. Stellman and S.M. Daum, *Work is Dangerous to Your Health* (Vintage Books, New York, 1973); V. Navarro, *Medicine under Capitalism* (Croom Helm, London, 1976); and P. Kinnersly, *The Hazards of Work: How to Fight Them* (Pluto Press, London, 1978).

¹⁰⁴E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Free Press, 1947), book 2, chapter 1.

impact of assembly-line production and repetitive work processes on the mental well-being of workers.¹⁰⁵ There is also a growing body of information documenting the adverse implications of shift-work and night work on employee well-being and their general hostility to such arrangements.¹⁰⁶ Besides the apparent disruptive impacts on social and family life and deleterious effects on health, a number of more insidious by-products have been uncovered. For instance, studies have indicated that workers employed on night shift, afternoon shift and overtime are more likely to suffer an injury at work than those employed on day work.¹⁰⁷

Associated with efforts to maximize the productive efforts of labour during working hours have been increasingly sophisticated attempts to link payment to output. The plethora of schemes devised by management in this area can be conveniently summarized under the terms Payment by Results (P.B.R.) and Productivity Bargaining.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵A. Kornhauser, *The Mental Health of the Industrial Worker* (John Wiley, New York, 1965) and D. Ferguson, "A Study of Occupational Stress and Health", *Ergonomics*, vol. 16, no. 5, 1973, pp.649-663.

¹⁰⁶For evidence of overseas and Australian research on the growing incidence of shift-work, its adverse effects and employee/union hostility see M. Maurice, *Shift Work* (International Labour Office, Geneva, 1975); J. Carpentier and P. Cazamian, *Night Work* (International Labour Office, Geneva, 1977); P.H. Rogers, *Shiftwork in Industry* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, 1974); P. Skenridge, *The Effects of Shift Work on Workers and their Families* (unpublished Research Paper, University of Sydney, February 1975); "Twilight World of the Night Shift", *International Management*, November 1978, pp.18-25; C. Spencer, "Employee Attitudes to Shift Work", *Personnel Practice Bulletin*, vol. 26, no. 1, March 1970; pp.25-33; and "Alternative work schedules", *The Modern Unionist* (Trades Hall, Sydney), vol. 4, no. 7, October-December 1978, pp.35-47.

¹⁰⁷J.R. Brown, "Factors involved in the causation of weight-lifting accidents", *Ergonomics*, no. 2, 1958, p.117.

¹⁰⁸Other techniques such as sub-contracting which might usefully be included within this context are frequently treated separately. For a generalized discussion of such payment systems in the United Kingdom and Australia see G.D.H. Cole, *The Payment of Wages: A Study on Payment by Results under the Wage System* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1928); T. Cliff, *The Employers' Offensive: productivity deals and how to fight them* (Pluto Press, London, 1970); D.W. Oxnam, *Payment by Results* (University of Western Australia Press, 1958); D. Yerbury, "Productivity Bargaining in Australia", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 15, no. 1, March 1973, pp.25-40; and K. Jackson, *Payment by Results in Australia* (unpublished Working Paper, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1979).

Despite a strong tradition of union antagonism to P.B.R. payment systems in many countries, workers have frequently been drawn into such arrangements by the prospect of higher earnings for additional effort.¹⁰⁹ Union resistance has seldom proved even partially effective apart from strongly organized groups of craft workers. As with other methods of work intensification, evidence indicates that P.B.R. systems often have adverse effects on worker health by promoting stress, over-exertion and the cutting of corners with regard to safety. Such systems also tend to promote competition amongst workers, inhibit the potential for collective action and focus worker attention on monetary questions to the exclusion of other critical aspects of working conditions such as health hazards. Of course, workers have not passively accepted these practices and have attempted to counter their effect where possible by minimizing product quality (what Haraszti calls "looting") and therefore the time spent on each job cycle; through the imposition of collective output restriction occasionally formalized into a "darg" which employers must accept; or the holding of frequent stop-work meetings and/or strikes designed to interrupt production. Work intensification strategies must be examined in conjunction with the conflict that arises from worker attempts to counter their influence. These points will be expanded in later chapters.

Other techniques employed by management in order to exert greater influence over the production process and maximize output include minimizing break times, speed-ups, the use of personnel departments to ensure the workers selected are the most co-operative available with trouble-makers being excluded or eliminated; constraining worker organization or dissent where possible through

¹⁰⁹Evidence of such opposition during the nineteenth century in Australia was cited in Chapter 2. For instances of more recent hostile statements by unions see the Metal Trades Federation, *Incentive Systems Based on Output* (Daking House, Sydney, 1951); *The Sheet Metal Worker*, August 1953, p.10 and April 1954, p.13; and *The Boilermakers' Report*, April 1950, p.3 and October 1950, pp.37-38.

¹¹⁰M. Haraszti, *A Worker in a Workers' State*, *op cit.* Roy provides a sensitive analysis of this struggle in an American engineering firm. See D.F. Roy, "Efficiency and 'The Fix': Inter-group Relations in a Piecework Machine Shop", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1954, pp.255-256.

arbitrary dismissals and discipline; inducing greater worker identification with management goals by promoting an image of benevolent paternalism through the provision of welfare, social and sporting facilities; employing doctors and nurses on the premises to discourage "faked" illness and absenteeism and protect the company's interests in the case of injury or compensation claims; isolating recalcitrant individuals or groups of workers; and encouraging less threatening unions and their leaderships with privileged access to the work-place (by signing closed-shop agreements with preferred unions and so on). As can be seen, the strategies for maximizing production at the work-place are inextricably linked to those designed to inhibit, institutionalize, centralize and in other ways modify conflict responses on the part of workers and their representatives.¹¹¹

Given this lengthy, but necessary, introduction, the implications of such practices for migrant workers can now be examined.¹¹² As Collins indicates, there is considerable recent evidence to indicate that migrants, particularly those from southern Europe, the Middle East and South America, are concentrated in industries, occupations and firms which are characterized by low rates of pay (including a high incidence of contract labour; piece-work and bonus payment systems); poor working conditions and amenities; susceptibility to lay-off; the need to undertake regular overtime shift and night work; and dirty, monotonous and repetitive tasks of a strenuous and hazardous nature.¹¹³ There is also evidence indicating the wide-

¹¹¹Beynon and Nichols and Armstrong provide useful accounts of the ongoing nature of these struggles in two British factories. In Australia, some unions have continuously warned their members about management ploys and this will be explored in more depth in later chapters. See H. Beynon, *Working for Ford*, *op cit.*, especially pp.129-150; T. Nichols and P. Armstrong, *Workers Divided*, *op cit.*; and (for instances of local union warnings), *The Sheet Metal Worker* (journal of the S.M.W.U.), April 1954, p.13 and the *A.E.U. Monthly Journal*, September 1960, p.14.

¹¹²The relevance of some of the above points will be made clear in Chapters 7 to 10.

¹¹³Apart from the broad evidence already referred to (see Footnotes 70 and 71), there are a number of more specific studies worth mentioning. See, for example, Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.), *"But I Wouldn't Want My Wife to Work Here ..."* a study of migrant women in Melbourne industry (C.U.R.A., Fitzroy, 1976); F. Emery and C. Phillips, *Living at Work* (Australian Govern-

spread intimidation of migrant workers by foremen and other levels of management.¹¹⁴ The wages and conditions of female migrant workers are, as one would expect, considerably worse on average than those of their male counterparts and they appear to be particularly vulnerable to intimidatory tactics.¹¹⁵

While such research has often suggested that migrants are particularly vulnerable to manipulation at the hands of management there has been little if any attempt to systematically test this by

ment Publishing Service, Canberra, 1973); Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, *Unemployment: The Facts and Effects* (Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, Melbourne, 1972), p.19; D. Storer, "Migrants and Unemployment", in G. Crough, T. Wheelwright and T. Wilshire (eds), *Australia and World Capitalism* (Penguin, Ringwood, 1980), pp.46-52; Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales, *First Annual Report* (New South Wales Government Printer, Sydney, 1978), chapter 14; and the Jackson Committee, *Policies for Development of Manufacturing Industry, a Green Paper, op cit.*, vol. 1.

¹¹⁴Union officials and others have periodically alleged that some migrants have paid bribes to foremen in order to retain their jobs. Such allegations usually referred to recently arrived groups (and especially women) unaware of their rights and desperate for work. The current unemployment situation has increased the frequency of such complaints. See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, March 17, 1978 and April 5, 1980, p.3; *The Melbourne Herald*, February 15, 1979; and *The Australian*, January 10, 1979.

¹¹⁵In their study of migrant women in the clothing industry Brown and Storer note that, apart from the abysmal physical working conditions, "All women state that bosses are often abusive of workers calling them 'wop', 'bastards', etc. They often call girls (from lunch, etc.) by whistle. They time them in the toilets. Women are treated unpleasantly if they take days off sick or to mind their sick children and some factories dock 'bonuses' if women report a few minutes late. Often girls are threatened with the sack if they refuse to work overtime (even if they want to be with their families). Instances were given of girls fired just before long service leave was due and maternity leave is simply not considered by many factories (although the Commonwealth factory does). Many ladies complained that the hard work and hours meant there was little time to spend with their children." These findings were reinforced by a later and more extensive study. See K. Brown and D. Storer, *A Survey of Migrant Women in the Clothing Industry, op cit.*, p.11; and Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.), "But I wouldn't want my Wife to Work Here ...", *op cit.* For additional evidence see E. Cox, S. Jobson and J. Martin, *We Can Not Talk Our Rights: Migrant Women 1975* (New South Wales Council of Social Services and the School of Sociology, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1976); M. Power, "Cast-Off Jobs: Women, Migrants and Blacks May Apply", *op cit.*; L. Rubinstein, *Women and Shiftwork: A Study of Women Working at Night in Melbourne's Western Suburbs* (Western Region Council for Social Development, Footscray, June 1977); and "Factory Women", *Refractory Girl*, September 1977, pp.7-10.

comparing the situation with similar undertakings with a predominantly Australian-born work-force. Many of the migrant-dominated industries studied had always been characterized by poor conditions prior to the arrival of immigrants or grew up during the post-war period almost totally on the basis of a foreign-born work-force. Given this, such comparisons are difficult, if not impossible. What evidence exists on the attitudes (of similarly situated) migrant and Australian-born workers to their employment, management and unions indicates that the areas of consensus far outweigh any differences that could be ascribed to ethnicity or differentiation in managerial policy on this basis.¹¹⁶

While an historical study would seem to resolve this problem (and will be attempted in the case-study chapters), such research is hampered on a number of grounds. First, prior to the early 1970s there was little research on the interaction of immigrants with their work-place.¹¹⁷ As pointed out by Callus:

Just as researchers on immigration had ignored the work-place as an area of investigation so too had researchers in industrial relations and industrial sociology failed to look at the impact and effect of a multi-ethnic workforce has had on the workgroup and the organization.¹¹⁸

Second, as already noted, what research exists (largely questionnaire-based attitudinal surveys) tends to be very limited in scope. Johnston states:

¹¹⁶Many of the foregoing studies mentioned concentrated on the observable differences (language, culture and so on) between indigenous and foreign-born workers without systematically comparing attitudes to aspects of their employment situation which both groups shared. The implications of this with regard to unions will be taken up in Chapter 7. However, it is worth noting that one study of 400 indigenous and foreign-born workers which did take account of the broader situation has cast doubt on the validity of focusing on differences alone (even though the study was confined to government employees and cannot be generalized without some reservation). See R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, *"Well at least it's better than the Line ..."*, *op cit.*

¹¹⁷R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions*, *op cit.*, p.49.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p.52.

To the writer's knowledge there is so far no specific study which deals exclusively with immigrants' place in the occupational structure, their expectations, aspirations, disillusionment with the placement in a particular job, satisfaction with work, etc. Ideally such a study would be undertaken by every industry and profession in which immigrants work, as only then could any generalisation be drawn about the involvement, contribution and personal attitudes of immigrants in the Australian workforce.¹¹⁹

Third, as noted by Collins, there has been little, if any, systematic investigation of the strategies of management with regard to labour-force management including techniques for intensifying work patterns and minimizing worker dissent.¹²⁰

Thus, it is impossible to state categorically that post-war immigration fundamentally altered managerial practices and permitted employers in industries dominated by foreign-born workers to introduce or retain more exploitative work patterns than they would have otherwise been able to do. Nevertheless, this is intuitively plausible if only because the additional supply of labour kept the bargaining power of workers and their unions in check in a number of key industries. At the work-place level, the relegation of migrants to the worst jobs and favouritism shown to Australian-born workers in promotion undoubtedly encouraged a sense of isolation and frustration amongst migrants and reinforced ethnocentrism on the part of Australian workers. This was exacerbated, in many cases, by the formation of ethnic work-groups.

There is also reason to believe that the industrial inexperience of many migrants, language difficulties, and the fact that many arrived with few possessions inhibited temporarily, their engaging in industrial struggles and rendered them acutely susceptible both to intimidation by management (such as the threat of dismissal) and the attraction of additional earnings through overtime, shift-work allowances and piece-work or bonuses. In particular industries this was exacerbated by weak or insensitive union leaderships which did little to rectify such problems. Collins argues that employers

¹¹⁹R. Johnston, "The Immigrant Worker", *op cit.*, p.77.

¹²⁰J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*, p.189.

played on the language problems and ignorance of immigrant workers so they accepted conditions other workers (Australian-born or more established migrants) would not.¹²¹ This point will be explored later in the chapter.

Apart from such broad generalizations, some evidence may be presented with regard to a number of specific industries and questions. First, with regard to payment systems it can be noted that the post-war industrial expansion coincided with renewed efforts on the part of employers to introduce or extend output-based payment schemes.¹²² This bid had only a marginal effect on the metal trades. Over-award payments incorporating an attendance or output-based bonus did become common. This was predominantly a response to the inadequacy of industrial awards. In general, Australian employers did not pursue productivity bargaining with the same vigour as their American or British counterparts. Many Australian trade unions viewed piece-work with great hostility and opposed any move to increase its extent. Few unions registered the complaint that immigrants were more inclined towards piece-work than local workers.

However, in a number of other industries which came to be dominated by foreign-born labour and which were already characterized by piece-work and contract labour an effect appears to have been felt. One such industry was the clothing trades.¹²³ Here, the influx of industrially inexperienced non-English speaking workers was conducive to the "sweating" of labour by disrupting an already weak union organization, making organized output restriction more difficult and promoting competition amongst workers. In addition, the large number of small "backyard" operations were able to

¹²¹*Ibid.*, pp.188a-188b.

¹²²This move was officially encouraged by the government in the interests of greater efficiency. See Industrial Welfare Division, Department of Labour and National Service, *A Review of Wage Incentive Practice* (Department of Labour and National Service, Commonwealth of Australia, 1949).

¹²³Booth offers a brief elaboration of the extent and impact of piece-work in the clothing industry and its effect on migrant women. See A. Booth, *Women in Rags - a Descriptive Account of the Predicament of the Female Workforce in the Clothing Industry* (unpublished B.Ec. Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, November 1977), pp.144-150.

directly evade award requirements. Some factories were not registered with the Department of Labour and Industry although union officials claimed even registered factories were involved in paying below award wages. The enforcement of award rates was particularly difficult in the case of out-workers employed under a contract labour arrangement.¹²⁴ In July 1957 the New South Wales secretary of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union alleged that the employment of large groups of migrant workers in factories was enabling employers to evade award rates because these workers were unaware of their entitlements. He also pointed to the exploitation of home-workers.¹²⁵ Accusations of widespread "sweating", under-payment and even bribery by foremen have continued up to the present. If anything, the extent of these practices and the employment of migrant women as out-workers appears to have grown since 1975.¹²⁶

Another activity where the introduction of immigrants has been associated with a growth of contract labour arrangements is cleaning. Contract cleaning grew rapidly from the early 1960s to the stage where most city offices are now cleaned by contractors. Undertakings range from self-employed individuals up to large firms with several hundred employees. The industry is characterized by a high turnover of labour, contracts and businesses. Employment is frequently of a part-time or casual nature. The limited amount of capital required to start a business and the fierce competition amongst contractors has resulted in the "sweating" of workers, particularly migrant women. There is evidence of widespread under-payment, evasion of award requirements and disruption to union

¹²⁴This occurred in spite of legislative provisions designed to control contract labour. For instance, S116 of the New South Wales Factories, Shops and Industries Act (1962) prescribes that outdoor workers in the clothing trades must be licensed, "pyramid" sub-contracting is prohibited and factory workers are not permitted to take work home. There are also provisions in the Federal Clothing Trades Award covering contract labour arrangements. All these safeguards proved to be largely ineffective.

¹²⁵S.M.H., July 8, 1954, p.4.

¹²⁶The Women's Employment Rights Committee argued that while there are no definite figures, information suggested a sharp increase in the number of women so engaged over the last couple of years. The particular vulnerability of migrant women to underpayment was also noted. The Women's Employment Rights Committee, *Women and Unemployment* (Panacea Press, Sydney, 1979), p.16.

organization. These points will be elaborated on in Chapter 10.

In the building industry there is also evidence to suggest that immigrants have had an impact on the extent of contract labour arrangements. Sutton, in a study which examined the rapid growth of sub-contracting in the housing sector of the New South Wales building industry from the late 1950s onwards, argued this has had a significant adverse impact on union organization, worker solidarity, job regulation and employment security.¹²⁷ Insidious practices such as pyramid sub-contracting and the body hire system proved, as in the clothing trades, largely immune to either union action or government intervention. A large proportion of the work-force was foreign-born and, in the concrete, bricklaying and plastering fields there was a noticeable tendency for sub-contract groups to be composed of the members of a particular family or ethnic group.

The exact role of immigrants in promoting this situation is open to question. According to an employer spokesman:

The immigration policies of the post-war years contributed to the increase in the sub-contract nature of the building industry because many new Australians brought with them a fear of unionism and they formed themselves into sub-contract groups sometimes comprised entirely of members of their family ...¹²⁸

The Building Workers' Industrial Union (B.W.I.U.) disputed this view by arguing that migrants were no different to indigenous workers and constituted half the union's membership including many active unionists. Nevertheless, a number of union officials felt that some migrants' prior experience of lower standards helped employers break down working conditions. Quoting evidence relating to the incidence of piece-work/contract labour arrangements in the industry overseas and particularly Italy - a major source of migrant building workers - Sutton argued, "These two examples suggest an argument proposing that migrants' previous experience under sub-contracting may have led them

¹²⁷J. Sutton, *Contract Labour in the Building Industry* (unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1979).

¹²⁸J. Elder, liaison officer, the Master Builders' Association of New South Wales, lecture given at University of Sydney on April 30, 1976 (roneoed).

to work under such arrangements in Australia has some plausibility.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, his overall conclusion was that the growth of sub-contracting could not be explained simply in terms of the predisposition of immigrant workers. Rather, account had also to be taken of the evolving struggle between employers and unions, associated economic and technological changes and the particular attitude sub-contracting tended to induce amongst "subbies".¹³⁰ In particular, he saw the impact of employer policies - including their advocacy of large-scale immigration - to be more crucial than the supposed characteristics of foreign-born workers themselves. In this respect, it is important to note that Australian-born "subbies" were commonly hostile to trade unionism.

It would appear that in the clothing trades, cleaning and building industry the arrival of large numbers of additional workers with limited understanding of English or local working conditions and practices was advantageous to employers. A predilection for output-based payment on the part of immigrants was useful but not essential in this regard. While some migrants may have sought such arrangements, most had little choice in the matter. Even those nominally working as employees for sub-contractors in the building industry were frequently paid an "all-in payment" or set rate. Sutton's research indicated that such rates were often below those specified by the award and other statutory requirements.¹³¹ Likewise, for migrant women in clothing and cleaning, under-payment and the evasion of other statutory requirements (through partnership agreements of dubious legality and so on), plus the simple device of pushing workers to their physical limits were commonplace despite the requirements of S88E and F of the New South Wales Industrial Arbitration Act and other protective legislation.

Writing 70 years ago, J.R. Commons stated, "the position of

¹²⁹J. Sutton, *Contract Labour in the Building Industry*, *op cit.*, chapter 4, pp.21-22.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, chapter 4 and conclusion.

¹³¹For a further discussion of this and other aspects of the contract labour question see M. Gardner, M. Quinlan and J. Sutton, *Masters and Servants: The Resurrection of Contract Labour in Australia* (unpublished paper, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1980).

the contractor or sweater in the business in American cities is peculiarly that of an organiser and employer of immigrants."¹³² This link between immigrants and exploitative work systems is suggestive of the nature of some industries that migrants were (are) drawn into, the effects of rapid increases in the supply of labour and the characteristics of immigrants themselves.¹³³ It could be argued that the infusion of immigrants merely exacerbated any existing weakness in the position of workers. Thus the industries principally affected were those already characterized by piece-work, contract labour and union vulnerability. In other industries the effects have been more subtle. Some of these will be dealt with in succeeding sections of this chapter and Section 2 (Chapters 8-11).

Another area where migrants can be seen to be more susceptible to managerial manipulation than their Australian-born counterparts is with regard to health and safety at work. As already pointed out, many of the features of industry (shift-work, night work, physically demanding tasks of a specialized, monotonous and repetitive nature, machine pacing, the use of toxic and other harmful substances, the pressure of employment insecurity, intimidation by foremen, piece-work or bonus-payment systems, overtime and long hours, low pay and dangerous plant) place workers under a great deal of mental and physical stress. There is a growing body of evidence which indicates that migrants, and some national groups in particular, suffer from a higher incidence of occupational injuries (including mental illness) than the population in general.¹³⁴ This phenomenon can largely be explained by the

¹³²J.R. Commons, "The Sweating System in the Clothing Trade", in J.R. Commons (ed.), *Trade Unionism and Labor Problems* (Ginn and Co., Boston, 1905), p.318.

¹³³Most relevant to the present analysis is the association Commons saw between contract labour (and sweating) and disorganized and overcrowded labour markets. *Ibid.*, p.322.

¹³⁴In his first annual report the Commissioner for Community Relations asserted that "... in many industries twice as many overseas born workers are injured in the workplace as locally born." He attributed this to the work environment, industrial and cultural alienation. Surveys conducted by the Bankstown District (New South Wales) Section of the M.T.I.A. in 1973 and 1976 disclosed a higher incidence of lost-time injuries amongst some ethnic groups than was consistent with their work-force representation. However, no

types of work most migrants undertake in industries characterized by considerable physical hazards and oppressive social patterns of work organization.¹³⁵ While Australian-born workers in similar jobs are equally vulnerable - apart from those injuries resulting from an inability to comprehend safety warnings and migrant ignorance of industrial regulations which have allowed employers to cut corners with regard to safety (removing guards from machinery to increase output, ignoring provisions with regard to scaffolding, etc.) - foreign-born workers are often subjected to more intense

account was taken of the actual jobs performed by these workers and the 1976 survey revealed that the bulk of workers injured were rated as average or good by their employers. A study of injury in the building industry conducted by Fleming found that two ethnic groups had longer compensable absences. He attributed this to the severity of the injuries involved. In its first annual report, the New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission argued that non-English speaking migrants were concentrated in industries and occupations with a high incidence of work-place injuries. Surveying 400 compensation cases, the Ethnic Affairs Commission found that migrants suffered prejudicial treatment at the hands of doctors (even though particular ethnic groups were not over-represented in the contentious area of back injuries) and received appreciably lower compensation payments. The report also noted the absence of rehabilitation facilities for migrants and inadequate accident prevention (few firms used multi-lingual safety signs). See A.G. Grassby, *First Annual Report of the Commissioner for Community Relations* (A.G.P.S., Canberra, 1976); Metal Trades Industry Association (Bankstown District Section), *Survey of Workers' Compensation Payments (1973 and 1976)* (unpublished papers, M.T.I.A., Sydney); W.B. Fleming, "Minor Injury in the Building Industry (1951-1971)", *Symposium on Occupational Injuries: Published Proceedings* (The New South Wales Division of Occupational Health and Radiation Control, Lidcombe, 1973); New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission, *First Annual Report, op cit.*, chapter 15; and A. Jakubowicz and B. Buckley, *Migrants in the Legal System*, Law and Poverty Series, Australian Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975).

¹³⁵See previous footnote. Evidence relating to pattern of injuries in particular industries and occupations is fragmentary and inadequate. Nevertheless, statistics compiled by the New South Wales Workers' Compensation Commission indicate that sectors of the manufacturing industry (food, drink, heavy metal and engineering), mining, abattoirs, building and construction - all areas with a high proportion of foreign-born employees - have an incidence of injury far in excess of the average for the work-force as a whole. See New South Wales Workers' Compensation Commission, *Workers' Compensation Statistics and Reports* (Annual) (New South Wales Government Printer, Sydney).

intimidation.¹³⁶ There have been cases where migrants have been sacked at the first sign of injury, thereby encouraging workers to conceal their illness.¹³⁷ Employers have also attempted to minimize their compensation responsibilities through lump sum settlement or continuing to employ injured workers at a reduced capacity and pay.

Workers in general are accused of being "accident prone" - a term which conveniently absolves employer responsibility for injury. Nevertheless, certain ethnic groups (southern Europeans and Lebanese in particular) have been subjected to the pernicious, and usually unsupported, suggestion that they are abnormally "accident prone" and deliberately exploit the workers' compensation system by faking or exaggerating injuries.¹³⁸ In fact, evidence indicates that these groups suffer more injuries because of the

¹³⁶The communication problem has often been seen as the major reason for accidents. Nevertheless, while language difficulties may lead to spectacular, publicized and often extreme injuries, a recent study by the New South Wales Department of Labour and Industry eliminated language as a major factor in accident causation. See D.J. White, Central Planning and Research Unit, *Report on a study of industrial accidents for the year ended June 30 1978* (Department of Labour and Industry, New South Wales, 1979).

¹³⁷The sacking of injured workers has been noted with regard to women process workers suffering from tenosynovitis. Intimidation discourages injured workers from claiming compensation for fear of losing their jobs. In its submission to the New South Wales Inquiry into Occupational Health and Safety, the Greek-Australian Welfare Workers' Group stated that many immigrant women were harassed or dismissed when they reported health and safety deficiencies. The group also alleged that wife bashing, child abuse and marital breakdowns were increasing in immigrant groups because of conditions and stress of work, conflicting hours on shift-work and health problems related to work. Reported in the *S.M.H.*, May 9, 1980, p.9.

¹³⁸This is particularly prominent in the area of back strain with terms such as "Greek back", "Lebanese back" and "southern European back" achieving a certain vogue amongst employers, some doctors and members of the legal profession. Another crop of terms such as "functional overlay", "compensation neurosis" and "litigation neurosis" have grown up in response to the perceived link between the success of treatment and the stage of proceedings undertaken to secure compensation. The notion of "accident proneness" has drawn considerable criticism from researchers such as Ferguson. A balanced discussion of reactions to injury and compensation can be found in J. Lloyd and B. Stagoll, "The Accident Victim Syndrome", *The New Doctor*, issue no. 13, 1979, pp.29-34. See also D. Ferguson, "Accident Prone", in *Symposium on Occupational Injuries: Published Proceedings, op cit.*, pp.245-249.

heavy manual tasks they undertake; are stigmatized by doctors on the basis of ethnicity; receive, on average, lower compensation payments; and are less likely to rejoin the work-force owing to the severity of their injuries, prejudicial treatment and inadequate rehabilitation procedures.¹³⁹ It might be added that, as unskilled and poorly educated workers handicapped by language difficulties, these employees have little to offer but physical strength. Once this is impaired, they lose their market attraction to industry.

Cultural stereotyping merely serves to reinforce this situation. It has tended to draw attention away from the underlying causes of illness, namely the nature of the work itself, and provide a series of largely fictitious but persuasive explanations which mystify and legitimate the fairly rapacious exploitation of foreign-born workers.¹⁴⁰ The ready supply of replacement workers has permitted this process to go on with little overt questioning. In this sense, and given the ignorance of recently arrived migrants of their industrial and compensation rights, it would seem that foreign-born workers have proved to be more vulnerable to exploitative practices and indifference on the part of employers. Further, they have been hampered in their struggles either to eliminate hazardous conditions or receive equal treatment upon injury. Few unions have the resources, expertise or have demonstrated sufficient inclination to effectively counter this situation.

The foregoing has indicated a number of specific instances where employers (consciously or unconsciously) modified their practices to take advantage of immigrant workers. A more comprehensive assessment is hampered by the absence of studies

¹³⁹See Footnote 134 and J.I. Balla and S. Moraitis, "Knights in Armour: A Follow Up Study of Injuries after Legal Settlement", *Medical Journal of Australia*, August 22, 1970, pp.355-361; S. Encel and C.E. Johnson, *Workers' Compensations Redemption, Settlement and Rehabilitation* (School of Sociology, University of New South Wales, December 1972); J. Ellard, "The Problems of the Migrant", *Medical Journal of Australia*, November 22, 1969, pp.1039-1043; and *The Injured Ethnic* (a collection of papers presented to a seminar sponsored by the Centre for Urban Research and Action, A.N.Z. Society of Occupational Medicine and the Australian Greek Welfare Society, March, 1977).

¹⁴⁰Similar stereotyping of immigrant workers has been disclosed overseas and generally discounted by research. See, for instance, G.L. Lee and K.C.T. Wrench, *Accidents are Colour Blind: Immigrant Workers and Industrial Accidents; A Pilot Study* (Community Relations Commission, Birmingham, April 1977).

monitoring the impact of the introduction of foreign-born workers from the late 1940s onwards. What early research exists indicates that employers were largely concerned with minimizing friction between local and overseas-born employees where this was likely to disrupt production.¹⁴¹ Modifications to placement policies and other areas of personnel management were essentially pragmatic and *ad hoc*. The techniques for dealing with an increasingly multi-ethnic work-force evolved in response to perceived problems and gradually accumulated understanding of the conditions under which foreign-born workers could organize and act collectively.

Early arrivals were generally directed to those sections of factories and those jobs least popular with indigenous workers. The initial acceptance of small numbers of migrants was succeeded by the sometimes gradual/sometimes rapid displacement of local workers from other areas as the foreign-born component of the work-force grew. This process led to the ethnic stereotyping of work whereby certain jobs came to be seen by Australians as the legitimate (if inferior) preserve of migrants.

For the most part, there is little evidence to suggest that management took much interest in migrants upon engagement apart from minimal attempts at induction by a few large companies at the outset of the immigration programme. For induction, employers came to rely on the informal information networks built up among non-English speaking migrants whereby more established workers imparted their knowledge of job requirements and conditions to recent arrivals. Informal networks amongst particular kinship or national groups also absolved the need of many firms even to advertise for labour with

¹⁴¹A study by Grant Stevenson found evidence of friction in the early stages after immigrants were employed and increasing stereotyping of jobs as the preserve of foreign-born workers. He reported that there was little apparent close contact between immigrant and indigenous workers. In 1957 a survey of large undertakings employing a preponderance of migrants conducted by the Department of Labour and National Service disclosed that employers were more than satisfied with foreign-born workers and there was little evidence of friction either between immigrants and Australian-born workers or amongst different nationalities of the former. See K. Grant Stevenson, "The Employment of New Australians", *Bulletin of Industrial Psychology and Personnel Practice*, vol. VIII, no. 2, June 1952, pp.27-34; and D.L.N.S. unspecified report to the C.I.P.C., 1957.

new workers being sponsored by an existing employee - an extension of the chain migration system. By the mid 1950s this process was most apparent in the motor vehicle building industry.¹⁴² Given the high level of turnover in many undertakings there was a continuous demand for replacements. Overall, employees were judged on their ability to work rather than their nationality.

Although the federal government made some provisions for English teachers to visit factories the majority of employers showed little interest in this or in establishing their own schemes for this purpose before 1972.¹⁴³ Even then, the growth of such facilities was hardly dramatic.¹⁴⁴ What courses were operated generally ran on a part-time basis outside working hours and during lunch breaks. Given the taxing nature of the jobs on which migrants were employed, and the fact that in many migrant families both parents worked alternate shifts (one supervising children while the other worked), it is hardly surprising that when courses were offered attendance was frequently poor.¹⁴⁵

The failure to offer supports such as language tuition to migrant workers may be linked to pragmatism on the part of some employers and not just apathy - although the latter was undoubtedly a significant reason. Language difficulties inhibited the ability of migrant workers to readily find slightly better jobs elsewhere in the factory or outside it. This formed part of a deliberate strategy of splintering the work-force to promote production and

¹⁴²The operation of such networks in a number of car factories was readily admitted by management as were the high levels of labour turnover (100 per cent per annum) being experienced. See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, October 8, 1955, p.2.

¹⁴³This is well illustrated by the *Employers' Review* which hardly, if ever, mentioned the matter prior to 1970. Growing interest shown after this time appears to have been sparked by government initiatives in this area and that of employment discrimination. See the *Employers' Review*, November 1970, January 1973, April 1975 and August 1976.

¹⁴⁴The Jackson Committee, *Policies for Development of Manufacturing Industry, a Green Paper, op cit.*, vol. 1, p.7.

¹⁴⁵This was well evidenced in a study by Murray who also found some migrants were illiterate in their native tongue. See Jane Murray, *Report on English Classes Provided by Industry in the South Sydney Region* (South Sydney Community Aid, 1974).

minimize organized conflict. Collins suggests employers have positively contributed to keeping ethnic groups isolated.¹⁴⁶ Jakubowicz and Buckley state:

They [management] have pursued a policy generally of putting members of the one ethnic group together in the same section of the industry, with a bilingual overseer for that group ... Some employers on the other hand, pursue a policy of fragmenting groups so that they are unable to communicate with anyone.¹⁴⁷

There is evidence to support the view that employers in the motor vehicle building industry and elsewhere attempted to split up concentrations of one ethnic group especially when this had been seen to lead to collective action on the part of such workers or intergroup rivalry over the allocation of overtime.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the rapid labour turnover in certain sections of factories (sometimes exceeding 200 per cent per annum) made the formation of such groups inevitable because only then could vacancies be filled. The ability of such groups to conduct anything more than sporadic rebellions against managerial authority depended largely on the support given to them by their union - this being essential to broaden issues and bring the work-force together in a united front. In a number of industries, there is disturbing evidence indicating that employer and union leaderships collaborated to suppress rank and file dissidence, maintain worker apathy by excluding them from central pay negotiations and delimit the area of bargaining over conditions of work through bureaucratic institutional arrangements.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶J.H. Collins, *The Political Economy of Post-War Australian Immigration*, *op cit.*, p.197.

¹⁴⁷A. Jakubowicz and B. Buckley, *Migrants in the Legal System*, Law and Poverty Series, Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975), p.42.

¹⁴⁸M. Quinlan, *Management Policy and Industrial Relations* (unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1975), p.23; R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, "Well at least it's better than the line ...", *op cit.*; and R. Corden, *Study of the Namco Factory, Sydney* (unpublished paper, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1977).

¹⁴⁹These arrangements included formal closed shop agreements, grievance procedures and tacit agreements to isolate militant shop stewards or rank and file elements. For evidence of this in the motor industry see M. Quinlan, *Management Policy and Industrial Relations*, *op cit.*, pp.30-50 and Appendix 5. Other evidence will be cited in later chapters.

The situation where employers could regard immigrant labour as a highly expendable resource necessitating only minor changes in industrial practice changed temporarily after 1972 when a number of large companies became intensely interested in their migrant workforce. Callus argued that the genesis of this interest lay in boom economic conditions and unprecedented demand for labour.¹⁵⁰ Coupled with this was the decision of the government to cut the immigration intake rather than meet employer demands for additional labour. The resulting acute labour shortage was reflected in the amount of overtime worked; an upsurge in the level of industrial action taken by industrial workers in pursuit of improved working conditions (with migrants playing a prominent role in some disputes); and labour instability (labour turnover and absenteeism). Callus contends that the latter, in particular, came to be seen as a major problem in the manufacturing sector:

Prior to 1973-4 with a steady supply of labour from immigration and reasonably predictable market most companies were able to balance their production targets while absorbing the cost of a steady level of turnover ... The incidence of labour instability that began to plague employers from late 1972 could not be ignored by management because it was on a scale threatening their ability to meet production demands and realise sales. The desperate search for ways to overcome labour problems led to a plethora of schemes such as job enrichment, worker participation, and profit sharing aimed at achieving a more stable and committed workforce.¹⁵¹

The heavy reliance on migrant labour made these workers the vogue of interest. Management readily accepted the view of social workers and welfare agencies who argued that the primary problems of non-English speaking workers were their ignorance of employment matters; language difficulties and cultural differences which resulted in different values and patterns of industrial behaviour; and the problems of settling into a new country.¹⁵² These problems

¹⁵⁰R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions*, *op cit.*, pp.54-58.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁵²Prominent expounders of this view included social workers such as Roy Richter, Helen Hurwitz and those associated with the Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission.

were seen to be the underlying reason for labour instability amongst foreign-born workers. The solutions proffered included the provision of more elaborate induction procedures, English classes held during working hours, social welfare apparatus to counter ignorance and insecurity, greater sensitivity to cultural differences on the part of managers and foremen, and the appointment of roving ethnic welfare officers or internal bodies to deal with migrant problems in the work-place. In essence, the central thrust of the schemes was the application of human relations ideas - better communication, promoting group awareness and sympathetic leadership - to a multi-ethnic work-force. The attempt of reformers to encourage the development of ethnic identity and better communication amongst workers, ran counter to previous management practice in many instances.¹⁵³ However, as Callus argues, the schemes had the advantage of being relatively cheap to implement and did not necessitate a fundamental concession of either additional control or better conditions to workers. Nor did the proposed changes in any way disrupt management's prime goal of increasing production.¹⁵⁴

Nevertheless, such attractions proved to be illusory. The causal link between cultural alienation and labour turnover was never clearly established. Indeed, the post-war experience had always indicated that, placed in similar jobs, foreign-born workers were likely to prove to be more stable employees than their Australian-born counterparts. There is reason to believe that the underlying reason for labour instability was widespread dissatisfaction with pay and working conditions at a time when alternate employment was readily available - even if the shift involved only a minimal increase in earnings - rather than cultural alienation. In his study of two typical experiments at a car factory and wire products plant, Callus found that neither was able to reduce turnover. He concluded:

Just as the Leyland management had ignored the more fundamental concern of the workforce with poor working conditions, pressure of work and low pay, so too the

¹⁵³R. Callus, *Migrant Workers: Their Employers and Unions*, *op cit.*, pp.141-142. Callus argues social workers such as Richter were naive in not seeing the very rational reasons behind deliberate mixing up of ethnic groups.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.65.

management at AWI had failed to consider these factors as a possible contributor to labour turnover and absenteeism.¹⁵⁵

Callus did not deny that many foreign-born workers had communication problems. However, he suggested it was unlikely that migrants "... unable to bear the isolation, indignities and frustration in particular plants would find a more supportive environment elsewhere."¹⁵⁶

The firms which initiated these schemes were generally large industrial concerns. Most, if not all, had previously acted as *entrepôt* employers and were acutely dependent not merely upon foreign-born workers but, more particularly, recent arrivals (see earlier comments). The minimal employment conditions they offered in comparison with other employers meant that reduced immigration hit them worse in a period of labour shortage. This qualification does not invalidate Callus's general conclusion but does explain why certain companies more readily adopted the "cultural alienation" prescription. It was their only method of action apart from major improvements in pay and working conditions.¹⁵⁷ For most, and especially B.H.P., any change in the latter direction would have constituted a breach of previous industrial policy whereby the solution to labour shortages was viewed more in terms of government-sponsored immigrant recruitment than employee retention.

In desperation, a number of firms had also undertaken vigorous recruiting programmes aimed at securing labour locally. This effort proved to be both expensive and ineffective. The response amongst established migrants and indigenous workers was poor. Of those who

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p.126. Both factories studied were located in Sydney. A much larger group of firms were surveyed in the course of the research.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p.151.

¹⁵⁷It is interesting to note that in the motor industry those firms (Ford and G.M.-H) which chose not to pursue the Leyland approach significantly lifted pay and other working conditions at this time. In fact, the average pay level at these companies was superior to that offered by Leyland which was suffering from a declining market share and associated economic difficulties. See M. Quinlan, *Managerial Policy and Industrial Relations*, *op cit.*, p.39.

did start a very high proportion left within a short time of their engagement.

The economic recession, incorporating a significant decline in the manufacturing industry and rapidly rising levels of unemployment, caused management interest in "migrant" schemes to evaporate just as quickly as it had arisen. This heralded a return to the more traditional labour management policies outlined earlier. Indeed the prolonged nature of the recession reversed the displacement process and made it possible for *entrepôt* employers to obtain labour locally.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, the vulnerability of migrants to a recession was quickly revealed. Not only were they concentrated in the industries and occupations most severely affected, but their prior dependence on informal information networks left them ill-prepared to deal with government bodies. A government-sponsored study of workers retrenched from the clothing industry revealed that only half had ever heard of the Commonwealth Employment Service, and most of the migrant women found it extremely difficult to cope with this crisis.¹⁵⁹ There also appears to have been an increase in illegal and intimidatory practices.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

Employer responses to immigrant labour can only be understood within the context of the government programme they helped to shape. From the very outset, employers had been strong supporters of mass immigration. Moreover, the government sought, as far as possible, to deploy immigrants in such a way as to best meet the needs of industry.

For employers, immigration provided a ready and less discriminating source of labour. It moderated the wage pressures which might otherwise have accompanied prolonged and uninterrupted

¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, car factories, etc. have continued to welcome newly arrived immigrants including Vietnamese refugees. See *The Weekend Australian*, October 6-7, 1979.

¹⁵⁹ Reported in *The National Times*, week ending October 21, 1978, p.19.

¹⁶⁰ Including immigrants paying foremen in order to retain their jobs, award evasion, sexual intimidation of migrant women and arbitrary dismissal. See Footnote 114.

economic growth. Employers took advantage of other characteristics of the immigration process. Their responses, however, were essentially dictated by short-term considerations (rather than an all-seeing programme) designed to maximize economic efficiency and labour exploitation. Any attempt to intensify work patterns had to be based on the acquired experience of immigrants' industrial behaviour, an understanding or recognition of workers' ability to circumvent such strategies and other factors influencing the perceived importance of economic rationality. Each of these points will be dealt with in turn.

First, with regard to the impact of immigration on the workplace policies of management, a number of effects were noted. Immigrants provided an abundant source of recruits for the least desirable jobs. In so doing, they permitted the evolution of a stratified pattern of labour absorption and utilization. Upon arrival unskilled and semi-skilled migrants would be relegated to the worst paid, dirtiest and most physically demanding and least secure jobs in terms of a factory, employer and industry. This work, located at the bottom of the job hierarchy in particular activities such as steel-making, automobile manufacturing, building and construction (both public and private) became the domain of recent arrivals. The jobs were easily obtained because large firms in these industries suffered continuous labour shortages.

Entrepôt employers provided working conditions inferior to those prevailing elsewhere. This encouraged a high level of turnover as migrants got settled and were able to shift to slightly better jobs within the same occupational classification. This limited progression did not present a major handicap to *entrepôt* employers so long as there was a new batch of immigrants. It took recent arrivals some time to establish themselves to the extent that they could search for better paid jobs. In fact, the hiring and personnel policies of these firms became geared to losing a substantial number of employees within six to twelve months of their engagement. Even higher levels of turnover could be tolerated in sections where the job learning cycle was very short.

In the early phase particularly, the government bolstered the placement and retention of immigrants in the basic industries where *entrepôt* employers were generally located. Displaced persons

were contracted to work for a particular firm or undertaking for a period of two years. A similar but looser arrangement applied to most assisted non-British migrants. This was but one feature of the close collaboration between government bodies and employers. The government was not able to direct assisted British migrants. At the same time the recruitment of British tradesmen was crucial to employers like B.H.P. In an effort to tie them down upon engagement B.H.P. provided further passage assistance and housing. Irrespective of this the recurring shortages of skilled tradesmen in industry generally ensured a rapid drift away from *entrepôt* employers.¹⁶¹

While such arrangements did not apply to migrants who paid their own fares, the mobility of southern Europeans was inhibited by their general lack of education, recognized trade qualifications and ignorance of local employment practices. These groups frequently built up their own informal hiring networks which management, in turn, came to rely on. Just as chain migration of particular ethnic, regional and kinship groups provided a ready source of new immigrants, so word of mouth communication brought such labour to the factory gates. Informal networks also provided an introduction to work for the migrant prior to engagement - an important consideration for those from non-industrial backgrounds.

If ethnic identity was important in obtaining work it also presented management with both advantages and problems. In some respects it was easier to administer work through a foreman or leading hand who was in charge of workers from the same country or region. Cultural/national identification could be used to reinforce traditional patterns of authority. However, even Australian-born foremen were often able to exceed their official powers in obtaining the acquiescence of immigrant workers. Migrant

¹⁶¹This is perhaps the reason why B.H.P., unlike many other employers, maintained a vigorous level of apprenticeship training within its establishments in addition to its overseas recruitment of tradesmen. As with their unskilled counterparts, recently arrived immigrant tradesmen tended to be relegated to the least desirable jobs within their classification. While this work did not entail the same level of relative deprivation, tradesmen were noticeably less tolerant given their prior industrial/union experience.

women were especially susceptible to intimidation in the form of threatened arbitrary dismissal given their inexperience, sexist oppression and isolation from unions. These points will be taken up in succeeding chapters.

Problems associated with ethnic work groups led by a foreman from a similar background included the possibility that rivalry might develop between different work groups. If the group was not entirely made up of one nationality this might lead to allegations of favouritism in the allocation of overtime or more desirable jobs. Both of these scenarios did, in fact, eventuate, especially the former. More disturbing, however, for management were the instances where ethnic groups formed the basis for collective industrial action. Again this point will be discussed more fully in later chapters. The management response to this was to break up such groups and distribute the workers around. This had the added advantage of at least temporarily impeding collective mobilization generally. Nevertheless, management was neither always aware of, nor always able to forestall, the formation of ethnic work groups. It is also naïve to assume that all levels of management had identical perceptions. Furthermore, dispersal was not always desirable. Such groups did help counteract the most common individual methods of workers expressing their dissatisfaction, namely that of changing jobs or regular absenteeism. In work areas least able to retain workers, the modicum of stability imparted by ethnic identity might be desirable if not inevitable. Management had to evolve a policy suitable for its specific situation.

Another instance of pragmatism can be seen in the separation of migrants and Australian-born employees within the plant. To some extent this represented a consequence of the relegation of migrants to the least skilled jobs. Some employers also fostered this division in the early stages of immigration in order to avoid friction between foreign-born and local workers. Such a split, aggravated by favouritism shown to indigenous workers in promotion, undoubtedly helped to divide the work-force and make factory-wide industrial action more difficult. It is unlikely that the results of this policy were entirely foreseen at the outset.

Certainly, as has been suggested, management attempted to extract as much as possible from migrant labour. Evidence has been cited on

the exploitation of migrant vulnerability to intimidation, the less than stringent attitude employers were able to adopt with regard to safety and their skimping on compensation payments to foreign-born workers injured on the job. It has also been suggested that there may well be an association between immigration and the growth of work systems based on piece-work or contract labour in some industries. Again, more evidence will be presented with regard to these questions in Part Two. Nevertheless, it may be postulated that whilst such tactics were directed at maximizing economic efficiency the overall approach was far from systematic.

It would appear that the attitude of Australian employers to migrant labour was essentially unsophisticated. The availability of abundant immigrant labour obviated the need for highly developed management practices. Employers took little interest in induction, relied on informal networks for obtaining replacements, used simple methods of labour control and showed no real enthusiasm for on-the-job English classes. With regard to the latter, management saw no need for language ability to be imparted to non-English speaking migrants. It was not essential for their work, restricted the push for promotion and justified the favouritism shown to locals.

As noted above, from 1972 onwards *entrepôt* employers suddenly developed an interest in migrant workers. The economic boom and a cutback of immigration led to acute labour shortages and rates of labour turnover so high as to be economically damaging even to companies geared for an unstable work-force. Rather than paying better wages, a solution was sought in helping migrants to acclimatize to their industrial surroundings through culturally sensitive social welfare programmes and the provision of English classes. Suddenly the need to encourage identification and commitment on the part of migrant workers was seen to be critical. The principal attraction of these cheap policy packages proved to be illusory. They were promptly dropped when the onset of the recession reduced labour requirements and rising unemployment curbed labour instability.¹⁶² These events demonstrated that the problems

¹⁶²In a number of cases the schemes, or remnants of them, continued because of the momentum built up or because management perceived other advantages in their operation such as more effective control of the work-force. Chapters 10 and 11 will present some

of migrants at work were not primarily cultural or language-related but a consequence of poor working conditions - an important theme of this thesis. They also demonstrate that management's appreciation of the attitudes and behaviour of a foreign-born workforce were far from complete. Even so, the schemes were a useful cosmetic device given the growing level of government pressure on migrant issues.

At this point it is worth noting that the employer responses described above are very similar to Montgomery's assessment of the reactions of American employers to immigrants at the turn of the century (see Chapter 1). That is, the management of U.S. industry generally relied on quite unsophisticated, arbitrary and even tyrannical methods for selecting, training and controlling immigrant labour.¹⁶³ Few showed any interest in elaborate payment systems or other motivation/control techniques.¹⁶⁴ This attitude began to change just prior to World War One amidst boom economic conditions, massive labour instability and increased levels of industrial action on the part of immigrants. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that the welfare schemes initiated by U.S. management under the auspices of "Americanization" bear a strong resemblance to the sudden enlightenment of Australian *entrepôt* employers between 1972 and 1975.

Returning to the Australian situation, it can be argued that the effective exploitation of migrant workers also posed some long-term problems for local industry. It may well be that the relatively low level of capitalization (and obsolete nature of much existing equipment) which the Jackson Committee saw as characteristic of Australian manufacturing industry, constituted a partial consequence of the availability of migrant labour.¹⁶⁵ In conjunction with high levels of tariff protection, this made new capital investment less

evidence with regard to this. Nevertheless, the main impetus for the schemes had disappeared and almost all have since become redundant.

¹⁶³D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, *op cit.*, pp.36-38.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p.37.

¹⁶⁵The Jackson Committee, *Policies for Development of Manufacturing Industry*, *op cit.*, vol. IV.

pressing until the onset of recession in 1975 revealed major structural inefficiencies in Australian industry. The decline of some industries and gearing up of capital investment by others since this time rendered a large number of semi-skilled and unskilled migrant workers redundant.

In the same way, the failure of many employers to invest in the training of skilled workers during the post-war period because of the availability of migrant craftsmen established a pattern of dependency.¹⁶⁶ In the absence of large-scale immigration, industry has been faced with a shortage of some types of tradesmen. The scarcity was exacerbated by the drift of craftsmen to more lucrative areas of employment not utilizing their skills.¹⁶⁷ Inertia on the part of employers and institutional arrangements have made it difficult to overcome this problem. Rather than train additional apprentices or induce those who have deserted the trade to return, the main response has been to seek more immigrants. In a period of general labour surplus such attempts have proved to be controversial.

Overall, it can be argued that the arrival of immigrants has not induced anything but a highly pragmatic, unsophisticated and, in some ways, short-sighted approach to labour management by employers. Further, immigrants, like any other group of workers, have not passively accepted employer attempts to extract as much effort as possible from them. Forms of resistance ranged from tacit work restriction, labour turnover and absenteeism to sabotage and spontaneous rebellions. As already indicated, frequent job changes and regular absenteeism were a common mechanism by which immigrant workers expressed their dissatisfaction. In part, this represented a systematic shift away from *entrepôt* employers - with the worse working conditions - by succeeding waves of immigrants. In part, it reflected the high mobility of workers with little or no attachment

¹⁶⁶Montgomery notes that the arrival of skilled immigrants also served to discourage American industry from training apprentices. See D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America*, *op cit.*, p.37.

¹⁶⁷In turn, this may indicate that low wage "pockets" were not restricted to unskilled/semi-skilled occupations. Evidence on the tradesmen shortage - its origins and consequences - will be presented in Chapter 6.

to a particular employer during a period of economic prosperity. Such instability, while disruptive to some extent, did not critically threaten efficient management so long as ready sources of replacements were available.

The involvement of immigrant workers in work restriction was influenced by a number of factors. For those from pre-industrial work backgrounds the regulated nature of machine-paced work cycles must have seemed particularly onerous. Traditional breaks were impossible and migrants either had to learn the conventional escapes used by local workers or evolve their own. As particular industries became the domain of foreign-born labour the latter alternative assumed greater importance. In some cases, restriction was organized collectively under the auspices of a migrant leading hand or with the collaboration of a foreman. More commonly, all levels of management were the enemy of such practices. Instances of the nature of work restriction along with sabotage, strikes and other forms of protest initiated by immigrants will be elaborated upon in Chapter 7. Questions to be dealt with will include whether, overall, migrants were more passive than indigenous workers and the effectiveness of unions in organizing migrant workers.

This chapter has argued that while Australian employers vigorously supported a large immigration programme, they did little to soften the immigrant's first experience of work in Australia. A sophisticated international labour recruitment machinery was mismatched with *ad hoc* work-place employment policies and deprived working conditions. Undoubtedly, the inconsistency between the two helped lay the basis for extensive migrant dissatisfaction with working for *entrepôt* employers. It is the nature of immigrant responses to the deprivation of work which is the theme of much of this thesis.

The minimal efforts by industry to retain labour may seem paradoxical in the face of its continuing need for additional migrant workers. In fact, the inconsistency between employer demands for immigrants and their inability to retain them is "evidence". It can only be evidence to show that employers, and *entrepôt* employers in particular, calculatngly used the infusion of migrant labour to depress wages and working conditions. No other explanation is

consistent with rational behaviour on the part of management. To devote such resources to recruitment while denying them to labour retention demonstrates a clear choice or preference which may be plausibly linked to a logical desire to save on direct labour costs while permitting the government to bear the direct costs of recruitment. The political acceptability of ethnically diverse migrant recruitment in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s rested heavily not merely on the generalized labour needs for industrial growth but on the specific recruitment and industrial policies of a number of large and influential companies.

CHAPTER 5

RESPONSIBLE STATESMEN OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT: THE AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOR COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES?
RESPONSES TO POST-WAR IMMIGRATION

Something of the background to trade union attitudes to post-war immigration was outlined in Chapter 3. Union acceptance of the programme was conditional and far from unanimous. It was achieved partly because of fears of invasion, partly through trust in a Labor government and its commitment to full employment, partly because of the continuance of economic growth after the war, and partly because of the enthusiasm of a number of influential union officials who were able to rally support to a proposal traditionally viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility.

During the war the A.C.T.U. had assumed a prominent role on government advisory bodies connected with industrial production and the war effort. Its secretary and later president, A.E. Monk, was a strong supporter of immigration from the outset. He was instrumental in promoting Council's conditional support for the programme in 1945. At the biennial congress held in this year it was made clear that support was contingent upon intending migrants being fully advised of the true position in Australia with respect to employment, housing and social security. The government was also to maintain a close consultative relationship with Council.¹

The key consultative body was the A.C.T.U. interstate executive headed by Monk and including R.A. King, another keen advocate of the immigration plans.² King was secretary of the Labor Council of New South Wales, the largest of the A.C.T.U.'s state branches. In practice, the executive wielded more influence than its formal powers would have suggested. It was able to sell immigration to an unenthusiastic Congress on the basis of defence considerations, the absence of a large local pool of unemployed and the growing labour

¹This resolution (passed unanimously) was based on an executive recommendation which pre-empted a more hostile motion from the Victorian branch of the Liquor Trades Union. Source: Minutes of the A.C.T.U. Congress held in 1945.

²For evidence of King's sentiments see the *S.M.H.*, May 22, 1946.

requirements of expanding domestic industries.

As part of their investigation on behalf of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee (see Chapter 3), Monk and King had discussed the possibility of transferring union membership and the recognition of trade qualifications with European union leaders. They reported that the transfer of membership and benefits was only viable in the case of Britain, and then only when reciprocal agreements were reached by the individual unions concerned. Nevertheless, all union centres agreed to co-operate with the exception of those who saw no great potential for emigration by their countrymen.³

In June of 1946 Monk stated:

I express the hope that ultimately our full target of 70,000 migrants a year will be reached. Through its own organs and various publicity channels the trade union movement of Australia plans to enlist the aid of every Australian worker in welcoming accepted migrants as co-workers and fellow citizens assisting to build up the Australian democratic institution. They will realize that Australia's immigration programme is not a haphazard venture, and that those who come here are to be absorbed on a sound vocational and economic basis.⁴

Imparting these fine sentiments to union leaders and rank and file workers could have been no easy matter.⁵

Below the level of rhetoric, a number of government measures helped engender union co-operation. First, the enactment of specific regulations governing the recognition of tradesmen in the metal and electrical trades - the Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act - allayed the fears of a powerful body of craft unions that migrants might be used to dilute trade skills or circumvent the apprenticeship system. This will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

³The report of Monk and King was contained in Appendix A of the *Report of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee to A.A. Calwell, Minister for Immigration Presented on February 27, 1946* (Department of Immigration, Australian Government Printer).

⁴Quoted in the *S.M.H.*, June 5, 1946.

⁵For contemporary reports of the government's attempts to convince unions and the latter's reactions see the *S.M.H.*, August 12, p.2 and August 24, 1946, p.2.

Second, the government accepted the A.C.T.U.'s offer to assist in an advisory capacity on the implementation of the immigration programme. Leading union officials, including Monk, Broadby and King, were appointed to the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council and the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council.

Third, the government's commitment to full employment and, to a lesser extent, Calwell's vigorous pursuit of "White Australia" allayed the fears of most non-communist unions that immigration would be used to dump cheap labour in Australia. "White Australia" was still seen to be important by a number of unions, most notably the large Australian Workers' Union (A.W.U.) which was not affiliated to the A.C.T.U.⁶

The abovementioned ground rules helped establish union acceptance of immigration in the absence of a prolonged period of unemployment. However, it cannot be assumed that this acceptance on the part of unions was either continuous or universal. The recent depression experience had instilled pessimistic expectations among

⁶Recognizing the A.W.U.'s size and its influential and independent position within both the union movement and the A.L.P., Calwell appointed the union's general secretary, Tom Dougherty, to the Immigration Advisory Council - the only individual union leader to be represented on this body. Dougherty generally played a conciliatory role within his union on the immigration question. Nevertheless, the A.W.U.'s acquiescence was far from assured. In February 1950, for instance, the union's federal convention labelled as "industrial conscription" plans to introduce 40,000 British migrants who would be required to do work allotted to them by the government as long as they remained in government hostels. (Reported in the *S.M.H.*, February 8, 1950, p.1. See also the *S.M.H.*, February 10, 1950, p.3 and *Tribune*, February 11, 1950.) Like many other unions, the A.W.U. reacted strongly to the 1952 recession. In July the federal executive called for a halt to all but British immigration (*S.M.H.*, July 3, 1952, p.2). At the federal convention held in the following year another motion hostile to immigration was passed. Secretary Dougherty alleged that competition for jobs such as cane cutting was creating hostility between "old" and "new" Australians and compelling the latter to scab (*S.M.H.*, January 28, 1953, p.3). While there was a high proportion of Italians engaged in North Queensland sugar cane cutting the union made no move to revive its prewar practice of negotiating quota limits on the number of non-British migrants employed (see Chapter 2). A motion calling for a complete halt to immigration was defeated at the 1954 convention. Delegates (including Dougherty) criticized immigration at both the 1957 and 1958 conventions but motions specifically dealing with the issue were not debated. See B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.31; and *The Sheet Metal Worker*, February 1958, p.10.

many union officials. Their early cautious reactions were often based on fears that concessions hard won during and just after the war could be lost in a renewed bout of unemployment. These fears also manifested themselves in a strong informal preference for British workers who were imbued with similar trade union traditions, and in a deep suspicion of non-British migrants.

Calwell and Monk made judicious use of the A.C.T.U.'s earlier commitment to refugee immigration on humanitarian grounds to gain acceptance for the displaced persons scheme. After a somewhat shaky start the experience gained from displaced persons and other early arrivals, in conjunction with strategic re-alignments amongst unions, created an environment more receptive to large-scale non-British migration. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.), to which the A.C.T.U. affiliated, endorsed migration from backward to advanced economic regions at its 1953 and 1955 congresses. The A.C.T.U. executive argued that this bound congress not to renounce immigration *per se*. Yet, by and large, the union movement's position remained one of cool acceptance interspersed with impassioned calls for restriction whenever unemployment rose above minimal levels.

The trade union movement is not homogeneous. Divisions based on politics, membership skill and industrial strategy permeate the union movement. Many of these differences contributed to variations in union attitude towards immigration. Notwithstanding these differences, it is possible to delineate prevailing policies and attitudes by observing the proceedings of the A.C.T.U., and of the State Labor Councils. The remainder of this chapter is concerned to describe how two prominent union centres - the A.C.T.U. and the Labor Council of New South Wales - treated the general question of post-war immigration, and how they responded to problems raised by particular unions relating to migrants.

1. THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

As the central organization of industrial labour, the A.C.T.U. provides an indication of the trade union movement's formal responses to immigration at the national level. Policy decisions often represent a temporary and tenuous compromise reached between

competing groups. In the period 1945 to 1975 the A.C.T.U. generally supported large-scale immigration although this support could be described more as a decision not to obstruct the programme. Congress only affirmed the policy in 1945 and 1951 and then only in a lukewarm fashion. If the Council executive was inclined to guarantee A.C.T.U. compliance so long as government safeguards remained intact, the attitude of individual unions was often more hostile. Much of the A.C.T.U. business arose in the form of motions questioning government policy and demanding improved safeguards. Table 8 suggests which issues were seen to be most pressing.

Employment, Housing, Living and Working Conditions

Almost two-thirds of A.C.T.U. Congress business related to material questions such as employment, housing, living and working conditions. This pre-occupation was conditioned by deep-rooted fears that migrants would exacerbate job shortages and the housing scarcity, and depress social and work-place standards.

Housing was one of the most pressing problems facing unions and government in the immediate post-war years. Residential construction had stagnated since the depression and demobilization of the armed forces created a shortage which migration could only aggravate. For the decade after 1945 unions were to show special interest in the housing situation (see Table 8). Thereafter, the number of Congress motions dealing with the issue declined and there is little mention of the matter after 1963. This indicates some ebbing of union concern with the question. In contrast, concern over job shortages, welfare and working conditions was to persist.

At the 1949 Congress, the most intense opposition arose from communist-influenced unions such as the Australian Railways Union (A.R.U.), A.E.U., F.I.A. and Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union (O.P.D.U.). They claimed mass immigration would flood the labour market, depress wages and living standards and worsen the shortfall in accommodation. In contrast, a number of moderate to conservative led unions emerged as the keenest supporters of immigration. These included the South Australian branch of the Australian Tramway and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association, the Australasian Society of Engineers (Victorian branch) and the

TABLE 8

MATTERS RELATING TO MIGRANTS RAISED IN FORMAL MOTIONS

AT A.C.T.U. CONGRESS, 1945-1975

Issues	Number of Times Raised
1. The economic situation and unemployment	31
2. Housing	17
3. Living standards, wages and conditions	14
4. Difficulty or organizing migrants in trade unions	10
5. The political attitudes of migrants	6
6. Hostel conditions	5
7. Immigration authorities exaggerating job opportunities to migrants	4
8. The adequacy of migrant trade qualifications	2
9. Indentured labour	2
10. Victimisation of migrants	2
11. The assimilation of migrants	2
Total	95*

*This table only refers to those motions raising problem areas in connection with immigration. The total of issues exceeds the actual number of motions because some motions raised several issues simultaneously. Source: A.C.T.U. records held by the F.I.A., Sydney.

Australian Boot Trade Employees' Federation who all proposed motions expressing support for the government's policy on both defence and economic grounds.⁷ A fierce debate ensued with respect to the introduction of displaced persons and the measures taken to avoid the arrival of migrants with pro-fascist or anti-trade union attitudes. While this matter was noted in the final resolution, the key concerns to emerge were those of employment and housing. Congress affirmed its view that migration must be linked to the availability of jobs and housing. It called for a restriction of the intake on the basis of the poor economic outlook and dearth of housing.

This Congress set a precedent whereby, while the principle of immigration was accepted, the appropriate level of intake was subject to continuous debate. Whenever unemployment rose above minimal levels there were widespread calls for a complete cessation of immigration. This occurred in 1952-53, 1957 and 1961-62. On these occasions, A.C.T.U. president Monk was forced to bow to Congress pressure despite his belief that immigration could not be turned on and off like a tap. In 1954 Monk had gone so far as to publicly urge an increase in the migrant intake - a highly unusual step for a union leader and one certainly not emulated by any delegate to Congress.⁸

The Congress debates in 1952-53, 1957 and 1961 reflect accurately the slender basis upon which union support for immigration rested. In 1952 a special All Australian Trade Union Congress was convened to consider the rapidly deteriorating economic situation. This was the first time there had been widespread unemployment since 1941-42. The climate of debate was made even more tense by employer proposals that quarterly cost of living adjustments to the basic wage be scrapped and recent arbitration court decisions with regard to union margin claims be disallowed. The crisis also occurred at the peak of Industrial Group activity. The Groups made a concerted push to capture the A.C.T.U. but failed in the absence of support from Monk who, while conservative in outlook, refused to aid either side.

⁷A.C.T.U. Congress, 1949, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁸Reported in the *S.M.H.*, September 9, 1954, p.7.

Irrespective of their bitter disagreement over many issues, both the right and left wings of the union movement expressed hostility to immigration. Motions proposed by conservative-led unions such as the Federated Clerks' Union (F.C.U.), Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation (V.B.E.F.) and F.I.A. (now controlled by Industrial Groups) called for a temporary cessation of all immigration apart from those workers whose special skills were still in demand. The F.C.U. federal council also advocated that immigration be directed to the rural sector rather than to manufacturing industry. Motions emanating from communist influenced bodies including the Sheet Metal Workers' Union (S.M.W.U.), B.W.I.U., A.R.U., Queensland T.L.C. and the Victorian branches of the Builders Labourers' Federation (B.L.F.) and Federated Liquor and Allied Trades Union (F.L.A.T.U.) were even more extreme. Many expressed unequivocal opposition to mass migration because it was designed to create unemployment and depress wages and working conditions.⁹ A number also argued that immigration was placing excessive demands on the social infrastructure.¹⁰

In an attempt to appease hostility the A.C.T.U. executive placed a recommendation of its own before congress. This affirmed the need for a vigorous immigration policy but called for a temporary restriction of the intake to British migrants, essential skilled personnel and family reunion.¹¹ While cleverly worded, the motion did not placate the mood of congress. The Miners' Federation

⁹1952 All Australian Trade Union Congress (A.A.T.U.C.) *Motions on Agenda*. The F.L.A.T.U. (Victorian branch) and Queensland T.L.C. called on the government to grant free repatriation to unemployed migrants wishing to return to their homelands.

¹⁰The A.R.U. and S.M.W.U. both raised the question of hospital and school accommodation in this regard. The New South Wales Teachers' Federation took a different tack and demanded that the government should increase expenditure on education to meet the additional requirements brought about by immigration. This motion was repeated at the 1953 and 1955 Congresses but without success. In later years the federation launched a strong campaign on behalf of special educational programmes for immigrant children. This was linked to its desire to maximize employment opportunities for its members. The 1977 Teachers' Federation annual convention overwhelmingly resolved that Saturday School for migrant children would be boycotted because it was seen as a token gesture following the cutback of federal funds. See the *S.M.H.*, December 21, 1977, p.2 and January 4, 1978, p.10.

¹¹A.A.T.U.C. Special Congress, Minutes of Meeting, September 3, 1952, p.3.

delegates (Parkinson and Comerford) moved an amendment expressing hostility to passage assistance and calling for an end to all immigration other than family reunion and the repatriation of unemployed migrants.¹² A further amendment proposed by Timber Workers' Union delegate Weir urged that the reference to British and skilled immigration be dropped from the executive recommendation.¹³ This compromise was ultimately adopted by 236 votes to 131 after the Miners' Federation amendment was narrowly lost (182 votes to 172).¹⁴

Given the depth of feeling, Monk's rearguard action had not entirely failed. The final motion was stronger than he would have desired; however he had been under pressure from the executive itself to take a strong stand with the government.¹⁵ The left was unsuccessful in its bid to have the A.C.T.U. renounce its representation on the C.I.A.C. and C.I.P.C. The A.C.T.U. president was therefore still able to use his position on both bodies to keep the executive fully informed of developments and head off potential criticism.

Only a limited report of executive deliberations ever reached congress and then in such a bland manner that it was unlikely to cause controversy.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the notion that the A.C.T.U. was participating in government and influencing its decisions helped assure union officials that immigration would not be used against the interests of labour.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp.10-11. In the same year the federation's central council had called for a complete halt of immigration until all resident workers were employed and unions had campaigned for an increase in skill margins. See the *S.M.H.*, July 21, 1952, p.2 and August 10, 1952, p.4.

¹³A.A.T.U.C. Special Congress, Minutes of Meeting, September 3, 1952, pp.9-10.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁵See the *S.M.H.*, September 2, 1951, p.1. For further evidence of Monk's views see the *S.M.H.*, September 5, 1952, p.2.

¹⁶One former A.C.T.U. delegate described Monk's reports to congress as being like "getting hit in the face with a wet fish" - a rather colloquial expression but one quite in keeping with Monk's bureaucratic manner.

When there was no pressing crisis, motions criticizing immigration were often side-stepped by the executive's ordering of topics for discussion. By placing such motions at the end of the agenda it was almost certain that congress would have no time to deal with them.¹⁷ Thus, motions raised by the O.P.D.U., B.L.F., B.W.I.U. and Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union (A.M.I.E.U.) at the 1953 congress were conveniently avoided.¹⁸ The B.L.F. motion, which called for an immediate implementation of congress's 1952 resolution, was particularly irksome to an executive which had already accepted government measures to restrict the intake.

Renewed unemployment immediately prior to the 1957 congress resurrected union fears. Five separate motions calling for a cut-back in immigration were placed on the agenda.¹⁹ A recent public statement by Monk that unemployment should not interfere with immigration also drew criticism.²⁰ In its report to congress, the executive denied that Monk's statement contravened A.C.T.U. policy. It reminded delegates that congress had adopted the I.C.F.T.U.'s international migration programme of 1955 which firmly upheld the need for further immigration.²¹ The executive also rejected a

¹⁷This tactic was also mentioned by Luckham. See B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.18.

¹⁸A.C.T.U. congress, September 1953, *Motions on Agenda*, item 39.

¹⁹As in 1952-53, this represented the tip of the iceberg of opposition that can be found in the formal decisions of individual unions at the national, state and regional level. In May 1956, for instance, the Victorian branch of the A.R.U. called on the government to halt immigration (reported in *Newsweekly*, May 9, 1956). Evidence of widespread hostility can also be found at the work-place level. Such hostility was not always linked to the existence of unemployment. On April 26, 1959 the Williamstown Naval Dockyard Shop Committee called a mass meeting (including delegates from Garden Island) which resolved, among other things, that immigration should cease. Minutes of Williamstown Naval Dockyard Shop Committee, April 26, 1959, resolution number 19.

²⁰A.E. Monk, "Migrants in Industry", address to the 1957 *Australian Citizenship Convention* (Government Printer, Canberra, 1957). In this address, and others made to the 1956 and 1958 conventions, Monk had emphasized the economic advantages of immigration, its contribution to employment and the need to maintain a consistent intake level. See also A.E. Monk, "Our Second Million Migrants - How Should We Plan to Absorb Them", *Australian Citizenship Convention 1956* (Government Printer, Canberra, 1956); and A.E. Monk, "Immigration and Employment", *1958 Australian Citizenship Convention* (Government Printer, Canberra, 1958).

²¹A.C.T.U. *Executive Report to Congress*, 1955, pp.35-36 and I.C.F.T.U. *Resolutions*, Vienna, May 20-28, 1955, pp.29-30.

proposal by the Melbourne T.H.C. that immigration be suspended apart from United Kingdom commitments.²² However, union officials were still sensitive to the pockets of unemployment Monk felt could be ignored.²³ In March 1958, A.C.T.U. executive was pressured into reaffirming the need to ensure that immigration was geared to local labour market requirements.²⁴

The 1961 recession evoked another bitter reaction from unions at congress. Twelve affiliated bodies presented motions expressing opposition to the present level of immigration.²⁵ Responding to this pressure (and renewed criticism at the 1963 congress), the A.C.T.U. executive urged the Prime Minister to make a temporary review of the migrant intake in 1962 and 1964.²⁶ Union hostility lapsed following the restoration of full employment and did not re-emerge for more than a decade. Nevertheless, the notion that immigration must be tied to the capacity of the economy to absorb newcomers remained firmly ensconced as provision (m) of A.C.T.U. economic policy.

The decision of the federal Labor government to restrict immigration somewhat pre-empted the hostility that might have otherwise occurred when unemployment rose rapidly in 1975. Moves by the Liberal government to increase the intake have been opposed though without the fervour of earlier times. In 1977 the executive issued a policy recommendation on population and immigration which

²²Reported in the *S.M.H.*, February 15, 1957, p.5.

²³The New South Wales secretary of the Timber Workers' Union, for instance, publicly called for a cut in the intake of unskilled migrants. See the *S.M.H.*, August 22, 1957, p.5.

²⁴A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decision, March 1958. See also the *A.C.T.U. Bulletin*, May 1957, p.33.

²⁵A.C.T.U. congress, 1961, *Motions on Agenda*. The bodies involved were the Queensland T.L.C., A.E.U., Boilermakers' Society (B.S.A.), S.M.W.U., F.L.A.T.U., B.L.F., Municipal Employees' Union, Postal Workers' Union, A.M.I.E.U., Clothing and Allied Trades Union and the Plumbers' and Gasfitters' Union. The B.W.I.U. and the S.M.W.U. also publicly accused the government of misleading prospective migrants about employment and housing opportunities in Australia. See *Tribune*, April 24 and May 17, 1961.

²⁶A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decisions, 1962 and 1964. Only the South Coast Labour Council placed a hostile motion before the 1963 congress and there were few motions after this date.

reaffirmed the A.C.T.U.'s commitment to full employment. It rejected the government's argument that immigration would solve employment problems rather than exacerbating them. While acknowledging that the recruitment of some highly skilled persons might be justified, the executive was critical of immigration on other than humanitarian grounds.²⁷

Racial, National and Ethnic Preference

The A.C.T.U. had endorsed "White Australia" in 1930 but the policy was never reaffirmed during the post-war period. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, the left wing of the labour movement had become openly critical of Australia's racist immigration policy. During the post-war period it made increasing demands for government and union action against all forms of racism.²⁸ Nor did any right-wing or moderate union call upon congress to endorse "White Australia". Even so, the absence of statements by union leaders was probably more an indication of their desire to avoid public debate on such an emotive issue than a renunciation of this mode of immigration restriction. The A.W.U., which was a vocal supporter of "White Australia", and might well have generated debate, did not affiliate to the A.C.T.U. until 1967.²⁹ So long as "White

²⁷A.C.T.U. executive recommendation to the 1977 congress.

²⁸In 1945, for instance, the Queensland T.L.C. asked Immigration Minister Calwell to censor racist articles on Chinese workers which were appearing in *Smith's Weekly*. Queensland T.L.C. minutes of meeting held on April 4, 1945.

²⁹The A.W.U. was one of the few (only?) unions to publicly endorse "White Australia" in the post-war period. It was probably unique in having a rule excluding Asians, Africans and South Americans from its ranks. The 1955 federal convention endorsed a motion from the executive council which registered the A.W.U.'s opposition to alleged employer and communist party attempts to secure the free entry of non-European labour. General secretary Dougherty told the conference that "The White Australia policy must be proudly held forward as our national right and one we will never give up under any circumstances. There is no need for apology for this policy. Any Australian government which attempts to break it down or alter it will receive dismissal the moment it goes to the poll. Two organizations in Australia today believe it can be broken down. One is the New Fascist organization known as the Santamaria Movement and the other is the Communist Party" (reported in the *S.M.H.*, January 25, 1955, p.5). Irrespective of the widespread support for "White Australia", even the A.L.P. was unwilling to adopt such a forthright stance. The party failed to publicly affirm

Australia" remained a federal government policy there was little need for discussion in any case.³⁰

Congress never formally renounced "White Australia" although the A.C.T.U. gradually evolved a policy of unequivocal opposition to discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic background. This did not occur until the mid-1970s. Before this, direct references to racism were cut out of A.C.T.U. motions. The chief victims of this censorship were motions from communist-led unions. For instance, in 1949 a B.W.I.U. motion on indentured labour beginning, "Congress recognises and supports the principle that irrespective of race, all workers should have equal rights and opportunities ..." was largely incorporated in the congress resolution on immigration. However, the reference to "race" (along with "exploiting class" and "slave market") was deleted.³¹ Given this failure to denounce racism, it is hardly surprising that Monk should have some trouble explaining to Asians that union objections to wholesale immigration were entirely economic.³²

Nevertheless, congress was strongly opposed to the economic exploitation of non-Europeans who were imported for special occupations or resident in Australian protectorates. It demanded that, in all cases, these workers be accorded the rates and conditions prevailing amongst workers of European descent. In 1965 the A.C.T.U. executive condemned proposals to import indented [sic] labour for remote projects in north-western Australia which

its commitment to "White Australia" at the triennial conference held in Hobart. At the A.W.U. federal convention held in 1956 some delegates expressed regret at this failure on the part of the A.L.P. "White Australia" received unanimous endorsement from the convention (see B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.31).

³⁰In August 1953, Monk mooted that Japan was pressing Australia to permit migration of its citizens. The pressure, however, never assumed a scale that would have demanded attention by congress. See the *S.M.H.*, August 5, 1953, p.4.

³¹A.C.T.U. Congress, 1949, *Motions on Agenda*, p.18, and *Decisions*.

³²*S.M.H.*, September 4, 1952, p.1.

were being advocated by Western Australian Employers' Federation.³³ The executive labelled these moves as similar to those in South Africa which helped establish the "objectionable apartheid policy".³⁴ In 1977 congress resolved that Christmas Island workers should be accorded coverage under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Again, it condemned the payment of lower wages to these workers as "economic apartheid".³⁵

The A.C.T.U. also expressed its opposition to the exploitation of Aboriginal workers. In 1951, following a report from the North Australian Workers' Union, a resolution was passed condemning the plight of Aborigines employed in the Northern Territory cattle industry.³⁶ An executive investigation followed the congress decision. Similar complaints were revived regularly. In 1969 the Queensland T.L.C. asked congress to press the government for laws making it a criminal offence to discriminate in employment on the basis of race or colour. At the next congress an executive recommendation calling for an end to all wage discrimination was adopted.³⁷

Such statements were not merely bland expressions of paternalism. Nor did they simply reflect a self-protection motive. They were indicative of a slowly emerging critical stance on racism

³³In its circular the Western Australian Employers' Federation criticized the widespread growth of overaward payments. In appealing for greater resistance to these increases, it suggested that employers contract with workers in other countries to work in the state for a specified time. The employer would meet the costs of travel to Australia on the condition that workers were liable to repay the fare if they left the employer prior to the expiry of the contract. This scheme was seen to satisfy immediate needs without recourse to the established work-force of migrant intake. The plan was reminiscent of proposals vehemently opposed by unions in the nineteenth century. Reported in *Tribune*, April 7, 1965.

³⁴A.C.T.U. *Bulletin*, January-June 1965, p.11. See also minutes of the A.C.T.U. executive meeting, November 18-19, 1965. A motion expressing these sentiments was adopted at the 1965 congress.

³⁵A.C.T.U. *Policy Decisions 1951-1978* (Proposed Consolidation), p.126.

³⁶A.C.T.U. Congress, 1951, *Motions on Agenda and Minutes*.

³⁷A.C.T.U. Congress, 1971, minutes. Five unions had proposed motions dealing with the treatment of Aborigines while the Seamen's Union presented a motion condemning all racism.

by a body that had traditionally attempted to side-step the issue. Motions dealing with the discriminatory treatment of Aborigines and their lack of political and land rights were placed before almost every congress held between 1947 and 1975 by no fewer than 24 individual affiliates. Those bodies with left-wing leadership such as the Queensland T.L.C., Newcastle T.H.C., O.P.D.U., B.W.I.U., Waterside Workers' Federation (W.W.F.), Boilermakers' Society (B.S.A.), A.E.U./A.M.W.U., New South Wales Teachers' Federation and B.L.F. led the agitation. Moreover, the motions frequently generated considerable debate, especially after 1961. Ironically, these debates were generally more lengthy than those devoted to immigration issues. Further, the A.C.T.U. executive made decisions relating to Aborigines in 1951, 1958, 1966, 1971 and 1972. The impact of such formal actions is open to question. Nevertheless, the union stance on Aborigines significantly predated the growing public awareness that developed in the 1970s.

The A.C.T.U. also became increasingly vocal on international matters. In particular, apartheid in South Africa drew criticism. The matter was raised by unions at every congress held between 1963 and 1975.³⁸ The unions involved were largely those also concerned with the treatment of Aborigines.

These attacks on racism held no immediate implications for immigration. However, in 1974 Leyland Australia took advantage of Prime Minister Whitlam's disavowal of "White Australia" to ask permission to recruit Filipino tradesmen for its Waterloo factory. The A.C.T.U.'s response was hardly enthusiastic. In March 1974 it agreed to assess the possibility of the proposal so long as the work intended for these migrants was found to be skilled.³⁹ The latter provision was apparently designed to ensure that large numbers of unskilled Asians were not introduced. Even this agreement was further qualified. A.C.T.U. president, R.J. Hawke, stated that the union movement "will not tolerate a situation where if a company cannot attract local people to an unsatisfactory job with inadequate

³⁸A.C.T.U. Congress minutes and *Motions on Agenda*. The A.C.T.U. executive, itself, made initiatives on the issue in 1960, 1964, 1972 and 1976.

³⁹*S.M.H.*, March 3, 1974, p.1.

remuneration in a dehumanizing industry, it can resort to other sources."⁴⁰ This position, though not unjustified given the poor wages and conditions prevailing in the Waterloo factory, also reflected pressure from unions still bound to the "White Australia" principle. A small number of Filipinos did arrive but any large influx was cut short by the closure of the company's Waterloo operations in 1975.

Rapidly rising unemployment caused a general cutback in immigration although Filipinos and other Asian migrants began to arrive in larger numbers. The bulk of these were skilled. The A.C.T.U. did not direct criticism at them specifically but did express opposition to further immigration in general. An exception to this was the arrival of thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s. The bulk of these lacked industrial skills or had professional qualifications which were unrecognized. A number had arrived illegally. They were obliged to take on unskilled factory jobs at a time when such jobs were most scarce.

The A.C.T.U. executive voiced its concern at the level of illegal immigration.⁴¹ A number of thinly veiled criticisms were directed at the arrival of Vietnamese refugees. It is significant, however, that despite pressure from some union officials (a number of whom had no reason to believe that their own union would be affected), the statement was careful to avoid drawing any racist implications. This is indicative of a slow but discernible shift away from "White Australia" and a growing tolerance of non-European immigration.⁴²

As well as avoiding the expression of overtly racist sentiments, the A.C.T.U. executive and congress also strove to avoid implying any form of pronounced preference in the national or ethnic

⁴⁰Reported in *Tribune*, March 19-25, 1974. See also *S.M.H.*, March 13, 1974, p.3. At this time the V.B.E.F. was in the midst of major negotiations with the company over wages and working conditions.

⁴¹Reported in the *S.M.H.*, July 7, 1978, p.9.

⁴²The political considerations associated with criticism of the Vietnamese should not be overlooked. Like the displaced persons they are political refugees from communism and, in the eyes of some union officials, hostile to the labour movement.

background of migrants. At the 1949 congress a number of unions expressed their opposition to the introduction of displaced persons.⁴³ The reasons underlying this were largely political in origin and did not, at the official level, involve an explicit national or ethnically based sentiment. At the same congress a number of unions with right-wing or moderate leaderships expressed their support for the displaced persons scheme.⁴⁴ The final motion passed made no mention of the desirability of particular groups but did note "the obvious inclusion of many pro-fascists among the migrants selected from amongst displaced persons brought from Germany."

In 1951 the Boilermakers' Society and other "left" unions objected to German migration on political grounds. The year before Monk had indicated to the C.I.P.C. that Australian unions disliked Italian migration. As late as 1956 he expressed the view that the proportion of southern European migrants had been "a bit too high."⁴⁵ However, the above statements led to nothing. Gradually the A.C.T.U. adjusted its expectations away from Calwell's optimistic claims that Britain would supply almost all Australia's immigration needs.⁴⁶ Multicultural immigration was accepted by the A.C.T.U. almost without comment.

In general, the A.C.T.U. approach to immigrants was that they should be assimilated as quickly as possible. This involved opposition to any situation whereby migrants would be segregated from the Australian community. This may be illustrated by reference to Jewish migrants. In 1939 the A.C.T.U. had supported the notion of Jewish immigration. In 1945 it agreed to a proposal to establish a

⁴³Including the Boilermakers' Society, O.P.D.U. and B.W.I.U. See A.C.T.U. Congress 1949, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁴⁴Namely, the Australasian Society of Engineers (Victorian branch), Boot Trades Employees' Federation and Federated Confectioners' Association. *Ibid*.

⁴⁵In particular, Monk referred to their concentration in some work-places and the problems this posed for union organizers. Reported in the *S.M.H.*, April 16, 1956, p.1.

⁴⁶In 1952 the A.R.U. had urged congress to call for a halt to all but British migration. While such sentiments were undoubtedly widespread, congress motions expressing this preference were exceptional. They were never incorporated in a congress decision on immigration.

Jewish community in the Kimberly region of Western Australia. However, when the Freeland League put a definite proposal to this effect in May 1955, the A.C.T.U. changed its mind. It was resolved:

that this Executive is of the opinion that we cannot support sectional migration to Australia. We consider that it is necessary for any migration programme to conform with the assimilation of migrants into the Australian way of life and to integrate with our Australian population.⁴⁷

Another dimension of this policy was the early opposition to the segregation of migrants into hostels and the separation of migrant workers from their families. Following motions from a number of unions, congress resolved that:

it is particularly concerned at the housing of migrants in hostels and the consequent tendency to establish separate communities of foreign workers, and ... demands ... an ending of the system of segregating foreign born workers in hostels ...⁴⁸

This protest was directed particularly at the treatment of displaced persons.⁴⁹

While the assimilationist approach remained firmly entrenched throughout the 1950s and 1960s subtle changes of attitude were occurring within individual unions. Some like the A.R.U. became more aware of the economic, social and political problems faced by non-English speaking migrants including their susceptibility to discrimination at both the tacit and official levels.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, while the A.R.U. gave lip service to the cultural contribution of immigrants it opposed the formation of national community groups

⁴⁷A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decision, May 13, 1955. See also the *S.M.H.*, May 14, 1955, p.5.

⁴⁸A.C.T.U. Congress, 1949, *Decisions*. The resolution was part of a general call for the restriction of immigration.

⁴⁹On a number of occasions unions such as the O.P.D.U., Miners' Federation, B.W.I.U., S.M.W.U. and A.R.U. denounced the sub-standard nature of hostel accommodation and the prolonged period of residence in these establishments. They supported migrant protests on these issues and demanded that the separation of migrant families cease. See A.A.T.U.C. 1952 and A.C.T.U. Congresses held 1953 and 1967, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁵⁰A.C.T.U. Congresses held in 1963, 1967 and 1969, *Motions on Agenda*.

on the grounds that this made migrants more vulnerable to exploitation.⁵¹

It was not until 1977 that the legitimacy of cultural pluralism received even vague recognition. At this congress an executive recommendation on population and immigration demonstrated some sensitivity. It stated that there was no reason why migrants should be English-speaking although they must be able to adapt to the Australian environment and be given an opportunity to learn English before departure. More importantly, it stressed that adaptation must be a two-way process. The humanitarian grounds for immigration such as family re-union and political asylum were endorsed. A more receptive education system was advocated so that the disadvantages of non-English speaking migrants were not perpetuated. Finally, the recommendation argued that Australia must avoid the formation of an ethnic economic class by mass immigration of unskilled persons.⁵²

Migrant Rights and Trade Union Organization of Immigrant Workers

Of immediate concern to Council's functioning was the question of the organization of migrants into trade unions. In the early years motions, resolutions and executive decisions represented reactions to perceived problems. Hence their tone was generally negative. In 1949 and 1951 a number of unions made mention of the anti-union attitudes they thought were present amongst displaced persons and Germans. There were, however, no further allegations of anti-union behaviour on the part of immigrants at congress.

Several unions drew attention to more specific problems. In 1949 the B.W.I.U. criticized the contract governing displaced persons. Australian unions had always viewed the introduction of immigrant workers under contract as an anathema and these sentiments were conveyed in the congress resolution. In 1951 the same union proposed a detailed set of safeguards designed to ensure that

⁵¹A.C.T.U. Congress, 1967, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁵²These measures were part of a broad attempt to bring the A.C.T.U.'s standpoint on discrimination together. Motions on white collar workers, women, Aborigines and young people were also presented to congress. See R.M. Martin, "ACTU Congress - 1977", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 1977, p.431.

contractors on building and construction projects could derive no financial advantage by employing immigrant labour brought out under contract.⁵³ The motion was inspired by the capricious action of some contractors on a number of large projects including the Snowy Mountains project. Congress took no action on the matter. Nevertheless, unions were clearly unhappy with the contracts tying some migrants to their employment. After the mid-1950s these practices became exceptional, alleviating further hostility.⁵⁴ Aside from the debate over immigrants brought out under contract, the possibility of foreign-born workers accepting employment conditions inferior to those prevailing amongst indigenous workers received little, if any, attention at Congress.⁵⁵

A further area of concern was the inferior political status of migrants and the effect this might have on their industrial activism. As part of its motion in 1949, the B.W.I.U. asked Congress to declare that "when immigrants are allowed to enter Australia they should be accorded the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship."⁵⁶ Unions with left leaderships were extremely conscious of politically inspired victimization. This was not

⁵³The motion provided that the contractor would meet all the travelling expenses of domestic or foreign labour, provide free board, pay at least prevailing award conditions, not increase the contract period without the consent of the employee, not exclude Australian-born workers and ensure that all workers became union members and those recruited overseas had been financial members of the appropriate foreign union. A.C.T.U. Congress, 1951, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁵⁴The matter was raised by the Boilermakers' Society in 1969. A.C.T.U. Congress, 1969, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁵⁵Such allegations had occasionally been made by unions outside Congress (see, for instance the *A.M.I.E.U. Journal*, April 1949). However, it appears that award enforcement was not seen to be a major problem by most unions. A more common complaint was that the additional supply of labour enabled employers to hold down employment conditions. In the railways, for instance, A.R.U. officials argued that margins and overaward payments had not kept pace with earnings in other industries. This was seen to be responsible for local workers leaving railway jobs and being replaced by immigrants (Lloyd Ross, former New South Wales secretary of the A.R.U., interviewed August 25, 1978). This view was shared by other railway unions. In November 1951 the federal executive of the A.F.U.L.E. declared that manpower shortages in the railways were primarily a consequence of intolerable working conditions and demanded immediate action to rectify this instead of the "desperate reliance on immigrant labour." See the *S.M.H.*, November 24, 1951, p.3.

⁵⁶A.C.T.U. Congress, 1949, *Motions on Agenda*.

surprising given that migrants with communist or other radical leanings were the most frequent targets for suppression. Irrespective of this, the A.C.T.U. executive took action on the Abbiezzi deportation case and a number of others following widespread agitation.⁵⁷

In 1963 the A.R.U. called upon Congress to condemn:

the action of the Commonwealth Government in denying Australian citizenship rights to a great number of migrants arising from their political and trade union activities and affiliation. Such policies are considered to be violently opposed to democratic principle and a denial of human rights. We therefore determine to take all possible steps to ensure all migrants are given every opportunity to become Australian citizens and take their rightful place within the Australian Labour Movement.⁵⁸

This motion was directed at non-British migrants since migrants from the United Kingdom received citizenship almost automatically.

Aside from its defensive posture on specific problems, the A.C.T.U. found it difficult to initiate positive steps with regard to migrants. The 1953 I.C.F.T.U. congress resolution on migration included a clause urging affiliates to reach agreement on the international transfer of union membership.⁵⁹ Luckham argued this did not proceed with respect to non-British migrants because few Australian unions were then affiliated to the International Trade Secretariats.⁶⁰ This explanation overlooked the logistic and jurisdictional difficulties uncovered by Monk and King in 1945. Apart from these problems, transfer was irrelevant to the many migrants who either did not belong to a union or changed their occupation upon arrival in Australia. The agreements initiated by individual unions only ever involved a tiny minority of immigrants, i.e. some British tradesmen.

⁵⁷A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decision, June 29, 1954. The question of political victimization of migrant activists will be dealt with in some detail in Chapter 7.

⁵⁸A.C.T.U. Congress, 1963, *Motions on Agenda*. The A.R.U. repeated the call at the following congress. The S.M.W.U. presented a similar motion and the Seamen's Union raised the matter at the 1971 congress.

⁵⁹A.C.T.U. executive report, September 21, 1953.

⁶⁰B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, pp.23-24.

Even where there were few apparent barriers to action, congress was manifestly slow in responding to the constructive suggestions by some unions of how best to deal with non-English speaking workers. As early as 1951 the Victorian branch of the Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association asked the Council to request that unions be given an opportunity at instruction classes for migrants to explain their responsibility to join unions.⁶¹ In 1961, an A.E.U. motion on employment stressed the need to defeat any attempt employers might make to divide the Australian-born worker and the immigrant worker. The A.E.U. also advocated the building and strengthening of shop committees as a method of winning widespread unity on congress policy.⁶² If this seemed to imply a means by which migrant participation in union affairs might be encouraged, there is no evidence that even those unions endorsing shop committees (largely left-wing craft unions) tried to implement it.

Irrespective of their political/industrial philosophy, the majority of unions remained insensitive to the special needs of non-English speaking workers. By the late 1960s, however, a few bodies began to request A.C.T.U. leadership on the matter. In 1967 and again in 1969 the F.I.A. urged the A.C.T.U. executive to establish a committee to investigate the special problems of migrants and recommend appropriate campaigns for them.⁶³ At the same congresses, the F.C.U. urged the issuing of a multilingual booklet explaining Australian unionism and arbitration.⁶⁴

At the 1969 congress a demonstrably more perceptive motion on migrant/union relations, which challenged the smug assimilationist stance of the unions, was presented by the A.R.U. It stated:

Congress expresses concern at the division which has arisen between native and foreign born workers in

⁶¹A.C.T.U. Congress, 1951, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁶²A.C.T.U. Congress, 1961, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁶³A.C.T.U. Congresses, 1967 and 1969, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁶⁴*Ibid.* At the 1969 congress the A.M.I.E.U. had suggested that migrants be given English language classes prior to embarkation in order to bolster their appreciation of unions.

Australia because of the difficulties of communication, not only between workers on the job, but especially between the official trade union movement and workers who have a long heritage of struggle in many cases entirely different to the past experiences of the Australian working class, and, in particular, in regard to the activities of the Arbitration Commission in Australia. The trade union movement must recognize that a great number of lower paid workers regard the Australian trade union movement as devoting the majority of its time to the higher paid tradesmen group and in their opinion not paying sufficient attention to claims on behalf of the lower paid workers. The unfavourable conditions under which the large number of these migrants are forced to live after their arrival in Australia, being exploited by all sorts of land sharks and other unscrupulous individuals in the Australian community and the vast exploitation of these foreign workers as a source of unskilled labour to the big monopolies in Australia, shows that there is urgent need for attention to these problems so that foreign born workers cannot become a weapon to be used by the employing class against the trade union movement.

Therefore, Congress declares that discrimination of any nature against migrants must be stopped, that the ACTU press the Federal Government to repeal legislation which denies migrants social services and other benefits enjoyed by Australian citizens and to launch a campaign for a real lift in wages for all workers, both tradesmen and the lower paid groups to show in practice, the constant activity of the Australian trade union movement.⁶⁵

This forceful analysis of trade union failures with respect to migrants and the solution it prescribed had no effect on either congress or the executive.

Not for another six years was the question of migrant organization into unions seriously canvassed. The urgency of debate at the 1975 congress was partly inspired by recent acts of industrial militancy amongst some groups of migrant workers and a number of migrant worker conferences. These events revealed something of the past failings of Australian unions including a disturbing communication gap between migrant workers and union officialdom.⁶⁶ The South Coast Labour Council, representing a region with a very high proportion of foreign-born workers, advocated that trades unions make far greater efforts to inform migrants of their role and

⁶⁵A.C.T.U. Congress, 1969, *Motions on Agenda*.

⁶⁶These developments will be taken up in Chapter 7.

activities. Peak councils were to be informed of the best methods of dealing with the problems of migrant workers. The A.C.T.U. was to request advice from foreign trade union centres upon how best to assist newcomers; encourage visits by overseas union representatives; urge state and regional labour councils to establish migrant unity action committees; and approach the federal government with a view to establishing special "migrant offices" to improve migrant/union relations.⁶⁷ This ambitious motion was pre-empted by a less demanding recommendation from the executive.⁶⁸

The S.C.L.C. motion was narrowly lost, as was an amendment urging council to advocate the establishment of a trade union migrant advisory service by the federal government (proposed by F.C.U./Clothing Trades' Union delegates). What was left was a rather vague if not entirely vacuous call for greater action by individual unions upon the publication of multilingual material and upon English classes.⁶⁹ There was no mention of co-ordinating a campaign for migrants or specific initiatives to facilitate their greater involvement in unions.

In 1977 a two-pronged executive recommendation on migrants was tabled at congress but not debated. The first part dealt with the social aspects of immigration (see Page 238). The second part concerned the relationship of unions and migrants. It called on the government to provide english classes, trained interpreters, social workers and multilingual information to assist trade unions in dealing with migrant workers and their problems. In addition, the

⁶⁷A.C.T.U. Congress, 1975, minutes, pp.63-64.

⁶⁸In the ensuing debate the executive recommendation was amended in several respects. References to assimilation were deleted and a provision that the promotion of migrant participation in unions should be encouraged were included at the behest of delegates from the A.M.S.W.U. and F.M.W.U. Clauses urging unions with a significant proportion of foreign-born members to produce union information in appropriate languages (proposed by delegates from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Trades Union) and calling on the government to widen rights of entry for union officials especially in the area of safety (proposed by F.I.A. delegates) were inserted in the recommendation.

⁶⁹A.C.T.U. Congress, 1975, minutes, pp.64-66.

recommendation urged unions to establish migrant worker committees at the work-place, encourage the appointment and training of migrant job delegates, advertise union elections in foreign languages and provide a multilingual directory of union operations.⁷⁰

On December 21, 1977 the recommendation was referred to state branches and affiliated bodies for consideration. Although it was subsequently adopted, the recommendation still left the initiative with individual unions, most of whom accorded it a low priority. The more recent debates stimulated greater union awareness of the handicaps faced by non-English speaking workers but they do not appear to have led to radical policy changes.⁷¹

Summary

The prevailing tone of A.C.T.U. policy deliberations in the post-war years has been that of cautious self-interest. Australian unions have only been interested in migrants to the extent that they have impinged upon the traditional industrial and social interests of an essentially chauvinistic body of unions anxious to preserve their Anglo/Irish character.

No observation of this chauvinism would be adequate if it were not qualified by reference to Monk's long-standing and usually formidable commitment to the immigration policies formulated by the Chifley Labor government and maintained as political orthodoxy throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The A.C.T.U. was firmly governed by Monk's commitment to the broad social and defence objectives enshrined in this policy. Paradoxically, the increasing responsiveness of the A.C.T.U. to migrant interests cannot be explained by

⁷⁰A.C.T.U. Correspondence Circular no. 278/1977, *Re Population and Migration Policy*, December 21, 1977.

⁷¹An obvious influence on these debates has been the insignificant representation of non-British migrants at A.C.T.U. congresses. Martin has estimated that fewer than 30 non-British migrants were represented at the 1979 and 1977 congresses and fewer than 12 were present at the 1975 congress. It would seem reasonable to suggest that their representation was even smaller at earlier congresses. See R.M. Martin, *Trade Unions in Australia* (Penguin, Ringwood, 1975), p.75; and R.M. Martin's account of the 1977 and 1979 A.C.T.U. congresses in *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 1977, p.431 and vol. 21, no. 4, December 1979, p.492.

reference to Monk's leadership. He was more interested in advocating an immigration programme than aiding migrant workers as such. The long-term decline of the commitment to "White Australia", coupled with explicit opposition to racism and apartheid are evidence of changes in the character of union orthodoxy. More important, by the mid-1970s, unions had come to recognise more fully the special problems of migrant participation. The earlier emphasis upon protecting unions from the side effects of immigration was displaced, in part, by a demonstration of union concern for the special needs of migrants. No longer treated as outsiders or merely anonymous numbers, migrants were increasingly recognised as an important minority of the membership of many unions - and a minority that could not be ignored. This awareness - first apparent in the resolutions of the A.R.U. in the late 1960s - had flourished into a major exercise in the baring of union conscience by the mid-1970s.

The tension present in A.C.T.U. deliberations throughout the post-war years was a familiar one. As a body, the A.C.T.U. remained drawn between the competing aspirations of leaders whose political commitments frequently differed from the commitments of local union officials to their members. The conflict between the long-term statesmanlike goals of Monk and the short-term material interests of particular union officials dominated A.C.T.U. debates. Ironically, the input of those left-wing unionists most responsive to their membership was to change. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the strongest criticism of A.C.T.U. support for immigration came from left-wing unions expressing their members' job insecurities (tinged by some political considerations on the part of those battling a "grouper" challenge). By the 1970s, the same unions were expressing a different thrust in membership pressure, trying instead to formalize the aspirations of those non-British migrants that formed a large - if under-represented - segment of "blue collar" unionists. At this point the executive was placed under pressure to adopt a positive role for which it was not fully prepared. However, the desire of a pragmatic executive not to place any moral pressure on unions over the question of migrants was to become far more explicit at the state labour council level. The delayed reaction of the A.C.T.U. executive paled into insignificance beside the even stronger reluctance of the New South Wales Labor Council executive to exercise positive discrimination in favour of migrants.

2. THE LABOR COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Unlike the A.C.T.U., discussion of migrants and immigration on the Labor Council of New South Wales was almost, if not totally, tied to very specific issues rather than broad policy questions.⁷² To some extent this emphasis was a consequence of the greater frequency (weekly) and informality of Labor Council meetings. Labor Council was frequently asked to deal with more immediate or grass roots issues concerning immigrant workers. However, it was also the clear intention of Council's executive, dominated as it was by moderate/conservative A.L.P. elements throughout the post-war period, that discussion should not involve broad political and moral questions that might conflict with Labor Party policy.⁷³

Table 9 indicates the issues raised at Labor Council meetings between 1945 and 1978. Discussion centred on instances of political victimization of migrant unionists, the poor working conditions endured by migrant workers, language difficulties and remedies for this, the political activities of particular ethnic groups and other matters.

The generally responsive nature of the Labor Council debates to special areas of migrant hardship stands in contrast to the remote indifference of the A.C.T.U. As at the national level, left-wing led unions were prominent in forcing debate upon "migrant issues". The most frequently raised issue was the denial of political and legal rights to migrants. During the early 1950s a number of unions appealed for Council assistance to fight the proposed deportation of a foreign-born member. In such a manner Labor Council was drawn into threatened

⁷²This was irrespective of the representation of the Labor Council's secretary on the C.I.A.C. When J. Kenny succeeded King as Council secretary in 1959 he also took over King's post on the C.I.A.C.

⁷³This stance did not suit the left-dominated South Coast Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council representing industrial centres to the south and north of Sydney respectively. These bodies continued to pursue a policy line on many issues (including immigration) quite distinct, if not contradictory, to that proposed by the state body. In April 1972, for instance, the S.C.L.C. resolved to independently investigate hostel requirements for migrants. Five months later it called for a restriction of immigration. S.C.L.C. minutes of meetings held on April 19 and September 26, 1972.

TABLE 9

MATTERS RELATING TO MIGRANTS RAISED AT LABOR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEETINGS, 1945-1978

Issue	Number of Times Raised
1. Migrant rights (includes cases of refused naturalization, government proposals to deport migrants and other types of alleged political or legal victimization)	15
2. The activities or existence of "bogus" migrant trade unions	13
3. Migrant accommodation (including hostel conditions and eviction cases)	8
4. The unsatisfactory working conditions of migrants (includes alleged cases of exploitive practices by certain employers)	7
5. Employment conditions (includes migrant unemployment)	6
6. Language problems and trade union organization	4
7. Migrant political activity (both motions concerned the Ustashi)	2
8. The need for interpreters in workers' compensation cases	1
9. Labor Council representation on the Good Neighbour Council	1
10. The appointment of an officer by the Council to research into migrant worker problems	1
11. Unspecified	1
Total	59*

*The source of these records is the Mitchell Library of New South Wales for records of meetings 1945-1966 and archives of the Labor Council itself for records 1966-1978. Both executive and general meetings minutes were examined.

and actual deportation cases involving German migrants employed on the Snowy Mountains project, Chinese restaurant workers and Greek- and Italian-born unionists.⁷⁴ The general response by Council was to investigate the charges and, if the situation warranted, act on the matter or refer it to the A.C.T.U.

The question of accommodation problems amongst newly arrived migrants received Council attention in 1950, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1961 and 1967. In each case this concerned the poor conditions found in some hostels.

At the outset Council was concerned that migrants, especially displaced persons, should not be placed in inferior accommodation that would encourage their employment in preference to local workers. In May 1950, Council's Social Service Committee reported on government safeguards designed to ensure that facilities met the requirements of local, state or federal authorities.⁷⁵ It was reported that when employers providing accommodation made false representations (as had occurred) unions might seek the assistance of the relevant authorities. Despite this assurance many unions were far from convinced that hostel conditions were satisfactory. In August 1950 the Postal Workers' Union asked Council to convene a conference of unions with foreign-born members living in hostels controlled by the Department of Labour and National Service.⁷⁶

In 1952 Council interest in the hostel situation was rekindled by the protests of British migrants at an increase in tariff charges.

⁷⁴In the case of the German and Chinese workers it was alleged that deportation threats/proceedings were being used by employers as a general form of industrial intimidation. The cases involving Greek- and Italian-born workers mainly concerned individual union activists. A number of unions also complained that Greek migrants with records of industrial and political activism had been refused passports (or had them withdrawn) by local consular officials. A more detailed discussion of political victimization will be undertaken in Chapter 7. See Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meetings held on November 1, 1951, July 10, 1952, November 20, 1952, January 8, 1953, August 20, 1953, January 1, 1954, July 14, 1955 and June 22, 1957.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, May 11, 1950.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, August 3, 1950. The motion was pre-empted by secretary King who (along with A.C.T.U. president Monk) succeeded in obtaining an assurance from the Minister for Immigration that the matter would be investigated.

A representative of the British Migrants' Welfare Association was invited to address Council on hostel living conditions, medical care arrangements and details of the tariff increases.⁷⁷ In 1953 eviction problems occurred at some hostels prompting further Labor Council involvement.⁷⁸ In 1955 the A.E.U. questioned the adequacy of hostel accommodation on behalf of its British members - an issue to be raised in 1957 by the S.M.W.U.⁷⁹

Union complaints over hostel living conditions were related to their campaigns with regard to the housing shortage, employment and immigration. This partly explains their strong interest in the question during periods of economic recession. As part of its "Save the Building Industry Campaign" in 1952, the B.W.I.U. proposed a motion:

that this Labour Council views with grave concern the situation developing in Australia, and endorses the general view that a campaign should be indulged in in an effort to save Australian industries. We call upon the representatives of various industries to submit to the offices of council reports of unemployment in each industry in order that complete submissions can be made to the next Immigration Advisory Committee by the ACTU representatives, and that, in addition the information be supplied to the next ACTU Executive Meeting.⁸⁰

In general, Labor Council's attention was drawn towards the hostel problems of British migrants, who displayed a greater willing-

⁷⁷ Labor Council of New South Wales minutes of executive meeting held on May 1, 1952. See also minutes of the general meeting held on May 8, 1952.

⁷⁸ In June and September of this year Council passed resolutions condemning the eviction of migrants from government hostels proposed by the B.W.I.U. and Electrical Trades Union respectively. In the latter case, a Council sub-committee was appointed to investigate evictions from the Bunnerong hostel. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meetings held on June 18 and September 3, 1953 and executive meeting held on September 10, 1953.

⁷⁹ In the latter case British unions were informed of the reduction in hostel accommodation available to new migrants. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of executive and general meetings held on July 21, 1955 and June 2, 1957.

⁸⁰ This motion was acted on as was a motion from the W.W.F. in November which called for an A.C.T.U. investigation of the level of Italian immigration in the light of local unemployment. This was one of the few occasions that Council questioned the immigration programme in general. *Ibid.*, May 15, June 5 and November 6, 1952.

ness to question government authorities and conduct co-ordinated protest campaigns (through their own association) than their non-British counterparts. The major exceptions to this occurred in 1952 and 1961 when protests by large groups of non-British migrants at hostel conditions and the absence of work were dealt with by Labor Council.⁸¹ A renewed bout of protests by British migrants followed tariff increases in 1967.⁸² This was the last occasion that Council delved into the issue.

A less prominent source of concern at Council meetings was the exploitation of immigrant workers and the possibility that this might undermine the conditions of all workers. In 1950 Labor Council received assurances from the Department of Immigration that all migrants would be employed in accordance with industrial legislation and awards.⁸³ The few union complaints of award evasion were generally in relation to isolated projects or poorly organized groups of workers. In May 1951, Council was told that Australian [sic] workers were deserting the Snowy Mountains project in large numbers because of unsatisfactory conditions.⁸⁴ Twelve months later the B.W.I.U. reported that the firm of L. Possetti (involved on the Snowy project) was not paying wages when they were due.⁸⁵

In most cases individual unions were able to initiate action on award breaches without seeking Council assistance. In 1962 Council contacted the Minister for Labour and Industry following a report from the B.W.I.U. that two Filipinos were being paid below-award rates.⁸⁶ It is not apparent that the workers concerned were members of the B.W.I.U. and this may explain why the union raised the matter at Labor Council.

⁸¹In the latter year a number of unions requested Council to take action on behalf of unemployed non-British migrants and those arrested following protests at the Bonegilla migrant camp. *Ibid.*, July 13 and July 27, 1961.

⁸²*Ibid.*, February 2, 1967.

⁸³*Ibid.*, May 11, 1950.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, May 17, 1951.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, May 1, 1952.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, March 29, 1962.

However, occasionally, even well organized unions asked for Council assistance when faced with problems that did not breach award provisions. In March 1963, the Boilermakers' Society called for a meeting of unions covering workers employed by Electric Power Transmission (E.P.T.), a construction company which was accused of engaging Italian labour to the exclusion of Australians [sic].⁸⁷ Both the Boilermakers' Society and the B.W.I.U. alleged that E.P.T. and another company (Transfield) were employing semi-skilled migrant workers on trade work and in other ways circumventing established industrial practice.⁸⁸

Despite its sporadic action on hostel conditions and extreme cases of industrial and political discrimination, Council showed little inclination to take positive steps on the behalf of migrant workers in general. Nothing was done to help non-British migrants become acclimatized to local union organization despite recurring calls for action by a number of unions. As early as May 1950 the Tanners' Union reported that it was having difficulty absorbing new migrants into the industry.⁸⁹ The union's delegate proposed that Council should facilitate the distribution of literature in German, Polish and other languages explaining the role of Australian unions. A week later the Council's Social Services Committee reported that the Immigration Department did not encourage foreign language material of this nature. The department spokesman argued that if such material was too readily available there would be no incentive for migrants to learn English. He argued foreign language newspapers and journals encouraged the retention of national customs and thought, thereby inhibiting assimilation.⁹⁰ Further, it was suggested that there would be difficulty in clearly expressing

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, March 28 and April 4, 1963. In another case the Building Trades Group alleged that Tooth and Co. was discriminating in the employment of migrants. See Labor Council general meeting minutes, March 9, 1967.

⁸⁸The Boilermakers' Society's attempt to deal with the practices of these companies will be outlined in Chapter 9.

⁸⁹Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meeting held on May 4, 1950.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, May 11, 1950.

"purely Australian subjects" in a foreign language.⁹¹ This ludicrously naive advice was accepted by the Labor Council.⁹²

The official snub did not convince all unions, however. In October the Milk and Ice Carters' Union again urged Council to print pamphlets in various languages. Secretary King referred the union to Council's earlier decision and the matter was left in abeyance.⁹³

It was somewhat ironic that the only positive step taken by Council during this period was to affiliate to the New Settlers' League - a move suggested by the Immigration Department Industrial Officer as a way of countering the danger of migrants forming themselves into national groups.⁹⁴

If Council was unwilling to help unions in the preparation of foreign language material it was ready to crush any independent organization purporting to act as a trade union for migrants. In June 1959 the B.W.I.U. reported that a body known as the New Citizens Council had been registered under the New South Wales Trade Union Act.⁹⁵ In January 1960 the A.W.U. notified Council of the registration of the New Citizens Council and another body, the Industrial Workers' Organization [sic] under the New South Wales

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²The later response of one delegate was to ask that an English test be given to migrants prior to their entry into Australia. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of executive meeting, August 3, 1950.

⁹³*Ibid.*, October 19, 1950. Even then, several unions refused to let the matter rest. In September 1951 a Council deputation was organized to see the federal Minister for Immigration at the behest of the S.M.W.U. However, no action resulted from this. Four years later when the Miscellaneous Workers' Union notified Council of organizing difficulties with "New Australians" it was informed that "an interpreter is now employed by the NSW Department of Labour and Industry." *Ibid.*, September 13, 1951 and April 28, 1955.

⁹⁴The efficacy of even this move is contentious to say the least. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1955.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, June 11, 1959. At a Council meeting held two weeks later a foreign-born union delegate, M. Lazaris, stated that 99 per cent of migrants were 100 per cent behind the Australian trade union movement. See minutes of general meeting, June 25, 1959.

Industrial Arbitration Act.⁹⁶ Procedures for the deregistration of both bodies were authorized. In the following month the Council secretary, J.D. Kenny, reported that he had been in contact with the New South Wales Industrial Registrar in connection with an application to deregister both the New Citizens' Council and Industrial Workers' Union.⁹⁷ A week later the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union (H.C.R.E.U.) requested a further meeting of unions to discuss the New Citizens' Council.⁹⁸

Council action was successful in squashing these bodies. Nevertheless, the respite was shortlived. In June 1961 the Liquor Trades Union informed Council that a body calling itself the New Settlers' Federation (N.S.F.) had been formed. The N.S.F. did not seek registration under either state act. All the same, it was condemned as a bogus trade union and Council reiterated its objection to separate unions for migrant workers.⁹⁹ In September Council moved to have A.L.P. leader A.A. Calwell dissociate himself from a public procession being organized by the N.S.F.¹⁰⁰

It is improbable that these organizations, whose origins and activities will be explored at length in Chapter 7, ever presented a serious threat to established unions. The highly sensitive reaction of unions was indicative of a defensive outlook perhaps laced with an uneasy awareness of the failure to fully inform and

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, January 2, 1960. The second body referred to was actually called the Industrial Workers' Union of Australia. Despite the A.W.U. claim there is no record that either the New Citizens' Council or Industrial Workers' Union was registered under the New South Wales Industrial Arbitration Act. Both were registered under the state Trade Union Act on October 28, 1958 and February 23, 1959 respectively.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, February 18, 1960. Both bodies were subsequently de-registered.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, February 25, 1960. In 1961 the H.C.R.E.U. amalgamated with the Liquor Trades Union.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, June 29, 1969.

¹⁰⁰This action followed a further report from the Liquor Trades Union which had also raised the N.S.F.'s activities at Council a month earlier. *Ibid.*, August 3 and September 21, 1961.

involve migrants upon union affairs.¹⁰¹ However, the union response should not be portrayed solely as hysteria - blown out of all proportion to the threat posed by these tiny ineffectual organizations. The response was also based on the principle that no precedent - however small - could be allowed to justify the formation of separate unions for different ethnic groups.

Despite these events and increasing pressure from individual unions, the Sydney-based Labor Council - and its executive in particular - remained disinterested in the provision of special facilities for migrant unionists. In contrast, by the mid-1970s, the two major regional councils were beginning to act independently of the state body in this area. The South Coast Labour Council (S.C.L.C.) became involved with local migrant organizations in the Wollongong area including the Migrant Unity Action Group and a migrant workers' conference. The Newcastle T.H.C., representing a region far less influenced by immigration than either Sydney or Wollongong, made representations to the A.C.T.U. that a migrant union representative be appointed to work in conjunction with local unions and the New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission.

Progress made by the South Coast and Newcastle labour councils was indicative of the rising tide of sympathy for migrant workers and the evolution of pluralist orthodoxies in federal politics. The Labor Council of New South Wales tried to remain aloof from the changing climate and subsequently was remarkable more for its tokenism than for the sincerity and effectiveness of its actions.

¹⁰¹The major problem area raised by these bodies was with regard to workers' compensation proceedings where it was apparent that many migrant workers had little understanding of their rights. While the Labor Council's compensation department handled the compensation cases of many smaller unions, the executive still refused to take a positive role in this matter. At the height of the tussle with the N.S.F. in 1961 a body calling itself the Migrant Medical Centre made a request for funds and the F.I.A. urged Council to push for an amendment in the Workers' Compensation Act so that interpreting costs would not have to be borne by the union. Both requests were ignored. The N.S.F. continued to be a source of concern for some unions, notably the Plasterers' Union, Rubber Workers' Union and Vehicle Builders'. In 1963 the Attorney General agreed to investigate the body at Council's request. Even so, there were several further complaints over the next three years. See Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of executive and general meetings held on June 22 and August 31, 1961; February 21, March 14, May 2, October 31 and November 7, 1963; August 27, 1964; and November 10, 1966.

In 1976, the ethnic liaison committee of the Health Commission contacted Council's research officer requesting information and union co-operation in the publication and distribution of a migrant resources directory.¹⁰² In June 1977 the Ethnic Affairs Commission asked Council to send a representative to a committee set up to investigate the problems of migrant workers in New South Wales.¹⁰³ The executive recommended the appointment of Council's publicity and education officer, R. Carr. In November, Council asked a number of unions to take part in a survey of ethnic matters following further correspondence from the commission.¹⁰⁴ Unions were asked to press employers to establish interpreter services in large workplaces, English classes during working hours and in-plant welfare assistance for migrants. The commission itself undertook the publication of a number of simple foreign-language pamphlets explaining the structure and functions of Australian unions, the role of arbitration tribunals and the operation of the workers' compensation system. The use of these pamphlets remained at the discretion of individual union leaderships, many of whom chose to ignore them. As in the past, Council executive did not make any recommendations to affiliated unions on how they might improve the integration of foreign-born workers.

The unwillingness of the Council executive to sponsor change was graphically illustrated by its procrastination over the appointment of a state government-funded ethnic research officer to investigate the problems of migrant unionists and role of unions in this regard.¹⁰⁵ Some months after the funds had been offered, officials of the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales expressed their disappointment at the Labor Council's neglect in not making use of the money and its general lack of interest in migrant workers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Correspondence, R. Richter (Health Commission) to G. Symons, research officer, Labor Council of New South Wales, March 1976.

¹⁰³Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meeting held on June 23, 1977.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, November 24, 1977.

¹⁰⁵This grant had been announced by the state Labor government on February 18, 1977.

¹⁰⁶The Ethnic Communities Council was a non-government body representing almost 400 ethnic organizations. The statements were made by the chairman and senior vice-chairman of this body and reported in the *S.M.H.*, April 1, 1977.

Almost a year before, the Ethnic Communities Council had sent a report to Labor Council claiming that union leaders who were remote from their membership assumed an understanding of trade unionism by migrant employees which was "dangerously misleading." The report criticized the failure of the A.C.T.U. or its state branches to establish special bureaux or offices to help migrants. It alleged that workers' compensation and civil action claims had been ignored because of the lack of communication between migrants and their unions.¹⁰⁷ Despite this adverse publicity Labor Council still delayed making use of the money. In January 1978 Labor Council secretary John Ducker (a former British migrant) responded to criticism by saying that the offer had not been rejected. He stated that Council had submitted an alternative proposal for an ongoing ethnic affairs officer to assist on migrant welfare problems, train unionists in migrant issues, organize translations and develop multilingual union material.¹⁰⁸ That the funds should be left unutilized while such negotiations went on hardly seems justified.

Indeed, the Council standpoint was unacceptable to a number of unions affiliated to it. In the light of this apparent reluctance to make use of the money, the New South Wales branch of the A.M.W.S.U. asked if it could have the funds to appoint an ethnic research officer. This, and a follow-up proposal by the A.M.W.S.U. national office, were rejected by Council. The matter became enmeshed in a faction fight between progressive unions such as the A.M.W.S.U. and the more conservative group which dominated Council and its executive. The origins of this struggle did not originate with migrants but rather broad political and industrial divisions amongst unions.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, a number of officials from the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *S.M.H.*, January 7, 1978, p.6. For evidence of this criticism see the *S.M.H.*, January 5, 1978, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ These divisions carry over to the structure and operations of Council itself. Representation on Council is based on a sliding scale of membership size. A number of the large left-wing unions have claimed that the present scale leaves them under-represented (and smaller unions over-represented) on both Council and its executive. In Victoria, a similar situation led to the temporary withdrawal of more than 20 unions from the Trades Hall Council (see D. Plowman, "Unions in conflict: the Victorian Trades Hall split 1967-1973", *Labour History*, no. 36, May 1979, pp.47-69). This action has not been threatened in New South Wales. Left unions

A.M.W.S.U. and other unions accused conservative union leaders of deliberately ignoring migrants as part of their strategy of promoting a passive rank and file.¹¹⁰

Whatever its origins, the inactivity of the Labor Council executive compared poorly even to the belated and partial recognition of its two largest regional councils (the S.C.L.C. and the Newcastle T.H.C.).¹¹¹ When Council finally did appoint an ethnic affairs officer his functions had been redefined towards activities that were less likely to embarrass those unions whose efforts could best be described as tokenistic. These considerations were also reflected in the selection of a person to fill the post.¹¹²

have accused the Labor Council executive of manipulating meetings to retain its control and limit the scope of debate by not publishing notices of business or the minutes of previous meetings, maintaining strict adherence to procedures at meetings (delegates are not permitted to move amendments from the floor) and vetting all matters at the executive level. For evidence of these arguments see *Education* (Journal of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation), vol. 58, no. 4, March 16, 1977; and *Labour Newsletter*, October 1973 and November 1976.

¹¹⁰This allegation adds another dimension to the apathy/ignorance explanation of union inactivity with regard to migrants and will be explored more fully in later chapters.

¹¹¹The record of the Victorian Trades Hall Council is not much better in this regard. Even though it has a Maltese-born assistant secretary this has been less influential than the internal politics on Council. In general, left-wing unions have exerted greater pressure on Council's executive than their New South Wales counterparts. Yet while lip service has been paid to migrant issues the executive has still striven to pre-empt initiatives such as the creation of a migrant workers' committee with a token body of its own.

¹¹²The initial appointee was an American with only a limited knowledge of both the industrial and ethnic aspects of the Australian situation. In the first enquiry/circular to affiliated unions he asked union officials to estimate the ethnic break-up of their membership and suggest a research approach and the sorts of problems that should be explored (Labor Council of New South Wales Circular 274/78 *re Trade Union Migrant Survey*, November 8, 1978). Anyone even remotely acquainted with unions and the history of responses to immigrants would have been sceptical of the insights likely to be derived from this approach. Neither the Ethnic Communities Council nor the Ethnic Affairs Commission was particularly pleased with the appointment. These bodies did, however, exert an influence on a subsequent appointment made when the first ethnic affairs officer resigned.

Summary

The poor record of the Labor Council of New South Wales seems surprising in view of the fact that it was more clearly a forum for the representation of migrant problems than the A.C.T.U. Being sufficiently close to the grass roots of the union movement, Council was continuously engaged in the surveillance of migrant accommodation, employment, legal and union problems.

It is insufficient to show that Council handled business of this kind, or that it was aware of this kind of problem. As with the A.C.T.U., union politics were enmeshed in Council debates. In this case, migrant grievances generally arose from left-wing unions, to founder on the rock of conservative apathy. The conservative and often small unions which dominated the Labor Council were neither geared towards responding to migrant issues, nor well disposed to any public airing of their incapacities.

Like the A.C.T.U., during the 1970s Council was infected by the growing demand that unions be more sympathetic to migrants. Nevertheless, its response was quite different. The A.C.T.U. assumed a position of leadership upon general statements of principle even though it consigned their enactment to its member organizations. Charged with implementing these policies, the Labor Council of New South Wales has been at pains even to pay lip service to them. Faced with pressure from government-sponsored ethnic organizations and offered funds with which to initiate reform, Council executive displayed more interest in concealing past insensitivity than in confronting the problems of migrant workers.

3. CONCLUSION

In assessing union peak council responses to immigration four (related) points have emerged. First, there was a clear contrast between the A.C.T.U. and the Labor Council of New South Wales as forums for debating migration issues. This contrast can be understood in terms of the different political structure and problem orientation of each body and of Monk's efforts to secure for the A.C.T.U. a leading role in national development.

Second, there was a perceptible change in the official policy of both bodies over time. Notably, early mistrust and chauvinism were

progressively replaced by a paternalistic interest in the problems of migrant workers. However, while in the A.C.T.U. this change seemed to reflect a genuine baring of collective union conscience, in the case of the Labor Council the changes were cynical and cosmetic.

Third, the A.C.T.U. never entirely surrendered its kneejerk reaction to unemployment but the immigration/employment relationship did become less emotion-charged. In its place, the immigration programme has impacted itself on union attitudes to racism and the growing number of foreign-born workers. While an enlightened policy on both issues is not necessarily inconsistent with a restrictive approach to immigration *per se*, this presents difficulties in practice - something that has not gone unrecognized by unions. Just as full employment was the cornerstone of initial union acceptance of immigration, procedures for trade recognition were essential in achieving the acquiescence of skilled unions. The significance of skill safeguards and the controversy they generated is not evident in peak council deliberations and will be developed below.

Fourth, the politics of immigration were complex. From the very outset the left-wing of the union movement sought to bang a drum on migrant issues. Yet there was ultimately an abrupt change in the message. Early defensive gestures gave way to the championship of reform. At the other extreme, the great majority of right-wing unions showed little concern in migrant issues except where these impinged on the most basic activities such as dues collection. In the late 1940s and early 1950s right-wing factions had actively sought the migrant vote as part of a general power struggle occurring within unions at the time. The rapid collapse of interest in migrant participation in union affairs after this time cannot be seen as entirely accidental. It then served the interests of many conservative union leaderships to discourage, or at least not encourage, membership involvement which might disturb their control - this has been done quietly.

The third and fourth points will be dealt with in the following chapter although the latter will also be developed in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER 6

PRESERVING THE TRADITIONAL CHARACTER OF AUSTRALIAN UNIONISM:
UNION RESPONSES TO SOME ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL AND
LABOUR MARKET EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION

In the previous chapter it was suggested that trade union responses to immigration varied. The general commitment of the A.C.T.U. to a large immigrant intake and its rhetorical opposition to some aspects of racism contrasted strongly with both the membership sensitive caution of a number of trade unions, and with the pragmatic conservatism of the Labor Council of New South Wales. In an abstract way, Australian unions were committed - by the A.C.T.U. leadership - to an enlightened and humanitarian set of internationalist principles. However, parochial self-interest could dictate quite different reactions ranging from the anti-immigration resolutions of left-wing unions during the early 1950s to the passive inactivity of the Labor Council.

While Australian unions considered immigration from several different standpoints - relating variously to housing, political rights and numerous other questions - two issues stand out as being of particular importance. Australian unions were especially concerned about the impact of migrants upon the general labour market and upon particular skilled labour markets; and certain unions were alert to the political effects of the influx of immigrants into their membership ranks. Union conservatism became most intense when officials and indigenous members had to assess how immigrants might transform the economic standing of particular occupations, and how they might change the political characteristics of unions that had entrenched loyalties to particular wings or segments of the labour movement.

This chapter will offer a general account of trade union replies to the threats of political and economic transformation associated with some features of post-war immigration. The first part deals with the manner in which union factional struggles between communists and industrial groups during the late 1940s and early 1950s "fed back" into attitudes towards immigrants, especially displaced persons. The second part deals with craft union responses to the danger that dilution of skilled trades might accompany immigration.

In these two areas Australian unions expressed the strongest fears that immigrants could wreak unwelcome changes to their traditions and methods. These issues also highlighted two significant divisions within the union movement which have only been alluded to briefly thus far. In comparison, the immigration/housing relationship was not a divisive issue for unions. With some notable exceptions, most unions reserved their active interest in housing to peak council debates because they perceived it to be of broad but indirect importance to union operations. This view also applied to the question of legal rights for migrants. The cases of overt political intimidation of migrant unionists were not of a sufficient scale to demand more than the occasional attention of individual unions and peak council executives. Of course, victimization was vitally important for the immigrant activists affected by it and this, along with a number of other aspects of the migrant/union relationship, will form the subject of Chapter 7. Within the context of the present chapter it will be argued that an examination of union reactions to displaced persons and skill recognition for immigrant tradesmen is crucial to any assessment of the general responses of Australian trade unions to post-war immigration.

1. DISPLACED PERSONS

Displaced persons were the first significant group of non-British migrants to reach Australia in the post-war period. While the successful absorption of these immigrants laid the foundation for large-scale "alien" immigration, many unions greeted their arrival with open distrust that occasionally erupted into vitriolic abuse.

In part, the unpopularity of this group centred upon the political characteristics which were popularly attributed to them. Unlike most migrants, their escape from communist-occupied central Europe clearly had a political cause.¹ Communist led elements in

¹In her study, Richards argued that the political rather than economic motivation of displaced persons (for migrating) was of crucial importance in understanding their subsequent behaviour in Australia. See M. Richards, *Displaced Politics: Refugee Migrants in the Australian Political Context*, *op cit.*, p.3.

the labour movement were acutely suspicious of refugees from central Europe since Soviet propaganda had encouraged the belief that these people were not merely anti-communist but also anti-union and pro-fascist. Those from the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia - commonly referred to as "Balts" - were particularly subject to this allegation.²

The Australian Communist Party adopted an antagonistic stance to displaced persons soon after the war. In August 1947, for example, *Tribune* warned that displaced persons included former members of General Anders's Polish emigre forces; "Balts" who had collaborated with the Germans and aided in the extermination of Jews; and Croatian "Chetniks" who had supported a pro-Nazi puppet government against Tito's partisans. The anti-labour political leanings of these people, *Tribune* argued, posed a direct threat to trade unions and democracy.³

In the climate of "cold war" politics the anti-communism attributed to displaced persons was likely to be regarded favourably by the public at large. Overt fascist sympathies, however, were a different matter amongst Australians with fresh memories of the war. Reflecting this, misgivings were also expressed by the New South Wales president of the Returned Servicemen's League and the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism.⁴ The presence of some extreme

²Baltic immigrants accounted for less than 25 per cent of the 170,000 displaced persons who settled in Australia. Nevertheless, "Balt" became a generic term for all displaced persons.

³*Tribune*, August 1947. For further evidence of criticism see *Tribune*, October 5, 1947, January 3 and 14, 1948, July 10 and 31, 1948, September 8 and 11, 1948, March 26, 1949, September 5, 1949, November 12, 1949 and December 7, 1949.

⁴See the *S.M.H.*, July 24, 1947, p.1 and November 28, 1949, p.4 respectively. In 1950, a number of groups joined *Tribune* in making similar allegations about German migrants. See *Tribune*, September 9, November 23 and December 7, 1950; *German and Volks Migration Will Flood Australia with Nazis* (The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Melbourne, undated); and *Nazi Germans for Australia* (Melbourne University Labor Club, Victoria, undated).

right-wing elements amongst displaced persons helped to lend credence to more broadly-based stereotypes.⁵

Controversy surrounding the political character of alien immigrants was accompanied by discontent at their occupational placement. At the outset, the Miners' Federation, F.I.A., B.W.I.U. and other communist led unions expressed strong reservations about the introduction of displaced persons into jobs covered by their members. Political antagonism was entwined with the suspicion that displaced persons would undermine conditions of employment or trade union effectiveness. In April 1948 the federal council of the F.I.A. resolved that:

We are not satisfied that these displaced persons would mix properly with our members ... Council is prepared to agree to the appointment of displaced persons who have a clean trade union and anti-fascist record ... Any displaced person must be O.K.'d by the Port Kembla branch of the union before they are employed.⁶

In September 1948 the Miners' Federation declared at its National Convention:

We are in opposition to any plan for mass government assisted migration of national groups, or workers known to have an outlook and training foreign to the democratic ideals of the Australian working class movement ... We are emphatically opposed to their segregation in barracks attached to selected industries, believing that such a policy is against the best interests of the trade union movement ...⁷

⁵For evidence pertaining to the existence of such elements and their subsequent activities in Australia see E. Platz, *The Integration of Migrants in the Australian Community* (The Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Melbourne, October 1954); M. Jurjevic, "Migrants and Fascist Politics in Australia", *Ekstasis*, no. 6, June 1973, pp.15-19; D. Davies, *Ustasha in Australia* (Communist Party of Australia, 3rd edition, Melbourne, 1978); G. Petersen, M.L.A. statement in *N.S.W. Parliament Hansard*, March 13, 1973, pp.3489-3496; *S.M.H.*, March 28, 1973, p.14 and March 22, 1978, p.7; and *Tribune*, September 18, 1963, November 13, 1963, February 19, 1964, May 20, 1964 and May 8, 1973.

⁶Reported in the *S.M.H.*, September 29, 1948, p.2. A more detailed analysis of the F.I.A.'s responses to immigration plans will be made in Chapter 8.

⁷*Ibid.* Some unions stated their case in purely political terms. The New South Wales secretary of the S.M.W.U., for instance, stated that his union objected to displaced persons because they included many fascists. See the *S.M.H.*, September 3, 1949, p.3.

Following prolonged tripartite negotiation, the admission of displaced persons was made conditional upon their accepting union membership and employer undertakings not to hire displaced persons in preference to Australian or British-born workers.⁸ In some regions and work-places agitation amongst iron-workers and miners did not abate.⁹ As a result of this, further conditions were placed on the types of jobs displaced persons could undertake. This aroused the ire of the press which had already accused unions of political prejudice and procrastination.

NEW BOARDER



News item: A number of unions are refusing membership to Displaced Person migrants.
 Unionist: "We don't mind him sitting at the table, provided he only gets the scraps."

Source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 13, 1949, p.2.

⁸For reports of these negotiations see the *S.M.H.*, October 28, 1948, p.3 and June 3, 1949, p.1; and *Common Cause*, March 5, 1949.

⁹There was considerable distrust amongst both miners and iron-workers in the Newcastle region. See the *S.M.H.*, June 6, 1949, p.2, June 7, 1949, p.4 and July 19, 1951, p.1; and *Tribune*, June 8, 1949. For an example of opposition at a work-place in another region (Metal Manufacturers' tube mill, Port Kembla) see *Tribune*, February 22, 1950.

Some of the surviving objections were based upon fresh considerations. Industrial safety was one such residual issue. In 1948 the Miners' Federation opposed the employment of Poles at the Glen Davis shale oil mine because they represented a safety hazard. A government proposal that displaced persons be employed above ground was still met with caution.¹⁰ Several railway unions also objected to the employment of displaced persons on the grounds that fluency in English was essential for safety.¹¹

While the Miners' Federation had approved a procedure permitting district management committees and delegate boards to regulate the number of displaced persons entering the industry, it remained unconvinced that this additional labour was needed. In the embittered climate of post-war mining industrial relations the employment of "Balts" was readily associated with other employer stratagems to break worker solidarity or cut costs. In August 1949, the Western District branch of the federation warned that trouble would result from any attempt to use "Balt" labour in open cut mines.¹² One month later miners at the Victorian State Coal Mine

¹⁰As late as 1950, A.E. Monk reported to the C.I.P.C. that, while the federation had agreed to the employment of some displaced persons able to speak English, its officials asked that this decision not be publicized because of the continuing hostility of rank and file miners. C.I.P.C. Minutes no. 33/50, 1950.

¹¹In February 1949, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen annual conference resolved that its members would not work with immigrants who had not passed an English fluency test. (See the *Locomotive Journal*, February 10, 1949.) Twelve months later, the New South Wales state council of A.R.U. debated the danger non-English speaking workers posed to other workers and commuters. The subsequent death of a worker at White Bay power station under the very circumstances alluded to did little to alleviate these fears. (See the *S.M.H.*, February 20, 1950, p.4 and February 23, 1950, p.1.) The F.I.A. also expressed concern at the employment of immigrants in foundries which already suffered from a high incidence of injuries. See *Tribune*, February 25, 1950.

¹²Indicating the link between this and the union's current industrial struggles, a branch official stated, "Obviously the men are not going to offer to work 40 hours underground if they can work 40 hours on surface jobs in factories, etc." Quoted in *Tribune*, August 27, 1949.

rejected the offer of a 6/- shift allowance to train non-British workers.¹³ Ultimately, very few displaced persons were employed in coal mining - something as much attributable to the declining labour requirements of the industry as to the success of union policies.¹⁴

For the B.W.I.U. opposition to displaced persons hinged upon post-war housing policy. B.W.I.U. officials argued that "Balt" immigrants made little contribution to the building industry and their arrival placed intolerable pressure upon scarce housing and building resources.¹⁵ The New South Wales branch president, E.W. Bulmer, called for a halt in immigration and stated that his union would oppose any curtailment in home and hospital construction in order to build migrant hostels.¹⁶ A decision by the New South Wales government to stand down workers on all building projects apart from hostels in the wake of the coal strike induced a fierce reaction from the union which threatened a state-wide stoppage.¹⁷ In early July 1949 a meeting of 250 job delegates resolved to black-ban all "Balt" hostels when the miners resumed work.¹⁸ Feeling was especially strong in Newcastle where the housing shortage was acute. At one point, the Newcastle sub-branch of the B.W.I.U. banned further work on the half-completed stand of the Broadmeadows trotting

¹³S.M.H., September 21, 1949, p.3.

¹⁴See E. Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, *op cit.*, p.444. The federation had argued this all along. A former federation official rejected the suggestion that the union stance was based on hostility to immigrants *per se*, stating that there had always been a large number of foreign-born workers employed in the mines and that officials had strenuously opposed ethnic prejudice amongst members. Jim Comerford, interviewed November 14, 1978.

¹⁵*Tribune*, March 18, 1949.

¹⁶S.M.H., May 3, 1949, p.4. His views were echoed by the Victorian Building Trades Group, the New South Wales president of the R.S.L. and former state premier, Jack Lang. See *Tribune*, September 2 and 4, 1949; and the S.M.H., April 4, 1949, p.2 and May 4, 1949, p.2.

¹⁷The union revised its decision and instead sought to institute a "go slow" policy on hostel projects with the additional aim of winning improved wages and conditions. See *Tribune*, June 29 and July 9, 1949 and February 15, 1950.

¹⁸*Tribune*, July 9, 1949.

track - a move endorsed by the Newcastle Trades Hall Council.¹⁹ In April and May 1949 attempts had been made to ban overtime at three hostels in the region.²⁰ On June 6 the Trades Hall Council condemned the federal government for taking tradesmen from "building much needed homes for workers in the district in order to speed up the construction of hostels for 'Balts'."²¹ Amid widespread protest meetings by miners, iron-workers and other workers, the local Building Trades Group lodged a formal protest with Immigration Minister Calwell which called on the government to change its policy.²² Within days of this protest events took a dramatic turn when Trades Hall, Building Trades Group and F.I.A. officials shifted a number of local families, who had been rendered homeless by recent floods, into the unoccupied (but nearly complete) Mayfield West hostel.²³ This action was taken without any authority, yet was to last six months.²⁴

Even though left-wing unions remained at the forefront of the crusade against displaced persons, they had no monopoly upon the

¹⁹This ban was lifted only after a meeting with the state Housing Minister. Alex Dowling, former trades hall secretary, interviewed November 15, 1978.

²⁰A ban did operate for some weeks at the Mayfield West hostel project although tradesmen at this and other sites (Nelson's Bay and Greta) eventually chose to continue working overtime. See correspondence between the B.W.I.U. district secretary and the state branch secretary and president dated May 10 and July 18, 1949 respectively.

²¹Newcastle Trades Hall Council, minutes of meeting held on June 6, 1949.

²²The Building Trades Group protest followed a request from the Trades Hall Council. See correspondence between the Newcastle District Building Trades Group and A.A. Calwell dated June 21, 1949. The move was endorsed by a meeting of workers at the Mayfield West site who criticized the inclusion of "non-essential" items in hostels and resolved to stop work if the Building Trades Group demand was not met.

²³Newcastle Trades Hall Council, minutes of meeting held on June 23, 1949; and *Tribune*, June 24 and 25, 1949.

²⁴According to several union officials involved in the incident, the government was afraid to interfere because of the depth of local feeling. The families paid no rent during their stay, after which the issue lapsed. Community tension was resurrected by disturbances at the Greta hostel where, it was alleged, Nazi songs were being sung by displaced persons. Alex Dowling, interviewed November 15, 1978; Jim Comerford, ex-Miners' Federation official, interviewed November 14, 1978; and George Mulholand, ex-F.I.A. official, interviewed October 12, 1978.

substance of the principal objections, for these were rooted in the familiar antipathies roused by immigrants who appeared to exacerbate shortages of jobs and housing, and who threatened customary employment practices and safety procedures. A number of conservative unions shared in these fears. In May 1949 the Brick, Tile and Pottery Employees' Union banned the introduction of displaced persons until it obtained a conference with employer and government officials upon the employment security of indigenous brick-makers.²⁵ In Lithgow, the local branch of the Federated Gas Employees' Union asked the city council to grant Australian-born employees absolute preference of employment.²⁶ While the latter demand was rare, the underlying fears that displaced persons would be employed in preference to indigenous workers were common-place.²⁷ The employment of "Balts" triggered a large number of protests from work-places and local union branches.²⁸ In December 1949, the North Australian Workers' Union went so far as to decide that no displaced persons were needed in the Northern Territory.²⁹

Fears of displacement were reinforced by a number of

²⁵The union's action followed protests by workers at the State Brickworks (New South Wales) in September 1948 and at the Bedford Brickworks, Sydney in May 1949. (See the *S.M.H.*, September 29, 1948, p.2 and *Tribune*, May 28, 1949. See also *Labor News*, vol. 5, no. 12, December 1948, vol. 6, no. 7, May 25, 1949 and vol. 6, no. 10, July 6, 1949.) The matter was not resolved to the union's satisfaction until late September 1949. See the *S.M.H.*, June 6, 1949, p.2 (editorial), September 12, 1949, p.3, September 14, 1949, p.2. and September 16, 1949, p.4; and *Tribune*, June 1, 1949 and April 1, 1950.

²⁶*S.M.H.*, September 5, 1949, p.3.

²⁷Even unions not openly hostile to displaced persons were at pains to make their stance clear. For instance, the stated policy of the New South Wales Building Trades Group (representing six building unions) was that acceptance was contingent on there being no unemployed union members. *S.M.H.*, September 13, 1949, p.3.

²⁸Typical of the numerous reported incidents were resolutions passed by the Sydney Yards branch of the A.R.U. (*Tribune*, June 11, 1949), a meeting of job delegates at Garden Island (Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting held on April 13, 1950) and the Victorian branch of the O.P.D.U. *S.M.H.*, January 21, 1950, p.2 and February 16, 1950, p.4.

²⁹*Tribune*, December 21, 1949.

instances where displaced persons refused to join unions.³⁰ Yet it was only to be expected that migrants with little or no command of English and a different cultural background should have some initial problems understanding Australian trade unionism. Some believed joining a trade union entailed membership of a political party or religious group or precluded them from accepting other types of work.³¹ In time most unions came to recognise that only a tiny minority of displaced persons resisted union membership after the situation had been explained to them.³²

The question of union membership was associated with qualms that displaced persons would be used to undercut established wages and conditions. In April 1948 Immigration Minister Calwell assured the Melbourne Trades Hall Council that "Balts" would be employed at award rates and would not be used as strike-breakers.³³ While this partly allayed misgivings, a number of unions were worried that awards might be difficult to enforce. The danger existed in industries and occupations where employees were widely scattered, union organization was weak, immigrants were concentrated in particular work-places or where payment was made under a piece-work or sub-contract arrangement. In December of 1948 a meeting of

³⁰*Tribune* reported a number of cases involving waitresses, hospital orderlies, construction labourers and postal workers which led to actual or threatened protest stoppages by fellow workers. See *Tribune*, April 10, 1948, September 9, 1948, July 2, 1949 and April 29, 1950.

³¹This confusion partly arose from the European experiences of displaced persons. There is considerable evidence of it in the reports of organizers and union journals which will be referred to in the case study chapters. Confusion was aggravated by the negative and insensitive attitude of union officials. The federal government also made little effort to inform displaced persons of their industrial rights and obligations apart from periodic multi-lingual articles in *New Australian* and other publications. For an illustration of contemporary debate on the issue see the *S.M.H.*, June 10, 1950, p.5.

³²This point was made by many past and present union officials interviewed. Even in the case of a determined refusal to join, unions were generally able to enforce membership under the threat of dismissal. See, for instance, *Tribune*, March 8, 1951.

³³In January a similar assurance had been given to the Timber Workers' Union. See the *S.M.H.*, April 7, 1948, p.5.

cane-cutters at Innisfail, north Queensland alleged that the introduction of "Balts" had led to overcrowding in the industry and the undercutting of contract rates.³⁴ The B.W.I.U. also reported that it had to intervene on the behalf of migrants not being paid their full award entitlements. Hostility and mistrust were exacerbated by press, government and employer spokesmen who ascribed a strong work motivation to displaced persons and drew comparisons with indigenous workers which were unfavourable to the latter.³⁵ Again, it took some time before these fears were appeased.³⁶

³⁴*Tribune*, December 8, 1948.

³⁵These descriptions included phrases such as "magnificent workers with no false dignity", "hardworking and adaptable", "industrious" and "New Australians think pay is good". (See the *S.M.H.*, January 19, 1948, p.2, July 22, 1948, p.2, August 7, 1949, p.5 and April 3, 1950, p.2.) The C.I.P.C.'s description of them as "splendid types" also drew union criticism, much to the chagrin of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*S.M.H.*, September 3, 1948, p.2). *Tribune* also publicized these sentiments. In January 1948 it quoted one displaced person as stating, "We want to work, and we'll work hard to please everybody. All we want is good plain food - plenty of potatoes. We won't worry about sweets and luxuries." Eighteen months later it reported that employers had found displaced persons were prepared to ignore award conditions by starting early. See *Tribune*, January 3, 1948 and June 11, 1949.

³⁶A mixture of misunderstanding, behaviour stereotypes and migrant ignorance of customary modes of industrial behaviour was responsible for a good deal of work-place friction in the early stages. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that some employers had found that "production was enhanced if migrants were kept working in groups of their own countrymen rather than being mixed with Australians because they became infected with the latter's go slow attitude" (*S.M.H.*, September 24, 1950, p.5). The sometimes deliberate, sometimes accidental, segregation of ethnic work groups became a characteristic feature of migrant employment (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, an early study by Bell found that employers were obliged to limit the number of migrants at the outset in order to permit accommodation. He argued the major source of resentment amongst indigenous workers was the "language, segregation and money-hungriness" of migrants which was seen to threaten working conditions and the employment of "locals" (J.H. Bell, "Problems Relating to New Australians in Industry", *Manufacturing and Management*, May 1951, pp.363-365). A belated recognition of the accommodation process by unions is apparent in *Tribune* which reported instances where displaced persons either initiated or joined industrial action aimed at rectifying award evasion. The apprehension that displaced persons would be used as strike-breakers also failed to materialize apart from a few isolated instances such as in June 1949 when the W.W.F. accused the A.W.U. of directing "Balt" members to unload ships during a strike by north Queensland wharf labourers (see *Tribune*, June 4, 1949). Even in this case, the

A more persuasive source of union dissatisfaction with displaced persons was the government contract which tied them to a particular job for two years. Unions felt this reduced them to the servile status of indentured labour - always a source of unbridled hostility. The matter aroused considerable debate at the 1949 A.C.T.U. congress which called for an abolition of the system (see Chapter 5). The basis of the attack was not merely the threat posed to award enforcement. A number of skilled unions and professional bodies feared that these requirements would be used by employers to exert extraordinary power over labour, including the employment of displaced persons in grades of work beyond their recognized qualifications. In turn, this would disrupt traditional training systems and induce skill dilution.

In November 1948 the state council of New South Wales Nurses' Association debated whether or not it would take action against the training of displaced persons as nurses.³⁷ In September of the following year the association's secretary alleged that displaced persons were being paid more than Australians.³⁸ Council eventually resolved to permit the employment of displaced persons so long as there was no erosion of conditions and no Australians available.³⁹ In 1950 the federal executive of the Blacksmiths' Society ruled that displaced persons must complete their contracts and have their qualifications recognized by the local (blacksmithing)

decision to "scab" was made by another union and not employers or displaced persons themselves. Trade unions also made their first feeble attempts to overcome the communication problem. In July 1950, for instance, interpreters were used at a meeting of 600 striking postal workers at the Sydney Trades Hall. A number of union officials interviewed expressed the view that once misunderstanding was overcome displaced persons proved as resolute during industrial action as their Australian-born counterparts. See *Tribune*, September 19, 1951; *Labor News*, vol. 6, no. 17, October 12, 1949; and the *S.M.H.*, July 6, 1950, p.3.

³⁷New South Wales Nurses' Federation, minutes of state council meeting held on November 23, 1948.

³⁸*Ibid.*, September 27, 1949.

³⁹*Ibid.*, November 22, 1949. By this time the association had been involved in a jurisdictional dispute with the Hospital Employees' Association at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney. The Nurses' Association claimed that displaced persons were nurses (and therefore should belong to it) while the Hospital Employees' Association charged that they were domestics - a calling it covered. New South Wales Nurses' Association, annual conference minutes, 1949.

trades committee before they could be admitted into the union.⁴⁰

Significantly, it was not only unions who voiced disapproval with the government contract binding displaced persons. Refugees themselves expressed disaffection with a scheme that took little or no account of their qualifications and skills. This was particularly the case with professionals such as doctors, who found themselves relegated to heavy manual labour.⁴¹ Although considerable criticism was levelled at the restrictive policies of craft unions upon trade recognition, the attitude of professional associations was commonly far more discriminatory. Standards rigidly connected to British criteria were sometimes complemented by a strict quota on the number of non-British trained professionals who could be accredited in any one year (see Chapter 4).

It is true to say that the contract did endow employers with exceptional powers, although not all attempted to exploit these. Displaced persons were only permitted to change jobs if they could prove to the local employment office that the employer was making unreasonable demands. This was quite difficult for workers who frequently possessed only a limited understanding of their rights. Department of Labour and National Service (D.L.N.S.) precautions against unscrupulous employers proved less than effective.⁴² For their part, displaced persons were not entirely subservient to employer pressure. On occasion, groups engaged in spontaneous or

⁴⁰This ruling was endorsed by the union's federal council. (Blacksmiths' Society of Australia, federal executive report on correspondence with the Metal Trades Federation, April 15, 1950; and federal council minutes of meeting held on September 13, 1950.) This stance never proved entirely enforceable. Recognizing this, the union's 1952 federal conference ruled that displaced persons and elevates who could not be excluded or regressed were to be paid award rates and enlisted into a special category of membership. Conference resolved, however, not to enter into any written agreement with employers on either displaced persons or elevates. Blacksmiths' Society, federal conference minutes, May 11, 1952.

⁴¹A number wrote letters of protest to the press. See, for instance, *S.M.H.*, February 21, 1949, p.2, July 7, 1949, p.2 and January 19, 1950, p.2. The matter was also raised by Jim Healy, general secretary of the W.W.F. See *Tribune*, September 10, 1949.

⁴²For a report of the department's role in protecting displaced persons see the *S.M.H.*, July 27, 1949, p.2.

organized (with union assistance) protests against their working and living conditions.⁴³ More commonly, individuals took the matter into their own hands by leaving the job before the expiry date of the contract.⁴⁴ However, these absconders and those with "unsatisfactory work records" risked deportation if caught. This power was exercised in a salutary fashion. By March 1951, 42 displaced persons had been deported, most on the basis of such offences.⁴⁵ While these measures were not without effect, the "drift" continued. Amongst those displaced persons who saw out their contract a high proportion left soon afterwards.⁴⁶

Displaced Persons and Union Politics

The previous section has suggested that union attitudes to displaced persons could be founded in the political character of these immigrants, as well as in their special impact upon employment, industrial conditions and union effectiveness. Undoubtedly, the political responses of unions to this group were made especially sensitive by the intense political struggle that dominated Australian unionism throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. Displaced persons were unfortunate to be greeted by an Australian union movement riven by conflict between communists and Industrial Groups.

⁴³See Footnote 36. For further reports of similar actions see the *S.M.H.*, January 13, 1950, p.5; and *Tribune*, April 29, 1950 and July 27, 1951.

⁴⁴The exact number who did this will probably never be known. While the immigration minister suggested less than 2 per cent broke their contract (about 3,400), this was rejected by a New South Wales police spokesman who estimated the number was 30,000 in this state alone. The practice generated considerable publicity. See the *S.M.H.*, March 7, 1951, p.1, March 26, 1951, p.3, August 2, 1951, p.3 and April 6, 1952, p.2.

⁴⁵*S.M.H.*, March 7, 1951, p.1. A government spokesman stated that many others could have been deported. For other reports of deportation see the *S.M.H.*, March 22, 1949, p.3, May 18, 1949, p.2, May 19, 1949, p.2, May 21, 1949, p.2, September 27, 1949, p.3 and September 29, 1949, p.2; and *Tribune*, September 17, 1949.

⁴⁶A D.L.N.S. survey found that 57 per cent left shortly after they were released from their contract obligations. Reported in the *S.M.H.*, April 6, 1952, p.2.

By the end of the Second World War communists had attained positions of influence in a number of key unions including the F.I.A., Miners' Federation, W.W.F., B.W.I.U., Seamen's Union and Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association (F.E.D. & F.A.). For the next decade union politics were dominated by attempts by the largely Catholic-based Industrial Groups (subsequently endorsed by A.L.P.) to restore conservative influence within these (and other) unions, in order, ostensibly, to prevent the A.L.P. from becoming dominated by external political interests.⁴⁷

Factional conflict usually centred upon struggles to dominate the internal political machine of "disputed" unions. Local politics became of central importance, since the character of membership participation would determine the result of elections for union office. Other strategies were implemented in an effort to diminish the influence of communist-led unions which proved resilient to electoral challenges. The de-registration of the B.W.I.U. and the F.E.D. & F.A. enabled the registration of a "Grouper" union (the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners) and the transfer of some membership jurisdiction to the by then non-communist F.I.A. respectively.⁴⁸ Despite these and other options, the main thrust of political conflict took place within unions rather than between them, and remained a struggle for votes rather than a fight for membership. Survival in union office came to depend critically upon the officials' capacity to organize blocs of dependable voters.

⁴⁷The influence of the Movement, its relationship to the Industrial Groups and the exact impact of these on the Australian union movement (as distinct from the A.L.P.) is still in need of further research. Nevertheless, there is a considerable body of literature which at least partly documents these events. See Paul Ormonde, *The Movement* (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1972); R. Murray, *The Split, Australian Labor in the Fifties* (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1972); I. Turner, *In Union is Strength* (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1976), chapter 8; D.W. Rawson, *Unions and Unionists in Australia* (George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978), pp.101-111; T. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia 1920-72* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975), chapter 8; and J.G. Murtagh, *Australia: The Catholic Chapter* (Folding Press, Melbourne, 1969), chapter 12.

⁴⁸For a discussion of the de-registration of these unions and the implications thereof see G. Teagle, *The Consequences of De-Registration on the Organizational Survival of a Trade Union: Three Case Studies* (Unpublished B.Ec. Honours Thesis, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, 1979), especially p.82, pp.113-121.

A simple connection can be made between the political character of the displaced persons who adopted union membership and the role that could be imputed to them in union politics. Their presumed anti-communism permits commentators to assume an alliance with the Industrial Group faction. Their apparently homogeneous "group character" makes them a seemingly identifiable ingredient in the array of tightly disciplined groups that tussled for union control. In short, their conservatism, their presumed solidarity and their eligibility to participate in some union ballots have been taken to suggest that they were a critical factor in the successes of the Industrial Groups.

Martin sees the arrival of displaced persons between 1947 and 1952 and the major assault upon communist influence within the union movement as being more than coincidental.⁴⁹ Without eschewing the traditional identification of the Industrial Groups with Irish Catholic elements in the labour movement, Richards has accorded a role to displaced persons. She argues that:

The migrants may not have been decisive for the success of anti-communist groups through which the Movement worked in the unions, but they were certainly important.⁵⁰

The line of argument which connects the migrant intake with the Industrial Groups seems to be buttressed further by certain elements of policy. In particular, the mass rural immigration policy recommended by the "Groupers", in order to secure economic growth and military survival, stands in sharp contrast to the restrictive attitude to immigration publicly adopted by the left.⁵¹ Whether

⁴⁹J. Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, *op cit.*, p.187.

⁵⁰L. Richards, *Displaced Politics*, *op cit.*, p.6.

⁵¹The Victorian-based grouper journal *Newsweekly* firmly advocated mass rural immigration in the interests of economic growth and security from Asian aggression. While notionally opposed to cheap industrial labour *Newsweekly* condemned union opposition to immigration even during periods of unemployment and enthusiastically endorsed employer support for the programme. In the early stages it had deplored the decline of European colonial hegemonies in Asia and did not hesitate to appeal to race prejudices. *Newsweekly* eventually disowned "White Australia" but did not publicize this stance to the extent of its arch enemy, the Communist Party. See Paul Ormonde, *The Movement*, *op cit.*, p.23; and *Newsweekly*, May 25 and June 8, 1955, March 21 and June 20, 1956 and March 20, 1957.

or not immigrants in general, or displaced persons in particular, played a critical role in the struggle for union votes, both camps could be portrayed in terms of support for or opposition to further recruitment of unionists of this kind.⁵²

The exact role of displaced persons in these intra-union struggles will probably never be known, but appears to have been of some significance in specific unions and regions. Unlike the broader political sphere, displaced persons had immediate voting rights in the unions they joined. As already noted, they were directed in large numbers to manual occupations in construction, manufacturing, steel and transport industries. These were precisely the areas from which a number of key communist-led unions drew their memberships.

According to Richards (nee Cleggett), substantial numbers gravitated towards the Movement and by 1953 a great many were working for Industrial Groups.⁵³ The extent to which the Movement consciously sought to incorporate displaced persons within its ranks is open to question. As early as January 1948 the Communist Party had expressed its suspicion at the active support for "Balt" immigration emanating from the Catholic Action Movement.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, as Martin states, the coalescence was not entirely planned though neither was it purely accidental. Displaced persons came to the cause in a variety of ways - through Movement leaders, their own Catholic priests (who, like their Australian counterparts, rallied support during the struggle), union organizers and by voluntarily offering their services.⁵⁵ For the most part, those who

⁵²The likely allegiance of displaced persons was not lost on those anti-communist union leaders who did not subscribe to the notion of mass rural immigration. See public statements by Labor Council of New South Wales president C.W. Anderson reported in the *S.M.H.*, December 31, 1949, p.2.

⁵³M.G. Cleggett, *Migrants in the DLP: A Study of the Involvement of a Group of Migrants in the DLP in Victoria* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of Sociology, La Trobe University, 1971), p.79.

⁵⁴*Tribune*, January 3, 1948.

⁵⁵J. Martin, *The Migrant Presence*, *op cit.*, p.188. Amongst a number of former communist union officials interviewed the role of foreign-born priests was seen as the most significant aspect of organizing the votes of displaced persons.

joined the struggle as activists appear to have worked anonymously and in isolation from each other.⁵⁶

It was not necessary for these recruits or their target electorate to understand the intricacies of the Australian political/industrial situation and little, if any, effort was made in this regard. Their major function was to translate and distribute electoral propaganda, engage new activists, lobby support through door-knocking, etc. and act as interpreters at work-place meetings. Evidence as to extent and effectiveness of their activities is scarce. This is not surprising given the informal basis upon which most operated and the tendency of written material covering this period to "go missing" from union records. Nevertheless, Richards argues that displaced persons played a prominent role in electoral contests within the Victorian branches of the F.I.A. and A.R.U.⁵⁷ Referring to one activist she states:

The roots of the whole migrant effort undoubtedly grew in the ironworkers under the unobtrusive supervision of the NCC and Borin's far from unobtrusive figurehead.⁵⁸

She records that another migrant, Godlewski, was given an interpreting job in the new anti-communist administration. Richards also discovered migrants involved in battles within the F.C.U. and Hospital Employees' Federation.

In New South Wales a similar pattern emerges to that uncovered by Richards in Victoria. However, research failed to reveal even a few high profile activists and the impact of the displaced persons vote appears to have been negligible in all but a few isolated cases. In 1949 a right-wing campaign against the communist leadership of the B.W.I.U. included the publication of "red baiting" leaflets in German - a language understood by most displaced persons.⁵⁹ There is no evidence that the pamphlets had any effect.⁶⁰ The B.W.I.U.

⁵⁶L. Richards, *Displaced Politics*, *op cit.*, p.7. Nevertheless, Richards cites several notable exceptions to this.

⁵⁷See M.G. Richards (née Cleggett), *Migrants in the D.L.P.*, *op cit.*, p.83.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p.58.

⁵⁹*Tribune*, October 29, 1949. See also B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.44.

⁶⁰The federal deregistration of the B.W.I.U. actually made electoral challenges to the leadership almost impossible.

did later accuse its "grouper" rival, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, of exploiting the English-language difficulties of migrants in efforts to recruit them within its ranks.⁶¹ The number of displaced persons within skilled unions was generally too small to warrant these efforts, however.

As in Victoria, the focus of activism in New South Wales was within the A.R.U. and F.I.A. - unions with predominantly unskilled/semi-skilled memberships. In the F.I.A. the Industrial Group sought the support of migrants by publishing pamphlets which drew attention to its anti-communist stance. Upon gaining power, the conservative faction published a multi-lingual segment in the F.I.A. journal, *Labor News*. This practice was dropped several years later when, coincidentally, the new leadership was firmly entrenched. The organization of displaced persons in the A.I. & S. Port Kembla steelworks appears to have played some part in the defeat of communist officials in the south coast branch. Concerted appeals for their allegiance were made by way of work-place meetings, pamphlets, priests and door-to-door canvassing in what turned out to be a closely contested ballot. However, the impact of this campaign strategy should not be overstated. The collapse of the communist F.I.A. leadership occurred at a national rather than regional level for reasons far more profound than the infusion of a few thousand displaced persons.⁶² Indeed, the basis of the communists' defeat was laid in Sydney and Newcastle where displaced persons were not influential. In Victoria and Port Kembla - the two branches where migrant involvement was most apparent - communist officials hung on for a short time after the national takeover.

Similarly, the New South Wales branch of the A.R.U. changed its philosophy before displaced persons had entered the railways in any large numbers. Moreover, anti-communist sympathies did not even initially strengthen the Industrial Group's position with regard to

⁶¹B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.41.

⁶²This view was readily proffered by most former protagonists in the struggle interviewed - including former communist officials of the F.I.A. A more thorough account of events within the F.I.A. will be provided in Chapter 8.

displaced persons. The National Union of Railwaymen, a rival to the A.R.U., used the communist stigma against the reformed A.R.U. leadership in an attempt to recruit displaced persons as members - with some degree of success.⁶³ At the same time, there is little doubt that those displaced persons who did join the A.R.U. tended to support the Industrial Group.

Their introduction was also associated with the decline of railway shop committees in New South Wales and Victoria. *Tribune* alleged that "Balts" were partly responsible for the defeat of a number of communist shop committee officials and were interrupting work-place meetings.⁶⁴ However, while the introduction of a large number of apparently anti-communist, non-English speaking and transitory workers made cohesive rank and file organization more difficult, this cannot be seen as more than a subsidiary factor in the decline of shop committees and maintenance of conservative union leaderships.⁶⁵

⁶³The National Union of Railwaymen (N.U.R.) had been officially designated as a scab organization by the union movement in general (its antecedents having been formed after the 1917 rail strike in New South Wales). *Tribune* which had little sympathy for either the N.U.R. or the current A.R.U. leadership, reported a number of instances where the former was using anti-communist propaganda to enrol "Balts". (See *Tribune*, May 25, 1949 and April 29, 1950.) These problems were mentioned by a number of anti-communist A.R.U. officials including Lloyd Ross (interviewed August 25, 1978). It cannot be discounted that a number of displaced persons joined the union simply out of confusion. *Tribune* placed the blame with the apathy of the A.R.U. executive rather than anti-communist feelings on the part of displaced persons. Credence is lent to this claim by the fact that some British migrants also joined the N.U.R. because this was the title of the A.R.U.'s United Kingdom counterpart.

⁶⁴*Tribune*, January 14 and April 29, 1950. This view was echoed by a number of former shop committee activists such as Alf Leno.

⁶⁵For a more convincing analysis of the reasons underlying the decline of railway shop committees see M. Rimmer and P. Sutcliffe, "The Origins of Australian Workshop Organization, 1918 to 1950", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 23, no. 2, June 1981, pp.236-239.

Conclusions

For a number of reasons it would be plausible to expect that political antagonism towards migrants would be especially intense in the case of the displaced persons. The specific political stereotype imposed upon this group was sufficient not merely to engender suspicion in communist circles, but also weakened their acceptability to other Australians who feared fascist influence. Furthermore, these migrants arrived at the height of an especially paranoid bout of intra-union conflict, and could easily be cast as partisan elements in the faction fights that split Australian unionism.

In spite of these arguments, there are flaws in the suggestion that displaced persons were active supporters - in any special sense - of the Industrial Groups. First, very little evidence has survived to establish a significant connection. The argument rests largely upon the *a-priori* plausibility of an association between Catholic anti-communist immigrants and Catholic anti-communist Industrial Groups. Second, surviving evidence concerning union attitudes to displaced persons suggests that whatever xenophobia existed could be at least equally attributable to concern upon distributive matters relating to housing and employment, or to industrial questions such as safety and trade union activity. Displaced persons attracted special fears because the nature of their contractual obligations to the Australian government were such that they became dependent upon employers to the point where their effectiveness as unionists could be doubted. Third, it is clear that a relatively small number of unions could have been affected by the entrance of large numbers of displaced persons. Craft unions were generally exempt from this group, as were such communist-led unions as the Miners' Federation, the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Seamen's Union - which exercised some control upon entry to the occupation they covered. Even the F.I.A. and the A.R.U. - which did admit displaced persons - did not generally absorb sufficient numbers for them to be decisive in union elections. Fourth, to reinforce the suggestion that displaced persons were not significant in Industrial Group struggles to unseat communists in unions such as the F.I.A. and the A.R.U., it is apparent that there is no correlation between the geographical distribution of displaced persons

and the spread of Industrial Group influence. For example the Newcastle branch of the F.I.A. was taken over by an Industrial Group in 1949 when displaced persons were of negligible importance in the B.H.P. Steelworks.

In conclusion, any suggestion that displaced persons acted in such a way that there existed a reasonable basis for associating them with the political transformation of unionism in the late 1940s and 1950s must be treated with extreme caution.⁶⁶

2. SKILL RECOGNITION: THE CRAFT UNION RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION

If political antagonism to migrants was most intense in the case of displaced persons, industrial insecurity peaked amongst craftsmen and their unions - a sector that has been traditionally suspicious of outsiders, whether immigrant or not. The remainder of this chapter will consider the way in which craft-based trade unions reacted to immigrants. It was suggested in Chapter 2 that the imperatives of craft unionism differ from those of industrial or general unions because of the degree of control the former are able to exert on the entry of workers into their calling. Australian craft unions, like their British counterparts, depended upon the apprenticeship system. It provided both for the training of workers to a recognized standard, and enabled craft unions to restrict entry into the trade. The employer was obliged to train apprentices in all facets of the trade rather than those which he might find immediately useful. Craft unions also enforced an age limit upon entry to apprenticeship, limitations upon the movement of apprentices, and a ratio of apprentices to recognized tradesmen. This system was designed to ensure that there was no excess supply of skilled labour and that craft standards were maintained. In Australia, craft privileges including wage differentials and job rights became firmly ensconced within the arbitration system in the form of skill margins. Craft unions argued that the long training

⁶⁶It is worth noting that later groups of Catholic immigrants, notably Italians, have not proved to be especially sympathetic to the overtures of anti-communist elements either inside or outside the union movement. See L. Richards, *Displaced Politics, op cit.*, p.15 who cites some evidence with regard to political attitudes.

period was both essential and a necessary basis for wage fixation.

Such arguments, of course, rested on the maintenance of apprenticeship as the primary source of skilled labour. Craft unions were engaged in a continuous struggle to exclude non-apprenticed operatives and craftsmen from other trades from undertaking tasks for which they claimed exclusive coverage. Restrictive practices have been disturbed by technological change which has rendered some trades redundant and altered the nature of others. Australian craft unions also attempted to restrict competition from immigrant tradesmen by actively dissuading British craftsmen from emigrating and preventing those who did arrive from being contracted at inferior rates of pay and conditions (see Chapter 2).

Unions could do little about the dilution of work through the deskilling of tasks. They did, however, fight a rearguard action against the dilution of their respective trades by the upgrading of less skilled men to jobs traditionally undertaken by indentured tradesmen.

The Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act

The contraction of apprentice numbers during the depression caused critical shortages of tradesmen at the outset of World War Two. Faced with this, the federal government asked the metal trades unions to accept limited dilution. By 1940 negotiations between representatives of the government, unions and major employers had resulted in a series of dilution agreements which were incorporated under the National Security Regulations. The agreements (covering the boiler-making, black-smithing, engineering, sheet-metal working, moulding, electrical and boot trades) enabled the rapid training (for about three months) of 50,000 semi-skilled and partly trained workers for tasks which were formerly the preserve of tradesmen. The process was regulated by tripartite committees covering each trade both at the commonwealth and state level. "Added" workers were paid full award rates. A register was kept of those workers upgraded and it was agreed that they would be returned to their former status at the end of the war. In the event of redundancies, preference had to be shown to recognized tradesmen who had completed apprenticeships. Union leaders viewed these provisions as essential to safeguard the interests

of time-served tradesmen and to placate the strong antipathy to dilution which their members had always exhibited.

Towards the end of the war discussions were renewed with regard to fulfilling the intention of the agreement. A further question considered was the claims of ex-servicemen to enter into dilution trades. The Re-establishment and Employment Act of 1945 provided that preference be shown to ex-servicemen in employment. The Commonwealth Reconstruction and Training Scheme (C.R.T.S.) was introduced for those ex-servicemen with experience in the trades concerned (not just those covered by dilution regulations). Those who, on application to the relevant local trade committees, could acquire tradesman proficiency within twelve months were designated as probationary tradesmen. Others authorized for training by the local committee were designated as trainee tradesmen. They were paid an allowance by the government on a sliding scale (from 60 per cent to zero), depending on the progress towards proficiency. The employer was required to make up the difference between the allowance and the award rate. In March of 1946 the National Security (Dilution) Regulations were amended for blacksmiths, boiler-makers, sheet-metal workers, engineering and electrical tradesmen. Dilutees were permitted to remain in their trade subject to local committee direction. This was based on there being no available unemployed recognized tradesman or a similarly placed probationary/trainee tradesman.

In the following year, the Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act (T.R.R.A.) was introduced. With an initial life of five years, the T.R.R.A. was intended to formalize the dilution arrangements outside the auspices of specific wartime legislation. As in earlier agreements, union acquiescence was contingent upon guaranteed preference to recognized tradesmen in engagement and redundancy. A tripartite Central Trade Committee (C.T.C.) established general standards in each trade.⁶⁷ At the state level Local Trade Committees (L.T.C.) considered applications for tradesman status and policed preference

⁶⁷ Apart from the engineering trades, where the A.E.U. and the Australasian Society of Engineers competed for members, committees consisted of representatives of one union (usually the federal president and secretary).

provisions. The continuation of full employment meant that about half the wartime dilutees remained at their trade.

Unions strongly supported the T.R.R.A. legislation because it safeguarded the rights of tradesmen. For their part, employers accepted the act but without any enthusiasm. Many employer groups felt that the preference provisions impinged on managerial prerogatives.⁶⁸ The government viewed the legislation as essential to maintaining the commitments made to unions in 1940 and to enable the smooth absorption of ex-servicemen into industry.

The T.R.R.A. legislation, arising as it did in quite an *ad hoc* fashion, was to assume a new and important role with the onset of post-war immigration. As in earlier periods, British immigrants faced few problems in having their skills recognized since the local apprenticeship system/craft divisions had been derived from the United Kingdom. Hence, British craftsmen could readily find their counterparts in Australia.⁶⁹ However, the proposal to introduce non-British tradesmen, whose training differed markedly from the Anglo/Australian model, raised significant questions as to what standards would be acceptable both to industry and to unions. Following preliminary overseas investigations by Monk and King (as part of their functions on the Immigration Advisory Committee mission), it was decided that the recognition of immigrant tradesmen would be carried out under the auspices of the T.R.R.A. Applicants whose documented proficiency was in question could be required to undergo a trade test by the L.T.C. before being issued a tradesman's certificate. Again, this only covered those trades subject to the original dilution agreements.

Before 1952 British migrants made up the bulk of the skilled worker intake. Tradesmen were selected by technical advisers

⁶⁸For evidence of this see *Canberra Letter*, no. 276, July 18, 1946, p.5.

⁶⁹As noted in Chapter 2, many craft unions enjoyed close and cordial relations with their British counterparts and used this to dissuade immigration at times of unemployment. This relationship did not always work to the advantage of British migrants who were sometimes required to show evidence of good membership standing in the U.K. body. Further, British ex-servicemen were not permitted to complete trade training in Australia. See the *S.M.H.*, March 14, 1947, p.3.

seconded from the D.L.N.S. to the Immigration Department's London mission. Recognition procedures for non-British migrants were *ad hoc* and inadequate - a problem made worse for displaced persons who frequently lacked documentation testifying to their skills.⁷⁰ Responding to employer/government pressure, Monk advocated the immigration of young workers able to enter apprenticeship.⁷¹ He stated that unions would accept non-British tradesmen so long as their skills were evaluated prior to embarkation.⁷² This suggestion was accepted by the Immigration Department which proposed that the A.C.T.U. nominate technical advisers to conduct preliminary (overseas) examinations of those workers claiming special skills. It also undertook to institute trade testing facilities at the Bathurst and Bonegilla migrant reception centres.⁷³ This was endorsed by the C.I.P.C. although union representative Broadby warned that account would have to be taken of the situation in each state and the attitude of individual unions.

Irrespective of these developments, unions maintained a rigid adherence to the apprenticeship principle in skill recognition. In 1951 the C.I.P.C. agreed that the target numbers for European craftsmen would be determined after a metal trades mission had ascertained the categories of workers acceptable to Australian unions.⁷⁴ Technical advisers (usually former tradesmen) were appointed to the immigration missions in the Netherlands, Italy and West Germany soon after immigration agreements were signed with these countries. However, according to Salter, screening standards proved too strict with more than 70 per cent of those applying as electrical tradesmen being rejected.⁷⁵ The problem was particularly acute with regard to Italian applicants.⁷⁶

⁷⁰M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, p.43.

⁷¹C.I.P.C., minutes of meeting held on March 28, 1950.

⁷²C.I.P.C., minute no. 33/50, 1950.

⁷³C.I.P.C. minute no. 148 54/51, 1951.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵M.J. Salter, *Studies in the Immigration of the Highly Skilled*, *op cit.*, p.43.

⁷⁶Monk told the C.I.P.C. that only a small percentage of Italian tradesmen could measure up to Australian standards - a statement rejected by I.M. McLennan (B.H.P.). C.I.P.C., minutes of meeting held on January 25, 1952.

In order to resolve these problems, the Eltham committee was sent to Europe to investigate training methods in these and other countries. The committee found that Austria and Germany had standardized training systems which included an apprenticeship period of 2.5 to 3 years. Its recommendation that applicants be accepted if they could prove further experience totalling five years (the length of metal trades apprenticeship in Australia) was adopted by C.T.C.s. As a result of this, selection by a technical adviser meant almost certain receipt of a tradesman's certificate from the relevant L.T.C. The Netherlands and Malta had several training methods and it was resolved that selection would be based on documentary proof of indenture and/or trade testing. Unions accepted this criterion with little complaint.⁷⁷ The problem was much more difficult in Italy where the Eltham committee found a wide variety of training methods and little in the way of formal apprenticeship. It was impossible to find criteria readily acceptable to unions and discrimination against Italian metal tradesmen was inevitable.

The growing resistance of Germany and Britain to emigration of their tradesmen after 1953 caused the C.I.P.C. to reconsider the question of Italian workers claiming skills. A proposal that Italians be given additional training locally was rejected by unions who argued this would constitute preferential treatment to migrants.⁷⁸ This masked a more general opposition to adult training other than for ex-servicemen. The claim that Italian skilled workers should be judged on ability rather than apprenticeship had little appeal to unions bound by a traditional and defensive philosophy.⁷⁹

In the meantime, the T.R.R.A. had been re-enacted for a further three years in 1952 following some debate. Unions argued that the

⁷⁷For an exception to this see the *S.M.H.*, November 11, 1953, p.3.

⁷⁸C.I.P.C. minute no. 242 27/1953, p.5. In 1956 a further enquiry was made with regard to employing Italians in a semi-skilled capacity. See C.I.P.C. minute no. 381 21/1956.

⁷⁹This claim was made by a member of the I.C.E.M. (See the *S.M.H.*, March 1, 1954, p.6.) A six-year qualifying period for Italian migrants was eventually adopted.

T.R.R.A. made a crucial contribution both to retraining ex-servicemen and the smooth absorption of migrant tradesmen. Metal trades employers re-iterated their belief that the preference provisions interfered with the right to manage.⁸⁰ Employers admitted that the machinery had worked and their failure to propose an alternative procedure persuaded the government to renew the bill. Nevertheless, a number of amendments were made. New provisions permitted tradesman status to be formally granted to dilutees who had been employed on tradesmen's work for seven years.⁸¹ In addition, the grounds for considering migrant qualifications were embodied in Section 33E (2) which stated:

that a person has qualified or qualifies in a country other than Australia, by training and employment in accordance with the laws and customs of that country for employment in that country as a tradesman in a trade substantially corresponding with a trade to which this part applies and whose training and employment are such as to provide the skill necessary for the performance in Australia of work ordinarily performed by a recognized tradesman.⁸²

Unions saw this provision, and Section 43 (2) a and b which guaranteed preference to recognized tradesmen, as fundamental for the acceptance of dilutees and migrant tradesmen in the work-place.

The T.R.R.A. performed a critical role in bringing metal trades unions to accepting mass immigration of skilled labour.⁸³ Table 10 indicates the number of applications for tradesman status made by British and other European migrants between 1950 and 1955 in New South Wales. It shows the higher overall success rate of British migrants in obtaining recognition. Table 11 gives a more detailed

⁸⁰See P.A. McBride, speech as Acting Minister for Labour and National Service on T.R.R.A. Bill to House of Representatives, September 1952. Footwear manufacturers were also far from pleased with the bill. However, deskilling in the boot trades rendered their complaints increasingly irrelevant. See the Footwear Manufacturers' Association of New South Wales Circular no. 31, October 1, 1952 and Circular no. 35, October 27, 1952.

⁸¹An exception was made with regard to electrical tradesmen who still had to pass a proficiency test because of safety considerations.

⁸²Quoted in the Footwear Manufacturers' Association of New South Wales Circular no. 35, October 27, 1952.

⁸³Training former servicemen became steadily less significant after 1953.

TABLE 10

APPLICATIONS FOR TRADESMEN'S STATUS - NEW SOUTH WALES 1950-1955
BY TRADE AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH

	Britain			Other European Countries		
	Application	Certificate Issued	Acceptance Rate (%)	Application	Certificate Issued	Acceptance Rate (%)
Engineering	673	539	80.1	2,908	1,546	53.2
Electrical	481	227	47.2	1,137	532	46.8
Boilermaking	153	85	55.6	240	107	44.6
Blacksmithing	24	13	54.2	165	77	46.6
Sheet-metal	23	10	43.5	34	24	70.6
Boot Trades	30	17	56.7	20	5	25.0
Total	1,384	891	64.4	4,504	2,291	50.84

Source: Records of the Local Trade Committees of
New South Wales, Sydney.

TABLE 11

APPLICATIONS FOR ENGINEERING TRADESMEN'S STATUS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES 1955-1957 BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Country	Number of Applications	Applications Accepted	Acceptance Rate (%)
Austria	211	151	71.6
Britain	415	254	62.2
Bulgaria	4	3	75.0
Canada	1	-	-
China	5	4	80.0
Cyprus	9	5	55.6
Czechoslovakia	50	14	28.0
Denmark	54	51	94.4
Egypt	92	66	72.5
Estonia	10	5	50.0
Finland	1	1	100.0
France	23	12	52.2
Greece	149	87	58.4
Hungary	240	164	63.3
Israel	1	-	-
Italy	416	192	46.2
Lebanon	11	6	54.5
Lithuania	6	1	16.7
Malta	53	36	67.9
Netherlands	292	183	62.7
Norway	9	6	66.7
Poland	85	19	22.4
Portugal	2	2	100.0
Roumania	10	3	30.0
Russia	27	8	29.6
Spain	8	7	87.5
Sweden	17	12	70.6
Switzerland	21	16	76.2
Turkey	1	1	100.0
Ukraine	3	2	66.7
U.S.A.	1	-	-
West Germany	671	422	62.9
Yugoslavia	103	31	30.0
Total	3,008	1,767	58.7

Source: Records of the Local Trade (Engineering)
Committee of New South Wales, Sydney.

breakdown of applications to the New South Wales engineering trades committee for the three years to 1957 by country of origin. Although the period is too limited to allow firm conclusions to be drawn, the recognition problems of applicants from a number of eastern and southern European countries are apparent.⁸⁴

One reason for the high rejection rate by L.T.C.s was that technical advisers were only attached to migrant missions in countries where skilled labour was being actively sought. Moreover, advisers screened only those applying for assisted passage. Not surprisingly, while there was a high acceptance rate amongst skilled migrants selected by technical advisers, the success rate was significantly lower amongst those who had not received this initial check. As Australia flung its migration net more broadly, tripartite missions were sent to study the training of skilled workers in the metal and electrical trades and to recommend criteria to the C.T.C.s. By the late 1970s criteria had been established for most European countries, South America and the Philippines. Furthermore, technical advisers had been attached to a much larger number of countries.⁸⁵

Within the context of these developments, there were important differences within the metal trades. The stringency with which craft standards were maintained varied both between and within individual unions. The Boilermakers' Society (B.S.A.) and the Blacksmiths' Society were most restrictive in outlook, followed by the A.E.U. and the E.T.U. The S.M.W.U. adopted the most flexible

⁸⁴The relatively high acceptance rate for Hungarian migrants is of some interest. In 1957 the A.E.U. was accused of playing politics when its commonwealth council refused to permit a trade test for refugees from the Soviet invasion who lacked credentials. Despite this, the acceptance rate for Hungarian applicants (see Table 11) is higher than that pertaining to West Germany, Britain and the Netherlands - countries for which recognition was seen to be least problematic. For evidence of the criticism see the *S.M.H.*, March 23, 1957, p.4.

⁸⁵Correspondence from D.K. Maiden, assistant secretary, Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Branch of the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations with the author, August 3, 1978.

stance.⁸⁶ At its most extreme, this was evident in the demand for documentary evidence of apprenticeship. The admission rules of the B.S.A. and the A.E.U. were very specific on such matters (see Chapter 9).

In 1955 the federal secretary of the B.S.A., H. Grant, stated:

There is little problem in the admittance of immigrants as tradesmen in this union if they are properly documented according to our rules. No immigrant can get a job as a boilermaker unless he has a 'ticket'. We consider that the union itself can deal quite adequately with the question of admitting anyone who wants to join in. We issued 'tickets' before the war and we can do it again.⁸⁷

Speaking for the A.E.U., A. Searle said:

We recognise only an apprentice of 5 years for a man's trade certificate. Australians too must have this qualification. There would be very little chance of a man getting a job in a union shop without a 'ticket' and without union membership.⁸⁸

Discrimination against migrants without proof of indenture was incidental to the purpose of such restrictions. For both unions, issuing a union ticket was tantamount to trade recognition. A stringent policy was demanded both by the local branches of each union and their members at the work-place. Even then problems arose. In some regions, local branches (of the A.E.U. and B.S.A.) imposed higher standards and were reluctant to accept workers who had been issued clearance papers by less exacting branches.⁸⁹

⁸⁶These differences were clearly revealed in a survey of New South Wales L.T.C. records for the month of February in the years 1949 to 1961. During this selected period the boilermaking and the blacksmithing trade committees rejected 50.2 per cent and 52.2 per cent of applications respectively. For the engineering trades (A.E.U. and Australasian Society of Engineers) the rejection rate was 40.8 per cent. The rejection rates in the electrical trades and sheet-metal trades were 38.8 per cent and 34.3 per cent respectively. These figures do not include deferrals. Source: New South Wales Local Trades Committee records, Sydney.

⁸⁷Quoted in the *S.M.H.*, February 24, 1955, p.2.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹Correspondence with D.J. Garland, joint national secretary of the A.M.W.S.U., June 26, 1978. In time both the A.E.U. and B.S.A. were obliged to adopt a more flexible policy in the interests of membership control. Nevertheless, internal friction continued. These points will be dealt with in more depth in Chapter 9.

It is not known whether L.T.C.s adjusted their standards to meet labour market exigencies, but available evidence indicates that they stuck closely to C.T.C. guidelines. The rigid adherence to the apprenticeship principle was put to the test when the T.R.R.A. became due for renewal in 1955, in the midst of an acute skilled labour shortage.⁹⁰ Table 12 gives some indication of the shortage in various trades. By 1955 the scarcity of tradesmen had peaked, standing at six times the 1953 level.

The D.L.N.S. had prepared a special report on the extent of and possible remedies for the shortage.⁹¹ The report found considerable evidence of upgrading by employers but argued that this, and other short-term responses (increased overtime by tradesmen and altering production methods so semi-skilled workers could be substituted for tradesmen) could not cope with the fundamental nature of the problem. First, there was the long-term shortage of apprentices. The 1954 Commonwealth/State Apprenticeship Inquiry had been gloomy about the prospects of apprenticeship meeting skilled labour requirements, especially in the less desirable "black" trades. While this was partly a result of the low birth rate during the depression, the inquiry also found fault with employers. It stated that:

In the trades of metal moulding, boilermaking and black-smithing, bringing working conditions in employers' establishments into line with the best modern practices should remove some of the prejudices against them, so far as apprenticeship is concerned.⁹²

Second, the recruitment of migrant tradesmen had helped offset the shortfall in local training. Overall, migrants had constituted more than one-third of the new entrants into the skilled labour force since 1947. However, the formal recognition procedures embodied in the T.R.R.A. meant that the migrant contribution was somewhat lower in the metal trades than elsewhere.⁹³

⁹⁰The C.I.P.C. reported that there was a scarcity of prospective migrant tradesmen (especially boilermakers) as a result of buoyant conditions in Europe. C.I.P.C. minute no. 354/15, 1955.

⁹¹The Department of Labour and National Service, *Problems of Skilled Labour in the Metal and Electrical Trades* (D.L.N.S., Melbourne, May 27, 1955).

⁹²Quoted in *Problems of Skilled Labour in the Metal and Electrical Trades*, *op cit.*, p.9. The inquiry supported a continuation of the apprenticeship system.

⁹³*Ibid.*, p.4.

TABLE 12

EXCESS OF VACANCIES OVER TRADESMEN REGISTERED AS UNEMPLOYED WITH THE COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE - AUSTRALIA
(Monthly Averages)

	1953*	1954	1955*	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	Average for Period
Blacksmiths	-26	-	82	44	-11	-21	-5	14	-37	-11	20	46	62	13
Boilermakers	401	-	1,078	675	305	208	319	472	111	167	256	652	759	450
Welders	37	-	575	198	25	31	159	316	-262	13	176	613	470	196
Fitters	-169	-	1,414	702	25	-60	142	559	-366	-82	410	986	1,136	391
Turners	33	-	560	331	156	115	225	370	61	111	305	476	510	271
Metal Machinists (first class)	206	-	477	270	127	118	179	282	25	154	249	356	434	240
Panel Beaters	219	-	383	425	240	173	194	337	154	99	241	351	358	265
Motor Mechanics	169	-	1,168	707	216	82	175	573	-4	167	678	1,121	1,101	513
Electrical Fitters	-12	-	408	308	137	65	94	179	162	144	235	324	405	204
Electrical Mechanics	81	-	849	620	260	121	233	472	280	292	425	646	720	417
Total	939	-	6,994	4,279	1,480	832	1,715	3,574	124	1,054	2,995	5,571	5,955	2,959

*These figures are for the month of
February only.

Source: Department of Labour and National Service, *Problems of Skilled Labour Supply in the Metal and Electrical Trades* (D.L.N.S., Melbourne, May 27, 1955), Tables 1 and 2; and Report of the Tripartite Working Party into *Apprenticeship and Training for Skill in the Metal, Electrical and Vehicle Building Trades*, March 18, 1965, Appendix 5.

To resolve these problems the D.L.N.S. advocated adult training similar to C.R.T.S., up-grading semi-skilled workers (especially in the boilermaking trade) and the use of short courses for local and (more particularly) for foreign-born workers whose training had been too specialized to be recognized. It also urged unions to relax demarcation lines so that semi-skilled workers could perform some tasks previously reserved for tradesmen.

The D.L.N.S. proposal received employer support at a meeting of the Ministry of Labour Advisory Council sub-committee on trade matters held in June 1955 to consider the T.R.R.A.'s future. Employer representatives opposed any further extension of the legislation.⁹⁴ Union representatives were critical of the D.L.N.S. proposal. Further, they argued that the T.R.R.A. was essential while mass immigration continued. A. Horsburgh (A.E.U.) warned that removal of the legislation would invite industrial disputation for which the unions could not be held responsible.⁹⁵

Several unions denied that there was a labour shortage in their trade. The Moulders' Union (7,000 members) representative argued that metal moulding was a declining craft. He stated that the union had already received complaints from members forced to do unskilled work and argued that further innovation in the foundries would soon eliminate any present shortfalls. Because of this, the union had only agreed to elevation up to machine moulding - a policy which had been operating for many years.⁹⁶ The even smaller Blacksmiths' Society also adopted a hard line, its representative stating that 95 per cent of the membership were apprenticed tradesmen with strict preference being given to time-served members. Table 12 would seem to indicate that there was, indeed, no long-term shortage of blacksmiths.

Even unions which conceded that a shortage existed in their trade strongly opposed the idea of adult training (outside C.R.T.S.).

⁹⁴They again argued that the legislation impinged on the right of management to employ tradesmen on the basis of work performance. *Note on Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Labour Advisory Council and Co-opted Representatives of Employer and Union Organizations* held in Sydney, June 16, 1955.

⁹⁵*Ibid.* A view echoed by Buckley (B.S.A.).

⁹⁶Second meeting of the sub-committee held in Melbourne on July 22, 1955. Reported by the D.L.N.S., August 2, 1955.

Representatives of the B.S.A., A.E.U., E.T.U. and Australasian Society of Engineers (A.S.E.) contended that the introduction of adult training would damage the apprenticeship system.⁹⁷ The A.S.E. representative alleged that some employers were already reluctant to train apprentices. A narrowing of training or the employment of specialists instead of "all rounders" was equally unacceptable to unions.

The S.M.W.U. supported the T.R.R.A. although it claimed to derive little benefit from it - the elevation of workers from second-class sheet metal worker (semi-skilled) to first-class sheet metal worker (skilled) having increasingly displaced apprenticeship. The A.E.U. and B.S.A. were determined to forestall a similar development in their trades. They would only agree to a strictly limited amount of upgrading to meet the current shortage. Buckley (B.S.A.) stated that his union had admitted 1,178 "added" tradesmen (as provisional members), 1,068 tradesmen and 518 apprentices in the eighteen months to June 30, 1955. He said that the B.S.A. had permitted elevation of semi-skilled workers by agreement with specific employers and urged others to contact local union officials on the matter.⁹⁸ In response, an employer representative expressed misgivings at the amount of elevation permitted. He stated that employers always approached unions before upgrading workers - an assertion immediately refuted by Monk and Wright (S.M.W.U.).

The union viewpoint was encapsulated by the A.E.U. representative who stated that adult training was unacceptable to rank and file tradesmen and boosting apprenticeship was the only viable long-term remedy to the skilled labour shortage. The A.E.U. saw the existence

⁹⁷Horsburgh (A.E.U.) and Buckley (B.S.A.) stated that 80 per cent and 90 per cent of their memberships respectively had served apprenticeships. Both unions had separate membership categories for elevated tradesmen to safeguard time-served members in time of redundancies (see Chapter 9). Sub-committee notes of June 16, 1955 meeting.

⁹⁸Buckley cited agreements reached with state government railways and I.C.I. He admitted that the practice had been banned at Whyalla and on the waterfront following industrial disputes. The later cases lend credence to his contention that union involvement was essential if rank and file hostility was to be allayed. Note on sub-committee meeting held on July 22, 1955.

of dilution in the metal trades as a consequence of the apprentice shortage. It would only agree to further elevation within the context of the T.R.R.A.⁹⁹

On August 11, 1955, a meeting of the Metal Trades Federation unanimously resolved that:

While migration continues there is a need for bodies such as these committees [C.T.C.s and L.T.C.s] to look at migrant papers and issue certificates on the reasonable standards that have been arranged and generally recognized in the past. The system has been laboriously built up since 1940 and is at present operating quite successfully.¹⁰⁰

The resolution went on to reiterate union opposition to adult training and warned that a more defensive posture could be expected if unions were thrown back onto their own resources.

Recognizing the need for consensus if stable arrangements were to continue, the government extended the T.R.R.A. for a further three years. Employers accepted the act and generally abided by its principles.¹⁰¹ Their expressions of disenchantment were mostly rhetorical statements of principle belying a pragmatic resignation to the need for such legislation. Even so, the hostility of the M.T.I.A. and A.C.M.A. does seem to have grown over time.

In 1958 employers did not oppose renewal of the T.R.R.A. Rather, they called for the deletion of Sections 43 and 45 which granted preference of employment to recognized tradesmen. For employers these were the most onerous aspects of the legislation. For unions, such a proposal attacked the very heart of the T.R.R.A. Unions also reacted angrily to a proposal that employers should issue trade certificates. They argued that union rights had already

⁹⁹This view had the full support of the A.C.T.U. executive. See A.C.T.U. executive, minutes of meeting held on May 13, 1955.

¹⁰⁰Metal Trades Federation, *The Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act and Adult Training Scheme*, statement adopted unanimously by unions at meeting held on August 11, 1955.

¹⁰¹At least with regard to well organized unions such as the B.S.A. An exception to this will be cited in Chapter 9.

been watered down since 1946.¹⁰² Boilermakers' Society, A.E.U. and S.M.W.U. officials all stated that the maintenance of the legislation in its present form was essential to the "smooth assimilation [sic]" of migrants at the work-place.¹⁰³ The A.S.E. representative expressed the fear that employer proposals would lead to preference being shown to immigrants over local tradesmen and the undermining of apprenticeship. The A.E.U. spokesman warned that the move could lead to the banning of migrants without certification in government employment and trouble in the private sector.¹⁰⁴

In defending the present arrangements, union representatives drew attention to the much smaller shortage of skilled labour than had existed in 1955 (see Table 12). Wright (S.M.W.U.) expressed the conviction that, without the present safeguards, a period of unemployment could engender "antagonism and racial feeling in the workshops which has been avoided so far".¹⁰⁵ The A.E.U. representative confirmed this opinion and stated that his union was already experiencing redundancy problems in some regions.¹⁰⁶ Unions rejected the inference that there had been a large number of harsh decisions under the existing criteria. An employer proposal that probationary status be granted to migrants as well as ex-servicemen was rebuffed on the grounds that any significant extension in trade testing would place apprenticeship in jeopardy.¹⁰⁷

Union arguments again won the day and the T.R.R.A. was renewed for a further three years. From this time onwards the necessity for the Act became a non-partisan plank in the policies of successive

¹⁰²See minutes of conferences convened by the secretary, D.L.N.S., with representatives of federal unions, partners to the Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Act, June 11, 1958 (Sydney) and July 4, 1958 (Melbourne).

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴Government employment was an area where the A.E.U. had been most receptive to elevation. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, July 7, 1958 meeting.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.* He reported that the crisis in the northern New South Wales coal fields had induced the Maitland branch to ask for permission to close its books to new members. In addition, the A.E.U. representative argued that unemployment at Mount Isa was even affecting recognized tradesmen.

¹⁰⁷It was argued that L.T.C.s now met weekly in most capital cities to avoid delays in processing.

Australian governments. In 1964 another proposal for adult training along C.R.T.S. lines was repulsed by unions who argued it took no account of the requirements of different industries, endangered apprenticeship and would lower Australian trade standards.

The operation of the T.R.R.A. was, however, far from rigid. Central Trade Committee criteria were reviewed, and extended to new countries. Trade testing was expanded. Moreover, local apprenticeship requirements were being relaxed, with the period of service contracting from five years to four years. In any event, the narrowing skill differentials during this period can be interpreted to imply that trade restrictions did not induce a serious scarcity of craftsmen during the post-war years.¹⁰⁸

By the late 1960s overall rejection rates were significantly lower than in the 1950s. Table 13 indicates the results of applications for trade certificates between 1969 and 1977 by country/region. The low rejection rate amongst migrants (from all countries) who were selected as tradesmen by overseas technical advisers demonstrates the progress made in this area. Even amongst the "All Migrants" category the overall rejection rate was only 31.3 per cent - a considerable reduction on earlier periods. Nevertheless, a high rejection rate still occurred amongst applicants from Greece (58.6 per cent), Italy (48.6 per cent), Malta (46.3 per cent),

¹⁰⁸In his study of the United Kingdom, Lee argued that craft restrictions performed a stabilizing role in the labour market but did not create an artificial shortage which prejudiced the opportunities of other workers. He saw the post-war compression of skill differentials as indicative of this. (D.J. Lee, "Craft Unions and the Force of Tradition: The Case of Apprenticeship", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 17, no. 1, March 1979, pp.34-48.) In Australia, the compression of skilled wage differentials had been at least as pronounced as in the United Kingdom. (See W. Brown and D. Fuller, "The Impact of Overaward Pay upon the Australian Wage Structure", *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 5, no. 1, December 1978, pp.34-42; and V. Griffin, "Getting a Good Trade ...", *Apprenticeship, Industrial Relations and the Labour Market*, North Brisbane College of Advanced Education Business Research Centre Discussion Paper no. 8, July 1981, pp.31-53.) Further, a study conducted by Zeremes found that the skilled labour shortage in Australia declined between 1950 and 1973. See M. Zeremes, *The Determinants of Changes in Skill Differentials in Australia* (unpublished Master of Political Economics Thesis, University of Queensland, 1975).

TABLE 13

TRADESMEN'S RIGHTS REGULATION ACT: APPLICATIONS FOR TRADESMEN'S CERTIFICATES
BY MIGRANTS 1969-1977 - AUSTRALIA

Country	(a) Selected Migrants (Those approved as Tradesmen prior to Immigration)			(b) All Migrants (Including Migrants in Column (a))			Overall Refusal Rate %
	Applic- ations	Granted	Refused	Applic- ations	Granted	Refused	
Austria	102	92	-	517	344	98	18.9
Belgium	35	31	1	156	89	38	24.4
Denmark*	84	79	-	237	197	21	8.9
Finland*	50	50	-	212	149	56	26.4
France	160	150	-	1,099	615	373	33.9
Germany	835	777	5	2,947	2,157	520	17.6
Greece	11	8	-	2,191	683	1,284	58.6
Italy	193	185	2	4,152	1,736	2,009	48.4
Malta	37	33	1	389	175	180	46.3
Netherlands	151	129	-	1,213	718	349	28.8
Norway*	8	7	1	59	33	17	28.8
Spain	69	64	1	1,643	706	747	45.8
Sweden	63	60	-	237	161	47	19.8
Switzerland	107	94	-	611	531	38	6.2
Turkey*	9	8	-	509	148	330	64.8
United Kingdom	9,438	9,069	16	20,710	17,199	2,499	12.1
Yugoslavia*	284	239	4	4,321	2,176	1,710	39.6
Other European†				3,200	1,123	1,877	58.6
Total Europe	11,636	11,075	31	44,403	28,940	12,192	27.5
South America‡	38	34	-	2,883	1,194	1,544	53.5
North America†				297	142	112	37.8
Total America	38	34	-	3,180	1,336	1,656	52.1
Asia†	340	336		1,779	1,013	659	37.0
African Countries†				722	296	384	53.2
New Zealand and Pacific†				755	586	121	16.0
Unspecified§				10,285	4,991	4,141	40.3
Grand Total	12,014	11,445	31	60,827	37,020	19,041	31.3

*Figures for the years 1971-1977 inclusive.

†Figures for years 1972-1977 inclusive.

‡Figures relate to 1977 which was the first year separate statistics were kept for South American countries.

§Includes any country not separately listed in the 1969-1977 period.

Source: Tradesmen's Rights Regulation Branch, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, August 1978.

Spain (45.5 per cent), Turkey (64.8 per cent), South America (53.5 per cent) and Africa (53.2 per cent).¹⁰⁹

The reasons underlying the high rejection rates amongst some migrant groups are not entirely clear. In part, they reflected biases in the recruitment of skilled labour which were built into the immigration programme. Another problem was the variety of training systems (and absence of documentary qualifications) in some countries. Cox suggested that there was a tendency to see Italian qualifications as inferior and concluded:

the problem of skilled Italian migrants whose qualifications are not recognized is real and the consequent loss of status and earning capacity has emotional effects and leads to settlement problems.¹¹⁰

There is little doubt that standards remained harsh for some migrant groups. On the other hand, instances of racketeering and deception (such as production of phoney documentation) fostered an attitude of suspicion amongst union officials. The L.T.C.s at least guaranteed a hearing based on consistent guidelines.

The smooth operation of the T.R.R.A. and the continued adjustment of selection guidelines was the central reason for craft unions accepting large numbers of non-British tradesmen in a manner which, if not entirely free of prejudice, was a good deal more equitable than the stance of many professional associations and registration boards.¹¹¹ Discrimination against some migrant groups

¹⁰⁹This pattern is largely consistent with a survey of migrant households conducted in 1973 which found that migrants from the Middle East, Greece and Yugoslavia had the lowest rates of trade recognition. See Australian Population and Immigration Council, *A Decade of Migrant Settlement* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976), p.4.

¹¹⁰D. Cox, "The Role of Ethnic Groups in Migrant Welfare", in Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, *The Welfare of Migrants* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975), p.43.

¹¹¹In 1973 the C.I.A.C. committee on social patterns reported that "There appears to be decreasing difficulty with the acceptance of overseas trade qualifications though there still are some problems with professional qualifications." C.I.A.C. Committee on Social Patterns, *Final Report of the Inquiry into the Departure of Settlers from Australia* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1973), p.11.

owed more to the traditional union reliance on apprenticeship than ethnocentric sentiments.¹¹²

For their part, employers continued to express opposition to the T.R.R.A. periodically. Throughout the post-war period they had become progressively more reliant upon immigration to provide their skilled labour requirements. Between 1946 and 1960 the total gain in metal tradesmen through immigration was 56,299 for Australia as a whole and 18,766 for the state of New South Wales.¹¹³ During the 1960s employers were encouraged to recruit migrant tradesmen directly. Between 1960 and 1964 more than 13,600 trade certificates were granted to foreign-born applicants.¹¹⁴ In the nine years to 1977 more than 37,000 trade certificates were issued (see Table 13). The Beattie inquiry estimated that, by 1965, the migrant intake was equivalent to 70 per cent of the accretion in metal tradesmen through apprenticeship.¹¹⁵

Despite this contribution, there was an almost continuous shortfall in the supply of metal tradesmen. In the twenty years to 1967, there was only one period (April 1961 to March 1962) when the number of unemployed tradesmen exceeded the number of job vacancies registered with the Commonwealth Employment Service.¹¹⁶ Peak shortages (an excess of job vacancies over tradesmen registered as

¹¹²Ethnocentrism was widespread within the ranks of these unions. Nevertheless, officials strove to ensure that migrants with recognized qualifications were treated equally. See Chapter 9.

¹¹³A.C. Beattie, Industrial Commission of New South Wales, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.: A Report by the Commission to the Minister for Labour and Industry, July 1968* (New South Wales Government Printer, Sydney, 1969), p.28.

¹¹⁴Quoted in *Apprenticeship and Training for Skill in the Metal, Electrical and Vehicle Building Trades, March 18 1966*, report of the tripartite working party established by the D.L.N.S. on February 23, 1966 and presented to the Ministry of Labour Advisory Council Sub-committee on Trade Matters on April 14, 1966, p.9.

¹¹⁵A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.30.

¹¹⁶Even in the period April 1961 to March 1962 there was an excess of vacancies over unemployed in certain trades, notably boilermakers, first-class machinists, toolmakers and electricians. During periods of general scarcity, the shortage in these trades was more pronounced. Reported in A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.17.

unemployed) occurred in 1951, 1955, 1960 and 1964.¹¹⁷ In other years the size of the shortage varied considerably (see Table 12).

Faced with shortages, many employers resorted to breaking down jobs formerly performed by tradesmen and, more commonly, upgrading semi-skilled workers to tradesman level. Trade unions acquiesced in this - in many cases having little option in the matter - but did attempt to control the extent of such practices. There are no exact figures on the extent of dilution (of work and craft). A D.L.N.S. survey of 262 large private manufacturing establishments conducted during July and August 1964 revealed that 19.5 per cent of those working as metal tradesmen had neither served apprenticeships nor been recognized under the T.R.R.A. For welders and first-class machinists the figure was more than one-third.¹¹⁸ Table 14 gives a breakdown of the survey results. The Beattie inquiry suggested that the survey understated the extent of upgrading because it did not include small firms, the civil construction industry and government authorities.¹¹⁹ On occasion, government instrumentalities issued tradesmen's certificates to semi-skilled workers doing trade work. However, unions were quick to challenge such practices.¹²⁰

Any presumption that the skilled labour shortage was a consequence of the unions' restrictive outlook to apprenticeship training and trade recognition must be viewed critically. In fact, a strong case can be made that employers were heavily to blame. The Beattie inquiry found no evidence to support an argument that

¹¹⁷The Beattie inquiry tended to overstate these shortages by referring to the monthly peaks rather than the average for the whole year (see Table 12). The inquiry concluded that the shortage had induced a rapid growth in over-award payments. *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹¹⁸This picture was confirmed by metal trades employer representatives during the course of the Beattie inquiry. The director of the M.T.E.A., R.G. Fry, stated that the elevation of semi-skilled workers was an important source of tradesmen especially in the grades of pipe fitter, welder and machinist. *Ibid.*, p.30.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.32.

¹²⁰For a case involving the Tasmanian Hydro Electric Authority see correspondence between B.B.S.A. federal secretary and F.I.A. national secretary dated June 6, 1967.

TABLE 14

ANALYSIS OF DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE
SURVEY OF UPGRADING, 1964

	Employed and paid as Tradesmen	Not Apprenticed nor Issued with L.T.C.	
			per cent
Boilermakers	1,846	88	4.8
Welders	2,197	906	41.2
Fitters/Turners	6,637	711	10.7
First-class Machinists	3,151	1,197	38.0
Panel Beaters	191	33	17.3
Motor mechanics	873	182	20.8
Electrical Fitters	1,116	133	11.9
Electrical Mechanics	735	9	1.2
Total	16,746	3,259	19.5

Source: Quoted in A.C. Beattie, *The
Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.,
op cit.*, p.183.

apprentice/tradesmen ratios had stood in the way of employing more apprentices.¹²¹ During the course of the inquiry employer representatives had admitted that the shortfall in apprenticeship was at least as much the result of employer reluctance to take on apprentices as to any shortage in the number of applicants. Even where applicants were readily available, many employers did not take on anywhere near the number permitted under union-imposed quotas. Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd, a company which did employ a high proportion of apprentices to tradesmen, had been permitted to exceed its quota by unions.¹²² Despite the Beattie inquiry's warning that immigration would never be able to meet long-run demand for skilled labour, employers became increasingly dependent on this source of metal tradesmen.¹²³

The continuous, but often exaggerated, shortage of skilled metal tradesmen owed much to the reluctance of employers to bear the costs of local training and, perhaps, their unwillingness to pay skill differentials at a level which would have reversed a significant drift of craftsmen from their trades. It is not self-evident that greater flexibility on the part of unions would have boosted local training but it may well have endangered their members. Faced with strong rank and file pressure, officials adopted a defensive approach to skill recognition tempered by pragmatism on the question of elevation to meet specific skilled labour shortages.

Craft Unions Outside the T.R.R.A.

One major bastion of craft unionism not covered by the T.R.R.A. regulations was the building trades. Wartime exigencies had not included any great need for commercial or housing construction and hence there had been no need to reach dilution agreements with unions covering these trades. Apart from plumbers (who had to be

¹²¹A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.183.

¹²²Even then, the number of applicants for apprenticeship at the Newcastle and Port Kembla steelworks was more than twice the required intake. *Ibid.*, p.52.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p.30.

licensed by the Water Board), post-war controls over admission to the building trades were not subject to government regulatory bodies. Craft unions covering the building trades included a number of small specialized bodies such as the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union (O.P.D.U.), Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees' Union, Operative Plasterers' and Plaster Workers' Federation, Operative Stone Masons' Society and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (A.S.C. & J.).¹²⁴ By far the largest union was the B.W.I.U. - an industrial union more in name than organization - which had been created by the wartime amalgamation of unions covering bricklayers and carpenters and joiners.

Employment in the building trades as a craftsman depended on satisfying the employer, and the union where the latter was well organized. Building unions did try to enforce apprenticeship as the primary mode of entry into the trades. They also sought to limit the number of dilutees. Complete exclusion was never possible and their success in this strategy would seem to have declined after World War Two.

In 1946 building union officials met with the federal government and employer representatives to discuss policy regarding C.R.T.S. trainees. Unions agreed to admit 1,600 trainees initially so long as a committee was established to review labour requirements in each trade. They called on the government to guarantee the continuation of housing and works programmes and to liaise with them on the implementation of immigration.¹²⁵

From the very outset, a number of problems arose with regard to these arrangements. The rapid expansion of building and construction after the war meant that the demand for skilled labour could only partly be met by C.R.T.S. and normal apprenticeship. Further, it was apparent that a number of unions, and the B.W.I.U. in particular, were unhappy with the degree of consultation on immigration. The

¹²⁴As mentioned earlier, the A.S.C. & J. was a breakaway from the B.W.I.U.

¹²⁵For a report of these proceedings see B.W.I.U. New South Wales branch, Annual State Conference minutes, August 1946. For further evidence of the union's policy see membership circular from the New South Wales president, E.W. Bulmer, dated March 3, 1948.

B.W.I.U. expressed no qualms about the standard of British tradesmen, but did complain that it was not being notified of decisions to despatch them to Australia.¹²⁶ The union reported instances where its officials had been obliged to intervene on behalf of British immigrants who had been promised work and family accommodation by employers prior to embarkation but which had not subsequently been provided.¹²⁷ In 1950 the B.W.I.U. federal conference resolved that the admission of migrants should be based on linking their occupational qualifications to the needs of industry.¹²⁸ This position changed to one of uncompromising hostility when unemployment in the building trades peaked at 10,000 in June 1951.¹²⁹ However, complaints evaporated following a renewed growth in employment opportunities.¹³⁰

The union's attitude to non-British migrants was complicated by a number of considerations. The contracted status of displaced persons was seen to make them vulnerable to employer directions which interfered with the rights of tradesmen. In particular, officials feared that they would be underpaid or used on trade jobs without any attempt being made to assess their skills. While the B.W.I.U. was less hostile to upgrading (by necessity) than its metal trades counterparts, it did try to restrict elevation to instances where specific agreements had been reached with employers. The union was also opposed to displaced persons being given

¹²⁶The B.W.I.U., like a number of other craft unions, maintained close links with its British counterparts (notably the Amalgamated Union of Building Trades Workers) and used these to discourage immigration. See B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.46.

¹²⁷See *Tribune*, November 16, 1949, for example.

¹²⁸*Tribune*, January 28, 1950.

¹²⁹*Tribune*, May 7 and July 16, 1952.

¹³⁰Hostility was likely to return at the slightest sign of unemployment. In May 1961 the B.W.I.U. informed its British counterparts that the information on wages and conditions being advertised to prospective migrants in the United Kingdom was false. Two years later, the union's federal secretary stated that there was no need for immigrant building tradesmen. See *Tribune*, May 17, 1961 and June 5, 1963.

preference over local workers in the case of elevation.¹³¹ This attitude was not confined to displaced persons. Similar fears were voiced about migrants enlisted by contractors under the special projects procedure. In February 1952 Monk told the C.I.P.C. that there had been breaches of building trades formal requirements, customs and even industrial awards involving migrants engaged under such arrangements.¹³²

A more general problem facing building unions was the question of apprenticeship as the regulator of entry into the trade. Most unions formally required migrants to show evidence of apprenticeship or membership of the appropriate union in their country of origin. Such criteria were, however, impossible to enforce since many were not trained under an apprenticeship system and came from countries/regions where the building industry was poorly organized. This particularly applied to Italian migrants who were, nevertheless,

¹³¹This stance was made clear by the New South Wales branch president, E.W. Bulmer. (See *Tribune*, February 15 and 25, 1950.) In July 1948 B.W.I.U. members had refused to train displaced persons (*Tribune*, July 31, 1948). While the union rejected press claims that it was attempting to ban the employment of displaced persons, it was clearly unhappy with the number that were entering the trade. In June 1949 a B.W.I.U. deputation to Immigration Minister Calwell expressed its opposition to the "great influx of Balts into the building industry". Calwell promised that further arrivals would be subject to union approval (*S.M.H.*, June 7, 1949, p.4). Luckham suggests that fewer than 2,000 displaced persons were building tradesmen (B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement, op cit.*, pp.47-48). It is unclear whether this included those who had been upgraded. In an effort to limit this elevation, the B.W.I.U. attempted to have an employer undertaking not to upgrade displaced persons without Commonwealth Employment Service permission incorporated in the form which builders used to obtain refugee labour (see correspondence E.W. Bulmer to C.E. Hall, Newcastle district secretary dated July 19, 1950). This strategy failed and the union then strived to ensure that displaced persons employed as tradesmen were paid accordingly. See correspondence between P. Barclay, New South Wales branch secretary, and the managing director of Construction Services Pty Ltd dated November 24 and 28, 1950; and between Barclay and W. Manning, Newcastle district organizer dated December 11, 1950.

¹³²Monk cited a case in Queensland as evidence of this and called for an investigation by the Immigration Department. C.I.P.C. minute no. 8/52 of meeting held on February 25, 1952.

admitted to plastering and other building trades in large numbers. In practice, the conditions governing entry were frequently quite informal - especially where sub-contractors were concerned. In plastering, the applicant had only to satisfy his workmates and employer that he was not a "ring in".¹³³

The B.W.I.U.'s official policy upon migrants seeking entry to bricklaying or carpentry without proof of apprenticeship or union membership was to send them to the local technical college to undergo a simple trade test. Figures cited by Luckham indicate that many early applicants (more than 40 per cent) failed these tests.¹³⁴ However, as in other building trades, procedures were often less formal with migrants being employed so long as no local union members were out of work and they could satisfy workmates of their proficiency. The B.W.I.U.'s claim to industrial coverage meant that it had only one class of membership. Luckham suggests that this provided a loophole through which many migrants could enter the trade.¹³⁵ The widespread character of informal practices, in combination with upgrading by employers, made it impossible for the B.W.I.U. to maintain a strict adherence to craft standards. Officials of the rival A.S.C. & J. were not slow to exploit this in their appeals to time-served tradesmen.

The B.W.I.U.'s struggle to retain craft control quickly exposed both the strengths and weaknesses in its organization. The expansion of building in the areas of commercial, government and industrial premises aided union organization by drawing large numbers of workers together on big sites. However, the rapid growth of sub-contracting created problems especially in the cottage sector of the industry where it became the predominant form of labour.¹³⁶ Initially, the union simply expressed its hostility to this trend.

¹³³S.M.H., February 24, 1955, p.2.

¹³⁴B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.45.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p.45.

¹³⁶The New South Wales M.B.A. told the Beattie inquiry that between 1948 and 1965 the total employee work-force grew by 44.3 per cent while the number under sub-contracting arrangements increased by 122.5 per cent. A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.* p.37.

This eventually gave way to attempts to organize contract labour - a strategy which met with only limited success.¹³⁷ The low level of unionization amongst sub-contractors meant that the B.W.I.U. could exert little pressure on the entry of non-apprenticed and untrained workers.

Ironically, the trend to sub-contracting was encouraged by the union's attempt to maintain skill standards. There was a marked tendency for immigrants to form themselves into family or ethnically-based sub-contract groups. Many did not possess the breadth of skills of local tradesmen and had to specialize.¹³⁸ This was admirably suited to the sub-contracting of specific jobs such as erecting pre-cut framework, laying timber floors, installing doors and windows and roofing. Moreover, only a small proportion of the sub-contracting group needed to be tradesmen at all. The remainder could rely on experience, dexterity and a willingness to work long hours on tasks subdivided within the group.

An associated problem was that sub-contractors rarely employed apprentices. Employers using sub-contractors did not require as many tradesmen, further reducing the number of apprentices. Given this, it is plausible to suggest that an increasing number of workers undertook trade tasks without serving an apprenticeship. This tendency became most pronounced during periodic booms in building activity when labour was scarce and the trend to sub-contracting increased.¹³⁹ The only avenue left open to the union was to try to ensure that those doing trade work were paid the appropriate award rate. Even this proved difficult because many workers engaged by sub-contractors were given an "all-in payment".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷J. Sutton, *Contract Labour in the Building Industry*, *op cit.*

¹³⁸A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.37.

¹³⁹This was the view of both employers and unions. *Ibid.*, p.38 and p.58.

¹⁴⁰J. Sutton, *Contract Labour in the Building Industry*, *op cit.* These problems applied in most building trades and not merely those covered by the B.W.I.U. For instance, the growth of sub-contracting in wall and floor tiling was also associated with a reduction in apprenticeship and award enforcement problems. See A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.60.

As in the metal trades, the growing employer reliance on immigration to provide skilled labour discouraged local apprenticeship. Between 1946 and 1965, net migration of building tradesmen to Australia was 59,606 (New South Wales 22,650).¹⁴¹ Overall, migrants came to constitute more than one-third of all building tradesmen. Moreover, as the Beattie inquiry concluded, "It would seem that migration has produced twice as many bricklayers as apprenticeship, nearly as many painters, and at least half as many carpenters."¹⁴²

Despite a favourable union quota on the ratio of apprentices to tradesmen (1:2), many employers were reluctant to take on apprentices.¹⁴³ A study undertaken by the M.B.A. found that only 26 per cent of the builders surveyed had increased the number of apprentices they employed in the five years to 1965. Indeed, 43.3 per cent had reduced apprentice numbers. Nor was this due to a shortage of applicants.¹⁴⁴ Many employers saw apprentices as an expense to be avoided especially during industry downturns. This attitude was well reflected in the sluggish, and sometimes non-existent, growth of annual apprenticeship approvals in New South Wales between 1955 and 1966.¹⁴⁵

Employers made continuous demands for a reduction in the training period. In an effort to retain some control over training, the building unions sought a compromise. In 1976 the New South Wales Building Trades Group reached agreement with the M.B.A. on the introduction of a new scheme to be operated in conjunction with the Department of Technical and Further Education. Under this scheme, on-site training was reduced from 4 to 2.5 years with trainees spending their first 18 months as full-time students at a technical college. Before the first pilot programme had finished, the M.B.A. asked the New South Wales Industrial Commission to reduce the wages of apprentice carpenters by \$30 to \$50 per week.¹⁴⁶ The claim was

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, p.579.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, p.39.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p.183.

¹⁴⁴This was admitted by the M.B.A. *Ibid.*, p.58.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p.239.

¹⁴⁶*S.M.H.*, July 14, 1978, p.6.

inspired by a shortage of skilled labour - undoubtedly a partial consequence of the cut-back in immigration. The M.B.A. argued that the reduction would bring apprentice rates into line with the metal trades and allow employers to engage more apprentices. In response, the B.W.I.U. state secretary contended that, given existing skill differentials, lower rates of pay would discourage young people from undertaking apprenticeships.¹⁴⁷ These moves were indicative of union weakness in trying to uphold an apprenticeship system which had been progressively undermined throughout the post-war period.

The absence of controls equivalent to the T.R.R.A. enabled immigrants to enter the building trades more easily than the metal trades. Whether this has been beneficial to building trades unions or migrants themselves (especially those engaged under sub-contracting arrangements) is a moot point. The need to enforce licensing procedures with regard to builders certainly lends credence to the union's accusation that trade standards have been eroded.

Conclusion

The response of Australian craft unions to mass immigration can be distinguished from that of other unions on a number of grounds. Principally, these unions could exert a measure of control - depending on the cohesion and effectiveness of their organization - upon the entry of immigrants into their calling. For them, the overall level of immigration was not of as much concern as the number of migrant workers with qualifications to enter a particular trade. Craft union officials were conscious of two extremes which would have unfavourable ramifications. If their attitude to immigrant trade recognition was too restrictive, employees would be induced to evade entry requirements (where possible), downgrade trade tasks to semi-skilled workers or adopt other forms of skilled labour substitution. If, on the other hand, their approach was too flexible, or immigration of skilled labour too plentiful, the bargaining power

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.* The M.B.A. subsequently revised its claim to a reduction of \$15 to \$27 per week. At this stage the Labor Council of New South Wales sought leave to intervene in the case. *S.M.H.*, July 20, 1978, p.9.

and job security of local tradesmen would be undermined, narrowing skill differentials and causing unemployment. Most craft unions were concerned with guarding themselves from either extreme although the latter prospect was always their predominant fear. The retention of formal apprenticeship as the primary mode of trade recognition was central to union strategy in this regard.

Broadly speaking craft unions could be divided into two groups - those who were covered by the T.R.R.A. regulations and those who were outside its influence. For the former group, trade recognition was governed by statutory regulations. Systematic procedures existed for checking the qualifications of foreign-born workers and ensuring these met Australian standards. Metal trades unions played an active role in deciding these standards (in overseas missions and the C.T.C.s) and enforcing them (through the L.T.C.s). Officials were also able to enunciate the union case on general training methods at meetings of the Department of Labour Advisory Council sub-committee on trade matters. In retrospect, they were fairly successful in defending the apprenticeship system and resisting proposals to introduce adult training for locals and partly qualified migrants. Nevertheless, unions were obliged to make a number of concessions in the light of certain inequities and continuing shortages of skilled labour.

Employers periodically attacked the T.R.R.A. However, in general, they abided by the regulations, not the least because the requirement that skilled workers meet certain standards benefited them. More flexible arrangements, while attractive during periods of acute labour shortage, may well have entailed long-term costs in the area of trade standards. Without detracting from this point, it is apparent that the T.R.R.A. performed a far more vital role for unions. In safeguarding skill standards and protecting the interests of recognized tradesmen, it formed the cornerstone for union acceptance of the mass entry of immigrant tradesmen - and those from countries other than the United Kingdom in particular. The defensive posture of federal union leaders was dictated by pressure from local branches and the rank and file. As more than one official pointed out, T.R.R.A. provisions and the issuing of trade certificates were essential to the smooth absorption of immigrant tradesmen at the work-place with little overt friction or demands for quotas on the number of foreign-born craftsmen in particular establishments.

Of course, these general observations mask a multitude of differences between unions. Provisions were never watertight. Enforcement depended upon the attitude of individual employers and the organizational effectiveness of each union. Continuing labour shortages meant that no union was able to totally exclude workers without trade certificates or formal training. Well organized bodies such as the E.T.U., B.S.A. and A.E.U. appear to have been more successful than other unions. The E.T.U. was assisted by safety considerations which provided a significant incentive for employers to engage only recognized tradesmen. In the A.E.U. and B.S.A., the strong sense of craft identity to be found at branch and work-place level inhibited the use of non-recognized tradesmen. It was reinforced by the need to have a clearance paper in order to move from one branch to another.

Where dilution did occur - and the B.S.A. and A.E.U. both tried to ensure that this was done only with the sanction of federal and local union officials - these workers were admitted under a separate membership category. This was designed to protect the interests of time-served tradesmen rather than discriminate against migrants - although they came to dominate provisional/dilutee membership categories. Those migrants entering the tradesmen's section were treated with complete equality. Since the migrants concerned had industrial experience, their only impediments to participation in union affairs were language, insecurity and any informal ethno-centrism they might encounter. The strong spirit of localized activism and craft traditions encouraged their participation but dictated against the provision of special supports for this.

The Blacksmiths' Society and the Moulders' Union, both small bodies covering declining trades, adopted a restrictive stance because they perceived an over-supply of tradesmen was imminent. In contrast, the S.M.W.U., a union whose ranks were increasingly composed of semi-skilled workers, was noticeably less craft conscious. It saw systematic elevation in the sheet-metal working trade as inevitable, but nevertheless lent its support to the T.R.R.A. A more detailed account of the unions which formed the A.M.W.S.U., their responses to immigrants and the participation of migrant workers within them, will be given in Chapter 9.

Even those unions most successful in maintaining control over admission to the trade could not induce employers to boost

apprenticeship in line with industrial growth. The suspicion is that as employers became reliant on immigrant tradesmen their interest in matching apprentice numbers to future labour requirements waned. The problem was accentuated by the rapid drift of craftsmen out of their trade, necessitating both a continued dependence on immigration and the elevation of semi-skilled workers.¹⁴⁸ Thus, it is perhaps not so remarkable that in a period of general unemployment the federal government should advertise for tradesmen overseas and support a recruiting mission by metal trades employers.¹⁴⁹

For those unions not covered by the T.R.R.A., restriction of migrant entry rested solely on the effectiveness of union organization. Unions able to establish pre-entry closed shops such as the Printing and Kindred Industries Union (P.K.I.U.) appear to have had little problem with trade recognition. Entry into the printing trades was restricted by the need for proficiency in English, although this did not apply to those non-English speaking printers able to find work in the small foreign-language press. Further, the level of immigration amongst skilled printing operatives was very small. Net migration of printers, compositors and linotypists between 1946 and 1965 was only 1,969.¹⁵⁰ On at least one occasion the P.K.I.U. did claim that migrant tradesmen should be excluded in the calculation of apprentice/tradesmen ratios. However, this overt attempt to restrict the number of apprentices was unsuccessful.¹⁵¹

In the building trades early union resistance quickly collapsed and migrant tradesmen faced little difficulty obtaining

¹⁴⁸The substantial movement out of tradesmen's ranks, first noted by the Beattie Inquiry and the subject of more recent debate, may have been a consequence of the narrowing of skill differentials. See A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.33.

¹⁴⁹This evoked an extremely hostile reaction from metal unions. See the *S.M.H.*, January 26, 1979, p.3, January 25, 1980, p.3, February 2, 1980, p.3 and March 23, 1980, p.6.

¹⁵⁰A.C. Beattie, *The Apprenticeship System in N.S.W.*, *op cit.*, p.580.

¹⁵¹This case concerned the New South Wales Government Printer. *Ibid.*, p.187.

entry, if only by joining sub-contracting groups. It is beyond dispute that the infusion of migrants and expansion of sub-contracting substantially contributed to the decline of apprenticeship in the building trades. Ultimately, unions were obliged to agree to a new training method which almost halved the period spent on-site. As in the metal trades, there is evidence of short-sightedness on the part of many employers with regard to long-term training requirements.

The efforts of unions to defend the apprenticeship system and craft standards cannot be viewed purely as an attempt to uphold anachronistic restrictions and thereby discriminate against migrants claiming skills. The Commonwealth/State Government Apprenticeship Inquiry of 1954 and the Beattie Inquiry in New South Wales 14 years later had both endorsed apprenticeship as the soundest method of trade training. Immigration was never more than a partial solution to the skilled labour shortage - and a potentially temporary one at that. Lee's assessment of the British situation would seem to hold equal relevance for Australia:

the ambiguity of skill exists because the employer [if only by seeking to 'dilute'] actually prefers us to be agnostic about his employee's capacity and expertise. The defence of apprenticeship by craft unions in recent times has not therefore simply consisted of an attempt at 'social construction'. It has also involved a rudimentary assertion of the right of the workman to instruction, to participation in technical knowledge. Perhaps there was always this element in 'craft' but fewer and fewer trade unions are any longer able to evoke it. Unfortunately the claim to exercise skill had its roots in a relatively privileged set of occupational groupings. Such workers were in no position strategically to appreciate what their claim might mean for the working class as a whole.¹⁵²

It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that migrants were again caught between local combatants who sought conflicting roles for migrant tradesmen. Employers in those industries covered by the T.R.R.A. opposed regulation of trade recognition not merely because it infringed upon their managerial prerogatives, but also because it forced them to accept the primacy of local training through the

¹⁵²D.J. Lee, "Craft Unions and the Force of Tradition: The Case of Apprenticeship", *op cit.*, p.46.

apprenticeship system, closing access to a potentially massive pool of immigrant dilutees. The unions - especially in the metal trades - clung to the apprenticeship system as the lynch pin of their traditional *modus operandi*.

The ethnically neutral character of this dispute became transformed not because craft unions were especially hostile to immigrants, but simply because these happened to provide the largest group of potential dilutees, and the most difficult test cases to break the principles enforced in trade recognition. As in the area of political conflict within trade unions, migrants - by virtue of their presumed characteristics - were drawn into an essentially Australian struggle.

CHAPTER 7

PATTERNS OF CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE:
CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT WORKER ORGANIZATION

Introduction

The two preceding chapters have sought to establish that Australian unions followed a delicate line between enlightenment and xenophobia in the early years of post-war immigration. The migration programme was accepted, on the basis of certain institutional safeguards, with the influential support of certain higher echelons within the union movement. Effectively, unions were party to the consensus aims of economic growth, full employment and population building for defence purposes. At the same time, union leaders had to consider how migration would influence the balance of power both in the internal struggles within unions, and in the more serious struggles with employers. Considerations of this kind were likely to lead to opposition to immigration, particularly at times when jobs or housing were scarce. In some circumstances, hostility could also be directed against migrants after their arrival. The previous chapter has shown how some migrants attracted political antagonism, while others remained sandwiched between warring factions struggling over the craft system. Beyond these specific instances, non-British migrants possessed a more ambiguous "outsider" status as far as trade unions were concerned.

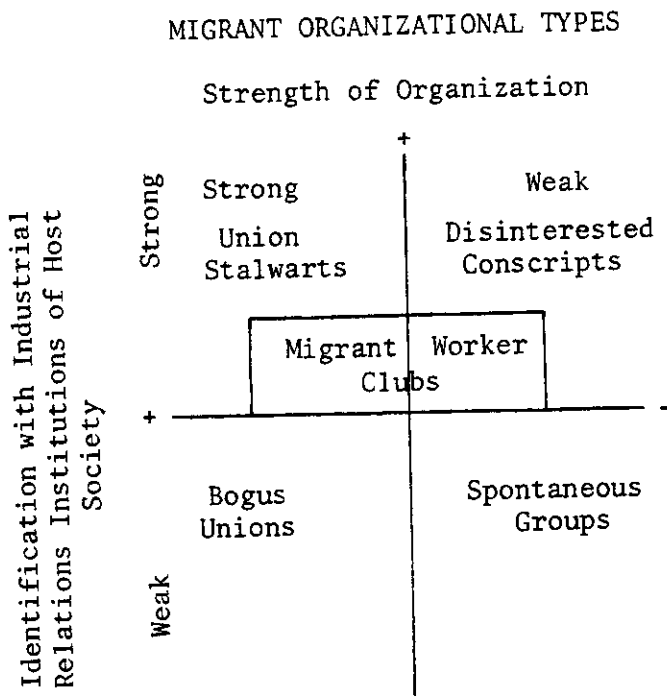
Clearly trade union attitudes towards migrants could condition the kind of role that migrants were able to play within unions. At the same time, a reciprocal process was in train whereby the organized industrial relations behaviour of migrants was shaped by their orientations.

The product of these forces can be depicted as a heterogeneous set of organizational configurations, by which migrants were able to play a part in industrial relations. Given the variety to be found both among migrants and unions, it would be unrealistic to expect that migrant organizations should display strong uniformity.

Nevertheless, the main body of literature upon migrant organization has yet to develop a full typology of the range of organizational types to be found. On the one hand, the assimilationist perspective has focused in isolation upon patterns of participation by migrants within trade unions in the host society. On the other hand, the Marxist perspective has drawn attention to divergence and to the formation of ethnically exclusive organizations outside the mainstream of labour organization.

The cross-classificatory scheme developed below integrates these two perspectives by distinguishing organizational types in terms of identification with the industrial relations institutions of the host society. The vertical axis delineates migrant participation within the organizations and procedures of the Australian industrial relations system from participation within organizations confined to special migrant enclaves within the workforce, and with an exclusive migrant character.

The horizontal axis of the cross-classificatory diagram represents variations in organization strength, drawing attention to the implications for migrant organization of either voluntary or involuntary exclusion from strong organizations, whether these are ethnically exclusive or genuinely multicultural.



The four types set out in this schema comprise different organizational alternatives for the representation of migrant workers upon industrial questions. No provision is made in this schema for unorganized individuals and the quadrants do not denote stereotyped characteristics of individuals.

The upper left hand quadrant - termed "Union Stalwarts" - includes those organizational arrangements where migrants achieve levels of commitment and participation in unions comparable to indigenous workers. This does not imply that a "standard" level of commitment and involvement is to be found amongst all unions. Nor does it imply that all migrant unionists should necessarily be active participants. It merely refers to an arrangement where migrants are not under-represented *vis-à-vis* indigenous workers.

The upper right hand quadrant - "Disinterested Conscripts" - again refers to organizational arrangements where migrants choose, or are forced, to be represented by indigenous trade union organizations, but where they do not play an active role in union affairs to the level achieved by indigenous workers. Again, it does not follow that all migrant unionists are apathetic card-carriers - only that a disproportionate number fall into this class of union member. The sources of under-representation, whether in membership, meetings, elections, informal activities, disputes, or office-bearing - remain a matter for enquiry, if this category of organizational involvement is found to be common.

The lower right hand quadrant - "Spontaneous Groups" - refers to exclusively ethnic organizations, often of a temporary and informal nature, which do not have the trappings of permanent trade union organization (registration, membership of the A.C.T.U. or Labour Councils, activity in arbitration tribunals, etc.), but which do seek to influence industrial relations, often through petition and protest. Such groups may be formed in protest against specific job grievances, while others may be formed in protest against social or economic matters which are commonly the concern of Australian unions. It does not follow that these groups are in conflict with unions - merely that their organization is remote from the mainstream of union life.

The final organizational type, in the lower left hand quadrant - the "Bogus Union" - is again remote from the mainstream of union life,

recruiting upon an exclusive ethnic basis. However, such an organization will also be seeking to become established as a formal union by gaining registration, and possessing formal union functions and organizational characteristics. Such organizations are termed "bogus" as a sign of their exclusion from a labour movement which recognises no formal role for the separate organisation of minorities into "unionate" bodies. Bogus unions are controversial organizations, attracting widespread opposition from established unions.

Migrant worker clubs perform a special role in this schema. They cannot be depicted as "bogus unions" since they lay no claim to union status. Rather they act as a bridge between the two upper quadrants. It will be demonstrated elsewhere in this chapter that they help channel migrant action in such a way that disinterested migrant unionists perform a fuller role in union life. It should be stressed that this intermittent industrial relations function is not the prime *raison d'être* of these organizations, which possess substantial functions as social, cultural and political centres of ethnic life, normally working within an integrationist perspective.

The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with the application of four ideal types identified in the cross-classification, showing how different kinds of migrant organization resemble these types, explaining their origin and function, and evaluating their relative significance.

1. Independent Action by Spontaneous Groups

The immediate natural units of organization for many migrants upon arrival in Australia were the numerous migrant hostels established following the war. These provided a powerful if temporary community which could be mobilized to mount protest upon specific grievances. Spontaneous group protest was dominated initially by hostel organization.

The substance of protest was focused away from immediate employment conditions, centring rather upon closely linked material problems of hostel life, such as the quality of accommodation, hostel discipline, hostel charges and employment prospects. British migrants were to prove most intensely concerned with hostel conditions. Non-British migrants appeared more concerned with unemployment.

In all these problems Australian unions did not become the primary agency for representing grievances, although some unions came to offer sporadic support. Instead the individual migrant camp was the most important unit of organization. Nor were employers the targets of economic protest, their place being taken by the Commonwealth Government, and subsequently by its hostel management agency, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd (C.H.L.). Thus union/employer conflict became supplanted by hostel/government conflict. Nevertheless, the core issues remained the same, with distress upon inadequate income or poor employment prospects finding an outlet through the accessible and volatile collectivities created by hostel life rather than the remote unresponsive unions to which some migrants would have belonged.

Spontaneous group protest was not the exclusive preserve of the temporary hostel communities, finding outlet also in some trade union activity. Nevertheless we can distinguish camp collectivities as an important if ephemeral example of exclusive migrant organization outside the umbrella of "trade unionism".

Spontaneous protest by migrants within unions is not dealt with in this section, which is confined exclusively to migrant collectivities that are distinct from union organization. Some migrant groups have arisen as rank and file revolt movements within unions such as the Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation. These will be considered in a different section concerned with migrant participation in unions.

The first protests to become apparent were about hostel conditions, the separation of husbands from their families and hostel food starting in the early 1950s when many migrants were housed in hostels hurriedly converted from military barracks. As usual, displaced persons appeared to suffer worse from the policy of separating workers from their families.¹ However, protests appear to have emanated from all groups of migrants. In 1950, the *Sydney*

¹In March 1950 migrant women visiting their husbands at the Maribyrnong hostel (Victoria) fought police when they tried to return them to the Bonegilla hostel. The following month displaced persons at the Mayfield West hostel (New South Wales) petitioned the Commonwealth Immigration Department about hostel conditions and the separation of families. See *Tribune*, March 1 and April 19, 1950.

Morning Herald reported separate protests from the Finsbury (South Australia), Broughton (Burwood, New South Wales), Unanderra (Wollongong, New South Wales) and Cowra (Western New South Wales) hostels.² Most of these protests were simply verbal complaints.

However, at Cowra, 300 displaced persons (all women) lowered the Australian flag and refused to eat camp food following a cut in camp rations. The remaining migrants (more than 3,000) threatened to join the strikers.³ The Immigration Minister, H.E. Holt, stated that reports of complaints were exaggerated (a claim the *Sydney Morning Herald* disputed after sending reporters to the camp to interview the women), that there were no problems with the food and that three ringleaders were responsible for the action.⁴ This indicated strong reluctance to accept criticism of the government's immigration facilities and policies of separation as anything but the work of agitators.⁵

The government had a particularly cavalier attitude to non-British migrants, exemplified by its decision to evict European migrants (all single men) from its Villawood, Matraville and Wallgrove (New South Wales) hostels in order to make way for British migrants. The men were served with notice that unless they vacated the camp, their present employment would be withdrawn and they would be directed to country employment with accommodation to be provided by the employer. The Regional Director of Employment stated that if the latter option was refused, then the Commonwealth would impose its legal powers - a thinly veiled threat of deportation.⁶

²British migrants also protested at the lack of available housing. For reported instances of these protests see the *S.M.H.*, February 20, p.5, May 8, p.9, May 24, p.1, May 25, p.4, August 2, p.4, November 14, p.1, November 20, p.1, November 22, p.2 and November 24, 1950, p.4.

³*S.M.H.*, November 19, 1950, p.1.

⁴Belying Holt's allegations, 106 women in one section of the camp signed a petition calling for an investigation of hostel conditions. *S.M.H.*, November 24, 1950, p.4.

⁵For other statements illustrating Holt's attitude, see the *S.M.H.*, June 27, 1951, p.3 and August 4, 1951, p.5.

⁶When migrants refused to leave the camp they were locked out, their belongings dumped outside and a police guard placed on the camp perimeter. *S.M.H.*, March 6, 1951, p.1.

Protests intensified during 1951 when the government had its hostels registered as a company - Commonwealth Hostels Limited (C.H.L.).⁷ British migrants who were not separated from their families and generally given better (separate) accommodation from their non-British counterparts remained dissatisfied. In June a British Migrants' Association was formed amongst migrants at the Bradfield, Meadowbank and East Hills (all New South Wales) hostels to agitate for improved conditions and medical facilities and to eliminate the victimization of welfare committees already operating in many hostels. In July delegates from ten British hostels protested against increased tariff rates and criticized accommodation and food. These allegations were denied by an executive officer of the Department of Labour and National Service who accused them of seeking preferential treatment.⁸ In Victoria 200 British migrants at the Brooklyn hostel refused to pay the 10/- tariff increases and received notices threatening legal action. Meeting a deputation in August, Holt told them that many Australians would welcome the accommodation they were provided with and stated it would be far more economical simply to introduce non-British migrants.⁹

In 1952 there was a dramatic escalation of protests following increases in tariff charges ranging from 8/- to 17/- per week. For migrants hostel charges were of key concern because the tariff rates were levied in accordance with prevailing wage rates. The higher the nominal wages of a migrant, the higher the tariff paid.¹⁰ The situation was made more turbulent by the fact that the economic recession of 1952 prolonged the average period of stay in hostels.

⁷See the *S.M.H.*, March 15, p.3, June 26, p.4, June 27, p.3, June 29, p.4, July 13, p.3, July 16, p.3, July 20, p.3, July 22, p.1, July 29, p.6, August 4, p.5, August 5, p.6 and October 31, 1951, p.3.

⁸The government did become alarmed when reports of hostel conditions and the misleading nature of information provided to prospective migrants were published in British newspapers. *S.M.H.*, July 16, 1951, p.3.

⁹*S.M.H.*, August 4, 1951, p.5.

¹⁰In May 1952 the hostel tariff for a family of four was £11/7/6 per week. This rate was levied on the basis that the majority of occupants were expected to be tradesmen earning considerably more than the basic wage. Reported statement of C.H.L. chairman, *S.M.H.*, May 3, 1952, p.11.

A national body with representatives in each state and each hostel the Federal British Migrants' Welfare Association (F.B.M.W.A.), attempted to co-ordinate the resistance of the migrants who refused to pay tariff increases and demanded separate cooking facilities for each family. Officials of the F.B.M.W.A. sought the support of the union movement by addressing labour council meetings and approaching individual unions with a high proportion of British-born members.¹¹ The reaction from unions already worried about the housing shortage and unemployment was sympathetic. The Melbourne District Committee of the A.E.U., which had previously assisted hostel welfare committees, established a hostel sub-committee to conduct investigations of the conditions within hostels.¹²

From June onwards Commonwealth Hostels Ltd began serving summonses on migrants refusing to pay tariff increases in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.¹³ The F.B.M.W.A. replied by organizing protest meetings in each state. In August a meeting of 800 at the Sydney Trades Hall called for an inquiry into British migration and free passage for those desiring to return to the United Kingdom. The meeting also called upon the government to reduce hostel charges, provide families with their own cooking facilities and give free meals during periods of unemployment.¹⁴ Similar demands were made by meetings of British workers retrenched from their jobs or who arrived to find no work was available.¹⁵

¹¹See Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meeting held on May 1, 1952.

¹²In its report on the Williamstown hostel, the committee found that space was limited, there were no power points or running water in each unit, showers were defective, canvas was used to partition lavatories, there was no children's playground and only one shop (privately run). The canteen at the hostel was assessed to be reasonable. A.E.U. Melbourne District Committee, Hostel Sub-committee, *Report re conditions and tariff charges at migrant hostels*, Melbourne 1952.

¹³See the *S.M.H.*, June 21, p.4, November 19, p.6, November 20, p.3 and November 21, 1952, p.3.

¹⁴*S.M.H.*, August 24, 1952, p.3.

¹⁵This even affected migrants selected for a specific public or private employer. For a report of protests by Transport Department workers see the *S.M.H.*, September 24, 1952, p.1.

The F.B.M.W.A. planned passive resistance to evictions. However, on November 21 migrants and police were involved in a brawl at the Brooklyn hostel followed by a mass protest by 1,000 migrants from the hostel on the Yarra bank.¹⁶ In Adelaide the Finsbury hostel manager and two officers were stoned after serving eviction notices. In Sydney the president of the F.B.M.W.A. denied a statement by Immigration Minister Holt that tariff charges were well below private rates and argued the hostels were no financial burden owing to taxes paid by immigrants.¹⁷ Holt's attitude was hardly sympathetic. Ignoring the housing shortage and unemployment, he accused recent migrants of being "less enterprising" than their predecessors and the dupes of communist agitators.¹⁸ Migrant hostels in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales organized further protests. Responding to a statement by the chairman of C.H.L., W. Funnell, that all migrants not paying tariffs would be evicted, F.B.M.W.A. president H. Boreman said that if there were any further evictions British migrants would be urged to walk out of their hostels and demand immediate repatriation to Britain.¹⁹

The government hoped to break resistance by suing three migrants (one each in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia) for not paying the tariff increases. The case, however, did not prove to be that simple. Commonwealth Hostels Ltd had been forced to justify the complex system (based on the migrant's economic circumstances and number of dependants) of levying charges. The defendants, receiving F.B.M.W.A. assistance, charged that C.H.L. failed to have the increase approved by the New South Wales Prices Commissioner. Commonwealth Hostels Ltd claimed that, as an agent of the Commonwealth, it was not subject to state legislation governing rents and prices. The prospect of a quick victory faded as the case dragged on in the High Court.²⁰

¹⁶The meeting called for the resignation of the Victorian manager of C.H.L. and urged migrants to take over the camp. *S.M.H.*, November 22, 1952, p.4.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*S.M.H.*, November 20, 1952, p.3.

¹⁹*S.M.H.*, November 23, 1952, p. 1, p.2.

²⁰*S.M.H.*, November 25, 1952, p.4.

Faced with widespread protests, the federal government hurriedly set up a committee to enquire into the complaints of U.K. migrants on November 23, 1952.²¹ The committee of four, including R.R. Broadby, secretary of the A.C.T.U. (two F.B.M.W.A. officials were permitted to attend as observers) completed its report on December 5, 1952. The committee's report admitted some early difficulties in housing British migrants owing to the shortage of housing materials and the Korean war. It found that the tariffs levied were reasonable and migrants were not justified in withholding payments. However, some improvements in sanitation and road sealing were recommended.²²

The hostel rates operative as at April 27, 1952 for a migrant with dependants ranged from £8/12/6 to £9/6/6 per week for those earning a nominal wage (excluding bonuses) of £10/5/- to £12/-/- respectively. This left migrants with between £1/12/6 and £2/13/6 of their wage for saving and other expenditure.²³ While acknowledging that conditions varied considerably between hostels, the committee saw no need for different rates. It rejected suggestions that migrants should be given rebates for periods of less than a week not spent in the hostel, should pay only for the meals they consumed or be able to cook meals in their own unit. The early closure of the "less desirable hostels, particularly the woolstore type" and the provision of social welfare workers at hostels, was proposed.²⁴ The committee criticized the role of the F.B.M.W.A. in dealing with complaints and argued that new booklets issued by the Immigration Department would remove the misleading impressions of prospective migrants concerning local housing.

²¹British migrants had previously sent protest cables to the Queen, the British prime minister and the leader of the opposition. The government's decision was applauded by a meeting of 600 migrants representing 17 hostels.

²²*Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister for Immigration to Investigate the Grounds for withholding of Tariff Payments by British Migrants in Commonwealth Hostels* (Commonwealth Government Printer, Melbourne, December 5, 1952).

²³*Ibid.*, p.17.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p.6.

The key note of the report was the committee's statement relating to the involvement of communists in the agitation:

It is satisfied that communists have pursued a deliberate policy of ingratiating themselves with migrants and exploiting their grievances - indeed, not only were known communists a guiding force in the recent unhappy incidents but they have also been among the legal advisers to the migrants in various law suits against the Commonwealth Government.²⁵

The committee's evidence to support this contention was somewhat flimsy. It consisted mainly of references from communist literature urging a joint struggle by migrants and Australians against the Menzies government. None of the cited literature referred directly to hostel problems.²⁶ The committee also stated that it was not accusing F.B.M.W.A. officials of holding communist views. For its part, the F.B.M.W.A. had always denied any involvement in broader political struggles.

The committee's report, in the characteristic fashion of the cold war era, placed the blame for protest with unspecified agitators. It was promptly labelled as a "whitewash" of migrant complaints by the F.B.M.W.A. president.²⁷ While the report succeeded in eroding public sympathy for the migrants' case, it did not stifle protest.²⁸ The F.B.M.W.A. continued its campaign for improved conditions although it did not excuse those migrants who refused to pay their tariffs in protest at the entry of non-British migrants into hostels.²⁹ To further the struggle for separate cooking facilities, letters were drawn up for migrants at the Finsbury hostel stating they would not require food or catering

²⁵*Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁶Indeed, *Tribune* referred to the hostel struggles on only two occasions throughout 1952. See *Tribune*, April 30 and May 7, 1952.

²⁷See the *S.M.H.*, December 6, 1952, p.4.

²⁸The *Sydney Morning Herald*, which had previously supported the migrants, began to refer to unspecified "red" intrigue after this time. See, for instance, the *S.M.H.*, December 12, 1952, p.1 and p.2 and January 20, 1953, p.2.

²⁹*S.M.H.*, January 9, 1953, p.3.

services.³⁰ On January 17, the C.H.L. chairman warned that migrants attempting to cook meals in their own rooms would be liable to eviction.³¹

In reply, the F.B.M.W.A. president warned that 500 migrants would walk out of the Bunnerong hostel (New South Wales) if the 23 families alleged to be cooking meals in their own rooms were evicted. It was estimated that more than 150 families were refusing to pay anything more than rent and electricity.³² This was part of the F.B.M.W.A.'s campaign to have migrants designated as tenants - rather than lodgers as C.H.L. claimed. For its part, C.H.L. did not abandon its demand that migrants pay the full tariff and that those refusing to do so be evicted.³³ The housing shortage which prolonged the communal hostel existence for most migrants was a significant factor underlying the friction. The tragic death of babies at Hargrave Park and the inflexible attitude of C.H.L. did not help to ease tension.³⁴

Commonwealth Hostels Ltd suffered a set-back in March 1953 when the High Court ruled that hostel tariffs were not immune from state laws and that a recent increase broke price regulations in three states.³⁵ The F.B.M.W.A. stated that C.H.L. owed £95-£100 to each family that had paid the increases. This victory was short-lived. The federal government intervened to remove C.H.L. from the jurisdiction of state prices control. The C.H.L. reiterated its

³⁰*S.M.H.*, January 12, 1953, p.4.

³¹The chairman referred to the committee's finding that an attempt to do this within existing hostel facilities would pose health and fire risks. *S.M.H.*, January 17, 1953, p.3.

³²*S.M.H.*, January 19, 1953, p.3.

³³The F.B.M.W.A. responded by arguing that migrants should be permitted to prepare their own meals. At the Brooklyn hostel it threatened to have prepared meals brought in. See the *S.M.H.*, January 21, p.3, January 25, p.4 and February 5, 1953, p.3.

³⁴The events at Hargrave Park evoked widespread press and public comment. See *S.M.H.*, February 16, 1953, p.3 (editorial and letters).

³⁵*S.M.H.*, March 14, 1953, p.4; and *Tribune*, March 25, 1953.

"pay the full tariff or leave" policy to those migrants trying to opt out of hostel food arrangements. It estimated that only 10 per cent of the 15,025 migrants in hostels were involved. However, the government was concerned that adverse publicity from protests combined with long periods of residence in hostels due to the housing shortage was damaging the immigration programme.³⁶

On April 14, F.B.M.W.A. representatives met with Immigration Minister Holt in Melbourne. At the meeting the Association proposed that migrants be given the option of eating in the canteens or cooking their own food and that only meals eaten in the canteen should be paid for. Representatives offered to forget about the refund (flowing on from the High Court decision in March) if these proposals were agreed to. Despite an assurance from Holt that the matters would be considered sympathetically, both proposals were rejected on May 9.³⁷ Migrants were sent letters setting down the rules and conditions governing their stay in hostels. The F.B.M.W.A. alleged that many migrants could not meet existing tariffs and that even those outside the Association had become so embittered that they refused to sign the documents circulated by C.H.L.³⁸

In May C.H.L. began to institute eviction proceedings against the hundreds of migrants under notice. This inspired protests in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Some non-British migrants took part in these demonstrations. In Glenelg a group of non-British migrants threatened to tear down a recreation room after being refused permission to hold a meeting to discuss tariffs and hostel conditions.³⁹ On June 10 200 British and other European migrants marched down the main street of Wollongong following evictions at the Balgownie hostel. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that squads of migrants were guarding the premises of those under notice at the Berkley and Unanderra hostels. A deputation including representatives from the South Coast Labour

³⁶*S.M.H.*, May 17, 1953, p.13.

³⁷Correspondence between the president and secretary of the F.B.M.W.A., Brooklyn hostel, Footscray, May 14, 1953.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*S.M.H.*, May 18, 1953, p.5.

Council, Miners' Federation, Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemens' Association and Waterside Workers' Federation informed the mayor that migrants would not return to dining halls. Workers at the South Bulli and Excelsior Collieries stopped work in protest at the evictions and began augmenting hostel "pickets".⁴⁰ A number of other unions pledged support.⁴¹

At the East Hills hostel near Sydney police clashed with more than 50 migrants, many of them women. As in Wollongong, the union movement expressed sympathy for the migrants' cause although left wing and right wing officials disagreed over the direction the protests should take.⁴² For its part the F.B.M.W.A. asked the premier to keep police from becoming involved.

Faced with these hostile demonstrations, the Acting Minister for Immigration, Sir Phillip McBride, called a temporary halt to evictions. This lasted but a matter of days before the conflict was resumed with greater intensity.⁴³ In West Cessnock, near Newcastle, British and Dutch miners resisting rent increases formed their own association and received help from the Miners' Federation.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, resistance at the major hostels was finally broken by the government's determination to tolerate no dissent. The belongings of migrants were removed by C.H.L. officers and police while the occupants were absent.⁴⁵ At the Bradfield hostel north of Sydney - a typical example of the woolshed/barracks

⁴⁰*S.M.H.*, June 11, 1953, p.3.

⁴¹*Tribune*, June 3, 1953.

⁴²The New South Wales president of the B.W.I.U. urged migrants to join with unions rather than act independently. The assistant national secretary of the F.I.A. suggested that migrants place their case in the hands of the Labor Council of New South Wales. See the *S.M.H.*, June 13, 1953, p.3.

⁴³See the *S.M.H.*, June 16, p.3, June 17, p.4, June 18, p.3 and June 20, 1953, p.4.

⁴⁴*S.M.H.*, June 21, 1953, p.5.

⁴⁵*S.M.H.*, June 17, 1953, p.4; and *Tribune*, July 1 and 15, 1953.

structure formerly used as an Air Force training camp - evicted migrants attempted to erect a "tent city" in a vacant lot opposite the hostel.⁴⁶ However, the tents were removed by the local council.⁴⁷ The Randwick Council did permit migrants evicted from the Bunnerong hostel to erect tents, but only as a temporary measure, after gaining approval from the New South Wales Housing Commission.⁴⁸ In Victoria migrants gave up their protests in July and agreed to pay the full tariff rather than face eviction.⁴⁹ Resistance lasted until September in New South Wales. However, in September an injunction brought against the Bunnerong evictions was rejected by the High Court and migrants occupying tents in a park opposite the hostel were obliged to move.⁵⁰

The government's action was ultimately successful in breaking up organized resistance and in particular the F.B.M.W.A., although sporadic protests at the quality of hostel accommodation and food continued to occur.⁵¹ As late as 1967 British migrants from 13 Commonwealth hostels in New South Wales and Victoria protested against a \$6 tariff increase. Hostel residents' committees were established in both states to co-ordinate opposition. In Victoria a number of unions helped the committee publish a pamphlet outlining the living conditions in ex-military training or prisoner-of-war camps still being used as hostels. The pamphlets were sent to British trade unions - a move designed both to discourage prospective migrants and to engender a more conciliatory attitude on the part of

⁴⁶ *S.M.H.*, June 28, 1953, p.4.

⁴⁷ *S.M.H.*, July 1, p.3, July 2, p.5 and July 3, 1953, p.4.

⁴⁸ *S.M.H.*, July 22, 1953, p.5.

⁴⁹ *S.M.H.*, July 11, 1953, p.1.

⁵⁰ *S.M.H.*, September 11, p.6 and September 21, 1953, p.4.

⁵¹ For instance, in December 1954 migrants at Heathcote hostel, East Hills (near Sydney) alleged that food contained maggots and children were suffering from malnutrition. See the *S.M.H.*, December 10, p.5 and December 11, 1954, p.4.

the federal government.⁵² However, unlike in 1952-1953, the issuing of summonses against migrants refusing to pay the increase appears to have stopped opposition.

In general, non-British immigrants proved less discriminating with regard to hostel accommodation. Displaced persons had, in many cases, some experience of communal camp existence. This was less the case with other European immigrants. However, both groups objected to the segregation of husbands and families into separate hostels, sometimes hundreds of miles apart - a practice that was not employed with British migrants. On occasion groups of migrants in isolated regions went on strike during the early 1950s in protest at their working conditions and separation from their families.⁵³ However, unlike their British counterparts, non-British migrants and particularly displaced persons faced a real threat of deportation if they engaged in activities which the government might deem illegal.

There were a number of instances where groups of non-British migrants did engage in public and sometimes violent demonstrations - both within and outside hostels. The major cause of these protests was not so much hostel conditions - abysmal as these often were - but the existence of widespread unemployment. As indicated in Chapter 4, unemployment hit non-British migrants, particularly those lacking trade skills, far harder than British or Australian-born workers. The deprivation of unemployment could inspire desperate acts by jobless new immigrants quite out of character with the scrupulous obedience to the law generally found amongst foreign-born residents.

⁵²*S.M.H.*, March 20, 1967, p.4. In February *Tribune* reported that migrants wanted hostel plumbing systems investigated and that the New South Wales and Queensland labour councils were calling for an A.C.T.U. inquiry into hostel conditions. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported further migrant protests in April, July and August of 1967 including a number in Western Australian hostels. See *Tribune*, February 1 and 22, 1967; and the *S.M.H.*, April 26, p.9 and August 18, 1967, p.3.

⁵³For reports of such incidents see the *S.M.H.*, January 13, 1950, p.3 (involving 29 migrants on an army job in North Queensland) and July 26, 1954 (60 Maltese migrants walked off their jobs on the Queensland canefields); and *Newsweekly*, August 4, 1954 (14 Greek migrants employed on the Burdekin Dam construction job).

The first arrivals of large numbers of unskilled Italians in 1952 coincided with a dramatic worsening of the unemployment situation. Many arrived to find no work was available. By July, some had been idle for two months and were living a spartan existence in isolated hostels. On July 18, 2,000 unemployed Italians at the Bonegilla camp threatened to riot, set fire to the camp and march on nearby towns to protest against the government's inability to find them work.⁵⁴ They demanded to be released from their two-year contract and insisted on early repatriation to Italy. Several days later a mass march on Canberra was planned - an action which led to renewed police and army intervention.⁵⁵ Responding to public criticism, Immigration Minister Holt stated that most of the men had only been unemployed between three and six weeks. However, he undertook to reduce the intake of Italians and find work for those already here.⁵⁶

This statement did not ease the situation. On July 28 about 100 unemployed Italian migrants rioted at the Maribyrnong hostel near Melbourne demanding better food, work or immediate repatriation.⁵⁷ In August a march by 60 occupants of the hostel on the Footscray employment office was stopped by police.⁵⁸ On October 11 91 Italians refused to pay their fares at Sydney's Central Railway Station, claiming that the contract which they signed obliged the government to find them work - an obligation it had broken.⁵⁹ Holt denied that the government was under any such obligation, stating that there was "no legal guarantee of work". The contract merely provided that in return for free passage, migrants would work as directed by the government and could be suspended by the employer

⁵⁴*S.M.H.*, July 20, p.1 and July 21, 1952, p.2; and *The Sheet Metal Worker*, August 1952, p.14 offer abbreviated accounts of these disturbances.

⁵⁵*S.M.H.*, July 22, 1952, p.7.

⁵⁶*S.M.H.*, July 23, 1952, p.7. See also H.E. Holt, M.P., statement by the Minister for Immigration, *Press Release* for July 24, 1952; and *S.M.H.*, July 25, 1952, p.2 (letter).

⁵⁷*S.M.H.*, July 29, 1952, p.1.

⁵⁸*S.M.H.*, August 9, 1952, p.3.

⁵⁹*S.M.H.*, October 13, 1952, p.2.

for "insubordination or not working hard enough".⁶⁰ They were, however, entitled to unemployment benefits.⁶¹

Again, these statements failed to defuse the situation. In Queensland ten Italian workers refused to leave the R.A.A.F. base at Amberley where they had been employed until alternate work was found for them.⁶² In the same month, a meeting of 250 persons at the Italo-Australian Club in Sydney demanded an end to immigration "until all residing in Australia are employed".⁶³ Six days later 200 unemployed migrants from the Matraville and Villawood camps marched on the Italian consulate in Oxford Street where a brawl broke out with police - ten policemen being injured and five arrests taking place. This induced an official statement from the police commissioner warning migrants not to engage in street demonstrations to support their demands for work.⁶⁴ Holt blamed the disturbance on "communist activity". This was denied by an Italian cabinet minister then in Australia who said the march had not been organized but was a spontaneous outburst generated by "Latin exuberance" and by the desperate plight of migrants unable to repay their initial debts (for fares) while going further into debt.⁶⁵ All sections of the union movement expressed support for the migrants.⁶⁶ In November a further quiet demonstration by about 60 migrants occurred outside the consulate.⁶⁷ Protests were not entirely confined to Italians. On the same day two Hungarians broke the windows of a large Sydney department store, waited to be arrested, and stated that the action was in protest at their inability to obtain work.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ *S.M.H.*, October 15, 1952, p.2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *S.M.H.*, October 19, 1952, p.4.

⁶³ *S.M.H.*, October 25, 1952, p.4.

⁶⁴ *S.M.H.*, October 31, 1952, p.1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Responding to Holt's allegation, anti-communist Labor M.L.C. C.W. Anderson stated that unless the migrants were given work they would be thrown into the hands of communists. *S.M.H.*, November 1, 1952, p.1. See also *Labor News*, April 2, 1953, p.20.

⁶⁷ *S.M.H.*, November 2, 1952, p.3.

⁶⁸ *S.M.H.*, November 2, 1952, p.3.

In Victoria, a meeting of non-British migrants including Greeks, Yugoslavs, Cypriots, Russians and Czechs at the Melbourne Trades Hall called for an end to all immigration and repatriation of those unable to find work.⁶⁹

In response to these demonstrations the government began shifting groups of unemployed migrants from town to town and from state to state, partly in an effort to find them work but also to prevent them congregating in hostels for any length of time.⁷⁰ This was considerably less expensive than repatriation which had gained official support by the federal executive of the A.L.P.⁷¹

The tactic was not entirely successful. In January 1953 unemployed Italians attempted to storm the Italian consulate in Brisbane.⁷² In another incident 30 Italians in the Mildura region marched to the police station for lodgings claiming that they had been sacked from their jobs as fruit-pickers after complaining about being paid below-award rates.⁷³ Following further demonstrations involving more than 800 migrants, the A.W.U. sent 14 inspectors to ensure that migrants were enrolled as union members and paid award rates.⁷⁴ A separate move by the government to institute deportation proceedings against a number of migrant activists will be dealt with later in the chapter.

In the meantime, the claim that the contract obliged the government to provide work had not been dropped with a number of Italians taking legal proceedings in order to recover wages "lost" during their period of unemployment.⁷⁵ The Italian government had also requested that the federal government give urgent attention to

⁶⁹S.M.H., November 24, 1952, p.1.

⁷⁰During these shifts police were sometimes placed at railway stations to prevent fare evasion. S.M.H., November 16, p.1, December 5, p.5 and December 20, 1952, p.1.

⁷¹S.M.H., November 13, 1952, p.4.

⁷²S.M.H., January 9, 1953, p.3.

⁷³S.M.H., February 20, 1953, p.3.

⁷⁴S.M.H., February 22, 1953, p.1 and March 8, 1953, p.4.

⁷⁵The proceedings eventually reached the High Court. See S.M.H., March 24, 1953, p.3.

the problem of unemployment.⁷⁶ In the end, adjustments to the immigration intake and the restoration of full employment resolved the situation.

The less dramatic bout of unemployment in 1956-1957 produced a renewed round of protests. In August the government began to move large numbers of new arrivals unable to find work.⁷⁷ The groups involved were unemployed Italian migrants and Hungarian refugees who had been resident in hostels for a number of months. In June approximately 100 Italians marched to the office of the Italian consular official posted in Cairns requesting that work be found for them.⁷⁸ In October, *Tribune* reported that Hungarian migrants at the Bonegilla camp had petitioned the federal Immigration Minister, A. Townley, for permission to leave Australia because of the lack of accommodation and work.⁷⁹

It was not until the more serious recession of 1961 that protest approached the scale achieved in 1952. As in 1952, the concentration of large numbers of unemployed migrants in camps such as Bonegilla generated frustration and hostility. In June migrants from a number of different national groups at Bonegilla conducted a protest march demanding that they be given work or sent home.⁸⁰ On July 9, 200 unemployed Greeks and Italians attended a meeting at the Melbourne Trades Hall. They demanded work or repatriation, housing, immediate payment of unemployment benefits (i.e. without a qualifying period), and increases in benefits.⁸¹ Both nationalities also established their own unemployment committees. The continued inflow of migrants finding no work available and police harassment of unemployed migrants, many of whom were arrested

⁷⁶*S.M.H.*, November 21, 1952, p.3.

⁷⁷*S.M.H.*, August 13, 1956, p.4.

⁷⁸*Tribune*, June 26, 1957. See article on Hungarian migrants in same area.

⁷⁹*Tribune*, October 23, 1957.

⁸⁰German migrants interviewed claimed that about 4,000 camp occupants were unemployed and food was of poor quality. See *S.M.H.*, June 25, 1961, p.35; and *Tribune*, June 21, 1961.

⁸¹*S.M.H.*, July 10, 1961, p.1.

on vagrancy charges, only increased tension.⁸² On July 17, 2,000 jobless migrants representing a number of nationalities demonstrated at the Bonegilla camp. This was followed by a second riot by 600 at which police were stoned, and a protest march by 200 migrants.⁸³

The immediate reaction of the government to the events at Bonegilla was to deny that any problem existed, to renew accusations of communist conspiracy and to seek out the ringleaders of the disturbances.⁸⁴ By July 25, 11 migrants had been arrested over their involvement in the riot.⁸⁵ Although Italians were seen to be prominent in the incident at least half those charged were German and Austrian migrants.⁸⁶ A proposed march by unemployed migrants was broken up by police who cleared dormitory blocks.⁸⁷ The arrests brought forth a storm of protest. The labour councils of Queensland, South Australian and New South Wales, together with a number of individual unions, lodged formal complaints with the government. The matter was also referred to the A.C.T.U. The Combined Waterfront Unions Action Committee labelled the government's action as a "witchhunt".⁸⁸ Representations were also made by the Italian government and the Italian Australian Welfare Association. These representations succeeded in having the charges dropped although relations between Australia and Italy were so strained by the incident that it contributed to the cancellation of the immigration agreement between the two countries.⁸⁹

Demonstrations also took place in other states. A mass meeting of unemployed migrants at the Sydney domain called for an

⁸²See *Tribune*, July 12 and 19, 1961.

⁸³The demonstration was supported by workers in a number of work-places. See the *S.M.H.*, July 18, 1961, p.1; and *Tribune*, July 19, 1961.

⁸⁴*S.M.H.*, July 21, p.4 and July 23, 1961, p.5.

⁸⁵*S.M.H.*, July 26, 1961, p.12.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Tribune*, July 25, 1961.

⁸⁸*Tribune*, August 9, 1961.

⁸⁹*S.M.H.*, August 6, 1961, p.12.

end to immigration.⁹⁰ In Adelaide the Vehicle Builders' and Seamen's Unions, Greek Workers' Association (Planton) and Greek Unemployed Migrants' Committee organized a march by jobless workers.⁹¹ However, as in 1952, protests quickly dissipated once the employment situation improved. Since 1961, there have been no widespread outbursts of unrest by unemployed migrants although sporadic demonstrations by small groups continued to occur.⁹²

To sum up, there have been occasions when groups of migrants demonstrated their capacity to engage in independent collective action. These actions seem to be generally the product of desperation and accumulated frustration with their treatment as inferior and expendable resources. The catalyst for these demonstrations amongst non-British migrants was the absence of work which undermined their aspirations for economic security and social dignity. The prominence of particular national groups in some protests is explicable in terms of their concentration within hostels and the limits to communication. British migrants were more commonly skilled and therefore less prone to unemployment. Their complaints usually rested on the quality and cost of accommodation. United Kingdom migrants appear to have possessed higher expectations of what hostel standards should be and felt they had been misled by immigration officials. They were also in a better position to express and organize opposition. However, like non-British migrants, they were still stigmatized as the dupes of communist agitators.

To its credit, the union movement supported demonstrations by both British and non-British migrants. At the same time, its only response to migrant unemployment was to call for an end to immigration and voluntary repatriation. It did not insist, as did

⁹⁰*S.M.H.*, July 30, 1961, p.4.

⁹¹*Tribune*, September 13, 1961.

⁹²For instance, in November 1962, 100 jobless Spanish migrants in Perth claimed that they had been offered only manual work in remote areas of the state. On occasion, even unemployed British migrants made protests. In June 1965 30 British bricklayers and their families demonstrated outside the Perth office of Clay Brick Manufacturers Association. See *Tribune*, November 21, 1962 and June 16, 1965.

the Italians in 1952, that the government had an obligation to provide migrants with work. For its part, the federal government was more obsessed with locating a political conspiracy in migrant protests and preventing further public displays than with remedying the underlying causes. The vulnerability of migrants, and especially non-British migrants, to intimidation, combined with their tenuous position in Australian society, was generally an effective deterrent to protests. Only at times of exceptional stress did migrants dare challenge their treatment at the hands of the government. Hence, organization was largely spontaneous and short-lived.

2. Bogus Trade Unions

The spontaneous groups characteristic of the camp organizations and the ephemeral protest groups dealt with in the previous section may be described as a weak form of exclusive migrant organization concerned with certain aspects of employment and living standards. The ephemerality of these bodies due to the turnover of migrants through the camps, the infrequency and brevity of recession-induced discontent and the effectiveness of government discipline, served to close the option of this model of organization. Nevertheless, migrants still sought more permanent expressions of ethnic exclusivity. In a few instances these organizations took on part of the character of trade unions.

There were several instances in the post-war period where a migrant trade union was set up in direct opposition to established unions. In most cases, these bodies sought only to partially fulfil the functions of unions. In 1956 a New Australian Labor Council was established in New South Wales claiming to represent Italian, Polish, Jewish and Ukrainian migrants and care for their social and industrial welfare. The New South Wales branch of the F.M.W.U. denounced the body, arguing that it fulfilled no useful purpose, exploited migrant ignorance of unions and was part of a broader strategy to splinter the labour movement - an apparent reference to the recent Industrial Group struggles.⁹³ Despite these allegations, Luckham found that the

⁹³*The Miscellaneous Workers' Union Review*, October 1956, editorial.

"Council" did not attempt to negotiate better working conditions but was concerned with migrant assimilation, combatting prejudice in unions and advising migrants on general employment conditions, local industrial practice and particular problems. It was, he concluded, merely a small committee which offered assistance to trade unions in translation and other limited matters.⁹⁴ Apart from the F.M.W.U., few unions showed much interest in the body which appears to have vanished as quickly as it arose.

A less imaginary threat concerned the activities of bodies known as the New Citizens' Council and the Industrial Workers' Union of Australia. These organizations were registered under the New South Wales Trade Union Act. The general president of the New Citizens' Council was J. Bielski and its general secretary was S. Baltinos. Both were members of the A.L.P. Bielski had previously served as an organizer for the A.W.U. but was dismissed in 1958 after a disagreement with the union leadership.⁹⁵ Following an unsuccessful effort to secure his reinstatement Bielski formed the New Citizens' Council.⁹⁶

The New Citizens' Council alleged that new settlers were barred from many positions in Australian trade unions. It also claimed to

⁹⁴B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.25.

⁹⁵Several A.W.U. officials alleged that Bielski had become involved in corrupt practices (making himself the benefactor in migrant wills, charging migrants a fee for retaining their jobs, etc.). Yet evidence of Bielski's earlier activities indicates genuine idealism. In 1956 he was quoted extensively by the *A.E.U. Monthly Journal* when he criticized the phoney assimilationist activities of the New Settlers' League and Good Neighbour Council (*A.E.U. Monthly Journal*, June 1956). It is apparent that Bielski had become an embarrassment to the union because of his activities on the New Australian Advisory Committee of the A.L.P. It seems likely that he was also associated with an unsuccessful attempt to establish a separate migrant workers' division within the A.W.U. at about the time of his dismissal. See general correspondence of New South Wales branch of A.L.P. (letter from the assistant general secretary), July 27, 1957; and *The Daily Telegraph*, October 1, 1958.

⁹⁶See *Bielski vs Oliver and Others*, Commonwealth Industrial Court, *Federal Law Reports*, vol. 1, 1950-60, pp.258-271.

be the only authorised trade union of migrants and the only one devoted to their industrial problems.⁹⁷ Its stated aims included upholding the rights and privileges of workers, settlement of disputes between workers and employers, assisting members to obtain their industrial rights, providing them with legal assistance and protecting them from discrimination and victimization. The council stressed that it had no political affiliations, had low membership fees (£1 per annum), operated its own employment service, could help obtain tradesmen's certificates and was active in the recovery of unpaid wages and in obtaining workers' compensation and damage settlements for injured employees.

According to its publicity, the council had a membership of 5,000 drawn from more than 40 nationalities. Despite these claims it is unlikely that the financial membership ever exceeded a few hundred at most.⁹⁸ Some migrants who joined the council were under the impression that money paid to it would be credited to their dues when they joined the union of their calling.

The actual operations of the New Citizens' Council are difficult to uncover. A major area of activity would appear to have been the presentation of workers' compensation cases. At a protest meeting organized on June 22, 1959, Bielski stated that unions were not interested in the compensation and wages problems of migrants. For their part, unions accused the New Citizens' Council of incompetency in this field.⁹⁹ In September 1959 Bielski and Baltinos wrote to the general manager of B.H.P. on behalf of the Council's general

⁹⁷The New Citizens' Council, *Press Release*, February 26, 1959.

⁹⁸At a meeting held on June 23, 1959 the New Citizens' Council claimed 1,300 members. One of its officials was subsequently revealed to be an employer and vice-president of Maroubra branch of the Liberal Party. Speakers at the meeting attacked the Labor Council of New South Wales, alleging its officials made derogatory remarks about migrants. New South Wales branch of the A.L.P., general correspondence.

⁹⁹See, for instance, *The Australian Glassworker*, vol. 4, no. 3, August 1959. There is evidence that the New Citizens' Council took over cases from unions. See correspondence between national secretary of the F.I.A. and the editor of *Die Woche*, October 12, 1961.

executive urging the company to stop tolerating the A.W.U. coercing employees into becoming unionists.¹⁰⁰ They stated that this arrangement was in contravention of the Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on December 10, 1948 relating to compulsion to join an association. It was also stated that the A.W.U.'s practice of issuing yearly union tickets was a violation of S129 (B) 7 of the New South Wales Industrial Arbitration Act. It is unlikely that the company took the threat to raise these matters before the United Nations, the International Labor Organization and the International Court of Justice very seriously.

Nevertheless, this body provoked a strong reaction from the established union movement. The New Citizens' Council was denounced as a bogus organization by numerous union meetings at all levels.¹⁰¹ The Combined Rail Unions Committee in New South Wales requested that the Minister for Transport make a statement with regard to the New Citizens' Council. The Minister's reply stated that all employees of the Department were requested to become members of an industrial union recognized by the State Industrial Court or Federal Arbitration Commission.¹⁰² It was evident that the New Citizens' Council did not come under this criterion and the Minister informed Commissioners accordingly. The denunciation of the New Citizens' Council by union leaders was almost universal and was carried over to the rank and file in union journals and other publications.¹⁰³ Such condemnations often struck a defensive chord by stressing that the particular union concerned encouraged and welcomed "New Australian" members, would brook no discrimination on the basis of birthplace and had always

¹⁰⁰Correspondence New Citizens' Council to General Manager, B.H.P., Melbourne, September 4, 1959.

¹⁰¹See minutes of the F.I.A. National Conference, March 24-26, 1959, meeting of the Wollongong branch of the Boilermakers' Society, July 2, 1959 and motion placed on agenda at the 1961 A.C.T.U. Congress by the Blacksmiths' Society.

¹⁰²Quoted in *The Boilermakers' Quarterly Report*, 1959.

¹⁰³See *Federation News*, March 1960; *The Boilermakers' Quarterly Report*, 1959; and *Labor News*, April 1960.

served the interests of all its members.¹⁰⁴

As indicated in Chapter 5, the Labor Council of New South Wales played a prominent role in discrediting the New Citizens' Council. A circular which labelled the New Citizens' Council as a bogus organization was issued to all unions.¹⁰⁵ In February 1960 the federal Minister for Immigration, A.R. Downer, publicly condemned the New Citizens' Council as utterly unnecessary and urged migrants to seek assistance from existing unions.¹⁰⁶ By April the New Citizens' Council had been deregistered. Despite its grandiose claims, it is clear that the New Citizens' Council never constituted a real competitive threat to existing trade unions.¹⁰⁷ Bielski and Baltinos were both expelled from the A.L.P. as a result of their role in the New Citizens' Council.¹⁰⁸

In 1961 Baltinos was the leading figure in the formation of a body known as the New Settlers' Federation (N.S.F.). The N.S.F. opened offices in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Unlike the New Citizens' Council, it did not seek state industrial registration. Nevertheless, the N.S.F.'s existence was drawn to the attention of the New South Wales Labor Council which reiterated union objections to separate organization by migrants.¹⁰⁹ This criticism was followed

¹⁰⁴In March 1959 the F.I.A. federal council resolved that "While our union is aware of, and opposed to the discriminatory treatment meted out to New Australians by some unions, particularly those which are communist dominated, we know that these abuses will not be defeated by the formation of separate unions for New Australians." F.I.A. National Council minutes, March 1959.

¹⁰⁵Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meeting, January 21 and February 25, 1960.

¹⁰⁶Downer went so far as to praise the role of trade unions in facilitating the integration of migrants. See the *S.M.H.*, February 15, 1960, p.6.

¹⁰⁷Few migrants were attracted to its ranks and some even expressed reservations about the New Citizens' Council. See the *Daily Telegraph*, June 24 and 25, 1959.

¹⁰⁸Bielski had held the post of secretary of the Kingswood branch while Baltinos was vice-president of the Pagewood branch. For letters relating to their expulsion see general correspondence of the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P., January to February, 1960.

¹⁰⁹Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meetings held on June 29, August 3 and September 21, 1961. In August the Labor Council sent a circular to all affiliates warning them of the N.S.F.'s existence. See Boilermakers' Society, Sydney branch, minutes of meeting held on August 15, 1961.

up by the A.C.T.U. executive which condemned both the now defunct New Citizens' Council and N.S.F. for purporting to be able to deal with compensation and wage claims and other industrial matters including the problems of Greek seamen visiting Australian ports.¹¹⁰ The N.S.F. had earlier been accused of interfering in a union election.¹¹¹ The most outspoken critic of the N.S.F. was the state secretary of the Plasterers' Union who labelled it as "neo-fascist, anti-union and anti-labour".¹¹² Baltinos and the N.S.F. vice-president wrote to Arthur Calwell and the general secretary of the New South Wales branch of the A.L.P. rebutting these charges, warning of Greek communist influence within the A.L.P. and indicating that any further attacks would damage the relationship between the federation and the party.¹¹³ However, there appears to have been little relationship to damage.

Judging from its own claims and union criticism, the main focus of N.S.F. operations was in the lucrative area of workers' compensation claims. Industrial registration was unnecessary in order to represent individual migrant workers before the Workers' Compensation Commission or civil court proceedings. Further, it appears that injured migrants were either unaware or distrustful of the role of unions in this sphere. In October 1961 a Greek language newspaper reported that the N.S.F. had received over 7,500,000 [sic] compensation claims. It praised the N.S.F. and urged migrants to contact the federation should they suffer an injury at work.¹¹⁴ Two years later the V.B.E.F. informed Labor Council that the N.S.F.

¹¹⁰A.C.T.U. Interstate Executive decision, May 3, 1962.

¹¹¹See the *Hellenic Herald*, November 2, 1961; and *The Sun*, September 27, 1961.

¹¹²He was responding to Baltinos's claim (published in a Greek language newspaper) that Labor Council decisions were a communist plot. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meetings held on February 22 and May 2, 1963.

¹¹³The strong opposition to communism was reiterated by the N.S.F. vice-president when he wrote to A.L.P. New South Wales branch secretary on July 23, 1965 to inform him that the N.S.F. had opened a Victorian branch. Correspondence, New South Wales Branch of the A.L.P.

¹¹⁴*The Torch*, October 21, 1961.

was touting for workers' compensation business and recruiting migrant hospital patients.¹¹⁵ Labor Council lodged a protest with the Minister for Health.

Despite this action, a number of unions continued to make periodic complaints to Council until November 1966.¹¹⁶ The N.S.F. appears to have made few forays into the province of trade union operations beyond workers' compensation proceedings. It has continued to exist up to the present although its current activities are unclear.

Similar, if more ephemeral, bodies purporting to represent and help migrants and especially recent arrivals have continued to be formed.¹¹⁷ The existence of these organizations has been less a threat to trade unions than a nuisance and a reminder of the failure to effectively inform migrant unionists of their rights.

In conclusion, the evidence upon these bogus unions suggests that they have not proven a significant organizational type, neither attracting much support from migrant workers, nor making serious impact upon Australian institutions. The few weak organizations that have been described were the instruments of a handful of persons without significant grass roots support. They have offered minimal services and built no strong representational role. By any standard that could be reasonably applied, they must be judged a failure.

Several points may be made about these organizations. While the term "bogus union" is applied usually from the perspective that these bodies are not acceptable to the Australian union movement because they purport to represent workers that they should not

¹¹⁵Labor Council minutes of general meeting held on October 31, 1963. A former union official suggested that the N.S.F. was trying to penetrate the G.M.-H. Pagewood plant.

¹¹⁶See Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of general meetings held on October 13, 1963, August 27, 1964 and November 10, 1966.

¹¹⁷For instance, in 1973, a Sydney employment agency charged migrants \$15 each for information on car factory jobs which were freely advertized in newspapers. See also Self-Help Social Centre Circular dated July 28, 1977 - a body purporting to assist Lebanese migrants in Campsie in employment and injury compensation matters.

represent, these bodies are bogus in another sense. Their appeal was ostensibly to migrants who identified themselves as "new settlers". No such group existed to respond to this appeal. Ethnic exclusiveness was usually more specific with particular cultural/national groups possessing a very strong identity. Thus the Italian and Greek migrant workers' clubs drew strength from national solidarity. However, there was no significant broader "migrant collectivity" upon which general migrant organizations such as the New Citizens' Council or N.S.F. could base themselves. They had no roots in natural social organization despite their claims.

Finally, it is appropriate to notice that Australian unions themselves are heavily dependent upon state support in order to survive. This support is granted in the form of registration which bestows access to industrial tribunals. The bogus unions failed to get this registration, lacking the political support necessary to do so. Without state support they could not compete with existing unions.

While the opposition of established institutions like the New South Wales Labor Council may explain much of the failure of bogus unions, it is still relevant to ask why migrants have chosen to be represented by traditional Australian unions rather than by special organizations exclusive to them. The following sections are concerned with the positive aspects of this choice: why did migrants belong to Australian unions, to what extent did they participate in them, and was this choice fruitful?

3. Migrants as Union Members

The two organizational options dealt with so far have focused away from Australian unionism. They have proven to be either ephemeral or a failure. Spontaneous groups are evident only sporadically and in the special confines of hostel organization. Bogus unions, although potentially both permanent and more clearly related to employment collectivities, realized almost none of their potential. Exclusive migrant organization was to take place in the special migrant workers' clubs. However, since these impinged little upon the main areas of union activity, they will be considered

as a special link integrating migrants into unions rather than developing into an alternative.

The main avenue for migrant representation that remained were the Australian trade unions to which migrants came to belong. This section is concerned with describing several aspects of migrant behaviour in unions, in order to specify whether they can be located as "union stalwarts" or as "disinterested conscripts". It is unlikely that any conclusion could match the artificial clarity suggested by these polarised stereotypes. The purpose of these types is to suggest a tension between alternatives which enables us to focus upon different kinds of involvement in unions.

In any event, the clear ascription of universal organizational characteristics to migrant unionists is likely to be frustrated by the diversity of both union behaviour and migrant attitudes. Generalizations are likely to founder upon the wide-ranging differences that exist between unions and upon the heterogeneous array of migrant groups that entered Australia.

Exclusion or Incorporation?

From the standpoint of Australian unions, any attempt to exclude immigrants from membership would have been suicidal in the context of the massive post-war intake and could only strengthen the hand of enemies both within and outside the labour movement. Exclusion, therefore, was never practised on a large scale. Moreover, the dominance of the assimilationist orthodoxy undermined the foundation of any possible tendency towards explicitly ethnocentric organization. The unions, party to a national accord upon immigration and assimilation, found that they had usually to accept a change in the composition of their membership. One corollary of assimilationist tendencies was the evolution of union expectations that migrants conform to union norms. Their insistence upon conformity was a close and common consequence of absorption.

Australian unions did not generally seek to exclude, limit or segregate migrants at the workplace level through award provisions, formal or informal agreements. There were a few exceptions to this. According to Luckham:

In 1952 the Clothing Trades Union sought to fix a maximum quota of employment for New Australians in any one factory of 25%, for those who had been in Australia less than five years. The union sought advice on the possibility of restriction through legislation or award of an Arbitration Court. It was stated that an average percentage of New Australians in some fifty factories was 20%, in some reaching as high as 95%.¹¹⁸

The clear intention of the limit was to safeguard union organization by maintaining a core of experienced/Australian-born employees in each workplace. Five years later the union's New South Wales branch secretary renewed the call for a quota system. He alleged that the concentration of migrants in some factories, particularly small establishments, had led to widespread award evasion.¹¹⁹

Few other unions seem to have viewed the concentration of migrants in certain workplaces as a major obstacle to award policing. Indeed, the pervasive coverage of arbitration tribunals in Australia - and the minimum wage levels they established - may be seen as an important reason why demands for quotas were atypical. Even when retrenchments occurred unions resisted the temptation to favour locally born workers. In October 1952 the New South Wales branch of the A.R.U. accused the state Railway Department of providing work to German and British workers brought out under contract while retrenchments were taking place. The union secretary, Lloyd Ross, rejected rank and file calls that "New Australians" should be dismissed first by reiterating that redundancies should take place according to the last-in-first-out principle. He added:

While we oppose retrenchments, we strongly oppose men being put on while redundancies are taking place, not because they are Germans but because they are replacing men who are dismissed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.26.

¹¹⁹S.M.H., July 8, 1957, p.4. This admission refuted earlier suggestions by *Newsweekly* that award policing problems were the result of shortcomings on the part of the union's Victorian leadership. See *Newsweekly*, June 8, 1955.

¹²⁰S.M.H., October 13, 1952, p.3.

A similar case occurred at the Lithgow small arms factory in 1956 when union officials opposed proposed redundancies and a suggestion by the Defence Minister, Sir Eric Harrison, that "New Australians" be retrenched first. National secretary of the F.I.A., Laurie Short, pointed out that the dismissal of "New Australians" first would contravene the no-discrimination principle of assimilation. Union agitation succeeded in having the number of redundancies reduced to 41 women, these being laid off on a last-in-first-off basis.¹²¹

At times, a few unions went so far as to complain that migrants were being discriminated against during economic downturns. On July 26, 1956 a meeting of the Perth Building Trades Group discussed the greater problems faced by migrants in obtaining work. This followed a public statement by the secretary of the West Australian Plasterers' Union that unions might soon have to fight employers over discrimination against migrants.¹²² The vulnerability of migrants to prejudicial treatment had been recognized by the B.W.I.U. for some time. Union officials strove to prevent victimization especially when it was directed at foreign-born union activists because they saw this as a divisive strategy on the part of employers.¹²³

However, in general, the realization that immigrant workers faced special difficulties was slow to dawn on union leaderships. Rank and file workers were often even less tolerant in their attitude to newcomers. There is evidence of some friction between foreign and Australian-born workers especially during the early post-war period. This friction arose from, or was aggravated by, communications problems. Many locally-born workers distrusted immigrants and were impatient with those lacking an adequate command

¹²¹For reports of these events see the *S.M.H.*, July 7, p.2, July 9, p.2, July 10, pp.2-3, July 11, p.2, July 12, p.1 and July 14, 1956, p.2.

¹²²*S.M.H.*, July 25, 1956, p.15. A survey conducted by the D.L.N.S. found that the unemployment rate amongst non-British migrants was 20 per cent for males and 31.4 per cent for females. Report submitted to the C.I.P.C. by the D.L.N.S., Melbourne, July 16, 1958.

¹²³For an example of this see *Tribune*, April 5, 1961.

of English. For their part, newly arrived migrants were frequently unsure of their industrial rights and the customary modes of workplace behaviour. Divisions were sometimes exacerbated by the discriminatory practices of foremen with regard to overtime and job allocation, promotion and manning levels. Ethnic favouritism was difficult to counter unless it was actively pursued by job delegates, which was not always the case. In turn, full-time union officials usually became aware of friction only if it erupted into overt confrontations that threatened industrial solidarity. At these times pragmatic considerations alone were generally sufficient to ensure rapid intervention. That such outbreaks appear to have been rare after the early 1950s may be indicative of a growing acceptance of immigrant workers by their locally-born counterparts.¹²⁴

However subordinate exclusion appeared to be, assimilationist strategies had a cost in the major weakness of the linked conformity requirement which was that it made few concessions to the diverse experiences and linguistic handicaps of migrants. Union officials tended to recognize the growing ethnic diversity of their membership only when this overtly impinged on the normal concerns of recruitment, dues collection, dispute handling and internal electoral contests.

¹²⁴The arrival of Indo-Chinese refugees in the 1970s was associated with some renewed tension. In 1979 the Queensland branch of the Storemen and Packers' Union closed its books to Vietnamese refugees. The branch secretary stated that this action was initiated because Vietnamese had obtained union tickets and were displacing large numbers of local permanent casuals at a cannery. He alleged that Vietnamese were circulating tickets amongst fellow countrymen who were not union members and stated that this was the first time in his 21 years' experience as a union official that it had been necessary to discriminate in favour of local workers (*The Weekend Australian*, October 13-14, 1979). This move was exceptional. While Indo-Chinese refugees have been frequently labelled as aggressive and diligent workers, there has been little evidence of union concern. In April 1980 a group of 45 workers (including European migrants) at a Sydney factory struck because they feared they would be displaced by Indo-Chinese refugees. These workers were not union members and had acted spontaneously. See the *S.M.H.*, April 18, p.3 and April 19, 1980, p.4.

With the partial exception of the building trades, craft union officials tended to see their foreign-born members as unproblematic. They could assume that all possessed industrial experience and most were already familiar with trade unionism. In the metal trades the close association between trade recognition and union membership - jealously guarded at the workplace and branch level - generally ensured that union membership was a prerequisite for employment.

Few craft unions bothered to produce more than miniscule amounts of multilingual material. On the positive side, some traditional aspects of craft union organization undoubtedly promoted the integration of foreign-born workers. These features included strong local branch and workplace organization, the practice of holding regular rank and file meetings to discuss industrial matters and the efforts of some unions to find work for their unemployed members. The strong attachment to craft standards also had advantages for those migrants recognized as tradesmen. Unions would generally tolerate no discrimination. The O.P.D.U., for instance, challenged the refusal of a Royal Agricultural Society foreman to employ a Russian. The branch secretary stated that the union was quite satisfied with the worker's qualifications.¹²⁵ Finally, the commitment of many craft unions to localized industrial action made it easier for immigrants to come to terms with Australian unionism.

Some craft unions also enrolled non-tradesmen and this practice became more common as a consequence of industrial changes and union amalgamations. There was a significant lag between these developments and adjustments in the strategies of tradesmen-dominated union leaderships. The consequences of this were considerable (see Chapter 9). The Metal Trades Federation which represented metal workers in industry-wide negotiations was likewise dominated by officials whose background and loyalty lay with time-served tradesmen. Their influence extended beyond the metal trades itself into other industries employing metal workers such as the railways. It was also firmly ensconced in the A.C.T.U.'s national wages platform and reflected, in part, the prominent role played by tradesmen in award negotiations and pioneering new conditions.

¹²⁵S.M.H., January 29, 1959, p.1.

There can be little doubt that the pre-occupation with negotiating margins for skilled workers was resented by migrants located in low-paid unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Yet, it was not until the 1970s that these priorities were in any way challenged.¹²⁶

If craft-dominated unions could largely afford to ignore immigrant members this was less true of non-craft unions who received large numbers of migrants from a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds. The unions most affected by this included the A.W.U., F.I.A., F.M.W.U., Vehicle Builders' Employees' Federation (V.B.E.F.), Clothing and Allied Trades Union (C.A.T.U.), Textile Workers' Union, Food Preservers' Union, Australian Glass Workers' Union (A.G.W.U.), Rubber Workers' Union (R.W.U.) and the Liquor Trades Union to name but a few. While there are no exact figures on the non-British migrant membership of individual unions, the growing concentration of foreign-born workers in particular industries, occupations and workplaces was indicated in Chapter 4. In 1957 it was reported that "New Australians" constituted 17 per cent of the membership of the F.I.A., 95 per cent of the membership of the A.G.W.U. and 52 per cent of the membership of the R.W.U.¹²⁷ There can be little doubt that this pattern was even more pronounced a decade later.

During the early 1950s a number of large unions including the A.R.U., F.I.A. and A.W.U. began to publish multilingual material. Their efforts were restricted to the production of a few pamphlets or a special section in the union journal which explained union

¹²⁶It was not until 1977 that the Metal Trades Federation initiated a broadly based award campaign using multilingual literature. The vanguard attitude with regard to skilled workers was readily admitted by former and current union officials interviewed. The point was also made by the Victorian secretary of the A.M.W.S.U. when referring to union neglect of migrant workers. See J. Halfpenny, "Migrant Workers and Trade Unions", *Ekstasis*, no. 16, December 1976, pp.13-16.

¹²⁷C.I.P.C. Minutes, 1957. The source of these figures is uncertain.

operations and some industrial matters in two or three languages.¹²⁸ In May 1955, the small Milk, Ice Carters' and Dairymen's Employees' Union of New South Wales resolved to produce copies of its award in Greek, Italian and German as well as English.¹²⁹ The latter move was exceptional and would have been a daunting task for those unions servicing numerous awards. Union peak councils such as the Labor Council of New South Wales refused to assist unions in the production of multilingual material (see Chapter 5). In any case, many union officials subscribed to the view that such material would impede assimilation. They were also conscious of some resentment amongst locally born workers.¹³⁰

The A.W.U. and F.I.A. were, perhaps, the first unions to appoint foreign born officials with specific responsibilities to help migrant members. The A.W.U. appointee was a Polish migrant, J. Bielski, with previous experience at organizing displaced persons into a union in West Germany.¹³¹ Bielski's functions were initially restricted to translation and advice. Luckham records that:

In 1952, he was appointed as a full-time organizer amongst migrants, but later transferred his concern to all members in his area, retaining a special interest for migrants generally.¹³²

At the union's 1958 national conference, Bielski was involved in a confrontation with other union officials after he proposed that more foreign language material be published in *The Worker*.¹³³ The

¹²⁸The F.I.A. published a recruiting pamphlet entitled "Welcome - This is Your Union" and a foreign-language segment in *Labor News*. The A.W.U. produced a similar feature in *The Worker*. Both foreign language sections were subsequently discontinued. Luckham argued that many migrants did not, in any case, subscribe to *The Worker*. See B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.31 and p.35.

¹²⁹*S.M.H.*, May 3, 1955, p.1.

¹³⁰This early hostility was mentioned by a number of union officials including Lloyd Ross, former New South Wales branch secretary of the A.R.U., interviewed August 28, 1978.

¹³¹B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.35.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p.35.

¹³³Bielski argued that 34 per cent of the union's membership were non-British migrants. *S.M.H.*, January 23, 1958, p.8.

Queensland branch secretary, J. Bukowski, labelled migrant cane-cutters as award breakers and stated that, "It is time they learnt our way".¹³⁴ His views were supported by a Tasmanian delegate who stated that only three migrants (out of 171) had failed an English language course after the union told management that it would not permit those who could not speak English to work underground. Despite the moderating influence of general secretary T. Dougherty, the Bielski motion was shelved. Shortly thereafter, Bielski was dismissed from his post and subsequently took a leading role in the New Citizens' Council (see Pages 340-342).

The Bielski incident was atypical but does illustrate the tenuous position of appointed officials who sought to question the conformist stance of Australian unions. Most migrant appointees were either content to perform a low-key role or chose to leave. A number had been appointed primarily to organize migrant support during the Industrial Group struggles. After fulfilling this function, they either drifted away or were retained as conspicuous symbols of the union's commitment to its foreign born membership. There were never more than a handful of such officials.

Like a number of other unions, the New South Wales branch of the A.R.U. retained the services of part-time translators to produce the occasional pamphlet and deal with correspondence. During the mid-1950s it established a special committee to advise the leadership on migrant issues.¹³⁵ The F.I.A. made a similar initiative. Neither committee exerted much influence and both soon became defunct.¹³⁶ Another early experiment by the F.I.A. - and one followed by other unions - was to appoint migrant workers as co-delegates.

Apart from the A.R.U., A.W.U. and F.I.A. which were all large bodies capable of devoting resources to migrant recruitment, most unions appear to have relied on far more informal mechanisms such as "on-site" translators or local ethnic leaders in the workplace to

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *S.M.E.*, January 12, 1956, p.2.

¹³⁶ The national secretary of the F.I.A., L. Short, could only vaguely recall the existence of these bodies and was able to offer little information as to their origins, structure, operations and demise. L. Short, interviewed October 13, 1977.

disseminate union information. This could be strengthened if such persons could be persuaded to take on the position of job delegate. In winning over migrants without prior union experience, officials found it useful to take up particular issues so that the benefits of union membership and collective action could be illustrated. The capacity of officials to use this demonstration device depended on their ability to identify suitable issues.¹³⁷

Many of the difficulties associated with recruiting and maintaining the allegiance of migrant workers could be avoided by unions if they could make membership a condition of employment. The problem of enrolling and collecting dues from immigrants was a particular incentive for some unions to establish post-entry closed shop and check-off arrangements with employers. The A.W.U., for example, reached an agreement with the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electricity Authority whereby workers had to join the union upon commencing employment. In some instances, governments lent their formal support to these measures. In the early 1950s the A.R.U. made arrangements with the New South Wales Commissioner for Railways so that union dues could be deducted from the pay packet of "New Australians". This followed union complaints that an earlier ministerial instruction regarding the desirability of all employees being members of the appropriate union was not being fully implemented because of the difficulty of tracing "foreign" names.¹³⁸ The check-off system was not extended to all A.R.U. members until the mid-1960s because of strong objections on the part of

¹³⁷A Greek-born organizer for the Clothing Trades Union suggested that migrants from a peasant background tended to make up their mind about unions on the basis of a specific issue. This view was also frequently expressed by Australian-born union officials interviewed. Whether this is all that much different from indigenous workers is a moot point. See Con George, "Migrants and Australian Unions", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation* (Clearing House on Migration Issues, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Melbourne, 1975), pp.27-30.

¹³⁸Most unskilled migrants had entered the traffic branch of the railways which was more difficult to organize than workshops because workers were widely scattered. The original instruction on union membership had been made by the Minister for Transport on June 27, 1941.

Australian-born workers.¹³⁹ Craft unions such as the S.M.W.U. had rejected a proposal to introduce the check-off even for their foreign-born members because they feared it would diminish contact between union officials/delegates and rank and file members and thereby weaken union organization.¹⁴⁰

If craft unions often viewed arrangements whereby management agreed to deduct union dues with suspicion, many private employers were at least equally hostile to such practices. However, an increasing number of employers found that both parties could derive benefits from it. For unions enrolling semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers with a bargaining philosophy closely tied to central arbitration hearings, the closed shop/check-off was a convenient means of stabilizing their membership and allowing officials to concentrate upon award determination. For their part, many employers came to see this arrangement as a device for institutionalizing their relations with unions and excluding or circumscribing the influence of militant or less desirable unions which might compete for the allegiance of workers. Signing a closed shop/check-off agreement with one union ensured that it remained the predominant worker representative in a workplace.

An example of this can be found in the vehicle building industry. In 1956, the moderate leadership of the V.B.E.F. signed an agreement with Fish, Ludlow and Austin partly in order to preclude the S.M.W.U. which was then competing with the V.B.E.F. to enrol production workers. In 1969 the agreement was reformulated with B.M.C. to include automatic deduction of union dues from wages. By this device the high levels of labour turnover in car plants were transformed from a source of organizational weakness into a financial advantage which multiplied union receipts. In essence, the arrangement represented an amicable bargain struck between the union leadership and management. It was based on a tacit agreement over

¹³⁹Correspondence J. Maddox, New South Wales state secretary of the A.R.U., with the author, May 9, 1978.

¹⁴⁰As already suggested, craft unions had less need of such arrangements in any case although their attitude was to undergo some change in later years. See correspondence, Chief Staff Superintendent, Department of Railways to state secretary, S.M.W.U., February 22, 1952.

the character of job regulation. Wage negotiations and all but the most trivial industrial matters were handled centrally. The activities of shop stewards were circumscribed through a rigidly enforced grievance procedure. The V.B.E.F. leadership feared radicalization at the plant level by militant shop stewards. The agreement was useful in controlling shop floor elements and in relegating craft-based unions to a peripheral role. While G.M.-H. and Ford were initially hostile to the closed shop/check-off, by the mid-1970s they had followed the lead set at Leyland Australia.¹⁴¹

While a number of cases may be cited (see Chapters 8 to 11), it is difficult to assess the impact of immigrant recruitment problems upon the growth of closed shop arrangements. It is apparent that the high levels of labour instability in industries/occupations where migrants were frequently to be found did make such arrangements highly desirable for unions, and especially those predisposed to highly centralized dealings with employers. Nevertheless, more thorough research into the development of the closed shop in the post-war period is needed if a balanced picture is to emerge.¹⁴²

Irrespective of these developments, migrants were also to be found in pockets of low unionization including isolated manufacturing concerns (such as small firms and backyard operators in the clothing trades), small businesses (shops, restaurants, etc.) which depended on family labour, service industries such as contract cleaning and various types of sub-contractors in the building trades and elsewhere. While there is evidence that the presence of migrants has in some ways inhibited union recruiting efforts (see Chapter 10), the consensus amongst union officials has been that immigrant workers are not noticeably more hostile to union membership than their Australian-born counterparts. Nor can immigration be readily associated with

¹⁴¹For a fuller account of these developments see M. Quinlan, *Management Policy and Industrial Relations*, *op cit.*, pp.30-50.

¹⁴²For a brief discussion of the incidence of closed shop arrangements within Australia see M. Wright, "Unionization in Australia and Coverage of the Closed Shop", *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 7, no. 3, June 1981, pp.122-138.

fluctuations in the unionization rate amongst employees in Australia during the post-war period. While not discounting a deterioration in some areas of employment where immigrants became concentrated, more compelling reasons can be found for the decline in unionization rates after 1954.¹⁴³

This interpretation is supported by Table 15 which illustrates the density of union membership by birthplace revealed in an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey conducted in 1976. The survey indicates that workers born outside Australia are more highly unionized than their Australian-born counterparts. The gap is most pronounced with regard to workers born in Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. An apparent explanation of this phenomenon is that these migrant groups are concentrated in industries and occupations (see Chapter 4) which are the traditional bastions of trade unionism.¹⁴⁴ Equally, they are poorly represented in the less unionized tertiary sector. It would also be plausible to suggest that closed shop agreements are more common in the employment areas where Italian, Greek and Yugoslav migrants have congregated. In short, there is no evidence that migrants have significantly eroded the membership base of Australian unions and institutional arrangements between employers and unions appear to have played some part in this.

Immigrant Participation in Unions

If the enrolment of migrant workers has not proved to be a major obstacle for Australian unions, the level of participation by foreign-born workers in union affairs has varied considerably. The question of what constitutes adequate participation in unions has

¹⁴³The unionization rate declined from a peak of 60 per cent in 1954 to 51 per cent in 1969 before commencing a partial recovery. Rawson attributes this trend to changes in union preference provisions within some states and changes in employment patterns (the growth of tertiary sector employment, increased workforce participation rates by females, etc.). D.W. Rawson, *Unions and Unionists in Australia* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978), p.24, pp.31-34.

¹⁴⁴For a breakdown of unionization rates by industry and occupation see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Trade Union Members, November 1976* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1976), Table 2, p.2 and Table 5, p.4.

TABLE 15

TRADE UNION MEMBERS: BIRTHPLACE, NOVEMBER 1976

Birthplace	Number ('000)			Percentage of Total			Percentage of all Employees		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Australia	1,255.3	578.5	1,833.7	72	75	73	55	42	50
Overseas countries -	485.9	193.1	678.9	28	25	27	59	45	54
United Kingdom and Ireland	174.0	74.1	248.1	10	10	10	53	41	49
Canada, U.S.A., New Zealand, South Africa	15.1*	11.3*	26.5	1*	2*	1	37*	34	36
Italy	47.6	15.1*	62.7	3	2*	3	66	54*	62
Greece	41.0	14.2*	55.1	2	2*	2	80	44*	66
Germany	15.8*	*	24.3	1*	*	1	47*	*	48
Yugoslavia	37.7	15.9	53.6	2	2	2	77	55	69
Other Countries	154.7	54.0	208.7	9	7	8	61	49	58
Total	1,741.2	771.5	2,512.7	100	100	100	56	43	51

*Based on an estimate with a standard error greater than 20 per cent but not greater than 30 per cent.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Trade Union Members, November 1976* (A.B.S., Canberra, 1976), p.5.

been subject to much controversy. Rather than enter this debate, the remainder of this section will make a number of general observations which shed light on the questions being addressed in this chapter. Specifically, migrant participation in unions will be explored along the dimensions of their involvement in industrial action, union decision-making and the holding of union office. Finally, the scattered survey evidence on immigrant perceptions of unions will be examined. The resulting analysis will also serve as a background to the more detailed case study chapters which follow.

British-born workers were the most successful immigrant group in securing official positions within Australian unions. This penetration process long predated the post-war period and there is no evidence that those occupying full-time posts differed markedly from the spectrum of attitudes found amongst their Australian-born counterparts. Writers such as Hearn have cited instances where groups of U.K. immigrants sought to build British-style shop steward organization at the workplace.¹⁴⁵ Her suggestion that the La Trobe Valley is one such case must be qualified by the consideration that semi-independent workshop organization is a characteristic of the power generation industry in New South Wales where British influence cannot be detected as a significant factor.¹⁴⁶ There is less dispute that British immigrants were responsible for establishing shop committees in a number of automobile assembly plants such as Leyland, Footscray and G.M.-H., Elizabeth. However, even here other nationalities (including Australian-born workers) were involved and rank and file revolts have occurred in plants where British immigrants were not numerous. Hearn records that during the early 1970s British migrants were prominent in repeated unofficial stoppages and acts of sabotage

¹⁴⁵J. Hearn, "The Problems of Migrant Workers", in S. Staats (ed.), *Social Policy and Problems of the Workforce* (A.C.T.U., Melbourne, 1976), vol. 1, p.34.

¹⁴⁶In New South Wales shop committee organization has been a long-term feature of power stations and ECCUDO (the central organization of shop committees) has played a leading role in negotiations with the Electricity Commission. See M. Rimmer and P. Sutcliffe, "The Origins of Australian Workshop Organization 1918 to 1950", *op cit.*, pp.216-239.

in the South Australian vehicle building industry.¹⁴⁷ The actions were labelled by the federal secretary of the V.B.E.F. as alien to the Australian context.¹⁴⁸

The diverse industrial experiences of migrants cannot be ignored. Many found it difficult to comprehend, and on occasion accept, complex arbitration procedures or the strategy of the union to which they belonged. Nevertheless, the predominant evidence is that immigrants tended to adopt the pre-existing pattern of industrial relations behaviour. Indeed, their involvement in unions has not commanded special explanation except where it appeared to be in defiance of an official union direction and therefore challenged the *status quo*. Such actions have been exceptional. Nevertheless, there have been instances throughout the post-war period where migrants employed on construction projects, in steel-works and in car plants have engaged in spontaneous strikes and even riots. A number of these revolts need to be examined in depth if their character and origins are to be understood.

The capacity of immigrants to involve themselves in industrial action was amply demonstrated on the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric project in the early 1950s. Much of the labour was initially supplied by overseas contractors and non-British migrants made up more than 60 per cent of the project workforce throughout the

¹⁴⁷J. Hearn, "The Problems of Migrant Workers", *op. cit.*, p.34.

¹⁴⁸British style shop steward organization has been the butt of widespread criticism, both from unions such as the V.B.E.F., the media and politicians such as Ian Sinclair who made a florid denunciation of British migrants "... bent on importing the 'British disease' into the Australian union movement". This remark was widely refuted (see the *S.M.H.*, August 8, 11, 15 and 16, 1977). The impact of British workplace organization upon local industrial relations has been misunderstood and exaggerated. Such organization is not ethnocentric, nor is it widespread in industry. The activities of shop committees can usually be more easily explained in terms of the regulation of particular industrial conditions rather than the importance of foreign institutions and practices. See M. Rimmer and P. Sutcliffe, "The Origins of Australian Workshop Organization 1918 to 1950", *op cit.*, pp.216-239.

1950s.¹⁴⁹ At the outset, sub-standard (and dangerous) working and living conditions on construction sites aroused discontent amongst both foreign and locally born workers.¹⁵⁰ The fact that bonuses were paid only to production workers and that considerable anomalies existed in conditions provided by the thirteen state and four federal awards covering site workers contributed to unrest.¹⁵¹ The situation was exacerbated by infrequent contact with full-time union officials. Contractors and Authority supervisors were accused of intimidating and exploiting migrant workers.

In June 1951 1,000 workers held a stop-work meeting in protest at poor conditions. Many migrants joined the stoppage including members of the A.W.U. which specifically instructed them not to attend.¹⁵² The following year witnessed a three-week strike and a two-week strike (both over wages and allowances) by employees of the Authority and a major contractor respectively. On January 19 1953 a meeting of 2,000 workers representing all unions (and nationalities) voted to strike in protest at the refusal of the Authority to retain transport to remote sites.¹⁵³ The 4,000 strikers organized a co-ordinating committee of 44 delegates - one-third of whom were non-British migrants.¹⁵⁴ While unsuccessful in its

¹⁴⁹The figure was far higher in the case of some contractors. The Authority itself employed a smaller proportion of migrants and introduced only 200 German migrants under a two-year contract. Correspondence with the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority, Sydney.

¹⁵⁰Workers complained at the lack of facilities and social outlets, the capricious activities of caterers and the employment of non-tradesmen on trade work. Some idea of the dangerous conditions can be gauged by the fact that 122 workers (mostly migrants) were killed on the project. Eric Ramsay, former Boilermakers official, interviewed May 26, 1978. See also *Tribune*, February 25, 1950 and April 5, 1951; and the *S.M.H.*, January 12, 1956, p.2 and December 29, 1971, p.1.

¹⁵¹P.L. Kleinsorge, "Industrial Relations on the Snowy Mountains Project: The Development of a System of Conciliation", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 12, no. 3, November 1970, pp.287-305.

¹⁵²While about 20 unions covered the project, the A.W.U. enrolled 60 per cent of the workforce. *Tribune*, June 7, 1951.

¹⁵³*Tribune*, January 28 and February 28, 1953.

¹⁵⁴*Labor News*, February 12 and 27, 1953.

immediate aim, the strike established a strong unity between migrant and local workers. The A.W.U. organizer was able to report that 29 of the union's job delegates on the Snowy were "New Australians".¹⁵⁵ During an earlier stoppage the same organizer had been threatened with physical violence by migrants disgruntled at his inactivity.¹⁵⁶

These spontaneous stoppages ultimately led to a re-organization of union representation and the appointment of a special industrial conciliator to handle industrial relations on the project. This was accompanied by a significant improvement in employment conditions and amenities.¹⁵⁷

If migrant worker/union relationships eventually became amicable on the Snowy, this has not always been the case. The vehicle building industry, for instance, has experienced industrial action on the part of immigrants which cut through traditional negotiation procedures in direct defiance of the recommendations of union officials. In Victoria, non-British migrants - particularly Italians and Greeks who constituted a large proportion of the workforce in some plants - were prominent in these disputes. Perhaps the first major disturbance took place at the G.M.-H.'s Fisherman's Bend plant in 1961. According to one Greek-born activist, the issue for workers was not so much wages as the dictatorial attitude of management and frustration with accumulated injustices.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the combination of low pay and intransigent management decisions with regard to such things as line speeds, tea and toilet breaks served to maintain unrest within this and other plants.¹⁵⁹

In November 1963 the V.B.E.F. federal secretary wrote to G.M.-H. seeking a wage increase. The company was implacably

¹⁵⁵B. Luckham, *Immigration and the Australian Labour Movement*, *op cit.*, p.30.

¹⁵⁶Eric Ramsay, interviewed May 26, 1978.

¹⁵⁷P.L. Kleinsorge, "Industrial Relations on the Snowy Mountains Project", *op cit.*, pp.287-305.

¹⁵⁸George Zangalis, interviewed October 25, 1977.

¹⁵⁹See *Tribune*, March 14, 1962 and October 2, 1963.

opposed to over-awards. A prolonged series of negotiations involving management and the union leadership and aimed at securing tea breaks, over-awards and improved conditions for foundry workers were fruitless.¹⁶⁰ Frustration with the delay in the proceedings provoked a strike on October 2, 1964 which lasted one month and involved workers outside the Fisherman's Bend factory. During this period workers defied the efforts of V.B.E.F. and A.C.T.U. officials to obtain a return to work. The V.B.E.F. leaders blamed the concentration of Greek and Italian migrants in particular sections of the plant such as the foundry, the breakdown of communication and the role of outside clubs (particularly amongst the Greeks) for the lengthy nature of the stoppage and refusal of workers to accept the recommendations of officials.¹⁶¹

Migrants also played an independent part in a dispute the following year when the union sought to have G.M.-H.'s profitability taken into account in wage proceedings before the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission. The Commission ruled that the prosperity of a particular industry was of no concern to its employees and that one section of the union movement could not benefit until the whole nation showed a similar movement. This position must have appeared quite paradoxical to poorly paid vehicle builders. The factory strike committee produced a pamphlet attacking G.M.-H., printed in several languages.¹⁶²

In 1973 the Victorian vehicle building industry witnessed the most dramatic demonstration of militancy on the part of immigrant workers at the Ford Broadmeadows factory which had - until 1969 - been relatively free from strikes. The unions involved were caught completely by surprise. They had united for the first time to place a log of demands before all vehicle companies. This included

¹⁶⁰M.P. McCarney, "The General Motors-Holden's Dispute", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 7, no. 3, November 1965, pp.326-331.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, p.331. For a differing account of the dispute see *Tribune*, October 21 and 28, November 11 and December 12, 1964.

¹⁶²G.M.-H. Strike Committee, *The All-Australian Car with the All-American Profits* (Australian Greek Publications, Melbourne, 1965). See also *Tribune*, October 13 and 20, 1965 and September 14, 1966.

increased over-awards and the elimination of bonus penalties. A campaign based on guerilla tactics was also devised. Union officials agreed to concentrate on one company at a time and G.M.-H. was selected as the first target - partly on the basis of the proven record of militancy among workers at Fisherman's Bend and Elizabeth.¹⁶³ Following stop-work meetings in all states and a short struggle, agreement was reached with both G.M.-H. and Chrysler. At the former company workers secured over-award increases ranging from \$4.30 to \$8.00 per week, and the elimination of merit-based payments.¹⁶⁴

Before these negotiations had been concluded workers at the Ford Broadmeadows plant, who had been impatient with union strategy from the outset, turned a mass meeting called on May 18 to explain official recommendations into an all-out strike.¹⁶⁵ After three weeks Ford made a "final offer" to increase over-awards by \$3.50 for semi-skilled workers and \$4.00 for tradesmen and threatened to close all other plants if the dispute continued. Baulking at the prospect of an industry-wide stoppage, union officials recommended a resumption of work - a motion narrowly endorsed at a meeting held on June 11. A considerable number of migrants wished to continue the strike. On June 13 600 workers defied the call to return to work and rioted within the plant, causing some \$10,000 worth of damage. The company responded by locking out all workers and union officials had little option but to continue the struggle.

In total, the strike lasted more than nine weeks and demonstrated a depth of frustration, hostility and solidarity on the part of the largely migrant workforce which surprised both management and union leaders. Even when workers voted to resume work on July 23 it was not without dissent, the margin being 680 for and 290 against. The sources of discontent which emerged during the course of the dispute

¹⁶³For a summary of union strategy see Laurie Carmichael, "The Ford Dispute", *A.M.W.U. Monthly Journal*, September 1973, pp.2-3.

¹⁶⁴*Tribune*, July 17-23, 1973.

¹⁶⁵Carmichael accused the company of aggravating the situation by trying to induce a return to work before the meeting had concluded. L. Carmichael, "The Ford Dispute", *op cit.*, p.2.

lay not only with low levels of pay (assembly-line workers received a base rate of \$70-\$75 per week) but also with many aspects of work including line speeds, the timing of toilet breaks together with undue pressure and ethnic favouritism on the part of foremen. Like G.M.-H., Ford management refused to discuss time measurement methods and fatigue allowances with union delegates or officials. Faced with this intransigence, the union instructed workers to do as much as they could and leave the remainder unfinished. At times the problem had induced spontaneous refusals to work. Management responded by taking disciplinary action against workers who failed to keep up. New arrivals, in particular, found it difficult to meet the line speed requirements when the plant was operating at peak capacity, as was the case in 1973.

The prolonged strike did secure pay increases ranging from \$5 to \$5.50 per week, an afternoon tea break, increased spacing between cars on the line, the issuing of special IDs to relief crews and improvements in physical working conditions.¹⁶⁶ These concessions indicated a change in thinking by Ford and the major car companies in general. The need for a more conciliatory philosophy was reinforced by less publicized incidents including a "wild cat" strike by migrant workers following a dismissal at G.M.-H. Pagewood and a "riot" by Greek migrants in the Leyland Waterloo press shop. In 1974 the V.B.E.F. was able to negotiate consent awards with the major car companies that entailed significant improvements in pay and conditions.

The Broadmeadows strike also drove home some lessons to union officials. Both the assistant commonwealth secretary of the A.M.W.U., Laurie Carmichael, and the assistant federal secretary of the V.B.E.F., Len Townsend, admitted that they had misunderstood the attitude of the workers. Carmichael also said that unions had failed to "get understanding" to the migrant dominated section which refused to resume work and attributed this to language problems and the lack of industrial experience of many workers involved.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶For reports of the dispute see *Tribune*, June 12-18, June 26-July 2, July 3-9, July 17-23 and July 31-August 6, 1973; and *The National Times*, June 18-23, 1973, pp.18-19.

¹⁶⁷L. Carmichael, "The Ford Dispute", *op cit.*, p.2.

The precise role of Greek migrants in the dispute was subject to some controversy. It has been suggested that the strike was instigated by a small group of Greek activists and was primarily based on ethnic community organization. However, even superficial press interviews with Greek, Turkish and other migrants involved revealed the weakness of this claim. The strike committee represented a spectrum of the major ethnic groups employed at the plant. Further, while the strike received strong backing from the Greek community, there was nothing particularly novel about a strike being supported (financially and otherwise) by ethnic organizations.¹⁶⁸ The Greek language newspaper *Neo Kosmos* estimated that Greek migrants constituted only 40 per cent of those who took part in the June 13 riot. Indeed, the strike was marked by considerable solidarity between the various national groups including Greeks, Italians, Turks and Yugoslav-born migrants.¹⁶⁹

There has been a tendency for the media, management and some union officials to see events like the Broadmeadows riot as evidence of peculiarly ethnic behaviour patterns including the temperament of southern Europeans. This is a gross over-simplification. At one level these incidents were symptomatic of mutual misunderstanding on the part of foreign-born workers and union officials. Recently arrived migrants, in particular, were likely to be ignorant of customary modes of industrial behaviour and unions did little to speed up the learning process. However, the apparent absence of communication during the Broadmeadows strike was indicative of something more fundamental than the failure of unions to explain the intricacies of Australian industrial relations. It also represented a reaction to the failure of union leaderships to challenge the treatment of workers by particular employers. Evidence in the vehicle building industry indicates that low pay, poor working conditions and oppressive management were the underlying reasons for

¹⁶⁸ In 1956, for instance, Russian, Greek and Maltese associations donated £68/4/3 to aid naval dockyard strikers. See *Naval Establishment Strike Fund Report*, September 28, 1956.

¹⁶⁹ Even some press reports recognized this. See *The National Times*, June 18-23, 1973, pp.18-19.

periodic rank and file outbursts. The strong community identity of some migrant groups has had a bearing on these disputes.¹⁷⁰ However, this should not detract from the fact that these strikes were essentially rank and file revolts against poor conditions in conjunction with remote and unsatisfactory union/management relations. They achieved an "ethnic" character largely because migrants from southern Europe, the Middle East and South America are concentrated in many industries and occupations where such circumstances exist (see Chapter 4).

Hearn argues that:

Effective communication between the leadership and the rank and file often falls far short of what is desirable for truly democratic participation in Australian unions. The situation is much worse where large sections of the rank and file are non-English speaking migrants and where lack of communication perpetuates misunderstanding and causes, at times, distinct alienation from union officials.¹⁷¹

The strikes of the early 1970s, including many outside the motor vehicle industry, did establish this point to some union leaders. Taken in perspective, these outbursts of militancy were exceptional with high levels of labour instability remaining as the key indicator of migrant worker disaffection with poor working conditions.

One apparent factor in the communication gap between non-British migrants and unions was the failure of migrants to gain positions in the formal government of unions. Non-British migrants have secured positions as job delegates although, even in the absence of systematic evidence, it could be suggested that the number has been less than proportional to their representation in the workforce. The concentration of non-British migrants within certain workplaces and unions made this process inevitable. Union organizers

¹⁷⁰On occasion, migrants have been able to use language barriers to their own advantage to prevent management discovering the co-ordinators of spontaneous stoppages.

¹⁷¹J. Hearn, "The Problem of Communication in Unions", in N. Brennan (ed.), *The Migrant Worker* (Migrant Workers' Committee and Good Neighbour Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1974), p.20.

found that the appointment of migrant job delegates was useful in securing a level of communication with members sufficient for dues collection, passing on union recommendations and so on. However, non-British migrants, especially women, have been noticeably less successful in achieving positions on union governing bodies and as full-time officials. The small spate of appointments in the early 1950s (see Page 353) stagnated for many years,¹⁷² and the language skills of some migrant officials (such as eastern Europeans) became increasingly irrelevant as other groups of migrants (Greeks, Italians and Yugoslavs) came to dominate union membership.

According to Martin:

in the early to mid sixties, there was a small burst of appointments of non-British immigrants to the post of organizer in a few unions; one man born in Egypt to Italian parents was elected full-time assistant secretary of a sizable state union in 1960, and others gained senior part-time positions.¹⁷³

In 1966, a survey of Melbourne union officials by Jupp found that six non-British migrants held organizing posts in four unions (the F.I.A., Clothing Trades Union, B.L.F. and Furniture Trades Society).¹⁷⁴ Tsounis's 1971 survey disclosed 20 Greek-born union officials throughout Australia.¹⁷⁵

The most comprehensive research on migrant participation in union leadership was carried out by Hearn. Her evidence relates to Victoria where migrant inroads into union government appear to be more pronounced than in other states. Hearn's 1971-1972 survey of 300 full-time union officials (representing 80 unions) revealed that 31 were overseas born with 22 having been born in the British Isles.¹⁷⁶ The remaining nine (who worked in six unions) were born

¹⁷²The A.W.U., for instance, did not seek a replacement for Bielski following his dismissal.

¹⁷³Ross Martin, *Trade Unions in Australia* (Penguin, Ringood, 1980), p.75.

¹⁷⁴Quoted in D. Storer, *Migrants and Unions* (Ecumenical Migration Centre, Fitzroy, August 2, 1973), p.2.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁷⁶J. Hearn, "Migrant Participation in Trade Union Leadership", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 18, no. 2, June 1976, p.114.

in Greece, Malta and Italy. Of these, three were employed in a largely supportive capacity (interpreter-compensation officer), only two could claim to have risen from the ranks and only a Greek-born V.B.E.F. organizer could claim to have successfully contested a union election.¹⁷⁷

In explaining the absence of migrant officials even in unions where the bulk of membership was foreign-born, Hearn pointed to the poor communication between union leaders and the rank and file which discouraged migrant participation. Associated with this was the complexity of arbitration which made confrontations indirect, technical and drawn-out affairs; the large number of unions with overlapping coverage; the lack of prior union experience on the part of southern European migrants; the need for fluency in English to undertake arbitration proceedings and understand awards; and the multiplicity of different ethnic groups which inhibited communication between migrants and could lead to internal divisions.¹⁷⁸ Hearn's somewhat stereotyped comparison between arbitration and collective bargaining may be criticized.¹⁷⁹ However, this does not detract from the force of her analysis. It is notable that there are few instances where migrants have mobilized a bloc vote during a union election. Nor have union leaders viewed migrant members as a cohesive bloc.

Given these circumstances, those migrants to achieve full-time posts have generally done so on the initiative of union leaders. Hearn argues that the factor compelling some unions to encourage participation was organizational survival. In industries such as vehicle building, glass and construction where closed shop arrangements are common, union officials could afford to retain minimal contact with their membership. Where organization was weak and award evasion common (restaurants and liquor trades, cleaning and small

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp.114-115.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp.115-118.

¹⁷⁹For example, the shift to directly negotiated consent awards in the vehicle industry has not been associated with noticeably greater levels of rank and file involvement in proceedings, which remain highly centralized.

backyard factories) there was a greater imperative for effective communication. In these situations Hearn found it was not surprising to encounter migrant union officials.¹⁸⁰ Despite these initiatives, Hearn argues that migrant recruitment problems have not reached a scale where they have been seen as a critical issue by unions. Those unions most susceptible to these problems were generally small and weak.¹⁸¹ The strong tradition in some unions (generally craft-based) that all official posts must be subject to election has been an additional impediment to migrant representation (see Chapter 9).

A strength of Hearn's analysis was the recognition that low levels of rank and file participation were not unique to migrant workers and that the extent of oligarchic tendencies varied considerably between unions. Non-British migrants frequently belonged to unions where these tendencies were strongest. Yet even the most hierarchically structured union required some minimal level of rank and file involvement. Where this was threatened, where officials were for other reasons anxious to increase membership activism or where rank and file revolts threatened to undermine the leadership's control the appointment of foreign-born officials provided one solution. All played a part in increasing migrant representation during the 1970s although the former was undoubtedly the most important.

Hearn made a follow-up study in 1976 which disclosed 42 foreign-born officials of whom 16 were non-British.¹⁸² Hearn found a slight trend toward migrants achieving their position through election rather than appointment although the latter mechanism remained by far the most important. Perhaps the most notable success was the election of a Maltese-born migrant as assistant secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall.¹⁸³ In New South Wales a smaller number of

¹⁸⁰J. Hearn, "Migrant Participation in Trade Union Leadership", *op cit.*, pp.118-120. A similar pattern seems to exist in New South Wales.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, p.120.

¹⁸²J. Hearn, "The Problems of Migrant Workers", *op cit.*, p.34.

¹⁸³Even so it should be noted that migrants from Malta and Cyprus are generally conversent with the British model of trade unionism and thereby have an advantage over other non-British migrants.

unions also began to experiment with non-British migrant organizers. In both states, the majority of those elected were sponsored by the union leadership. However, in the F.I.A., an Italian migrant, F. Lelli, was elected assistant secretary of the Port Kembla branch as part of a rank and file team which defeated the existing leadership in 1970. In March 1978, C. Frizziero, another Italian migrant, was elected assistant secretary of the Federated Confectioners' Association, Victorian branch, after the Federal Industrial Court overturned an earlier ballot because of gross anomalies.¹⁸⁴

Throughout the 1970s there was a growing tendency for individual unions to attempt to improve communication with their migrant members and involve them in union activities. The nature and extent of these policy responses varied considerably. The reason for this lay at least as much with strategic and philosophical differences within the union movement as the particular requirements of organizational survival. As in other areas of union operations, political considerations had a conspicuous effect on union responses to migrants. In a few cases the initiatives represented a genuine sensitization on the part of union leaders who responded to and encouraged rank and file migrant involvement in unions.

In the Victorian railways, for instance, non-British migrants were able to gain positions within shop committees.¹⁸⁵ In April 1974, a meeting of 32 migrant job delegates (from the A.R.U. and A.M.W.U) endorsed the proposals of the 1973 Migrant Workers' Conference held in Melbourne and put forward a series of recommendations to railworkers, shop committees, the A.R.U. and A.M.W.U.¹⁸⁶ The recommendations (printed in English, Italian and Greek)

¹⁸⁴Frizziero received active migrant support in launching a major strike against chocolate manufacturers which secured significant improvements in pay and conditions. See *Nuovo Paese*, March 27, p.9 and August 27, 1978, p.12.

¹⁸⁵In 1973 *Tribune* reported that three of the fifteen shop committee representatives at the Joliment workshops were non-British migrants. *Tribune*, September 4-10, 1973.

¹⁸⁶The meeting was called by the Central Council of Combined Shop Committees and endorsed by the A.R.U. A.R.U. *Victorian Branch Circular*, April 30, 1974.

supported union demands for a \$30 increase for railworkers and other improvements in conditions including cumulative increases in retirement pay, provisions for upgrading unskilled workers to tradesmen and adequate leave for workers travelling inside or outside Australia for personal/family reasons.¹⁸⁷ The meeting also called for greater migrant representation on union committees and as full-time organizers, the provision of basic union information (written and oral) in Italian and Greek, the *A.R.U. Gazette* to contain one page each in Italian and Greek, the employment of multilingual staff in union offices, the organization of special schools in unionism for migrant workers, an increase in the federal government funds allocated to the education of migrant unionists and for unions to sponsor migrants to full-time government-run language schools. In addition, the meeting requested that a joint A.R.U./A.M.W.U. deputation approach railway management to establish English classes in work time, print multilingual employment information and employ multilingual staff at head office, in each workshop and at the medical office.¹⁸⁸ Finally, an 11-man Railway Migrant Workers' Advisory Committee was established to foster greater migrant participation in union affairs and to co-operate with the union leadership.

The ruling "Militant Democratic Team" of the Victorian A.R.U. proved receptive to these proposals. By 1978, the union had two full-time migrant organizers with another two on its team of candidates for the election in that year, employed multilingual staff in its office, published multilingual articles and pamphlets on a regular basis, had recognized the Railway Migrant Workers' Advisory Committee, had established good links with left-wing migrant organizations and had defended ethnic and community access

¹⁸⁷The latter demand had been anticipated by several actions over individual cases. In March 1974, for instance, 160 cleaners at the Dudley Street Depot went on strike to secure overseas leave for a fellow worker.

¹⁸⁸*A.R.U. Victorian Branch Circular*, April 30, 1974.

radio against government cutbacks as well as its industrial practices.¹⁸⁹

Other Victorian unions to show initiative included the Victorian branch of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union which published regular foreign language features in its journal, produced a multilingual tax guide, appointed a Yugoslav-born welfare officer to pursue migrant issues and established links with migrant community organizations. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union produced a multilingual guide to workers' compensation while the Clothing and Allied Trades Union also produced foreign language material as well as appointing several foreign-born organizers. The Victorian branch of the A.M.W.S.U. also adopted a progressive approach to its migrant members which filtered through to other states and was endorsed at the national level (see Chapter 9). However, in many unions the activism of one branch has had little effect on the leadership in other states.

In New South Wales union initiatives on behalf of migrants appear to have been less widespread than in Victoria. In 1976 the Water and Sewerage Employees' Union (Salaried Division) sought an interpreting allowance for its members employed on translating duties.¹⁹⁰ In May of the following year the Wages Division of this union established English classes for its members in conjunction with the New South Wales Department of Education. A survey conducted by the New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission found that few unions produced foreign language broadsheets on new award rates, workers' compensation, meetings and elections.¹⁹¹ Despite the occasional use

¹⁸⁹These achievements were reported with satisfaction by *Muovo Paese* which urged Italian migrants to support the union's leadership. *Muovo Paese*, May 27, 1978, p.9.

¹⁹⁰The response of the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board was to reject the claim and instruct its employees to conduct all conversations in English only! The claim was prepared with the assistance of Roy Richter, New South Wales Health Commission Officer. Correspondence between Richter and D.J. Dickinson, Industrial Officer of Water Sewerage Employees' Union (Salaried Division), February 9, 1976.

¹⁹¹New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission, *First Annual Report* (New South Wales Government Printer, Sydney, 1978), chapter 17.

made of interpreters, most unions relied on bilingual members, job delegates and office staff. Union officials expressed the view that finances hampered additional efforts. They argued that the use of delegates improved understanding and the job delegates' own confidence while the use of formal interpreters at meetings merely served to delay and confuse proceedings.¹⁹² The Ethnic Affairs Commission was unable to determine the extent and effectiveness of the informal communication system upon which so many unions put their faith.

In 1979, the Labor Council of New South Wales Ethnic Relations Officer conducted a survey of unions with personnel fluent in languages other than English. While the results understated the capacity of unions (many did not bother to respond), it is worth noting that even where union personnel possessed a foreign language it was frequently of limited relevance to the ethnic concentrations within the membership of the body concerned (see Table 16).

In 1980 an A.C.T.U. survey of 26 unions found that the failure to communicate with migrant workers was a major problem facing unions and called for "additional support and assistance to enable organizers, shop stewards and the union office to carry out the roles they consider are appropriate for these workers".¹⁹³ In essence, the report suggested that dependence on informal networks was inadequate to overcome non-English speaking workers' ignorance of their industrial rights and that multilingual material was an essential back-up to personal contacts. This finding merely echoed the public admission of a Victorian union official four years earlier:

In particular, all sections of the Trade Union movement have a lot to answer for, because of their neglect of the problems and issues concerning migrant workers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹²*Ibid.*

¹⁹³Quoted in *The Weekend Australian*, August 9-10, 1980, p.5. See also p.12.

¹⁹⁴J. Halfpenny, "Migrant Workers and Trade Unions", in *Ekstasis*, no. 16, December 1976, p.13.

TABLE 16

RESULTS OF LABOR COUNCIL SURVEY OF TRADE UNION OFFICE
PERSONNEL FLUENT IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Union	Language
Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union	German, English
Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners	Italian, Greek
Association of Architects, Engineers, Surveyors and Draughtsmen of Australia	Dutch, German
Australian Workers' Union	Arabic, German, Malaysian, Hindi (an Indian language), Tamil (an Indian language)
Commercial Travellers' Guild	Greek
Federated Ironworkers' Association of Australia	Hungarian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish
Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union	Greek, Arabic, Maltese, Italian
Federated Municipal and Shire Council Employees' Union	Serbo-Croatian
Furnishing Trades Society	Greek
Police Association of New South Wales	German
Printed and Kindred Industries Association	Greek, Arabic
Water and Sewerage Employees (Wages)	Russian, Serbo-Croatian

Source: Labor Council of New South Wales
Directory - 1979, p.158.

Halfpenny went on to state that Australian unions had confused equality with conformity and in so doing became one of the few union leaders to question the assimilationist ethic upon which post-war responses had been built. He urged the compulsory publication of foreign language material; the sponsoring of multilingual education and on-the-job English classes; the establishment of migrant advisory committees in each labour council; and the creation of workplace committees so that immigrants could discuss industrial issues in their own language.¹⁹⁵ The latter proposal represented a significant departure from the prevailing view (among union officials) that differentiation would invite segregation.¹⁹⁶

Despite the initiatives of individual unions, the union movement as a whole remains bound to traditional priorities and methods of operation. While an increasing number of union leaders have become partially aware of problems confronting many migrant unionists, few see this as more than a peripheral area of concern. Migrant inroads into union officialdom slowly gained momentum after 1970.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the prospects for a significant increase in the number of migrant candidates for union office emerging from the ranks in the near future remain remote. Facilities for training unionists have not served to help counter the imbalance in migrant representation. Few unions have comprehensive schools for job delegates and those that operate are of little use to migrants with only a limited proficiency in English. Nor have courses operated by the Trade

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.* Halfpenny argued that segregation already existed precisely because of the assimilationist approach of unions. See also G. Zangalis, 'Migrants in Trade Unions', in N. Brennan (ed.), *The Migrant Worker*, *op cit.*, p.12.

¹⁹⁷By 1978 Victorian unions with non-British branch officials or organizers included Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Australian Glass Workers' Union, A.R.U., Australian Textile Workers' Union, Australian Timber Workers' Union, B.W.I.U., Clothing Trades Union, Confectioners', Furnishing Trades Society, F.I.A., Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Union and V.B.E.F. In New South Wales the list included the F.I.A., F.M.W.U., Federated Tobacco and Cigarette Workers' Union, Gramophone Record Industry Union and New South Wales Government Railways Canvas Workers' Union.

Union Training Authority (T.U.T.A.) altered the situation much although they have attempted to sensitize Australian-born delegates and officials to migrant problems. According to Carr, of the 6,900 unionists who attended T.U.T.A. courses in 1977 only 6.8 per cent came from non-English speaking backgrounds.¹⁹⁸ There has been a small number of courses specially run for migrants although some were cancelled through lack of applicants.¹⁹⁹ The reasons for this poor response are obscure. However, greater union activism on the issue of English classes during working time and migrant attendance at such courses would seem to be a prerequisite for increasing migrant involvement in unions.

Immigrant Perceptions of Unions

It is difficult to say precisely how immigrants - both in general and as specific groups - viewed unions and in what direction these perceptions have evolved historically. It was not until the 1970s that any interest existed in discovering the attitudes of migrant workers. Apart from the absence of early surveys it should also be noted that those surveys conducted more recently were usually small and selective. Ignoring the broader methodological problems with questionnaire analysis, a number of these studies failed to make proper use of an Australian-born control group. The foregoing sections of this thesis have made a number of suggestions about the way foreign-born workers perceived unions and work. It would be useful to examine some of this research in the light of these suggestions.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸Bob Carr, "Australian Trade Unionism in 1977", *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 20, no. 1, March 1978, p.2. In their submissions to the 1977 T.U.T.A. Inquiry the Greek Welfare Society and Co-As-It argued that T.U.T.A. helped only those migrants already actively involved in unions.

¹⁹⁹*Nuovo Paese*, July 30, 1980, p.12 reported one such instance.

²⁰⁰These works include J. Hearn, *Political Attitudes of Migrants* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Melbourne, 1971); Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.), *But I wouldn't want my wife to work here ...*, *op cit.*; R. Johnston, *Workers and Unions*, *op cit.*; Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales, *Annual Report to Premier 1978*, *op cit.*; R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, *Well at least it's better than the line ...*, *op cit.*; and P. Georgiou, "Migrants, Unionism and Society", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 1973, pp.32-51.

In general, the recent studies reveal a commitment to unionism on the part of immigrant workers with a strong focus on industrial issues such as wages, safety and job security.²⁰¹ Most of the surveys also reveal varying degrees of migrant dissatisfaction with the management of the union to which they belong. The Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.) survey of semi-skilled female factory workers found that many migrants, particularly new arrivals, felt isolated from both shop stewards and union organizers. They objected to being treated without dignity by employers and wanted improved working conditions with more than half being prepared to strike in pursuit of this.²⁰² Despite their interest in industrial issues, non-Anglophone migrants had a significantly lower rate of participation in union activities than their Anglophone counterparts. The C.U.R.A. researchers attributed this to the failure of unions to effectively counter language difficulties. Union officials, the survey found, were generally insensitive to both ethnic divisions and sexual status and viewed English classes and child-care facilities at work as a bonus rather than as a basic industrial issue.

At a more specific level the study showed that attitudinal differences between industries reflected an assessment of the relationship between individual unions and management. Those unions which made greater efforts to communicate with and serve the interests of their non-Anglophone members were rewarded with a higher level of involvement. Less active unions were rewarded with non-involvement based on ignorance, apathy and cynicism. While closed shop/check-off arrangements solved union recruiting problems, they could also encourage a situation of isolation whereby migrants became passive and confused participants in unions unless union

²⁰¹Hearn's study of 400 migrant workers revealed that 63.7 per cent expressed confidence in unions. A similar sample surveyed by Callus, Quinlan and Rimmer revealed that more than 80 per cent of those surveyed supported the concept of unionism with in excess of 60 per cent stating that they would have joined their union even if it were not compulsory. See J. Hearn, *Political Attitudes of Migrants*, *op cit.*; and R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, *Well at least it's better than the line ...*, *op cit.*

²⁰²C.U.R.A., *But I wouldn't want my wife to work here*, *op cit.*, p.50.

officials took steps to counter this.²⁰³ Inexperienced migrant workers who had not had unionism explained to them in their own language were most susceptible to confusion.²⁰⁴

Johnston's survey also found that the attitudes of Australian-born and foreign-born workers to unions varied considerably between unions.²⁰⁵ Immigrants with greater union experience frequently had strong views about the role their union should perform and quite specific criticisms about its shortcomings - safety matters being a common cause of complaint. In general, immigrants were more critical of union officials than their Australian-born counterparts. Experience had transformed some into ardent union supporters although eastern European refugees retained their suspicions that unions were "red" inspired.²⁰⁶

A survey of 400 male manual workers employed by three New South Wales government instrumentalities found that the attitude of both migrant and Australian-born workers was strongly influenced by the level of activity of the union to which they belonged, by the opportunity for communication at the workplace level and by the success of their union in securing favourable employment conditions.²⁰⁷ Support for unions was strongest in the Electricity Commission where employment conditions (pay, safety, security and promotion opportunities) were superior to the other bodies surveyed and almost all workers claimed to know their delegate and have regular contact with him irrespective of ethnic origin and the large

²⁰³Research has indicated instances where migrants have interpreted closed shop arrangements as indicating that unions are too close to management or even allied. See, for example, New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission, *First Annual Report*, *op cit.*, chapter 17.

²⁰⁴C.U.R.A., *But I wouldn't want my wife to work here ...*, *op cit.*, p.109. The C.U.R.A. study contained some intriguing material on how migrant women become involved in unions which, unfortunately, was not systematically compared with Australian-born women. Johnston's study also pointed to a learning process amongst immigrant workers. See R. Johnston, *Workers and Unions*, *op cit.*, p.58.

²⁰⁵R. Johnston, *Workers and Unions*, *op cit.*, p.40.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*

²⁰⁷R. Callus, M. Quinlan and M. Rimmer, *Well at least it's better than the line ...*, *op cit.*

number of individual unions involved. Support was most pronounced in power stations where shop committees were active in pursuing industrial issues. The only exception concerned Italian cleaners who belonged to the F.I.A., the most passive of the unions, which shunned shop committee organizations.

Support for unionism was less strong amongst workers employed by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board who mostly belonged to the Water and Sewerage Employees' Union (Wages Division).²⁰⁸ Those stating that they would not have joined the union voluntarily largely gave dissatisfaction with their contact with officials and union inactivity as a reason for this. At the same time, many workers were aware of the union's initiatives since 1972 when a major strike over dismissal had ended its tame-cat image. In contrast to the Electricity Commission unions, the Water and Sewerage Employees' Union lacked a cohesive delegate system particularly in the construction division where migrants were concentrated. This meant that the union was unable to eradicate all but the most blatant discriminatory practices on the job. Lack of contact and policing of conditions resulted in a low level of participation, especially amongst recently arrived immigrants - 39 per cent of Spanish speaking workers claiming that they never understood the issues discussed at union meetings.²⁰⁹

Ignorance of and dissatisfaction with unions was most prominent amongst workers employed by the Department of Main Roads, the bulk of whom belonged to the A.W.U.²¹⁰ The lower level of support seemed to accurately reflect worker disapproval with working conditions, the close relationship between union officials and management (who both saw active job delegates as "troublemakers" and "stirrers")

²⁰⁸*Ibid.* Amongst Electricity Commission respondents, 89 per cent supported unionism in principle and 74 per cent stated that they would join the union even if it were not compulsory. The figures for their counterparts in the Water Board were 82.6 per cent and 62.4 per cent respectively.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, pp.26-28.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp.164-166. Seventy-two per cent of respondents supported unionism and 52.16 per cent stated that they would join the union even if it were not compulsory.

and the limited avenues for rank and file involvement in industrial campaigns. Both Australian and foreign-born expressed bitterness towards the A.W.U. despite their support for unionism in general. More than half had never been to a union meeting and 63 per cent had never voted in a union election. The picture emerged of a union which was largely unaware of its members' needs.

The findings of this study were that irrespective of their origins, the attitudes of workers to union membership were strongly influenced by their perception of how interested and active union officials were and the opportunities for involvement in union activities. Apathy, cynicism and lower levels of loyalty were most pronounced where remote union officials failed to deliver the goods.²¹¹ This parallels Rose's finding that union solidarity is closely associated with the union's effectiveness in achieving its goals with regard to income and job security and with the degree to which participation in union activities is encouraged by union leaders.²¹²

In sum, the limited research on migrant attitudes indicates a general identification with unions and interest in industrial issues despite instances of confusion and disillusion.

Conclusion

In assessing the relationship of migrants to unions this section has pointed to both the variety of union behaviour and the gradual changes which have occurred over time. From the early 1950s through to the 1960s there is only slight evidence of deviance from the conformist perspective which marked Australian unions. On the one hand, craft unions were bound to this perspective by their predominantly Anglophone membership and obeisance to traditional democratic procedures and elections. On the other hand, popular and unpopular "bostdoms" found that conformity was consistent with membership

²¹¹Georgiou's study of Greek auto workers likewise found that cynicism and a low level of union participation could reflect the policy of a particular union leadership to rank and file involvement. P. Georgiou, "Migrants, Unionism and Society", *op cit.*, pp.32-51.

²¹²A. Rose, *Union Solidarity* (University of Minnesota Press, 1952), p.183.

enforcement through the closed shop and an absentee landlord concept of service. Without explaining why these positions have broken down, it is apparent that unions in both camps have recognized the need to provide specific migrant services, to actively attract migrant members and, in some instances, to adapt the traditional character of their organization to meet specific migrant needs. The insistence upon conformity has not gone. Rather, it has melted at the edges.

Notwithstanding the reluctance of Australian unions to win over migrant support, there is little evidence of abnormally high levels of migrant dissatisfaction with unions. The sporadic outbreaks of "migrant" industrial conflict take their character not from the special ethnic features of the workforce, but from the entirely conventional sources of dissatisfaction in sub-standard pay and working conditions. Apparent ethnic disaffection with unions and employers needs little special explanation in the peculiar communication problems or adjustment crises that these workers may have experienced. Moreover, more wide-ranging survey evidence on migrant attitudes to unions has failed to demonstrate that migrant and Australian-born workers' attitudes to unions diverge in any way that can be exclusively related to ethnic background. While migrant participation in union leadership may have been low, it does not follow that this can be correlated with high levels of alienation from unions.

By several criteria it may be hard to conclude that non-British migrants conform to the orthodox stereotypes of good unionists. They are frequently out of touch, often conscripted through the closed shop, occasionally vocal in their criticism of unions and only rarely present in the higher councils of union government. Notwithstanding all these things, it could still be argued that migrants have chosen involvement in Australian unions as their primary means of organized representation on industrial matters, and display an interest in industrial matters that is not conspicuously lower than that found amongst Australian-born unionsists. Moreover, non-British migrants are now becoming, through their occupational and industrial distribution, disproportionately numerous as union members. It is not implausible to argue that the causes of underparticipation are temporary, being located in ephemeral factors associated with age, cultural adaptation and traditional screening for union leaderships. Ethnic

dominance of certain classes of union membership may well flow through to ethnic dominance of union leadership once the inter-generational lags are overcome. By this stage their status as migrants may be in doubt. At no stage has their standing as unionists seriously been in doubt.

4. Migrant Workers' Clubs

One kind of organization that possesses an initially ambiguous character is the migrant workers' club. Ostensibly similar to bogus unions, these organizations have been the object of some union suspicion. At the same time, their involvement in encouraging active migrant participation in the indigenous labour movement suggests a quite different character. They have acted, in effect, as a catalyst by which relatively poorly integrated migrant workers could be converted into active union members. These bodies were also a focus for shared cultural, ideological and social values among particular groups of migrants. They facilitated the exchange of ideas, experiences and the provision of social outlets and welfare services on a self-help basis.

Organization amongst non-British migrants can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. In particular, Italian migrants were active in forming working class associations.²¹³ In Victoria an Italian club was established in the 1870s to help the sick and unemployed.²¹⁴ In 1891 an Italian Workmen's Mutual Benefit Society was formed in New South Wales by Italian migrants with socialist leanings and forged cordial links with the union movement.²¹⁵

²¹³Storer attributes this to a high proportion of political exiles and adventurers amongst early Italian migrants. D. Storer, "Italians in Australia: A Social Overview", *Paper presented to the World Conference of Italian Immigration held in Rome 1975*, p.2.

²¹⁴G. Abbiusa, "Political Involvement of Italians: An Historical Perspective", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation*, *op cit.*, p.32.

²¹⁵The society warned both the Sydney and Melbourne labour councils about the importation of indentured Italian labour. See Sydney Trades and Labour Council, minutes of meetings held on May 15, August 6 and 27, 1891; and Melbourne Trades Hall Council, minutes of meeting held on September 4, 1891.

However, the wind-down of Italian immigration following federation forestalled the further development of such associations.

The expansion of southern European immigration in the 1920s stimulated a new phase of organization amongst particular migrant groups. The formation of radical working class associations by Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavs was a response to their alienation from Australian society and the rise of fascism in their homelands.²¹⁶ Many immigrants were employed in low paying or insecure occupations such as canecutting, restaurants and rural outwork. According to Cresciani, Italian anarchists were prominent in the formation of anti-fascist leagues in Sydney, Lithgow, Perth and Ingham.²¹⁷ In Melbourne the Matteotti Club acted as a distribution centre for anarchist propaganda and a meeting place for Italian migrants.²¹⁸ The club received support from union officials including the Melbourne Trades Hall Council secretary.²¹⁹ These bodies focused their activities on the consular representatives of the Mussolini government. However, Italian anarchists were also active in organizing strikes amongst North Queensland canecutters in 1931 and 1935, and in opposing the employment quotas on non-British migrants sought by the A.W.U.²²⁰

A more broadly based anti-fascist organization, "Italia Libera" (the Australian-Italian Movement), counted several prominent

²¹⁶Tsounis makes this point with regard to Greek working class organization. Papadopoulos, too, identifies the installation of a fascist dictatorship in Greece as a strong influence on the character of Greek immigration between 1936 and 1949. See M. Tsounis, "The Greek Left in Australia", *Australian Left Review*, vol. 29, March 1971, pp.53-56; and G. Papadopoulos, "Social Organization and Ethnic Power: A Greek Perspective", in D. Storer (ed.), *Ethnic Rights, Power and Participation*, *op cit.*, p.41.

²¹⁷G. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism and Italian Anarchists in Australia", *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1, March 1976, p.6.

²¹⁸Several attempts by the club to establish an Italian language newspaper were frustrated until the Scullin Labor government was elected. *Ibid.*, p.8.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.14.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, p.12.

A.L.P. politicians and union officials amongst its patrons. Its expressed aim was to "bring about a better understanding between Italian and Australian workers and to make Italian workers become good trade unionists".²²¹

A number of worker clubs were formed by Greek migrants during the 1930s. Those identified by Tsounis include Platon (1932-1938) and its successor Atlas (1939-) in Sydney and Democratos (1935-) and the Greek Educational League (1942-1944) in Melbourne.²²² Unlike many such organizations, Atlas and Democratos did not prove ephemeral and have maintained a continuous existence up to the present. The Atlas Club was established by Greek seamen visiting Sydney and other Greeks who sought refuge in Australia from political events in their homeland. Atlas sought to cater for the interests of Greek seamen and workers as well as facilitating links with the Australian labour movement. In addition to Greek and Italian organizations, there was an Australian Yugoslav Association which also adopted a strong anti-fascist stance.

In the post-war period this pattern of small and ephemeral national organizations continued. Associations frequently exhibited a stronger interest in the political problems of their homeland than those in Australia. There appears to have been little, if any, working class organization amongst northern and eastern European migrants. The great majority of voluntary associations formed by post-war immigrants were apolitical or politically conservative and their primary functions were social, cultural or religious. Likewise, the foreign language press was overwhelmingly conservative in outlook.²²³ Nevertheless, the large-

²²¹Correspondence from C. Alcorso, secretary of the Australian-Italian Movement to E. Thornton, national secretary of the F.I.A., December 12, 1945.

²²²M. Tsounis, "The Greek Left in Australia", *op cit.*, p.54.

²²³S. Mavrantonis, "The Ethnic Australian - A Vital Component of Australia's Revolutionary Force", *Australian Marxist Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, March 1977, p.31. This point was made by a number of migrant activists interviewed who sought to explain this in terms of the background and interests of the ethnic media. Until 1956 the federal government exerted control over all foreign language publications. In 1953 it used this power to withdraw the permit of *The Australian-Greek Review* (see *Tribune*, June 10, 1953). During the 1960s a number of progressive foreign language

scale influx of immigrants into industry was accompanied by an expansion of working class associations amongst particular national groups. Initially most prominent amongst Greek migrants, the trend later spread to Italian, Turkish, Arab and Spanish-speaking migrants. Factors influencing this development included the period of arrival of individual national groups, the emergence of a substantial foreign-born proletariat with few political rights, political events in the country of origin and Australia, and characteristics of the particular community.

Research by Tsounis disclosed Greek workers' clubs in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane from the 1940s onwards. By the early 1960s similar bodies existed in Adelaide, Wollongong and Newcastle.²²⁴ These clubs attempted to politicize Greek migrants and induce community action on housing, social welfare, employment and language problems of migrants. They were able to forge more extensive and influential links with the indigenous labour movement than had been the case in the pre-war period. Nevertheless, contact was generally restricted to sympathetic left-wing unions in the building, metal and maritime industries. The clubs' most significant early achievement was to elicit demonstrations of labour solidarity with regard to events in Greece including the gaoling, trial and execution of unionists, communists and other radical leaders.²²⁵ The Seamen's Union, for instance, raised these matters with the Labor Council of New South Wales on several occasions between 1948 and

newspapers emerged including *Neo Kosmos*, *Nea Nopeia*, *ΟΕΥΝΑΙΑ ΜΙΕΤΗ* (The Unionist) and *Il Progresso*. Not all have maintained this position. However, several new newspapers have since emerged including *Nuovo Paese* and the Turkish *Emek* (Voice of the Worker). Melbourne has been the headquarters for most of these publications. The introduction of ethnic radio has been associated with similar allegations of conservative bias. Takis Kaldis, interviewed August 10, 1977.

²²⁴M. Tsounis, "The Greek Left in Australia", *op cit.*, p.54.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, pp.56-57. In 1948, Dr H.V. Evatt, then United Nations General Assembly President, intervened on behalf of Tony Ambatielos, a Greek union leader who visited Australia to address various union bodies. The Seamen's Union helped establish an Australian branch of the Greek Seamen's Union and imposed boycotts on Greek shipping during the 1960s in protest at oppressive measures in Greece.

1952.²²⁶ In 1959, the Sydney branch of the Boilermakers' Society and the New South Wales branch of the S.M.W.U. sent cables protesting at the military trial of former resistance fighter, M. Glezos, following an appeal by the Atlas Club.²²⁷

In their efforts to build a bridge between Greek migrants and the indigenous working class and encourage greater migrant involvement in unions, the Greek workers' clubs had less success. Even sympathetic unions made only limited efforts to foster greater migrant participation in their operations.²²⁸ Many unions remained hostile to the politics of Greek worker associations and suspicious of independent migrant worker organization. For their part, the clubs saw the demand for unquestioning uniformity on the part of migrant workers as a denial of rank and file rights. However, even if support for independent associations partly derived from the insensitivity of local unions, club leaders were strongly opposed to the notion of separate migrant unions.²²⁹ Indeed, Atlas avoided direct organization of migrant workers because it feared this would promote divisions based on nationality. This view was widespread although the Melbourne based Greek Welfare Association periodically offered support to striking automobile workers (see Pages 363-367). Denied access to many unions, the organization of national conferences of Greek workers and publications such as the *Australian-Greek Left Review* provided a limited avenue for propagating the cause

²²⁶Labor Council of New South Wales, executive minutes, September 2, 1948 and August 14, 1952.

²²⁷Boilermakers' Society, Sydney branch minutes, July 7, 1959 and S.M.W.U. New South Wales branch minutes, July 4, 1959.

²²⁸The New South Wales branch of the S.M.W.U. sent messages of greetings to conferences of Greek workers held in 1962 and 1970. In 1961 it raised the problems of unemployed Greek workers with the Labor Council of New South Wales. The New South Wales and Victorian branches made financial donations to a number of publications including *Il Progresso* and *Syndikalists* throughout the 1960s and distributed them to foreign-born members. See Chapter 9.

²²⁹The point was emphasized by migrant activists including S. Mavrantonis, interviewed April 22, 1977 and G. Zangalis, interviewed October 25, 1977.

of migrant workers.²³⁰

The effectiveness of Greek workers' clubs was also impeded by religious schisms within the Greek community, the fragility of political alliances within the clubs and their inability to command widespread support. According to Tsounis, although Atlas and Democritos each have no fewer than 2,000 recorded members, their financial membership has never exceeded 150.²³¹ Even then, not all members were politically motivated.²³² Another source of weakness was the refusal of immigration authorities to grant citizenship to migrant activists - an action which discouraged other migrants from joining these clubs. Even more alarming was the attempted deportation of several activists, including two members of the Atlas Club, during the early 1950s.²³³ Vulnerability to governmental pressure was to remain a hallmark of radical migrant organization.

Government intimidation played a part in the collapse of an early attempt at political organization by Italian migrants. After the war, the Italo Australian Association (Italia Libera) continued its anti-fascist activities. Some time after 1948 it requested a former Garibaldi Brigades resistance fighter, Mario Abbiezzi, to edit its official journal *Il Risveglio*. Abbiezzi also became secretary of the Italo Australian Club in Sydney. Through these positions, Abbiezzi encouraged Italian migrants to become active union members and take out Australian citizenship. In 1952, support was lent to demonstrations by unemployed Italian migrants

²³⁰Launched in 1970, the *Review*'s editorial board included a number of active unionists. See also Footnote 228.

²³¹M. Tsounis, "The Greek Left in Australia", *op cit.*, p.58.

²³²The Atlas Club also performs social functions (it operates a library) and organizes cultural activities such as dances, music and drama. S. Mavrantonis, interviewed April 22, 1977.

²³³These points will be elaborated upon in the final section of this chapter. The "cold war" period witnessed frequent public attacks on migrant associations remotely suspected of having communist sympathies. In June and November of 1949 the Maltese Settlers' Associations were subjected to these allegations. See the *S.M.H.*, June 14, 1949, p.6 and November 24, 1949, p.15.

at the Bonegilla hostel and in Sydney.²³⁴ Reacting to this, the federal government threatened Abiezzi with deportation and ultimately issued a deportation order against him. The ensuing events will be related elsewhere. However, one effect of the struggle was that the Italo Australian Club henceforth concentrated on purely social activities.²³⁵

Apart from the Greeks, there appears to have been little independent organization amongst immigrant workers before the 1970s. The reasons for this are complex. Some groups such as the Turks, Lebanese and South American migrants did not reach Australia in substantial numbers until the late 1960s. Motives for migration and prior political experiences also seem to offer some explanation of why there was no organization amongst eastern Europeans and Yugoslavs.²³⁶

The 1970s witnessed a rapid expansion in the number of workers' associations among particular migrant nationalities. As in earlier periods, the primary impetus for many of these bodies were politics at "home" and conservative/religious denomination of other organizations within individual ethnic communities. These bodies included the Spanish Workers' Commission, Free Chile Committee, Uruguyan Unity, Palestinian Forum and the Turkish Workers'

²³⁴The Sydney demonstration occurred five days after a protest meeting organized at the Italo Australian Club. *S.M.H.*, October 31, 1952, p.1.

²³⁵The Italo Australian League continued to operate in Melbourne but was less influential than the Greek Workers' Clubs. The newspaper *Il Progresso* gave Italian migrants an inroad into the labour movement, being praised by unions for its activities in interpreting migrant complaints to officials (see *Federation News*, March 1962). The paucity of working class organization amongst Italian migrants until after 1970 cannot be explained purely in terms of government intimidation and more research is needed on this question.

²³⁶Deep internal divisions within the Yugoslav community appear to have precluded political organization amongst Yugoslav workers. On the other hand, the political experiences of many South American migrants seem to have led them to seek political associations in Australia. See D. Cox, "The Role of Ethnic Groups in Migrant Welfare", *op cit.*, p.65.

League.²³⁷ Once established, these associations frequently formed links with indigenous political parties, sympathetic unions and other nationality-based organizations. One consequence of this was a broadening of interests even if their *raison d'être* remained essentially unaltered. A smaller group of associations directed considerable attention to the social, political, economic and industrial circumstances of migrant workers as well as informing them of events at "home". These included the Greek bodies already mentioned, the Australian Turkish Welfare Association (A.T.W.A.) based in Melbourne and the Federation of Italian Labourers and their Families (F.I.L.E.F.) which spread its operations from Melbourne to New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia. The latter two associations provided their own foreign language newspapers, *Emek* and *Nuovo Paese* respectively.

The accelerated expansion of independent national organizations was associated with a broadening awareness of migrant worker problems. A number of interdependent reasons may be offered to explain this. First, from the mid-1960s onwards, the Australian left began to take an increasing interest in exposing the plight of

²³⁷ These bodies all operate in Sydney. This list is by no means comprehensive and many associations resist investigation apparently because they fear government intervention. At the time of research there was no evident organization of Lebanese migrants in Sydney although one may well exist. Des Storer (interviewed October 24, 1977) stated that a Lebanese association formed in Melbourne had since split. This is typical of the small and ephemeral character of many bodies. The Turkish Workers' League is an example of one of the more fragile alliances. In 1977 it split following internal dissension. Unlike other associations, it has not sought contact with unions or even other migrant groups although a number of unions such as the A.M.W.S.U. have sent it material and invited its representatives to attend union meetings. The League did protest against right wing control of ethnic radio. It may also conduct informal activities amongst Turkish workers who are concentrated in a number of factories in Alexandria (A.C.I., Crown Corning and S.T.C.) and Homebush (Arnotts, Ampac and Ford). Local Turkish organizations mirror political divisions in the homeland and include right-wing and Islamic bodies which propagate strong nationalist sentiments. A number of spokespersons interviewed suggested that the League faces extreme difficulty in politicizing Turkish migrants, the bulk of whom are politically conservative - a reflection of their rural background and commitment to temporary migration. Idal Nami, interviewed August 31, 1977 and Helen Boynton, interviewed August 19, 1977. See also D. Cox, "The Role of Ethnic Groups in Migrant Welfare", *op cit.*, p.77.

migrants as an exploited class of worker.²³⁸ Second, the election of a federal Labor government in December 1972 heralded a dramatic shift in political philosophy. The new government strove to broaden debate on immigration and its social effects by fostering research in this area. The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, A.J. Grassby, was a charismatic advocate of cultural pluralism - a significant break with the assimilation doctrine which marked earlier government policies.²³⁹ These developments reinforced the growing readiness of migrants to speak out on their problems.

Migrant workers' conferences held in 1973, 1975 and 1976 were significant demonstrations of this growing self-confidence. The first conference, held at the Melbourne Trades Hall in October 1973, was attended by 200 delegates (representing all major migrant national groups) and addressed by migrant activists and unionists, the assistant secretary of the Trades Hall Council and the state secretary of the A.M.W.U.²⁴⁰ The policy document that was established called for a general improvement in wages and conditions, equal pay for women, the recognition of migrant skills, special

²³⁸Through *Tribune*, the C.P.A. showed an increasing interest in publicizing the attitude/problems of migrant workers. The breakaway Socialist Party of Australia maintained close links with some migrant groups especially Greeks. The C.P.A. has a number of semi-autonomous national groups within its ranks. In 1976 these groups presented a draft resolution to the party's national congress containing specific proposals for greater union action in the area of multilingual communication, low paid workers and piecework, English classes and child-care, the establishment of migrant worker advisory committees in each union and migrant trade union centres in each state and the organization of Migrant Worker Conferences. *Draft Resolution on Migrant Workers and Ethnic Minorities*, 25th Congress of the C.P.A., 1976.

²³⁹For a more detailed account of these points see R. Callus, "Employer Policies for the Management of a Multi-Cultural Workforce - A Critical Examination", *Paper presented to the 49th ANZAAS Congress, Auckland, January 1979*, pp.3-5.

²⁴⁰Most delegates had been elected at workplace meetings. Conference proceedings were conducted in English, Italian, Greek and Spanish. More than 15 individual unions sponsored the Conference which also received support from migrant associations including the Italo Australian League, the Free Spain Committee, the Fitzroy Ecumenical Centre and the Australian Council of Churches. See *The Migrant Workers' Conference* (a broadsheet in four languages, Melbourne, undated), p.1.

provisions for overseas leave and guaranteed job security for injured workers. Unions were called on to establish migrant committees, to promote migrant involvement in their operations at all levels by electing migrant organizers, to conduct a multilingual education programme, to publish multilingual information on unions, workers' compensation and working conditions and to employ multilingual office staff. Other stated objectives included the creation of a trade union advisory centre for migrants and the inclusion of paid English classes and child-care facilities in union log of claims. A series of demands in the areas of social welfare, education and culture aimed at securing equality for migrants. In keeping with the political orientation of migrant worker associations, motions were passed condemning fascist regimes in Spain, Greece, Portugal and Chile. Overall, conference demands demonstrated a remarkable unanimity of opinion upon the source of migrant problems, particularly at the workplace.²⁴¹ A migrant workers' committee was set up to publicize issues raised at the conference.²⁴²

A number of unions accepted the conference resolutions, notably the A.M.W.U. and A.R.U. (see Pages 372-374). Reflecting their greater penetration of union officialdom, Greek migrants were particularly prominent in early developments.²⁴³ Most were members of Greek workers' clubs. At the same time, the conference fostered understanding between migrant nationalities and greater interaction between the various associations.

A migrant workers' conference held in Sydney at the New South Wales Teachers' Federation auditorium in November 1973 was attended by between 200 and 300 delegates with addresses being given by George Petersen, M.L.A., an Immigration Department

²⁴¹This was noted with satisfaction by *Tribune*, October 16-22, 1973.

²⁴²The committee published its own bulletin *Spark* which reported on the development of migrant awareness within unions, migrant problems and political events overseas. See *Spark*, issue no. 1.

²⁴³According to Tsounis, Greek representation within union leadership probably exceeds that of any other non-British migrant group. M. Tsounis, "The Greek Left in Australia", *op cit.*, p.56.

official and Ignazio Salemi (F.I.L.E.F.).²⁴⁴ Conference discussion and recommendations echoed those raised at the Melbourne conference one month earlier.²⁴⁵ The Sydney conference received less official union support, with the Labor Council of New South Wales remaining distinctly suspicious of proceedings.²⁴⁶ This may partly explain why a second conference was held in Melbourne but not Sydney in 1975. The greater effectiveness of migrant worker organizations in Melbourne and the support of religious and community groups were other contributing factors. Initiative was also displayed in Wollongong where migrant organization proceeded beyond the nationality basis of organization with the formation of a South Coast Migrant Unity Action Group.²⁴⁷ This body won the co-operation of the South Coast Labour Council in initiating action on community and industrial issues such as the provision of interpreters for injured migrant workers. In 1976 a migrant workers' conference was organized in Wollongong with the Migrant Unity Action Group and F.I.L.E.F. both playing a prominent part. Nevertheless, the Action Group was unable to establish contacts with a number of unions. In April 1976 it suffered a split when several leading members left to form another organization - a further indication of the weakness of such organizations.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴As in the Melbourne conference, delegates (representing Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Arab, Yugoslav and Chinese workers) were elected at workplace meetings through the efforts of migrant activists and with the co-operation of a number of sympathetic unions.

²⁴⁵See *New South Wales Migrant Workers' Conference, November 3-4, 1973* (undated leaflet).

²⁴⁶According to one organizer, Pierina Pirisi, the Labor Council executive, and its secretary, John Ducker, labelled the proposal for an ongoing migrant workers' committee as constituting a threat which might divide migrant and Australian-born workers. (*Tribune*, November 13-19, 1973.) In the same month Labor Council did recommend union support for a seminar on "Migrants in Industry" held at Sydney University. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting, November 15, 1973.

²⁴⁷At the migrant workers' conference held in Sydney a spokesman from this body criticized trade union inaction on migrants. The organization pursued a wide range of activities in the Wollongong region. See South Coast Migrant Unity Action Committee, *Circulars*, (1975-1976).

²⁴⁸Illawarra Migrants' Support Group, Open Letter, April 1976.

In spite of developments in Wollongong, Melbourne remained the hub of independent migrant worker organization. Victorian union leaders were more likely to express support and less likely to openly criticize migrant activities. The Migrant Workers' Conference committee maintained a continuous existence. In October 1975 a motion was prepared for the forthcoming migrant workers' conference which condemned the M.T.I.A. and M.B.A. and called for greater union activity on industrial issues.²⁴⁹ The November conference was addressed by the federal Minister for Labour and Immigration. Conference resolutions extended the 1973 proposals and were frequently worded more forcefully.

This second conference reinforced the growing co-operation between migrant associations. The more influential bodies such as the Greek Welfare Association and F.I.L.E.F. already possessed links with organizations active in migrant welfare and research including the Ecumenical Migration Centre, Centre for Urban Research and Action (C.U.R.A.), the Working Women's Centre and the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence and used these to publicize migrant issues.²⁵⁰

The union response to these activities was mixed. Formal expressions of support frequently amounted to little more than lip service. In Melbourne, as in Sydney, there was still suspicion of independent migrant organization. This was most acute amongst conservative union leaders who saw the socialist politics of migrant activists as a threat. When the Migrant Workers' Committee attempted to obtain office space at Trades Hall, the Trades Hall Council formed its own migrant workers' committee and informed the

²⁴⁹Migrant Workers' Conference Committee. Motion No. 1, October 1975. The second conference was to be conducted in seven languages.

²⁵⁰F.I.L.E.F. and four other migrant worker organizations assisted the federal-government funded C.U.R.A. survey of migrant factory women (*But I wouldn't want my wife to work here ...*, *op cit.*). The Australian Greek Welfare Society jointly sponsored a seminar, "Ethics in Industry", in April 1976 and made a submission to the Inquiry into Trade Union Training in 1977. Some similar developments have occurred in Sydney where migrant activists and groups have made links with Workers' Health Centre (which receives financial assistance from some unions and the Ethnic Affairs Commission) and women's community health centres located in Leichhardt and Liverpool.

applicants that there was no space available.²⁵¹ The Victorian branch of the A.M.W.S.U. was less hesitant in offering support and provided office space and funds (together with some other unions) for a Trade Union Migrant Workers' Centre at its Melbourne headquarters. The centre, with a small permanent staff, has functioned as a resource centre for migrant workers; handling their enquiries, visiting factories during disputes and assisting unions with translations. While an increasing number of unions have made use of the translating and interpreting services, there has been little concerted effort to promote communication and co-operation amongst migrant workers through the centre. Not all unions using the centre's services have given financial support. Furthermore, the practice of migrants visiting the centre rather than notifying their union has led to some resentment amongst union organizers. Centre workers see this situation as a direct consequence of the poor contact between migrants and some unions to which they belong.²⁵² There is an undeniable gap between the centre, migrant workers and individual union leaderships.

While some development in the relationship between migrant worker associations and unions is apparent, a closer examination of one of the most influential bodies, F.I.L.E.F., sheds further light on the role, strengths and weaknesses of this type of organization. Unlike other associations, F.I.L.E.F. is an international organization based in Italy and with branches located in all major areas of Italian migration. The goal of F.I.L.E.F. is to assist Italian migrant workers and their families settle into their new homeland by providing welfare and community services, defending their rights and fostering migrant participation in the social, economic and political activity of the host

²⁵¹Maria Pozos, interviewed October 24, 1977 and Vera Kent, interviewed October 25, 1977.

²⁵²Maria Pozos, interviewed October 24, 1977.

society.²⁵³ An Australian branch of F.I.L.E.F. was established in Melbourne in 1971 with organization later spreading to Sydney, Wollongong, Adelaide and other urban centres. In February 1974 Ignazio Salemi, a representative of F.I.L.E.F. central branch who had participated in the 1973 Migrant Workers' conferences, returned to Australia to help establish a welfare office in Coburg and edit a F.I.L.E.F. newspaper.

Between 1974 and October 1977 the Coburg office handled more than 5,000 inquiries from migrants.²⁵⁴ The bulk of these related to pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits and other community welfare issues. However, F.I.L.E.F. also received more than 300 requests for information on workers' compensation and more than 400 requests for information on unions during the same period.²⁵⁵ The Federation of Italian Labourers and their Families involved itself in community action such as the Working Women's Charter.²⁵⁶ *Nuovo Paese* attempted to act as a counter-balance to the generally conservative local Italian language press by highlighting community, political and industrial issues.²⁵⁷ In urging greater migrant participation in unions, F.I.L.E.F. tended to support progressive or militant rank and file based leadership or opposition groups within individual unions.²⁵⁸ It also advocated the establishment of shop committees with nationality based representation at the work-place. Although it was critical of some aspects of Australian unionism, the

²⁵³At the time of research F.I.L.E.F. had between 400 and 500 members in Australia with about half of these being located in Victoria. The Federation of Italian Labourers and their Families has seen its role in off-setting imbalances in the Italian government funds allocated by consular authorities and church efforts to establish a pattern of dependency amongst migrants. *Background Briefing - F.I.L.E.F.* (F.I.L.E.F., Melbourne, 1976); and interviews with F.I.L.E.F. members including Angela Cepella (September 27, 1977), Bruno di Biase (September 7, 1977), Cathy Angelone (October 27, 1977) and Pierina Pirisi (December 13, 1977).

²⁵⁴*Background Briefing - F.I.L.E.F., op cit.*; and *Nuovo Paese*, October 29, 1977.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*

²⁵⁶See *Paper Presented by F.I.L.E.F. Women's Group to the "Charter Campaign Conference", Sydney, August 12-14, 1977.*

²⁵⁷See, for example, *Nuovo Paese*, August 20, September 3 and October 29, 1977, and February 2, April 29 and May 27, 1978.

²⁵⁸See, for instance, *Nuovo Paese*, May 27, 1978, p.9.

Federation remained committed to the idea of a single union movement which migrants should see as their own.²⁵⁹ Indeed, by 1977 F.I.L.E.F. was able to secure a base of contact with unions which surpassed all other migrant worker associations. These links were strongest in Melbourne.²⁶⁰ However, even the Sydney branch sought to investigate migrant participation in unions and inform individual unions of industrial problems affecting migrants (underpayment of wages, health hazards and so on) in particular work-places.²⁶¹ It received, in turn, limited moral and financial support from several unions, although others remained unco-operative.²⁶²

²⁵⁹The policy was emphasized by all F.I.L.E.F. members interviewed and is well illustrated by the following statement published by the Federation as an undated roneoed leaflet:

"For the workers of Australia the Union represents the only means to defend their rights. It is therefore important for every worker to join the Union and also to actively participate in it, especially at factory level. It is important and essential that all the workers participate in their Union, so that the Union may become stronger and may reflect more and more all the needs and the interests of the workers. Therefore, joining the Union does not only mean paying for the membership card, although this is essential for the Union's survival, but also means active participation in the Union itself, beginning from the election and activation of the Shop Committee, from its active presence in the factory as the workers' immediate mouthpiece and as a live cell which is essential to the good functioning of the union.

"Let us remember that we, the workers, are the Union and that the Union reflects our interest and our needs only insofar as we actively participate in it.

"FOR A STRONG UNION WHICH IS THE INTERPRETER OF ALL YOUR NEEDS, JOIN THE UNION NOW AND PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY!"

²⁶⁰By 1978 *Muovo Paese* was distributed by ten unions in Victoria, three unions in New South Wales, three unions in South Australia and four unions in Western Australia.

²⁶¹See, for instance, correspondence between P. Pirisi (F.I.L.E.F.) and the New South Wales Secretary of the V.B.E.F., April 9, 1976.

²⁶²While the F.M.W.U. and B.L.F. both sent donations and letters of endorsement to F.I.L.E.F., the Hairdressers and Wig-makers Employees' Union rebuffed a request for assistance, stating that migrants had refused to support the union. Correspondence New South Wales branch secretary, F.M.W.U. to B. di Biase, assistant secretary, F.I.L.E.F., July 3, 1975; New South Wales branch assistant secretary, B.L.F. to di Biase, July 26, 1976; and New South Wales secretary, Hairdressers and Wigmakers Employees' Union to di Biase, August 18, 1976.

One basis for F.I.L.E.F.'s relative success was the grass roots community orientation of its operations. Initially, this was reinforced by the provision of government funds. In 1974 the federal Labor government made \$10,000 available for the development of a welfare rights programme. The funds enabled the Coburg office to employ several full-time workers. Funding continued until 1976 when it was cut by the then Liberal administration. In 1978, the Victorian government granted F.I.L.E.F. \$6,000, and the South Australian government provided \$15,000 for a F.I.L.E.F. child-care centre at Mile End.²⁶³ In New South Wales several applications for funds were rejected.²⁶⁴ Conservative governments have generally reacted unfavourably to F.I.L.E.F.'s association with the Italian communist party and its support for working-class political parties in Australia. The Federation tended to advocate the cause of the A.L.P. electorally although it also sought aid from conservative governments.

A clear indication of the federal Liberal government's hostility to F.I.L.E.F. was the deportation of Ignazio Salemi in 1977. Salemi had arrived under a twelve months' visitor's permit in 1974. Applications for extensions were ignored and he was told not to worry. In 1976 the Liberal government announced an amnesty for illegal migrants with a sound character. Salemi made a further application but was told he would have to leave the country by June 30. Two months later the Minister for Immigration made clear his intention to deport Salemi. By this time F.I.L.E.F. was actively mustering union support.²⁶⁵ On August 16 a mass meeting of workers

²⁶³ *Nuovo Paese*, June 24, 1978, p.9.

²⁶⁴ On March 23, 1977 di Biase wrote to the State Council of the A.M.W.S.U. seeking its support for an application for funds to the New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission.

²⁶⁵ On August 11, 1976 the respective secretaries of the New South Wales branch of the B.W.I.U. and the Victorian branches of the Plumbers' and Gasfitters' Union, A.M.W.S.U. and Clothing and Allied Trades Union wrote to G. Sgro (F.I.L.E.F.) offering support. The first three also sent telegrams of protest to the Minister while the latter raised the matter with the Victorian Trades Hall Council. Other unions to offer support included the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association (New South Wales branch), and the Victorian branches of the F.M.W.U. and W.W.F. Correspondence to Sgro dated August 16, 19 and 20, 1976 respectively.

at the North Melbourne railway workshop condemned the Minister's action and called for combined union action at all levels including financial donations to the F.I.L.E.F. Defence Fund.²⁶⁶ This resolution was endorsed by the state executive of the A.R.U.²⁶⁷ The proposed deportation was also opposed by prominent Labor politicians and the president of the A.C.T.U.

The Salemi case united the various national migrant worker organizations and large segments of the migrant community in general. In Sydney, a Committee for the Defence of Migrant Workers Against Political Discrimination was established which included representatives from the Atlas Club, Turkish Workers' League, Portuguese Democratic Group, F.I.L.E.F., Spanish Workers' Commission, Greek Progressive Youth of Australia and Centro Democrato Emiliani in Australia.²⁶⁸ The committee marked a watershed in co-operation within the migrant community, receiving financial sponsorship from the A.M.W.S.U., B.W.I.U., W.W.F., F.E.D. & F.A., Painters' and Dockers' Union, Miners' Federation and A.M.I.E.U. The Federation of Italian Labourers and Their Families also arranged a series of protest meetings and organized a petition with more than 10,000 signatures.²⁶⁹

Immigration Minister Mackellar remained unmoved by the mounting public pressure. He stated that Salemi was being deported because his occupation (journalism) was not approved for immigration and he was ineligible for amnesty because of his status as a

²⁶⁶Resolution Unanimously Passed at North Melbourne Workshop Mass Meeting, Monday, August 16, 1976 Re: Deportation of I. Salemi. Two days later a protest telegram was sent to the Minister.

²⁶⁷Australian Railways Union state executive statement, August 17, 1976. The A.M.W.S.U. also campaigned strongly against the proposed deportation. See A.M.W.U. *Monthly Journal*, September 1976, p.28.

²⁶⁸See open letter of the Committee for the Defence of Migrant Workers Against Political Discrimination signed by P. Pirisi, secretary, September 21, 1976. The author was able to observe a meeting of this committee in 1977. Similar bodies operated in Melbourne and other cities.

²⁶⁹F.I.L.E.F. *Information Bulletin*, August 16 and October 17, 1976. Some conservative elements of the foreign language press such as *La Fiamma* joined the protests while others like *Il Globo* supported the government's action. *Tribune* saw the move as part of a general attempt to repress migrant worker organization. See *Tribune*, September 1, 1976.

temporary resident rather than a visitor who had overstayed his permit.²⁷⁰ It was more commonly believed that Salemi was being deported because of his links with the Italian communist party.²⁷¹ The High Court rejected a writ sought by Salemi to restrain the Minister from deporting him.²⁷² On September 2, 1977 the Minister signed an order to deport Salemi.²⁷³ The growing level of union protests and a formal request from the Italian government that Salemi be permitted to stay were ignored.²⁷⁴ On October 19 Salemi (now in hiding) was arrested and deported within hours.²⁷⁵ The F.I.L.E.F. Council of Australia could only express its indignation at this exercise of arbitrary power.²⁷⁶

The withdrawal of funding and deportation of Ignazio Salemi exposed fundamental weaknesses in radical organization amongst migrant workers. To establish effective community contacts, F.I.L.E.F. needed money for its welfare activities. The absence of finance has curtailed the Federation's activities and the victimization of Salemi gave a lesson to those activists wishing to operate openly. While the struggle brought migrant organizations and unions closer together, the outcome could hardly have encouraged greater participation by migrants in worker associations. Rather, it demonstrated the financial and political impotence of these bodies.

²⁷⁰*The Age*, August 14, 1976.

²⁷¹These links were continuously referred to in press reports. (See the *S.M.H.*, August 17, 1976.) The Federation itself interpreted the events as a deliberate attempt to crush political dissidents. See *F.I.L.E.F. Information Bulletin*, "Mackellar has Confessed", 1976.

²⁷²In a split decision, all judges agreed that Salemi had been treated unfairly and was entitled to amnesty. (A similar recommendation had been made by the federal ombudsman.) However, the majority held that the minister was not obliged to give Salemi a hearing. See *The Nation Review*, August 4-10, 1977, p.23.

²⁷³This followed a number of earlier reprieves. See the *S.M.H.*, July 9, July 15 and September 18, 1977.

²⁷⁴For reports of these protests see *F.I.L.E.F. Information Bulletin*, July 15, 1977; and *W.W.F. (Sydney) Branch News Circular* no. 1532, p.2.

²⁷⁵*S.M.H.*, October 20, 1977, p.3.

²⁷⁶*Muovo Paese*, October 29, 1977, p.9.

Conclusion

However important migrant workers' clubs may have been in the insular environment of migrant communities, their impact upon trade unionism and industrial relations has been marginal. Nevertheless, several points can be made about them. First, these clubs have chosen to co-operate rather than compete with organized labour. Although their reception has been mixed, their commitment to working within the partisan atmosphere of union and labour politics has always been apparent.

Second, these bodies have played an unabashedly partisan role in union affairs. The older organizations of the 1950s were always drawn to the left wing of the labour movement in spite of the anti-communist hysteria in Australian politics at that time. This commitment to the left has remained intact. Undoubtedly this explains the hostility they encountered from some unions - rather than any suspicion that they were bogus unions.

Third, the involvement of these bodies in trade unionism suggests political compatibility rather than a direct interest in industrial relations. Nevertheless, these clubs have performed a tangential industrial role with respect to encouraging migrant participation in unions, upon workers' compensation and upon involvement in policy making on industrial matters. In view of the extraordinarily wide ranging interests of Australian unions it is difficult for many institutions to operate without interacting with the labour movement which is often able to exert decisive political influence. For this reason the migrant workers' clubs have been drawn to trade unions and have encouraged migrant participation in unions as a way of exerting influence upon innumerable issues ranging from citizenship rights to welfare support grants and English classes in working time. Such interaction is not evidence of a significant industrial relations role but has provided a foundation upon which a minor co-operative industrial role has been built.

5. Screening, Citizenship and Deportation

Explanations of the organized activities of migrants that ignored migrant selection and control would be of only limited value. Any presumption that migrant participation in the

organizational types analyzed so far is voluntary and unfettered and that migrants are as likely to be predisposed towards collective protests as other groups of employees is suspect. The nature of the immigration programme mounted by the federal government and the inferior political and legal status of migrants must be recognized.²⁷⁷ This section is concerned with describing how the composition of the migrant population was regulated to screen out turbulent elements and to place restraints on those migrants who sought to become leaders of worker activism. Government action had a substantial influence upon migrant worker clubs. Since this victimization undoubtedly had a deterrent effect upon other migrants it cannot be dismissed lightly. Rather, a number of crucial areas of control need to be identified.

Throughout the post-war period the federal government maintained a security screen upon people applying to migrate to Australia. Initially, the government had to establish its own overseas screening arrangements. Special checking, involving an examination of political and industrial activities, was conducted by liaison officers appointed from Australia in conjunction with the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (A.S.I.O.). Prospective migrants were required to declare their membership of organizations and pertinent details of their civil record. Officers worked on the basis of this information, local police and security authorities and any unsolicited information received from individuals.²⁷⁸

Screening arrangements varied according to the national origin of the migrant and the degree of co-operation offered by foreign

²⁷⁷The vulnerability of migrants to government intimidation in Europe and the United States of America was referred to in Chapter 1. See Pages

²⁷⁸The latter provided an avenue for individual prejudice by fellow migrants which was admitted as a problem by security officers. See the *S.M.H.*, March 29, 1951, p.5.

governments.²⁷⁹ Displaced persons were screened by British and American authorities and an Australian security team headed by Brigadier J. Galleghan.²⁸⁰ Until 1949, such checks were mainly directed at excluding Nazi party members or collaborators. The onset of the cold war period created much public hysteria about the arrival of migrants with communist sympathies. The sources of some allegations of "communist immigration" were as much within the labour movement as the traditional anti-communist and conservative elements of Australian society. In April 1949 Jack Lang, ex-New South Wales Labor premier and current federal M.H.R., claimed that many new arrivals were communists who would endanger Australia.²⁸¹ These statements were denied by an Immigration Department spokesman who nevertheless admitted that some communists may have entered following the defeat of the communist party in Italy and political repression in Greece.²⁸²

²⁷⁹This is made clear by a report on screening prepared by the Immigration Department in 1957. The report stated that security checks were conducted on British applicants who had been employed in transport, teaching, government employment or those who had travelled in central or southern Europe, or following an officer's report or private letter. The report complained that the U.K. government had refused Australian proposals for stricter controls because this would impinge upon the tradition of liberal freedom. Scandinavian countries were generally seen to be co-operative apart from Sweden which, not being a member of N.A.T.O, maintained a strict neutrality on political matters. This was also the case with Austria. In Germany, screening procedures were felt to be good while in Greece, the Australian Mission had close links with Greek Security Organization and maintained its own "black list". Italy was perceived as a risk. At only one point is the rejection rate mentioned. This is in connection with Malta where the report states that of 30,161 applications screened in 1956, 148 were rejected on security grounds. The Secretary of the Department, T.H.E. Heyes, concluded that existing procedures were sound with errors of human judgement falling on the side of strictness rather than leniency. See the Commonwealth Immigration Department, *Report on Criminal and Security Screening of Migrants presented to the Minister for Immigration on September 20 1957*. See also the Commonwealth Immigration Department, *Report on Screening Arrangements presented to the C.I.P.C. 1958*.

²⁸⁰Galleghan was accused of holding strong anti-communist viewpoints. See *Tribune*, April 17, 1948.

²⁸¹*S.M.H.*, April 17, 1949, p.3.

²⁸²*S.M.H.*, April 19, 1949, p.4. The controversy was intensified when the Maltese Minister for Emigration accused the local Maltese Settlers' Association of having communist affiliations. See the *S.M.H.*, June 14, 1949, p.4 and November 24, 1949, p.15. See also Footnote 279.

Throughout 1950, a heated debate over the adequacy and direction of screening arrangements ensued. Displaced persons were variously accused of being communists, Soviet agents, fascists and Nazis.²⁸³ The communist tag was often applied to European migrants generally.²⁸⁴ However, southern European migrants were regarded as a special risk.²⁸⁵ In July 1951, Immigration Minister Holt announced that more officers were to be employed to check prospective migrants, especially those from Mediterranean countries.²⁸⁶ Despite this, accusations persisted that screening arrangements were faulty.²⁸⁷ These allegations were fed by the demonstrations of unemployed Italian immigrants in 1952.²⁸⁸

The tacit suggestion that applicants with known left-wing sympathies were excluded was made more explicit during a parliamentary debate which occurred in October 1956. Responding to Labor member L. Haylen, Holt denied that migrants were selected on the basis of their political beliefs. Nevertheless, he stated that people known to be active in communist organizations and political

²⁸³See the *S.M.H.*, January 17, p.2 and January 30, p.3, February 21, p.7 and March 29, 1950, p.3. Immigration Minister Holt denied these allegations but nevertheless issued a warning to alien migrants. See the *S.M.H.*, July 8, 1950, p.3.

²⁸⁴In February, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the opinion of unnamed social workers that "communists and persons of low moral character were getting through screening tests". *S.M.H.*, February 14, 1950, p.7. One month later Archbishop Mannix stated that "there are some people in this country today in a position to do irreparable damage to Australia." Reported in the *S.M.H.*, March 6, 1950, p.1.

²⁸⁵The Returned Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Imperial League conducted its own inquiry of screening procedures. The Queensland president reported that there was a security risk in Italy because the black-listing system was inefficient, the British consul was less security conscious than Australian officers in Rome and many northern Italians were members of the communist party. R.D. Huish, State President, Queensland branch of the Returned Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, *Report on European Migration to the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. Federal Executive*, August 27, 1951.

²⁸⁶*S.M.H.*, July 14, 1951, p.1.

²⁸⁷These were rebuffed by Holt. See the *S.M.H.*, July 16, 1952, p.2 and September 21, 1952, p.5.

²⁸⁸*S.M.H.*, October 13, 1952, p.5.

work were excluded as were former Nazis and fascists.²⁸⁹ The argument that persons of both political extremes were excluded was not accepted by the communist party, elements in the A.L.P. and migrant activists themselves. These groups repeatedly pointed to the inherent left-wing phobia in A.S.I.O. operations, and the conspicuous presence of migrants with strong right-wing beliefs.²⁹⁰

In July 1960 a Labor M.H.R., Alan Fraser, renewed the claim that many intending migrants from Europe were being excluded because of their left-wing opinions. Fraser laid the blame for this not with the Immigration Minister but with the security service which he felt might rely on false stories or hearsay. He proposed that all applicants with relatives in Australia should have a right to appeal before a tribunal in order to present a reply to any charges.²⁹¹ Despite periodic challenges there is no evidence to suggest that screening procedures were modified. The Royal Commission into Australian Intelligence and Security recommended that A.S.I.O. and the Department of Immigration critically assess the screening activities of A.S.I.O. agents operating as immigration officers overseas.²⁹²

Upon arrival migrants do not enjoy the same legal and political rights as indigenous residents. A second line of control exercised

²⁸⁹Haylen stated, "You are looking for safe migrants, safe in the sense that he is a good deal to the right." Holt replied, "You mean we exclude known communists." Reported in the *S.M.H.*, October 5, 1956, p.5.

²⁹⁰Allegations focused on the presence of Croatian migrants with fascist links, government toleration of terrorist training amongst Croatian nationalist organizations and the strong links between these bodies and prominent Liberal politicians. (See *Tribune*, April 3, May 8 and 29, October 9 and November 13, 1963; February 19 and 26, March 11 and 18, May 6 and 27 and June 3, 1964; March 10, 1965; January 10, May 3 and December 12, 1967; April 3, 1968, December 1 and 14, 1971; May 23 and July 25, 1972.) In 1973 Labor Attorney General L. Murphy organized a raid on A.S.I.O. and leading Croatian nationalists. (*S.M.H.*, March 28, 1973, p.14.) Six years later, L. Urbanchich, president of the New South Wales Liberal Party's Ethnic Council, was suspended following accusations that he was a former war criminal. See the *S.M.H.*, August 18, 28, 29 and 30, 1979.

²⁹¹*S.M.H.*, July 18, 1960, p.7.

²⁹²By 1975 A.S.I.O. had 22 operatives in 16 countries involved in screening prospective migrants. *S.M.H.*, August 31, 1978.

by the government was its power to grant or refuse citizenship to migrants. There is some evidence to suggest that migrants who chose to take an active part in industrial and political struggles on behalf of the labour movement did so at a cost to their chances of obtaining Australian citizenship.²⁹³ In their study of migrants and the legal system, Jakubowicz and Buckley stated:

We are aware of many cases where naturalization has been refused, although the persons had no criminal record, or any other obvious impediment. It has been repeatedly claimed that Liberal Governments based their refusal on political grounds, and our knowledge of persons who have been refused would seem to bear this out. It is perhaps of significance, too, that since the Labor Government came into office, the number of persons applying for citizenship has jumped dramatically: whereas 13,432 applied for naturalization from 1 January to 30 April 1972, during the same period in 1973 the number applying was 19,855.²⁹⁴

In 1949, the last year of office of the federal Labor government, 118 applications were refused or deferred. The period of Liberal government (1950-1972) showed a marked fluctuation in refusals not entirely related to the number of applications in any one year. Between 1950 and 1953, 427 applications were rejected at an average of 107 per year. After 1953 the number of refusals rose steadily, reaching a peak in 1962 before slowly declining. Between 1954 and 1964, 18,923 applications were refused/deferred (an average of 1,720 per year). In the period 1965 to 1972 the figure was 4,948 (620 per year), from 1973 to 1975 (a period of Labor

²⁹³The notion of separate Australian citizenship was introduced in 1948. Before 1973 United Kingdom migrants could apply for citizenship after one year's residence. The residence requirement for other migrants was five years. In 1973 a uniform requirement of three years was introduced and applicants were no longer obliged to renounce their allegiance to another country - something which had been seen to inhibit applications in the past. Two potentially dangerous provisions in the Citizenship Act were Sections 37 and 40. Section 37 permitted any person to provide the Immigration Department with information pertaining to an applicant. Section 40 bestowed on the Minister absolute power to reject an application without specifying the grounds for this action. See A. Jakubowicz and B. Buckley, Research Report, *Migrants in Legal System*, Law and Poverty Series, Australian Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975), p.63.

²⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p.63.

government) 1,742 (an average of 581 per year) and from 1976 to 1977 (return to Liberal government), 2,007 (an average of 1,004 per year). The average annual rejection rate was 1,052 in periods of Liberal government and 465 in periods of Labor government.²⁹⁵ Italian- and Greek-born migrants appear to be over-represented with 10,516 and 4,623 applications respectively being refused.²⁹⁶

Identifying those applications rejected on political grounds is extremely difficult since the Citizenship Act does not require that an explanation be given for refusal to grant citizenship. The Immigration Department has sometimes released information in the face of public debate. Quoting one such report, Storer notes that between 1947 and June 1964, 362 applications were disallowed on security grounds - including 140 Greeks and 60 Italians.²⁹⁷ For the period January 1966 to March 21, 1970 the official figure was 169. Of 155 persons refused on the basis of left-wing association/activity, 51 applicants were Greek, 35 Italian and 25 Yugoslav. In Storer's view these figures understate the number of migrants denied citizenship because of their political/industrial activities.²⁹⁸ This interpretation is supported by the widespread protests emanating from migrants, unions, A.L.P. politicians and the communist party throughout the post-war period.²⁹⁹ In 1969 *Tribune* alleged that more than 500 members of the Greek community alone had been refused

²⁹⁵These figures do not take into account those applications subsequently approved after deferral (2,371 between 1964 and 1977) or multiple rejections. Source: Records of Applications for Citizenship Refused or Deferred by Country of Citizenship 1949-1977, Department of Immigration, Canberra.

²⁹⁶Taken together these constituted 54.6 per cent of all applications rejected or deferred throughout the period. *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷D. Storer, "The Rights of Ethnic Minorities - Ethnic Representation and Political Involvement", *Ekstasis*, no. 6, June 1973, p.7.

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁹⁹See Chapter 5. See also *Tribune*, June 28 and October 11, 1961; December 5, 1962; July 3 and August 28, 1963, January 13 and February 10, 1965; August 6, 1969; October 3-9 and November 13-16, 1972; *Federation News*, December 1962; *The Sheet Metal Worker*, July 1965, p.13; and S.M.W.U. New South Wales branch minutes of meeting held on October 23, 1956 for further evidence of alleged victimization and protests.

citizenship for political or union activities.³⁰⁰

Whatever its extent, there can be little doubt that this form of discrimination struck at those migrants most willing to organize migrant workers and lead industrial struggles while also discouraging activism on the part of a far broader group. The period of Labor government between 1972 and 1975 gave many activists an opportunity to secure the naturalized status they had previously been denied.³⁰¹

Perhaps the ultimate government sanction against migrant participation in working-class activism was its power to deport undesirable settlers under the Immigration Act. This power extends beyond the capacity to expel persons who arrive illegally, overstay their visa or are convicted of criminal offences. Aliens may be deported on the basis of their conduct in Australia or elsewhere (S14 (1) and (2) a) including advocating the overthrow by force or violence of organized government or of all forms of law (S14 (2) b).³⁰² Section 50 of the Act empowers the government to revoke the citizenship of a naturalized migrant who proves disloyal to Australia.³⁰³ The legal inferiority of naturalized citizenship is compounded by Section 30 of the Crimes Act which enables the Governor General to proclaim that a serious industrial disturbance exists. From this point onwards anyone continuing to take part in the dispute may be summarily imprisoned or, if foreign-born, be deported.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰It was alleged that the government was sitting on another 11,000 applications. *Tribune*, August 6, 1969.

³⁰¹This point was made by a large number of migrant activists in interview, including G. Zangalis, S. Mavrantonis, P. Pirisi and B. di Biase.

³⁰²Persons threatened with deportation under S14 may appeal against the order. Ten cases brought under this provision between 1958 and March 1973 were lost by the government on appeal. A. Jakubowicz and B. Buckley, *Migrants and the Legal System*, *op cit.*, pp.61-62; and the *S.M.H.*, March 31, 1973, p.6.

³⁰³In August 1958 the federal government reduced the number of grounds upon which citizenship could be revoked. This did not benefit those migrants who could not obtain citizenship in the first place. See the *S.M.H.*, January 21, 1959, p.2.

³⁰⁴This section was inserted in the wake of the 1925 Seamen's strike to facilitate the deportation of foreign-born militant union leaders. R. Pearce, *Arbitration 1918-1933*, *op cit.*, p.55.

Given this array of powers, it is hardly surprising that migrants who took part in collective attempts to improve working and living conditions were occasionally subjected to an explicit threat of deportation. This threat took various forms. There are a number of reported instances where threats were made unofficially by Immigration Department officers, or government and private employer representatives in order to frighten unco-operative migrants.³⁰⁵ Displaced persons were particularly vulnerable to such intimidation, especially those who engaged in hostel protests, refused to do allotted tasks or tried to leave a job prior to the expiry of their contract.³⁰⁶ A number were deported.³⁰⁷

Another vulnerable group of foreign-born workers were non-Europeans without permanent resident status. Following the war, the federal government began proceedings to deport several thousand Asians who had reached Australia as refugees. This action drew considerable criticism from church leaders, the press and some union leaders.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the government pressed ahead with the

³⁰⁵In October 1951, for instance, the A.C.T.U. convened a meeting of unions and Snowy Hydro Electricity Authority commissioner following reports that officers of the authority were threatening German migrants with deportation. Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting held on November 1, 1951.

³⁰⁶For several reported cases see *Tribune*, September 17 and November 16, 1949.

³⁰⁷See Chapter 6, Page 273 herein.

³⁰⁸The basis of this opposition ranged from humanitarian disquiet on the part of concerned citizens, church leaders and the *Sydney Morning Herald* to a denunciation of the government's racist intent by *Tribune* and communist union leaders. (See *Tribune*, November 26, 1947, April 9, 1948 and June 4, 1949; the *S.M.H.*, May 27, 1949, p.2, May 29, 1949, p.2, July 7, 1949, p.2, July 11, 1949, p.2 (all letters) and September 12, 1949, p.2 (editorial); and *The Sheet Metal Worker*, April 1949.) The Liberal government continued this deportation policy and drew criticism from unions such as the B.W.I.U., B.L.F. and New South Wales Teachers' Federation. See the *S.M.H.*, February 24, 1959, p.7 and August 31, 1960, p.6; and Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting held on January 22, 1970.

deportations, even introducing special legislation for the purpose - the Wartime Refugees Removal Act.³⁰⁹ Amongst those deported were a number of communist party members and trade unionists. While this was coincidental to the government's purpose, the maintenance of "White Australia" effectively inhibited the rights of small numbers of non-European workers imported to work in pearling and Chinese restaurants. Pearling workers were brought out under indenture and could be deported if they refused jobs allotted to them.³¹⁰ Similarly, restaurant workers were tied to a particular employer and could not leave even on the grounds of harsh treatment.³¹¹ In August 1953, the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union asked the Labor Council of New South Wales to intervene on behalf of four Chinese members who had been dismissed following union action on unpaid wages and now faced immediate deportation.³¹²

Amongst the more general group of migrants the British were the least vulnerable to threats of deportation given their privileged access to citizenship, their familiarity with local institutions and the political repercussions that might ensue from such acts. These constraints did not apply to non-British migrants and evidence indicates that those who joined radical working-class organizations (including their own clubs) were acutely conscious of the possibility of deportation. As with citizenship, the intimidatory effect far exceeded the small number of cases where the latent threat was translated into an actual attempt to forcibly expel a migrant. Most recorded cases occurred during the early 1950s when anti-communist hysteria was at its height and the Liberal government took advantage of the particular antipathy directed at foreign-born radicals.³¹³

The left wing of the union movement was extremely sensitive to the use of deportation. In 1951, the Williamstown branch of the

³⁰⁹*S.M.H.*, June 9, 1949, p.2.

³¹⁰*Tribune*, June 11, 1949.

³¹¹See the *S.M.H.*, April 14, 1954, p.2; and *Tribune*, March 25, 1953.

³¹²Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting held on August 20, 1953.

³¹³This mirrored earlier experiences in the 1920s, both in Australia and the United States. See Footnote 304 and D. Caute, *The Great Fear*, *op cit.*, chapter 11.

Boilermakers' Society reported that threats had been made against migrants who took an active part in unions and urged the union's federal council to lodge a formal protest with the Minister for Immigration.³¹⁴ Unions were instrumental in preventing a number of deportations at this time including migrant worker club activists. In November 1952, for instance, the Amalgamated Printing Trades Union asked the Labor Council of New South Wales to take action on behalf of J. Anastasiou, a Greek-born member of the B.W.I.U. who was to be deported.³¹⁵ The matter was referred to the A.C.T.U. and overtures from president Monk succeeded in having proceedings dropped.³¹⁶

The Abbiezzi case was perhaps the strongest indication of the government's willingness to expel foreign-born agitators. Abbiezzi's union, the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees' Union, drew the matter to the attention of the Labor Council of New South Wales and obtained its unanimous support.³¹⁷ The involvement of the A.C.T.U., many individual unions and a public petition signed by 10,000 people (including 36 parliamentarians) caused the government to reconsider its decision.³¹⁸ However, the reprieve was only temporary. The Minister for Immigration informed A.C.T.U. president Monk that no final decision would be made until the Petrov Inquiry was concluded.³¹⁹ One year after the original decision, Abbiezzi was called into the Sydney office of the Immigration Department and informed that he had been sent to Australia as an organizer for the Italian communist party and that the Italo Australian Club was a left-wing organization. These charges were accompanied by the issuing of a definite deportation order. Abbiezzi ignored the order

³¹⁴The motion was narrowly lost because some branches feared the motion was so broad as to imply union endorsement for criminals and fascists. Boilermakers' Society Federal Council Reports 1951.

³¹⁵Labor Council of New South Wales, minutes of meeting held on November 20, 1952.

³¹⁶*Ibid.*, January 30, 1953.

³¹⁷*Ibid.*, January 8, 1953.

³¹⁸For evidence of this campaigning see *The Sheet Metal Worker*, February 1953; and the Boilermakers' Society, Sydney branch, minutes of meeting held on February 10, 1953.

³¹⁹A.C.T.U., resolution of Interstate Executive, June 28, 1954.

and shifted around Australia until he was arrested in Darwin. Transferred to Long Bay Gaol in Sydney, Abbiezzi eventually won his struggle to remain in Australia after renewed agitation by the union movement and the migrant community.³²⁰

Although the risk of deportation was most acute during the "cold war" period, the Salemi case is a clear demonstration that it has not entirely abated.

The evidence upon the screening, deportation and citizenship controls used upon migrants in the post-war period is sketchy. The existence of these controls is clear. The extent to which they were used against migrants prominent in working-class organization is not known, and only a few conspicuous cases exist to demonstrate these practices. For the most part, there exists only the suspicion that the government would not allow working-class activists to enter Australia and tried to intimidate or expel those who evaded the screening process. Whatever the facts concerning selective use of controls upon migrants, their impact on migrant fears and suspicions is unequivocal. Migrant involvement in unionsim, industrial disputes and radical political activity has been subdued by apprehension of the sanctions imposed by governments, and particularly the non-Labor governments that were in office between 1949 and 1972.

In general, it must also be recognized that migrants experience especially acute institutional vulnerability. This may be revealed in deference to the police, tolerance of bureaucratic mistakes by government departments, as well as reluctance to become involved in public displays of opposition towards indigenous institutions or individuals. The specific restraints placed upon migrants by screening and deportation fears in particular are an example of the more general case of social control through migrant alienation from or poor comprehension of Australian institutions.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion it must be recognized that migrant organization in Australian industrial relations has been extraordinarily complex.

³²⁰ Abbiezzi maintained a low profile after these events and eventually obtained Australian citizenship. Mario Abbiezzi, interviewed September 7, 1977.

This complexity reflects the especially diverse requirements of migrants extending to, on the one hand, the ephemeral requirements of hostel protest groups, concerned with the immediate necessities of life of new migrants in a strange country to, on the other hand, the mature industrial requirements of an increasingly experienced and union-conscious workforce ready to demand industrial justice upon wages, workers' compensation, special migrant needs such as language classes and leave to travel overseas, and a host of other matters.

The diversity of migrant organization has been dealt with in this chapter. In addition, specific reasons have been put forward to explain why certain kinds of organization such as bogus unions and spontaneous protest groups have proved to be of little importance. Reasons have also been advanced to explain why trade unions have been the dominant, if muted, form of organization embraced by migrants - albeit with the support of migrant workers' clubs.

The involvement of migrants in trade unions is fullest at the base level of union membership. Comparable representation in the highest levels of union government has yet to be achieved. Nevertheless, in spite of the admitted shortcomings of Australian unionism, and the intimidatory impact of federal government immigration and citizenship policies, migrants have persisted in their involvement in trade unionism. A number of reasons have been advanced for this. Most of these arguments rest upon three things. First, survey and historical evidence does not reveal significantly higher levels of migrant dissatisfaction with union operations. As far as we can be aware, unions have not done conspicuously less for their migrant members than for their Australian-born members and have not caused a perceptible and fundamental splintering of interests. Second, there is evidence to suggest that the association between migrants and unions has been influenced by compulsory unionism and preference provisions, although this does not signify that migrants are predominantly unwilling unionists or even that such arrangements were needed to ensure union survival in the context of an uncomprehending and politically hostile workforce. Third, the relationship between migrants and unions has been coloured by the operation of the arbitration system and by the degree of maturity of the Australian

decentralized direct negotiation. While many unions have an overwhelming commitment to compulsory arbitration, a substantial number have no such traditional predisposition. Although involvement in arbitration rarely requires extended rank and file participation, direct negotiation has been associated with the development of job organization and rank and file activism. This schismatic tendency within the industrial relations set-up has a significant impact upon the organizational structure of unions and management. There is no plausible reason for believing that migrant workers should not be drawn into, and be influenced by, this aspect of industrial relations behaviour, even though their characteristics as migrants may have some bearing upon the pre-eminence of either centralized job regulation or localized direct negotiation.

The following chapters offer four case studies of union organization and industrial relations in industries where migrants had a considerable impact. The tension between conflicting industrial strategies and their organizational correlates will be pursued, at length, in these chapters.