

# **THE ALTERNATIVE VISION: AUSTRALIAN REPUBLICANISM**

BY

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# ABBREVIATIONS

ACM            Australians for Constitutional Monarchy.

ALP            Australian Labor Party

ARM            Australian Republican Movement.

## IN NOTES

AGPS           Australian Government Publishing Service.

*CPDHR*       Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of  
Representatives.

*CHBE*           Cambridge History of the British Empire.

*MSD*           Ministerial Document Service.

# THE ALTERNATIVE VISION: AUSTRALIAN REPUBLICANISM

But hear, O ye swains ('tis a tale most profane)  
How all the tyrannical powers,  
Kings, Commons, and Lords, are uniting amain  
To cut down this guardian of ours.  
From the East to the West blow the trumpet to arms,  
Thro' the land let the sound of it flee:  
Let the far and the near all unite with a cheer,  
In defence of our Liberty Tree.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Paine's call for American patriots to rise in defence of their liberty has ignored the constraints of time and context and influenced the evolution of a distinctive Australian republican tradition. This tradition emerged initially as a counter discourse, in opposition to the dominant discourse of the Australian settlement. At least until the 1970s, the Australian settlement advanced a vision of an Australian population enjoying the virtues of responsible government while operating initially within the British empire, and subsequently, the British commonwealth. The resources of the Australian continent were assessed in terms of their potential for exploitation in the establishment of British institutions and the creation of a profitable market for British commerce in the antipodes. Australia's destiny rested within the fold of empire as a wealthy, prosperous, white and above all, British nation. A strong paternal state and an emotional attachment to empire were the two overriding themes of the Australian settlement. They remained characteristic features of Australian political development until the erosion of the settlement undermined the tradition of identifying within a British cultural context, and, almost by default, advanced the Australian republican tradition from a counter discourse

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<sup>1</sup> T. Paine, "Liberty Tree (1775)", M. Foot & I. Kramnick, *The Thomas Paine Reader*, Penguin Books, England, 1987, p. 64.



to the position of dominant discourse. Consequently, in Australia today, republicanism is in the ascendancy.

This project shall trace the origins and evolution of a distinctive Australian republican discourse beginning in the mid nineteenth century. It is a tradition that draws heavily upon the American republican experience, and by extension, the radical British republican tradition that J. G. A. Pocock has analysed in relation to America.<sup>2</sup> An underlying theme of this thesis is the principle that language is the means through which we make sense of, and participate in the world. Accordingly, I will draw upon Gordon Schochet's understanding of political thought as a "'discursive' or 'linguistic' phenomenon" and his assessment of language, "as the primary source of historical continuity".<sup>3</sup>

A significant feature of Australian republican discourse is the use of a paternalistic vocabulary, characteristic of, but not exclusive to the Victorian era.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the dominant discourse held Australia in a position of adolescence to a British parent, republicans rejected this image, arguing colonial arrangements relegated the Australian "child" to perpetual subordination and dependence. Nineteenth and twentieth century Australian republicans have simultaneously employed this critique of adolescence while merging it with the seventeenth and eighteenth century vocabulary of the Anglo-American republican

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<sup>2</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "The Revolution Against Parliament", *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> G. J. Schochet, "Why Should History Matter? Political Theory and the History of Discourse", in J. G. A. Pocock (ed), *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup> G. Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory*, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1980, p. 144.

tradition to create a distinctive language of Australian republicanism worthy of further exploration.

Through local perceptions of the American republican experience Australian republicans have in turn tapped a British republican tradition, a legacy that authors such as Pocock and Lawrence Stone have argued weighed heavily on American revolutionary thinking.<sup>5</sup> I will attempt to extend this revolutionary tradition to the Australian republican experience. Within this experience the independent United States acted as an intermediary, but its activities went beyond simply conveying a British republican tradition. The American republican experience invested this British tradition with distinctive American traits, in particular, a belief in an alliance between puritanism and republicanism and, most importantly, a firm conviction that it is the manifest destiny of the new world to be republican.

By virtue of the American precedent, manifest destiny has become a constituting feature of Australian republicanism. The first chapter will argue the belief in the inevitable republic owes its origins to America's role as the republican pioneer of the new world. It is this concept of manifest destiny that allows for the exploration of a consistent Australian republican tradition. A tradition that has existed since its first serious expression in the pages of the radical colonial newspaper the *Currency Lad* in the 1830s and recognises Australia's place within a radical Anglo-American tradition that viewed the new world as eager for colonisation by a progressive spirit.

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<sup>5</sup> L. Stone, "The Results of the English Revolutions of the Seventeenth Century", in J. G. A. Pocock (ed), *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, and Pocock, *1776: The Revolution Against Parliament*.

Australian republican discourse however, is not without its discontinuities. The second chapter of this project in particular, maintains that while the guiding rationale behind republican sentiments is a blinding faith in the potential of the new world to eclipse the old it was, in most cases, the rights contained within the British constitution that republicans had in mind when demanding reform. It is this discursive tradition which equates most clearly with the English precedent established in the revolution of 1642 when the people were encouraged to rise in arms against the King to preserve the mutual authority of the King and Parliament.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on the same principle, Australian republicans advocated action against the British Parliament in order to secure recognition of their entitlement to British liberty.

In maintaining that Australian republicanism initially emerged as a counter discourse to evolution within empire, it follows that Australia's destiny is the contested ground of this project and is the central issue for the inappropriately titled "republic debate". The problematic nature of this title arises from the clear implication that it is republicanism that is contested. This overlooks the essence of the debate; a questioning of destiny rather than a debate that questions the republican project. By tracing Australian republicanism over three distinct periods, spanning one hundred and seventy years, I will depict an evolving, but not un-problematic, tradition that reveals aspects of continuity and incoherency with this current debate.

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<sup>6</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, p. 371.

One such incoherence surrounding the current debate is the orthodox assessment that Australia is already, in most respects, a republic. Thus, Brian Galligan maintains that “...Australia’s constitutional system is essentially republican...”.<sup>7</sup> He asserts that the republican credentials of the Australian constitution are secure because it is entirely the instrument of the people who are sovereign.<sup>8</sup> In his assessment, Galligan is supported by the finding of former Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Anthony Mason who declared in 1992 “the *Australia Act 1986 (UK)* marked the end of legal sovereignty of the Imperial Parliament and recognised that ultimate sovereignty resided in the Australian people”.<sup>9</sup> Somewhat cautiously by contrast, John Uhr declares Australia’s parliamentary system “covertly republican” but warns, the republican elements of the Australian constitution require further consolidation while Wayne Hudson has legitimised both Uhr and Galligan’s arguments by declaring republicanism compatible with constitutional monarchy.<sup>10</sup> The concept “crowned republic” has gained wide acceptance as a consequence of these assessments and has been used by those favouring the retention of the current system as a justification against change. Consequently, leading monarchist, Tony Abbott, declared “...we are already a republic in every sense worth worrying about”.<sup>11</sup> According to the

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<sup>7</sup> B. Galligan, “Regularising the Australian Republic” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 28, 1993, p. 56. See also, Galligan, *A Federal Republic: Australia’s Constitutional System of Government*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995, and J. Uhr, “Instituting Republicanism: Parliamentary Vices, Republican Virtues”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 28, 1993, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Galligan, *A Federal Republic*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Sir. A. Mason, *Australia Capital Television v. The Commonwealth*, *Commonwealth Law Report*, V 177, 1992-93, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Uhr, p. 30, and W. Hudson, “Republicanism and Utopianism” in W. Hudson & D. Cater (eds), *The Republicanism Debate*, News South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1993, p. 158.

<sup>11</sup> T. Abbott, *The Minimal Monarchy: And Why it Still Makes Sense for Australia*, Wakefield Press, South Australia, 1995, p. 29.

discourse of Australian republicanism however, Australia remains firmly a federal monarchy. The weakness of the “crowned republic” concept is located in the failure to recognise that the Australian republican tradition has appropriated an Anglo-American language of republicanism that maintains there is a clear incompatibility between hereditary monarchy and a new world republic. While the oxymoron “crowned republic” has political plausibility, it has little validity in the Australian republican tradition.

In publishing the first detailed historical account of republicanism in Australia to date, Mark McKenna has produced an original contribution of considerable importance.<sup>12</sup> An unwillingness to challenge the major assumptions of the contemporary debate however, is from the discursive perspective, a weakness of McKenna’s analysis. In particular, he has accepted that Australian republicanism is an essentially contested concept.<sup>13</sup> A fuller investigation of the character of Australian republicanism would have revealed that it fails to meet the criteria of a contested concept. W. B. Gallie maintains a contested concept exists when “...the proper use of the term inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users”.<sup>14</sup> In the discursive sense that I will be exploring, republicanism is not contested. This project is concerned with understanding Australian republicanism as a distinctive discourse the origins of which rest in the Australian perception of the American republican experience and, through this, a modified and transplanted British republican tradition. It is a tradition that has retained core themes

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<sup>12</sup> M. McKenna, *The Captive Republic: A History of Republicanism in Australia 1788 - 1996*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> W. B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1964, p. 158.

overtime. My argument will also test McKenna's portrait of Australian republicans as a minority exercising little influence. He is correct when calculating republican numbers, but stumbles when he equates this to an absence of influence; characterising republicanism as a "bogey" designed to frighten the Colonial Office into agreeing to colonial demands.<sup>15</sup>

Three significant periods where the expression of republican sentiments are prominent will be explored in chapters two, three and four. My intention is to demonstrate the discursive evolution of a distinctive discourse of Australian republicanism through an analysis of the contributions of prominent participants over an extended period. In reading these chapters it should be kept in mind that the historically marginal nature of republicanism does not reflect the character of the proposals, but illustrates a strategic resistance to the Australian Settlement. Chapter two explores the issues and influences on Australia's first republicans. Beginning with the demand that convict transportation cease, through to the granting of self government. Chapter three is devoted to understanding the nature of Australian republicanism in the late nineteenth century. At the core of this chapter is the debate that surrounded the proposals for Australian federation. A debate that occurred within the broader context of an emerging national identity, incorporating many republican sentiments, and the alternative of a greater imperial federation. The fourth chapter explores the Australian settlement and its subsequent demise and seeks to describe how Australian's have responded to the ascendancy of republicanism in the 1990s.

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<sup>15</sup> McKenna, p. 19.

# MANIFEST DESTINY IN AUSTRALIAN REPUBLICANISM

I have never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion, that a separation between the two countries would take place one time or other....<sup>16</sup>

Sentiments expressed in Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet, *Common Sense*, provided both inspiration and justification for the American colonists to wage their war of independence. Paine advised Americans that their relationship with Britain and its monarchy was preposterous, violating both the laws of nature and human reason. Accordingly, he called for its severance.<sup>17</sup> The inevitability of an American republic that Paine foresaw is apparent in the Australian conception of republicanism. It is no coincidence that these arguments appear in both republican movements. The influence of the American experience in Australia runs much deeper than the relatively recent cold war alliance and the pre-eminence of American commercial icons. America and Australia share a common heritage as settler societies, and if republicans have their way they will also share a common republican destiny. America, from the early nineteenth century provided Australian republicans with a plausible alternative to colonisation and evolution within empire.

A recurring theme that underlies the notion of inevitability, sometimes explicit but more often implicit in republican sentiments, is the belief in the inevitable maturity and manifest

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<sup>16</sup> T. Paine, *Common Sense*, R. Carlile, London, 1819, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> R. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763 - 1789*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 4.

republican destiny of the Australian polity. It is this theme, as it relates to the evolution of a language of republicanism, that links past and present republicans to a discernable tradition. In drawing upon the traditions of the American republic to establish a distinctive discourse, Australian republicans in the mid nineteenth century were influenced by the idea of American exceptionalism that was pervasive in America during the same period. It is, as the title suggests a myth that America is exceptional and Americans are a chosen people. Linked to this myth was the recognition that—as the first new world republic—America would provide the example for the new world to reproduce. In drawing upon the American precedent, Australian republicans also drew upon a republican vision that had its origins in a radical British tradition that had been embraced by American revolutionaries. Both of these traditions will be elaborated in the following pages. It is to the first influence of American exceptionalism that I now wish to devote my attention, exploring the character of American exceptionalism and its relevance to the Australian republican experience.

## **THE CHOSEN PEOPLE: THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC AND AUSTRALIAN REPUBLICAN TRADITION**

The army reduced to poverty, want and sickness, without pay, shelter, clothes, or munitions of war, left the blood-stained prints of their naked feet in the snows of seven dreary winters. Under the blazing sun of seven burning summers, they fought and bled, sometimes glorying in victory, and many times suffering in defeat - sometimes fainting in the struggle, but never faltering in the cause. The country was nerved to deeds of heroism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> W. Hall, in *Celebration of The Seventy-Ninth Anniversary of the Independence of the United States by The American Citizens Resident in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*, Goddough and Trembath Printers, Melbourne, 1855, p. 9.



William Hall's speech on the seventy-ninth anniversary of American independence expressed sentiments that were no doubt echoed throughout the United States on July 4 1855. Hall, however, did not deliver his speech in America. It was presented in Victoria, a colony which only five years earlier had been granted the concession of limited self government and where the sovereignty of the Imperial Parliament remained unchallenged. In *The Great Room* of Melbourne's Grand Imperial Hotel, ninety-eight people had gathered to celebrate American independence including James M. Tarleton; Consul-General of the United States and David Blair; editor of Melbourne's influential daily the *Age*.

A night of festivities ensued, as toasts from "The President" to "Our New Chums" continued to a late hour. The Americans unashamedly boasted of their country's achievements. The surroundings of a British colony, the presence of a Union Jack aside the Star Spangled Banner and the obligatory toasts to the monarchy, whose defeat they were celebrating, appears to have only heightened the sense of American achievement for those in attendance.

The influence of those Americans that gathered at the Grand Imperial Hotel, and their compatriots spread throughout the Australian colonies, far outweighed their presence in numbers. In a nineteenth century colonial society increasingly influenced by racial discourse, Americans were estranged members of a greater Britannic race. Americans may have left the fold of the imperial family but they continued to convey to the younger members the wisdom of their experience and the celebration of their achievements. Americans resident in the Australian colonies were emissaries of a relevant and influential

filial tie. The message conveyed via American travellers, settlers and business interests to the Australian colonies was similar to that which arrived neatly packaged and ready for consumption at American ports. News, whether it be of conflict or innovation, was dispersed within an overriding theme of American distinctiveness. American travellers and settlers were cast throughout this production as incidental ambassadors and missionaries; pursuing their individual interests and spreading the gospel of the virtues of the American republic to their younger and naive kin. On 4 July 1855 Charles Brown congratulated his compatriots for their conduct in the "The Land of our adoption";

....this country is comparatively but just springing into existence. But what strides have been made in improvements and towards her advancement, within a short period, and since we first landed on her shores ! and I feel proud in being able to say American spirit and enterprise have tended much towards this.<sup>19</sup>

It is important however, not to over exaggerate the political activities of Americans present in the colonies. For the bulk of Americans that arrived in the Australian colonies in the early nineteenth century two things were dominant in their minds, securing viable commercial opportunities or securing transport to the gold fields. It is unlikely that members of the *Order of the Lone Star* and *Young America*, clandestine groups established to advance the virtues of the American republic, were influential in the Australian colonies.<sup>20</sup> The 1854 Eureka Stockade, an event mythologised as the violent explosion of republican sentiment in colonial Australia, provides a good illustration of the character of the American presence in the colonies. US Consul, James Tarleton had reported to Washington that Americans had not been involved in the stockade and advised

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> B. Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba: 1848 - 1855*, Octagon Books, New York, 1948 offers a further description of both of these movements.

his countrymen in the colony against becoming so.<sup>21</sup> While his reports were excessively optimistic and Americans were present, they were a minority among their compatriots. In fact, three Americans received £1650 from the Victorian government for the efficient transportation of the troops that brutally suppressed the insurrection.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, while the general disposition of Americans was favourable towards an Australian republic, it was accepted that it would be achieved through a natural evolution to maturity and not through an antipodean style American revolution.<sup>23</sup>

While Americans played an important part in disseminating a vision of the ideal new world republic and introducing notions of manifest destiny into Australia, it was a role ably supported by a chorus of colonial print media and public debate which also reflected upon the American experience. Before I explore Australian perceptions of the American republican experience, it is necessary to profile important aspects of that experience. It is not my intention to deconstruct manifest destiny in the American context, nor to discuss how Americans see America. The point is to explain how an American myth provided the basis for the emergence of a peculiarly Australian imagining of the American republican experience and its ramifications for a republican tradition in Australia.

The American republican experience appealed to the hearts and ambitions of European settlers throughout the new world. It championed the revolutionary potential of this world

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<sup>21</sup> E. Daniel and A. Potts, "American Republicanism and the Disturbances on the Victorian Goldfields", *Historical Studies*, Vol 13 (50), April 1968, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 164.

to divorce itself from the corrupt and decaying hierarchical societies that characterised the old world. It was with this potential in mind that Thomas Paine addressed his treatise, the *Rights of Man*, to George Washington wishing that he “may enjoy the happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old...”.<sup>24</sup> Frederick Merk has described the realisation of this potential as America’s manifest destiny.<sup>25</sup> President Clinton’s address at Arlington National Cemetery in November 1996 acknowledged the legacy of this desire to redeem the world through a pioneering spirit;

...for the first time in the entire history of humanity on this planet, more than half the world’s people live in democratically elected governments because of the example and the force and the power of the ideas of America and the sacrifice of America’s veterans.<sup>26</sup>

The American republic functioned then as the prototype for the new world. When combined with the conception of manifest destiny this recognition invested successive generations of Americans with a mission to reinvent the world.<sup>27</sup> Australian republicans looked enviously to an American model. The manifest destiny of America provided Australians with a vision of a potentially glorious republican future. Thus, successive Australian republican movements have shared a belief that it is both the right and the duty of settler societies to pursue a path with the ultimate goal of achieving a republic.<sup>28</sup> This duty was the principle modification of the American republican experience to the British

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<sup>24</sup> T. Paine, *Letter to George Washington*, in *The Rights of Man: Part the Second*, London, W.T. Sherwin, 1817.

<sup>25</sup> F. Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: a Reinterpretation*, Random House, Toronto, 1963.

<sup>26</sup> United States President, William Clinton. *Remarks by the President at Veteran’s Day Ceremony*, Arlington National Cemetery, November 11 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> N. D. McLachlan, “The Future America: Some Bicentennial Reflections”, *Historical Studies*, Vol 17, 1977, p. 366.

republican tradition and was translated into the Australian context in the form of the doctrine of manifest destiny.

Numerous American historians have explored the myth of American uniqueness as the prototype new world state, but significantly few have explored the ramifications of this myth beyond America. Dorothy Ross stands out as one of the more influential contributors, with her critical account of what she terms American exceptionalism.<sup>29</sup> At the core of this thesis is the belief that America occupies an exceptional place in history. In a vision of uniqueness, that is also intermingled with providence and a celestial mission, the independent American republic bought forth the salvation of mankind and the advent of the millennium.<sup>30</sup>

While American exceptionalism was constructed for a domestic audience, it transcended its national boundaries and travelled across continents in the vehicle of American commerce.<sup>31</sup> Thomas Paine was pivotal in laying the foundation for this transference in 1783 when he declared;

To see it in our power to make a world happy - to teach mankind the art of being so - to exhibit on the theatre of the universe a character hitherto unknown - and to have, as it were, a new creation entrusted to our hands, are honours that command reflection, and can neither be too highly estimated, nor too gratefully received.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> D. Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> McLachlan, p. 380.

<sup>32</sup> T. Paine, *Thoughts on the Peace and Probable Advantages thereof to the United States of America*, J Stockdale, Philadelphia, 1783, p. 3.

Paine ensured settler colonies across the world would be mesmerised by the American republic with his declaration that the future prosperity and progress of the world rested with the success of America. The phenomenal progress of America following independence could not be ignored by the Australian colonists, especially when its origins replicated those of the Australian settlement. American success shone like a beacon, lighting the path to prosperity for the settlers of the new world to travel. Leading by example it would be the United States that would teach mankind the art of being happy.

The myth of American exceptionalism was supported in American historiography by a grand narrative, a narrative through which American history was recorded in the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> This narrative contained two themes of relevance to Australia. Firstly, a story based on western liberal progress, of growing commercial development and representative institutions based on democratic consent. On this point Joyce Appleby argues the history of the United States was constructed as a history of progress, shedding its illiberal elements and creating an irresistible truth and belief in the prosperous economic destiny of America.<sup>34</sup> This point will be elaborated in the following section. Secondly, it was a story that seated world progress in the United States. Progress that was not secular in nature, but derived from divine providence.<sup>35</sup> Together these themes worked to thrust America, and by implication the new world, into the foreground of human development.

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<sup>33</sup> D. Ross. "Grand Narrative in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty", *American Historical Review*, 1995, Vol 100, p. 653.

<sup>34</sup> J. Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.652.

The belief in the divine providence of the American republic entered the American imagination in the years following the revolution. The prosperity of the independent state convinced Americans that they were a chosen people, their cause of independence had been the cause of Christ and their reward was prosperity.<sup>36</sup> The foundations of an alliance between Christianity and republicanism were laid during the war of independence where a banner of the revolutionary armies declared; "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God".<sup>37</sup> Having confronted and defeated the enemy in the form of the British army, puritans and congregationalists across America rationalised what had transpired as an armageddon against the tyrannical and evil British parliament.<sup>38</sup> It was a belief in the inviolability of the alliance between Christianity and republicanism that led Massachusetts congregationalist, Jedidiah Morse, to proclaim from his pulpit in 1799:

Our dangers are of two kinds, those which affect our religion, and those which affect our government. They are, however, so closely allied that they cannot, with propriety, be separated....Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them.<sup>39</sup>

In the ascendancy of republican America the new world was shown the path to maturity.

A national myth became universal as Americans transcended their isolation by

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<sup>36</sup> J. Clark, "The American Revolution: a War of Religion?", *History Today*, Vol. 39, 1989 pp. 10-16.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>38</sup> M. A. Noll, "The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXIII:3, 1993, p. 636. Republicans and congregationalists' where joined in a common fear of the coercive authority of the inherited institutions of Britain, the fear of a state church and the principle of the supremacy of parliament. This perceived threat ensured a fortuitous partnership between Christian and republican

<sup>39</sup> Cited in K. A. Snyder, "Foundations of Liberty: The Christian Republicanism of Timothy Dwight and Jedidiah Morse", *The New England Quarterly*, Vol 56 1983, p. 382.

“universalising and exalting what was peculiar to them...”.<sup>40</sup> Australian republicans, secure in the knowledge they formed part of the new world were more than happy to accept as their guiding vision the American republic and the notion of manifest destiny contained therein. In this context, the religious rampaging of the New South Welshmen, John Dunmore Lang, that the decadence of Europe will be punished by God should not be dismissed. For Lang, an independent republic was not a mere utopian vision for a colony. It was

...the law of nature, or, in other words, the ordinance of God, and the parent state, which in such circumstances refuses to grant entire freedom and independence to any colony or group of colonies, is resisting the divine ordinance, and is acting unreasonably and tyrannically.<sup>41</sup>

Such sentiments may be out of tune with current secular sympathies, but for Lang, and the Australian republican tradition more generally, it is a Christian God that legitimates the platform; just as God had some seventy years earlier for the American colonists.

As the American citizens residing in Melbourne gathered to celebrate the seventy ninth anniversary of American independence, the *Age* summarised the influence of America and acknowledged the prevalence of American exceptionalism in the Australian colonies:

....not only to the politician does America furnish a theme of interesting speculation: to the student of history, and to every lover of the human race, it presents a chapter full of hope for the future destiny of man...The old world does not contain a single spot where humanity has had a field for free and spontaneous development. Such a field, however, was laid

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<sup>40</sup> Appleby, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> J. D. Lang, *Freedom for The Golden Lands of Australia*, Longman Brown Green and Longmans, London, 1852. p. 23.



open by the discovery of America. It offered a new theatre of human progress<sup>42</sup>

For Australian republicans, their quest remains virtuous because it represents a path to progress, enlightenment and an inevitable republic which is contained in the example set by America. One of Australia's greatest republicans, Charles Harper adhered to this design in a refusal to apologise for the republican tone of his poem *The Tree of Liberty* in 1855:

Why indeed, should I ? Believing, as I do, that men progress as sequently  
from monarchian to republican ideas when they make any moral and social  
progress at all...<sup>43</sup>

For Harper, as with Lang, a republic was the highest form of social and political organisation attainable to man. It was the right and divine obligation of a mature polity to act in accordance with this destiny.

As early as the 1830s American imagery was a prominent feature of an emerging Australian republican tradition. Lang was pleased to note in relation to America "Australia will pursue a similar course, and with similar success".<sup>44</sup> *The Currency Lad*, a weekly newspaper, with its distinctive motto "Rise Australia" expressed similar sentiments.<sup>45</sup> Edited by Horatio Wills, who named his pastoral property "Lexington", the location of the first battle of the American war of independence, *The Currency Lad* portrayed a

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<sup>42</sup> Age, 4 July 1855

<sup>43</sup> C. Harpur, "The Tree of Liberty (A Song for the Future), in M. Ackland (ed), *Charles Harpur: Selected Poetry and Prose*, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1986, p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> *Colonist*, 19 Jan 1837, cf. *McLachlan*, p. 373.

<sup>45</sup> *Currency Lad*, as with many colonial newspapers enjoyed a brief life. It existed from August 1832 to May 1833, publishing monthly.

distinctly anti colonial character viewing the burning question of the early nineteenth century of representative government as a battle between

...the Senate of England...who have the fate of America before their eyes,  
and the men on whose brow are indelibly traced the stamp of free and  
determined INDEPENDENCE!<sup>46</sup>

For republicans, the manifest destiny of Australia was to become a republic in tune with the American precedent and create a glorious *Empress of the Southern Wave!*<sup>47</sup> On this very point republicans consistently diverged from other campaigners of their time. While many Australians have demanded reform to governing institutions in the past two hundred years, it was from republicans that the demand for installing institutions that would replicate the republican experience of America was most clearly heard.

Paine's claim in *Common Sense*; that a colony would inevitably become an independent republic, was not a widely held belief in the eighteenth century. The American republic however, created the reality of a mature, independent republic as a legitimate aspiration for the new world. American independence certainly was not inevitable in the context of the 1770s, but an Australian republic certainly is in the 1990s as a consequence of the American experience of 1776.

A cartoon that appeared in 1993 effectively captured the character of contemporary Australian republicanism. That Australia has the capacity for maturity is represented by

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<sup>46</sup> *Currency Lad*, 24 November 1832, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> This is the final line of prose sharing the title page of the *Currency Lad*:

See! AUSTRALASIA floats, with flag unfurl'd,  
A New Britannia in another world!  
While ev'ry surge that doth her bosom lave,  
Salutes her "*Empress of the Southern Wave!*".

the masculine adult bush legend figure, with cork hat and boots.<sup>48</sup> Australian immaturity is represented by the striking image of dependency in the form of a pram which restrains its mature occupant, confining the legend, and by implication Australia, to perpetual adolescence. The illustration conveys a message that Australia has achieved maturity and

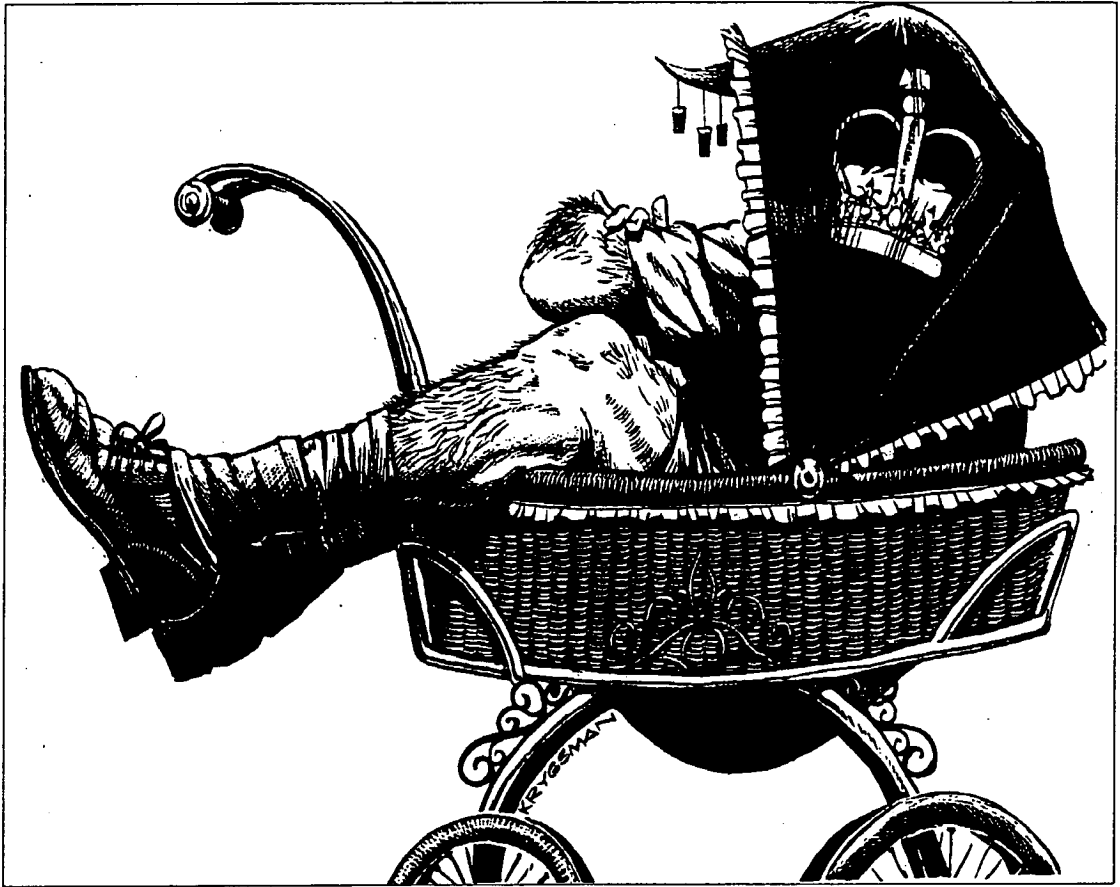


Figure 1. *Weekend Australian*, 24-25 July 1993.

has the potential to realise its manifest destiny, yet is impeded by the presence of a monarchy.

<sup>48</sup> See the classic work of R. Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978 for an explanation of the Australian Bush Legend.

The example America set for the new world, although matched in its revolutionary vigour by the French a few years later, remained the uncontested goal of republicans. France was unable to cast off its geography as easily as its monarchy and the French revolution remained a potent example of revolution in the old world. The precedent established by the French directly challenged the monarchies and feudal orders of Europe, institutions which did not formally exist in British settler colonies, thus limiting its implications for the Australian colonies. By contrast, America was the master of the new world. It was the exceptional example to which all British settler communities could aspire, and the notion of manifest destiny actively encouraged such sentiments. America defined the path to maturity for the new world; of settlement through to eventual independence, full self government, national prosperity and a republic.<sup>49</sup> To bring this chapter to an end, the following pages will explore the second influence on the Australian republican tradition. It will profile the origins of some of the major republican principles that Americans incorporated into their republican discourse and, by implication, provided a foundation from which an Australian republican tradition has subsequently emerged.

## THE ANGLO-AMERICAN REPUBLICAN TRADITION

History is a gallery of pictures in which there are few originals and many copies.<sup>50</sup>

In 1784 the rogue armies of thirteen British colonies of North America defeated the armies of George the Third and the victory heralded the establishment of the United States

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<sup>49</sup> McLachlan, p. 361

<sup>50</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien régime*, (1856) J. P. Mayer (ed), 1951, p. 113. (*On voit que l'histoire est une galerie de tableaux où il y a peu d'originaux et beaucoup de copies*)

of America as the first modern republic. Astutely observing the course of future events, Alexis de Tocqueville's prediction has rang true; Australian republicanism is but a modification from this American original. If we are to stretch the analogy further, the American republican tradition is also a modification on an original British republican tradition. Consequently, many of the defining characteristics of Australian republicanism can be explored through the influences and thoughts of American revolutionaries, functioning as the intermediaries between a seventeenth century British tradition and a nineteenth and twentieth century Australian colonial context. I have chosen Thomas Paine, a figure whose writings galvanised and inspired Americans through the years of revolution to provide insight into this Anglo-American republican tradition. This is not to exclude or down play the influence and contribution of other prominent American revolutionaries. Paine is chosen because his writings directly influenced the character of the Anglo-American republican tradition. Accordingly, his relevance to the Australian republican tradition rests in this role as an original contributor to the Anglo-American republican discourse upon which Australian republicans have subsequently drawn upon.<sup>51</sup>

The influential nature of Paine's writings, part sermon part political tract, inspired Washington to order *The Crisis: Number One* read to his troops on Christmas eve 1776:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country, but he who stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of men and women. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this

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<sup>51</sup> Australian authors have only recently began to examine Paine's influence. See for instance P. Bell & R. Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 20.

consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.<sup>52</sup>

Paine's influence however extended beyond the bounds of mere inspiration. He advanced an ideological justification for the war of independence based primarily on a campaign of opposition to hereditary institutions. Paine's vision possessed a number of distinguishing characteristics, but underlying his vision was the theme expressed eloquently in the *Rights of Man* that "All hereditary Government is in its nature tyranny."<sup>53</sup>

That Government should be constituted on the basis of the contract outlined by John Locke was an attractive alternative to government by *Grace of God* for Paine. Paine's preferred government was at best a necessary evil however; required only to restrain human debauchery.<sup>54</sup> According to this model, government was not absolute but restrained by the inalienable, or natural rights of the citizen, rights which could not legitimately be interfered with. A legitimate government had its authority conditionally transferred to it from the people, with their consent. Consequently, hereditary institutions that derived their legitimacy from divine right were repugnant. The monarch's subject could be neither a citizen nor the possessor of inalienable rights. Freedom was a privilege granted on the prerogative of the monarch. Any rights that subjects possessed were legal rights granted at the discretion of the monarch.

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<sup>52</sup> T. Paine, *The Crisis: Number One (1776)* in B. Kuklich, *Thomas Paine: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> T. Paine, *Rights of Man: Part the Second*, W.T. Sherwin, London, 1817, p. 25.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

Not only were hereditary institutions inconsistent with the theory of ascending power in which sovereignty is anchored in the people and flows upwards to the institutions of government but, they also run contrary to a belief in the equality of man. Paine shared in the certainty of the Declaration of Independence that it was “self-evident” that men were created equal, and consequently endowed with the inalienable rights of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”.<sup>55</sup> Inequality on the basis of talent, industry and frugality were acceptable, they were considered natural in a merit based arrangement where reward for individual endeavour and achievement would prevail over the fortunes of birth. Drawing upon the sixteenth century Harringtonian ideal that men preeminent in their possession of reasoning should temper and direct popular debate, a natural aristocracy in a republic was favoured over an hereditary aristocracy that was considered, in the American context, decadent and corrupt.<sup>56</sup> The superiority of natural aristocracy over the hereditary alternative became a universal truth for American republicans. Accordingly, the cause of America, the successful ascendancy of a natural, rational aristocracy over the tyranny of monarchy and aristocracy, was, to again borrow Paine’s words, “...in a great measure the cause of all mankind”.<sup>57</sup>

The principles that Paine, and his revolutionary counterparts espoused were adaptations from a British republican tradition, inherited from the English revolutions of the 1640s and

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<sup>55</sup> It is unfortunate that “man” usually translated into white males, to the exclusion of women and indigenous peoples.

<sup>56</sup> J. Cotton, “James Harrington and Thomas Hobbes”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol 42, 1981, p. 411.

<sup>57</sup> Paine, *Common Sense*, p. iv.

1688, and applied to an eighteenth century colonial context.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Lawrence Stone argues that “The great American adventure of the eighteenth century could never have occurred without this rich legacy of English ideas and experience”.<sup>59</sup> According to Pocock, the roots of American republicanism are located in a sequence of events in the ascendancy of the Whig order in Britain. During the revolutions of 1641 and 1649 the Tudor order was increasingly supplanted by the rise of a Whig order. The revolution of 1688 is the final step in the construction of a Whig oligarchy, while the American revolution in 1776 is the greatest insurgency against this order.<sup>60</sup> At the core of American resistance to the Whig oligarchy was the traditional constitutional ideal of striking a balance between King, Lords and Commons.<sup>61</sup>

Not long after the establishment of the institution of King-in-Parliament, the Whig’s great achievement, the arrangements surrounding the hereditary elements of the British constitution, particularly the relationship between monarchy and the other two components were brought under scrutiny.<sup>62</sup> Critics charged that the Whig’s entrenchment of King-in-Parliament and the subsequent principle of parliamentary sovereignty compromised the balance of the traditional constitution, corrupting the independence of

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<sup>58</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> L. Stone, p. 110.

<sup>60</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, p. 47 has argued the opposite, citing Americans as driven by a Whig analysis of British institutions.

<sup>61</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, “1776: The Revolution Against Parliament”, in J. G. A. Pocock (ed), *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, p. 272.

<sup>62</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, “1776: The Revolution Against Parliament”, p. 271.



executive and legislative authority. Paine, according to Pocock was acutely aware of this corruption and attacked the King as despotic by virtue of possessing a monopoly of parliamentary patronage.<sup>63</sup>

This critique of the institution of King-In-Parliament was attractive to American colonists whose demands for local representation under George the Third had the effect of also demanding the return to a traditional constitutional balance. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, American demands for local representation might well have been accommodated within the framework of self governing dominions within the empire. In eighteenth century Britain however, American demands were deemed a threat to parliamentary supremacy.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, the two positions appeared irreconcilable. Americans viewed parliament's right to levy taxes as a tyrannical act endangering their liberty. The Whigs on the other hand perceived the American demand for local representation under the Crown as a challenge to the supremacy of Parliament which was the ultimate guarantee of British liberty.<sup>65</sup> The revolutionary character of what the American colonists were demanding in the eighteenth century acted to constrain the British government who could never envisage a solution to the American problem that did not involve the sovereignty of Parliament.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>65</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "The Imperial Crisis", in J. G. A. Pocock, *The Varieties of British Political thought, 1500-1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 275.

<sup>66</sup> Pocock, "1776: The Revolution Against Parliament", p. 283.

American colonists were convinced that the British parliament's decadence, corruption and tyranny that they had witnessed was symptomatic of the Whig ascendancy.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, the commonwealth or country tradition, formed around Harringtonian ideals, which had secured a position in England as the alternative model to the parliamentary tradition was an attractive alternative for Americans.<sup>68</sup> This commonwealth tradition stressed the tension between virtue and commerce and sought to ensure virtue; the act of placing the public good before individual self interest, was retained as the guiding principle of government.<sup>69</sup> This search for republican virtue however, did not necessarily translate into government by consent, but, merely a government of virtuous natural leaders who directed the search for a common interest.<sup>70</sup>

Montesquieu, considered by American revolutionaries as the authority on republics,<sup>71</sup> argued virtue could never be achieved and devised models of limited government to moderate tyrannical tendencies.<sup>72</sup> In drawing upon Harringtonian principles, American revolutionaries by contrast believed that virtue was both attainable and necessary. Should

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<sup>67</sup> D. Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth Century America", *The American Historical Review*, Vol 89, 1984, p. 911.

<sup>68</sup> Pocock, "1776: The Revolution Against Parliament", p. 275

<sup>69</sup> J .G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975, p. 349.

<sup>70</sup> For a brief discussion of consent in Harringtonian thought see: J. Cotton, "'The Harringtonian 'Party' (1659-1660) and Harrington's Political Thought", *History of Political Thought*, Vol 1, 1980, p. 52.

<sup>71</sup> Middlekauff, p. 657.

<sup>72</sup> D. W. Carrithers, "Not So Virtuous Republics: Montesquieu, Venice, and the Theory of Aristocratic Republicanism", *Journal of The History Of Ideas*, Vol 52, 1991, p. 257.

virtue fail, Paine warned, slavery would be the likely consequence.<sup>73</sup> In combating the challenges presented to virtue, Americans seized upon Montesquieu's balanced constitution. Liberty, Montesquieu argued, was best guaranteed by a moderate government achieved through a process of decentralisation, fragmentation and oversight, commonly referred to as checks and balances. Moderation was achieved by a division between executive, legislative and judicial arms of government. Both the legislative and executive branches should possess a "reciprocal faculty of checking" with the judiciary acting to prevent the executive and legislature from moving beyond their respective jurisdictions.<sup>74</sup> A balance would ensure that should one arm lose sight of the common good, the others would act to restrain its despotic tendencies. With the spoils of power at their fingertips even the most virtuous of governors could easily lose sight of their civic responsibilities and serve their own interests against those of the common good. A balanced constitution would establish a system that would prevent, or at least moderate such tendencies. While Pocock questions if Americans ever achieved their aim of institutionalising virtue and the eradication of corruption, there was little doubt in the minds of republicans of the glorious nature of what had been achieved.

It was this Anglo-American republican tradition that crossed the Pacific in the nineteenth century. The people of the new world would be encouraged to secure a virtuous population from which a natural aristocracy would emerge if they wished to achieve maturity and fulfill their manifest destiny. Australian republicans would have their first

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<sup>73</sup> Paine, *Common Sense*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> B. de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, A Cohler, B.C. Miller & H. S. Stone (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, Book XI, p. 162.

opportunity to engage with this Anglo-American discourse in the 1850s as the demands for the abolition of convict transportation and debates surrounding the nature of self government cleared the way for the formation of a distinct Australian republican tradition.

## A NEW BRITANNIA

We'll plant the tree of Liberty  
 In the centre of the Land,  
 And round it ranged as guardians be  
 A vowed and trusty band;  
 And sages bold and mighty-souled  
 Shall dress it day by day -  
 But woe unto the traitor who  
 Would break one branch away...

Till felled by gold, as Bards have told,  
 In the Old World once it grew,  
 But there its fruits were ever sold,  
 And only to the Few;  
 But here at last, whate'er his caste,  
 Each man at nature's call,  
 Shall pluck as well what none may sell,  
 The fruit that blooms for All.<sup>75</sup>

In the immediate period leading up to war in the American colonies the colonial centres of Boston and Charleston, in defiantly declaring American freedom, consecrated trees to symbolise their liberty. Some seventy years later in New South Wales Charles Harpur, son of convict parents—a currency lad—wrote his poem “The Tree of Liberty”. Harpur was clearly moved by the powerful symbolism of the American act and was equally influenced by yet another symbol of the American revolution, Thomas Paine. Michael Ackland has argued Paine’s ideals are evident throughout Harpur’s writings, the least of which is Paine’s 1775 poem; “Liberty Tree”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> C. Harpur “The Tree of Liberty (A Song of the Future)”, in M. Ackland, *Charles Harpur: Selected Prose and Poetry*, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1986, pp. 21-22.

<sup>76</sup> M. Ackland, “Charles Harpur’s Republicanism”, *Westerly*, 1984, p. 76.

Harpur's poem captures both the sentiment and reveals the Anglo-American origins of early Australian republicanism. For Harpur, the success of the American revolution had exposed the decay of Europe, of an old world that wallowed in dynastic wars, feudal structures, and inequality. America in casting a drift this burden was sowing the seeds of liberty anew, rescuing freedom from decline in the exhausted soils of Europe. The prospects for enhancing liberty in the old world had been eclipsed by the manifest destiny of the new. The tree of liberty would no longer be imprisoned by the class structures of the few and its fruits would be distributed widely throughout the new world.

An influential figure in the first half of the nineteenth century, Charles Harpur detested hereditary aristocracy and expressed sympathy for the natural aristocracy that Paine argued constituted the rational rulers of a republican polity. While believing in the capacity of the Australian colonists to reach their "God-given potential" Harpur remained unconvinced however that his compatriots were fit candidates for republican government.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, Harpur sought to establish the foundations for a virtuous republic in line with Harringtonian principles. These foundations required the recruitment of a virtuous population, the granting of institutions of self government accompanied by the abolition of convict transportation. The majority of colonists however, contrast with Harpur's republican sentiments. Most appear concerned with merely redefining the foundations of the Australian settlement, to secure a destiny within empire but, beyond the function and characteristics of penal settlements.

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 87.

Four proposals that would define the future character of colonial NSW competed for supremacy in mid nineteenth century. The British government, in particular the Colonial Office, revised a long standing principle that convict transportation was incompatible with free institutions and proposed to grant limited self government to the colonies while continuing transportation.<sup>78</sup> In the minds of most colonists however, convict transportation remained incompatible with free institutions and they demanded, on the basis of what they perceived as their rights, that transportation be abolished before they would be content with self government within an larger imperial framework. Large employers and pastoralists in particular were the exception among colonists. Complaining of a shortage of cheap labour; they supported the retention of transportation and the establishment of a class structure in which pastoralists would constitute a rural aristocracy.<sup>79</sup> Republicans agreed with their fellow colonists that transportation and self government were incompatible, but differed on the implications. While those colonists that agitated for an end to transportation on the basis that they possessed the right as British subjects to demand it from the British government, republicans of the period perceived the reluctance of Britain as an absolute denial of their rights and a basis from which to propose an Australian republic. The background to these sentiments will be explored in the following pages and the emergence of a distinctive republican discourse, with parallels to an Anglo-American republican tradition, around the issues of convict transportation and debates surrounding self government will be explored

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<sup>78</sup> M. Roe, "1830-50", in F. Crowley, *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1974, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup> J. M. Ward, *Earl Grey and the Australian Colonies: 1846 - 1857*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1958, p. 67

One of the immediate problems that faced the British government following the loss of America was locating a new destination for exiled criminals. After much deliberation, New South Wales was chosen for this purpose and the first convicts arrived at Botany Bay in 1788. The intention was to use these, and subsequent convicts to establish a prosperous colony that would in time evolve into a market for British commerce.<sup>80</sup> It was not until 1823, following the arrival of significant numbers of free settlers, that Britain was compelled to revise the "penal colony" status of New South Wales. A change in status to a "settlement colony" brought with it a limited form of constitutional government and the establishment of a nominated Council of fourteen to advise the Governor. Convict transportation continued freely under these modified arrangements.<sup>81</sup>

These changes may have placated most New South Wales colonists had it not been for the 1837 insurrection in Lower Canada which administered a fatal blow to the existing system of colonial administration.<sup>82</sup> In 1839 Lord Durham recommended a resolution to the Canadian situation. With an eye to the future character of colonial government, Durham's report was published and studied in New South Wales within a year of its release.<sup>83</sup> Durham encouraged an entirely new understanding of the future relationship between Britain and her colonies, based on granting the colonies responsible government under the

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<sup>80</sup> E. A. Benians, "The Beginnings of the New Empire, 1783 - 1793", in J. Holland, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians *CHBE*, Vol II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 24 -25.

<sup>81</sup> P. Knaplund, "Colonial Problems and Colonial Policy, 1815 - 1837", in J. Holland, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians *CHBE*, Vol II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1968, p. 286.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>83</sup> W. Smith, "Canada and Constitutional Developments in New South Wales", *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 6, 1926, p. 95.



British Crown, a relationship that would continue to evolve into the late twentieth century. He recommended the extension of responsible government to a legislative union of Upper and Lower Canada, similar to the system of ministerial responsibility that was enshrined in the English constitution.<sup>84</sup>

The implication of Durham's recommendations was that Britain was now responsible for colonial tutelage. Administration, where applicable, should be based on preparing the local population for eventual limited self government. Following from this revised principle, the penal character of the settlements in New South Wales was of greater significance to Australian political development than their earlier American counterparts.<sup>85</sup> Previously, tutelage was not an overriding theme of imperial administration as no precedent existed for a British colony exercising relative autonomy. In the post American independence period the British reluctantly accepted the inevitability of their new world colonies gaining control over local affairs. This new paternalistic arrangement cast Britain as the arbiter of a colony's readiness for self government. Accordingly, in the Australian colonies the predominance of convicts and emancipists, who in some settlements constituted the majority of the population, acted initially to restrain British willingness to grant institutions of self government.

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<sup>84</sup> J. R. M. Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", in J. Holland, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians *CHBE*, Vol II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 339 - 345.

<sup>85</sup> See A. B. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607 - 1776*, W. W. Norton, North Carolina, 1975.

For many Australian colonists, the Durham report presented a legitimate opportunity to lobby Britain for greater local representation without compromising their loyalty or destiny as a bastion of Britishness in the South Pacific. The conservative Hobart Town newspaper, *The Britannia and Trades' Advocate*, a believer in the principles of the Australian settlement, declared with its first edition, "....As British subjects, we are entitled to British institutions, and none other without protest and remonstrances ought we to acknowledge."<sup>86</sup> For republicans, who joined the chorus of complaint for reform, such sentiments were inadequate. Republicans laboured to establish the foundations for a new society that was not founded on the vice and corruption of criminals from Britain. Their vision was of a virtuous people pursuing their manifest republican destiny. Nevertheless, whether it was responsible government or republican destiny that drove individual colonial demands, it was with a united voice that they called upon Parliament to end convict transportation and for institutions of self government.

Significantly, the British government in the mid nineteenth century was better placed to respond to the demand of the colonies than had been the case with America. London had become increasingly sophisticated in the management of colonial affairs and in defusing situations that could potentially threaten the supremacy of Parliament. The haphazard administrative arrangements, the inefficiency and ignorance of officials appointed to advise on colonial matters that had characterised the administration of the old empire had departed.<sup>87</sup> The second empire was characterised by an effective Colonial Office headed, from 1812, by a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, an arrangement

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<sup>86</sup> *Britannia and Trades' Advocate*, 1 January 1846.

<sup>87</sup> Middlekauff, p. 23- 25

further bolstered in 1825 with the appointment of a Permanent Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office.<sup>88</sup> The core task of this office was to create an administrative framework through which British commercial expansion could thrive throughout the colonies without a repetition of the American crisis.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the colonial office further refined the administration of imperial responsibility. A distinction between dependent and semi dependent colonies emerged. Semi dependent colonies, as the Australian colonies were considered, were encouraged to shoulder the burden of responsibilities including self government and local defence. Dependent colonies would remain the political, and more significantly, the financial responsibility of Britain.<sup>89</sup>

By the 1840s, Australian colonists and republicans were practised in agitating for reform within this colonial structure. Henry George Grey, British Colonial Secretary of State from 1846 to 1852 and the third Earl Grey, was the recipient of much of their hostility. The Earl was known throughout Britain for a devotion to the principles of free trade and an enthusiastic interest in the state of the colonies. Grey's sentiments when appointed Colonial Secretary of State, that representative institutions were owing to New South Wales, were however, overshadowed by his insistence on being the final arbiter on the timing and form of those institutions.

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<sup>88</sup> Knaplund, p. 300.

<sup>89</sup> J. Holland, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians *CHBE*, Vol II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968 p. VII.

That the Colonial Secretary was the target of colonial demands was reflective of the distinctive character of the second empire and the overwhelming authority of the Colonial Office. The establishment by royal charter of the American colonies inspired Americans to assume their relationship to Britain was governed through the Crown.<sup>90</sup> It was with this in mind that Americans addressed their demands directly to the Crown. They denied Parliament's power to tax the colonies on two principles, that only their own elected colonial assemblies had the right to demand it, and that they owed allegiance only to the Crown.<sup>91</sup> In 1775 John Adams declared that America owed neither its existence, allegiance or connection with Britain to Acts of Parliament. Acts of Parliament had been passed to annex Wales and create the union of Scotland and England, but no such Act existed in reference to America. Accordingly, Parliament could have no legitimacy in the colonies.<sup>92</sup> Adam's conclusion amounted to nothing less than a direct challenge to the authority of king-in-parliament as sovereign and absolute, final and unanswerable, one and indivisible.<sup>93</sup> Following American independence, Parliament acted to remove the ambiguity surrounding its relationship with the colonies that had given rise to Adam's sentiments. In asserting its authority, Parliament overrode the prerogative of the Crown to found colonies by charter. The Canadian Constitution Act of 1791 established the precedent which was later extended by an Act of Parliament which founded the colony of South Australia in 1834.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Middlekauff, p. 23.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>92</sup> L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 136.

<sup>93</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "Empire, Revolution and the end of early modernity", in J. G. A. Pocock, *Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 297

<sup>94</sup> Knaplund, p. 286.

Recognising the actual and symbolic shift in power away from the Crown, it was to the imperial parliament that the Australian colonists protested, a situation reinforced by the distance separating the colonies from London and the primitive communications that decreed governors, effectively Colonial Office appointees, acting in consultation with the British Colonial Secretary of State, who was responsible to Parliament, were by virtue of their authority the source of power in the colonies.

The Crown's inability to project a symbolic presence into New South Wales during the mid nineteenth century further encouraged the Australian colonists and republicans to address their grievances to the Colonial Office and Parliament. The absence of an illustrated press and a literate population in the colonies capable of experiencing the ceremony of monarchy through words and illustrations thousands of miles removed from the events was a contributing factor, as was the inept and unresponsive performance of ceremonial ritual that characterised monarchy throughout this period.<sup>95</sup> The greatest impediment to the Crown acting as a symbol of power and an institution of colonial appeal before the 1870s however, remained its close association to a declining, but nonetheless influential feudal order, and a reluctance among Parliament to raise the profile of the Crown while it continued to exert itself in the business of governing.<sup>96</sup> Monarchy throughout this period was neither above politics or society but actively engaged in both. Consequently, the Crown was invested with a divisive nature and its political activities restricted it to the political and cultural centre of London. In further containing the

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<sup>95</sup> D. Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c 1820 - 1977, in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 109.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*

influence of the monarchy the relative strength of the provincial centres also played its part. In the mid nineteenth century British society was still coming to terms with the industrial age, the expanding urban centres and rising professional classes had not at this point significantly impacted on regional loyalties.<sup>97</sup> Thus, in early nineteenth century New South Wales, an extension of provincial Britain separated by months at sea from London, the monarchy remained a distant institution of limited symbolic significance. Consequently, the daily activities of monarchy, as opposed to its hereditary nature, were not scrutinised by republicans in the early nineteenth century to any where near the degree they would be in later periods as the monarchy attained an increasing symbolic presence in the Australian colonies.

Passive means of protest and lobbying were the most widely employed tools of colonists and republicans throughout the early nineteenth century. The effectiveness of their protests were greatly assisted by the remarkable level of press freedom and the printing of the first independent newspaper in New South Wales, the *Australian* in 1824. In acknowledging such freedom some members of Parliament observed in 1832 that the vigorous press of the colony had all but rendered institutions of self government unnecessary.<sup>98</sup> A small, but vibrant newspaper founded by Sydney born Horatio Spencer Wills provides an interesting insight into the colonial press of the period. By the age of twenty-one Wills had acquired the position of founder, printer, publisher and editor of the avowedly republican weekly the *Currency Lad*.

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>98</sup> *Currency Lad*, Supplement on the debates in the House of Commons on trial by jury and taxation by representation. 24 November 1832.

The *Currency Lad* was launched on 25 August 1832 among fears that it intended to “sow dissention in the body politic” by promoting the differences between recently arrived free Europeans and currency lads.<sup>99</sup> This claim was denied by Wills, but the paper nonetheless was a strong advocate of the rights of native born Australians and emancipists who found their employment opportunities under threat by the arrival of increasing numbers of free settlers.<sup>100</sup> The *Currency Lad* devoted much of its space to petitioning London for an elected assembly, highlighting the unscrupulous pursuit of self interest and blinding unfamiliarity with the colony of the fourteen members of the existing Council.<sup>101</sup> London, concerned with the influence of convicts and emancipists rejected the petition. Predictably the editorial announcing the rejection accused parliament of “ignorance” and “narrow-minded prejudices”. But the worst indignation was reserved for the freemen of New South Wales who had worked against the petition. They were characterised as “cowardly”, “detestable”, “aristocratical asses” and “enemies” of the people. It was intolerable that taxation would continue without institutions of representation. The American experience was not lost on Wills, concluding his editorial with a warning in bold type; **“WE WERE NOT MADE FOR SLAVES!”**.<sup>102</sup>

With bold newspaper editors the likes of Wills, it was not surprising that upon leaving the Australian colonies few Governors took with them pleasant memories of their stay. New

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<sup>99</sup> “The *Currency Lad*” is an Australian term used to distinguish Australia born colonists from British migrants. It is one of the earliest terms used to indicate colonial distinctiveness.

<sup>100</sup> *Currency Lad*, 25 August 1832

<sup>101</sup> *Currency Lad*, 8 September 1832.

<sup>102</sup> *Currency Lad*, 24 November 1832.

South Wales Governor, John Hunter (1795-1800) signalled what was in store for governors upon departing the tiny settlement of a little over five thousand people in 1800: "I could not have had less comfort though I'd certainly have had more peace of mind if I'd been in a penitentiary".<sup>103</sup> When Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy, the tenth Governor of New South Wales arrived in 1846 he faced a barrage of demands for freedom: freedom from transportation, self government, and freedom for the colonists of the Port Phillip settlement (Victoria) from New South Wales.<sup>104</sup>

Not long after his arrival, FitzRoy's administration was entangled in a notable attempt by colonists to ridicule and embarrass London and the colonial administration into action. The colonists of the Port Phillip settlement had grown increasingly impatient with a commitment expressed by Grey in the previous year for a separate administration from New South Wales. When nominations were called in 1848 for six Victorian representatives to sit on an expanded New South Wales Legislative Council, disgruntled Melburnians nominated Earl Grey to represent them. Subsequently, the Earl was elected by an overwhelming majority to the New South Wales Legislative Council. A somewhat embarrassed Governor FitzRoy annulled the election and called for new nominations only to find among the list, The Duke of Wellington, the Prime Minister; Lord Russell, Lord

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<sup>103</sup> W. Joy, *The Liberators: Australia's Struggle for Independence 1820 - 1855*, Rigly Ltd, Adelaide, 1976, p 1. Colonial protest, ridicule and accusations sent some Governors into early retirement. For others, Macquarie and Darling in particular, their emotional suffering continued after leaving the colonies as they were forced to defend their administration against accusations of mismanagement in London. Meanwhile, for several unfortunate Governors, notably Eardley-Wilmont of Van Diemen's Land, their service in the antipodes was rewarded with an early grave.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p.89.



Palmerston, and Sir Robert Peel. To the relief of FitzRoy, the colonists however, elected legitimate candidates.<sup>105</sup>

Satire aside, Australian history shows as that the colonists were not adverse to outbursts of violence but, this is more the exception than the rule. The obvious example is the Rum Rebellion of 1808 when the New South Wales Corps, led by John Macarthur, staged a *coup d'etat* and imprisoned the Governor. Violence was usually the consequence of official corruption and provocation by local authorities. The ineptitude of colonial authorities, their inability to exercise restraint among themselves, on the press and those under their command, was usually behind the most serious outbreaks of violence in the settlements. The 1854 insurrection on the Ballarat gold fields is the prominent example of violence that resulted from provocation by colonial authorities.<sup>106</sup> Beginning with agitation for trial by jury in the 1820s, republican protests were characteristically composed until they peaked in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Agitation for self government and a proposal to resume transportation to New South Wales set the stage for a potential recourse to violence as Sydney cast itself in the role of Boston and the convict cargo of ships destined for Sydney were substituted for tea.

At the heart of colonial demands in the mid nineteenth century, republican or otherwise, was a familiar call for the rights of Englishmen enshrined in the 1688 Act of Settlement; more specifically no taxation without representation. The colonists were aware it was this principle that had fuelled the flames that sweep through the American colonies and they

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<sup>105</sup> *ibid*, pp.101-102.

<sup>106</sup> J. Molony, *Eureka*, Viking, Melbourne, 1984.

had few scruples about employing this argument to good effect. The Republican appeal however, went beyond the demand of most colonists for British institutions and their rights under the British constitution. Influenced by the inalienable rights doctrine of Locke, Paine and the American constitution, republicans sought to merge the legal rights tradition of Britain with the natural rights philosophy of the American republic. What they created was a discourse in which English legal rights were incorporated into a doctrine of natural rights. Accordingly, Australian colonists possessed the rights of Englishmen by virtue of being born British. Accordingly, Parliament and its appointed officials were acting tyrannically in failing to acknowledge these rights. It was these views that Wills summarised in 1833 when declaring;

Let the colonists then come forward - let every man who drew milk from the breast of an English mother - let every man who drew his first breath in the "glorious land of freedom" come forward, as his ancestors came forward, and claim that freedom which every freeborn Briton holds as his birthright.<sup>107</sup>

Republicans were joined by most colonists in the belief that the continuation of convict transportation constituted an intolerable stain on the character of the colonists, a violation of their rights as freemen and forestalled any prospects of self government in the near future. The removal of the image associated with convictism was the first stage for republicans in laying the foundations for self government and the eventual realisation of Australia's manifest destiny. Grey's unwillingness to cease transportation to the colonies however, stood in the way of this republican endeavour and the general colonial objective of responsible government.

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*Currency Lad*, 23 February 1833.

## PRIDE AND PREJUDICE: CONVICT TRANSPORTATION AND SELF GOVERNMENT.

In the first place I could hardly imagine that a country like England could produce such an illiterate cub as this colony...Saturn is not more remote from the Sun, than Hobart Town from all Science and Literature...I have often met with envy, splenetic ill nature, and rancorous detraction, where I hoped and sought to cultivate very opposite feelings...<sup>108</sup>

One need only recall the consciousness of class, excessive prudence, the concern to retain honour and the near obsession with reputation of Victorian England to be adequately equipped to appreciate why republicans and colonists were distressed by the transportation of convicts and why it was necessary for the abolition of transportation before institutions of self government could be established. The infamous Brigg report of 1821, commissioned to report on the condition of New South Wales, shaped in the minds of Britons an especially brutal image of the Australian colonies. Finding the treatment of convicts to be intolerably relaxed, it advised "no more kindness to convicts" with the intention of striking terror into the hearts of dishonest British men and women at the mere whisper of the Australian settlements.<sup>109</sup> Accordingly, the settlement of Van Diemen's Land was known almost solely for its purpose as a destination for convicts, with the penal settlement of Port Arthur on the isolated Tasman Peninsular flying the flag of this most ungracious honour.

Convict transportation continued unabated until 1840, when it ceased in New South Wales despite the pleas of leading pastoralists, who relied on inexpensive convict labour,

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<sup>108</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (London), 1828, cited in F. Crowley *A Documentary History of Australia: Colonial Australia, 1788-1840*, Thomas Nelson, Victoria, 1980, pp. 370-371.

<sup>109</sup> Joy, p. 2.

for a gradual reduction. The tide of thinking in Britain had been turning against the pastoralists and the exile of criminals. A parliamentary select committee chaired by the champion of colonial reformers, William Molesworth, reported in 1838 that the system of transportation in New South Wales had failed.<sup>110</sup> The committee, in which Viscount Howick (later Earl Grey) was a member, found that the "...inefficiency in deterring from crime and remarkable efficiency in further corrupting those who undergo punishment" warranted the system's abolition.<sup>111</sup> Convict laden ships were diverted to the remaining penal settlements in Van Diemen's Land and Norfolk Island. This redirection placed enormous strain on the resources of these two settlements with the consequence that, by 1847, convicts and emancipists accounted for over half of the total population of Van Diemen's Land.<sup>112</sup>

The shame of the convict heritage that compelled the colonists of Van Diemen's Land to change the name of the colony to Tasmania in 1856 was essentially the same factor that drove many republicans and colonists of the period. They were concerned to enhance their reputation above that of pickpockets and savages with the aim of securing self government. They were, in effect, demanding the right to regulate migration to the colonies.

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<sup>110</sup> Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", p. 383.

<sup>111</sup> Joy, p.68 & E. Scott, "Problems of Settlement: Transportation", in J. Holland, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians *CHBE*, Vol II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, p. 427.

<sup>112</sup> *Statistics of Van Diemen's Land or Tasmania: From the date of the first occupation by the British nation in 1804 to the end of the year 1853.*, James Barnard, Hobart Town, 1856, p. 1 (1847).

The uncomplimentary image in Britain of the Australian settlements derived from two sources. The first source was the deliberate construction by British authorities of an image of a convict hell that was used as a deterrent against crime. This logic was reflected in the Brigge report. The second source derived from the desire to explain the increasing quantity of crime in the urban areas of industrialising England. Class was promptly accepted as an explanation; with most offenders belonging to the poorer stratum of British society. This class was already considered depraved and untrustworthy in light of the French revolution, so the discovery of a criminal predisposition among the poor and working classes surprised few.<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, not only were the Australian settlements a hell on earth but, their population originated from the worst source imaginable, the expelled criminal class of Britain. Ironically, this image appears to have had greater influence on those officials in Britain responsible for the image propagation and the colonial elite of New South Wales than it did in striking fear into criminals. For free settlers and currency lads it was guilt by association. They were, the *Currency Lad* declared, prisoners until they prove themselves to be free.<sup>114</sup> The image of the Australian colonies populated by a race of delinquents, thieves, murderers, and criminals of the worst type did not make for a complimentary impression, and where republicans were concerned, it made civic virtue a problematic concept in relation to the colonies and hampered attempts at political reform.

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<sup>113</sup> C. Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750 - 1900*, Longman, New York, 1987, pp 48 - 49.

<sup>114</sup> *Currency Lad*, 1 September 1832.

With news that the Reform Bill had passed through the British parliament in 1832 the Australian colonists felt assured that their petition for a legislative assembly and trial by jury would receive a favourable hearing.<sup>115</sup> The British parliament, while conceding the legal right of colonists to taxation via representation, reserved for itself the exclusive right to implement it when they felt the colony was fit for such responsibility. In 1832 the arguments of colonists could not overcome the depraved image of the Australian settlements and by Parliament's reckoning, the colony was not ready for such institutions. Viscount Howick expressed his broad objections to the petition at this early stage of the colony's development;

..is the House prepared to throw the government of the colony into the hands of persons convicted of crime, in this country, and who have been sent from their native land as felons?<sup>116</sup>

Clearly the House was not. The convict disposition of the colonies remained uppermost in the minds of members. That the free men of the colony may be subjected to the tyranny of the emancipated and convict classes remained an unacceptable risk.

Given the problematic nature of achieving self government while transportation continued, it followed that republicans would campaign for its abolition. A significant republican in the mid nineteenth century and an extremist on the abolition of transportation was John Dunmore Lang, a Presbyterian minister who had migrated to New South Wales in 1823. He despised the convict elements of New South Wales society and accepted the principle that penalism was incompatible with self government. Having toured the United States,

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<sup>115</sup> *Currency Lad*, 2 February 1833.

<sup>116</sup> *Currency Lad*, Supplement: Debates in the House of Commons, 29 June 1832 on Trial by jury and taxation by representation for the colonists of New South Wales., 24 November 1832.

he was familiar with what a strong virtuous Christian population could accomplish from the most humble of beginnings, and was convinced Australia possessed a similar republican destiny if only the convict elements of New South Wales could be purified. For Lang, a considerable step towards this purification would be the abolition of transportation and the recruitment of a virtuous population, reflecting the place on virtue in the Anglo-American republican tradition. With the success of this endeavour in mind, Lang spent considerable time in London as the unofficial representative of New South Wales, convincing his ideal settlers to migrate to the colony. While Harpur expressed apprehension at the prospect of a community of convicts and emancipists exercising self government, it was Lang, on a self appointed mission to recruit a virtuous population, who set out to overcome these fears.<sup>117</sup> Lang, together with his republican counterparts formed a defacto republican elite in early nineteenth century New South Wales. These republicans were not only convinced by a republican vision, but they were sure of their intellectual and moral superiority and, no doubt pictured themselves as prominent participants in the natural aristocracy of a future republic guiding, in an Harringtonian sense the search for common interest.

The colonists, though isolated by today standards, remained acutely aware of the fashions and opinions of London. Those fortunate enough to afford the expense of travel experienced first hand the suspicion and caution which surrounded persons of Australian origin, while for others it was only a matter of months before they would hear or read the most recent examples of British enmity. Following the news of a meeting at Mansion

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<sup>117</sup> D. W. A. Baker, "J. D. Lang", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1967 Vol 3. pp. 76 - 83.

House in Dublin in 1839, one resident of Van Diemen's Land was so incensed at the reputation of the settlement in Britain that he took to writing a defence to vindicate the colonists against what he perceived as a grievous "moral" and more outrageous "physical" wrong. The gathering at Mansion House had been called to promote migration to New Zealand and during the proceedings organisers denounced New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land colonists:

...picturing the free British residents of these settlements as reprobates of the most abandoned stamp - wretches, with whom, were the etching just, it would indeed be contamination and disgrace to hold intercourse.<sup>118</sup>

Given the deplorable reputation of the Australian colonies it was with hostility that republicans and many colonists greeted the 1848 announcement by Grey of the resumption of transportation to New South Wales. The deteriorating conditions in Ireland had forced Grey to modify his earlier support for the abolition of transportation to New South Wales. Following successive crop failures in Ireland and the subsequent increase in crime, Irish convicts had placed an intolerable strain on British prisons. In response to the crisis various options were canvassed, including an attempt at a new penal colony of Gladstone on the north-east coast of New South Wales that failed in 1846. A desperate Grey approached the New South Wales Legislative Council for support for a planned resumption of transportation. Dominated by pastoral interests whose ventures stood to benefit from an influx of cheap convict labour, the Council agreed, further enraging much of the colony.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> D. Burn, *Vindication of Van Diemen's Land in a cursory Glance at Her Colonists as They Are, not as they have been represented to be*, J. W. Southgate, London, 1840, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> T. H. Irving, "1850-1870", in F. Crowley, *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 134 - 135.



Grey's announced resumption of transportation only further infuriated colonists and republicans who were still coming to terms with his despatch of 1847 which detailed his plans for the future government of the Australian settlements. Most of the inhabitants of New South Wales would have been dumbfounded by Grey's proposed concurrent resumption of transportation and limited self government. No doubt they were pleased at the invitation to devise their own constitution but, unlike Grey, they retained the ideal that free institutions were incompatible with the continuing transportation. In the republican mind, a community of exiled criminals could not possibly, given the character of nineteenth century criminal discourse, possess the necessary virtue to formulate a constitution, let alone temper and direct public debate. Grey was not perturbed that his proposal departed considerably from anything demanded by the colonists, believing it was the duty of the Colonial Office to decide upon such large public issues, not the colonists.<sup>120</sup> Along with a proposal to expand representative institutions in New South Wales and separate Victoria, he intended to create representative institutions in Van Diemen's Land, South Australia and Victoria, insist on a uniform tariff between the colonies and included a novel idea of establishing an assembly to deal with common colonial matters. Grey's federal proposal anticipated that individual colonies might be tempted to restrict trade through the erection of tariff barriers which would threaten the viability of British trading interests.<sup>121</sup> While news of Grey's plans met with jubilation in Victoria and the colonies that were to receive their first instalment of representative institutions, the plans were greeted with hostility in New South Wales. His intention to

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<sup>120</sup> Ward, *Earl Grey and the Australian Colonies: 1846 - 1857*, p. 107.

<sup>121</sup> E. A. Benians, "The Empire in the New Age, 1870-1919" in E. A. Benians, J. R. M. Butler, P. N. S. Mansergh and E. A. Walker, *CHBE*, Vol 3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 3.

create a bicameral legislature in New South Wales with a popular house indirectly elected by municipal councils was condemned. Such a proposal was unacceptable in New South Wales where, since 1842, the majority of members in the Legislative Council were already elected by direct franchise (with malapportionment in favour of rural constituencies). In effect, Grey's proposal would not only further restrict the existing arrangements but remove altogether the direct franchise in New South Wales.

Although Grey's proposal for a federal legislature had its parallels with American and Canadian federal arrangements, it raised only concern in the Australian settlements. Grey's plan threatened to remove the gloss, if not a substantial amount of power from the eventual achievement of self government.<sup>122</sup> More importantly, a federal union would taint the not inconsequential settlements inhabited by free settlers (such as the colony of South Australia, founded on a belief in the civilising influence of agriculture) with the convict stain. Arguing a justified, but nonetheless ambit claim of a lack of consultation, the colonists forced Grey to disclaim any intention of forcing unwelcome change on the colonies.<sup>123</sup> Subsequently, Grey modified his proposals and, in an illustration of his failure to comprehend the implications in the colonial mind for the achievement of self government should transportation continue, he advised that he would not oppose attempts by colonial legislatures to write their own constitutions subject to imperial approval.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ward, *Earl Grey and the Australian Colonies: 1846 - 1857*, p. 66

<sup>123</sup> J. Quick & R. Garren, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1901, pp. 81- 83.

<sup>124</sup> Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", p. 376.

It came as no surprise then that as the *Hashemy*, the first ship carrying convicts under Grey's resumed transportation scheme, approached the final part of its voyage into Sydney Harbour in June 1849 that Sydney was simmering with revolt. Melbourne's residents had made it clear to FitzRoy that under no circumstances would they accept convicts, and had subsequently been assured they were Sydney bound. Sydney was outraged at this prospect and following successive public meetings to denounce the decision, the Legislative Council, fearing an impending crisis, rescinded its support for the resumption of transportation. As the ship entered the harbour on 11 June the Governor, sensing the potential for revolt, increased the military guard around Government House while Sydney's wary merchants and shop keepers closed at 11 am. The attention of the colony was focused on the large crowd, between four and five thousand, that had braved miserable weather and gathered at Circular Quay. To the cheers of the crowd, speakers proclaimed it "monstrous that an outrage so gross as that of thrusting convicted felons upon them, should be attempted...".<sup>125</sup> The crowd was reminded of the correlations between contemporary events and those of some seventy-four years earlier in Boston by the provocative figure in New South Wales politics, Robert Lowe:

As in America, oppression was the parent of independence; so would it be in this colony. The tea which the Americans flung in the water rather than pay tax upon it, was not the cause of the revolt of the American States; it was the unrighteousness of the tax - it was the degradation of submission to an unrighteous demand. And so sure as the seed will grow into the plant, and the plant to the tree, in all times in all nations, so will injustice and tyranny ripen into rebellion, and rebellion into independence. (Immense cheering).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>     *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 June 1849.

<sup>126</sup>     *ibid.*

Lowe had ceased Harpur's "Tree of Liberty" and attempted to plant its roots in the fertile soil of a defiant Sydney. Armed with a resolution passed unanimously by the gathering a delegation set off for Government House. They got only as far as the Governor's private secretary who accepted the resolution but insisted on a future appointment to meet with the Governor. Unwilling to rise to Lowe's call to arms, the crowd proceeded to disperse, but not before they had prevented the ship from relinquishing its convict cargo.<sup>127</sup> The peaceful dispersal of the crowd was perhaps the best indication that while they cheered at Lowe's sermon, most colonists did not share his republican expectations. Rather, they shared the desire for responsible government within the fold of empire in accordance with the Canadian example.

The two visions however, republican and responsible government were united by their common assessment that the abolition of convict transportation was necessary before conditions would be conducive to the extension of comprehensive governing institutions to the colonies. This belief provided the basis for the first of many incoherencies within the republican discourse. Republicans joined with most colonists in demanding the extension of self government, which Grey was eager to bestow but, they decreed this should not be granted before the abolition of transportation. In effect, a fear of creating a depraved piratical republic ruled by exiles of questionable virtue convinced republicans that it was preferable to delay the granting of self government.

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<sup>127</sup> Roe, p. 94.

As the situation stood, republican sentiments failed to sway a recalcitrant Grey. Despite concessions and assurances that he would not force change following the negative reaction to his 1847 proposals, he pressed ahead with the proposed federal assembly and presented *The Australian Colonies Government Bill* to parliament in 1850. The Bill proved to be the most thoroughly debated colonial measure since the Canadian union Bill.<sup>128</sup> The text of the bill had circulated in the colonies during the previous year and colonial objections to the proposal weighed heavily in the final outcome. Grey's concern that individual colonies would subvert the free passage of trade upon which the empire depended would be proven in the following decades but, in 1850, members of parliament were more concerned with placating colonial objections and averting a repeat of the crisis in America. Accordingly, the Bill was modified, the provision for a fixed uniform tariff and the federal legislature were unceremoniously deleted before it was passed.<sup>129</sup>

Despite its rejection by Parliament and colonial warnings not to force a union, Grey was relentless in the pursuit of his federal vision.<sup>130</sup> Unable to reform via parliament he used what existing statutory authority was available. In 1851 he commissioned FitzRoy as Governor of New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, South Australia, and Victoria. Accompanying this new appointment he issued the commission to FitzRoy as Australia's first Governor General with the title; *Governor-General of all Her Majesty's Australian possessions, including the colony of Western Australia*. Existing colonial governors were relegated to the subordinate position of Lt-Governor and were required to communicate

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<sup>128</sup> Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", p. 377.

<sup>129</sup> Quick & Garren, p. 87.

<sup>130</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1850.

with the Governor-General on all matters of inter-colonial trade and follow his instructions.<sup>131</sup> In the absence of a legislature, however, the Governor-Generalship was inert. Aided by colonial hostility to the appointment, the title and position fell into disuse until it was revived in 1901.

In June 1851 Grey was alarmed at a warning from Governor FitzRoy that discontent was brewing among the population. Accordingly, he implemented an effective circuit breaker by revoking the 1848 Order-in-Council that resumed transportation to New South Wales. Never again would a convict ship unload at Sydney.<sup>132</sup> The Anti-transportationists in New South Wales had secured a victory, but the most hostile phase of anti convict agitation was only just beginning. Grey insisted in March 1852 that Van Diemen's Land must continue to accept convicts.<sup>133</sup> The Australasian League for the Abolition of Transportation, established in 1851, took on the task of coordinating dissent throughout the colonies, reminding London of the devastating effect to which the American colonists had exploited such unity. This was perhaps the first instance of the Australian colonies acting to further a common interest. This unity however, did not extend past the abolition of transportation and it was as late as the 1880s before a intelligible understanding of a collective interest would emerge.

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<sup>131</sup> Quick & Garren, p. 89.

<sup>132</sup> Irving, p. 134.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 135.

A broad cross section of society throughout the Eastern colonies was incensed at Grey's insistence on continuing transportation to Van Diemen's Land. Grey's comments did little to calm the tense situation:

....Van Diemen's Land had been founded as a penal colony and had remained one ever since. Therefore, the free inhabitants - who had not been forced to go there went in the full knowledge that it was a penal colony. It was illogical for them to begin complaining that its penal character was an intolerable grievance.<sup>134</sup>

For Grey, the saving grace of the colonies, the discovery of gold, further justified his position. An influx of convicts would prevent the labour shortage that would result as a consequence of the discovery and inevitable rush. The usually restrained *Sydney Morning Herald* responded to Grey's attitude with obvious displeasure, warning the "ill-feeling" towards the mother Country over this question would only get worse.<sup>135</sup> Colonial condemnation of Grey made its way to Westminster and within the year questions in the House of Commons reflected a degree concern for the increasing discontent in the colonies and their unwillingness to accept convicts.<sup>136</sup>

It appeared likely that a resolution to the colonial insistence on the abolition of transportation would only be found in some form of violent confrontation with colonial authorities. Had it not been for the discovery of large quantities of gold in 1851 the events at Sydney Gove in 1849 may well have been a prelude to a sustained rebellion in the Australian colonies. Instead, these gold discoveries presented the opportunity to

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<sup>134</sup> Earl Grey to Lt-Governor Denison, cited in F. G. Clarke, *The Land of Contraries: British Attitudes to the Australian Colonies 1828 - 1855*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1977, p. 28

<sup>135</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1852

<sup>136</sup> *Times*, 16 May 1853, cited in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1853.

consolidate a complimentary image of the colonies and, despite Grey's hope that the discovery of gold would lead to a vindication of his position, the opposite occurred. As early as the 1840s it had become increasingly difficult to strike fear into the hearts of criminals of transportation to Botany Bay as New South Wales prospered by virtue of its massive sheep runs. In some cases, the living standards of convicts in the colonies were better than those enjoyed by the working class of England. The increasingly favourable image of the Australian colonies following the gold discoveries led the *Times* in 1853 to warn that it would "become a positive inducement to crime" if transportation continued.<sup>137</sup> The fate of transportation was sealed in 1851 when FitzRoy expressed a fear that the image of Port Arthur was no longer a sufficient disincentive to crime, warning Grey that "...there are few English criminals who would not regard free passage to the gold fields of New South Wales, via Hobart Town, as a great boon".<sup>138</sup> The discovery of gold, rather than agitation from within the colonies, had effectively defeated Grey's proposals and brought sixty three years of convict transportation to the eastern colonies to an end. The only issue to have arisen in Australia's two hundred and nine year history with the potential to replicate the violent American experience was nullified.

Hell had increasingly become a paradise as a more complimentary image of Australia overwhelmed the old convict stain. Australia was portrayed as a rural refuge from the traumas of industrialisation, a working man's paradise. The gold rush and the massive sheep runs which supplied Britain with over 50% of its wool had ensured high levels of employment and standard of living. The land of the exile had become the land of the

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<sup>137</sup> *Times*, 17 August 1852, cited in Clarke, p. 28.

<sup>138</sup> Governor FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 19 June 1851. cited in Clarke, p. 26.



emigrant, “an idealised Arcadian society, a rural utopia, an eden before the fall”.<sup>139</sup> With the arrival of the last transport of convicts to Van Diemen’s Land in 1853, convict transportation to the eastern colonies ended. The ending of transportation was a victory against Parliament for republicans and their desire to establish a virtuous citizenry, but it was secured by default. The battle had not been won by force of argument but, in the fortuitous discovery of gold. Nonetheless, republicans could now re-focus their attention on the proposed institutions of self government that would captivate colonial politics in the following years.

### A BUNYIP ARISTOCRACY

That the proposed Constitution Bill is radically defective and opposed to the wishes and interests of the inhabitants of this colony, who believe that a Representative Legislature, consisting of two Elective Chambers will alone possess that stability, energy, and usefulness which is maintained by public confidence, and without which no government can permanently exist.<sup>140</sup>

John Darvall, New South Wales colonial barrister and politician proposed this resolution as the first of a series denouncing the proposed constitution for New South Wales devised by a committee of the colonial Legislative Council. In contrast to the struggle for the abolition of transportation, there was no comparable struggle against Parliament for self government. Rather, constitution making in the colonies was centred around the issue of who would rule following the introduction of responsible government.<sup>141</sup> Grey’s proposals

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<sup>139</sup> R. White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688 - 1980*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, p. 33.

<sup>140</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1853.

<sup>141</sup> Irving, p. 127.

for self government recognised the colonies were entitled to local representation and a version of Durham's vision remained the most attractive means of securing the future stability of the Australian colonies within the empire while granting such institutions.

Lang however, unwilling to settle for responsible government, expressed his firm belief in the natural progress of Australian society towards maturity and warned it "... is universally admitted that colonies generally must some day or other become sovereign and independent communities...".<sup>142</sup> In his classic work of 1852, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*, Lang advocated his republican position passionately

....it is the law of nature and the ordinance of God...that we, the Australian people who have already attained our political majority, and are both able and willing to govern ourselves, should be forth with permitted to do so by the parent state...is unsafe in the highest degree to counteract a law of nature: it is positively sinful to resist an ordinance of God.<sup>143</sup>

In drawing upon the analogy of the child and the adult, he argued that every colony must pass through three successive stages, of infancy, youth and manhood. He maintained that when manhood is achieved the colony is entitled to entire freedom and independence, this was the "law of nature", an "ordinance of God".<sup>144</sup> In delivering *The Coming Event Lectures* he asserted that when this principle is abused "those from whom it is unjustly withheld will only be acting in accordance with the great law of self preservation, if they wrest it from their oppressors on the first favourable opportunity (Great Applause)".<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> J. D. Lang, *The Coming Event or the United Provinces of Australia*, Two lectures delivered in the city theatre and School of Arts, Sydney, D. L. Welch, 1850,

<sup>143</sup> J. D. Lang *Freedom for The Golden Lands of Australia*, Longman Brown Green and Longmans, London, 1852, p. 34.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>145</sup> Lang, *The Coming Event or the United Provinces of Australia*, p. 7.

He argued that the Eastern Australian colonies having attained their maturity should unite to demand and, if necessary, fight for their entitlement to freedom and independence.<sup>146</sup>

While it is in the British constitution that Lang finds taxes are the property of the people and must be appropriated by their legitimate representatives, it is with reference to America that these are considered the natural rights of the people. Thus, Lang thundered “Does great Britain require that instructive lesson to be taught her in the Southern Hemisphere, as it was in the Northern? It would appear she does.”<sup>147</sup>

Lang argued Britain had failed in the providence of God to complete the work of colonisation, that as “God made the earth to be inhabited” he will hold Britain responsible for neglect of this duty”.<sup>148</sup> It was the duty of Britain to release the colonies from their relationship of bondage and “enable us to become a great and glorious people”.<sup>149</sup> This was Australia’s new world destiny as prescribed by Lang and the Anglo-American republican tradition. Despite his suspicion of the management of British colonisation and the suggestion that God will sanction any attempt by colonists to seize their independence, Lang managed to capture the most important element of republicanism of his day, adding “England, with all thy faults, we love thee still!”<sup>150</sup> There was no contradiction apparent in these sentiments for Lang. It was the rights of the glorious English constitution he

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<sup>146</sup> J. D. Lang, *Freedom for The Golden Lands of Australia*, p. 25. The Swan River settlement (Western Australia) having recently transformed itself into a penal colony was excluded from Lang’s federation.

<sup>147</sup> J. D. Lang *The Coming Event or the United Provinces of Australia*, p. 19.

<sup>148</sup> J. D. Lang *Freedom for The Golden Lands of Australia*, p. 5.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48.

demanded, rights that he perceived as natural and, in the tradition of American republicanism, divinely ordained. This is yet another ambivalence in the early republican discourse, on the one hand it celebrates the British constitution, demanding the rights contained within it, while at the same time declaring Britain a decadent and corrupt segment of the old world. Providence had declared a republican destiny for the Australian colonies and for Lang and other republicans of the early nineteenth century contradictions or proposals that would subvert this destiny would not only subvert the laws of nature, but also the will of God.

Lang's view of a democratic republic was outlined in his proposal for the creation of *The Seven United Provinces of Eastern Australia*. He advocated a federation between New South Wales, Victoria, Van Diemen's Land, South Australia, and three new provinces carved from the contemporary boundaries of Queensland; Cooks Land, Leicharts Land and Flinders Land. Each province would possess a House of Representatives and Senate which would be mirrored at the national level. Government would be open to men of "talent, enterprise and honourable ambition".<sup>151</sup> At the national level, Lang drew heavily upon the American federal compromise. The House of Representatives would be elected according to the population of each province while the Senate would have equal representation from each province and would be appointed by a joint meeting of each provincial House of Representatives and Senate.<sup>152</sup> The President and Vice President of

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<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

the republic would be directly elected by the people, with the Vice President acting as the speaker of the Senate, as in the United States.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast to Lang, William Charles Wentworth's proposals rested somewhere between a desire for responsible government within empire and advocacy of an aristocratic republic. As with Lang, Wentworth was familiar with America and acknowledged Australia's new world status, reflected in his famous poem *Australasia* written in 1823, which prophesied the demise of Britain and the resurrection of her spirit in the antipodes.<sup>154</sup> Wentworth began to define his political vision in the 1820 and 30s, but hints of potential radicalism were soon overcome by the pursuit of self interest and the attractiveness of Durham's prescription.<sup>155</sup> It was a young Wentworth who first introduced Horatio Wills to colonial politics after he defended Wills in court for absconding from his brother-in-law/master. Despite Wills' subsequent gratitude, the *Currency Lads'* levelling principles would have sat uneasily with Wentworth's later ambitions of securing a place in a colonial rural aristocracy.<sup>156</sup> As early as 1819, Wentworth informed London that it ignored the demands of colonists at its peril, warning the colony's tiny population could be marshalled behind the Blue mountains to fight out

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<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>154</sup> The poem was entered in a competition at Cambridge University for the Chancellor's gold medal for poetry. It came second. The poem ended: *A New Britannia in Another World*. Cited in I. Turner (ed), *The Australian Dream*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", p. 365.

<sup>156</sup> Wills' gratitude extended to naming his first born son Thomas Wentworth Wills and including in the banner of the *Currency Lad* the final lines of Wentworth's poem *Australasia*, "A New Britannia in Another World!".

a war of independence.<sup>157</sup> Pragmatically, sensing the changing character of empire, by the 1840s, Wentworth was no longer threatening war, but seeking to secure himself a prominent place in the future government of New South Wales in anticipation of the granting of responsible government.

Despite distinctive differences, both Wentworth and Lang had reserved government for the virtuous. Wentworth however, amended this ideal with property, confining rule to men of considerable property who had proven their honour and integrity by having freely arrived and succeeded in the colony. Wentworth desired not only the rights of the British constitution, but also the character of the constitution, which necessitated the establishment of an aristocracy of landed gentry, for which he was a renown spokesman and member. Unapologetically, Wentworth publicly declared "We want a British not a Yankee constitution".<sup>158</sup> He advocated the establishment of an oligarchy in which leading pastoralists would possess a peerage and entitlement to sit in the Legislative Council of New South Wales and scrutinise the popularly elected house. Significantly, Wentworth's proposed aristocracy could also have been extended to an aristocratic republic had he sought to act on his earlier threats of war, but it was not to be. His proposals emerged as the antithesis of the natural aristocracy envisaged by republicans such as Lang and Harpur and subsequently, he was openly chastised by two of the colonies most reputed republican poets, Charles Harpur and Daniel Deniehy. For these republicans, Wentworth had

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<sup>157</sup> W. C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its dependent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land: with a particular enumeration of the advantages which these colonies offer for emigrants, and their superiority in many respects over those possessed by the United States of America*, G and W.B. Whittaker, London, 1819, p.251.

<sup>158</sup> C. Pearl, *Brilliant Dan Deniehy: a Forgotten Genius*, Thomas Nelson Ltd, Melbourne, 1972, p. 24.

forsaken the manifest republican destiny of Australia for the lesser prize of responsible government and the veneration of empire.

With the passing of the *Australian Colonies Government Act 1850* the colonies had been formally invited to devise their own constitutions for the approval of the Imperial Parliament. This presented Wentworth with an opportunity to further his aristocratic ambitions. In 1853 the New South Wales council established a select committee to draw up a constitution for responsible self government. With Wentworth occupying the chair this committee produced a constitution that ensured a lower house dominated by rural interests, and a nominated upper house mirrored on the House of Lords. Not surprisingly, Wentworth's proposed lower house infuriated the merchants and bankers of Sydney while the upper house infuriated the mass of the colony.<sup>159</sup> Recalling the concern expressed in New South Wales regarding Grey's earlier proposals in the *Australian Colonies Government Bill* London was familiar with the sentiments of New South Wales. In particular they were aware of the colonists overwhelmingly preference for one house where nominees were in the minority to two houses where nominees could veto legislation.<sup>160</sup> Even so, Wentworth and much of his committee chose to ignore these local sentiments.

Following a public meeting of colonists concerned with the proposed constitution a committee was formed to protest, specifically against the proposed upper house. Among the notable members of this group was the young chartist Henry Parkes, and its youngest

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>160</sup> *Spectator* cited in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1850.

member of just twenty five, Daniel Deniehy. On the 16 of August a public meeting was arranged to oppose the proposed constitution. During this meeting the son of Irish convict parents, Daniel Deniehy, in a magnificent display of oratory, launched a broadside which effectively sunk Wentworth's proposed constitution and his peerage.

Insisting that he would "call things by their right name", he attacked the Legislative Council committee's attempt to constitute a native aristocracy. Inviting the crowd to imagine the proposed nobility paraded upon the stage, he proceeded to taunt the group of "Harlequin aristocrats", "Botany Bay magnificos" and "Australian mandarins". Encouraged by the cheers and laughter of the crowd he turned to classifying these would be aristocrats. Noting the contrariety of the antipodes he supposed, to the great enjoyment of the crowd, that they were to be favoured with a "Bunyip aristocracy".<sup>161</sup> By appealing to the legendary Bunyip, a mythical creature that inhabited the mystical swamps of the Australian interior, Deniehy relegated Wentworth and his position to ridicule. Wentworth's proposal was dead in the water. Charles Harpur, read the news of Deniehy's performance with delight and together both men set out to attack Wentworth. This was in spite of the fact that Wentworth's proposal could have been incorporated into an aristocratic republic. In effect, the republican prejudice towards Paine's natural aristocracy asserted itself in Deniehy's pronouncement of Wentworth's poem *Australasia* to be about "as execrable a piece of trash as it has ever been my misfortune to read", proclaiming Wentworth a man of "incurable commonplace mind". Harpur concurred "Mr Wentworth never had in him even the promise of a right masterly intellect".<sup>162</sup> In January 1854,

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<sup>161</sup>        *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1853.

<sup>162</sup>        Pearl, p. 27.



perceiving the tide was turning against him, Wentworth sailed for England to see through his committee's proposals. He returned only briefly to Australia in 1864 and remained in England until his death in 1872.<sup>163</sup> Deniehy was subsequently elected to the New South Wales legislature in 1857, but he was ill-equipped for such a role and in tragic circumstances died an appalling death from alcoholic poisoning at the age of 37.<sup>164</sup>

Both Deniehy and Harpur shared in Paine's vision of the revolutionary potential of the new world, categorically rejecting an Australian future as a appendage of the old. Both joined with Lang in looking to a natural aristocracy to lead this new world, repudiating any suggestion of the establishment of a native hereditary aristocracy. For Deniehy it was "honest and zealous patriots, men opposed to old-world values and the claptrappery of Flunkeyism" who would lead New South Wales.<sup>165</sup> In a letter to his friend Henry Parkes during preparations for the election of the new government of New South Wales in 1856, Deniehy outlined the character he sought in the new legislature:

...Talent or knowledge or political experience must for the most part be put aside; we *cannot* get them; we must seek out and put in *honest* men who have in addition to their trustworthiness, *some* claim to social respectability...The question must be put them thus: 'fit or unfit...will you not go in, at a crisis like this, to save the country?...'<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>164</sup> D. Headon. "God's Aristocracy: Daniel Henry Deniehy's Vision of a Great Australian Republic", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 28, 1993, pp. 136 - 145, pp.137-140.

<sup>165</sup> D. Headon. "'Sons of the Morning': Daniel Henry Deniehy's Trustees of the Coming Republic", in D Headon, J Warden and B Gammage (eds) *Crown and Country: The Traditions of Australian Republicanism*, Allen Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p. 60.

<sup>166</sup> Cited in Pearl, p. 54.

It was men of virtue that Deniehy sought, men who, regardless of their talents, would be prepared to risk all for their country; this would be "God's Aristocracy" Deniehy declared. Along with Harpur and Lang, Deniehy was a radical republican of this period, pursuing a dream of an Australian people who possessed the rights of the British Constitution and had the glorious destiny of the American republic before them.

With the ending of transportation and the subsequent achievement of responsible government and authority in internal affairs in 1856, much of the despair that had given rise to colonial agitation and republican sentiments dissipated. The colonists had been granted their rights, even though they were never conceded as natural but as legal rights, granted through an Act of Parliament. Most colonists appeared satisfied with the achievements of responsible government and the ending of transportation. Their demands had been met by the colonial administration and the British government.

Of the republican sentiments expressed over this period, few harboured serious notions of a war of independence and total separation from Britain in the immediate future. The main theme of republicanism was securing rights considered entitlements of birth and laying the institutional foundation for the eventual realisation of Australia's manifest destiny within an Anglo-American republican discourse. The character of early Australian republicanism was not that it was anti British per se, but that it was based on the belief that the future of mankind rested in a new world governed by virtuous men and the glorious potential of the British constitution could not be realised outside of this context. The old world was in a state of decay and accordingly, republicans looked to the legal rights

of the English constitution as a guide for what could be achieved in the new world within the context of a discourse of natural rights.

For the majority of colonists however, Australia's destiny rested in a Canadian like organisation, and they were unwilling to face reform that would jeopardise Australia's destiny as *A New Britannia in Another World*. For the republicans, responsible colonial government was a mere preamble in the fulfilment of Australia's republican destiny.

## A NEW AUSTRALIA.

Perhaps no lot of people more likely to make prosperous and creditable colonists ever left the shores of their native land. Frank-faced, honest-looking, self-respecting men, cleanly, decorous pleasant-spoken healthy-looking women-of such and of a large contingent of sturdy bright-faced children, is made up the live cargo of the *Abergedie*.<sup>167</sup>

The arrival in Sydney of the *S. S. Abergedie* in 1884, the first steam powered migrant ship to depart Britain for the Australian colonies, represented one of the many innovations in the late nineteenth century that would fundamentally alter the relationship between the Australian colonies and Britain. It also signified the changed social composition of the colonies with the threat of ships sailing into colonial harbours laden with misfits and deviants, destined for hellish penal settlements, long since terminated. In the 1880s, ships that departed from Plymouth Sound were steaming up Sydney Harbour carrying some of England's finest, destined for prosperous colonial centres. The passionate debates of thirty years previous surrounding convict transportation had faded and responsible government was secure in the eastern colonies. The republicans of the early half of the nineteenth century, and their issues, had been eclipsed as the century drew to a close by a new generation of republicans who, nonetheless, continued to draw upon the language of their predecessors. This was a generation motivated by a belief in the superior character of the Australian race and accordingly, republicans in the late nineteenth century incorporated notions of white, virtuous migration with the doctrine of manifest destiny established earlier in the century.

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*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1884.

Following the adoption of constitutions in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in 1856, and Queensland in 1859, responsible government became a reality on the Australian continent. In the space of a few decades, Governors had evolved from autocratic rulers, hounded into early graves or retirement by colonists to, as one Governor's wife recalled, a "dreadfully boring existence" at Government House.<sup>168</sup> Governors took on a ceremonial role, providing the example of style and social behaviour, as representatives of fashion as opposed to government.

Manning Clark has described the period from the discovery of gold to the early 1880s as the period when the seeds of a great society were sown, 1883 to 1901 was the harvest.<sup>169</sup> Republicans were merely one group participating in this harvest. This chapter will consider how the expectations of this harvest were threatened by a proposal to unite the empire under one great imperial federation that would undermine a republican destiny. The threat of imperial federation provided republicans with the rallying point that transportation and self government had earlier in the century. Imperial federation emerged as a viable option in the late nineteenth century as a consequence of the political and economic dominance that partnered British industrialisation and the technological advances in communication and travel.

In spite of the proposals reliance on advances in technology and industrialisation , imperial federation reflected upon the discourse that surrounded the British inability to accept

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<sup>168</sup> B. Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia: Glad, Confident Morning, 1860 - 1900*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 281.

<sup>169</sup> M. Clark, *Sources of Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 392.

eighteenth century American demands for autonomy and, an unwillingness to acknowledge the trend towards greater colonial self government. Imperial federation threatened a return to a pre Durham conception of empire, when the ideal of king-in-Parliament obscured the principles of local autonomy and empire was united under the sovereign.<sup>170</sup> Proponents of imperial federation offered one concession however; local representation in an Imperial Parliament. This, it was believed would legitimise parliament's sovereignty in the colonies and prevent a repeat of the American crisis. Despite this significant concession, the similarity between imperial federation and the structures of the old empire served to emphasise the lessons of the American experience as republicans worked to secure their liberty from captivity in the old world.

For republicans, the destiny of Australia did not rest with the election of representatives to an Imperial Parliament; only federation of the Australian colonies and a strengthening of local autonomy could be construed as progress leading to maturity. It was the federation of the Australian colonies that would take Australia the next step on the path to fulfilling its destiny.

Republican reaction to imperial federation was centred around the themes of defence and conspiracy; defence from foreign invasion, defence against the economic decay and the inequalities of the old world, defence of Australian interests, and defence against the Asiatic hordes who, in the nineteenth century imagination were waiting for the opportunity to descend upon the under populated Australian continent. This chapter will

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<sup>170</sup> Pocock, "The Imperial Crisis", p. 260.

illustrate that for republicans, these threats were symptomatic of the proposal for imperial federation.

In defending themselves against any further incursion of the old world, republicans extended, courtesy of an influx of socialist ideology, a concern for economic equality into their discourse in the late nineteenth century. A new world society could no longer simply strive for those characteristics defined by the American republic; in the late nineteenth century it would also have to engage in the redistribution of wealth. Australia's new world destiny had incorporated a vision of a workers' paradise that these second generation republicans considered unattainable in the old world. This vision could be undermined however, by imperial federation and the influx of cheap foreign labour under the guise of empire. The Chinese migrant was the central target of this campaign, symbolising a threat to both the living standards and destiny of Australia which was designated "whites only". Accordingly, nationalist aspirations had entered the republican vocabulary, constructed around the superiority of the British race and its white colonial, Australian, descendants.

These nationalist sentiments were heavily influenced by Social Darwinism which justified the belief in the inferiority of the native Australian races and added a biological foundation to republican aspirations. The destiny of the Australian race to live in the highest form of political and social organisation attainable, found legitimacy in the discourse of natural selection. Underlying late nineteenth century republican sentiments was an implicit recognition that as descendants of the British race, Australians shared the pinnacle of the social and biological hierarchy of evolution and accordingly, only the highest form of

political organisation would be appropriate. Only a republic would equate with the evolutionary positioning of the Australian race.

The inclusion of notions of racial superiority constitute a new and significant feature of late nineteenth century republican discourse. The earlier republican discourse of the 1850s was influenced by a fear that Australia's population was of dubious character, and action had to be taken to rectify this, namely the abolition of transportation. By the late nineteenth century, a reversal appears to take place as republicans began to work within an emerging national discourse, influenced by Darwinian and socialist ideals that classified Australians as among the most biologically evolved and economically advanced in the world.

The first section of this chapter seeks to contextualise the proposal for imperial federation. This will provide a basis from which to sketch how republicans defined themselves against this proposal within an emerging nationalist discourse, manifested through a recognition that the Australian colonies possessed distinct national interests which could not be accommodated within empire. And finally, the last section will profile republican participation and the influence of republican ideals in the formation of a federal constitution.

## **RULE BRITANNIA: IMPERIAL FEDERATION**

OUR country was following the natural laws which made for Independence, but she has been pulled up sharply by a chain that binds her



to a military federation with the most warlike and warring country in existence.<sup>171</sup>

For Robert Thomson, in sentiments reminiscent of Lang, natural law decreed that Australia would inevitably become an independent republic. Imperial federation would hinder, if not prevent, Australia from fulfilling this destiny. It would bind Australia to the old world and, by implication, to perpetual subordination and adolescence. Subsequently, republicans detested Imperial federation. By the late nineteenth century, in spite of the incoherencies and inconsistencies within their discourse, the claim to be a republican would clearly signify an adherence to a set of principles that rested in a belief in the republican destiny of the new world.

However, the impact of technological change in the second half of the nineteenth century had ushered in a radically different conception of empire and made imperial federation a viable proposal. The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 resulted in a monumental reduction in travelling time to and from the Australian colonies, while the completion of the overland telegraph line in 1872 linking the colonies, via submarine cable, to Europe further revolutionised communications. Keeping pace with these innovations was the Colonial Office which had become increasingly skilful in the art of managing empire. The consequence for the colonies of technological advancement in their relationship to the Colonial Office was captured in the somewhat overstated criticism of the Victorian Attorney-General in 1871, George Higinbotham, who remarked that Victorians have been fooled into believing they possessed self government when in fact a colonial law officer

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<sup>171</sup> R. Thomson, *Australian Nationalism: An earnest Appeal to the Sons of Australia in Favour of the Federation and Independence of the States of our Country*, Moss Brothers, Sydney, 1888, p. 81.

has been governing them for the previous fifteen years.<sup>172</sup> The evolution of a system of imperial scrutiny was partnered by an intensifying of the belief that empire had become a white man's burden, payed for by the British tax payer. This concern with the expense of empire was exacerbated by the cost involved in converting the Royal Navy from sail to steam, imperative if Britain was to protect its trading routes and retain its position as the preeminent naval power.

Innovation and improved communications were not the only revolutionary changes to influence the colonies relationship with Britain in the late nineteenth century. Following the death of her Prince Consort in 1861, Queen Victoria's withdrawal from government presented the opportunity to reconstitute the Crown as the symbolic embodiment of empire.<sup>173</sup> The transformation of monarchy into an imperial symbol corresponded with London's transformation into the centre of national and imperial politics. The rural basis to the English economy had been firmly supplanted by the burgeoning urban and industrial centres. Provincial and colonial loyalties had been subsequently weakened and in both cases, Queen Victoria was placed at the centre of this realignment, symbolising stability, continuity and unity.<sup>174</sup>

Under the tutelage of conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, the Crown captured its subjects imagination through expertly managed ceremonies.<sup>175</sup> This reinvigorated

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>173</sup> Cannadine, p. 118.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>175</sup> Butler, "Colonial Self Government, 1838 - 1852", p. 383.

monarchy functioned as the symbol of imperial Britannia, extending the influence, power and prestige of empire across the globe. The extension of the Queen's title in 1877 to include the "Empress of India" was reflective of the monarch's growing symbolic significance and the Crown's new symbolic relationship with the colonies.<sup>176</sup> Disraeli had argued the loosening of the political ties with the colonies had not been met with an equal concern for increasing those sympathies which served to preserve the union declaring

...no Minister in this country will do his duty who neglects any opportunity of reconstructing as much as possible our colonial Empire, and of responding to those sympathies which may become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land.<sup>177</sup>

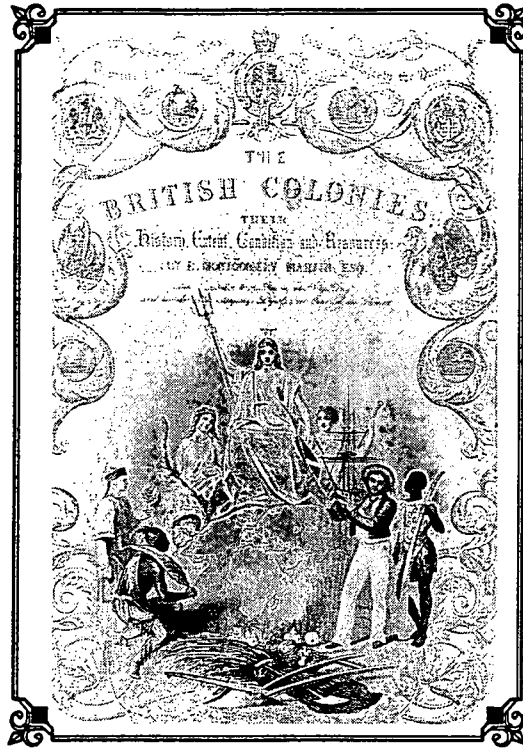
In the second half of Victoria's reign, the potent image of Britannia perched on the globe, observing from Olympian heights her colonial possessions was overwhelming. Courtesy of Disraeli, every great royal occasion would be an imperial occasion accompanied by the sounds of *Rule Britannia*.<sup>178</sup> From a diverse community of race and cultures the empire was welded into a symbolic unity. Within this unity the divisions that had first appeared at the beginning of the century were further strengthened. While the Australian colonies enjoyed self government in internal matters and earned the title "Dominions" they were sharply differentiated from "Crown Colonies" where the Governor continued to exercise the powers of government with little prospect of surrender. And finally there was India, which was accorded a distinctive status in reflection of British ambitions of assimilating

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<sup>176</sup> S. Weintraub, *Disraeli: a Biography*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1993, p. 571.

<sup>177</sup> Cited in J. R. M. Butler, "Imperial Questions in British Politics", in E. A. Benians, J. R. M. Butler, P. N. S. Mansergh and E. A. Walker, *CHBE*, Vol 3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 41.

<sup>178</sup> Cannadine, p. 124.



**Figure 2 Front Piece from R. M. Martin, *The British Colonies: Their history, extent, condition and resources*, J. F. Tallis, London, 1857.**

India into the self governing parts of the empire.<sup>179</sup>

During this period the social basis that would predominate in Australia until the final dismantling of the discriminatory policies of White Australia in 1970s was also beginning to exert its influence. With the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* in 1859, a readiness by British theorists to accept the relevance of biology in the relationship between race was bolstered.<sup>180</sup> Theorists accepted Darwin's principle that the human species was descended from a common ancestor and that a graduated series of

<sup>179</sup> Benians, "The Empire in the New Age, 1870-1919", pp. 1 - 2

<sup>180</sup> See G. Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory*, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1980. Especially chapter VIII "Race and Class".

links provided evidence of this evolution. A natural social hierarchy evolved, under the title of Social Darwinism, that explained the relationship between racial groups as a result of natural selection and characterised native races as earlier and less developed historical forms.<sup>181</sup> For the Australian colonists, Social Darwinism not only reinforced the subordinate relationship between indigenous races and European settlers, but justified their subordination on natural, biological grounds.<sup>182</sup> There were few in the Australian colonies that disputed the superiority of the British race within this social hierarchy. Not only were the British justified in ruling over primitive races; the laws of nature obligated them to spread European civilisation across the globe, this was the white man's burden. The British Empire was the natural consequence of the survival of the strongest.<sup>183</sup> In this environment of heightened awareness of race, of increasing metropolitan control and mass ritualisation of monarchy, it was conceivable that Britain, and its predominantly white colonies would federate and together rule the empire, if not the world. With this vision in mind the Imperial Federation League made rapid progress in Britain and the colonies advocating the uniting of empire around federal principles.<sup>184</sup>

Significantly, Queen Victoria—the symbolic head of empire—was the obvious target of this late nineteenth century republican discourse rather than the Colonial Office, as had been the case earlier in the century. The abortive attempts in Sydney to plan the celebrations

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<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 141 - 142.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>184</sup> R. E. Robinson, "Imperial Problems in British Politics", in E. A. Benians, J. R. M. Butler, P. N. S. Mansergh and E. A. Walker, *CHBE*, Vol 3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 177.

for the Queen's jubilee in 1887 reflected the new symbolic presence of the Crown in the colonies. A gathering at the Sydney Town Hall to plan celebrations for the Queen's forthcoming jubilee was swamped by unsympathetic colonists and a resolution passed denouncing any attempt to celebrate the sovereign as potentially detrimental to the "democratic spirit of the colony".<sup>185</sup> Officials, concerned that this resolution was not reflective of the colonists true affection for the Queen, planned a sequel that was attended by some of Sydney's leading figures who were subsequently treated to scenes of wild wrestling. After order was restored the shaken officials retired to privately denounce the "insignificant" minority and reaffirm their loyalty to the Queen and plan a third attempt.<sup>186</sup> Under the watchful gaze of the undergraduates of Sydney University and several local football clubs, the third meeting took place and, in spite of an attempt by "free-thinkers" to rush the stage, the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared the deliberations a success.<sup>187</sup> By the third meeting it was clear that public expressions of loyalty to the Queen, and by implication to the cause of empire and imperial federation, would attract at the least a few hecklers and at worst trigger a riot. The republican discourse of the later half of the nineteenth century placed a stress on monarchy that had been absent earlier in the century. Poet and republican, Henry Lawson, proclaimed the Queen "cold", "dull", "fat", "callous", "selfish" and "brainless". The empire had its symbol of glory, unity and honour. Republicans correspondingly now had a symbol of all that was decadent about the old world.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 1887.

<sup>186</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1887.

<sup>187</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June 1887

<sup>188</sup> H. Lawson, "The English Queen: a Birthday Ode", L. Cronin (ed), *a Camp-Fire Yarn*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1986, pp. 210 - 212.



Figure 3. *Bulletin*, 27 February 1886

The image in the *Bulletin* of Queen Victoria resting upon a mound of hundreds of thousands of surplus pounds while distributing a penny to the poor and starving of England brings together the two themes of republicanism during this period. Firstly, it illustrates the heightened awareness of empire and control from the centre; the figure of Queen Victoria represents this power. Secondly, it illustrates the concern of republicans not to replicate the old world and to overcome the inequality associated with a less than fair distribution of wealth. In the background the figure of a goddess floats above the Queen, drawing the sword of liberty in anticipation to strike a fatal blow to Victoria and empire, having been judged guilty of complicity in the starvation of her subjects.

Major-General Henry Tottenham would have argued the Queen was unjustly accused. In a pamphlet addressed to the colonists of Sydney in 1887, Tottenham was the realisation

of Robert Thomson's fears regarding Britain's propensity for military adventurism. The differences between the various races of the empire eclipsed the differences within the British race for Tottenham. Imperial federation was constructed upon the "oneness and indivisibility of our race and nation...", a unity Tottenham assumed to exist.<sup>189</sup> This assumed unity was the fundamental flaw of imperial federation. It assumed a common blood line equalled a common interest. The colonists were indeed part of the British race, but it did not follow that their interests were identical to those of Britain. This fact was apparently overlooked by supporters of imperial federation. Republicans, while sharing in the belief of the superiority of the British race, believed that their shared racial origin was where the link began and ended.

The imperial federation debate drew support from both a colonial and metropolitan base. In the Australian colonies, its support was drawn extensively from the upper middle classes of Victoria and Tasmania who saw in the proposal the possibility for glory, promotion and peerage.<sup>190</sup> Republicans seized on this point, arguing imperial federation would necessitate the establishment of a native aristocracy on par with that of Britain. Wentworth's bunyip aristocracy would see the light of the day and peerages would be bestowed on the "humbugs and lickspittles of the community".<sup>191</sup> Nevertheless, support in the colonies for the ideal of imperial federation remained marginal. London based

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<sup>189</sup> Major General Tottenham, *An Address on Imperial Federation*, Calder, Bowden and Co, Hobart, 1887, p. 5.

<sup>190</sup> C. Blackton, "Australian Nationality and Nationalism: The Imperial Federationist Interlude, 1885-1901", *Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand*, Vol 7, 1955, p. 4 - 5.

<sup>191</sup> *Bulletin*, 20 March 1886.



patrons sponsored much of the push, concerned to relieve British taxpayers of the burdensome costs of empire by distributing the expense to the colonies.

J. R. Seeley, professor of modern history at Cambridge University in his book, *The Expansion of England* written in 1890, argued imperial federation was a natural progression in an imperial age. He proposed a "Greater Britain", a vision that was both an extension of the English state and a community united in race, religion and interest; a vision that united people through "the strongest tie" of blood.<sup>192</sup> In respect to America, and the influence it exerted over the new world, Seeley argued the conditions for American independence were only temporary and had since been removed. America, according to Seeley, was not the vision of progress, but a Greater Britain was.<sup>193</sup>

Three years before Seeley, Tottenham had outlined his analysis of a Greater Britain as a militaristic federation of one race united and ruling over the world.<sup>194</sup> To achieve this, the colonies would be governed by a strong federal ministry. A ministry drawn from an Imperial Parliament elected by a united empire of white men. It was defence which drove Tottenham's vision. Defence against the incursions of other imperial powers, and most importantly, defence of the British race against the Asiatic populations that significantly outnumbered the combined British population of the Empire. R. J. Beadon, addressing a public meeting of the Tasmania branch of the Imperial Federation League, followed through this concern for defence. He advocated imperial federation on the basis that the

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<sup>192</sup> J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, Macmillan, London, 1909, p. 11.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>194</sup> Tottenham, p. 12.

defence of the Australian colonies proved an unfair expense to the British tax payer. Britain's military power together with the colonies finances would secure the defence of the empire. For Beadon, imperial federation and national unity were the same thing so the Australian colonists should accordingly pay their fair share for imperial and local defence.<sup>195</sup> The nature of a united empire that included diverse cultures and races was of great concern to the British patriot Edward Freeman. He argued that he wanted nothing to do with a federation that included the Indian sub-continent. He foresaw that the capital of such a federation would rest in its most populous component which would be India. Westminster would be reduced to the miserable status of a Canton legislature and ruled from Delhi.<sup>196</sup> Freeman's fears were addressed in the very same volume by the editor however, who clearly indicated Crown dependencies and India were "obviously" excluded from the vision of federation.<sup>197</sup>

The vagueness which surrounded the use of the term federation plagued the cause of imperial federation. Federation suggests an agreement entered into by equal partners. How the native populations would enter into an imperial federation when they were considered biologically inferior was a distinct problem. As for the colonies, they would have to acquire independence before they could enter any agreement with Britain on equal terms. For Alfred Taylor, librarian at the Tasmanian Public Library, the contradictions inherent in imperial federation were far too overwhelmingly to support the ideal. He concurred

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<sup>195</sup> R. J. Beadon, *Imperial Federation*, Public Lecture of the Tasmanian Branch, Imperial Federation League, Hobart, 24 April 1888.

<sup>196</sup> E. A. Freeman, "Physical and Political Bases of National Unity", A. S. White, *Britannia's Confederation*, George Philip and Sons, London, 1892.

<sup>197</sup> A. S. White. *Britannia's Confederation*, George Philp and Sons, London, 1892, p. xi.

with the sentiments of republicans that it would amount to nothing more than domination from Downing Street.<sup>198</sup>



Figure 4. *Bulletin*, 23 April 1887

It was a recognition that Australia faced a potential future as a mere appendage of Britain that drove republicans to label supporters of imperial federation as traitors to Australia's destiny, seeking fame and title in the old world while forsaking the glory that awaited them in the new.<sup>199</sup> They were a "creation beneath a formless, organless, boneless, stomachless, brainless polype" the *Bulletin* declared.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>198</sup> A. J. Taylor, *Imperial Federation versus Australian Independence*, The Mercury office, Hobart, 1889, pp. 3 - 8.

<sup>199</sup> Figure 4. Caption Reads:

*LET US FEDERATE*

*Little Red Riding Hood Australia: "O, Grandmother, what nice imperial teeth you have!"*

*Granny Downing Street: "All the better to chew you up with, my little colonial dear."*

<sup>200</sup> *Bulletin*, 2 July 1887

## “AUSTRALIA FOR AUSTRALIANS”

If our loyalty means neither more nor less than the sacrifice of all our interests, hopes, and manhood to English avarice, cupidity, and pride, undeniably the time has come when we should cut the painter...The days of our childhood are passed and the hour of Manhood is at hand.<sup>201</sup>

While internal self government recognised the need for local responses to local issues, in the matters of defence, trade and external affairs however, the colonies were constrained to follow the lead of the imperial government. As the nineteenth century progressed, the demands from within the colonies to exercise some form of external power increased leading republicans to conclude the interests of the Australian colonies were subordinated to those of Empire and for the *Bulletin* to declare:

Already are the people of these colonies becoming aware to the fatal truth that their interests are utterly subordinated to those of a power separated from them by thousands of leagues of ocean.<sup>202</sup>

Jules François Archibald's *Bulletin*, perhaps the most renowned advocate of republicanism in the 1880s expressed unequivocally a national interest that rested beyond the boundaries of empire. Where Archibald was concerned, he was witnessing Australia's republican destiny unfold before him.<sup>203</sup> In countering the defence issue, primary among proponents of imperial federation, the *Bulletin* proposed a policy of continentalism; that the Australian borders should not extend beyond the continental land mass and Tasmania. As far as the *Bulletin* was concerned, continentalism nullified the need for British defence - if Australia shared no land borders there would be no need to become entangled in a war.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *Republican* 4 July 1887

<sup>202</sup> *Bulletin*, 2 July 1887

<sup>203</sup> S. Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: a Strange Case of Authorship*, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1987, p. 133.

<sup>204</sup> *Bulletin*, 14 July 1883

It was with this strategy of continentalism in mind that the *Bulletin* responded in 1883 to the Queensland Premier, Thomas McIlwraith's unilateral annexation of New Guinea with the approval of other Australian colonies. In Sydney the action was significantly reported as "...the first independent act of a son announcing...that he has come of age".<sup>205</sup> The unprecedented move by the colony was the climax in Britain's reluctance to establish a protectorate over New Guinea and secure it from foreign, mainly German, ambitions; a reluctance that reflected the anxious state of many in London to rid Britain of the responsibilities and costs of governing distant, primitive peoples. Britain's principle motive of new colonial acquisitions in the early 1880s was to protect communication and trade links with India. Accordingly, New Guinea was considered neither a potential strategic nor a commercial asset.

In a stern reproach to the Queensland government the British Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Derby, reminded the Queensland government that its powers did not extend to external affairs, and certainly not the unilateral establishment of British protectorates. The British government subsequently nullified the Queensland action declaring;

It is well understood that the officers of a Colonial Government have no power or authority to act beyond the limits of their colony...It is, therefore, much to be regretted that your advisers should, without apparent necessity, have taken on themselves the exercise of powers which they did not possess.<sup>206</sup>

The Colonial Office proposed two solutions to colonial anxiety over New Guinea. It advised Queensland to immediately inform London, via cable, if action was required and

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<sup>205</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 23 June 1883, cited in Kingston, p. 300.

<sup>206</sup> Earl of Derby to The officer Administering the Government of Queensland, Downing Street, 11 July 1883, in N. Meaney, *Australia and the World: a Documentary History from the 1870's to the 1970's*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985, pp. 60 - 62.

Britain would act within hours. Queensland and the other concerned colonies viewed this proposal with particular scepticism, given it took nearly two weeks to inform London of the annexation due to the remote nature of Northern Queensland. The alternative option canvased by London was that the Australian colonies raise the necessary funds to establish a protectorate. A conference of interested colonies was held in late 1883 and a resolution passed to establish a Federal Council to coordinate matters such as defence co-operation between the colonies.<sup>207</sup>

It was later in the decade that Britain's interests were sufficiently challenged to encourage a renewed phase of expansion in the South Pacific. The imperial ambitions of Germany and fears of further French expansion into the New Hebrides from their base in New Caledonia, which to the disgust of the Australians had been transformed into a penal colony, provided the catalyst for Britain's proclamation of a protectorate over the southern portion of New Guinea in 1884.<sup>208</sup> Australian attempts to implement a policy comparable to the American Monroe doctrine in the South Pacific had failed to gain the necessary British support in the crucial early years of the 1880s and consequently, the South Pacific was divided between competing European empires. For republicans, the principles of the Monroe Doctrine were equally applicable to the South Pacific as they were to the Americas. American concerns at European monarchs interfering in the affairs of the new world were appropriated by Australian republicans and applied to the South Pacific. Republicans had hoped for a comparable declaration as that given by President

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<sup>207</sup> Kingston, pp. 298 - 299.

<sup>208</sup> Benians, "The Empire in the New Age, 1870-1919", p. 6.

Monroe in 1823; that any future colonisation by Europe would be regarded as an unfriendly act.<sup>209</sup> It was not forthcoming.

The *Bulletin* denounced Queensland's attempt to annex New Guinea on two accounts. Firstly, it was assessed as misplaced imperial ambition on the part of Australia and contrary to the adherence to a policy of continentalism. Secondly, the paper branded the act a cynical attempt by the Queensland premier to "dazzle the populace" and win the forthcoming election.<sup>210</sup> Nonetheless, republican advocacy of federation benefited greatly from the Colonial Office's subsequent disallowance. It was in the act of child like subordination that republicans considered inappropriate for a race that shared the pinnacle of evolution with the British and, the events surrounding New Guinea had provided republicans with a great example of subordination. For republicans, imperial federation prescribed the absorption of the Australian colonies by England with the effect of rendering the colonists in perpetual adolescence. Consequently, republicans were at the fore in the movement for the federation of the Australian colonies.

The impetus for colonial federation gained momentum when London, portrayed as John Bull in the *Bulletin*, had restrained the expansionist ambitions of Queensland.<sup>211</sup> The administrations in the colonies argued it was in their interests to further expand the

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<sup>209</sup> F. Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism 1843-1849*, W. W. Norton, Toronto, 1966, p. 4.

<sup>210</sup> *Bulletin*, 18 July 1883

<sup>211</sup> FIGURE 5. Caption reads: *John Bull: Hallo There! Just Drop It Now!*"

empire, contrary to imperial strategy that wished to contain the expense of existing responsibilities. A national interest was consequently evolving among the colonies, but it



Figure 5 *Bulletin*, 14 July 1883

would take another two decades before the recognition of this shared national interest could overcome a tradition of inter-colonial rivalry.

The *Bulletin's* vision, of an isolated Arcadia, prospering in peace, and at harmony with its surrounds, was shattered when Germany took possession of northern New Guinea and the adjacent islands. Australia's region was no longer insulated from the turmoil of Europe the paper announced. "Europe is to be reconstituted here" it declared, the decadence of the old world had descended upon the northern shores of Australia.<sup>212</sup> If the Australian colonies were to avoid a fate as victims of Britain's wars, which henceforth might be

<sup>212</sup>

*Bulletin*, 3 January 1885.



fought in the South Pacific as well as the Mediterranean, immediate action was necessary to distance Australia from Britain. The best way to escape this fate, the *Bulletin* announced, was to separate from England. It was Australia's continued links to England which would drag it into conflicts in which Australia had no interest. Predictably the *Bulletin* responded with horror to the despatch of 750 infantry and artillery by New South Wales to the Sudan in 1885. This was perceived by many republicans as a token of things to come. Australian colonists would become casualties of Britain's imperialist ambitions across the world, while Australian national interests would be constrained by an obstinate Colonial Office.<sup>213</sup> The *Bulletin* warned that New South Wales' contribution, while merely a symbolic gesture, would have enormous repercussions for furthering the cause of imperial federation.<sup>214</sup>

In May 1887, another event signified to republicans that imperial federation was imminent. Colonial delegates gathered in London to celebrate the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria. Taking advantage of the celebrations, officials and politicians discussed matters of common concern within the empire. A negotiated defence agreement emerged and a decision was made to establish a permanent naval station in Australia, funded by the colonies, under British command. The *Bulletin* denounced the arrangement and restated its belief that Australian security was best served by severing the ties with Britain.<sup>215</sup> The likelihood of imperial federation had significantly increased according to the *Sydney Morning Herald's* London correspondent who declared the conference "...the first

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<sup>213</sup> *Bulletin*, 20 March 1886.

<sup>214</sup> *Bulletin*, 16 May 1885.

<sup>215</sup> *Bulletin*, 7 May 1887.

practical attempt to bind the English communities on the face of the earth into a union". The editor of the paper was more cautious, declaring the implications of the imperial conference premature, "it is too early to think about imperial federation when the colonies are only now learning to communicate and cooperate with each other", he warned.<sup>216</sup>

The evolving republican discourse on defence in the 1880s was classically articulated by Henry Lawson in the *Republican*. Lawson declared the only protection Australia required was protection against England: protection from those characteristics which define England such as title-worship, class distinction, oppression of the poor, the monarchy, and customs that rightly belong in the middle ages; protection against the encroachment of the evils and corruption of the old world.<sup>217</sup>

In launching the short lived Sydney based newspaper the *Republican*, Louisa Lawson with the assistance of her son, Henry, made it clear in their monthly editions where they stood on the issues of the day. They were unashamedly republican, socialist, and racist. They saw Australia's destiny as resting with a world of democracy, which extended beyond mere participation in government to a form of labourism which supported the rights and conditions of workers against migrant labour and unscrupulous capital.

This was a period when socialist doctrines provided a heightened awareness of class, a time when capital was viewed with suspicion and workers fought for basic conditions and wages within the framework of class struggle. The destiny of the new world was

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<sup>216</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1887.

<sup>217</sup> *Republican*, 5 October 1887

increasingly being framed to dispense with the wealth disparity of the old world. In its advocacy of labour, the *Republican* served to reinforce the message of its larger and respected republican cousin the *Bulletin*. Both papers agreed imperial federation was not an option. In the case of the *Republican*, a war of independence was inevitable against the “warriors whose mission it is to preserve the old order of things”.<sup>218</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, news and stories of the poverty of the industrial centres of Britain reinforced a republican belief that the old world was in perpetual decline. The stories of social dislocation and destitution characteristic of industrialisation must not happen in the new world republicans declared. For the *Bulletin*, Australia’s future was one of prosperity and progress, of a society characterised as a worker’s paradise where conditions of employment exceeded those of other nations. It was through this prosperity that the republican notion of democracy would be achieved. Australia would be a democracy which left behind the class and religious divisions of the old world and possessed a democratic spirit that would provide a generous standard of living for all white Australians.

The republican embrace of socialist discourse in the late nineteenth century reflected the emergence of a new basis to the economic and social fabric of Australian society that encompassed aspects of this new social democratic spirit. Beginning with the Victorian Factory Act of 1883, the Australian colonies passed legislation ensuring a minimum standard of living, far more advanced than any proposed legislation in Europe.<sup>219</sup> Victorian

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<sup>218</sup> *Republican*, July 4 1887.

<sup>219</sup> M. Clark, *Sources in Australian History*, p. 442.

banker, Henry. G. Turner, proudly boosted in 1882 that “It may safely be said that there is no country in the world where material prosperity and substantial comfort of the working classes are so assured as in Australia”.<sup>220</sup> Such prosperity was a reflection of the level of progress in the Australian colonies. It was, of course, Australians fulfilling their divine duty, New South Wales congregationalist James Jefferis declared in 1888.<sup>221</sup>

Nevertheless, this did not prevent violent strike action in the 1890s when an unparalleled depression was further aggravated by severe drought. The environment was not conducive to push workers claims against capital, but increasing poverty necessitated such action in the minds of many republicans. If Australia was to take its place in the new world it would have to overcome the wealth and class disparity of the old world, it would have to provide for a free and equal citizenry in economic as well as political terms. It was a belief that something had gone terribly wrong in the natural progress of Australia, that the poverty typical of Europe was increasingly obvious in Australian cities, that led the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne to call for a day of prayer in the hope that God will “restore to us times of prosperity”.<sup>222</sup> The process of the unfolding of the millennial seed was faltering according to the Bishop and it was only in turning to God that the Australian colonies would return to prosperity.

Undoubtedly, while many republicans would have joined the Bishop in prayer, William Lane would not have been one of them. Editor of the republican mouthpiece *The*

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<sup>220</sup> H. G. Turner “Advance Australia”, in Turner, p.105.

<sup>221</sup> J. Jefferis “Why has God sent us here?”, in Turner, pp. 111 - 114.

<sup>222</sup> M. Clark, *Sources in Australian History*, p.416.

*Boomerang*, and later the socialist newspaper *The Worker*, Lane reported on the industrial turmoil throughout the colonies, arguing the future destiny of Australia rested with a radical socialist program.<sup>223</sup> As a passionate socialist, prosperity, freedom and equality could not coexist with economic inequality, according to Lane.

Lane's belief was that the new world could create an economic system that could overcome the destructive nature of the market as witnessed during the depression. Lane viewed the Australian reluctance to pursue the socialist path however, as representing a capitulation to the old world of capital and inequality. Consequently, Australia's destiny as part of the new world would be played out elsewhere. Together with a band of loyal supporters, Lane established the doomed colony of "New Australia" in 1893.<sup>224</sup> One hundred miles east of the Paraguayan capital of Asuncion, Lane and his supporters laboured to realise Australia's new world destiny.

Most republicans were not as pessimistic about the future as Lane. The immediate threat to the progress and evolving democratic spirit of the Australian colonies they believed was not in the inability to introduce socialism but migration.<sup>225</sup> The increasingly diverse nature of empire, with peoples from all races joined in a union under the Crown, was repugnant to republican nationalist aspirations and heightened the sense of a distinctive colonial interest in conflict with imperial priorities. Australia was British, and this was defined

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<sup>223</sup> G. Souter, *a Peculiar People: The Australians in Paraguay*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1968, pp. 5 - 10.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>225</sup> *Bulletin* 6 November 1886

narrowly as white and descended from the British isles. For republicans, the importation of the empire's "coloured" races would threaten the purity of the Australian race and challenge white employment and labour conditions. The similarity between these republican sentiments and those expressed earlier in the century are noteworthy. In both cases republicans feared the influx of particular migrants would be detrimental to the achievement of a republic. In the 1850s it was convicts that threatened the establishment of a virtuous population and in the 1880s it was coloured labour, in particular Chinese labour, that threatened the republican democratic vision. These similarities reveal that by the late nineteenth century, elitism was a distinct feature of republican discourse. Republicans watched over Australian society from their olympian heights and willingly passed judgement on Australia's interests and accordingly, they declared Chinese and coloured immigration was not in the national interest. By the end of the nineteenth century it was clear the absence of a republic had not prevented republicans from behaving as if they constituted Paine's natural republican aristocracy.

More than any other migrant group in Australia, the Chinese were identified as representing a challenge to Australia's republican destiny. Chinese migration would see the working conditions of white Australians reduced to those of the Chinese competitor, "a hermit, a miser, an outcast, a Diogenes...". These "interlopers" did not possess the "progressive spirit of the Nineteenth Century" declared the *Republican*, and consequently were ill suited to the republican project ordained for Australia.<sup>226</sup> The threat posed by Chinese labour was linked, in the minds of these republicans, with the cause of imperial

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<sup>226</sup> *Republican*, 15 October 1887

federation. Chinese migrants were in fact characterised as “loyalists” to the imperial federation cause. Imperial federation, republicans argued, would result in an influx of Chinese labourers that would undermine attempts to establish a workers democracy and result in rule by a contemptuous native aristocracy in conjunction with London. This fear

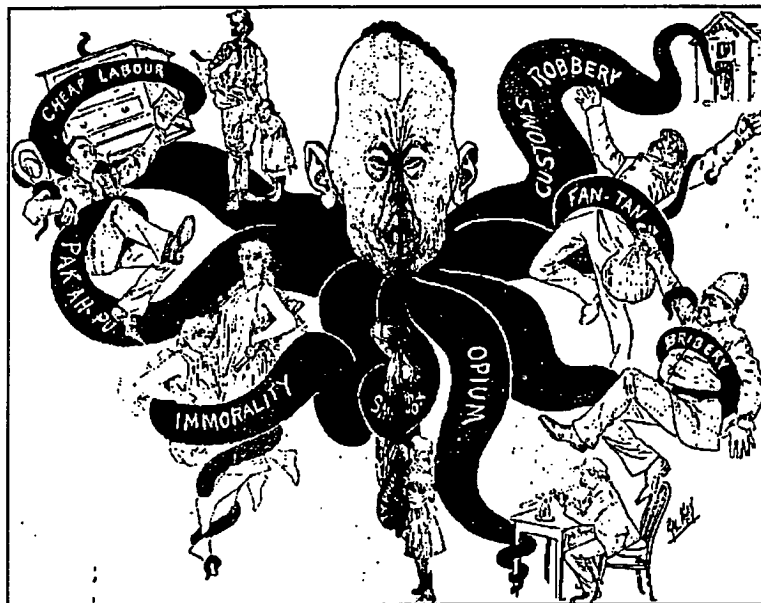


Figure 6. *Bulletin*, 21 August 1886.

manifested itself in republican circles and was encouraged by the notorious caricature “The Mongolian Octopus” by Phil May. The image warned the Chinese race would spread their corruptive tentacles into every aspect of society. The brutal solution to “The Chinese Question” as announced by the *Republican* was clear in the sentiment; “...so long as he lives the whole world may perish”.<sup>227</sup> The *Bulletin* had reserved “Australia for Australians”, the title of its most famous editorial, and declared “No nigger, no Chinaman, no lascar, no kanaka, no purveyor of cheap coloured labour is an Australian”.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>227</sup> *Republican*, 15 October 1887

<sup>228</sup> *Bulletin*, 2 July 1887

London had in fact reinforced the exclusivist tendency of republicans by vetoing a Queensland gold fields bill in 1876 that prevented Chinese from working on Queensland's gold fields on the grounds it was repugnant to Britain's treaty obligations and offensive.<sup>229</sup> Imperial federation moreover, was conceived as a plan by London to force open the gates of the colonies to Asian migration under the guise of imperial federation and British citizenship. A federated and independent Australia could act to ensure "ports could be absolutely closed to the Chinese..." and ensure the resources of Australia were not "exploited by every unwashed tribe in the British dominions".<sup>230</sup> A republic could secure Australian interest against imperial intent. For republicans, Australia was a continent blessed from heaven with an abundance of riches, the proceeds of which had been bequeathed to white Australia, their ownership, an ordination of god. It was this sentiment which Robert Thomson captured in 1888:

Our country, by the law of God, is one and indivisible. It is peopled by men of the same colour, tongue and lineage, and, as one country peopled by the same race, it should form one nation.<sup>231</sup>

### **"A CONTINENT FOR A PEOPLE, A PEOPLE FOR A CONTINENT"<sup>232</sup>**

A day of separation may come. In the fulness of time the desire to cling to the parent of our national existence might be a weakness at once unworthy of our spirit and of our destinies. But the period is distant, if it need ever arrive, and any attempt to force such a consummation would be generally deplored.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Kingston, p. 294.

<sup>230</sup> *Bulletin*, 23 April 1887

<sup>231</sup> Thomson., p. 35.

<sup>232</sup> This statement is attributed to Edmund Barton, Australia's first Prime Minister and a principle campaigner for federation.

<sup>233</sup> G. H. Reid, *An Essay on New South Wales, The Mother Colony of the Australias*, Thomas Richards, second edition, Sydney, 1878, p. 143.



These sentiments expressed in 1878 by the future New South Wales premier, George Houston Reid reflected a common perception in the late nineteenth century towards republicanism. While many were sympathetic to the belief that a republic was inevitable, it was not going to occur in the near future. For republicans, federation was conceived as a natural progression in the evolution from self government in 1856 and reflected the evolving progress and maturity of the colonies with Melbourne having earned the impressive titles “marvellous Melbourne”, “the Paris of the Antipodes” and “the Chicago of the South”.<sup>234</sup>

The late nineteenth century ushered in two contradictory elements into Australian discourse generally: one of a shared British racial origin and another a recognition of a unique Australianness. This was an awareness that while Australians shared their membership of the British race, at some point within this relationship a distinctive Australian character had evolved. Accordingly, federation within an overriding imperial structure, as had been achieved successfully in Canada, comprised the dominant discourse of the period. Australians would be Australians, but they would also be British at the same time. While republicans were advocating federation as a further step in achieving Australia’s manifest destiny, loyalty to Empire was steadily emerging as the dominant theme within the Australian colonies. This loyalty did not extend however to colonists embracing imperial federation which threatened to eclipse any recognition of Australian distinctiveness.

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A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1968, p. 278.

Propelled by events in New Guinea, the first attempt at establishing a federal institution occurred in 1886. The establishment of the Federal Council of Australasia had recognised that the Australian colonies shared common interests, especially in the area of limiting foreign expansion in the South Pacific. The Council did not constitute a federation however. With a delegated federal legislature, no executive, and limited power to pass laws on areas of common colonial interest, the Council had almost no power to raise funds and little ability to enforce its decisions. The doomed fate of the Council was sealed when New South Wales refused to participate and South Australia attended for only two years. New South Wales justified its rejection on the basis that the structure was ill conceived and expressed suspicion over the motives of other colonies. The *Bulletin* on the other hand had greeted the establishment of the Council with cries of the “inevitability” of Australian independence. Drawing parallels with America, it announced “It is to the union rather than to England we must look for lessons to guide us”. Consequently, New South Wales’ refusal to join was denounced as imperilling “the future prosperity of Australia”.<sup>235</sup> In the years that followed, the ineffective nature of the Council was revealed and the *Bulletin* reversed its sentiments declaring the Council a “hallow and untrue” union.<sup>236</sup>

The form of a more comprehensive federation was subject to increasing public interest as the century drew to a close, culminating in the federal conventions of 1891, 1897 and 1898. As the date for the referendum for federation approached, a leaflet reminded Australians not to repeat the disunity that had characterised relations between the colonies:

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<sup>235</sup> *Bulletin*, 28 November 1885.

<sup>236</sup> *Bulletin*, 4 June 1887.

No people in the world have been so manifestly marked out by destiny to live under one government as the people of this island continent; but no people with so little reason have been so disunited in their public actions.<sup>237</sup>

For one not so brave Tasmanian who precipitated federation in an anonymous manifesto, the establishment of an hereditary aristocracy would be the precursor to federation lest it be England's intention "to make Sydney a Washington, and Melbourne a New York".<sup>238</sup> The prospects for the establishment of this native aristocracy was however, terminated once and for all during the federal conventions when no serious proposal for federation included an hereditary house.

In the design of the federal constitution the American example would once again exert itself in the minds of Australians.<sup>239</sup> The influence of James Bryce's, *The American Commonwealth* on the framers of the federal constitution was captured in its characterisation as "a work of Biblical authority".<sup>240</sup> A marriage of two seemingly incompatible structures and principles of government was orchestrated through continual reference to the American experience and the familiar Westminster tradition of the colonies.<sup>241</sup> This marriage was more aptly

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<sup>237</sup> *To The Australian Born*, Referendum leaflet, June 1898, in G. Sawyer *The Australian Constitution*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, p. 67.

<sup>238</sup> Anonymous, *Prospects and Considerations of a future for the Australian Colonies*, J. Walch and Sons, Tasmania, 1865, p. 17.

<sup>239</sup> E.M. Hunt, *American Precedents in Australian Federation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1930.

<sup>240</sup> J. Warden's "Federal Theory and the Formation of the Australian Constitution", PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1990, p. 15.

<sup>241</sup> See *ibid* for a detailed explanation of the theories and influence of these writings.

described in later years as the “Washminster Mutation”.<sup>242</sup> Perhaps the most telling influence of the American federal republic on the constitution’s authors remains the existence of a written constitution, which in itself is incompatible with British doctrines of parliamentary sovereignty. Thus, the Commonwealth Parliament cannot alter its own constitution, unlike many of the state constitutions which have generally retained a stronger link with Westminster tradition. Consequently, the power to alter the constitution is invested in the people, and this principle can be directly traced to American notions of consent underlined in the theories of Locke and enshrined in the Declaration of Independence:

....Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government...<sup>243</sup>

There are however other significant areas of mutation. The establishment of a High Court, to regulate the division of powers in the federation, modelled on the United States Supreme Court further diminished the sovereignty of parliament, an ideal which had been all but dispensed with through a division of powers within the constitution that regulated the activities of individual parliaments. The establishment of a second chamber modelled on the US Senate was a further adaption. The Senate’s relationship to the House of representatives (the very names can be attributed to the US Congress) further diminished the Westminster tradition in Australia, with the lower house readily subjected, and in many cases thwarted, by the immense powers of the house of review. The existing arrangements

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<sup>242</sup> See E. Thompson, “The Washminster Mutation”, in P. Weller & D Jaensch (eds), *Responsible Government in Australia*, Drummond, Melbourne, 1980 for a full discussion of responsible government in Australia.

<sup>243</sup> *American Declaration of Independence*, 4 July 1776 in H. S. Commager, *Documents of American History*, Meredith, New York, 1968, p. 100.

of the Commonwealth Parliament, more than any other institution, is proof of the significance of the American influence in Australia.

Significantly, one author of the constitution, Andrew Inglis Clark was a notable republican and worked to further invest the constitution with distinctly republican features. Clark's task was to lay a framework through which Australia would inexorably become a republic and contribute to the history of the world as the American republic had done before it. Drawing upon his extensive knowledge of the US constitution and through correspondence with American friends and colleagues, Clark attempted to lay a republican foundation from which Australia would one day fulfill its manifest destiny.<sup>244</sup> Many of his suggestions, however, failed to convince other members of the convention.

For Clark, federation was a logical step on the path to maturity, a rite of passage through which Australia would eventually emerge as a republic, but not in its present pubescent form. As Tasmanian Attorney-General and co author of the first draft of the Australian constitution of 1891, he exercised enormous influence over the shape of Australian federal government. In using America as a model to provide the basis for a federal structure Clark distinguished himself as one of the few members of the convention who had a thorough and practical understanding of the US constitution.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Clark kept in regular contact with Americans and on occasions was prone to discuss developments in Australia towards federation. See A. I. Clark Papers, University of Tasmania, C4/C197, C4/C198, C4/C199 and C4/C33.

<sup>245</sup> A. C. Castles, "Andrew Inglis Clark and the American Constitutional System", M. Haward & J. Warden, *An Australian Democrat: The Life, Work and Consequence of Andrew Inglis Clark*, Centre for Tasmanian Studies, Tasmania, 1995, p. 16

Affirming wholeheartedly the declaration of Independence that “all men must be regarded as equal in the possession of the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, Clark too believed in Australia’s republican destiny.<sup>246</sup> He warned that Australia should not remain an appendage of the British empire because it “will never reach that maturity of national life which it requires for its evolution and realization of national individuality and a consciousness of capacities and opportunities which only complete autonomy can perfectly awaken”.<sup>247</sup> But on the basis of practicalities, Australia would have to wait until it could defend itself and a definitive “Australian Sentiment” emerged. The emergence of these elements was inevitable as was “the advent of an Australian sovereignty and full and complete Australian nationality”.<sup>248</sup>

Clark’s republican aversion to hereditary power manifested itself in a proposal to exclude the power of disallowance by the Crown.<sup>249</sup> He harboured no illusions that the new federal government would be subordinate to Westminster and in section 57 of his draft *Australasian Federation Bill 1892* he invested the power of disallowance in the imperial government.<sup>250</sup> His proposal raised fears however that the imperial government would be

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<sup>246</sup> A. I. Clark. “Why I am a Democrat”, 1887, in M. Haward and J. Warden, *op cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>247</sup> A. I. Clark. *The Future of the Australian Commonwealth: A Province or Nation*, 1901, University of Tasmania Archives ( C4/F3 A. I. Clark Papers), p. 23.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 26 - 27.

<sup>249</sup> A. I. Clark. “Why I am a Democrat”, p. 202.

<sup>250</sup> A. I. Clark, *Confidential Draft, Australasian Federation Bill*, University of Tasmania Archives, A. I. Clark Papers, C4/E19(a).

encouraged to interfere in matters great and small and consequently the proposal was rejected.<sup>251</sup>

Clark's bid to have a citizenship clause inserted into the constitution based on the fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution also failed to materialise. The bid was rejected on the basis that the ideal of citizenship was far too broad and may be extended to the "undesirable" non white elements in Australia that future state and commonwealth governments would desire to discriminate against. The ultimate guarantee of rights in Australia were thus enshrined in a mutated form of responsible parliamentary government rather than in the American tradition of constitutional guarantees and natural rights philosophy.<sup>252</sup>

While some members of the convention expressed a belief in an inevitable republican destiny for Australia, the convention reflected Clark's judgment that Australia was not yet ready. George Dibbs, New South Wales representative to the convention of 1891 and ardent federalist, led a frank and open discussion on republicanism, declaring it "the inevitable destiny of the people of this great county".<sup>253</sup> Quite astutely, he noted that what his fellow members were doing was

laying the foundation of the inevitable which is to come...and step by step are following in the lines of a great nation, and in due time we shall

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<sup>251</sup> George Higinbotham to A. I. Clark, Portland, Victoria, 8 March 1891, University of Tasmania Archives, A. I. Clark Papers C4/C206.

<sup>252</sup> J. Williams, "Race, Citizenship and the Formation of the Australian Constitution: Andrew Inglis Clark and the 'fourteenth Amendment'", *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol 42 (1), 1996.

<sup>253</sup> G. Dibbs, *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federation Convention*, Sydney 1891, March 10, p.186.

become what America has become, a separate, free, and independent state.<sup>254</sup>

For Henry Parkes, the chartist who had shared the platform with Deniehy in 1850 and was now premier of New South Wales, a reaffirmation of monarchy was necessary to ensure the convention did not stray into the uncharted seas of republicanism. He reminded the honorable gentlemen that they should devote their attention to the main issues, free from what he described as the “collateral” issue of republicanism.<sup>255</sup> Parkes did not heed his own advice however, and his proposed title for the federation; the “Commonwealth of Australia”, ensured that this republican term, derived from the English republican Commonwealth of the 1650s, remained a contentious point throughout the first convention. In the constitution committee of the 1891 convention Parkes’ had advocated the name “Commonwealth” in celebration of the glorious nature of the English civil war which had profound influence on the character of the British constitution. The republican and separatist overtones of the title however, led to its initial rejection by a majority of the committee. Undeterred, Parkes enlisted the support of Alfred Deakin and together they canvassed support among the committee ensuring the name was carried by one vote.<sup>256</sup>

Debate over the choice of the committee was later resumed in the full convention. Deakin staunchly defended the choice, arguing it reflected the creation of a government that would serve the common good of its people, furthering their common-wealth and

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<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>255</sup> H. Parkes, *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federation Convention*, Sydney 1891, March 13, pp. 323 - 324.

<sup>256</sup> A. Deakin, *The Federal Story*, J. A. La Nauze (ed), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963, pp. 48 - 49.



declaring the English Commonwealth “The most glorious period of England’s history!”<sup>257</sup> For South Australian representative, Sir John Downer, the republican connotations of the title challenged the colonies relationship with the Crown and was reason enough for its abandonment.<sup>258</sup> Downer’s views were echoed in following conventions, as loyal members sought to overturn the 1891 convention vote of 26 to 13 in favour of adopting the title.<sup>259</sup> News that Joseph Chamberlain, British Colonial Secretary of State had reported to Prime Minister Lord Salisbury in 1900 that Queen Victoria had expressed “novelty” at the choice of “Commonwealth” and preferred the title “Dominion”, came too late to bolster the case of those advocating change.<sup>260</sup> The future federation would hence forth be the Commonwealth of Australia, a commonwealth with a monarch, and a monarchy with a republican destiny.

Republican discourse had continued to evolve from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century with the second generation of republicans adding many distinctive elements. Nonetheless, the character of the federal constitution illustrated that the presence of a radical Anglo-American discourse remained a dominant influence. It was these late nineteenth century republicans that were faced with the challenges presented by industrialisation. Some republicans, such as William Lane declared Australia had failed in meeting these challenges, while others set out to inject a democratic spirit to manage the

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<sup>257</sup> A. Deakin, *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federation Convention*, Sydney 1891, April 1, pp. 551 - 552.

<sup>258</sup> Sir J. Downer, *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federation Convention*, Sydney 1891, April 1, p. 551.

<sup>259</sup> *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federation Convention*, Sydney 1891, April 1, p. 557.

<sup>260</sup> J. A. La Nauze, “The Name of the Commonwealth”, *Historical Studies*, V. 15, 1971, p. 62.

relationship between capital and labour and secure comfortable living standards. This democratic spirit did not extend to the coloured races however. In particular, the Chinese and Australia's indigenous races were excluded from participating and reaping the rewards of Australia's republican future. "Australia for Australians" the *Bulletin* had declared as the emerging nationalist discourse, influenced heavily by Darwinian ideas, constructed an identity founded in race.

While it was a federation and not a republic that was declared in 1901, republicans could once again be pleased with the outcome. Imperial federation would have been a major set back to the prospects of the Australian continent, only federation could be construed as progress within a republican discourse. Federation, as with responsible government, was a further step along the path towards fulfilling Australia's destiny, it was another foundation stone in the process of building an Australian republic. Interestingly, by constructing a commonwealth under the Crown, Australians achieved what American republicans had demanded before they were compelled to declare their independence.<sup>261</sup> For Australian republicans however, the significance of this achievement was diminished by a recognition that Australia had only partially fulfilled its true destiny.

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<sup>261</sup> See Pocock, "The Imperial Crisis", p. 257 for an exploration of American demands.

## THE DEMISE OF THE AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT AND THE REPUBLICAN ASCENDENCY

My people in Australia have made great progress since the establishment of the separate colonies and even greater progress since the establishment of Federation - a progress which is a cause of great pride to all British people.<sup>262</sup>

In commemorating the jubilee anniversary of Australian federation in 1951, George the Sixth's sentiments acknowledged that while considerable distance separated Australia from Britain, this distance did not distinguish Australian from Briton. Australians were the King's people; they were British, and from federation until, at least, the 1970s most Australians agreed.

In this chapter I will argue contemporary republicanism is symptomatic of an attempt to incorporate republican ambitions into a distinct Australian identity following dramatic transformations in Australia's social and economic fabric; changes that have made it inappropriate today for the British monarch to refer to Australians as "My people". In the past two decades, the two pressures of economic adjustment and the collapse of empire have radically undermined the destiny mapped out under the Australian settlement. As outlined in the introduction, there were two overriding themes of the Australian settlement. The first theme was a strong paternal colonial state, engaged in the creation of British institutions and society. The second theme was an emotional attachment to

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H. R. M. King George the Sixth, *Commonwealth of Australia Jubilee Celebrations: 1901-1951, An Official record*, Commonwealth of Australia publication, 1951, p. 4.

empire and a larger British community. Together, these two themes worked to achieve the ultimate objective of a wealthy and white Britannic race in the antipodes. In the early 1970s the Whitlam government declared the irrelevance of empire and restructured the Australian economy in line with doctrines of international competitiveness and free trading principles. These challenges to the Australian settlement have undermined the traditional basis of Australian identity in which the intimate connection with empire was emphasised. This has resulted in an accelerated process of nation building which endeavours to stress local distinctiveness, a project in which republicanism plays a prominent part.

Earlier republican movements differ from the contemporary republican movement in their relationship to the Australian settlement. In the past, republicans rallied against a future within empire. Whether it was in the granting of self government or federation, the principles of the Australian settlement ensured that political development occurred under the British Crown. By contrast, the absence of the project provides a catalyst for the expression of contemporary republican sentiment. In the absence of the Australian settlement, republicanism is in the ascendancy. The American legacy, while not referred to as directly as in previous periods, has manifested itself once again in the language of maturity that continues to underpin contemporary republican sentiments. It is this legacy that the later part of this chapter will explore. This exploration should not be confused with the much broader phenomenon of Americanisation in Australia that Philip and Roger Bell have examined in their recent publication.<sup>263</sup> While Americanisation is an interesting social phenomenon, my intention in previous chapters has been to illustrate the influence

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<sup>263</sup> P. Bell & R. Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

of American ideals in the construction of an Anglo-American republican tradition that was subsequently disseminated throughout the new world. Accordingly, while I am directly building upon the Americanisation thesis, I am specifically concerned with understanding an Anglo-American republican discourse beyond the boundaries of recent American - Australian cultural, ideological and institutional transactions.

Traditionally, Australian identity evolved on the basis of attachment to empire. Nation building in the sense of local elites actively inventing traditions to emphasise local distinctiveness has only occurred in significant form over the past two decades. With the demise of the Australia settlement, Australians have been forced to re-evaluate the myriad of symbols and myths that express loyalty to a defunct empire. It is these symbols that are now under attack by a sustained activity of nation building. Prior to this, Australians were British, the imagined community extended beyond the boundaries of the Australian colonies to the boundaries of a white British empire. Exploring the nature of the Australian Settlement and its subsequent demise is the task of the first half of this chapter. An exploration of responses to this demise will follow in the second half.

### THE KING'S PEOPLE

It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result Australia is at war.<sup>264</sup>

Seventy-five minutes after the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain broadcast on 3 September 1939 that Britain was at war with Germany, Australian Prime Minister,

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R. G. Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1967, p. 15.

Robert Menzies, announced that Australia was also at war. The Commonwealth government had once again shown a willingness to serve the interests of empire through war. In 1939, as in 1914, Australia was embroiled in a conflict on the European continent. The prediction of Archibald's *Bulletin*; that Australia would be drawn into European conflicts was confirmed by the willingness of the Commonwealth to respond to a call to arms. For Menzies, as with most Australians in 1939, the notion that Australia had no interest in European conflicts where British interests were at stake was absurd. British interests, by their very nature, were also Australian interests. When the monarch, the symbolic institution of imperial unity was at war, Australia also at war. As Menzies later recalled, it was "beyond the scope of reasonable prophecy..{that}... the King be at war and at peace at the same time..."<sup>265</sup>

The emergence of Australian nationalism, the ideology that the political and national unit should be congruent,<sup>266</sup> was consistently frustrated in the period from federation to the 1970s by a colonial allegiance to empire and the firm belief that united under the Crown, the British people of the world were economically, militarily, culturally and racially superior. The influence of empire in the twentieth century was not measured in political control—London had long shown a willingness to yield to the demands of Dominions—but was achieved through the effective management of symbols, the monarchy being a central component. The orchestrated spectacle of royal occasions such as the coronation of Elizabeth the Second reinforced the unity of empire as British people across the seas waited with anticipation to receive their new Queen. By eclipsing potential symbols of

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<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>266</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 1.

local distinctiveness with those of shared traditions, British imperialism served to reinforce the unity and membership of empire at the expense of local Australian sentiment.

Benedict Anderson's widely accepted definition of nationalism maintains that it compels an emotional attachment to an imagined community.<sup>267</sup> In imagining this community Australians, like any national grouping are guided by a series of myths and symbols. It is also generally the case with nationalism that myths and symbols are employed in support of self determination and to emphasise the distinctiveness of a local people. Curiously, in the Australian context they were employed to reinforce the imaginary bonds connecting the British people across the globe. The Australian settlement reduced the role of local myths and symbols to that of reinforcing an imagined community of empire, Australia was conceived as a continent of British people. From the oath of allegiance prescribed in the Australian constitution that "I, A. B., do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Her heirs and successors according to law. SO HELP ME GOD!" to the Union Jack on the Commonwealth and State flags; reflecting the theme of a new Britannia under the Southern Cross, symbols that encouraged a devotion to empire are scattered across the symbolic landscape.

In the mid twentieth century there were few Australian symbols or myths that did not represent loyalty to empire. Within this environment, Australian statesmen aspired to imperial appointments while the choice of British aristocrats and royalty to represent the Queen in Australian parliaments was considered legitimate as late as 1965 at the

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<sup>267</sup>

B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991.

Commonwealth level. The rewards for Australian statesmen extended to Menzies' membership of the prestigious 900 year old Order of the Thistle, the first time the award had been conferred to someone born outside the British Isles while Richard Casey, only the second Australian appointed to the Governor Generalship, was rewarded for his various services to empire with the title; Baron Casey of Berwick, Victoria and the City of Westminster.<sup>268</sup> The careers of these men epitomised their membership of the postwar Australian elite and Australian identity in the early twentieth century. They were Australian and this meant they were also British.

The second fundamental principle of the Australian settlement, accompanying loyalty to empire, was a paternal state and an economy which reflected a statist tradition. The nature and conditions of European settlement, the provision of infrastructure, ports, railways, communications, roads, and urban services in the sparsely populated Australian continent saw the state, not private enterprise, responsible for the leading role of economic development.<sup>269</sup> Through programmes of immigration and the provision of extensive infrastructure the state conspired to create a paternalistic and idyllic society with a prosperous economy.<sup>270</sup> Consequently, the historian W. K. Hancock argued that Australians developed a view of the state as a vast public utility that was obligated to

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<sup>268</sup> See W. J. Hudson "Casey, Richard Gavin Gardiner", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, V. 13, 1993 Casey is a good illustration of the imperial opportunities for Australians as a result of this shared cultural tradition. Casey ended his career with the appointment to the Governor Generalship in 1965, having also served as Churchill's Minister of State in the Middle East and as Governor of Bengal. See also K. Perkins, *Menzies: The Last of the Queen's Men*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1968, p. 224.

<sup>269</sup> S. Bell & B. Head, "Australia's Political Economy: Critical themes and Issues" *State, Economy and Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>270</sup> *ibid*, p. 1.



ensure economic prosperity and abundant employment and fair and reasonable living conditions.<sup>271</sup> Although it was as late as the 1930s before private investment in Australia outstripped the public contribution, the state rarely challenged the concept of the autonomous firm and private management. With the exception of industrial arbitration, there was a clear reluctance to intervene at the micro level of the economy.<sup>272</sup>

The Australian settlement envisaged a partnership between the state and the individual that achieved economic prosperity through a model of protectionism allied with a system of industrial arbitration. Australian prosperity would be guaranteed through state regulation of the relationship between capital and labour. The obligation was on employers who benefited from the high levels of protection to redistribute their profits in the form of improved working conditions for their employees. Thus, with the passing of the Arbitration Act in 1904 Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin declared “....the beginning of a new phase of civilisation..”.<sup>273</sup> Justice Henry Bourne Higgins, president of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court from 1907 to 1921, further institutionalised the statist tradition of the Australian settlement. In the *Harvester* judgement of 1907, Higgins established the minimum wage, and reinforced this judgement three years later when he advised Broken Hill Proprietary Limited (BHP) that it was preferable to shut a mine than pay below the minimum rate declaring; “If it is a calamity that this historic mine should close down, it would be still a greater calamity that men should be underfed or degraded”.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> W. K. Hancock, *Australia*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1966, pp. 53-55.

<sup>272</sup> Bell & Head, p. 11.

<sup>273</sup> A. Deakin, *CPDHR*, 30 July 1903, V 15 p. 2864.

<sup>274</sup> P. Kelly, *The End Of Certainty*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, pp.7 - 8

Nonetheless, the most powerful symbol of the Australian settlement remained the monarchy. The process of reinventing the institution begun by Disraeli in the 1880s reached its peak in Australia during the mid twentieth century. The royal tour of Elizabeth the Second, the first ever of a reigning monarch in 1954, produced scenes of jubilation unlikely to be repeated.<sup>275</sup> This was not the first time Australia had been graced with visits from the royal family. It was the Duke of York that opened the first Commonwealth Parliament, and Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh who was shot in Sydney by a disturbed Irishmen in 1868.<sup>276</sup> Subsequent Royal tours were less dramatic but no less important in providing Australians with an opportunity to express their loyalty to empire. In 1963 Menzies' illustrated the excess that Australians were willing to go to in expressing this loyalty, declaring his fellow Australian's unyielding love and affection for the youthful monarch, "I did but see her passing by and yet I love her to the day I die".<sup>277</sup> Australian children, in the absence of a sporting field or battle ground carried the burden of proving the physical strength of the Australian race through displays of gymnastic prowess.<sup>278</sup> Their task was to illustrate to the distinguished audience that the British race had not deteriorated under the southern sky, but had in fact prospered in this new world environment, aided by the exclusion of "undesirable" races. Such performances underscored the anxiety that colonial, especially one of dubious convict origin, was

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<sup>275</sup> See for example: *As Time Goes By*, Vol 1, 1992, Peter Richman Productions, a video of the Queen's Tour to Tasmania 1954.

<sup>276</sup> Henry James O' Farrell was a disturbed individual and the reasoning behind the shooting remains speculative. Nonetheless, the press and politicians remained unjustly paranoid about a Fenian conspiracy following the incident, in spite of evidence to the contrary. Kingston, p. 125.

<sup>277</sup> Perkins, p .220.

<sup>278</sup> See White, p. 72 for an explanation of the relationship between sport and war in the Australian imagination.

inferior to the authentic British Isles born. This differed sharply from the republican discourse which had overcome the convict “hangover” in the late nineteenth century and declared the Australian race equal to the most superior in the world.

From its peak in the 1950s displays of British symbolism increasingly ceased to be imperial in nature, and the popularity of monarchy along with empire went into decline in Australia. At the same time, the monarchy was increasingly appropriated as a distinct symbol of the British people within the United Kingdom, rather than a global, imperial symbol. In the second half of the twentieth century the decline in economic and international influence of Britain further undermined the potency of imperial mythology. Consequently, by the 1970s the performance of *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory* seemed out of place in Melbourne and Sydney. By the 1970s the monarchy had all but abandoned its status as an imperial symbol and the empire had degenerated into a loose community of republics, monarchies and dictatorships known as the Commonwealth, an institution whose popular appeal was limited to a sporting carnival every four years. As the symbols of empire declined in significance the umbilical cord which had sustained the identity contained within the Australia settlement was severed.

Indeed, the history of Australian citizenship illustrates the changing relationship between empire and Australian identity over this period. As early as 1948 the British government had moved to clarify British citizenship by restricting it to those born in the United Kingdom. This act forced a reluctant Australian government to create Australian citizenship, a classification which nonetheless declared Australian citizens British Subjects:

A person who, under this Act, is an Australian citizen or, by enactment for the time being in force in a country to which this section applies, is a citizen of that country shall, by virtue of that citizenship, be a British subject.<sup>279</sup>

This created the curious situation of Australians retaining their subject status as a consequence of having been declared citizens. But the Act did not strike the minister for immigration, Arthur Calwell as unusual and the British sentiment of Australians remained firm until the 1970s when it became clear Australians could no longer legitimately claim their British status.<sup>280</sup> Thus, the identity which had evolved within the Australian settlement was increasingly thrown into crisis. In 1973, after Britain joined the European Economic Community, the Whitlam government in recognising Australia's changed symbolic relationship with Britain amended the entitlements of Australian citizenship to remove the status of British Subject.<sup>281</sup> The Commonwealth census also responded to this changed attitude in 1976 by ceasing to classify the nationality of Australian born residents as "British born in Australia".<sup>282</sup>

Coinciding with the decline of empire and Britain's shift towards Europe, an economic revolution occurred in Australia with the implementation of a new economic agenda that challenged the statist tradition, further undermining the paternalistic character of the Australian settlement. From the 1980s proponents of economic liberalism took control of

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<sup>279</sup> *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, Part II, Section 7 (1).

<sup>280</sup> A. Calwell, *CPDHR*, V 198, 30 September 1948, pp. 1060 - 1066.

<sup>281</sup> *Australian Citizenship Act 1973*.

<sup>282</sup> The Commonwealth Census in 1961, 1966 and 1971 asked a question on Nationality and grouped Australian born under a British category which included (1) British born in Australia and (2) British born outside Australia. All other nationalities were classified as foreign. In 1976 the question was asked as birth place and citizenship with Australian born grouped as "Australian" and UK subjects grouped under "Other Countries".

the national agenda and further dismantled the economic tenets of the Australian settlement.<sup>283</sup> When Paul Keating sent shock waves through financial markets in May 1986 by characterising Australia's economic future as a "Banana Republic", he was also advising that a new economic model was required to substitute for the failed economics of the Australian settlement. Keating subsequently targeted the statist tradition as the main cause of Australia's economic malaise.<sup>284</sup> The Hawke - Keating government, eager to disassociate itself from the negative economic legacy of the previous ALP Whitlam government, adopted economic liberalism as a platform of responsible economic management. It set about systematically dismantling the economics of the Australian settlement, albeit slower than some in the Liberal Party desired. Deregulation of the exchange rate and the financial sector, a program of micro economic reform, a lowering of tariffs and reductions in foreign ownership requirements, were matched with an equally ambitious program of privatisation and labour market reform.<sup>285</sup>

The symbols of empire and the statist tradition that had been nurtured over two hundred years within the fold of empire were not easily disposed of however, and new traditions would need time to be nurtured. Since the 1970s there has been an increasing awareness that Australia is saddled with an economy and collection of symbols and myths that reflect an emotional and economic relationship with an empire that no longer exists.

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<sup>283</sup> The terms Economic Rationalism or Neo-Classical Economics can be substituted for Economic Liberalism.

<sup>284</sup> S. Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 80.

<sup>285</sup> P. Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The story of the 1980s*, Allen & Unwin, 1992. This book provides great insight into the processes, characters and events is the process of undermining the economics of the Australian settlement.

Robbed of the ability to declare their Britishness, Australians over the past two decades have agonised over their identity. Republicans have promoted solutions to relieve this anxiety, having advanced their nationalist discourse through the activity of nation building. Emotionally charged issues such as the removal of the union jack from the flag and the attempt to invent a distinctly Australian militaristic tradition are obvious examples of this nation building which, have joined with the republican agenda to redefine the boundaries of the Australian nation. Recent attempts to create a distinct military tradition will be detailed in the following pages to further illustrate this point. It is in this context of a renewed phase of nation building that we should interpret Keating's declaration that "We cannot find our place in this new world without finding and cementing the common ground among ourselves."<sup>286</sup>

Glorifying war had been a principle characteristic of the Australian settlement which had strengthened the willingness of Australians to fight for king and empire. Although the separate colonies had sent expeditions to various theatres of war, it was Australia's involvement in the first world war, as a federated state, that provided a history from which to invent a military tradition. From Melbourne to the small village of Ross in central Tasmania, memorials to the Australian contribution to empire during the First World War are a prominent presence. The history that these, and subsequent, war memorials represent was sanitised, catalogued and presented for public dissemination in Australia's first

national museum - The Australian War Memorial. The mythology of Australian participation was characteristically masculine; brave, fearless and above all, noble.<sup>287</sup>

The innocence and bravery of Australians at war was represented by Keating's description of Australian soldiers in World War Two as "young Australians, 18 and 20 years of age, in shorts and singlets...fighting crack Japanese troops on the lawns of the central square of Kokoda village...".<sup>288</sup> Given the central profile of a military tradition it was an obvious sight to redraw the boundaries of Australian nationalism and, the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in the Pacific in 1995 provided the opportunity to reclaim Australia's military history from its imperial past.

A concerted effort was launched to reinvent the Australian military tradition as a distinctively national tradition, exalting Australian engagement in the defence of its own territory. As an added bonus, this new military tradition served to reinforce Australia's historical relationship with a region in which it seeks to secure its future economic prosperity. In highlighting the 64 devastating air raids on Darwin, Australia has claimed its place as a victim of direct Japanese imperialism along with China, Thailand and the other states that were casualties of Japanese aggression.<sup>289</sup> In claiming this victim status, Australians have been eager to impress upon their Asian neighbours Australia's extensive

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<sup>287</sup> M. Anderson & A. Reeves, "Contested Identities: Museums and the Nation in Australia", in F. Kaplan (ed), *Museums and the Making of Ourselves: The Role of Objects in National Identity*, Leicester University Press, London, 1994, pp. 100-101.

<sup>288</sup> P. Keating, *CPDHR*, Vol 194, 2 June 1994, p. 1319.

<sup>289</sup> P. Keating, "Battle of Australia Commemoration, 19 February 1992", *Major Speeches of the First Year*, Australian Labour Party, 1993, p. 5.

engagement with the region, with war forging a partnership founded in blood and sacrifice.<sup>290</sup>

On the anniversary of the fall of Singapore the *Australian* published a series of reports that argued the British command had rushed to surrender the fortress while Australians were forcing back the Japanese advance. The editorial declared the defeat a ‘humiliating military disaster’ and, by implication, a disaster for which British ineptitude and the command’s desertion of Australian troops was responsible.<sup>291</sup> A few weeks later the front page of the paper declared “Britain left us to Japanese Keating Says”.<sup>292</sup>

In the following weeks, two historians, Gregory Pemberton and David Horner argued a “British Betrayal” in the defence of Australia and its surrounding region.<sup>293</sup> Pemberton did not stop at Singapore however, in later editions he attacked the involvement of Americans in the “Battle of Australia” as overstated and deliberately underplaying the significant achievements of Australians in New Guinea.<sup>294</sup> This provided the platform from which Pemberton and Keating could later argue Australian achievements in New Guinea had been overlooked as a significant national event in the defence of Australia because of burdensome imperial ties and American narcissism.<sup>295</sup> By the end of 1992 the objective

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<sup>290</sup> P. Keating, “Kanchanbaburi War Ceremony, 9 April 1994”, *MDS*, No 159/93-94, 11 April 1994, p. 5409.

<sup>291</sup> *Australian*, 15 February 1992.

<sup>292</sup> *Australian*, 25 February 1992 and 29 February 1992.

<sup>293</sup> *Australian*, 29 February 1992

<sup>294</sup> *Australian*, 28 March 1992.

<sup>295</sup> *Australian*, 18, 20, 21 April 1992.



had been achieved, the New Guinea campaign was established as the authentic defence of Australia by Australians which allowed Keating to proclaim

Australians who served here in Papua New Guinea fought and died, not in defence of the old world, but the new world.<sup>296</sup>

The fall of Singapore, on the other hand, was mythologised as the consequence of inept British officers who lacked the honour to accept responsibility for the defeat.

The movement to reinforce distinct symbols, as best illustrated in the attempt to re-interpret Australia's wartime history, and more importantly the installation of an Australian Head of State are all reflective of a renewed effort at nation building as a consequence of the demise of the Australian settlement. The monarchy is no longer merely physically absent from Australia, but, in the 1990s, its symbolic presence is absent in the imagined boundaries of the Australian nation that are under revision.

### THE REPUBLICAN ASCENDENCY

My point is that we can no longer be Australian in the way Bob Menzies was Australian.<sup>297</sup>

For the first time since European settlement the republican vocabulary of maturity and manifest destiny has been expressed in the 1990s in the absence of the competing discourse of the Australian settlement. Where previous republican movements were restricted to providing an alternative vision to the Australian settlement and laying the foundations for a future republic, contemporary republicans are constrained only by the

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<sup>296</sup> P. Keating, "ANZAC Day, 25 April 1992", *Major Speeches of the First Year*, Australian Labour Party, 1993, p. 55.

<sup>297</sup> P. Keating, *MDS*, No 174/91-92, 8 April 1992, pp. 6030-6031.

limits of their respective visions of a mature and prosperous republic. Republicanism is in the ascendancy. For republicans the past two hundred years of imperial oversight are conceived as a period of adolescence and the decline of the Australian settlement provides an opportunity to declare Australia has come of age. To adapt Ross's assessment of the American republic, the past has become a prologue to the future fulfilment of Australia's republican destiny.<sup>298</sup>

Moreover, the legacy of Paine and the American republican example remains entrenched in the vocabulary of Australian republicanism. While not necessarily the model to emulate, the Anglo-American republican discourse continues to provide republicans with a language of maturity and a belief in manifest destiny.

The character of contemporary republican discourse has also been radically influenced by the demise of the Australian settlement. In the nineteenth century the dominance of the Australian settlement was the foil against which republican discourse constituted itself. In spite of the inconsistencies within the discourse, when in doubt, republicans could always look to the Australian settlement to signify what they opposed. Thus, Wentworth's proposed aristocracy was rejected, not because it was particularly anti republic, but because its hereditary character was associated with the ideals of the Australian settlement. The proposal for imperial federation is another prime example where republicans defined their position through opposition to the dominant theme of imperial loyalty. By contrast, contemporary republican discourse is expressed in the absence of the defining influence of the Australian settlement. Republicanism is in the ascendancy and

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Ross, "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth Century America", p. 912.

accordingly, the unity provided in opposition has dissipated as versions of Australian republicanism have rushed to fill the space in the Australian imagination vacated by empire. Accordingly, the contemporary republican movement has generated a range of republican visions at the expense of the relatively united direction characteristic of earlier republican discourse.

Consequently, the crucial question of contemporary republicanism is not when Australia will become a republic, but which republican vision will form the basis for a future Australia. The contemporary republican discourse has however retained crucial elements of the republican tradition. Among them is the retention of a language of manifest destiny and a tradition of elitism. With a few exceptions, the republic remains an issue discussed within the elite of Australian society, a debate between academics, journalists politicians, and corporate Australia. A preferred republican option has emerged from within this elite and has subsequently been enforced against alternative republican proposals. This modern experience has clear parallels with the earlier republican experience when Harpur and Deniehy attacked Wentworth's proposals because they did not equate with the preferred republican vision of a natural aristocracy in the 1850s.

There are essentially four main arguments circulating into which one can loosely group participants engaged in the current debate. What distinguishes contemporary republicans from monarchists is the republican belief in the manifest destiny of the Australia people to live in a republic. The first vision argues that the republic should not be used to reinforce Australian nationalism but used to reject notions of nationalism. This argument belongs to post-nationalist republicans. The second perspective represents the dominant

republican vision that favours the minimal necessary change to allow the position of head of state to be exploited for the purposes of nation building; these are Australia's nationalist republicans. The third perspective is asserted by traditional monarchists who seek the retention of particular aspects of the Australian settlement though a reinvigoration of monarchy and the final grouping consists of monarchists who are monarchist by default. They share no desire for Australia to become a republic and possess no overwhelming loyalty to monarchy. They favour the status quo, devoting their attention to achieving economic goals and rejecting attempts to hijack the national spot light from the main concern, the Australian economy.

## THE MULTICULTURAL REPUBLIC

Illustrating the incoherence characteristic of contemporary republicanism, one strand of republican discourse has abandoned the nationalist preoccupation of earlier debates in favour of multiculturalism. This constitutes a significant discursive rupture with the late nineteenth century republican promotion of a nationalist discourse. These post-nationalist republicans advocate a republican destiny of open cultural borders and equality between ethnic groups. It is the ultimate vision of a pluralist society in which every Australian is assigned to an ethnic group. Consequently, the Anglo Saxon/Celtic category has been revived to account for native Australian born descendants of British migrants.<sup>299</sup> In advocating a multicultural republic, post-nationalist republicans have refused to participate in the activity of nation building. They credit their ideology with the demise of the

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<sup>299</sup> J. Hirst, "National Pride and Multiculturalism" *Quadrant*, November 1994, p. 30.

Australian settlement, and in the ascendancy of their ideal they forecast a new destiny for Australia, as a multicultural republic.

The founding fathers sought to establish a fair and just society, but they, and most of the citizens of Australia, feared diversity.<sup>300</sup>

This statement by Senator Nick Bolkus, Keating's Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, represents a particular interpretation of Australian history in which the Australian settlement is portrayed as the creation of a homogenous, white Anglo society. This follows a principle theme of multiculturalism that emphasises the monocultural nature of the Australian settlement and the subsequent impact of postwar migration on Australian society which they argue, forced Australia to become a tolerant and diverse society.<sup>301</sup> Two assumptions underlie these sentiments. The first assumption is that if the influx of migrants in the postwar period had not occurred, Australia would not be a tolerant society. Secondly, that before post war migration Australia possessed a homogeneous society.<sup>302</sup> Both of these assumptions will be explored in following pages.

For post-nationalist republicans, the republic presents an opportunity to emphasise the contribution of migrants from a non British background to Australia. It is a position that celebrates the demise of the Australian settlement, as all ethnic groups are invited to participate in defining a new multicultural Australian republic. These republicans are not satisfied with the prospect of changing the head of state. They possess a vision of how to

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<sup>300</sup> N. Bolkus, *MDS*, No 83/93-94, 22 November 1993, p. 3263.

<sup>301</sup> See M. Kalantis & B. Cope, "Republicanism and Cultural Diversity" in W. Hudson and D. Carter *The Republicanism Debate*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1993, p.129, also S. Castles, Kalantis, Cope, and M. Morrissey, *Mistaken Identity*, Pluto Press, 1988, p. 9.

<sup>302</sup> Kalantis & Cope, p.128.

achieve full Australian maturity after the weight of the British monarchy has been lifted from Australian shoulders. They demand that Australia not only become a republic but, in drawing upon Paine's certainty that the new world is invested with revolutionary potential, they demand it become a multicultural republic.<sup>303</sup> Consequently, manifest destiny has been invested with a distinctive multicultural flavour.

In condemning recent attempts at nation building they argue the appeal is limited to Australians of British decent. The goal is to encourage the growth of a society based on tolerance and respect for ethnic diversity beyond the boundaries of a national tradition. It was this aim that provided the core of the "Creative Nation" statement, the professed cultural policy of Keating government.<sup>304</sup> It will be revealed in the following section however, that Keating in particular was unwilling to surrender a distinctive Australian nationalism to a multicultural ideal.

The search for homogeneity in the nation is considered archaic according to multicultural republicans and is opposed to the multicultural vision of a community with only component ethnic identities. What binds this post-nationalist society together is an obscure conception of "common purpose", which resembles a confused attempt at nationalism without the intention of establishing nations. Senator Nick Bolkus described such a project as "...the development of a new patriotism based not on ethnic singularity but a sense of

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<sup>303</sup> I. Moss, "Australia and the Question of National Identity" in D Headon, J Warden and B Gammage *Crown or Country: The Traditions of Australian Republicanism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p. 142.

<sup>304</sup> Department of Communication and the Arts, *Creative Nation*, AGPS, Canberra, 1994. I would qualify this claim by adding the statement was fundamentally confused and contradictory which makes it difficult to assess with any certainty the intended outcome.

common purpose defined by our very diversity”<sup>305</sup> This sense of common purpose is located in a reinvigorated sense of citizenship, of “mutual respect and tolerance of differences”.<sup>306</sup> Irene Moss defined this vision of common purpose as the “qualities of self-direction and self reliance” with the implication that the title “Australian” be constructed as an inclusive legal classification of citizenship stripped of any symbols or myths of nation.<sup>307</sup> Accordingly, the manifest destiny of Australia is to possess a society in which no one group has ownership of an Australian identity. This is what is alluded to in the concluding paragraph of Kalantis and Cope;

2001 could be a time, not to reaffirm the boundaries of nationalism, but to celebrate their irrelevance; to celebrate our community without nation.<sup>308</sup>

## THE NATIONAL REPUBLIC

If your self-respect is so lacking that you are not affronted that the highest post under our constitution can never be filled by an Australian, then kindly keep your inferiority complex to yourself.<sup>309</sup>

In contrast to multicultural republicans, nationalist republicans have maintained a continuity with the nationalist discourse that influenced republican sentiments in the late nineteenth century. It should be noted however, that this group has also been influenced by a multicultural discourse, but has reacted differently to its intrusion. Nationalist republicans deny the legitimacy of the multicultural view that Australian identity should become nothing more than a blanket term encompassing all who reside in Australia.

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<sup>305</sup> Bolkus, p. 3261.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3265.

<sup>307</sup> Moss, p. 139 & 142.

<sup>308</sup> Kalantis & Cope, p.144.

<sup>309</sup> M. Turnbull, "The Queen and Colonialism: A Republic Address", *Lionel Murphy Memorial Lecture*, State Library of New South Wales, 31 Oct 1991, p. 6.

Indeed, they seek to strengthen a distinctive Australian identity by infusing it with new myths and symbols and the construction of a strong civic component which nevertheless encompasses diversity and tolerance for a multicultural Australia. They argue the need to construct new symbols that can reflect upon the Australian nation and instil in Australians a sense of distinctive identity. The invigoration of Australian nationalism and the achievement of a republic will assist in the realisation of this goal.<sup>310</sup> It is both a denial of the ascribed Anglo Saxon/Celtic identity of post-nationalist republicans and the desire to belong to a distinctive Australian nation.

Historian and republican, John Hirst, has led the assault against post-nationalist republicans. His support for a republic stems from the realisation that the symbol of monarchy has lost its appeal following the disappearance of the social basis for a British Australia.<sup>311</sup> In responding to the post-nationalist assumption of an intolerant early Australia, Hirst counters by declaring that the distinctive feature of the Australian settlement was its tolerance.<sup>312</sup> In highlighting the uneasy relationship between colonists of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish descent, Hirst argues Australia already possessed a tradition of tolerance long before the influx of postwar migration. An informal pact was created to discard the battles of the old world in the creation of the new and, with a few exceptions, this pact fulfilled its goals he declares.<sup>313</sup> The decision not to establish a state

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<sup>310</sup> J. Hirst, *A Republican Manifesto*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 102.

<sup>311</sup> J. Hirst, "The Conservative Case for An Australian Republic", *Quadrant*, September 1991, p. 10.

<sup>312</sup> J. Hirst, "Australia's Absurd History", *Quadrant*, March 1991, p. 20.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.



church, giving the three major dominations Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian equal standing in the eyes of the state, was reflective of this arrangement. The Australian settlement was a tolerant arrangement towards those communities that together formed the core of the British people. A tolerance that was not readily extended to races other than British, but a tradition of tolerance nonetheless. Consequently, the success of postwar migration rests with a pre-existing respect for diversity that derives from an inclusive and tolerant Australian tradition. In this sense multiculturalism is accommodated by nationalist republicans within an invigorated Australian national culture in which tolerance remains a principle characteristic.

Replacing the monarch in this context, a symbol that has lost its validity, is both the assertion of a new identity, in contrast to imperial loyalty, and a counter to the multicultural tendency to deny the existence of distinctive Australian nationality in favour of Anglo Saxon/Celtic designations and a post-nationalist ideal. For republicans such as Robert Manne and Donald Horne the decline of the Australian settlement has exposed the need for a stronger sense of civic responsibility and Australian citizenship.<sup>314</sup> They view republicanism as an opportunity to restore a sense of civic community to Australia while building upon the Australian tradition of diversity and tolerance. Their vision is of an Australia in which ethnic difference is overlooked and not celebrated as in the case of post-nationalist republicans. Hirst shares in this desire for a stronger civic patriotism and argues an Australian head of state would further this goal, standing above the conflict of

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<sup>314</sup> R. Manne, "Why I am no Longer Not a Republican", *Quadrant*, April 1995, p. 2-4.

politics and symbolising those rights and duties that unite all Australians in the common bonds of citizenship.<sup>315</sup>

For most nationalist republicans Australia's past is perceived as a period of subservience during which the emergence of exclusive local sentiment was stunted by cultural and political ties to Britain. Therefore, they are unrepentant in their demand that Australia must now sever the last remaining political tie and fulfill its destiny as a mature, independent republic in the new world. They maintain that Australia is practically independent but, the continuing symbolic dependence on the British Queen for the functioning of the Australian constitution is objectionable. Both Keating and Malcolm Turnbull are prominent within this grouping. For Turnbull, the monarchy is the "last vestige of colonialism", it is the monarchy which perpetuates Australian adolescence; "Are we to remain forever like Adult children pathetically clutching the frayed ends of parted apron strings...?" asks Turnbull.<sup>316</sup> This republican discourse is about discrediting imperial symbols and the creation of symbols and myths for an Australian nationalism that is unambiguously independent. Turnbull willingly concedes the republic is about nationalism and proposes nothing more than the minimal change necessary for the institution of head of state to be exploited for nationalistic purposes.<sup>317</sup> Paul Kelly's use of the *Australian* (of which he is an editor) as a contemporary version of the *Bulletin* has provided the means to voice these, and other nationalist republican sentiments. For Kelly, the inevitability of

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<sup>315</sup> J. Hirst, "Can Subjects be citizens" in D Headon, J Warden and B Gammage (eds) *Crown and Country: The Traditions of Australian Republicanism*, Allen Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p. 123.

<sup>316</sup> Turnbull, "The Queen and Colonialism: A Republic Address", p. 6, and *The Reluctant Republic*, p. 8.

<sup>317</sup> Turnbull, *The Reluctant Republic*, p. 247.

a future Australian republic is reminiscent of Paine's *Common Sense*; it is the "natural and logical next step" in the evolution of Australian government Kelly proclaims.<sup>318</sup>

Turnbull and Keating also provide insight into the difficulties faced by this group of republicans. In scenes reminiscent of earlier republican discourse they leave little room for civility towards their opponents. Accusing monarchists of not caring for Australia, of lacking self respect, and suffering from an inferiority complex as Turnbull did in 1991, has effectively marginalised sections of the community.<sup>319</sup> It has also failed to create an environment of bi-partisan support with the former federal opposition leader, John Hewson accusing Turnbull of being "divisive, arrogant, and impetuous".<sup>320</sup> It was Keating's characterisations of monarchists as "snivellers", "crawlers" and "lickspittlers to forces abroad" who do not "understand Australia...[or]...Australian nationalism" that further impeded nationalist republicans from advancing their agenda.<sup>321</sup>

In Keating's pursuit of a vision for a future Australia we saw most clearly an artist of nationalism at work. Keating strove to replace the decaying imperial symbolism of Australia with a concoction of myths and symbols to reflect a mature and independent nation. More recently, historian and art critic, Robert Hughes has taken up the role left vacant by Keating's defeat at the 1995 election. In an illustration of the movement of Australian identity away from identifying with a British cultural tradition, Hughes declares

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<sup>318</sup> P. Kelly, "A Case for a Republic", *Quadrant*, November 1993, p. 13.

<sup>319</sup> Turnbull, "The Queen and Colonialism: A Republic Address", p. 6.

<sup>320</sup> J. Hewson, *MDS*, No. 17/93-94, 3 Aug 1993, pp. 745-746.

<sup>321</sup> P. Keating, *CPDHR*, 28 APRIL 1992, V 183, p.1850.

there is nothing Australian about the current Head of State, Queen Elizabeth the Second. According to Hughes, the head of state more than any other institution should reflect Australianness, and like many nationalist republicans he belittles the fact that for at least seventy years after federation it did just that.<sup>322</sup>

Launched in July 1991, the Australian Republican Movement (ARM) has advocated the nationalist republican position and has professed its desire to see Australia declared a republic on the centenary of federation in 2001. The ARM is not so much a discussion group for republican ideas, but a platform from which the republican vision of its executive can be disseminated to the Australian masses. The organisation however, has not been without its problems. Its executive, in particular its dominant chairmen Malcolm Turnbull, has been accused of elitism and compared unfavourably to the "Sydney Dinner Party Set".<sup>323</sup> In spite of this perception, the organisation has managed to establish branches in each state and worked to ensure their approach remains the preferred republican option.<sup>324</sup>

Assisted by the constitutional knowledge of George Winterton, professor of Law, Turnbull, Keating and the ARM, have defined the dominant republican discourse.<sup>325</sup> In March 1992 Winterton, and numerous constitutional lawyers completed a draft republican constitution based on the minimalist platform to illustrate the ease with which a republic

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<sup>322</sup> *Australian*, 2 December 1996.

<sup>323</sup> *Australian*, 9 October 1995.

<sup>324</sup> *Australian*, 7 - 8 September, 1996.

<sup>325</sup> *Independent Monthly*, March 1992.

could be achieved. This project was further bolstered by Turnbull's book *The Reluctant Republic*. Turnbull set out to convince his readers that Australia should become a republic and to propose how this could be achieved without experiencing the trauma of growing pains. Originally, minimalism was conceived essentially as a process of substituting "Queen" and "Governor General" in the constitution for "President" with an added clause covering the President's appointment.<sup>326</sup> This enthusiasm and optimism deteriorated after the Keating appointed Republican Advisory Committee implied that even the most minimal change would require significant amendment given the nature of the Australian constitution which omits as much as it says about the system of Australian government.<sup>327</sup> Turnbull's emotive assessment of the constitution as "at best a rule book for a colony" was accurate to the extent that the constitution in 1901 reflected Australia's subordinate status.<sup>328</sup> Aside from the actual functioning of the commonwealth government and the existence of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, read literally, the constitution could easily leave the impression that government is conducted by the imperial representative and Parliament merely rubber stamps the views of the Governor General:

The executive power of the Commonwealth is vested in the Queen and is exercisable by the Governor - General as the Queen's representative, and extends to the execution and maintenance of this constitution, and the laws of the Commonwealth.<sup>329</sup>

To change the constitution to reflect the existing operation of the Australian government would be a monumental task in itself, let alone convincing the electorate of the need to

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<sup>326</sup> Turnbull, *The Reluctant Republic*, p. 187.

<sup>327</sup> See Report of the Republican Advisory Committee, *An Australian Republic: The Options - An Overview*, AGPS, Canberra, 1993.

<sup>328</sup> Turnbull, *The Reluctant Republic*, p. 6.

<sup>329</sup> Section 61, *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1901 (UK)*.

enshrine a republic at the same time. Although Turnbull was a prominent exponent of the minimalist position, he was one of the first people to call for the term's abandonment when it was found to be misleading.<sup>330</sup> A concerted campaign followed as minimalism was redefined from a guarantee of minimal change to existing institutions to favouring the proposal which envisaged the least amount of significant change. Accordingly, the ARM has expressed a preference for a future Head of State to be chosen by a two thirds majority of a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament, in line with the current practice of not directly electing the Australian Head of State.

### MONARCHY AS THE SAVIOUR OF THE AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT

The problem with saying that only a republic can make us 'truly mature' and 'truly independent' is the implicit accusation that we're not fully mature and independent now.<sup>331</sup>

Tony Abbott, former head of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy summarised the position of monarchists neatly. Monarchists do not believe in the manifest republican destiny of Australia that has been a constant feature of republican discourse over the past one hundred and sixty years. Consequently, Abbott and his fellow monarchists argue the onus is on republicans to illustrate why Australia should become a republic and not simply how it could be achieved.<sup>332</sup> The republican discourse of maturity has failed to persuade monarchists who measure Australian maturity in terms of actual sovereignty.

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<sup>330</sup> *Australian*, 22 July 1993, p. 2.

<sup>331</sup> Abbott, p. 10.

<sup>332</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

Unlike its republican counterpart the ARM, Australians for Constitutional Monarchy (ACM) represents a broad spectrum of opposing positions to the republican ideal. They describe their position as not simply defending the monarchy, but defending the Australian system of government, believing the Australian constitution is under threat from republican proposals. Accordingly, ACM would support the sentiments expressed by Hewson in 1993 that the proposed minimalist approach underestimates the impact of a republic, if not code for a hidden agenda to centralise power in Canberra, abolish the states and Senate and change the flag.<sup>333</sup>

Many monarchists have supported the retention of the monarchy because they view it as a sign of resistance to the transformations occurring in Australian society as a result of the demise of the Australian settlement. These monarchists fail to see how the abandoning the monarchy will solve the challenges confronting Australian society. Ironically, it was Robert Manne, when professing an adherence to the monarchist position, who expressed this conservative reasoning, "The victory of republicanism would not mean, as things stand, an antidote against the fashions of the day but a significant triumph for them".<sup>334</sup> Another grouping of monarchists should rightly be classified as royalists; they support the monarchy because they revere the Queen and the royal family. These are generally older Australians, or what Keating disparagingly labelled the "septuagenarians" and "blue rinse set" of the Liberal party.<sup>335</sup> They are a generation that was schooled in loyalty to empire

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<sup>333</sup> J. Hewson, *MDS*, No. 11/93-93, 22 July 1993, p. 421, & *MDS*, No. 63/93-94, 25 October 1993, p. 2547.

<sup>334</sup> R Manne, "Why I am not a Republican", *Quadrant*, May 1993, p. 2.

<sup>335</sup> *Australian*, 12 July 1993.

when it was at its peak; it was their generation who went to war “For God, For King, For Empire”<sup>336</sup>

Most monarchists maintain that Australia’s destiny need not rest in the fulfilment of the model prescribed by the American republic. While the monarchy may now be going through difficult times it is not beyond salvation. As in the past, the monarchy can legitimise itself by finding a revived role in the Australian context that will recapture the imagination of the Australian people. They seek a modern day Disraeli to resurrect the monarchy.

Historian, Alan Atkinson in his book *The Muddle Headed Republic* has provided the most articulate defence of monarchy. Atkinson insists upon the distinction between royalty and monarchy. In stressing that the function of monarchy in the political system is distinct from the behaviour of the royal family he is acutely aware of the recent negative publicity surrounding the House of Windsor as one reason for the current strength of the republican movement.<sup>337</sup> Atkinson’s nonetheless, remains loyal to the Queen because she forms an essential part of the institution of monarchy. Thus, Atkinson is not a royalist but a monarchist, an important distinction to keep in mind given the Australian context of the debate and the absence of any native aristocracy or royal family. It is the institution of monarchy in Australia that Atkinson wishes to protect, not the British royal family.

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<sup>336</sup> Inscription on the Oatlands’ Soldiers Memorial, Tasmania.

<sup>337</sup> A. Atkinson, *The Muddle Headed Republic*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 25.



Thus, while Australian attitudes to royalty have altered, attitudes to the monarchy and the expectations of government it symbolises have not. Australia is fundamentally a monarchy at a deeper level than is generally imagined with its key political traditions and institutions derived from, and dependent upon the presence of monarchy argues Atkinson.<sup>338</sup> In monarchy Atkinson identifies the answer to what republicans such as Horne and Manne have been seeking in the restoration of the active state that characterised the Australian settlement.<sup>339</sup> Primary among the traditions that the monarchy upholds is the partnership enshrined in the Australian settlement and the nurturing expectations of government among Australians. The monarch is the trustee of the people, acting as the moral overseer of government and guaranteeing the minimum living standards associated with the Australian settlement. For Atkinson, any alteration to the institution of monarchy fundamentally revises the character and purpose of the state.<sup>340</sup> Before his conversion to the republican cause Manne expressed a similar view, describing the republic as an attack on the traditions of parliamentary justice and democracy, an assault on the "source of our deepest political and cultural values - parliamentary government, common law, and civic tolerance".<sup>341</sup>

Significantly, Atkinson has joined with other monarchists to accuse republicans of "Post Modern Patriotism", of seeking to undermine Australian institutions and nationhood in

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<sup>338</sup> Atkinson, p. 25.

<sup>339</sup> See their respective publications on the issue. J. Carroll & R. Manne (eds), *Shutdown: The Failure of Economic Rationalism*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1992, and D. Horne, *The Trouble with Economic Rationalism*, Scribe, Victoria, 1992.

<sup>340</sup> Atkinson, p. 122.

<sup>341</sup> R. Manne, "Keating and the Flag", *Quadrant*, June 1992, p 2.

favour of integrating Australia into the greater world, to be "swallowed up in it", and in the process abandoning all that makes Australians distinctive. Atkinson describes these republican tendencies as

a broad and profoundly important movement which involves not only the dissolving of national boundaries, but also the abdication of sovereignty over the country's resources and over the daily welfare of its people.<sup>342</sup>

He concludes that republicans are in fact "abdicating independence altogether".<sup>343</sup> An attack on the monarchy thus constitutes a veiled attack on Australian traditions and institutions. Atkinson, has significantly linked the ascendancy of republicanism with the decline of the Australian settlement in a way that few engaged in the current debate have. Unlike Manne and Horne, he can see no prospects of a republic restoring those aspects of the Australian settlement that were worthy of retaining but have been dismantled. For Atkinson, a revitalised monarchy would restore the principle of the state's moral duty to its citizens, a view that runs contrary to the dominant economic liberal doctrine that stresses the individual should assume responsibility for their own well being.

In the monthly publication *Quadrant*, several monarchists have reinforced Atkinson's position. Ian Mabbett and Peter Howell have argued that monarchy further guarantees standards beyond politics; acting as a symbol of loyalty, justice and cohesion.<sup>344</sup> This is an argument supported by the ACM:

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<sup>342</sup> Atkinson, p. 103.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>344</sup> I Mabbett, "The Republic", *Quadrant*, July-August 1993 pp. 28-32, & P. Howell, "Paul Kelly's Unconvincing Case for a Republic", *Quadrant*, January - February 1994, pp. 82-84.

The Australian Constitutional Monarchy provides as excellent balance between politicians representing the wishes of the majority and the Monarch protecting the interests of ALL AUSTRALIANS.<sup>345</sup>

Bruce Knox has taken the argument further, arguing a republic would radically undermine Australia's parliamentary democracy.<sup>346</sup> These are standard monarchist criticisms and reflect a conservative tradition. Monarchists argue that republicans underestimate the potential impact of a republic, fearing Australia is already set on a course towards an American style republican government, a fear reinforced by the former Governor General Bill Hayden who recently prophesied such an outcome:

...my suspicion is that sometime in the future...the executive, that is the ministry, will eventually be a mix of elected and non elected people who will be subject to appointment, by the elected head of government, but separated from the parliament.<sup>347</sup>

Perhaps Ian Holloway was expressing this fear when he argued a republic will increase the process of "Americanisation" in Australia.<sup>348</sup> In concurring with Holloway, Tony Abbott argued the monarchy was all that prevented the triumph in Australia of a "Kentucky Fried Culture".<sup>349</sup>

## MONARCHIST BY DEFAULT

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<sup>345</sup> Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, *Charter for the Defence of the Australian Constitution*, Pamphlet, Sydney.

<sup>346</sup> B. Knox, "John Hirst, 'The Republic', and European Civilisation", *Quadrant*, January-February 1994 pp. 78-81.

<sup>347</sup> Before becoming Governor General, Hayden had long expressed a view that Australia should become a republic. B. Hayden, *Farewell Address by the Governor-General to the National Parliament*, Parliament House, Canberra, 15 February 1996, p. 11.

<sup>348</sup> I. Holloway, "Power, Politics and the Australian Monarchy", *Quadrant*, May 1995, pp 27 - 31.

<sup>349</sup> Abbott, p. 142.

...the main issue of today...is unemployment and the damage that has been done to this nation and to the livelihood of nearly one million Australians by this Prime Minister...<sup>350</sup>

For economic liberals of the monarchist persuasion, the republic is a contrived scheme to pawn the Queen to the highest bidder and a government initiated attempt to manipulate Australian identity to gain greater market access in the Asia - Pacific region which can only usefully be achieved by reforming the Australian economy. These monarchists provide a contrast to Atkinson's passionate plea to retain the monarchy. They are proponents of economic liberalism, emphasising the value of economic models to explain societies ills. Accordingly, the republic, as assessed in economic terms, has no benefit to offer individuals; it will not create employment, it will not keep inflation low, nor will it solve the balance of payments deficit. The issue is a distraction from the main issue of wealth generation.

At the beginning of the contemporary debate in 1991, Australia was deep in recession and the leadership of the Liberal Party argued the republic was nothing more than a ploy to conceal the government's failure on economic policy. While there is perhaps an element of truth in this belief, it was certainly not an adequate excuse to dismiss the entire movement. Thus, the party leadership was accused of being "bold on economics, deficient in politics, and uncomprehending on culture".<sup>351</sup> A reluctance to participate in the debate reflected a belief that participation would be tantamount to legitimatising the government's

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<sup>350</sup> J. Hewson, *CPDHR*, 28 April 1992, V. 183, p.1841

<sup>351</sup> P. Kelly, "A Case for the Republic", *Quadrant*, November 1993, p. 13.

priorities which the Liberal leadership described as "absolutely incomprehensible".<sup>352</sup> The priority of the Australian government declared John Hewson in 1992 is "....to reform the economy, create real jobs to lower the unacceptably high levels of unemployment and make our industries world competitive so that we can start to reduce Australia's unacceptably high level of foreign debt"; a platform that characterises the priorities of the present Howard government.<sup>353</sup> It was as late as 1995 before the Liberal Party relinquished its opposition to recognising the republic as a legitimate issue and agreed, reluctantly, to engage in the debate. For John Howard, however, participation does not make the republic a national priority. While in opposition he gave a clear indication of where he stood:

...the question of whether or not Australia becomes a republic will have no bearing on our standard of living and our capacity to economically penetrate the fast growing region of Asia.<sup>354</sup>

Central to economic liberalism is the capacity of the unencumbered individual to prosper, justifying the minimal state on both moral and efficiency grounds.<sup>355</sup> Whether the state is a republic is largely incidental to individual prosperity according to this model. For John Howard, and much of his government's leadership, their belief that economic liberalism is the answer to improving Australia's economic performance has not been accompanied by an equal commitment to strengthening community. Keating in contrast, actively

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<sup>352</sup> J. Hewson, *MDS*, No. 97/92-93, 16 November 1992, p. 4098

<sup>353</sup> J. Hewson, *MDS*, No. 189/91-92, 4 May 1992, p. 6607.

<sup>354</sup> J. Howard, *CPDHR*, 8 JUNE 1995, Vol. 201, p. 1620.

<sup>355</sup> M. Peters "Welfare and the Future of Community: The New Zealand Experiment" in S Rees, et al., *Beyond the Market: Alternatives to Economic Rationalism*, Pluto Press, New South Wales, 1993, p. 171.

engaged in both areas simultaneously. Consequently, insufficient room has been reserved for issues of community and nation by the Liberal leadership.<sup>356</sup>

The impression gained from the year old Howard government is that it would have preferred if the republican issue had departed with its defeated mentor at the 1996 election. During a low key announcement of a planned peoples' convention to discuss constitutional reform Howard reiterated

...that I and the members of the government do not regard this issue as being of anywhere near the importance of the other issues that have been subject of question and comment in the House so far during question time.<sup>357</sup>

In government, the Liberal leadership has been reluctant to stray beyond the bounds of economic management, and the republic, along with issues of race and aboriginal reconciliation have lacked direction. Consequently the job of republicans has been made more difficult by the presence of a Prime Minister who does not share a belief in the manifest destiny of Australia but holds severe doubts as to the legitimacy of government involvement in social debate when the economic legacy of the Australian settlement continues to haunt his government. Quite simply, monarchists by default, like Howard, do not see it as imperative to Australia's future prosperity to have an Australian as head of state.

Given the position of these monarchists, it is ironic that the implementation of an economic liberal agenda that has progressively dismantled the Australian settlement has

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<sup>356</sup> J. Hewson, *MDS*, No 189/91-92, 4 May 1992, p. 6607.

<sup>357</sup> J. Howard, *CPDHR*, 4 February 1997, p. 9.

also supplied the conditions conducive to the achievement of an Australian republic. If Australia becomes a republic, it will, in part, be thanks to the implementation of this economic agenda which has undermined the identity linked with the Settlement and provided a favourable climate for the ascendancy of Australian republicanism within a discourse of Australian nationalism.

## A REPUBLICAN FUTURE

Like the child who is still living with its parents at age 26, there is a point at which our actions, however convenient, are no longer appropriate. Australia, it's time to leave home. And if mum doesn't like it, tough. She knows where we live. Tell her to write!<sup>358</sup>

These sentiments expressed by Andrew Denton reveal that he, along with his republican counterparts, continue to draw upon the legacy of the American republic and a vocabulary of filial subordination. Horatio Wills, John Dunmore Lang, Charles Harpur, Jules François Archibald, Andrew Inglis Clark, Paul Keating, and Malcolm Turnbull, to name but a few prominent characters outlined in this project, are firmly apart of this Australian republican tradition. Their sentiments reveal a distinctive discourse of Australian republicanism. The focus on the paternal empire that has nurtured Australia through its infancy, provided security and shelter in times of crisis, and imparted to Australia its own morals, ethics, and institutions has been an essential, and recurring theme of the Australian republican tradition. Nonetheless, like a parent who is incapable of setting their child free, the monarchy has prevented Australia from embarking on its divinely ordained course and fulfilling its manifest destiny.

It has been argued throughout this thesis that Australia possesses a distinctive republican tradition, a tradition that draws upon an Anglo-American republican discourse. This tradition however, has not been without its discontinuities. Republicans in the early nineteenth century operated within a concern for the virtuous nature of the Australian population, while in the later part of the century republicans had dispensed with this

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<sup>358</sup> A. Denton, "The Third Umpire", *Summer Rally for the Republic*, Sydney Town Hall, 1 December 1996.



anxiety and declared the superiority of the Australian race influenced by an emerging nationalist discourse. The dominant contemporary grouping of nationalist republicans have retained elements of this nationalist discourse but, they have tempered their rhetoric within the boundaries of a multicultural discourse. A future Australian republic is no longer reserved for the white man but, the achievement of an Australian republic will most likely represent the success of a nationalist endeavour within which multiculturalism is catered for by a commitment to tolerance towards diversity. This will be a distinctly different outcome from a post-nationalist republic which would repute the ideals of an Australian nation.

One characteristic feature to have emerged from the three periods explored has been the elitist nature of republican discourse. From the 1850s when Deniehy and Harpur chastised Wentworth, republicans have both denounced competing republican alternatives and professed a "truth" concerning issues of national interest. In the 1850s it was Wentworth's proposal that was attacked as incompatible with the Anglo-American tradition of natural aristocracy, in the 1880s elitism was accompanied by declarations of what constituted Australian national interest. In the 1990s, the dominant nationalist republican vision reflects both these experiences; an elitist disposition and a conviction that republicans possess the "truth" concerning Australia's national destiny.

While the character of republicanism has altered over time, the influence of the American republic provides the pivotal link between the three periods of republican sentiment that have been outlined. Australian republicans over the past one hundred and sixty years have shared in a common vocabulary of subordination and a desire to see Australia achieve

maturity by fulfilling its manifest destiny according to the American precedent; of progress, independence and republicanism.

Despite the current government's indifference towards the republic, it has announced it will give Australians an opportunity to dispense with the monarchy. In an announcement by Prime Minister John Howard that the government would honour its electoral pledge; a "peoples convention" will take place in late 1997. The government proposes that the half appointed, half-elected convention will discuss a range of constitutional reforms. The ARM gave a "cautious welcome" to the proposal but insisted that the convention be fully elected and announced its intention to field officially endorsed candidates across Australia.<sup>359</sup> The leader of the ALP, Kim Beazley on the other hand was sceptical of the government's plan to widen the scope of the convention's agenda calling it "an expensive and unnecessary distraction from the real issue of whether we should have an Australian as our head of state".<sup>360</sup> Others such as Malcolm MacKerras expressed fears of a monarchist conspiracy to derail the republic permanently.<sup>361</sup>

Regardless of the outcomes of the convention, polling over the past decade indicated support for a republic increased from 21% in favour in 1987 to 47% in 1997. While not yet a majority, republicans have taken heart that the largest shift has been away from those in favour of the existing arrangements, with a peak of 64% in 1987 falling to 28% in 1997. While ACM appears far more organised and can claim a larger membership than the

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<sup>359</sup> *ARM Media Statement*, 4 February 1997.

<sup>360</sup> *Australian*, 5 February 1997.

<sup>361</sup> *Australian*, 13 February 1997.

ARM, republicans, assisted by the increasing recognition that the Australian settlement is obsolete, appear to have won the public debate over the past decade. Of those monarchists that have abandoned the Crown, approximately half have joined the republican cause while the other half have questioned their beliefs and form a substantial number of uncommitted Australians.<sup>362</sup> If the polls are any indication, a pro-republican result should occur when a referendum is presented to the electorate.<sup>363</sup>

If the polls have it wrong, and there remains strong support for the monarchy, two possibilities for a republic exist. One is that the choice of a republic may follow the established tradition of advances in Australian constitutional government and be decided at Westminster. A proposal before the House of Lords to alter the laws of succession to the British throne will at best create a dilemma in Australia, and at worst undermine Australia's status as an independent country enshrined in the *Australia Act 1986 (UK)*.<sup>364</sup> Clause 2 of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK)*, declares that;

The provision of this Act referring to the Queen shall extend to Her Majesty's heirs and successors in the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

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<sup>362</sup> *Australian*, (Newspoll) 13 February 1997.

<sup>363</sup> It should be recognised that the nature of the questions asked by pollsters, especially in periods of heightened national awareness may severely distort measurements of public opinion. Newspoll in July 1996 asked "Who should be Australia's head of state?". The poll required that respondents answer "An Australian", "The Queen" or "Uncommitted". The implied supposition of the categories is that "The Queen" is not an Australian, which is misleading. Since 1973 the Queen has been the Queen of Australia, and the workings of the institution of monarchy in Australia, as Atkinson has argued, are distinctive in this context.

<sup>364</sup> The *Australia Act 1986 (UK)* served two main purposes Firstly it was to bring the states into line with the Commonwealth in their relationship with Britain. Previously the states did not directly advise the Queen on the appointment of Governors, rather the Queen was advised by her United Kingdom Ministers. Secondly, the act was designed to remove all possibility of the United Kingdom legislating for Australia. Ultimate legislative authority had, up until this point, remained at Westminster, not Canberra.

According to the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department there remains considerable debate as to the full implications of this clause.<sup>365</sup> One body of opinion favours the view that Australia is not required to have as its sovereign the monarch of the United Kingdom. If this view is accepted, the Commonwealth has the option of bringing Australian laws of succession into conformity with any altered laws of the United Kingdom. This act would be repugnant to the spirit of Australian sovereignty however, as it would be in response to, what are considered today, foreign sentiments. Consequently, it is unlikely that the Commonwealth would adopt this approach. Worse still, the Commonwealth could do nothing and allow the current laws of succession to continue. If for instance, the British Parliament agreed to Lord Archer's *Succession to the Crown Bill*, and removed the gender bias, this could potentially create a vexatious situation in which the first born daughter will ascend to the British throne while a younger brother will ascend to the Australian throne.<sup>366</sup>

Should the contrary opinion, that clause 2 does in fact require conformity with the United Kingdom hold, then any changes would automatically apply in Australia by force of the constitution, again bringing into question the status of the sovereign Australian people. Given the potential for disruption to Australia from any changes in Britain to the laws of succession, it is with some anxiety that one ponders the possible implications for Australia if Britain was to dispense with monarchy altogether (although this is unlikely in the

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<sup>365</sup> Commonwealth Attorney - General's Department, *Succession to the Australian Crown*, (Reply to Personal Correspondence), January 1997.

<sup>366</sup> The Bill was presented for its first reading on the 18 February 1997 after a Humble Address to the Queen on December 9, 1996 that she agree to its consideration during the current Parliament, *Lords Hansard*, 9 December 1996, column 871, & *Lords Hansard*, 18 February 1997, column 555. See *Times*, 14 December 1996 for an assessment of the Bill.

foreseeable future). The institution that Howard accredits with providing stable government in Australia, if left unreformed has the potential to become a significant destabilising force within the constitution.<sup>367</sup> This is perhaps the greatest asset of contemporary republicans; that monarchy is no longer a viable option in a democratic state which asserts the sovereignty of an Australian people who possess an increasing awareness of national distinctiveness.

The second possibility should a republic fail at a referendum rests with the process of nation building that followed the demise of the Australian settlement. I have argued the republic is one aspect of this activity of nation building. It would be improbable, given the nature of this nationalist endeavour over at least the past two decades, that the failure to secure a republic would seriously hamper attempts to create a distinctive Australian nationalism. Indeed, the less favourable aspects of this national endeavour have recently asserted themselves in the form of an overt attack on multiculturalism and an outpouring of racial discourse, championed by Queensland independent, Pauline Hanson MP. Failure to achieve a republic by 2001 may merely illustrate to those engaged in mobilising Australians around a new sense of nation that their proposed republic was too early in the evolution of a distinctive nationalism.

The continuing legacy of the Australian settlement and the British loyalty contained therein may be stronger today than nationalist republicans imagine but, these sentiments are undoubtedly waning. Accordingly, it may only be a matter of time before a favourable

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<sup>367</sup> J. Howard, *CPDHR*, 4 February 1997, p. 9.

climate exists for the implementation of the republican agenda. The longer it takes to achieve a republic, the stronger the desire will become for republicans to see that Australia fulfills its manifest destiny.

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