

AUSTRALIAN

NATIONAL INDEPENDENT

THE NSW ELECTION

ABORIGINES – Forty Years after the Referendum

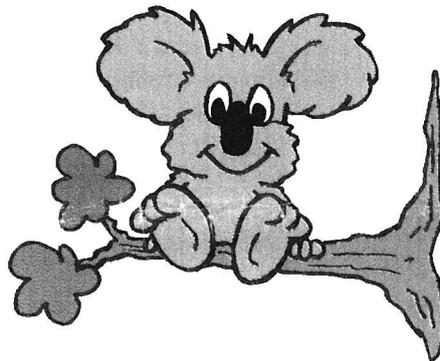
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Before the Dawn



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Welcome to our forty-first edition and hopefully you will find this useful and informative. Our first topic is the recent election held in New South Wales. Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI) ran in a large number of lower house seats as well as putting up a team for the upper house. Although a few candidates polled well none gained enough votes to get elected. AAFI had a candidate running for the seat of Cronulla in competition with John Moffat who was supported by the Australia First Party (AFP). This split the anti-immigration vote and to confuse matters further a Christian Democrat candidate also stood in the same seat after the party leader, Fred Nile had come out against Moslem immigration. The result was that parties that should look like allies look like competitors and the seat went to the Liberal Party candidate, Malcolm Kerr.

One might ask why AAFI ran so many candidates, when immigration is basically a federal government responsibility. AAFI is still registered in NSW but has been deregistered, along with a large number of other parties, by the Australian Electoral Commission. It appears that under legislation passed by the federal parliament, any party that has not been able to get a member elected to parliament can be deregistered. The AFP had already been deregistered for failing to put up candidates for four years hence the patriotic groups may not be represented in the federal elections to be held later this year. This shows a nasty contempt for democratic values by the Howard government and another reason why it will be good if they lose the next election.

On a happier note, unemployment has fallen to 4.2%, the lowest since the days of Gough Whitlam's government. The federal government is raking in billions in taxes hence the generosity they showed us, or at least most of us, in May's budget. Although not given much mention by the media one of the reasons the government is getting large surpluses is that so many Australians are up to their neck in debt. With our interest rates some of the highest in the industrialised world the banks are making healthy profits and hence the government gets a generous amount in company taxes from the banks.

The main rationalisation for our relatively high interest rates is that the Reserve Bank wants to keep a brake on inflation. The government's tax cuts and increases in spending will however have an inflationary impact. The budget gives us money in one hand while banks and other lending institutions take it out of the other hand. The government could have done something to mitigate this problem. As Ross Gittens (Sydney Morning Herald 28/05/07) noted, an influx of money from a resources boom can have a disastrous impact on a nation's economy due to an inflationary effect, raising the value of currency, or both. What the government could have done (and the government of Norway did do when they had a resources boom) is put much of the surplus into a fund similar to the Future Fund and direct its investments overseas. This would reduce the inflationary impact of the budget and give us a stream of income in future years. Howard and Costello unfortunately chose the short-term imperative of using tax cuts to buy votes.

On another matter the government may be acting more sensibly and that is in regard to the migration of Pacific Islanders. New Guinea and neighbouring Melanesian islands are already heavily dependent on economic aid from Australia and it has been suggested that to assist them further we allow in temporary unskilled migrants from these countries. Fortunately the Howard government has not heeded this suggestion but the Labor Party has different ideas. It has released a policy of allowing from 5,000 to 10,000 unskilled migrants from the Pacific on temporary visas. This would of course mean more money leaving Australia when these workers remit earnings back home and judging by the high crime rates in most of these countries we can expect similar problems to be imported with the migrant intake. Just think – you may have a 'raskal' gang in your street in the not too distant future.

ABORIGINES – Forty Years after the Referendum.

Aborigines have recently been celebrating the referendum of the 1967 that gave them recognition under the Commonwealth Constitution and census. Some have expressed doubt about whether there has really been any improvement in the conditions of Aborigines in the forty years since the referendum.

A World Health Report claims that Aboriginal health is a century behind that of other Australians with life expectancies about 20 years less among Aborigines. Leprosy, rheumatic heart disease and tuberculosis have not been a problem among whites for decades but are common in many Aboriginal communities (Epoch Times 2/05/07).

The Australian Medical Association wants another \$2 billion spent on Aboriginal health and claims that this would eliminate the gap in life expectancies between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and half the indigenous infant mortality rate within a decade.

The Aboriginal birth-rate meantime is far higher than for other Australians. An article by Philip Cornford in the Sydney Morning Herald (26/05/07) describes a virtual population explosion amongst Aborigines in western New South Wales. Typical were three Aboriginal women living in Brewarrina aged from 19 to 21, all single mothers (the 19-year-old has three children) receiving no support from the fathers of the children (two of whom were in jail), and subsisting on welfare. In Walgett there is a 46-year-old Aboriginal woman who has had 11 children by four different men, and has never married. The proportion of Aborigines in the region is increasing, they are already a majority in the towns of Brewarrina, Wilcannia and Goodooga, and will probably soon be a majority in Bourke, Walgett and other towns. Meanwhile many non-Aborigines are leaving the region due to the drought and depressed economic conditions. Between 1986 and 2001 the number of Aborigines in the region's towns increased by 700 while the number of whites fell by more than 3,000. Some towns have not only lost their professional people but also their tradesmen, Wilcannia has no clothing store, chemist, doctor, dentist, plumber, electrician or mechanic. There are few employment prospects in Wilcannia or most of the other towns in the region. Drunkenness and crime are serious problems, with imprisonment rates being 17 times higher for Aboriginals than for non-Aboriginals. About 41% of males aged from 20 to 24 came before the courts in 2001. Due to the population explosion 54.8% of Aborigines are under 25. Births to unmarried indigenous women are about 34%, or twice that for non-indigenous women.

Cornford's article expressed no concern that the exodus of whites from the region resembled a mild form of ethnic cleansing or that the high birth-rates among Aboriginals are exacerbating and multiplying disadvantage and social pathologies.

POPULATION STATISTICS

An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) web page that attempts to keep track of Australia's population gives a projected population for this country as 20,834,379 as of 31 May 2007. It estimates we have one birth every 1 minute and 59 seconds, one death every 3 minutes and 53 seconds, a net gain of one migrant every 4 minutes and 47 seconds, giving an overall population increase of one person every 2 minutes and 11 seconds. We calculate that this means our population is increasing at the rate of 1.15 % per annum. This however could be a serious under-estimation.

Another set of figures gives an increase of 1.3% in the 12 months period up to the end of the September 2006 quarter. Over the same period, the population of Western Australia increased by 2.0%, while the slowest growing state, Tasmania increased by only 0.6%. The natural increase for the nation was 131,800, which was 3% higher than the increase over the previous 12-month period. Meanwhile net overseas migration was 137,700, an increase of 8% over the previous period.

Newspaper reports state that our fertility has risen from 1.75 to 1.83 births per woman and while the population still continues to age the trend towards delaying retirement has gathered pace. The proportion of men between 60 and 64 staying in the workforce has risen to 57%.

As might be guessed most of our migrant intake has been from Asia but we still get good numbers from New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Our ten top sources of migrants from 1995/96 to 2005/06 were:

Country	Number	Total %	Top ten %
New Zealand	184,618	16.85	27.88
United Kingdom	138,197	12.62	20.87
China	88,882	8.11	13.42
India	62,400	5.70	9.42
South Africa	51,864	4.73	7.83
Philippines	37,684	3.44	5.69
Indonesia	28,429	2.60	4.29
Vietnam	25,685	2.34	3.88
Malaysia	22,603	2.06	3.41
Hong Kong	21,764	1.99	3.29

While our population is increasing so are our poor current account figures and foreign debt. The 'seasonally adjusted' balance on our current account for the quarter ending December 2006 rose 20% to minus \$15,096 million. This was made up of a deficit of \$3,554 million on goods and services and a deficit of \$11,406 million on net income. The latter figure seems to be made up mainly of interest payments on our huge foreign debt which reached \$521 billion in December. So while migrants flood into the country our money floods out.

(Sources: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs Jessica Irvine, Sydney Morning Herald 2 04 07, Sinclair Davidson & Christina Yan, Policy Autumn 2007, www.dimia.gov.au)

FOREIGN AID

It has been claimed that Australia is one of the least generous nations in the OECD when it comes to government spending on foreign aid and that much of what is spent is does not actually leave this country. The government has promised to boost aid by \$4 billion by 2010 but this will still mean that about 14 other OECD countries are giving more than us. World Vision claims we spend about 32 cents in every \$100 of gross national income on aid against an OECD average of 46 cents. Meanwhile, donations by private citizens to help overseas countries have been growing by about 11.5% on average over the last five years, and this does not count the appeal for the tsunami victims.

It is claimed that a lot of what the government spends is not really foreign aid but still gets counted as such. For instance \$113 million spent on supporting refugees during their first year in Australia was counted as foreign aid by the government. Similarly \$112 million of our aid to the Solomon Islands pays the salaries and logistics support of the Australian Federal Police and millions are spent on expensive scholarships for foreign students to study here that could have been given to assist the elementary education of children in poor countries.

The countries that received the largest amounts of our aid in 2006-07 were Iraq (\$358.3 million), Papua New Guinea (\$334.8 million) and Indonesia (\$328.2 million). Other recipients included the Solomon Island, Afghanistan, Vietnam, East Timor, the Philippines and other nations. This financial year, allocations will change and Indonesia will be the main aid beneficiary getting nearly \$460 million, the Philippines will get \$100 million, but PNG will only get an extra \$10 million making its share \$355 million.

(Sources: Debra Jopson, Sydney Morning Herald, Shar Adams, Epoch Times 16/05/07).

NATIONAL NEWS SUMMARY

MORE people have been charged over the riots at Cronulla in December 2005. A 19-year-old was given 11 months for rioting and assaulting a Middle-eastern man in a train at Cronulla station while draped in the Australian flag. The young man is appealing the sentence. A 22-year-old Middle-eastern man and a youth were charged over an incident that occurred as a 'reprisal' for the riot and during which an Australian man was stabbed. Both were given sentences of nine months but as both had already been in police custody for this amount of time they were allowed to walk free. Others involved in the knifing incident have not been found as yet. Meanwhile radio presenter Allan Jones has been found by the Communications and Media Authority to have broadcast material that was likely to encourage violence and vilify people of Middle-eastern descent (Shoba Rao, Daily Telegraph 16/03/07 & 13/04/07, Paul Sheehan, Sydney Morning Herald 4/06/07, Emma Alberici, ABC Online 11/04/07).

DVDs and books advocating or glorifying terrorism will be banned and prevented from entering Australia under new Federal government legislation. Anything that is deemed likely to "promote, incite or instruct in matters of crime or violence" can be removed from sale. Some books advocating jihad or the "Death Series" of DVDs released by a firebrand Sydney Muslim cleric are likely to be banned. Philip Ruddock, Attorney General, claims public safety overrides issues of free speech (DT 13/04/07). No example of any violence caused by the banned material was mentioned in the article.

OUR SKILLED migration program is being hijacked, according to a recent study, as people enter training courses simply to get permanent residence visas. Between 2004 and 2006 there was a 167% increase in foreign students doing courses in hairdressing and cooking. They are supposed to do 900 hours of work experience to qualify for the work visa and some have actually paid employers for the chance to clock up the required hours (ABC Online 28/03/07).

AN OFFENSIVE racial and sexist slur is said to have led to a killing on the Southern Highlands. Frederic Martin is said to have punched Santo Pantalon after he made a slur about Martin's Sri Lankan girlfriend. Pantalon and a friend visited Martin's unit where he met them with a shotgun (DT 1/02/07).

AN IRAQI MUSLIM man is alleged to have raped a Muslim woman twice in Sydney's southwest as punishment for reading the Bible. The woman was wearing a hijab at the time which her assailant pulled tight across her mouth to stop her from screaming (ninemsn.com.au 17/4/07).

DRAGAN VASILJKOVIC, an alleged war criminal has lost his appeal against his deportation to Croatia. He is accused of crimes, including ethnic cleansing, while serving with Serbian paramilitary (DT 13/04/07).

VICTORIAN homicide detectives arrested a man at Melbourne Airport shortly before he was to board a flight to Vietnam. The arrest was in relation to the murder of Thang Van Nguyen who was shot in the head, in front of his wife and child, a day after having given evidence in a murder trial (ninemsn.com.au 6/06/07).

TRISH FALLON, an Australian basketball star has sought an apprehended violence order against her former husband, Rodney Overby, a former courtside announcer for the Sydney Kings. They have a 9-year-old daughter (DT 11/05/07). Overby it appears is one of a large number of black American basketball players brought over here to feature in our national league.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS SUMMARY

CHILDREN now make up only 13.6% of the Japanese population. This is the lowest proportion in the world. In Italy and Germany children (those under 15 years) make up only 14.1% of the population but in Ethiopia the proportion is 43.2%, one of the highest in the world. By 2013 it is expected children will comprise only 12.3% of Japan's population (Epoch Times 9/05/07).

RIGHT-WINGER, Nicolas Sarkozy became president of France in May this year in an election noted for the highest voter turnout in years. Sarkozy, who was born in Hungary with Jewish and Greek ancestry, claimed he would come down heavy on crime and illegal immigration. Some of his platform is said to have been an imitation of that of Jean-Marie Le Pen and his National Front. Le Pen only gained 11% of the vote in the first round of the election.

NINE CHINESE oil workers were killed in a rebel attack in Ethiopia. The Chinese have been tapping into Africa's natural resources needed by their booming economy. A total of 74 people died in the attack which has been blamed on Eritrea (ET 26/04/07).

A JAPANESE real estate developer has been sentenced to life in prison by Tokyo District Court after being convicted of a series of rapes. He is thought to have been involved in the rape and murder of an Australian woman, Carita Ridgeway in 1992 and British bar hostess Lucie Blackman in 2001. It was also alleged he videotaped himself raping almost 400 women including 150 foreigners (news.ninemsn.com.au 24/04/07).

A TEACHER in India sprinkled cow urine on lower caste students to purify them and drive away evil. The students found the "cleansing ceremony" humiliating, and the teacher was arrested after complaints from parents.

TEN PEOPLE in Turkey have been arrested after the murder of three Protestant Christians. The victims were employees of a publishing house that prints bibles. Christians make up less than 1% of Turkey's population (MxNews 20/04/07).

MENTALLY HANDICAPPED Children in Iraq have been used by al-Qaeda militants to fight United States and Iraqi forces. In one case the military let a car through a checkpoint when they saw it had two children in it. Two adults got out of the car, then exploded it killing the two handicapped children and five other people. Some of the children are orphans, some have been kidnapped and at least one was sold to the militants by his father (ET 18/04/07).

JAPAN has had to try and defuse a row with Korea after Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe claimed there was no evidence that the Japanese government or army had forced women to serve as sex slaves during World War II. Tokyo had issued an apology back in 1993 over the sexual slavery and this apology was reiterated by Foreign Minister, Taro Aso. Historians claim that 200,000 women, mainly from Korea and China, but also some from Australia and other Allied nations had been kidnapped and forced to work as sex slaves by Japanese troops (Sydney Morning Herald 2/04/07).

RUSSIA has drawn criticism after it deported a Chinese woman and her 8-year-old child back to China. The child was placed with a relative in China but it appears the woman is being held by authorities. The woman was one of a number of Falun Gong practitioners who were arrested in Russia but it was unclear whether the others would be deported. Protest demonstrations against the deportation occurred in Canada and Russia. Meanwhile in Australia on 28 March a woman was forcibly removed from Villawood Detention Centre and deported to China (ET 4/04/07).

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

REGARDLESS of other problems Palestinians are having no troubles procreating their own kind. In the West Bank the fertility rate is 4.2 children per woman and 42% of the population is aged 14 or under, while in Gaza the rate is 5.8 children per woman and 48% are 14 or under. On the other hand 46 % in the West Bank are below the poverty line and in Gaza it is 63% (New York Times).

HUNDREDS of people including children have been found working as slaves in brick kilns in the Chinese provinces of Shanxi and Henan. Hundreds of children are said to have been kidnapped and forced to work under brutal conditions, unpaid and fed only on water and steamed buns. Police have rescued 568 people but in some areas local authorities appear to collaborate with the kiln operators despite the fact that forced labour and child labour are both illegal in China (Howard French, Sydney Morning Herald 18/06/07).

THERE are reported to be 12,000 refugee children enrolled in government schools in New South Wales another 1,500 arrive each year. Meanwhile in April, the NSW Education Department staged an "anti-racism education conference" looking at the "changing face of racism". Exactly what this exercise in political correctness cost we have been unable to find out although we can be confident the taxpayer would be footing the bill.

A SYDNEY pub was accused of racial discrimination as it instructed security staff not to allow Arabs or Islanders onto the premises. The owners of Scruffy Murphy's Irish pub claim they were trying to cut crime on the premises after the hotel was threatened with sanctions by police. The policy was introduced in 2005 but scrapped last year, nevertheless one barred would-be patron, successfully sued both the pub owners and the security firm (DT 3/05/07 & 20/06/07).

DESPITE widespread criticism about driving white farmers off their land, forcing 200,000 poor blacks out of their homes and numerous other abuses, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe still holds onto power. Inflation has hit 1700%, milk and other basics are becoming luxuries for most Zimbabweans and the IMF has suspended aid to the country. Nevertheless Mugabe still has some friends and has been getting support from Iran, North Korea and China. The country has been flooded with cheap Chinese goods and all university students are required to learn Chinese. More worrying is that a viable diamond mining industry might start up hence boosting the Mugabe regime.

A SYDNEY beautician, Thanh Huong "Jade" Doan, and her boyfriend have been charged over the largest shipment of the illicit drug pseudoephedrine ever seized in Australia. The substance is used to make amphetamine-type drugs like ecstasy, speed and ice. Doan, who has recently given birth may get a life sentence, meaning the child may reach adulthood before she is released (Warren Owens, DT 29/04/07).

TWO Muslim Kurdish men in Britain have been found guilty of murdering the daughter of one of the men in an "honour" killing. The 20-year-old woman is said to have shamed her family by ending an arranged marriage, becoming too Westernised, and falling in love with a man who came from a different village. There have been more than 25 such honour

killings in Britain in the last decade and another 100 are under investigation (MxNews 12/06/07).

A NEW REGULATION in Russia means that from 1 April shops and markets were forbidden to hire foreigners. This is said to be aimed at stamping out illegal immigration and protecting the local trade economy. Last October, President Putin called on parliament to protect the native population. Most migrants come from former Soviet republics like Georgia, Armenia and Kazakhstan, while in the east cities like Vladivostok have seen swarms of illegals from China and Vietnam. In 2005 over 300 assaults and 28 ethnic-related murders were recorded in Russia but at the same time the country's population is falling drastically. In 2006 there were twice as many deaths as births and the life expectancy is up to 20 years less than most industrialized nations (Sonya Bryskine, ET 28/02/07).

THE CHURCH of England is institutionally racist according to an internal report. Ethnic minorities are said to be marginalized and black and Asian clergy have little chance of promotion (Telegraph, London).

JAMES SEALE, a 71-year-old former Ku Klux Klansman has been convicted of the kidnapping of two young black men back in 1964. The two were later killed. The prosecution's main witness was a former Klansman who was granted immunity. This case was the subject of a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documentary and some of the evidence used against Seale was unearthed during its filming (Matt Saldana, SMH 16/06/07).

THE REMAINS of two Titanosaurs, the largest dinosaurs known to have ever existed in Australia were shown to the public for the first time in May although they were actually discovered by farmers in south-west Queensland in 2005 and 2006. It's believed these dinosaurs lived 98 million years ago and may have weighed 100 tonnes.

ACCORDING to figures released by ABS drawn from the 2006 census, Indigenous people now make up 2.43% of Australia's population. At the time of the census this was 455,028 people. A large proportion of the population failed to answer this question on the census paper so the actual number of people with Aboriginal ancestry could be higher.

OTHER FIGURES from the 2006 census show that our median age has increased from 34 to 37 years, and the percentage of the population age 65 and over has increased from 12.1 to 13.3%. Fewer people now own their own home and mortgagees were paying an average of \$1,400 per month towards the cost of their home, although the figure in Sydney was \$1665. Hinduism was the fastest growing religion and there was a noticeable increase in the number of people speaking Mandarin or Cantonese at home. Buddhists make up 2.1% of the population, Moslems 1.7% and Jews 0.4%. A third of Sydney's population were born overseas and this is the highest proportion of any capital city (DT 28/06/07).

YONKY IRVIN TAN has been jailed for life over the killing of Sydney accountant, Dominic Ly. Tan had orchestrated the killing in which two other men poured acid over Ly's face and hit him with a gun outside his Sydney home in December 2002 (news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=275932 29/06/07).

AUSTRALIA'S Sunni and Shia Muslims have formed a united front against Israel and declared their support for the Iranian-backed Hezbollah. The Jewish community has accused Shia leader, Kamal Mousselmani of creating hatred towards Jews by calling Israel a "terrorist" state and expressing allegiance to Hezbollah militants. Muslim spokesman, Keysar Trad claimed Hezbollah is not a terrorist group and Sunni spiritual leader Fehmi Naji el-Imam last year referred to Hezbollah as "freedom fighters" (news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=274901 25/06/07).

HISTORICAL ARTICLE

AUSTRALIA IN THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War is one of the less well celebrated and remembered wars that our country has participated in but nevertheless it had a serious impact on Australia at the time and hundreds of our men lost their lives fighting it

Korea had been controlled by Japan since 1910 but with fall of Japan in 1945 the Soviet Union occupied the north of the country while the United States occupied the south. The 38th parallel formed the border between north and south. The United Nations supervised an election in South Korea but the communists refused an election in North Korea.

In June 1950 the communists tried to unite the country by force and sent troops across the 38th parallel. The North Koreans moved swiftly and captured the South Korean capital of Seoul in a matter of days. Shortly after they had over run most of the country except for Pusan, a small area held by the United Nations.

By this time the United States and Australia had started sending troops and air and sea power. Four days after the North Koreans had entered the south, the Australian government had sent ships of the Royal Australian Navy to help and a day later No. 77 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was also committed. Shortly after, the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, announced that we would raise a special land force for service in Korea.

Our RAAF squadron saw action as early as 2 July 1950 when they flew long distance escort missions with American bombers. They later concentrated on supporting ground forces by bombing, rocketing and strafing enemy positions.

Meanwhile a battalion of trained troops were sent while another battalion was recruited. Most of the recruits were ex-soldiers and could therefore be given short refresher courses as training.

The impact of the war on Australia's economy was initially good as the demand for wool increased and the value of the national wool clip doubled in a year. Unfortunately this was inflationary and disrupted the economy. In 1952-53 our Gross Domestic Product actually shrunk 0.8%.

Meanwhile in Korea itself the United Nations forces under General MacArthur made an amphibious landing at Inchon, on the west coast of Korea while an offensive was launched from within the Pusan area. By November the United Nations forces had taken most of Korea and had reached the Yalu River. This river forms the border between North Korea and China.

The first Australian land troops reached Korea in late September, about two weeks after MacArthur's landing at Inchon. The Australians fought their way northward with the other United Nations forces, their first serious action being at the battle of Yongju where seven of them were injured. This was the start of a week of fighting in which Australia lost 17 killed and 57 wounded.

On the 25 October the Australians were engaged in a battle at Broken Ridge in which 8 were killed and 22 wounded. Later in the month their officer in charge was mortally wounded when shrapnel from an enemy shell hit the tent where he was sleeping. This occurred at Chongju which was the most northerly point that the Australians reached, many being disappointed that they did not reach the Yalu.

By this time the Chinese had entered the war on the side of the North Koreans. Initially they were successful in pushing the United Nations forces back south and occupied Seoul on the 4 January 1951. The United Nations forces regrouped and took Seoul back on 15 March and early in April they had forced the Chinese back north of the 38th parallel.

The most notable Australian action in the war was on the 23 and 24 April 1951 when they and their allies engaged and halted a Chinese advance at Kapyong. The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, was presented with a United States Presidential Citation for the valour shown during this battle. In 10 July 1951 cease fire talks began but fighting continued for some time after.

The Australian navy had been active throughout the war. Two RAN vessels were taken off occupation duties in Japan and sent to Korea early in the conflict. In December 1950 two of our vessels helped Canadian and American destroyers evacuate between 7,000 and 8,000 wounded troops and refugees from Chinnampo on the Taedong River when they were in the path of advancing Chinese forces. In 1951 one of our frigates spent 44 days on the Imjin River shelling enemy positions.

By 27 July 1953 the peace talks at Panmunjon had reached enough agreement that the fighting finally stopped. The war however had failed to capture the Australian public's imagination and never excited the interest that the world wars did. Nor arouse the controversy that surrounded the war in Vietnam. This was despite the loss of 281 soldiers killed and 1,257 wounded.

BOOK REVIEWS

“THE STATE of AFRICA: A History of Fifty Years of Independence” by Martin Meredith, Free Press, London 2005 (ISBN 0-7432-3222-4)

Meredith's book is a history of how sub-Saharan African states have fared in the post-colonial period. With a young population and plenty of natural resources it could be expected that the new African nations would prosper and progress. With a few exceptions this did not happen. Post-colonial Africa became noted for corrupt political regimes, poor human rights and a population that went backwards economically.

With the exception of Ethiopia (which itself had colonialist ambitions) virtually all of Africa was claimed by one European power or another by the end of the 19th Century. Some 10,000 polities, from kingdoms and chiefdoms to small tribal groups, were amalgamated into forty European colonies and protectorates. Traditional societies were often partitioned while hundreds of once autonomous groups were enclosed in boundaries set by the colonial powers.

Nevertheless most colonial powers brought progress and development. Particularly during World War II and afterwards airports were built, harbours expanded, roads constructed and production of commodities such as copper, tin and groundnuts increased. In the post-war period some colonial powers set about educating the African population. More schools were established, and universities were opened in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Uganda and the Sudan.

Once granted independence, those countries where the colonial power had done a lot to prepare the Africans to run their own affairs started to make some progress. Others, like the former Belgian Congo started to fall apart almost immediately. Shortly however, even the more progressive countries such as Ghana came to suffer from corrupt and repressive regimes. Where Africa's valuable resources were exploited the people generally did not benefit, the bulk of the profits going to foreign capitalists and the bank accounts of corrupt politicians.

Needless to say many were unsatisfied and coups, rebellions and civil wars flared up across the continent.

One of the bloodiest episodes occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Relations between the two main tribal groups in Rwanda, the Tutsis and Hutu, had rarely been good but in 1994 there was an attempt at genocide and in a period of 100 days, 800,000 Tutsis and others were killed by Hutus. While the Hutu militia and “genocidaires” did most of the killing they were often aided by priests, teachers and doctors. More Tutsis were killed in church buildings than anywhere else but hospitals were no safer. Some people gathered in maternity clinics in the belief that no one would kill mothers and new-born babies but in fact some of the most horrific massacres occurred in these clinics. Many doctors, male and female, including some of the country's most experienced and qualified, participated in the killing.

Once the genocidal government was overthrown the genocidaires fled with hundreds of thousands of refugees to Zaire. Here they controlled and terrorised the refugee camps.

Unhappily the butchery that occurred in Rwanda has been repeated in one country after another – Angola, Congo, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea. In the year 2000 there were at least ten major conflicts proceeding in Africa, and 12 million Africans were classified as refugees.

At the same time most Africans were getting poorer. Average per capita national income is a third lower than the world's next poorest region, namely South Asia. Most African countries now have a lower per capita income than they did in 1980 and some were poorer than they were in 1960. The African continent has 880 million people but a total Gross Domestic product less than Mexico. Investment and savings have declined since 1970, school enrolments are declining, and two out of five Africans are illiterate. Life expectancy is falling. According to the United Nations the 25 countries that rank lowest in human development are African.

On top of these economic problems is the scourge of AIDs. By the year 2004 at least 20 million had died from AIDs and another 30 million had been infected. Southern Africa is the worst affected and by 2010 it is expected that the average life expectancy will fall to 27 years.

Africans have been helped by aid donations from Western nations totaling over \$500 billion but there is little to show for it. "Compassion fatigue" is starting to set in among the donor nations. Despite a lot of rhetoric the United States is one of the stingiest of the donor nations. It spends less than 0.1% of its national income on foreign aid and only one hundredth of one percent of the US budget goes on aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

Even if the US and other Western nations did become more generous the greed and corruption of those who rule through much of Africa would still hinder progress. Worse still, although Meredith does not bring up this point, is whether Africans even have the ability to maintain or run a modern state.

"BEFORE the DAWN: Recovering the Lost History of Our Ancestors" by Nicholas Wade, The Penguin Press, New York 2006 (ISBN 1-59420-079-3)

Wade's highly readable book deals with man's evolution – biological, cultural and linguistic. He has drawn his information from many sciences including anthropology, archaeology, genetics and linguistics, to give us a broad history of the human species.

Much of what he says about our evolution has been covered on books reviewed in previous issues. He points out that modern man originated in Africa and that most of present day humanity – with the exception of black Africans – are descended from a small group who left Africa by crossing the Red Sea about 50,000 years ago.

Our closest relatives in the animal kingdom are the chimpanzees and we in some ways still behave like chimps. Humans, like chimps, are very social animals. Most primate species are matrilineal in that females stay in the territory where they originate but males disperse and breed with females from other groups. Hunter-gatherer tribes, like chimps, are patrilineal whereby males stay in their home territory, while females often go off to marry males from other groups. In both cases the strategy seems to be aimed at reducing inbreeding.

Nevertheless populations tend to homogenize, especially when isolated, due in part to the fact that some individuals will have many progeny, some very few, and some will have no progeny at all.

Unlike some other writers, Wade does not avoid the controversial matter of race but in fact devotes a chapter to it. As he points out, as early man spread out over the globe various groups continued to evolve independently. With vast distances between them, until relatively recently, most people tended to live, marry and die in the places where they were born. Inter-marriage was limited, people on each continent became differentiated, and slowly the various races evolved.

A result of this differentiation is that certain racial groups are more, or less, susceptible to certain diseases. Very few non-Europeans suffer from the genetic condition, hemochromatosis, though to have been spread by the Vikings. Pima Indians are particularly susceptible to diabetes and Pacific Islanders to obesity. Furthermore people from different races vary in the way they respond to certain drugs. For instance the heart drug enalapril works with white patients but has little effect on blacks.

Some people still maintain that race is biologically meaningless but geneticists have pointed out that the emerging view of human population structure has major points of correspondence with the public conception of race. The greatest differences are between people from different continents hence humanity could be divided into five continent-based races as follows:

Africans – those whose primary ancestry is in sub-Saharan Africa

Caucasians – those from Europe, the Middle-east, North Africa and the Indian sub-continent

Asians – those whose origin is in East Asia

Pacific Islanders – Australian Aborigines, New Guineans, Melanesians and Micronesians

Native Americans – the original inhabitants of North and South America.

There are of course populations who are a mixture of two or more races. Ethiopians and Somalis for example are an admixture of Caucasians and Africans.

African Americans are largely of African origin but also have some Caucasian genes which Wade believes is a mere 17%. (Other sources claim it is more like 25%.) Hispanics in the southwestern United States are said to be 39% Native American, 58% Caucasian and 3% African in ancestry. East coast Hispanics have a bigger proportion of African ancestry. Despite this evidence of inter-marriage in past years, the overwhelming majority of Americans marry people of the same race.

When the ancestors of non-Africans emigrated from Africa 50,000 or so years ago they carried only a portion of the African genetic diversity hence setting them on an evolutionary path. The emigrants spread over the globe fragmenting into many smaller populations. Genetic drift would reduce diversity and where there was no inbreeding with outsiders the populations of each continent or region would become more distinct.

In Iceland, where people have only settled for a thousand years the people in various regions have become sufficiently different that with only a small sampling of their DNA it is possible to tell which region they come from.

Another force causing differentiation would have been natural selection as different human populations adapted to radically different diets, terrains, and climates. For example a gene for white skin is found in Caucasians. It occurs in 99% of Europeans but not in Africans or East Asians.

With all those evolutionary forces at work the widely dispersed populations in various continents acquired their own distinctive variations. Studies of mitochondrial DNA or Y chromosome lineages, or examining DNA differences at literally hundreds of sites on the human genome reinforce the evidence of diversification between people from different continents. This largely reflects the reality of common perceptions of race.

While the various races probably started to diverge at least 50,000 years ago, skull types remained much the same throughout the world until about 12,000 to 10,000 years ago. It was then that skull shapes typical of today's races started to appear. At about this time the Han Chinese originated from a small population and expanded quickly at the expense of its neighbours. The skulls of modern Caucasians have both similarities and differences to those of Europeans living before the last Ice Age. The earlier European skulls were larger, with heavier brow ridges and jaws, and in fact some people claim that they were different to the point where these ancient people should not be lumped with modern Europeans in a "Caucasoid" race.

Wade's book mentions some other controversial matters. For instance it details the work of anthropologists who studied the remnants of hunter-gatherer populations still remaining today. One thing that became evident is that rather than being the peaceable types some romantics would have us believe, hunter-gatherer cultures were incredibly violent and inter-tribal warfare was rife. In fact such peoples could lose 0.5% of their populations in warfare each year.

Similarly, cannibalism seems to have been much more common than we would like to think, and it was practiced by peoples who had advanced well beyond the hunter-gatherer stage. The Aztecs of pre-Colombian Mexico had a recipe for human stew.

On a brighter note, some ancient people appear to have given up life as nomads and took to a settled existence thousands of years earlier than once believed. A people known as the Natufians established settled communities in the Middle-east some 15,000 years ago, this puts it thousands of years before domesticated cereal crops were developed.

ABORIGINAL CRIME – HOWARD’S INTERVENTION

A report by the Productivity Commission, “Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage” has found a massive gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in terms crime rates, health, education and employment. Unemployment rates are three times higher, they are ten times more likely to have kidney disease and suffer higher rates of arthritis, heart disease and asthma. Aboriginals are 13 times more likely to be jailed and imprisonment rates have soared by 32% over the last six years.

Things have gotten so out of hand that in some Northern Territory communities that the Commonwealth government has intervened. They have virtually taken control of that half of the Territory that is Aboriginal land. The Territory government under Labor’s Clare Martin has been accused of being too inactive over Aboriginal problems.

The problems include serious levels of drunkenness, violence and the sexual abuse of children, both male and female, which is said to occur in almost every Aboriginal community in the Territory. Mal Brough, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, talks of 12-year-old mothers and 22-year-old grandmothers. In one community, believed to be on Groote Eylandt, girls aged 12 to 15 are said to have been prostituted to mining workers.

The Howard government’s intervention involves taking control of over 60 communities, enforcing alcohol restrictions, sending in 70 police from federal and state forces, banning pornography, and monitoring children’s sexual health. It will quarantine welfare payments so that money goes to food and not grog, force people on income support to clean their own communities, and withhold welfare payments of parents if children are not attending school. The federal Labor opposition has supported these moves and says that if it wins government in the upcoming election it will spend \$30 million to increase the number of school places in the Territory. This would be enough to employ 200 teachers and create 2,000 places for those children not currently enrolled in school.

These actions seem well meant and should mitigate if not eliminate the worst abuses now occurring. In the longer term however the poor genetics of the situation may win out and with the current dysgenic effects of our welfare system the problems may return with a vengeance.

(Main sources: <http://abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/06/01/1939372.htm> Paul Toohey, “Hard Law Hard Love” The Bulletin 3/07/07, Stephanie Peatling, “Medical Checks: Dole Cut Warning” Sydney Morning herald 2/07/07)

NOTABLE QUOTES

“The genetic basis for national differences in intelligence lies in the racial identity of the populations. This becomes apparent when nations are categorized by race.”

Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen, “IQ and Global Inequality” 2006

“They are in all respects treated with savage barbarity; condemned not only to carry the children, but all other burthens, they meet in return for submission only with blows, kicks and every other mark of brutality.”

Watkin Tench (circa 1791) quoted by Louis Nowra in “Bad Dreaming” 2007

“A small number of hard-line Jewish anticommunists and others muddied the waters further. They admired McCarthy and fiercely defended him against numerous critics.”

Murray Friedman, “The Neoconservative Revolution” 2005

“The jury’s speaker replied, ‘Guilty’ and my world started to fall ... I knew deep-down that there would be only one outcome – a prison sentence!”

Pauline Hanson, “Untamed and Unashamed” 2007

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