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Title:

V.A.I.R. brochure: 'Immigration Reform: Where Do We Go From Here?'

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IMMIGRATION REFORM —

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

"Proposals for reform have been prepared by Immigration Reform Groups, consisting mainly of university people, that for several years have operated within what would be described in other countries as opinion-forming quarters. If reform of immigration policies proceeds calmly these Groups are entitled to much of the praise."

— Donald Horne, "The Lucky Country" (1964), p. 113.

"Condemnation of the White Australia policy does not extend to the Immigration Department, which can operate only in the limits set by government.

"Government in turn has presumably been limited by a fear of getting too far ahead of public opinion.

"Any change in this opinion is almost certainly the result of the devotion and energy of the immigration reform associations.

"Only when we are totally accepted in South-East Asia will we realise what debt we are in to these associations."

— The Australian, 22nd February, 1966.

Since the publication of "Control or Colour Bar" (1960) and the subsequent formation of Reform Associations in various States, there have been substantial improvements in Australia's immigration policy. The bigotry and xenophobia of the bad old days has been tempered by an enlightened awareness of Australia's place in a multi-racial world.

There has, however, been no clean break with the past. Despite the fact that Gallup Polls show that a majority of Australians would like to admit a proportion of migrants from countries outside Europe, we still hear the Minister making such remarks as:

"I cannot foresee the day when non-Europeans will constitute a significant proportion of the Australian work-force." (22/5/67).

Moreover, the Government launches expensive campaigns in Europe trying to wheedle Europeans into migrating, but continues to insult Asian countries by refusing to enter into immigration agreements with them, and sometimes by deporting individual Asians who have started to assimilate into our community.

As Mr. Douglas Brass wrote in "The Australian" on 19/7/67: "But there is another thing at this time that Mr. Snedden and his colleagues must do if they are sincere in making sense and justice out of our immigration programme. That is to extend our concessions to Asiatics.

"There is no need for them to take the emphasis off Europe and homogeneity and the rest of the holy writ, but it is no longer good enough to preach Asian fellowship and responsibility on the national front while maintaining strict anti-Asian exclusiveness with individuals.

"We've got to do at least what Canada is doing — and Canada is now our strongest competitor in the migrant market — before it is too late to hold our head up in Asian capitals."

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

AIMS AND OBJECTS

1. To demonstrate that the majority of Australians no longer desire an immigration policy which in practice excludes people on the basis of their colour.
2. To increase awareness that the present immigration policy is morally wrong, and weakens Australia's impact in the councils of the world by the fact that it bears the taint of racial superiority.
3. To secure that the Australian immigration policy be based on the following principles:
 - (a) Our capacity to absorb migrants without social or economic strain will be the sole determinant of our level of intake, for non-European migrants as for Europeans.
 - (b) This capacity will be determined by the need to avoid harmful economic competition that gives rise to social tensions, to prevent a concentration of any racial group in low status employment, to avoid housing congestion and to ensure reasonable dispersion throughout the Australian community.
 - (c) Guided by these criteria, Australia is prepared to negotiate bilateral migration agreements with the Government of any country whose citizens may wish to come here.

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