

THE I.P.A.

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC
289 Flinders Lane,



REVIEW

AFFAIRS — VICTORIA
Melbourne — Victoria
Central 1249

Vol. VI

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1952

No. 1

CONTENTS

	Page
A National Pride	1
The Wide Spread of Property Ownership in Australia	9
Charts	16
The Mad Spiral	18
"A Richer & Stronger British Commonwealth"— comments by Sir Herbert Gepp, E. F. Atkins & S. J. Gandon	23

COUNCIL OF THE INSTITUTE

G. J. COLES, C.B.E. (Chairman).
 Sir W. MASSY-GREENE, K.C.M.G.
 Sir LESLIE MCCONNAN, K.B.
 C. A. M. DERHAM, C.B.E., M.C.
 H. R. HARPER.
 HARRY HEY.
 W. A. INCE.
 F. E. LAMPE, M.B.E.
 C. N. MCKAY.
 W. I. POTTER.
 HERBERT TAYLOR.
 Hon. A. G. WARNER, M.L.C.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

F. E. LAMPE, M.B.E.
 HERBERT TAYLOR.
 C. D. KEMP, B.Com. (Director of the
Institute).
 G. R. MOUNTAIN, M.A.
 H. N. WARREN, B.Com., A.C.I.S.
(Secretary).

A National Pride

"Every nation may be said at every time to be at the parting of the ways. To say so of Australia today may then border on the truism. And yet it would appear closely to fit a nation whose immediate decisions may lead to widely different futures. Is Australia to be one of the nations that shape the destinies of the world; or is she to remain one of those whose doctrines are shaped elsewhere?"

(Salvador de Madariaga)

THESE are the words of a distinguished visitor recently in Australia, a great and wise scholar, a world-renowned economist-philosopher, a one-time President of the Council of the League of Nations. Most thoughtful Australians would probably admit that they penetrate to the core of the Australian dilemma today. Over the next few decades will Australia emerge from the small-nation class to become one of the leading influential nations of the globe, a centre of English-speaking culture and power in the Pacific? Or will she remain a small and not over-significant member of the world family



of nations? Is she to be a nation with a great and expansive destiny, or is she to be content with a future of small-time mediocrity, a nation which the rest of the world may continue to regard with a paternalistic tolerance, but which will count for little or less in the pattern of things now unfolding?

But perhaps even that choice is not vouchsafed to us! Perhaps the real alternative confronting this country is the grimmer one defined by a member of the Board of Editors of a leading American journal:* *"Every Australian who knows anything at all knows that his country must become great or go under."*

Certainly, at the present time, there is manifest among some Australians a feeling that their country must attempt to scale the mountain tops of greater achievement, to fulfil a higher destiny, regardless of the hazards and stresses and economic sacrifices certain to be encountered. The mood of national expansion is upon us. How else account for the determination to increase the Australian population at the rate of 3% a year (a rate faster than the United States achieved even at the peak of her great period of development)? Or for the resolution to have, by 1960, 10 to 11 million people on the Australian continent—and beyond that . . .? How else explain the surge of enthusiasm for ambitious costly projects of development—such as the giant Snowy River project—which can bear fruit only many years ahead—and this at a time when the immediate demands of defence press urgently and insistently upon us! All these are no more, surely, than the outward expression of a nation's instinct that its hour of destiny is close by.

And yet it cannot be said that this realisation is accompanied by any strong confidence that Australia will rise to the occasion. There is a feeling, widespread, that all is by no means well with Australia. On every hand, we meet with doubts and forebodings. There are deep-rooted destructive divisions eagerly fostered and viciously aggravated by those whose allegiance is not to Australia, but to another power. There is, among some, talk of a moral sickness that threatens the very foundations of the social and economic order and of our national security. There are the almost daily accusations that Australia is a nation "on the darg," on a universal "go-

* Gilbert Burck in "Fortune," September, 1950.

slow," with a constitutional aversion to hard work that would be difficult to parallel among any other of the English-speaking peoples, or indeed among the non-English-speaking peoples. Is it that we harbour grandiose ideas and intentions but lack the will and fibre to achieve their successful realisation? We are, perhaps, not unlike the batsman who has set his sights on the century mark, who knows, indeed, that he must score a century to retain an honoured place in the team, but who is without the firm resolution and the quiet confidence in his own technique necessary to the attainment of his ambition.

What, then, do we need to give us the drive, the over-mastering will-power, the inner self-assurance, which at present, as a nation, we seem to lack, and without which our high ambitions will remain an idle dream?

A BELIEF IN AUSTRALIA

Perhaps it is no more, and no less, than a belief in Australia herself. Perhaps many of our troubles would disappear, many of our problems be overcome, if we had a firm unshakable sense of national pride, a faith in Australia's greatness, a confident belief in her destiny. Certainly if we had such a faith, we would have something outside of ourselves to consider and to work for. If our loyalty to Australia took pride of place over our narrower group loyalties (commendable though they may be), over our loyalties to our particular political party or creed, or our fellow employers or trade unionists, how much of the fierce destructive conflicts which are at present inhibiting our national progress would begin to disappear? If Australians could be caught up in the irresistible enthusiasms of a great national purpose and endeavour, based on an over-riding national pride, how many of the goals at present so far distant would rapidly come within our reach?

The great periods in the histories of nations have invariably been accompanied by an all-consuming sense of national pride and national destiny: Elizabethan England, 19th Century England, or to go back further in the pages of history, the great days of the Roman Empire. And how greatly now are the English people, passing through dark and desperate

times, sustained and strengthened by the Englishman's traditional love and faith in his native land! What abounding virility and impulse is lent to American life today by the superb pride of Americans in America, and by their spreading sense of American destiny!

Can we capture something of the American spirit in Australia?

OUR ASSETS

Truly we have much to be proud of. Few, if any, countries in the world equal Australia in the natural amenities of enjoyable living. Returning travellers are unanimous on this point. There would be far less grumbling and grouching in this country if Australians were only able to see for themselves the conditions under which the great part of the rest of the world have to live. Aware of their unique advantages, their incomparable national assets, would Australians not determine to make the utmost of a land which offers so much?

We have, for instance, a truly glorious climate, a climate in which it is possible to go out-of-doors in relative comfort all the year round. This is not possible in most countries, even in some parts of the United States and Canada. We have the priceless advantage of being a *new* country. We can start afresh. We can plan our cities, industries and civic services, in the light of modern science to provide the basis of healthful and efficient living, without the tremendous physical drawbacks and discomforts imposed on other countries by the legacy of past ages. We are largely free, too, of some of the stifling traditions and anachronistic social relationships which at present so heavily burden the older nations striving to adapt themselves to the world of the middle '20th century. We have the glorious gift of space: "the vision splendid of the sun-lit plains extended." We are fortunate to be able to look into big distances and dream big dreams. The very spaciousness of our land should encourage a corresponding spaciousness of the mind, an enthusiasm for broad-ranging projects, both spiritual and physical. Unlike the majority of countries, less happily-placed, we have immense natural resources still to be exploited, the frontiers of which are constantly being pushed back by scientific discovery.

And then we have rare human material to work with. Admittedly, the average Australian has his defects—but so, too, have the people of every country. He is perhaps too easy-going. His ideal of “mateship”—a fine one in itself—overflows into a passion for equality at all costs, which leads him to level down rather than *level up*. He delights in putting down the mighty from their seats, in bringing back the fastest runners to the pace of the field. All grades of society take a grim satisfaction in seeing their leaders fall. It has been said that in Australia every man thinks he is *twice* as good as another. We applaud and glamorise the great in cricketers or race-horses; we could learn, with advantage, to do likewise in our political and business life. We dislike the unusual in ideas or men and thus impose on ourselves a distressing uniformity of outlook, customs, clothes and manners.

The Australian is lacking, perhaps, to some extent in appreciation of intellectual pursuits. But he is a creature of his environment. He is unsophisticated and unpretentious. He dislikes the showy or artificial. He is simple and wholesome in his tastes. If he is hard and sceptical on the surface, he is generous at the core. His sympathies lie with the underdog. He has a sense of sportsmanship and fair-play equalled by few. If his pleasures are more of the body than of the intellect, this may be attributed to his ingrained love of the out-of-doors. He glories in the great open spaces of his continent and although he lives mainly in the cities he is never far from nature. There is no keener sporting nation in the world and the Australian is able to claim, in all modesty, that few, if any, nations so excel in competitive sports. In Australia, sport is an integral and essential part of the national life, not something incidental and unimportant. The whole nation participates, not just a select circle. This is something that cannot be changed, and perhaps it is better that it should not be changed; those who deplore it might remember that there are less healthy and less worthy ways of spending one's leisure time. The Australian love of sport is a product of climate, environment, opportunity and native vigour, and to a less extent of racial tradition. The accusation that the Australian is incurably indolent and lazy falls to the ground when one considers the startling concentration and energy which he expends on his sporting recreations.

All these are virtues of great price, which we should place to our high credit in any character stock-taking. For the Australian has a serious habit of self-depreciation which can hardly be helpful to his self-esteem. Indeed he subjects himself to such a barrage of self-abuse (see the newspapers every Monday morning) that his confidence in his own capacities of achievement must be dangerously weakened. Since he responds so badly to the lash of criticism, might it not be worthwhile, now and again, to try him with the stimulus of a little encouragement?

LOYALTIES—RACIAL OR NATIONAL ?

It has been said that, culturally, Australia is not much more than a British colony. This is partly true; but is becoming less so. For our intellectual interests and inspiration we have drawn, and still draw, heavily on the Mother Country. This is natural enough, but the drawbacks of so doing should be more frankly recognised. It impedes the Australian development toward a distinctive culture of her own; it gives rise to a certain intellectual laziness and prevents the full flowering of our own creative genius; it imposes on the national life standards and traditions which are in some ways unsuited to it, indeed which obstruct the Australian ascent towards mature nationhood. We are perhaps over-ready to copy others and not sufficiently alert to create and build for ourselves. Up to the present this may have been excusable because of our youth and our meagre numbers. But it is no longer so.

Regrettably, the loyalties of too many Australians are more *racial* than *national*. Their pride in being "British" over-tops their pride in being "Australian." This is something which even visitors from Britain find hard to understand. Of course, Australians are rightly proud of their British blood and connection and this pride has contributed vitally to some of the very best things in Australian life. We have a deep, unbreakable—and wholly desirable—sentimental attachment to the Old Country, but with many people this is carried to excessive lengths and is not consistent with a full sense of pride and faith in their own land.

The important thing is that Australia is predominantly of British stock and is likely for many years to remain so.

Therefore, we should be keen to develop our own particular and distinctive brand of "Britishism," a brand thoroughly suited to the environment, conditions and demands of its new home. Only so can the British peoples throughout the world hope to attain to their maximum strength and stature. But this objective is retarded rather than advanced while, for far too many Australians, sentiment for the Motherland spills over into a sentimentality that tends to blind them to the qualities, the beauties and the magnificent potentialities of their own great country.

With the influx of vast numbers of new people into Australia as a result of the post-war migration schemes, it is now supremely important for us to take conscious steps to promote the concept of Australian nationalism. How else can we expect the hundreds of thousands of new Australians to capture the spirit of all that is finest and best and distinctive in this country?

In this we have much to learn from the United States. What a contrast exists between the overflowing belief and faith of Americans in America and its destiny, and the lukewarm evidence of national pride among Australians in Australia! But the Americans have left nothing to chance. They start with the child and they are not content until they have made him or her "110% American." They know their American history. The "Stars and Stripes" flies proudly over every school and many factories. The factory worker thus has it visibly brought home to him every day that he is working not for himself alone, still less for his boss, but for the American nation. The extraordinarily impressive and beautiful monuments at the national capital, Washington, are visited by "pilgrims" from all over America. Great newspapers organise "I am an American Day," when tens of thousands come together in scenes of indescribable enthusiasm. The American becomes greatly proud of his country's achievements and "the American way of life" and, being proud, he is vigilant not to damage or besmirch it. He has instilled into him a sense of national destiny, and from that sense springs the abounding vigour and confidence and aspiration so evident in the United States today.

"THE GRANDEST LADY OF THEM ALL"

It is not, for one moment, suggested that Australia should slavishly copy the American techniques. We can develop our own ways of promoting our national sense. But if Australia is to rise to the great challenge now presented, it is imperative that measures be taken to foster the spirit of national love and pride. When all Australians have this pride, this mystical love of country, this sense of an Australian destiny, we will be much less inclined to push our own particular barrows at the expense of the real interests of the Australian nation, or to indulge in activities detrimental to the welfare of the whole. We might begin to concentrate our considerable national traits of aggression and vigour and improvisation on wholly constructive purposes. With the awakening and stirring of a strong national pride, it is even possible that we might forget our fierce group loyalties and divisions—at present so ruinous—in a wider and greater national conception. We might begin to say with a greatly respected Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, John Curtin: "I proudly proclaim my Australian nationalism; I am a nationalist before I am an internationalist." Or with the poet:

"Now he has gone, and his sudden laughter
Lost in the hush that has followed after . . .
For he sleeps at Crete, beneath the sea
With his fingers curled as a child's might be.
But I hear his voice, and I understand
How deep was his love for his golden land.
'The convict's daughter', hear him call,
'Is the grandest lady of them all!'"

It is not what we have been; nor even what we are; but what we can and, with God's help, will become.

