

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debate – The case for national racial unity

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 12 September 1901, Vol. 4 Excerpts.

Alfred Deakin, Attorney-General in the Commonwealth Government, putting the case for national racial unity:

12 September 1901

We find ourselves today, it may be said, with, at all events, a half-open door for all Asiatics and African peoples, through which entry is not difficult, and through which, as the experience of the honourable member for Southern Melbourne proves, there is still entry from time to time. It was with a full recognition of those facts that the first plank in the Government platform, as submitted at Maitland, and emphasised at every opportunity since, was the plank which for ease of reference was called the declaration for a 'white Australia'. It was for this reason that so much stress was laid on this issue, and it is for this reason that since the Government took office, no question has more frequently or more seriously occupied their attention, not only because of this one proposal now before the House, but with regard to executive acts that have been and will be necessary. There have been determinations which hereafter may have important consequences arising out of our administration, as well as other measures which will be submitted to Parliament, all having in view the accomplishment of the same end. That end, put in plain and unequivocal terms, as the House and the country are entitled to have it put, means the prohibition of all alien coloured immigration, and more, it means at the earliest time, by reasonable and just means, the

deportation or reduction of the number of aliens now in our midst. The two things go hand in hand, and are the necessary complement of a single policy - the policy of securing a 'white Australia'...

At the very first instant of our national career we are as one for a white Australia. I say that because, if I may be pardoned for prophecy, it seems to me that this declaration for Australia is likely to stand with the declaration in the United States made some 70 or 80 years ago, received with derision where it was not ignored when made, but which, with every succeeding decade, has advanced towards greater influence and a wider acknowledgment, until at last, practically the whole civilised world, however unwillingly, has been compelled to accept the Monroe doctrine as applied by the United States of America. We may have in the future some development which may call for the application of the Monroe doctrine in the Pacific. But far more important than that, and a far more significant declaration at the present time, is this for a white Australia. It is the Monroe doctrine of the Commonwealth of Australia. It is no mere electioneering manifesto, but part of the first principles upon which the Commonwealth is to be administered and guided... There will be no mistake as to our meaning when these speeches are read, and when our votes are seen. Members on both sides of the House, and of all sections of all parties - those in office and those out of office - with the people behind them, are all united in the unalterable resolve that the Commonwealth of Australia shall mean a 'white Australia', and that from now henceforward all alien elements within it shall be diminished. We are united in the resolve that this Commonwealth shall be established on the firm foundation of unity of race, so as to enable it to fulfil the promise of its founders, and enjoy to

the fullest extent the charter of liberty under the
Crown which we now cherish.