

Australia Needs Unity From Diversity

DALMENY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, October 26, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The prospect of eventually achieving a nation of integrated people – for whom religion is a personal and private matter, to be lived and not talked about or used as a cudgel – was diminished when a Catholic education system was permitted to be established early in the new nation's history. When the author (Raja Arasa Ratnam) of 'Musings at Deaths Door: an ancient bi-cultural Asian-Australian ponders about Australian society' arrived in Australia in 1948 ('when the dragons blew smoke' said his little daughter decades later), he was horrified to discover the deep bitterness which prevailed between Roman Catholics and Protestants (now probably subterranean).

The social cohesion engendered by Australian public school systems may now be attenuated by the religio-educational ambiance of some of the multifarious private schools.

On a more positive note, while the author was initially denied permanent residence in Australia, because of the White Australia policy, it was his expert team which carried out the first review of the Australian Citizenship Act in the early 1980s. Before this Act was introduced in 1948, all Australians were only British subjects – as was the author (by birth).

As the relevant Director of Policy, he recommended that British residents seeking citizenship be now required to take an oath of allegiance. However, the oath proposed for all applicants was to the nation, instead of to the Crown (in Britain). His recommendation was eventually accepted, having survived the thicket of the usual competitive bureaucratic perturbations. The competence of his team prevailed.

The following chapters in the book, based on personal experience, are relevant to the worthwhile aim of a cohesive people over-riding any isolating stances by politicians, priests and ethnocentric individuals.

On racism and tribalism

It was a commendable achievement to bring to maturity a proudly racist nation within half a century. Instead of the virulent attacks based on skin colour or accent, there now remains only the voice of the intemperate ignorant. Inevitably, there will be those who perceive 'racist' prejudice too readily. So, Australia has legislation to protect those who might claim to be offended by another's words.

The author's experience is that immigrants are not wimps. They shrug off disparaging remarks. After being put down for more than two centuries, the Aborigine is probably immune to such remarks.

The term race is also a misnomer. Seemingly coined by European colonialism to enable a fatuous claim that the 'white race' is genetically superior to all other races (coloured, of course), it ignores that reality that a band of Asians, from east to west, are more white than Europeans.

Tribalism in Australia is church-related. The author suffered from this at the end of his career. For his persecutors (just a small gang), the word mass had great weight.

On multiculturalism

One would need to challenge any government which requires minority communities to retain their cultural identity, or which encourages (as did Australia once) the retention of their birthplace cultures. To the author, multiculturalism policy was the vehicle for ethnic empowerment. Advisory councils were formed which enabled appointed representatives of ethnic communities to recommend policies – when there was a bureaucracy paid to do the job. The author was one of those who wrote agendas for meetings and produced discussion papers. There was a clear tendency for some representatives from authoritarian nations to be prescriptive!

However, a policy for bonding people of diverse ethnicities through a shared citizenship then replaced that misguided policy – that people should be told how to get on with one another. The author was reminded of British colonialism claiming to occupy all those pink spots on the map in order to teach the natives how to govern themselves.

Until the recent claim that sharia law is needed, the Australian people got on together famously. Cross-ethnic marriages were increasing. As well, by the third generation, there were no 'ethnics,' while cultural celebrations may have continued.

On migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

A massive immigration program bringing in needed able-bodied workers, mainly from Europe, discomfited some Anglo-Australians. They demanded the foreigners speak English in public spaces. Yet, Good Neighbour Councils and, later, official settlement policies, assisted new arrivals to settle in successfully. Millions of dollars were spent on this very worthwhile program of settlement. (Refer the author's 'Destiny Will Out.')

The early post-war refugees (war-displaced persons), being part of the inflow of 'wogs', created no waves. The arrival of Vietnamese refugees from the 1970s on was a different kettle of fish. However, they all settled amicably.

It was the asylum seekers, mainly unlawful boat arrivals, who divided the nation. Financially irresponsible but kind-hearted people are pitted against those who require secure borders; and for entrants to be selected on their potential to be integrated. If selection had been thorough, would there be immigrants insisting that Australia had to adapt to their ideology? And with so many living on welfare?

Should not immigrants benefit the nation they chose to enter within a reasonable period?

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None

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