

## AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY

### Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. R.G. Menzies

As some question appears to have arisen here in respect of the Australian immigration policy, I think it desirable to say one or two things in order to clarify the position.

The Australian immigration policy has been steadily maintained for the last 58 years. It is our national desire to develop in Australia a homogeneous population in order that we may avert social difficulties which have arisen in many other countries. It is clearly the right of any nation to determine its own racial constitution. We have maintained our policy in respect of people who are actually citizens of other British Commonwealth countries. I say this so that it may not be thought that our policy has some specific reference to an American State or Territory.

So far as I know most nations have policies which determine the intake of citizens from other countries. So far as Australia is concerned, I want to make it quite clear that our policy, to which the overwhelming majority of Australians are deeply attached is not based upon any idea of racial superiority. We willingly recognise that citizens of other nations possess abilities and traditions which we sincerely respect and admire. When, therefore, a citizen of some Asian or Oriental country is refused permanent entry to the Australian community, it is not because we are assuming to ourselves some superior quality. That would be untrue, unjust and, indeed, absurd.

But we desire to organise the future of our own country in our own way. We have witnessed many examples of nations in which a mixture of races has given rise to deep prejudices and almost insoluble social questions. It would appear that in the Hawaiian Islands various races have been able to live together in complete amity and with mutual advantage. But this is not true everywhere.

The point I want to make is that our immigration policy was not devised as something with particular application to any one country. It is broadly devised, of long standing, and not discriminatory as between one country possessing non-European citizens and another. From time to time there have been suggestions made that we should introduce some quota system. My Government regards this as impracticable, as introducing possible new discriminations and as something which does not even begin to solve the problem of population movements. The whole essence of the matter is that we desire to build up our own population, partly by natural increase and partly by immigration in such a way as to produce as soon as possible an integrated population of a homogeneous kind.

I should perhaps emphasise that, as was realised by the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in 1947, it is the prerogative of every country to decide what shall be the composition of its population and what persons should be admitted to permanent citizenship.

We receive and welcome many Asian visitors whether they come for business or for travel. We have today approximately 6,000 Asian students attending our universities, technical colleges, schools and other educational institutions. It has been our experience that these students, in common with many other Asian visitors, have encountered no feeling of discrimination. We are in fact a friendly people, not given to making distinctions among people on grounds of race or religion. But we do not want to see created in our own country minority problems or prejudices or occasional bitterness such as exist in some countries where large numbers of non-Europeans and Europeans live in separate communities.

HONOLULU.

9th May, 1959.