

One Australia

John Hyde

Muslims throwing things at policemen and demanding the death of the author, Salman Rushdie, within the shadow of Big Ben, and the slaughter of Chinese in Tiananmen Square in an operation officially described as a "battle against bourgeois liberalism" should have Australians asking what, if anything, substantially prevents such divisions occurring in Australia. They might also ask what, if anything, is wrong with "One Australia".

I suggest that John Howard's "One Australia" policy was deliberately sabotaged by an unholy alliance between people who sought prestige and taxpayer money from official multiculturalism and people who hoped to gain political power by bringing Mr Howard down. So far, both have succeeded. Howard's Labor and Liberal assassins used Howard's politically unwise remark about the level of Asian immigration to remove "One Australia" from the political agenda. I believe Howard's assertion was factually wrong but nonetheless legitimate.

Exactly what Mr Howard meant by the expression has, thanks to his enemies, never been spelt out. However, the words are not meaningless. Surely "One Australia" means an Australia whose citizens respect or, at least, tolerate each other; a society where serious class and other group distinctions are absent; and above all, a society whose government does not have favourite citizens.

Such a policy implies either an isolated Australia, which would become inward-looking and eventually backward. Or it implies a melting-pot Australia, within which the old and the new all take from, and give to, a largely common culture. The melting-pot ideal calls for multi-cultural pluralism but not for "multiculturalism" policies which slow down the cultural blending.

Society is not possible without some shared values. And some values are so central to our sort of society that they are not negotiable---no matter that totalitarian thugs in Beijing refer to them as "bourgeois liberal" and no matter that a cultural enclave of Muslim British citizens is trying to overturn the tradition of British religious tolerance.

Those aspects of our culture which protect civil rights must be accepted by anyone within our frontiers. It is hypocritical and unfair to citizens, migrants or even visitors, to pretend otherwise. We have a responsibility to state the underlying non-negotiable cultural requirements of being an Australian, because without these the "One Australia" which we love and which is so attractive to migrants is not possible.

These essentials can generally be distinguished from those cultural traits which may safely be left to individual taste. We may, for instance, over time, abandon our dress and even our language---so long as we have a common language. But we cannot abandon our respect for freedom of speech and worship. Even less could we condone the execution of a man for blasphemy or for an offence which is not proscribed in our law.

To maintain our sort of Australia we must insist upon at least these: national sovereignty, the rule of law, democracy and open government, respect for the rights of individuals, and equality before the law irrespective of sex, race and religion. Each of these requirements is part of the Western tradition. To mean anything, each must be bound into the rules of a society. We must insist on them even though it means, for example, proscribing practices which are in the nature of Muslim fundamentalism.

We need not be coy about insisting upon any of these values. A measure of their superiority is that they are being adopted in the rhetoric and practice of non-Western nations also. They will, however, be difficult to maintain, if we invite too many people who do not share them to become Australian residents.

The liberal values also become hard to maintain, when, through lack of understanding or lack of care, we undermine them from within. The dual citizenship we now allow our new citizens is not consistent with national sovereignty, the many laws which favour some industries, trade unions and ethnic groups are not consistent with equality, and so on. Such unwarranted discrimination pits occupational group against occupational group, union against union, union against employer, producers against consumers, and culture against culture. Each is competing for the government-granted privilege of maintaining its *status quo*. There is, thus, much more to "One Australia" than migration policy, although migration policy is an important part of maintaining a tolerable level of national unity.

In the interests of "One Australia", we should avoid accepting those migrants who want to keep alive in Australia, rather than leave, the acrimonies of their native countries. We can do without the Croat/Serb, Sikh/Hindu, Greek/Macedonian and Ulsterman/Irish antipathies.

Since there are many more people who wish to come to Australia than we could possibly take, we should be choosy,

taking only those new settlers who have most to offer us. That means simply that we should take only those migrants who are most likely to mix with and improve the brew in the melting pot in which all are equal in law.

That brings me to Asian migrants. It seems to me that we could do with rather more of, at least, some groups of Asians. Generally speaking the Chinese and Vietnamese who wish to settle in Australia have the cultural characteristics we need. They are entrepreneurial. They generally try to earn large incomes by producing, rather than by combining in unions or business cartels. Their children tend to excel in exams set by Caucasian examiners. They are not generally political people but they do accept the rules of liberal democracy. The refugees among them deserve our consideration and they, in particular, will wholeheartedly accept Australian sovereignty and the melting pot of legal equals.

East Asia now offers us citizens of exceptional quality (does that preference make me a racialist?) in the way that Eastern Europe did in the early 1950s. Many of them are refugees selected for us by totalitarian governments. Both for their sakes and our own, we should take as many as we can absorb safely. Their number will be greater, if we insist upon a commitment to the essentials of "One Australia". We should require that commitment from them and from established Australians.

John Hyde is the Executive Director of the Australian Institute for Public Policy.

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