

Nation Race and Citizen – HTAV Talk, March 23, 2009

This is a brief outline of the key points to be covered under this Area of Study. Students should explore each point and research evidence to support each of these elements of the topic.

Dot Point One:

- **The hopes and fears which helped create the new nation and shaped ideas about citizenship, belonging and responsibilities.**

What did those who led the federation movement and those who supported it, hope for?

- A safe, secure and independent nation
- A pure white British style Australia.
- A prosperous nation.
- A high standard of living.
- An efficient nation.
- A democratic nation.
- An egalitarian nation.
- A caring nation.
- A well educated nation.
- A healthy nation
- A united and cohesive nation

What fears helped to shape the push for and support for federation?

- Fear of invasion.
- Fear of racial 'contamination'
- Fear of competition for jobs from outsiders.
- Fear of lack of economic progress.
- Fear of declining working conditions.

- Fear of loss of states' rights, powers and influence.

There were also fears that actually slowed down the movement towards federation. These included:

- Fears about the unequal size and power of the colonies.
- Anxieties about Protection and Free Trade.
- Fear about weakening of ties to Britain

Dot Point Two:

- **The processes of inclusion and exclusion which formed a nation of Australian citizens up to 1914.**

Citizenship and belonging were largely determined by THREE PROCESSES

- The Constitution – the document drawn up which formed the blueprint for the structure of the nation.

Example of exclusion through the constitution: Sections 53 and 127 which denied Aborigines the right to be counted in the census and denied the Commonwealth any power to make laws for Aborigines.

- Legislation – the laws passed by the Commonwealth and State Parliaments between 1901 and 1914.

Example of inclusion through legislation: All women over 21, whether they had the right to vote in their Colonial parliaments or not, were given the right to vote in Commonwealth elections under the 1902 Franchise Act.

- Social and cultural policies and practices which made some people feel included and some excluded.

Example of social/cultural exclusion: unmarried mothers were legally included under the Maternity Allowance Act of 1912 but socially excluded and even shunned by mainstream society.

NOTE THAT SOME GROUPS WERE NOT COMPLETELY EXCLUDED BUT MARGINALISED - eg Some Chinese long term Chinese residents such as Quong Tart

Dot Point Three :

- **The benefits and responsibilities extended to those who belonged to the new nation, including work education and welfare legislation, women and motherhood, national defence and conscription**

The benefits extended to those who belonged: predominantly white males of British origin.

- Political rights – vote, right to stand for Parliament etc
- Workers rights – Right to have disputes heard, right to basic wage, rights to pensions etc
- Prosperity and high living standards – These were expected to follow from the above, plus laws such as 'The new Protection' and the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank.
- Welfare –Right to basic wage, maternity allowance, Invalid and Aged pensions etc
- Protection – Right to feel safe through military training, the establishment of a citizen army and the establishment of Australian Navy
- Education (state responsibility) – all children were entitled to a free primary education (to Year 8). Education was compulsory but Aboriginal children were not forced to go to school.
- Health (state responsibility) – most people had access to medical care but the quality often depended on the wealth of the patient.
- Sense of belonging and acceptance – most white people received messages through laws, political speeches, newspapers, literature, plays and paintings that they were members of one of the finest and most progressive societies in the world. They were encouraged to feel positive about Australia. In 1883, Englishman REN Twopenny visited Australia and he wrote:

'In Australia, a man feels himself a unit in the community, a somebody... This brings with it a greater sense of self-respect and responsibility.'

The responsibilities placed on those who belonged:

- All white men (and after 1902, all white women) - to vote and be engaged in the political process.

- White males and boys as young as 12 – to undergo military training.
- Employers – to pay the basic wage and provide ‘decent’ working conditions (for the time)
- Workers – to work hard and contribute to the nation’s prosperity.
- White women – to produce white babies.
- Governments (State and Commonwealth) to pass laws that would look after the welfare of the citizens, especially in areas of education and public health.
- All - Continue to support the Empire.

Some or all of these benefits were denied to:

Most Aborigines

Most South Sea Islanders

Most Chinese

Some Women

Some children

Some workers

Some town and city dwellers

Some traders and merchants (espec in NSW) over Protectionist Policies.

<p>A final point to consider is the extent to which the original hopes and fears had been realised by 1914.</p>
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Largely – By 1914, Australia could be described as:

- Safe nation
- White nation
- High standard of living
- More efficient nation (internal free trade)
- Democratic nation
- Caring nation
- Nation loyal to Britain

- Australian identity and unity were emerging.

Not completely – By 1914, aspects of the hopes and fears had not been fully met:

- Still only a limited sense of national identity
- Non whites denied access to many aspects of citizenship.
- Australia not really a ‘workingman’s paradise’ - still great economic inequality.
- Women did not have equal rights in many aspects of life.
- Most Aborigines and Asians and Some Southern and Eastern Europeans were socially excluded.
- Australia not really able to defend herself, still relied on Britain.
- Many constitutional powers remained with Britain (eg British Parliament could over-ride Australian laws.)
- Some farmers and businessmen were negatively affected by Protection policies.

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