4

Diggers, democracy and urbanisation

c. 1851–85

On 12 February 1851, gold was discovered in Summerhill Creek on the western slopes of the Blue Mountains. Fear of convictism may have had some influence in suppressing news of earlier finds, but by 1851 Australian society had become so open that suppressing the news of Edward Hargraves's discovery would no longer have been practicable. Besides, the gold rush to California in 1849 had enticed away a disquietingly large number of the more enterprising Australian colonists, so that businessmen and some officials rejoiced to see a tide of migration flowing back across the Pacific. The rush to the Turon (New South Wales) diggings had scarcely gathered momentum when the newly separated Victorian government offered a reward for the discovery of a payable goldfield in its territory. Before the end of the year it was obvious that the Victorian fields near Ballarat were even richer than those of the mother colony.

The immediate impact of the discoveries on the placid pastoral society was so great that, for a time, some officials like the normally imperturbable Edward Deas Thomson, Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, feared a breakdown of the social order.[1] Shepherds and other employees, in both country and town, left their jobs *en masse* for the diggings. The draconic provisions of the *Masters and Servants Acts* availed little when so many police constables and other civil servants followed – not to arrest the absconders, but to join them. Governmental difficulties increased from September 1852, when the wave of overseas gold-seekers broke on Melbourne. Thousands of deserting sailors joined the eager "new chums" in their precipitate trek to the goldfields.

Nevertheless, civil order did not break down. Except for the short-lived Eureka revolt at Ballarat in December 1854, there were few considerable riots and, by Californian standards, a surprising absence of lynch-law and other disorders. Contemporary observers nearly all agreed on the high level of self-discipline and responsibility among the diggers. The goldfields entertainer and satirist, Charles Thatcher, for instance wrote of "the inevitable double-barrelled gun, as if gold was a thing to be shot at and brought down ... [as the chief among the] other useless trifles [and] usual treasures of a new chum".[2] The adjutant-general of New South Wales, Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey Charles Mundy, who left for Britain in August 1851, wrote sensibly of the reasons for the relatively orderly life on the fields. In contrast to the Californian situation, he pointed out, gold had been found in areas adjacent to seats of firmly established government, the vast majority of diggers belonged to one national stock – the British – and there was no warlike Aboriginal race and no large bodies of foreigners to cause friction by upsetting traditionally accepted mores.[3] Yet we should not exaggerate the effect of these stabilising factors. The sudden strain on the colonial administrations did result in the only considerably bloody riot in Australia's history.

By 1854 most of the alluvial surface gold had been won. In 1852 the approximate value of gold found per head of population in the Victorian fields was £390. This figure fell to £240 in 1853 and £148 in 1854.[4] All but the luckiest diggers began to find paying a miner's monthly licence fee of thirty shillings irksome. Much more provocative, in the opinion of the diggers, was the inefficient yet brutal way in which the police collected the tax. A tradition of unusually intense hostility between policemen and populace stemmed from convict days, and the "Russian sort of way" in which uniformed, mounted police often rode after diggers in "licence hunts" did nothing to lessen the bitterness. Nearly two years before the Eureka uprising, a respectable and well-educated eyewitness swore that police brutality on the

diggings was "creating a spirit that will break out one of these days energetically".[5] As discontent with these very tangible evils grew among all diggers, some of their leaders began speaking of "no taxation without representation" and demanding far-reaching political reforms, including those of the People's Charter which had been drawn up in Britain in 1838 – universal manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, annual elections of parliament, abolition of property qualifications and payment of members. In the last weeks of November 1854, the Ballarat Reform League began to organise revolt. Led by an educated, middle-class Irishman, Peter Lalor, the diggers took up arms and built a stockade just outside Ballarat on a hilltop commanding the road to Melbourne. The stockade's defenders then proclaimed the Republic of Victoria, hoisted a blue-and-white Southern Cross flag, and swore by it "to stand truly by each other, and fight to defend [their] rights and liberties".

Thirst was their undoing. On Saturday 2 December, most of the armed diggers sallied forth to the hotels as usual. Troops and police attacked at 4.30 on Sunday morning in the half-light of dawn, and in a few minutes the Eureka Stockade had fallen. Twenty-two diggers and six solders were killed in the fight or died later of wounds. Among the dead diggers, ten were natives of Ireland, two of Germany, two of Canada, one of England, one of Scotland and one of Australia. Two of the remaining five were named Crowe and Fenton, but their birthplaces were unknown. All we know of the last three is that one of them was usually known on the Eureka by the nickname of "Happy Jack". Lalor, who lost an arm in the fight, escaped to Geelong in a cart driven by a certain Tommy Marx,[6] but a number of other alleged ringleaders were soon apprehended by the authorities. Among them were some Americans, but their consul in Melbourne succeeded in having all save one of them released before the trial. The exception was an American negro named John Joseph, about whom the consul does not seem to have concerned himself. He was one of the thirteen men brought to trial for high treason, but public opinion was so overwhelmingly in favour of the diggers that the jury acquitted them. Lalor lived to become the speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly. The best, and certainly the liveliest, contemporary account of these events was written by an Italian digger, Raffaello Carboni.[7]

Ever since 1854, Australians have argued about the significance of Eureka. In the last century popular opinion saw it as a fight for liberty, small in scale but great in symbolic significance, which hastened the establishment of full responsible self-government in 1856. This view is reflected by the American writer "Mark Twain", who wrote in his *More Tramps Abroad* (1875) that Eureka was "the finest thing in Australian history ... It was the barons and John over again ... It was Concord and Lexington ... another instance of a victory won by a lost battle." Conservatives tended to dismiss it as a local riot, inspired by Irish and foreign malcontents, which had no appreciable effect on events at large. In this century historians have continued the debate, sometimes with acrimony. In 1923, long after most of the participants were dead, a Ballarat citizens' committee erected a monument to mark the site of the most considerable battle between white men fought on Australian soil. The memorial's inscription reflects nicely the uneasily ambivalent Australian attitude toward the Eureka Stockade: "To the honoured memory of the heroic pioneers who fought and fell, on this sacred spot, in the cause of liberty, and the soldiers who fell at Duty's Call." Similarly, the bullet-torn insurgent flag was long preserved in the Ballarat Art Gallery – not, however, in a prominently placed display case, but under lock and key in the curator's private desk. Increasingly, as the years passed, Eureka and the Eureka flag came to be seen as a potent symbol of radical nationalism. Communist, trade-union, Labor party, republican and other politico-cultural organisations made much of the Eureka legend and often adopted its flag as their own.[8] Thus no commemorative postage-stamp to stir up dangerous thoughts was issued by the Liberal government of the Commonwealth in 1954, but soon after the election of a

Labor government in 1972, the seditious flag itself was publicly displayed for the first time since it had been souvenired by one Constable King on the morning of the battle.[9]

The Royal Commission which inquired into the causes of the Eureka revolt felt that the diggers would have resorted to arms even if no foreigners had been among them. However this may be, there is general agreement among historians that the "'white Australia" policy stemmed largely from passions aroused by the presence of foreigners on the goldfields. We have seen that most white Australians brutally ill-treated Aborigines almost from the moment of first contact, but there were few other non-white people to excite racial passions and even the most murderous "dispersers" of the Aborigines balked at the idea of deporting them from their own country. After the gold-rush decade, racist attitudes, and legislation aimed at excluding coloured people, continued to increase until they were given continent-wide force by the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. Yet the influence of foreigners during the decade has often been exaggerated: The vast majority of immigrants continued to come from the British Isles, and a great many of them brought wives and children with them. In 1862, 92.5 per cent of the whole non-Aboriginal population had been born in the British Isles or in Australia. Most of the alien gold-seekers came without dependants, and many of them left after a few years on the diggings. Most of those who stayed were assimilated into the Australian society almost as readily and rapidly as the newcomers from Britain, but this was emphatically not the case with the Chinese, who comprised at once the largest group of foreign nationals and the only considerable non-European one. In 1857 in the colony of Victoria, about one in every seven males was a Chinese.

The Chinese seem on the whole to have been singularly law-abiding and inoffensive people. They were conspicuous by their absence at Eureka, and not even the most prejudiced colonist ever imagined the existence of a Chinese conspiracy to seize power. It was rather – as with the Australian Aborigines – that their very meekness was their undoing. Nearly all were of the coolie class, imported in the first instance by a few of their wealthy compatriots to dig till they had paid their debts for fares to "the great gold mountain". Generally they kept to themselves on the goldfields, only venturing to work "tailings" on claims that had been dug over and deserted by Europeans. Later many took up occupations such as market-gardening and laundering which were disdained by most colonists. Yet their low standard of living, their strange appearance and manners, and their completely alien culture aroused distrust which, by guilt reaction in the minds of the white majority, soon became hatred. People did not fear them, but feared that more and more would come to live in Australia until they became the majority when, naturally, they might do as they had been done by.

This nightmare vision of Australia being taken over piece-meal by gradual Chinese immigration was not as far-fetched to Australians in the second half of the nineteenth century as it seems today. At some places and times it seemed an imminent possibility – at the Palmer River Gold Rush for instance. This field, discovered in 1873 by James Mulligan from County Down, proved the richest alluvial gold-field ever found in Queensland. It was also the most disease-ridden and difficult in terms of access. Miners had to climb over the Great Dividing Range from Cooktown and run the gauntlet of unusually aggressive Aboriginal tribes before they could even stake their claims. Within a year or two about 5000 European miners were at work, but in 1876 there were no fewer than 17 000 Chinese on the Palmer, almost all of them adult males. The census of the same year showed that there were only 17042 white Australians in the whole of North Queensland, many of whom naturally were women and children. According to tradition, the old Australian defenders of their soil, the Aborigines, killed and ate Chinese invaders with more zest than they did the European ones.[10]

White Australian passions were further influenced at this time by the Kanaka trade, initiated in 1863 by Robert Towns, arguably the most hard-driving and acquisitive businessman of his day. He was the first person to import from the South Sea Islands

indentured labourers, under one of the first acts passed by the newly established Queensland government. “Kanaka” is a Melanesian word for “man”. Towns’ men came to work on cotton plantations in the Logan River valley near Brisbane, but cotton-growing in Queensland failed with the end of the American Civil War in 1865. Sugar-growing along the Queensland coast began, however, at this time. By 1884 it had become one of the most important colonial industries, the profits of which were seen to depend on cheap Kanaka labour. How cheap was luridly demonstrated in that year when, of the thousands of Kanakas employed in Queensland, no fewer than one in every seven died.[11]

Legally and theoretically the Kanakas were free men who contracted to work on the sugar plantations for a fixed term, usually three years, in return for wages and “keep” as specified in the contract. In fact, many contemporaries thought Kanakas on the sugar plantations were little better off than slaves had been in the American South before the Civil War. The worst abuses occurred not in Queensland but on board the “recruiting” ships, which plied between Australian ports from Grafton northwards to Cooktown and Melanesian islands between Fiji and New Guinea. In June 1871, for example, the brig *Carl* set out to recruit labourers in the New Hebrides. At the subsequent trial for murder of the captain and one of the crew, Dr James Patrick Murray, part-owner of the vessel, turned Queen’s evidence to save his own worthless hide.

Since the Kanakas were unwilling to volunteer for plantation work, Murray explained, they were kidnapped. The *Carl’s* men sank the Melanesians’ canoes by dropping pig-iron through their bottoms, and then hit the swimming natives on the head “with clubs or slung shot” before dragging them aboard. In this way the *Carl’*s hold was soon filled with eighty Kanakas. On the night of 13 September, these men used the wooden beams from smashed bunks to try to batter their way out of the hold to freedom. The *Carl’*s crew subdued them by firing guns into the hold continuously for the eight hours of darkness. In the morning fifty men were dead, and only “about five” unwounded. About sixteen of the remainder were badly wounded but conscious. “There was,” deposed the unspeakable Dr Murray, “a discussion as to what should be done with these men, and the general cry was – ‘Over with them at once’.” And so it was done, though the ship was out of sight of land and some of the wounded Kanakas were bound hand and foot.[12]

The drive into the Pacific was given a further push by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, like Towns an acquisitive and enterprising immigrant deeply imbued with the puritan work ethic. He reached Victoria in 1854 but soon invested his considerable capital in Queensland and became premier of that colony for the first time in 1879. The governor, Sir William MacGregor, thought him “an able bully with a face like a dugong and a temper like a buffalo”. Others have seen him as the true founder of an Australian political tradition most evident in, but by no means peculiar to, Queensland – that a premier should put forward policies which *may* enrich the country, but which certainly *do* enrich himself or his relatives. McIlwraith’s annexation of eastern New Guinea in 1883 was certainly not unconnected with the growing trade in Kanakas and other commodities between Queensland and that island, or with his family’s growing shipping business. The British government disowned McIlwraith’s action, but a year later partitioned the eastern part of the island with imperial Germany. More contacts with Papuans increased anxiety and compensatory delusions of superiority among white Queenslanders.[13]

Australian racist feelings were augmented too by the arrival at the diggings of many Americans, perhaps the largest group of foreign migrants after the Chinese. L.G. Churchward has calculated that about 20 000 persons from American ports landed in Melbourne and Sydney between 1852 and 1857. This compares with about 40 000 Chinese in Victoria alone in the latter year. Most stayed here for only two or three years, yet they exercised on Australian life an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. Many of them came from

the Californian goldfields and their very similar frontier outlook, their more colourful "go-ahead" ways and their democratic republican background appealed strongly to colonists standing impatiently on the threshold of self-government. There is evidence to suggest that some American diggers, bringing with them their pre-Civil War racist attitudes, had an appreciable influence on the growth of colour-prejudice in Australia. The two major anti-Chinese riots on Victorian goldfields at Bendigo in 1854 and on the Buckland diggings in 1857 took place on the fourth of July, the anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence. At the Hanging Rock goldfield in northern New South Wales, another riot marked the "Glorious Fourth" in 1852, because a party of seven Americans "had a notion to Lynch [the Chinese]".

Americans also took a leading part in revolutionising land transport at this time. Before 1851, four-wheeled vehicles had been almost unknown in Australia outside the capital cities – and were not very common even there. In the bush people travelled on horseback, or else plodded along on foot beside the ponderous two-wheeled bullock-drays which carried all stores into, and wool out of, the interior of the country. There were practically no roads, and bush tracks were held to be impassable by four-wheeled vehicles. In 1851 and 1852, most of the newly arrived gold-seekers walked the hundred or two kilometres from Sydney or Melbourne to the diggings, but from 1853 onward most rode in the new, fast coaches. Freeman Cobb and James Rutherford, two newly arrived Americans, had most to do with the transformation. Despite the gloomy forebodings of the old colonial hands, the sturdily built four-wheeled Yankee-style coaches proved quite capable of negotiating bush tracks. With five stops to change horses, they carried passengers and mails up to 130 kilometres in a day, as against the bullock-dray's performance of as many kilometres in a week – under favourable conditions. Cobb and Co. began operating their coaching service between Melbourne and the main Victorian goldfield towns like Ballarat and Bendigo. By 1870, in the three eastern mainland colonies, the company was harnessing 6000 horses a day, its coaches were covering about 45 000 kilometres per week, and it was drawing about £100 000 a year in mail subsidies from the colonial governments. For more than half a century in Australia, the name Cobb and Co. was almost synonymous with "inland travel", although Cobb himself sold out early. He returned to America, became for a time state senator in the Massachusetts legislature, and then went to South Africa in 1870 to build another coaching empire; but he died there three years later.[14]

Inland transport was improved almost as much by navigation of the Murray-Darling river system, at least in the most populous southeast of the continent, as it was by the new-style coaches. In 1853, the same year that witnessed the first coach trips between Melbourne and Ballarat, two men sailed locally built paddle-steamers on the waters of the Murray. William Randell launched his *Mary Ann* at Mannum in South Australia, established a store at Hay on the Murrumbidgee and later sailed a boat up the Darling as far as Walgett, only about 100 kilometres from the Queensland border. Francis Cadell had his *Lady Augusta* built in Sydney, whence she paddled her way to Port Elliot in South Australia. There Cadell took command and successfully took her through the shifting and treacherous shoals of the Murray mouth – a feat of seamanship that has rarely been equalled. Soon hundreds of paddle-steamers, usually towing strings of barges, were carrying station stores into and wool out of the interior of four colonies, and carrying them more cheaply than the drivers of bullock and horse teams could do. The river trade did much to draw together the commercial and other interests of the four eastern mainland colonies. In rare wet seasons, river boats occasionally passed Walgett and reached stations on the Queensland border. Gundagai was the effective head of navigation on the Murrumbidgee and Albury on the Murray. The river traffic increased the prosperity of both towns, prosperity which had sprung initially from their being the best practicable crossing places on the main overland route, pioneered by Hume and Hovell, between Sydney

and Melbourne. In the 1880s, when the river trade was at its peak, the busiest port was Echuca on the Murray, the first point on that river to be joined to Melbourne by rail. In the 1860s and 1870s, more than one-third of all New South Wales wool was sent to market by paddle-steamers.[15]

Railway building in Australia was much discussed in the late 1840s, but the first shovelful of earth on the first railway to be planned, from Sydney to Parramatta, was not actually dug until 1850. When it was finished five years later, Victoria's first line, from Melbourne to Port Melbourne, had been carrying goods over its 4 kilometres of track for a year. South Australia followed with a line from Adelaide to its Port a few years later. All these railways were instigated by private capitalists, men like Thomas Mort, whose statue in Macquarie Place looks across the street today, appropriately, at the Sydney Stock Exchange founded only two years before his death in 1874. Like many Australian capitalists before and since, they exhibited their private enterprise most dramatically in the dexterity with which they plundered the public purse. From the very outset, colonial governments, with a variety of direct and indirect subsidies, guaranteed the railway companies' shareholders against loss. When the companies still lost money, the governments, often advised by legislative councillors who were also leading railway share-holders, obligingly bought the companies out, so that the heavy losses necessarily involved in railway construction, in a country of small population but vast distances, were borne for the rest of time by the taxpayers and not by the enterprising investors.[16]

Despite massive government borrowing for railway construction, lines snaked out into the bush only very slowly in the 1850s and 1860s. Ben Hall the bushranger, for instance, was able to elude a small army of police on the western slopes of the Blue Mountains for nearly three years until 1865, largely because the main western railway had not then crossed the range. This folksong about his death was still sung a hundred years later by a few old bush people.* (It gives the facts as seen at the time by the dead man's friends):

Come all you Lach1an men and a sorrowful tale I'll tell,
Concerning of a hero bold who through misfortune fell.
His name it was Ben Hall, a man of good renown,
Who was hunted from his station and like a dog shot down.
Three years he roamed the road and he showed the traps some fun.
A thousand pound was on his head with Gilbert and John Dunne.
Ben parted from his comrades, the outlaws did agree
To give away bushranging and cross the briny sea.
Ben went to Goobang Creek and that was his downfall,
For riddled like a sieve was valiant Ben Hall.
T'was early in the morning upon the fifth of May
When the seven police surrounded him as fast asleep he lay.
Bill Dargin he was chosen to shoot the outlaw dead.
The troopers then fired madly and filled him full of lead.
They rolled him in a blanket and strapped him to his prad,
And led him through the streets of Forbes
to show the prize they had.
They led him through the streets of Forbes
to show the prize they had.

**Source.* Sung by Mrs Sally Sloane, who learnt the song from her grandmother. *Note:* traps – policeman; prad – horse

By 1880, when Ned Kelly was captured at Glenrowan by a trainload of police despatched from Melbourne, railways had crossed the Great Dividing Range in many places and were beginning to annihilate time and distance in country travel. By 1888 the four main railway systems of Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales had joined at the colonial borders. In that year Lawson wrote nostalgically, "The mighty Bush with iron rails is

tethered to the world".[17] Passengers could go by rail from Adelaide to Brisbane and back again, though not without the annoying change of gauge at the borders which plagued travellers for so long afterwards. As the railheads moved further out to more remote townships, the coaches moved too, providing feeder-services from outback mining camps and cattle-stations to the rail termini. By 1890, travellers from even the most distant parts of a colony could reach the colonial capital or other coastal port in a day or two where it had taken as many months only forty years earlier.

Communication between Australia and the rest of the world, particularly that part of it which most colonists continued to call "Home", speeded up just as dramatically. The First Fleet took about eight months to reach Botany Bay. Twenty-seven years later, British and Prussian soldiers defeated Napoleon's Old Guard at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. Official news of this momentous victory, which determined the shape of European and world politics for a century afterwards, did not reach Sydney until March 1816 – again about nine months later – but by then the average time for a voyage had been reduced to about five months. In the last decade before gold, voyages of about four months were not uncommon, but in that same decade occurred the greatest revolution in shipbuilding since the European Renaissance. Spurred partly by competition from early steam-ships, shipping men in the Canadian maritime provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and in the New England states of the United States designed and built hundreds of new streamlined sailing ships. These came to be known as "clippers" because, Americans said, they moved "at a fast clip" and they seemed constantly to be clipping days off the duration of a voyage. By running before the "roaring forties" from the Cape of Good Hope to Melbourne, the clipper ships in the golden decade reduced the time for an average voyage to about fourteen weeks. Great clippers whose names have become legendary – such as *Lightning, James Baines, Thermopylae, Cutty Sark* or *Flying Cloud* – sometimes made it in as little as nine weeks. Some crack ships of the Black Ball or White Star Lines claimed to have covered 400 sea-miles in a single day in the Roaring Forties. Legend holds that on such occasions skippers like the famous "Bully" Forbes would hold a lighted candle on the plunging deck – the ship was moving at almost the same speed as the wind.[18]

The first steamships – or rather, steam-assisted ships – also reached Australia before or during the golden decade. At first they were not much faster and a good deal less reliable than the clipper ships. Sydney citizens rejoiced exceedingly when the "first" mail steamer, the P&O Company's *Chusan,* arrived on 3 August 1852, but she had taken sixty-seven days of "actual running time", that is, time exclusive of days or weeks spent in ports en route. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 cut time for steamer-borne mails from London to Melbourne to about fifty days, but windjammers still carried most goods and passengers to Australia. In 1880 most overseas ships to visit Australian ports were still moved by the winds. By 1900 most were steamers capable of making the trip in about five weeks.[19]

Transmission of news by the electric telegraph represented the greatest leap forward in communications in world history, far greater in its immediate effects than the invention of aircraft or wireless telegraphy or television. Telegraph lines were first put to practical use in North America and Europe in the late 1840s and the 1850s.In Australia the four largest colonial capitals were connected with each other, and with a few large country towns, by 1861, but news still took at least five weeks to come from Britain even after the opening of the Suez Canal eight years later. Then, on New Year' s Day 1870, Charles Todd became postmaster-general and superintendent of telegraphs for the province of South Australia, which had recently acquired from New South Wales responsibility for the Northern Territory. In a little more than two years he planned and supervised the building of the overland telegraph line to Palmerston (Port Darwin). There was no time for a proper survey. Todd and his men relied, perforce, on the rough maps made by the explorer John McDouall Stuart ten

years earlier. Their job was not made any easier by the Aborigines who quickly learnt that the porcelain insulators made excellent spearheads. Yet the line was pushed through about 3250 kilometres of bush and desert in two years: no other public work in the history of Australia can have been carried out so expeditiously. The two ends of the line met north of Alice Springs, named after Todd's wife, on 22 August 1872, though messages could not be sent on through the submarine cable from Darwin for another two months. Thenceforth world news reached the solid citizens of the eastern cities with their breakfast newspaper instead of five weeks after it had happened.[20]

The gold rush of the 1850s exacerbated racist prejudice among white Australians and brought about, or at least accompanied, a revolution in transport and communications. What other important effects did it have on our history? Most obviously it caused a sudden increase in population and wealth and in the rate at which Sydney, Melbourne and other colonial capitals changed from administrative townships into great cities. In the sixty-odd years after the First Fleeters landed at Sydney Cove, the white population increased slowly to 405 000. In the decade of the Gold Rush, 1851-61, this figure grew to about 1 146 000. In these ten years the white population of the continent nearly trebled, while that of the infant colony of Victoria increased sixfold from 87000 to 540000. For the next forty years or so, Victoria, and not the mother colony of New South Wales, was the most prosperous and influential colony. National wealth and the gross value of exports increased proportionately during the decade.[21] Naturally contemporaries thought that it was scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance and the likely results of the discoveries. Most seem to have felt that W.C. Wentworth was uttering only a truism when in July 1851 he said that gold had opened a new era "which must in a very few years precipitate us from a colony into a nation", yet ten years later many people doubted whether the golden decade had made very much difference to Australian society. In 1861 the first principal of Sydney University, John Woolley, gave a public lecture in which he painted a somewhat idealised picture of the cultural and national unity of ancient Greece. He then asked:

> Can we hope that Australia in a hundred years will present a counterpart to this picture? Five years ago [i.e. at the time of the inauguration of responsible government] we should have answered with an indignant and enthusiastic affirmative. But experience has taught us humility; we have learned that no accidental impulse can precipitate an infant community into a nation ... A corporate like a national body grows only from within.[22]

Historians have tended to echo these conflicting opinions but with a time lag of a century or so. Many were motivated by a conscious or unconscious desire to minimise the influence of Australia's convict origins. Until quite recently, most writers exaggerated the revolutionary effects of gold. Some even spoke at times of the "second" or "real" foundation of Australia in 1851. Now the wheel has come full circle, and most historians would probably endorse I.D. McNaughtan's words in Gordon Greenwood's *Australia* (1955):

> With the perspective of a century it can be seen that the digger's era left a fainter impression on Australian life than the first ten years of the squatting age [1832-1842] ... Gold ... gave a greater complexity to Australian society and a powerful impulse to existing trends ... Certainly it did not create a nation. The Colonies had before them another generation of parochialism and hard pioneering before political, economic and social life began to set in the native and characteristic forms of modem Australia.[23]

There is something valid in both views. If the gold discoveries did no more than accelerate most existing trends, the degree to which some of them were speeded up was immense. On the other hand, gold actually slowed down, or masked for a generation, the development of other trends – most notably of an indigenous national sentiment. Both effects stemmed largely from the very marked growth of middle-class influence brought about, especially in the cities, by the gold rush.

We have seen that, with the cessation of transportation to the eastern mainland in 1840, thousands of assisted migrants were brought out to supply the labour market.[24] The pastoral boom attracted also a much smaller number of aspiring squatters, many of whom were men of substance and culture. Yet in an almost purely pastoral economy the number and influence of city-dwelling, middle-class, commercial and professional people remained relatively slight – certainly by subsequent Australian standards. There was undoubtedly an element of exaggeration in the 1851 *Remonstrance of the Legislative Council of New South Wales,* addressed to the home government, which roundly declared that the majority of the assisted immigrants were the spiritless "outpourings of the poor-houses and the unions of the United Kingdom", but until that year most observers endorsed James Dixon's opinion that Australia was "a country possessing two distinct sorts of mankind [sic] ... Perhaps in all societies it is in some measure the same, but here it is more strongly felt."[25] Gold rapidly changed this state of affairs. The major colonial governments suspended, or greatly reduced, their assisted immigration programs as it became clear that thousands of migrants, able and anxious to pay for their own voyages, were crowding Australia-bound ships. Most of those who arrived during the golden decade had at least enough money to pay the high fares demanded, and there is certainly something in the view that they were usually much more self-reliant and enterprising people on landing than the earlier immigrants had been. It seems too that they included a lower proportion of unskilled labourers and a correspondingly higher proportion of skilled and semi-skilled artisans, tradesmen, white-collar workers and professional men.

The vast majority of all post-1851 immigrants were, in contemporary English terminology, lower middle-class or upper working-class people, almost all indeed middle class in terms of their aspirations. Most were deeply imbued with the Protestant work ethic and with Samuel Smiles' doctrine of self-help. Comparatively few of them had working-class backgrounds and fewer still thought of themselves as belonging to the working class. Nearly all yearned, more or less passionately, to "become independent": by which they meant to become their own masters, if not necessarily the employers of others. They were possessed by bourgeois ideology and many of them during the long boom up to about 1890 succeeded in joining the petty-bourgeoisie. Some of course, like J.M. Bruce, father of the future prime minister, Lord Bruce of Melbourne, became great commercial magnates. Most of them, like David Syme, founder of the *Age* newspaper, after a quite short sojourn on the diggings, moved to the city, for that was where money might be made and "independence" won.

Gold thus began the process of "urbanisation", a word some historians have treated with the reverential awe they reserve for abstract concepts which seem to explain everything: but urbanisation was a dramatic rather than an awesome process. When gold "broke out" in 1852, Melbourne – the second largest settlement in the content – numbered 23 000 people – by world standards a small town rather than a city. Nine years later the population had risen to 140000 and by the census of 1891 to 491000, nearly half a million. In the same forty-year period Sydney grew from 54 000 to 384 000 and the smaller colonial capitals grew proportionately: Adelaide, for instance, from 14000 to 133000. By the end of the century, both Sydney and Melbourne were great cities by any standard. David Syme's *Age,* Melbournians boasted, had the greatest circulation of any newspaper "in the southern hemisphere". In 1883 Melbourne installed a system of cable trams many years before trams of any sort were seen elsewhere in Australia. Visitors as well as residents spoke of "Marvellous Melbourne", which was seen as bustling, up-to-date and "yankeefied" in contrast with staid and old-fashioned Sydney, sometimes referred to by Melbournians as "Sleepy Hollow". Jealous Sydneysiders in turn sneered at "S'Marvellous s'Melbourne", in not very subtle allusion to the already polluted River Yarra, for at this period Melbourne was easily the greatest manufacturing city in the colonies as well as the greatest commercial and financial centre. Merchants, manufacturers and retired squatters like Sir William Clarke, Australia's

first native-born baronet, built in the suburbs princely mansions on the profits of their varied enterprises. Very often the same person engaged in both rural and urban activities. Thomas Mort began as a Sydney auctioneer who later invested in country properties and the manufacture of refrigerating machinery. In Melbourne, Sir Frederick Sargood combined an extremely lucrative business career with service as politician and the proprietorship of sheep stations in New South Wales.[26] Perhaps the most successful man of the period was a Canadian immigrant named Simon Fraser, grandfather of Malcolm Fraser, prime minister of Australia from 1975 to 1983. Simon Fraser dug up a small fortune in the early gold rush to Bendigo, made a great one as a railway construction contractor, bought pastoral properties in three colonies, pioneered the search for artesian water and became a member of the Victorian, and then the Commonwealth, parliaments for nearly forty years. He was probably the only eminent Victorian in Australia to have his portrait painted by Millais.

Yet though the great cities spawned ever-growing numbers of factories, banks, import and export agencies, warehouses, shops, Italianate mansions for the wealthy and slums of terrace-houses for the poor, their growth depended largely on the country areas whence they drew so much of their wealth. Gold, of course, was found in the bush, not in the streets of Melbourne or Sydney, or even Adelaide or Perth. From 1852 to 1870 it was the most valuable export, bringing back more goods and money even than wool, but practically every ounce of gold was bought and sold through the head offices of banks in the colonial capital where, for the most part, brokerage fees and other profits remained. The pastoral industry continued to expand until about 1890 and wool remained Australia's staple commodity and major export until long after World War II, but the colonial cities profited more from it than did those who produced it on the stations. Roads and railways radiated out from the capital city in each colony, ensuring that wool, like minerals and every other primary product of the land, would be brought to, sold or processed in, and exported through, the cities.

We have seen that this was true even of gold, though paradoxically gold did more, before it was exported, to populate the countryside than did wool production. Gold, as it happened, was found here and there on the slopes, mainly the inland slopes, of the Great Dividing Range, just that part of the country best suited to support many more people than could be employed in the pastoral industry. In a great arc stretching from inland Victoria to beyond Charters Towers in North Queensland gold attracted people to found scores of towns like Bendigo, Ballarat, Beechworth, Young, Orange, Parkes, Gympie and Cloncurry, or to swell the population of older ones like Wangaratta, Bathurst, Toowoomba, Tamworth or Gundagai. Though most people came for gold, many remained after the lodes were worked out, to supply goods and services to farmers in the surrounding countryside. Thus gold helped to realise, to some degree, the great dream of nineteenth-century Australian liberals, that the better parts of the bush should support people instead of sheep.[27] Historians who ascribe peculiar virtue to the shibboleth "urbanisation" count all these country towns, and indeed any hamlet of more than 500 people, as cities, and their history assumes that the dwellers in bush townships were generally sophisticated people of the same kind as the citizens of Melbourne or Brisbane or Perth. This is ridiculous. Apart from Ballarat and Bendigo, even the biggest country towns at this period numbered their population in thousands rather than in tens of thousands. By world standards they were large villages rather than small cities. They were and have remained purely local centres whose inhabitants generally regarded themselves as living "in the bush" rather than in the wicked city, and who generally articulated "bush" attitudes in politics and other spheres. The simple truth of the matter is summed up in the old folk saying "Sydney or the Bush" – where Sydney means any Australian capital city.

In both places, but especially in the cities, the gold-rush immigrants did much to raise the general standard of education, refinement and culture. The University of Sydney, for instance, was founded in 1852 and the Australian Museum in the same city in the following year.

Melbourne opened its university in 1854 and its great public library in 1856. Universities opened their doors also in Adelaide and Hobart before 1891. In this same period following the gold discoveries, art galleries and libraries were begun in the colonial capitals. Lord-mayors and aldermen symbolised their faith in progress by building in stone ornate, Victorian-Gothic town halls – usually both more commodious and more inconvenient than anything of the kind erected since.

Most important of all these cultural developments, at least in its long-term effects, was the Churches' establishment of the great secondary schools in the cities, like Melbourne Grammar School and Presbyterian Ladies' College in Melbourne, or Prince Alfred College in Adelaide or Hutchins School in Hobart. There were no public or state secondary schools so that, inevitably, except for a handful of "scholarship girls and boys", the only Australian children to receive any secondary schooling at all were those whose parents were rich enough to pay the high fees demanded. Higher or secondary education was thus the preserve of the upper bourgeoisie. Many people scraped money together to send their children to these schools so that they might make friends with "nice people", who might be useful to them in later life. Though most schools gave as good an education as could be had anywhere in the world at the time, they also did much to accentuate class divisions and to produce snobs. Catholic secondary schools took religious education seriously. Protestant ones often tried to, but in practice boys and girls learnt to set more store by "good form" and "right thinking" than by the example of the Judean Carpenter. Even more divisive of the Australian community was the heavy emphasis these schools placed on loyalty to Britain and their deprecation of all things Australian. Their headmasters and headmistresses were almost always imported from Britain. Naturally they looked to their homeland, even more fervently than well-to-do Australians usually did, as the fountainhead of all learning, loveliness and culture. From the 1850s onwards, Church secondary schools did much to perpetuate the already strong tendency of middle-class Australians to look to Britain as their true homeland.

The success – and failure – of their efforts is exemplified by the life and work of Ethel Richardson ("Henry Handel Richardson"), arguably the most distinguished scholar of the Melbourne Presbyterian Ladies' College, or any other girls' Church school of the period. When she left school in 1886 she had received one of the very best educations available to the children of the bourgeoisie in either Australia or England. Like many other young Australians of the time, she thus acquired – and kept – an outlook on life very much more subtle, sensitive and sophisticated than had been available to earlier generations of colonial youth. Yet her teachers would have sighed over her when she first arrived in England at the age of 17, "a sturdy young radical, convinced that one man was as good as another" and detesting English snobbery and subservience to titled persons.[28] She nevertheless lived in England for most of her life and wrote there what many critics think the greatest of all Australian novels, before the advent of Patrick White, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony.* This work shows, perhaps more than her life, how imperfectly successful her teachers had been. Mahony, the protagonist, spends his life wrestling with what sociologists, an unknown species in his day, would have called an identity crisis. Is he English or Australian? He loves and hates much in both countries and travels back and forth between them, but is really at home in neither. His inability to resolve the conflict finally helps to drive him mad.

No doubt most of Ethel Richardson's classmates, like most other middle-class girls, lived out their lives in Australia, thereby mitigating the severity of the identity crisis their education had prepared for them, but it had prepared them also for a life very much fuller, freer, even more equal – within the constraints of a still very male-dominated society – than their mothers had known. Many of the latter were no doubt some of Caroline Chisholm's immigrant girls who had fulfilled her fondest hopes. They had joined God's police force themselves and thereby assured their daughters of a place in the bourgeoisie.

For women in less exalted strata of society, especially those who lived in the still-barbarous bush, life had become on the whole harder because of the increasingly puritan, not to say wowserish, temper of society. How much harder is vividly suggested by the life story of Margaret McTavish, born in 1843 on Duntroon Station, now the site of the Royal Military College, Canberra. When she was 14, her father caught her in the act of riding a horse astride. For this disgracefully immodest act he thrashed her so brutally that she was confined to her bed for "several weeks". As soon as she could walk again she sought refuge with the other abused section of colonial society, "the local tribe of Blacks", who "were very kind to her and never insulted or abused her in any way". After a months's freedom her father caught her and "burnt the soles of her feet with a hot iron" to prevent her running away again. This time, on recovery, she disguised herself as a boy and got a job as a bullock-driver's offsider. She worked for the next six years as a bullocky and horse-breaker, her true sex being revealed only as a result of injuries she sustained when an outlaw horse fell on her. When she was well again she married a Monaro squatter and raised a family of seven children. Of course, Margaret McTavish was extremely unlucky. Few males can have been as tyrannical as her father, whom local opinion forced to leave Duntroon when her story became known, but there is no reason to think her experiences unique.[29]

The continuing exploitation of so many women may serve to remind us that the cultural aspirations of the period were considerably more impressive than its achievements. For the thirty or forty years following 1851, even in many ways until the end of World War II, Australia remained basically a remote, provincial British society. In some ways its British character was actually accentuated, at least temporarily, and especially in Victoria and in the cities, by the effects of the gold rush. This was so for two reasons. First, the sudden influx of British immigrants greatly increased the already high proportion which was in fact British by birth and nurture, as well as by sentiment. Second, the high proportion of middle-class people among the newcomers strongly reinforced that respectable section of Australian society which, as we have seen, always tended to look to the mother country – naturally the source of culture and civilisation – for its inspiration. Yet this does not mean that the new immigrants exercised a conservative political influence. Quite the contrary – unless we equate conservatism with stability rather than with preservation of the *status quo.* On the whole they seem to have had a stabilising effect on colonial life precisely because most of them were liberal or radical in outlook. There were, after all, very few immigrants of aristocratic or upper class (in a contemporary English sense) background among the newcomers. These few were often labelled by the colonists "remittance men" or "broken-down swells". Few of the artisans, white-collar people and tradesmen who made up the majority dreamed of entertaining socialist or revolutionary notions.

As Peter Lalor said in a well-known speech, "I would ask these gentlemen what they mean by the term 'Democracy' . Do they mean Chartism or Communism or Republicanism? If so, I never was, I am not now, nor do I ever intend to be, a Democrat." Lalor's speech was made after, not before, the Eureka affair and it certainly plays down the extent of Chartist influence among the diggers. Even so, most of them seem to have belonged to that middling, if rising, order of contemporary British society which made Mr Gladstone such a power at the time in England. As Sir Charles Dilke said of the period, Australian society was English "with the upper class left out". Thus, in the third quarter of the nineteenth-century, Australian political sentiment was overwhelmingly liberal, even radical, but at the same time strongly individualist and not markedly either collectivist or nationalist. John Stuart Mill was the philosophical mentor of most politicians literate enough to be aware of theoretical writings.

In 1850, even before the gold discoveries, the imperial Parliament had passed an *Act for the Better Government of Her Majesty's Australian Colonies.* This Act gave to the then four major colonies (New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Victoria and South Australia)

Legislative Councils, two-thirds elective on the New South Wales model; but it also extended the franchise on which they were to be elected, and invited them to submit for imperial approval constitutions of their own devising, subject only to the proviso that final control of Crown lands and of the civil services were to remain in the hands of the imperial government. In New South Wales, W. C. Wentworth, who had grown steadily more conservative with the years, chaired the Council's committee of constitution-makers, which included also James Macarthur. As leader of the squatters, Wentworth' s voice was loudest in demanding that the new colonial legislatures should control fully the disposal of Crown lands and all colonial revenue including the civil lists; but at the same time he sought to ensure that the new parliaments would themselves be controlled by the great propertied "interests" of the colony – primarily, that is, by the squatters. The demand for full responsible self-government was quickly conceded by the secretary of state for the colonies, in large part because, as he wrote in a dispatch in 1852, the gold discoveries had "imparted new and unforeseen features to [Australia's] political and social condition".[30] The lingering aroma of convictism was no longer deemed a sufficient reason for refusing to the Australian colonies what had already been granted, following the Durham Report of 1839, to the major North American colonies and was in the process of being granted to New Zealand.

The other constitutional recommendations of the Council's Select Committee provoked determined local opposition. Wentworth, Macarthur and their supporters sought conservative safeguards, including the creation of an Upper House consisting of an order of hereditary colonial baronets, electoral arrangements which would give the squatting districts grossly disproportionate representation in the Lower House, and a provision that the constitution could never be altered except by an "unusual majority" of two-thirds of the members of both houses. The first proposal for a hereditary aristocracy was, so to speak, laughed out of court, partly as the result of a speech by Daniel Deniehy, a 24-year-old Currency lad of convict stock who might have made a bigger mark in the world if he had not drunk himself to death a few years later. He suggested that in the proposed "bunyip aristocracy" James Macarthur would become at least an earl, and offered as the coat-of-arms for his family "a field vert, and emblazoned on this field ... a rum keg of a New South Wales order of chivalry".[31] In the event, New South Wales acquired an Upper House whose members were nominated – for life terms – by the governor, but in the other three colonies Upper-House members were elected on a moderately restrictive property qualification. Ironically, these elected Upper Houses proved on the whole more effective in resisting change than the nominated houses in New South Wales and Queensland.

In Victoria, for instance, there were two major battles between the two houses in fourteen years. In 1865-66 the Legislative Council rejected Victoria's first, and very moderate, protectionist tariff, introduced by a ministry led in the Legislative Assembly by the liberal politician James McCulloch.1n 1877-78 the Council rejected a bill renewing payment for members of parliament, sent up from the Lower House by Graham Berry's radical protectionist government. On both occasions passions were torn to tatters inside and outside the houses, partly because the desired measures had been "tacked" on to supply bills. On "Black Wednesday", 8 January 1878; Berry dismissed hundreds of judges, magistrates and other senior civil servants, because there was no money left in the Treasury to pay them, and also, he said, in order to be revenged on the recalcitrant Upper House by hurting great numbers of its members' friends. During these and comparable confrontations between the two houses in other colonies, the governors supported the ministries of the day, so long as they commanded majorities in the Lower House, and in the end political compromises were reached – compromises which usually left intact the great powers of the elected legislative councils. The other major safeguard of propertied interests, the two-thirds majority clause, was defeated in Great Britain. When the New South Wales Constitution Bill came before the

House of Commons, Lord John Russell, the architect of the British Great Reform Bill of 1932, was serving as Colonial Secretary. His influence may have been instrumental in having the bill altered so as to allow for constitutional amendment by a simple majority. Wentworth was dismayed at this opening of the flood-gates to the influence of "mere population ... selfishness, ignorance and democracy". The old patriot returned only briefly to the scene of his triumphs, now saddled, as he saw it, with "a Yankee constitution". He retired in 1862 to-live in England and died there ten years later.

Thus in the years 1855 and 1856 the four major colonies achieved – or were given – almost complete control of their own destinies. Queensland was granted a similar constitution upon its separation from New South Wales four years later, but Western Australia, which was still receiving convicts, had to wait until 1890, long after its convict period was over. Some of Wentworth's forebodings were fulfilled with what seemed, to many contemporaries, astonishing rapidity. By the end of 1858 the three most populous colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia had established constitutions which were among the most democratic then existing in the world, South Australia's particularly. Its first responsible parliament was elected in 1857 on universal manhood suffrage and by secret ballot. The latter method of voting is still sometimes called, in Britain and North America, the "Australian ballot". Moreover, about two-thirds of the seats in the Lower House, the Legislative Assembly, were given to Adelaide and its immediate neighbourhood, and the whole colony voted as a single constituency, on a moderately restrictive property franchise, for the Legislative Council. Thus the influence of "mere population" was given much weight from the beginning. Herman Merivale, the liberal-minded under-secretary of state for the colonies, was intrigued to see how what he saw as perhaps "the only thoroughly Benthamite constitution" in the world would work.

Victoria also employed the secret ballot from the beginning. Within two or three years popular pressure on elected representatives had won the secret ballot and almost complete manhood suffrage in New South Wales also. Many contemporaries felt that the Australian colonies had "shot Niagara", and such people looked forward apprehensively with Wentworth to the results of giving political power to "mere numbers". But they were wrong. As Professor C.M.H. Clark has stressed, unobtrusive safeguards for propertied interests were still embedded in the colonial constitutions. Except in South Australia, plural voting – for those with property in more than one electorate and for some other presumptively respectable persons – continued until the late 1880s and sometimes longer. Nomadic pastoral workers, of whom there were many, and other men of no fixed address, were excluded from voting at least as long, as were all women. Payment of members was not introduced until 1870 in Victoria, and not until the late 1880s in the other colonies, and its absence effectively helped to deprive working-class voters of direct representation in parliaments by men drawn from their own ranks. There were other and deeper reasons, however, for the moderate tone of colonial politics from the granting of responsible government until the late 1880s.

Some of them have been mentioned already. Responsible government might not have been established when it was, if it had not been for the great strengthening of the middle class brought about by the gold discoveries. Moreover, without this middle order of liberal-minded but respectable townspeople, self-governing institutions would probably not have functioned as smoothly as they did. Second, gold mining caused a great diversification of the economy. For two decades, gold surpassed wool as the staple export. For the first time, retail trades of all kinds flourished, and many rudimentary manufacturing industries, such as food-processing, and the making of builders' supplies and of clothes for the local market, were established. Though there were brief periods of recession, until about 1890 there was no serious check to the prosperous and steadily expanding colonial economies. Under these conditions, skilled workmen, no less than their employers, could aspire to vastly better living

standards than obtained in contemporary Britain. Artisans formed trade unions in the cities, and many skilled building workers won for themselves an eight-hour day from 1856 onward in Sydney and Melbourne. But most workers, including almost all rural employees, remained unorganised until the later 1880s, and most of the small craft unions in the towns spent almost as much time keeping unqualified men out of their ranks as they did agitating for better pay and conditions. Many, even of their leaders, held to the conservative belief that trade unions should "keep out of politics". Thus the colonial parliaments were filled during the period largely by middle-class townspeople. A radical-minded Victorian barrister, George Higinbotham, who was himself a member of parliament for many years, sardonically characterised contemporary politicians as men drawn for the most part from "the wealthy lower orders ... lawyers, journalists, officials, publicans and traders of the metropolis". This was so in the first instance because working-class voters, insofar as they were politically conscious, agreed with middle-class businessmen in resenting the traditionally established dominance of affairs by the "pure merino" squatting interests. It continued to be so for thirty years because of the political, social and economic conditions sketched above. So true was Dilke's dictum that Australian society lacked an "upper class" that, until the 1880s, it is hard to see many signs of growth of political parties based on fixed principles, or on class, religious, regional or other interests. From as early as 1860 onwards, nearly all actual or aspiring politicians at least liked to let it be thought that they were "liberals". Men of unusual ability, like Henry Parkes or John Robertson in New South Wales, or Graham Berry in Victoria, or C.C. Kingston in South Australia, tended to attract a band of personal followers which could be held together for brief periods by the conferment of places or perquisites, or of public works in the right electorates: but as every member gloried in his "independence" and felt free to vote on each new issue as private principles, conscience or interest dictated, these alliances were usually brief and precarious. The promise of a new railway extension to the member for one constituency, or of a few places in the civil service to the clients of another might put a governing coalition into or out of office. The result was that governments rose and fell much more often than they have done since and that, for most of the period in most of the colonies, parties could be distinguished only as the (temporary) "ministerialists" or "opposition". Thus John Martineau wrote in 1869:

> It is a fact notorious in Victoria that a proportion of the Legislative Assembly, sufficient to sway its vote on almost any measure ... is altogether corrupt and amenable to bribes! ... In answer to a question as to the character and composition of the [New South Wales] Lower House ... I was told that it was *now* no worse than that of Victoria.[32]

Yet we should notice that not even this hostile witness claimed that the *majority* of members were altogether corrupt. Some consistently held throughout long parliamentary careers to at least a few general principles, like support for free trade or protectionist fiscal policies, and some naturally proved in office more liberal than others. Though the level of political corruption was, understandably, higher than it became later after payment of members was introduced and fixed parties developed, many members undoubtedly worked conscientiously for the public weal, as they "independently" saw it. During the thirty years or so following 1856, they spent much time wrangling over local developmental questions – "roads and bridges" issues, as they were often called – but even these parish pump arguments usually resulted in added, if piecemeal, development of the country's resources. The politicians also debated and legislated upon three great questions which were agitating their constituents. These were the control and use of the land, the control of education, and the best kind of fiscal policy to be followed. We shall glance at each in turn.

By the time gold was discovered, much of the best and most accessible country had already been occupied by graziers. In the oldest colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, quite large areas near Sydney, Hobart and Launceston had been granted as

estates in freehold to wealthy settlers like the Macarthurs. Farther out, vast areas were leased by the squatters under easy terms which gave them a "pre-emptive right" to buy the best pockets of country outright. Yet much of this land was well-watered and fertile enough to support agriculture. As the gold fever subsided, people asked more and more loudly why so much land should be "locked up" in pastoral leases which supported only a very sparse, and relatively impoverished, human population of shepherds and bush-workers. If the vast sheepwalks were cut up into small blocks and sold to working agricultural proprietors, it was held that an "independent" class of yeoman farmers would, with their families, bring new population and prosperity to the bush. Thus, almost from the beginning of the gold-rush decade, there arose an increasing popular clamour to "unlock the lands", and contention over the land question was the main preoccupation of colonial parliaments for the first ten years or more of responsible government.

Historians used to believe that the *Free Selection Acts* of 1860 and following years were passed in response to this popular demand. However, research by D.W.A. Baker and others has shown that the matter was by no means as simple as this. There were in fact relatively few successful diggers and other small capitalists who yearned to become farmers on their own account. It now seems that the "lawyers, journalists, officials, publicans and traders of the metropolis", and of the country towns, who had no such ambition for themselves, provided most of the movement's impetus. These people, whose numbers had been so mightily augmented by the inrush of new immigrants, resented what they – in common with the rest of the population – saw as the squatting interest's near-monopoly of political and economic power. Thus the cry to "unlock the lands" was not so much the result of genuine land hunger as a popular slogan for uniting all who wished to attack the "privileges" and pretensions of the squatters. Moreover, there were also cogent economic reasons why middle-class townspeople wished to see the countryside populated with self-employed smallholders instead of sheep. In the 1850s and, for decades afterward, most squatters spent little money in the country towns near their stations. Generally their drays took the wool clip to the colonial capital each year and carried back flour, tea, sugar, tar, tools and other station supplies bought from wholesale importing houses near the wharfside. Naturally retail traders, lawyers, doctors and other professional men tended to believe that their own prosperity would be enhanced by the creation of the "numerous, industrious and virtuous agricultural population" advocated by the Rev. Lang and others.[33] Acts which aimed, or which at least purported to aim, at placing "small men" on the land were passed by the New South Wales Parliament in 1861. They were piloted through the House by the Secretary of Lands, John (later Sir John} Robertson, who was himself a squatter and also the owner of considerable free-hold land. A folk song of the day celebrated, somewhat prematurely as it turned out, the popular triumph.

> Come all you Cornstalks the victory's won,
> John Robertson's triumphed, the lean days are gone!
> No more through the bush we'll go humping the drum,
> For the Land Bill has passed and the good times have come.
>
> No more through the bush with our swags need we roam,
> For to ask of the squatters to give us a home:
> Now the land is unfettered and we may reside
> In a place of our own by some clear waterside.[34]

As the song suggests, Robertson was probably the most well-loved, if not exactly most revered, of all Australian politicians. Born in London, he was brought to Sydney by his parents in 1822 when he was only 5 years old. Thus, though technically an immigrant, he made friends with the native-born pupils at Reverend Dr J.D. Lang's primary school and, like the doctor himself, was regarded all his life as a kind of honorary Currency lad. As a young man he worked on stations in the Upper Hunter and Liverpool Plains districts, looked for new

country out as far as the Darling River, and became an excellent bushman. His immense popularity with the electors sprang from the fact that he exhibited in his own person all that was best and worst in the native-born bush people. He was a hard-riding, hard-drinking, hard-swearing man, never acceptable to polite society and never, it seems, in the least anxious to be accepted among the refined people in the colony. He never by any chance called a spade a spade, but always a bloody shovel, and most electors loved him for it. He was one of only two politicians in whose honour Henry Lawson ever wrote verses. He was born with a cleft palate but, like the ancient Greek, Demosthenes, became an effective orator despite this handicap. There are innumerable stories about his language and character. One of the best relates that a delegation from an outback township came to ask him during one of his premierships to have the telegraph system extended to its district. Robertson explained that there was a shortage of copper wire so that nothing could be done until the next shipment reached Sydney. The delegation pressed its case. Robertson, whose temper had a very short fuse, exploded, "Gawd, yentlemen, d'you think I'm a bloo'y thpider tha' I can thpin the bloo'y thtuff out of my arth![35]

The Robertson acts seemed to rest on the principle that he who would live on and cultivate the land had the first claim to it. Anyone – man, woman or child – could select a block of Crown land for their farm, before it had been surveyed and whether it was part of a pastoral lease or not. The block must be not less than 40 or more than 320 acres in extent. The selector had to pay a deposit of five shillings an acre to receive their right to occupancy, and the remaining fifteen shillings per acre were supposed to be paid within three years. They had also to live on the selection for at least one year and "improve" it to the value of at least £1 an acre to receive a freehold title to the land. At the same time, the acts sought to protect the squatters' equity in their leaseholds and to give them some protection from too many genuine selectors or from blackmailing speculators. The squatter was given, for instance, a pre-emptive right to one-twenty-fifth of his station and to particular areas on which he had built "improvements" such as shearing sheds, dams or fences. In practice, the acts failed to increase markedly the number of agricultural smallholders in New South Wales. Instead, they had the effect of vastly increasing the amount of freehold land in the hands of big graziers and pastoral companies. In the twenty-two years from 1861 to 1883, 29 million acres of Crown land were alienated, but the area under cultivation grew by only about half a million. E.G. Shann summed up in a well-known phrase the general effects of the *Free Selection Acts* in all colonies: "And it came to pass that demagogues dispersed the public estate and pastoralists gathered up the freehold thereof."[36]

The reasons for the failure of the land acts have been much canvassed. Historians have pointed to the vast amount of sharp practice engaged in by men of all classes, usually within the letter, thought not the spirit, of the law. The squatters acquired millions of acres in freehold by "dummying". The wife, children, friends or permanent employees of a squatter would select on his behalf the best parts of his run in order to keep out selectors. When the "dummy" had obtained full legal title to this selection, ownership was transferred to the squatter. An opposite manoeuvre was known as "pea-cocking", an expression apparently derived from the great number of beautiful "eyes", in the tail of a displaying peacock. Small speculators or large "land-sharks" would select the "eyes" or richest parts of a run – with or without the help of dummies – solely in order to force the squatter to buy, at an enhanced price, these well-watered blocks without which the rest of his run was useless. When taxed with the failure of his selection acts, Robertson replied, with characteristic spirit, that they were designed for honest men not for "bloody rogues"; but it is probable that, even if all men had been honest idealists, the land acts would have met with little more success. Except in South Australia, farming techniques were extraordinarily backward at this period. Capital, which most genuine selectors lacked, was just as necessary as a strong back and a stout heart. Most crippling of all was the primitive state of transport. In 1861, for instance, it was still

much cheaper to transport a ton of wheat across the Pacific from Valparaiso to Sydney than to carry it about 250 kilometres by bullock-dray from the vicinity of Goulburn on one of the main bush "roads" of the period.[37] It was not until railways began to crisscross the transmontane wheatlands in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that agriculture became a reasonably stable and expansive industry in New South Wales.

In Victoria, to the accompaniment of much agitation for legislation on the model of the American homesteading acts, three major bills were passed in 1860, 1862 and 1865. These resulted in putting rather more genuine farmers on the land: Between 1861 and 1881 the area under crop increased by about a million acres; but even more land than in New South Wales – relative to the total areas of the two colonies – found its way into the freehold possession of pastoralists. In Queensland, despite the passage of ten land acts between 1860 and 1884, the results were even less impressive, while in Tasmania, over an even longer period, the amount of cultivated land in the colony remained almost constant. The effort to settle farmers on the land was successful only in South Australia, but this achievement sprang from the peculiar character of the province's geography and population rather than from any peculiar genius in its politicians. South Australian wheatlands lay in a compact area near the capital, on a fertile coast plain blessed by a climate ideal for wheat-growing. The crop could be carted cheaply, over very short distances, to one of a dozen small ports or to Port Adelaide. South Australia's pious farmers worked hard and intelligently. In the 1840s, when other Australian farmers were still reaping their crops by hand, John Ridley and John Wrathall Bull invented a mechanical stripper. Seed drills and stump-jump ploughs were invented in the same colony during the following decades. The latter implement, by a simple system of levers and weights, allowed the ploughshares to cultivate soil from which ground-level stumps and tree roots had not been completely removed. Between 1860 and 1880, South Australia's wheat crop was about equal to that of all the other colonies combined, and she was exporting her surplus to Britain as well as to Sydney and Brisbane.

The selection acts generally failed, then, to accomplish what was ostensibly their prime purpose. Yet we should notice that they – or the struggle around them – did much to achieve what was at least a secondary aim of many who participated in the drawn-out campaign – namely, to transfer the balance of political power to the urban population under the leadership of middle-class business and professional men. Economically, the wool industry soon regained its pre-eminence, although many new industries, both primary and secondary, were growing up in its shadow; and, paradoxically, even wool contributed to the dominance of city interests as banks and finance companies took over the ownership of more and more pastoral properties toward the end of the period. The social prestige of the great pastoral proprietors remained high, as it still does. Their economic power remained great, too, but became relatively less. Their domination of the political scene was broken in the first ten years of responsible government. Thereafter, their political influence was exercised more and more indirectly, and on more equal terms with that of other pressure groups in the community.

The history of education in Australia is very complex, but basically it may be said that most schools might still be under religious control if it had not been for the seemingly irreconcilable differences between different bodies of Christians and even, at times, between those within the same churches. In the early days, the Church of England was naturally the official church but, despite attempts to make it so, it never quite became the established church as in England. The fact that until Governor Darling's time Anglican chaplains were frequently also civil magistrates, who were wont to order floggings no less generously than their lay brethren, strengthened opposition to such a step – among the emancipists naturally, but also among many influential freemen such as the Reverend Dr Lang. Thus, in most colonies before the gold rush, the general procedure was for the governments to subsidise the major religious sects, usually the Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Wesleyans,

partly in order to assist these churches in their self-imposed task of providing schools. However, some dissenting sects and not a few members of an Protestant churches rejected, or at least gravely mistrusted, government aid because they feared the measure of state control which might accompany it. Naturally, rejection of state aid and support for the "voluntary principle" was strongest in South Australia. In 1851 the newly established provincial Legislative Council, inspired by Richard Davies Hanson who had helped draft the Durham Report, ended all subsidies to churches and set up a Central Board of Education on which no minister of religion might serve. The Board's task was to administer a secular "national" system of schools, in which teachers might read from the Bible but might not give any kind of denominational or dogmatic religious instruction. Education in South Australian "national" schools was not yet, however, either free or compulsory. Churches, naturally, remained free to maintain their own schools on the "voluntary" principle.[38] Meanwhile, Victoria and New South Wales established a dual system, maintaining a number of "national" undenominational schools, while at the same time continuing state aid to churches. The dual system proved increasingly costly and inefficient. Some districts had more schools than they could support, while others had too few or none at all. Moreover, those dissenting groups which refused, on voluntarist principles, to accept government aid tended to resent its acceptance by others, and there were many voluntarists even in the Church of England. While leaders of religious opinion wrangled, an increasing number of liberal-minded people pressed ever more strongly for a single, national system (within each colony) of "free, compulsory and secular" education which, they hoped, would at least succeed in teaching the "three R's" to all children irrespective of the wealth or religious beliefs of their parents. Among these people was a relatively small but influential group of radical secularists, men like the great novelist Marcus Clarke, who, if not always convinced rationalists, were at least positive anti-clericals. Many sincerely religious people also opposed sectarian control of education because they felt it tended to perpetuate, or even create, class and "national" divisions in the Australian community.

The last argument was held by some to apply with special force to the Roman Catholic schools, for in Australia the great majority of the Catholic priesthood and laity were Irish by descent and so were suspected by traditionalists of disaffection. At the same time, the Catholic religious body as a whole was almost solidly united in opposition to the introduction of a "national" system. In June 1879 the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney denounced secular schools in a pastoral letter, declaring that they were "seed-plots of future immortality, infidelity, and lawlessness, being calculated to debase the standards of human excellence, and to corrupt the political, social and individual life of future citizens". While the controversy lasted, some secularist leaders at least matched the intemperance of this language. In reply, David Buchanan, a leading secularist and member of the New South Wales parliament, declaimed to a public meeting a letter he had received from the great Italian patriot, Giuseppe Garibaldi:

> I trust you will not suffer the presence of this human reptile in your beautiful and virgin country; and if anyone says there must be liberty to all, answer him that you will not give liberty to vipers, assassins and crocodiles – and the Jesuit priest is worse than any or all of these.[39]

The same resolution of the conflict was reached in all the colonies, though at different times. State aid to church schools was withdrawn and national (that is, colony-wide) systems of state-supported and controlled education were set up. If these state schools were not at first entirely free, they soon became so – as well as secular, and compulsory in the sense that children who did not attend voluntary church schools were obliged by law to attend the state schools. The decisive acts were passed in Victoria in 1872, in South Australia and Queensland in 1875, and in New South Wales in 1880. Yet both religious and secular prophets of woe did not see their fears, or hopes, fulfilled. Thenceforth, the great majority of all Australian

children attended the state schools – and became on the whole more law-abiding than their progenitors had been. On the other hand, Roman Catholics, by prodigious efforts, established their own religious school system. Nearly all Catholic children have attended these schools ever since, and few observers believe that their existence has had a seriously divisive effect on the Australian community. As we have seen, however, the expensive, elitist, Protestant church schools have done much to accentuate class divisions and to strengthen imperial loyalty while playing down Australian nationalist sentiment. To contemporaries, fiscal policy seemed to be a most important, as well as a most divisive, issue: this is strange because the historian, even with the benefit of hindsight, cannot see that either free trade or protection conferred marked advantages on the colonies that adopted them. Yet insofar as politicians of the period divided on questions of fixed principle at all, they did so on fiscal policy. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, organised Free Trade and Protectionist parties appeared in most of the legislatures. This development occurred even earlier in Victoria, which adopted increasingly high protective tariffs from 1866 onward. Tasmania and South Australia, though less enthusiastically, followed the Victorian lead – partly, perforce, as their economies were largely dependent on Victoria's. New South Wales remained throughout the period resolutely wedded to free trade, while Queensland maintained an uneasy position of compromise.

It may be that the greater proportion of Americans in Victoria, the premier gold-mining colony, had some influence on the early growth of protectionist sentiment there. More important, certainly, was the business recession, accompanied by mounting unemployment in the towns, which set in after 1857, when the most easily won gold had been worked out. It is hard also to overestimate the importance of David Syme, a young Scots radical who came looking for gold but stayed to become proprietor of the Melbourne *Age,* then and still one of the most influential newspapers in the continent. It has been suggested, not altogether jestingly, that New South Wales stuck to free trade for no better reason than that its younger but more populous rival became protectionist. It is also true that the wool industry, which in Australia never needed fiscal protection from any competitor, continued to occupy a more prominent position in the mother colony than in any of the others; Henry Parkes, the most influential Sydney politician throughout the period, remained an inflexible free trader. Customs houses were established along the colonial borders, though the population was so sparse that it was impossible to prevent smuggling. The opposed fiscal policies gave rise to much political rhetoric and to much jealousy, especially between New South Wales and Victoria, yet both prospered. Secondary industry increased in Victoria at a somewhat faster rate than it did in New South Wales, but the population of the latter colony grew more quickly. During the last decade of the century it resumed its place as the most populous of all the colonies. Yet after Federation in 1901 it was protection which became the fixed policy of the Commonwealth.

The most dramatic demonstration of colonial rivalry took place in the field of exploration. By 1860 Victoria was incomparably the richest and most populous colony, yet she had done nothing to explore the still unknown interior as South Australia had. Even Western Australia, which had been al- most unaffected by the mid-century gold rush to the eastern colonies, had explored much of the interior. For more than twenty years from its foundation in 1829, the Swan River colony had barely survived. In 1850 the 5000 white colonists or, rather, the superior gentlemen who took it upon themselves to speak for all, begged the British government to set up a convict establishment in Western Australia. Her Majesty's ministers in London were graciously pleased to comply with the humble petition of such a poor and remote colony. In the following sixteen years about 10000 convicts were sent to Fremantle and the money sent to feed them and to pay their gaolers did provide some stimulus to the colony's sluggish economy. The convict establishment also produced a colourfu1 incident

which focused a measure of attention on Western Australia for the only time before the western gold rush of the 1890s.

The last convict transport to sail for Fremantle, the *Huogomont,* carried in 1866 six Fenian prisoners sentenced to transportation for their patriotic efforts to free Ireland of its British rulers. The Irish Catholic chaplain in Fremantle gaol, Reverend John O'Reilly, proved to be sympathetic to Fenianism if not a member of the brotherhood. A group of American Fenians raised money and despatched a whale-ship, the *Catalpa,* to rescue the six Irish patriots from Western Australia. With the covert assistance of Father O'Reilly, the seditious plot succeeded. On Easter Monday, 17 April 1876, while most Fremantle police and other officials were enjoying themselves at the annual regatta in Perth, 18 kilometres up the river, the six men were smuggled aboard the *Catalpa* which had been standing on and off the coast for some weeks. An ancient paddle-steamer, the *Georgette,* manned by old British Army pensioners, gave chase but failed to fire on the *Catalpa* when she hoisted the American flag a few miles outside British territorial waters. Most white Western Australians, though Protestant, were excited and delighted by these stirring events. They felt that the Fenians should not have been punished like common criminals for political "crimes" motivated by patriotism. To commemorate the escape, unknown western citizens made up a ballad which was sung in waterside pubs and elsewhere for a century afterwards. The chorus went:

> Now come all you screw warders and gaolers.
> Remember Perth's Regatta day.
> Take care of the rest of your Fenians,
> Or the Yankees will steal them away.[40]

The convict "establishment" thus provided early Western Australians with some relief from what many felt to be the tedium of existence on the banks of the Swan River, but it hardly ushered in a period of expansion and prosperity such as the eastern colonies enjoyed at this time. Yet Victorians were jealous of the achievements of Western Australian, to say nothing of South Australian, explorers.

In 1860 John McDouall Stuart, sparingly financed by two South Australian pastoralists, had reached Tennant's Creek before turning back. The Royal Society and the Government of Victoria hastened to organise an expedition which would snatch from South Australia the honour of first crossing the Australian continent. To lead it they chose Robert O'Hara Burke, a well-bred, Protestant, Anglo-Irish gentleman working as a police superintendent at Castlemaine but thirsting desperately for glory. He was given every opportunity to achieve it. The expedition, which left Melbourne on 20 August 1860, was easily the largest and most lavishly equipped in Australian history. There were fifteen men and the drivers for twenty-five camels, dozens of horses and wagons and enough food and provisions for two years. Perhaps the most grotesque item in the immense baggage train was six tons of firewood! Even Leichhardt would probably have drawn the line at that, but Burke was certainly the worst bushman ever placed in charge of an exploring party and probably the worst in the world.

He dumped most of the stores at Balranald and Menindee and hastened on with a few companions to establish a depot at Cooper's Creek. It was a wonderful season. Sturt's Stony Desert was sprinkled with lily ponds and Burke and his three companions who made the dash for the Gulf of Carpentaria never had a moment's anxiety about drinking water. Nor did they take with them any drivers for the camels. These ungainly beasts are fashioned for walking on dry sand, not wet mud. They floundered and got bogged in it and died of exhaustion. Burke, mad enough to choose to walk when the party left Cooper's Creek, had no choice on the return journey. He, his second-in-command Wills, and a young man named King staggered back into the depot ha1f-starved and scurvy-stricken, only to find that the base-party had left for the south a few hours before. Even so the two leaders might have survived if they had been sane enough to accept the help of the local Aboriginal tribe, as did young King. Instead,

when the black men came into his camp bearing gifts of fish, Burke "dispersed" them with revolver fire.[41]

Meanwhile, a tough, nuggety little bushman, no less fond of a spree in town than others of his kind, was discovering central Australia. With only two or three companions, half a dozen horses, no camels and not very much more in the way of supplies than he could shoot for the pot, Stuart continued his careful probing northward. In July 1862, about eighteen months after Burke's party had reached the Gulf, he reached the Arafura Sea not very far from the present site of Darwin. He had lost the "race" across the continent but, unlike Burke, had discovered a route furnished all the way from Port Augusta to Darwin with permanent water-holes. Ten years later his path was followed by the Overland Telegraph line and virtually all inland traffic between north and south has moved along it since.[42]

Ernest Giles was an even better bushman and probably an even deeper drinker than Stuart. Blessed with the constitution of a camel and the toughness of an old mallee-root, he yet had a genuine appreciation of poetry and an imaginative, if somewhat florid, literary style of his own. He must be considered the greatest of our inland explorers. After McDouall Stuart's journey, the great object of exploration became to cross the still unknown part of the continent between the Indian Ocean and Stuart's north-south line of water-holes pivoted on Alice Springs. P. Egerton Warburton led the first successful east-west crossing in 1874 and a few months later that year, John Forrest, later premier of Western Australia and Minister for Defence in the Commonwealth government, successfully led an expedition from west to east. Within the next two years, leading small and very economically equipped parties, Giles crossed the central deserts in both directions, each traverse being through even worse country than Warburton and Forrest had passed through. In the 1890s he joined in the gold rushes to the Kimberleys and to Coolgardie, where he died as a clerk in the mining warden's office in 1897. His fellow townsmen waited a few days for Sir John Forrest, then premier of the colony, to arrange a state funeral for his fellow explorer. When no sign of interest came from Perth, they buried him in the town's graveyard like any other bushman.[43]

Giles, like most of the later explorers, avoided the Aborigines as far as possible but, unlike Sir Thomas Mitchell, sought good relations with those he had to meet. In settled and frontier areas degradation and "dispersion" of the tribespeople proceeded as before. In the County of Cumberland surrounding Sydney in 1857, there was only *one* survivor of the 2000-odd tribespeople who had seen the coming of the white men seventy years before. With an apt symbolism, utterly lost on himself and the whites, this old man was always to be found begging in the gutter in South Head Road, outside the front gate of the residence of the speaker of the newly created Legislative Assembly. [44]

On the pastoral frontier in Queensland and elsewhere, clashes between blacks and whites were more frequent and bloodier than they had been earlier, partly because of the activities of the Native Police. It is hideously ironic that one of the most humane men of the time, Alexander Maconochie, should have recommended to Governor Bourke in the 1830s that Aborigines be recruited as constables. In Queensland throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, always directed by white officers, they butchered many thousands of tribespeople, without respect to age or sex, always of course strangers to the police troopers. "A University Man" who worked in north Queensland during the 1860s gave the following account of the work of the Native Police:

> On occasion, when their prey takes to the scrubs, they are willing enough to strip off their uniforms, all but their belts and cartridge boxes, and go in after them, when they seldom fail to give a good account of their errand. I have seen two large pits, covered with branches and brush, secured by a few stones, and the pits themselves were full of dead blackfellows, of all ages and of both sexes.
>
> On another occasion, I was travelling along a road where for more than a quarter of a mile the air was tainted with the putrefication of corpses, which lay all along the ridges, just as they had fallen.[45]

It is only fair to the Native Police and their officers to remember that the squatters and their men very often murdered the blacks without any professional assistance. It is only fair to the Aborigines to record that they retaliated more effectively in Queensland than they had often done earlier. At Cullin-la-ringo Station, for instance, on the afternoon of 17 October 1861, Aborigines surprised and killed nineteen white people led by an experienced grazier, Horatio Spencer Wills, father of Thomas Wills, the early cricketer and "inventor" of " Australian Rules" football. On this occasion, made wise by experience of the ways of the white men, the Aborigines slaughtered women and children along with the men. The indignation of the colonial press knew no bounds, nor did the vengeance exacted by a punitive force.[46]

In white Australia throughout this period of steady, if unspectacular, growth, the leading role was played in the capital cities by liberal, middle-class people, most of whom were immigrants. The wage-earning majority of citizens took little active part, and relatively little interest, in politics, while the Australian-born minority of mature voters had little scope for giving political or other overt expression to the nationalist (as distinct from democratic} aspirations of which we saw inchoate signs before the gold rush. It seems that, to a significant extent, bushranging gave symbolic form to these half-formed nationalist sentiments.

Visiting writers during the 1860s and 1870s were much impressed by the prevalence of bushranging. John Martineau called it "the peculiar institution" of the country, thereby consciously comparing it with slavery in the southern United States as an institution discreditable in itself, but one to which most of the citizens were strongly attached. Martineau was right, for bushranging was distinguished from similar lawlessness in the United States and elsewhere mainly by the extraordinarily widespread sympathy felt for the criminals. He was right too in remarking that the institution flourished principally in the mother colony which (with Tasmania) had the highest proportion of native-born citizens. Without at least the tacit support of the majority of bush-workers and free- selectors, the most accomplished scoundrels would have been captured in days or weeks. As it was, they commonly ranged at will for months or years, robbing for the most part from the rich who were most worth the trouble, and giving to the poor considerable quantities -at least of other people's rum. When arrested and taken for trial to the capital cities, they were often given heroes' welcomes by large crowds.

This widespread sympathy stemmed from convict days when emancipist-exclusionist enmity had run high, but there is evidence that it was also in part a symbolic and only half-conscious expression of lower class and nationalist resentment at the *de facto* exclusion of these elements from any considerable political and social influence on events during the period.[47] The name of Ned Kelly, native-born and bush-bred son of an emancipist free-selector, and most colourful of the outlaws, is firmly entrenched in Australian language, literature and art. "As game as Ned Kelly" is a household expression throughout the continent. In 1964 a huge traffic "snar1" in the centre of Sydney was caused by a car bearing a Victorian number plate. Good temper all round was restored when a Sydney driver shouted at the embarrassed Victorian, "Where do you come from, mate – Glenrowan?" No frustrated motorist had to be told the name of the Victorian township where Kelly was finally cornered and caught. As an opposing symbol we may take Sir Redmond Barry, free immigrant of respectable middle-class background and liberal views. Barry was the first chancellor of the University of Melbourne, where stonemasons had been working in 1856 when they struck for the eight-hour day. He was first president of the trustees of the Public Library of Victoria and of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute, and from 1852 a judge of the Victorian Supreme Court. He was one of the worthiest citizens of his day and his statue stands before the main entrance to Melbourne's Public Library, yet few people even in Victoria notice it and fewer now remember his name, though many pilgrims visited the nearby Exhibition Building where

Ned Kelly's armour was kept until a few years ago. In November 1880, Barry closed the bushranger's trial by pronouncing the words, "Edward Kelly, I hereby sentence you to death by hanging. May the Lord have mercy on your soul." In a clear, level voice the outlaw replied, "Yes, I will meet you there!" As it happened, Barry died about a fortnight later, but the most celebrated trial in Australian history may have had some more general historic significance, at least of an allegorical sort. During the following thirty years or so, the two opposing, yet interpenetrating streams of influence symbolised by the two men did meet, and they coalesced to a remarkable degree, though in ways which would on the whole have pleased Sir Redmond more than Ned.[48] We shall outline this process in the following chapter.