

IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA¹

AUSTRALIA has had a marked population growth since the last war. Its 1947 Census indicated 7.5 million inhabitants. There are now approximately 10 million. This large growth has arisen from a persistently high post-war birth rate and a large number of immigrants from Europe.

For many years prior to World War II Australia's few immigrants came mainly from the mother country. After the War, she embarked on a policy to bring more immigrants not only from England but also from other countries of Europe. She not only opened her doors to the newcomers; she instituted an expensive program of assistance for them.

True, self-interest rather than humanitarianism may have prompted and shaped Australia's post-war immigration policy. There was need for workers owing to the low level to which the birth rate had fallen during the 'thirties. Perhaps even more relevant was a gnawing fear that a half-empty continent would be tempting to crowded Asian countries.

However, even if the pro-immigration policy was prompted by concern over national survival or by the desire to keep Australia white, it doubtless required a considerable amount of courage and imagination. There were elements of world citizenship in Australia's leading rôle in the post-war assistance of migration from Europe, and in her taking well over her proportionate share of displaced persons from that continent. There were elements of religious toleration, if not boldness, in the willingness of a small and predominantly Protestant country to welcome non-Protestants among her post-war immigrants.

Australia has provided the world with an interesting experiment in assisted immigration. Within this setting it is but natural that during the past decade the Department of Demography of the Australian National University, under the leadership of Professor W. D. Borrie, has devoted much attention to studies of the new immigrants within the country.

¹Zubrzycki, Jerzy: *IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA. A Demographic Survey Based upon the 1954 Census.* Melbourne, Melbourne University Press on behalf of the Australian National University, 1960, 118 pp., 57s. 6d.

_____ : *IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA: Statistical Supplement*, Canberra, The Australian University, 1960, paper bound, 108 pp. Price not indicated.

The author of *IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA*, Jerzy Zubrzycki, made a somewhat parallel study, *POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN BRITAIN: A STUDY OF ADJUSTMENT*, which was published in 1956. In the present book his purpose "is to discover the characteristic distributions of the several ethnic groups that go to make up the population of Australia." (p. ix) The five chapters are respectively concerned with (1) the effect of immigration on the age and sex distribution of the total population, (2) the ethnic and religious characteristics of the immigrants, (3) geographical distribution of the immigrants with special reference to metropolitan areas, (4) the occupational and industry status of immigrants, and (5) the rôle of immigration in the demographic development of Australia. The book contains 58 tables and 10 charts. Seventy-five additional tables, some quite detailed were published in a separate volume as a statistical supplement.

This book was published on the eve of the 1961 Census and most of the analyses perforce relate to the 1954 Census. This is somewhat unfortunate. However, the 1947-1954 comparisons indicate the patterns and the trends although precise knowledge of the present situation must await analyses of the 1961 data. During that period the population increased by 1.4 million and over half of the increase (52 per cent) was attributable to immigration.

The immigrants had a stronger impact on the age structure than on the ethnic composition of the population. Being largely young adults, they filled the gap in this segment of the native population that had been created by the low birth rates of the 'thirties.

Despite the greater importance of immigration from non-British countries of Europe during 1947-1954 than during previous years "the overall change in the ethnic composition of Australia has been less striking than many people imagine." (p. 114) Thus in 1947, 90 per cent of the population were native Australians, 7 per cent were born in the British Isles, and 3 per cent were born elsewhere. In 1954 the corresponding percentages were 86, 7, and 7.

As for residence, the immigrants resemble the natives with respect to clustering in the cities. Perhaps partly by design in

the selection of immigrants "the economic role of immigrants has been that of reserve manpower which could readily fit into occupations where labour shortages were particularly acute." (p. 115) As for ethnic variations "the Italians are concentrated in rural industries, the United Kingdom born tend to find employment in public authority and professional services, the Dutch are prominent in building and construction, while the Central and East Europeans (mainly ex-Displaced Persons) appear to be the mainstay of manufacturing industries." (p. 115)

According to Professor Borrie's foreword, this report was prepared originally only for "internal consumption" within the Department. Doubtless this helps to explain some of its deficiencies. Otherwise one might have hoped for more efforts to bring the study up to date with non-census data or even with estimates. Also, in a study of this type prepared expressly for publication one would hope to find some effort to interview some of the migrants in order to get their stories about the impact of Australia on them. A comprehensive sociological analysis would include something about the adjustment of the migrants on various social and economic fronts, the political party characteristics of the immigrants, and the general impact of the immigrants on Australia and of Australia on them.

It is hoped that following the 1961 Census this study will be brought up to date on census characteristics and that there also will be investigations of immigration in broad economic and sociological contexts.

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