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Author(s): Charles S. Blackton

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## AUSTRALIAN NATIONALITY AND NATIVISM: THE AUSTRALIAN NATIVES' ASSOCIATION, 1885-1901<sup>1</sup>

CHARLES S. BLACKTON

ROBERT MURRAY SMITH, recently returned from Melbourne in 1884, informed an audience at the Royal Colonial Institute that a silent revolution had permanently altered the character of the Australian people. He was reporting the numerical ascendancy of native white colonists over European-born immigrants. Henceforth, he predicted, the inhabitants would feel increasingly for Australia those sentiments which in the past they had reserved for England.<sup>2</sup>

Nativism—exclusivist, isolationist, defensive rather than aggressive—appeared in Australia a lifetime before this observant lecturer reported its triumph in London. After 1850 the practice of freedom in isolation developed among the colonists a native ethos, characterized by a distorted view of the old country and a loyalty, as yet undefined, to the new land.

One nativist organization did more than any other to define and stimulate nationality in the years between 1885 and 1901. Founded in Melbourne on April 24, 1871 as the Native Victorian Society and limited to citizens of Victoria, it opened its doors on April 25, 1872 to all native white Australian men of good repute under its final name, the Australian Natives' Association.<sup>3</sup> This fixed the

character of the society for the next quarter of a century as a young men's association, for most of the older men of the colony were ineligible by reason of British birth. The founders included such able young natives as James L. Purves, later Q.C., S. V. Winter of the Melbourne *Herald*, A. L. Tucker, a future colonial cabinet minister, and George Turner, headed for Victorian premiership and a K.C.M.G.

The A.N.A.'s aims included the cultivation of national feeling, the federation of Australia, compulsory military training, a preference for Australian men and products in the market place, a white Australia, a strong hand in the Pacific area, better education, health, and conservation programs. On embattled issues such as tariff protection and labor-capital strife, the A.N.A. stayed officially non-partisan and thereby avoided most of the grimy regional squabbles which marred Australian political life.

It was headed by a president and, after 1877, also by a board of directors, which met quarterly or oftener and acted with considerable executive freedom. Annual conferences of delegates from the local branches gave the members their chance to commend or amend the executive in the democratic British tradition. The branches convened monthly.

<sup>1</sup> Materials for this article are part of a study made with the aid of a Fulbright research award and a Social Science Research Council area travel grant.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, XV (1883-84), 111-12.

<sup>3</sup> See *A history of the Australian Natives' Association*, 1871-1921 (Sydney, n.d.), pp. 1-3; J. Hume-Cook, *The Australian Natives' Association, its genesis and development* (Warrnambool, 1931), pp. 5-7. Between 1871 and 1872 the interim name "The Victorian Natives' Friendly Society" was used.

The A.N.A. expanded slowly from the Melbourne No. 1 branch to North Melbourne (Hotham at that time), Fitzroy, Collingwood, up to Ballarat and beyond. By 1885 it had 21 branches and 1,554 members. In 1887 pioneer branches were established at Charters Towers in Queensland and at Corowa in New South Wales, and the roster of members reached 4,414. The association, by 1890, boasted 85 branches including two in Western Australia, Perth and Fremantle, and counted 7,459 dues-paying members. Two years later the branches numbered over 100 with representation in South Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. The federation drive helped membership to pass the 10,000 mark in 1895. The branches reached the figure of 153 in 1900, on the brink of federation, and two years later the membership rose to over 20,000.<sup>4</sup> During this expansionist phase many branches petered out, especially in New South Wales. One Brisbane local went independent, and others in Victoria were disowned for taking overt political action.<sup>5</sup> The strength of the A.N.A. at all times was greatest in Victoria. The headquarters, originally at Melbourne, shifted in 1879 to Ballarat, a town with a nationalist connotation. In 1890 it moved back to Melbourne.

During its first decade, the A.N.A. spread slowly. After 1880 it reflected Australian uneasiness regarding invasion of the Pacific by European powers and increased its activities to strengthen and unify the continent. In the middle eighties two other major groups were trying

<sup>4</sup> Statistics on members and branches are given in each *A.N.A. report of proceedings of the annual conference of Victorian branches* (hereafter referred to as *Conf.*). The writer is indebted to the secretary of the A.N.A., Mr. S. G. Herron, for the use of these reports and for help in many ways.

<sup>5</sup> *Conf.*, Ballarat, 1887, pp. 4-5, Melbourne, 1886, p. 17.

to shape the future of Australia. In 1885 the anglophile Imperial Federation League opened its five-year try for federation of the empire under Westminster.<sup>6</sup> At the other extreme, radical egalitarian groups began to move for independence as a common man's republic. The appeal of neither was universal however: the first because of its taint of "servility" and the second because it challenged the forces of money and property. The A.N.A. was the first group in the middle ground with a moderate solution ready-made: the federation of Australia along lines honorably pioneered by Canada. The idea was old in Australia and associated with popular leaders like Charles Gavan Duffy and Henry Parkes.

The Natives, believing in Australia's destiny as a future southwest Pacific power, made the cultivation of national feeling their central theme: they urged the teaching of Australian history in the state schools; in an attempt to establish a purely Australian national holiday, they made the awkward choice of January 26, the date of the first convict settlement; seeking a national emblem they corresponded with Canadians and finally settled for a wattle leaf and blossom; they found a motto, "Unity, Peace and Prosperity," and adopted a national hymn. All attempts to open their ranks to the non-native-born were repulsed. When Henry Parkes made his comic attempt to steal for New South Wales the name "Australia" the Natives were in the van of the successful campaign to recapture it.<sup>7</sup> They declined to award spe-

<sup>6</sup> Charles S. Blackton, "Australian nationality and nationalism: the Imperial Federationist interlude, 1885-1901," *Historical studies, Australia and New Zealand*, VII (1955), 1-16.

<sup>7</sup> *Conf.*, Melbourne, 1886, p. 12, Ballarat, 1887, pp. 20-21, Geelong, 1888, p. 8. See also *A.N.A. quarterly meetings of the board of directors* (hereafter referred to as *Quar. meetings*) for

cial honors to Peter Lalor when the old Eureka fighter died, while they indulged in excessive lamentations over the death of Searle, the Australian sculling champion.<sup>8</sup>

No criticism of Australia went unchallenged by the A.N.A. The Natives refuted charges of excessive criminality, alcoholism, and materialism. Their defense of Australian culture was conducted with the valor of ignorance. Their conventions demanded job and land preferences for the native-born. As a body they were critical of Australians who took hereditary titles, but as individuals they were not averse to honors. They called for more commissions for natives in the colonial naval forces and a colonial veto on imperial defense appointments.<sup>9</sup>

Some British visitors concluded that the Natives were disloyal and, up to 1893, the A.N.A. pronouncements on loyalty were somewhat tepid.<sup>10</sup> At the same time loyalism was the characteristic note of the rival Imperial Federationists. In general, the Natives gave to Britain voluntarily an allegiance which they refused as an obligation. This concession was tempered by distrust for a foreign office which had traded Australia's natural heritage of Pacific islands in return for imperial advantages. The record shows a fairly consistent support for Britain in imperial affairs except when Australian interests were at stake.

The 1885 A.N.A. conference officially applauded the dispatch of New South Wales volunteer forces to the Sudan and

disowned an A.N.A. branch at Beechworth which had objected to the Sudan contingent. Yet the delegates refused to indorse their president's official regret at General Gordon's death. Helping the old country gave stature to Australia, but honoring an imperial agent was another matter.<sup>11</sup> Outside of the A.N.A., some self-consciously native voices denounced the war.<sup>12</sup> Anglophobia and antimonarchist feelings reached a peak in 1887 when some A.N.A. members refused to drink to the queen's health. When loyalist members protested, the directors ruled that the royal toast would remain a part of banquet ritual, but they declined to discipline the curmudgeonly republicans.<sup>13</sup>

The decline of the Imperial Federation movement and the start of the era of great strikes in the early nineties marked a swing toward a more conservative and pro-British attitude in the A.N.A. Yet a subcurrent of anglophobia reappeared in 1894 in objections to the celebration of the Prince of Wales's birthday.

In 1899, when the South African crisis divided Australian opinion widely, the Natives' first reaction was cautious. The directors, on May 11, rejected pro-Uitlander appeals from the South African League Congress of Kimberley and the Imperial South African Association of London. The Natives' sympathies would support all constitutional efforts of British Uitlanders, but the issue lay beyond the purview of the A.N.A. Then the fighting broke out in October, and a spirit of kinship with Britain flared up. The A.N.A. raised companies of volunteers and later subscribed the largest

Sept. 17, 1890, pp. 9-10, Dec. 19, 1890, p. 4, Nov. 25, 1887, p. 3, June 29, 1889, pp. 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> *Sydney Bulletin*, Feb. 1, 1890.

<sup>9</sup> *Conf.*, Warrnambool, 1894, pp. 25-26; W. J. Sowden, *Australia: a native's standpoint* (Melbourne, 1893), *passim*. See also *Quar. meetings*, Dec. 15, 1891, p. 1, June 24, 1891, pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> A. Patchett Martin, *Australia and the empire* (Edinburgh, 1889), pp. 190-91, 250.

<sup>11</sup> *Conf.*, Sandhurst, 1885, pp. 1-12, *passim*; Melbourne *Age*, Feb. 19, 1885.

<sup>12</sup> N. S. W. Silverton, in *Silver age* (Broken Hill), Feb. 28, 1885, July 20, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> *Quar. meetings*, May 23, 1888, p. 2; *Conf.*, Ballarat, 1887, pp. 13, 32.

fund raised within the empire for families of the war dead. The Geelong Conference of 1900 cabled congratulations to General Roberts on the surrender of Bloemfontein and urged annexation of the Boer states. An honor roll of A.N.A. members killed in action was read, and plans were approved to commemorate all Australians who had died on the veld.<sup>14</sup>

Three recurring questions which affected the A.N.A. and Australian relations with Britain concerned Australian interests in the southwest Pacific, "White Australia," and some aspects of immigration from Britain and from Europe.

Between 1885 and 1901 the organization backed all efforts to prevent the establishment of French penal colonies in the New Hebrides. This position was based on Australia's defense needs and colonial ambitions. During the nineties the Natives condemned the British colonial office and the Australasian Federal Council for softness regarding Australia's Pacific legacy. They denounced a plan to sell a large tract of New Guinea to the Lowles syndicate. Their intercolonial conference of 1900 advised the coming national parliament to obtain a protectorate over all islands vital to Australian security and later received the personal reassurances of the prime minister, Edmund Barton.<sup>15</sup> Even so, leading Natives, influenced perhaps by Deakin, began to favor the Imperial Federation plan they had earlier opposed, a belated recognition that their isolation had been

a dividend of seapower rather than a natural resource of Australia.

The Prahran, Sandridge, and St. Kilda branches of the A.N.A. in 1887 revived the fear of colored immigration which had been latent since the anti-Chinese violence of the sixties. They warned the public of the influx of Chinese from Hong Kong and the mainland and of rumors of plans by the colonial office to use coolies in the Northern Territory. In 1892 they opened a campaign against the employment of Kanakas and the circulation of Indian and Afghan hawkers. These warnings voiced a fear common to the working and middle classes that Asia's masses would become a serf caste, destroying the living standards and independence of white labor and heralding the rise of a mongrel people.<sup>16</sup>

However, the Queensland delegates to the A.N.A. conference of 1900 argued that their canefields must have coolies or tariff protection. The Hindu with British citizenship, the Chinese and the Japanese, these, they claimed, were the great menace. But the inoffensive Kanakas were fine cane-cutters and never organized into unions. The Queenslanders circulated the canard that Europeans could not perform hard physical labor in the tropics. But the conference, unimpressed, passed an anticolored labor resolution, slightly watered down to hold the Queensland branches, and furthermore indorsed the principle of a white Australia. These views were communicated to Australia's first national government, which included two A.N.A. members, Alfred Deakin, the attorney-general, and Sir George Turner, the treasurer.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> W. J. Sowden, *An Australian native's standpoint* (London, 1912), pp. 63-64. See also *Conf.*, Geelong, 1900, pp. 34-36.

<sup>15</sup> *Conf.*, Ararat, 1891, pp. 6-7, Melbourne, 1895, p. 16, Port Fairy, 1899, p. 9; *A.N.A. Intercolonial Conference*, Melbourne, 1900, pp. 68-69; *Report of the national committee to the boards of directors*, May 29, 1901, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Quar. meetings*, Aug. 15, 1887, pp. 6-7, Nov. 25, 1887, p. 4, Sept., 1891, p. 12; *Conf.*, Kyneton, 1893, pp. 9-10, Daylesford, 1896, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> *A.N.A. Intercolonial Conference*, 1900, pp. 68-73.

The defensive ethnocentrism of the A.N.A. was on occasion directed against Britons and Europeans. As early as 1890, local branches drew to the directors' attention the plan of General William Booth of the Salvation Army to settle British paupers and reclaimed criminals in Australia, as explained in his book, *In darkest England and the way out* (1890). Radicals and imperialists joined with the Natives in a demonstration of public indignation, not uninfluenced by memories of the convict past. An exchange of letters took place between the A.N.A. executive and commissioner Thomas B. Coombs of the Salvation Army with the object of staging an open meeting on the pauper question in Melbourne. General Booth was to state his case and face the rebuttal of the ex-president of the A.N.A., James Purves, Q.C. But Coombs, perhaps shy of a hostile audience or of Purves' reputed oratorical prowess, demanded that the public debate be turned into a private conversation, and so the meeting was dropped. Booth pigeonholed his plan, ending this threat.<sup>18</sup> A briefer crisis developed on the heels of the last. A meeting of the A.N.A. directors on June 24, 1891 intercepted the rumor of a projected settlement of Russian Jewish refugees in the colony of Victoria. President Wise felt sufficiently concerned to denounce the plan to the 1892 conference at Sale. Bluntly he warned that undesirables, Jewish or gentile, would cause local antagonisms wherever they tried to settle.<sup>19</sup>

This isolationist reaction was common among Australians at the end of the century. It is worth noting that natives whose parents were Australian-born might well

have had convict ancestors. This placed a curious premium on having British parents, though persons of British birth were excluded from the A.N.A. Anglo-Saxon superiority was invoked by the A.N.A. to justify exclusion of the too-industrious Asian or the political victim from eastern Europe.

A venture of the A.N.A. into Antarctic affairs should be mentioned in light of twentieth-century Australian activities in that region. At the 1888 conference support for a projected South Polar exploration was approved. The directors followed this up by indorsing a fund to aid South Polar expeditions "so that Australians will not allow Germany to develop resources which are essentially and geographically Australian." In 1889 President Purves agreed to co-operate with learned societies in pushing an Antarctic project. The Prahran branch, in 1890, presented a resolution to support a Swedish-Australian scheme of exploration and noted correspondence from A. C. McDonald, treasurer of an Antarctic exploration fund. The following September the directors reported an A.N.A. subscription of £50 to a Swedish-Australian Antarctic expedition being fitted out at Stockholm. Thereafter, during the federation drive of 1893-94, the subject was dropped. Finally President Peacock, at the 1894 conference, made the melancholy report that the A.N.A. Antarctic grant was "locked up in the Commercial Bank," a victim of the panic of 1893, and that the expedition was making little progress. With this the A.N.A. interest in the South Polar empire seems to have faded.<sup>20</sup>

Closely related to the subject of Aus-

<sup>18</sup> *Conf.*, Geelong, 1888, p. 4, Ararat, 1891, pp. 7-8, Sale, 1892, p. 4; *Quar. meetings*, Dec. 19, 1890, p. 6, Dec. 15, 1891, pp. 6-9.

<sup>19</sup> *Conf.*, Sale, 1892, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Conf.*, Geelong, 1888, p. 8, Sandhurst, 1889, p. 9, Warrnambool, 1894, pp. 21-22; *Quar. meetings*, Aug. 31, 1888, p. 4, Dec. 19, 1890, pp. 6-7, Sept. 25, 1891, p. 12.

tralian nationality and issues around it was the fight for federation. The rise of European imperialism in the Pacific made federation the Natives' prime objective. President E. O. Wilson told the 1885 conference that during the previous year local A.N.A. activity for the federal cause had been widespread. The A.N.A.'s short-lived publication, *National Australian*, carried federation propaganda. The federal council bills and the federal defense concept were strongly indorsed by the Natives.<sup>21</sup>

When James Purves took the presidency in 1888, he stepped up agitation for federation. Early in 1890 a special A.N.A. intercolonial conference called on the public and the delegates to the impending Australasian federation conference (Melbourne) for immediate federation and for Australian sovereignty in domestic and Pacific affairs.<sup>22</sup> The A.N.A. view was presented to the federation conference by Alfred Deakin, a delegate, and also a loyal Native.

In 1891 President G. H. Wise conducted a lecture swing through the bush, speaking in favor of the draft constitution already adopted by the national convention. Federation, he said, was "the first pulse beat" of national life. He defended the term "commonwealth" as one re-evoking the stalwart virtues of Cromwell's day. Rejecting the "vice-regal court with its vain pomp," he cited the dignified democracy of the United States as a model for Australians. He predicted the end of the veto power implied in royal assent to bills and advocated a national protective tariff for national, not local, reasons.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Conf.*, Sandhurst, 1885, p. 3, Melbourne, 1886, pp. 4-6, 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Conf.*, Maryborough, 1890, pp. 6-7. The *Sydney Bulletin* (Feb. 1, 1890) called the A.N.A. special session a rally of the preconverted.

<sup>23</sup> A lecture on "The Constitution of the

Nearly 10,000 A.N.A. members worked to elect pro-federation candidates in 1892. The Kyneton conference (1893) hailed the appearance of local federation leagues and sent a deputation to launch the central Australasian federation league at Sydney Town Hall. A metropolitan federation conference at Melbourne, under the gavel of Deakin, united such diverse interests as the council of the University of Melbourne, the Total Abstinence Society, the Trades Hall Council, the Imperial Federation League and the single taxers.

A.N.A. branches and members were energetic in forming the border federation leagues in the Riverina and Northern Victoria which sponsored the Corowa conference of 1893.<sup>24</sup> After Corowa, Dr. John Quick (Bendigo Branch of A.N.A.) proposed to the Bendigo federation league the resolution calling for a constituent convention of delegates elected by the Australian people to draft a constitution to be submitted for public referendum. Quick's democratic device, indorsed by the Natives and the federation leagues, became the basic formula for the federal enabling bills which speeded up federation.

After 1893 strikes and unemployment blurred the federal movement. President Peacock (M.L.A. Victoria) told the A.N.A. conference at Warrnambool of progress in Tasmania and New South Wales and called on all A.N.A. branches to set up federation leagues and to carry the federal fight into the north under "the flag of the United States of Australia."<sup>25</sup>

Commonwealth" (published by the A.N.A., Melbourne, 1891), pp. 1-22, *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> John Quick and Robert R. Garran, *The annotated constitution of the Australian commonwealth* (Sydney, 1901), pp. 151-53; Henry Parkes, Correspondence, Mitchell Library, Sydney, XXVIII, 59, MSS. A. 898.

<sup>25</sup> *Conf.*, Warrnambool, 1894, *passim*; C. M. H.

This grass-roots propaganda drive sustained the federal movement during the doldrums of 1894–95. The New South Wales A.N.A. branches were active in the Bathurst Peoples' Federal Convention of 1896 which helped allay the fear that the federal bill was a tory, imperialist design. When, in 1897, Victoria elected her delegates to another national federation convention, four Natives were at the top of the poll.<sup>26</sup>

During 1897–99 A.N.A. propaganda was intensive. The Bendigo conference of the A.N.A. in 1898 centered on the theme of "One People, One Destiny" and indorsed the federation bill even before the convention had finished its draft.<sup>27</sup> A.N.A. solidarity put the bill through the Victorian legislature and backed the delegation to London (of which Deakin was a member) during the negotiations which preceded passage of the Australian draft through the imperial parliament.<sup>28</sup> In March of 1901 President Skelton commended the branches on the attainment of their first objective, Australian nationhood.

In their hour of victory, the Natives were suddenly afflicted by those deep sectional rivalries which in the past had impeded almost every intercolonial movement in Australia. In 1900 the non-Victorian branches successfully attempted to limit the power of the preponderant Victorian bodies by creation of a federal board of the A.N.A. As previously noted, the Queensland delegation opposed the

anticolored labor policy. Now the New South Wales representatives crossed swords with the Victorians on the question of the location of a national capital; nevertheless the conference supported the Victorian proposal for a location far from Sydney.<sup>29</sup>

Yet the A.N.A. entered the twentieth century as a powerful organization, with spokesmen at every level of the new national government. It had made friends and a good many enemies—the latter an important measure of its growing influence in the land.

*Young Australia*, the organ of the anglophile Imperial Federation League, carried on a constant and careful campaign against the A.N.A. Purves' remark that Australian separation from the empire was ultimately inevitable was repeatedly thrown back at it. A favorite target, Purves was made the hero of a fanciful sketch entitled "A Dream" in which the A.N.A. president visited "the little town of London" where, after giving offhand advice to the queen on management of the empire, he was effusively thanked by the Prince of Wales with these words, "Now, at last, I feel that the Empire is safe." The dream ended with a casual promise from Purves to solve the Irish question and generally ginger up the administration of the United Kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

A.N.A. "affronts to the Queen" were a constant topic in *Young Australia*. Exclusivism was a Native weak spot regularly rubbed raw. *Young Australia* liked to contrast "the lanky palefaced youths one sometimes sees addressing public meetings and . . . impressing their audience with the fact that they are native-

<sup>29</sup> *A.N.A. Intercolonial Conference*, Melbourne, 1900, pp. 63–73.

<sup>30</sup> *Young Australia*, alternatively titled *Australian naval and military gazette*, May, 1888, pp. 361–62 and July, p. 410.

Clark (ed.), *Select documents in Australian history, 1851–1900* (Sydney, 1955), pp. 498–500.

<sup>26</sup> Sir George Turner, Dr. John Quick, Alfred Deakin, and A. J. Peacock. See Quick and Garrahan, p. 164.

<sup>27</sup> *Conf.*, Bendigo, 1898, p. 32. The A.N.A. published "Federation Manifestos" in June, 1898 and July, 1899.

<sup>28</sup> Alfred Deakin, *The federal story* (Melbourne, 1944), pp. 89–94, 156, 159, presents the A.N.A. role in the federation drive.



born *Australians*" to the bold Britons who really opened Australia.<sup>31</sup> The Imperial Federationists not unjustly derided the A.N.A. claim of neutrality in politics. They saw the A.N.A. as a political party in embryo, fuller of energy than sense, loyal enough, but misled by opportunists. They claimed that a disloyal minority of Natives prevented men like Henry D'Esterre Taylor, a member of both the League and the A.N.A., from gaining office. The League persistently—and unfairly—charged the Natives with unwillingness to aid Britain in empire wars. At the same time, the editor of *Young Australia* jeered at the plan for an all A.N.A. battalion in the volunteer corps.<sup>32</sup> When possible, the A.N.A. was accused of seditious republicanism, which it was said led the British press to oppose further loans to Victoria. A.N.A. meetings were reported occasionally, usually when some disorder was involved. While the League attacks were read by many influential colonists, they reached a limited public. The Melbourne *Argus* spread anti-A.N.A. publicity more widely but less often.<sup>33</sup> After 1890 the Imperial Federationists, losing impetus, moved toward an alliance with the Natives against the rising legions of the Left, which were armed with the strike weapon.

The assault upon the A.N.A. from the Left was always more formidable. Most Australians alive to the issues of the age were to some degree influenced by the socialists, republicans, trade-unionists and single taxers who formed the cutting edge of social criticism. The popular labor spokesman E. W. O'Sullivan criticized the A.N.A.'s imperialist ambitions

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, May, 1888, p. 362 and March, 1890, p. 55.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, December, 1888, pp. 540-41 and August, 1888, p. 435.

<sup>33</sup> Sowden, *An Australian native's standpoint*, p. 6.

in the Pacific islands.<sup>34</sup> The republican propagandist, Thomson, of the Australian National Association, was tolerant of the A.N.A. He saw in its program the germ of nationality and a slow, deliberate plan of education for ultimate independence.<sup>35</sup> The Sydney *Bulletin*, which had never liked the exclusivism of the Natives, turned hostile in 1888. Agreeing that the Natives had once been a nationalist counterweight to the "Anglo (very Anglo) Australian members" of the Royal Colonial Institute in London and the Imperial Federation League, the *Bulletin* felt that under the leadership of Purves the A.N.A. had become a publicity-seeking, pro-British club—anti-socialist and obsessed with a federation formula which nobody else wanted. When a special Natives conference met in Melbourne in 1890 to re-energize the federation movement, the *Bulletin* described the delegates as about as representative of Australia as "the bush editor who took up his pen to address a solemn warning to the Emperor of Russia." Nativism, the *Bulletin* felt, was a miserable basis for nationality.<sup>36</sup> The Natives harbored some republicans and tolerated the *Bulletin* brand of socialism. Together with the *Bulletin* crowd, the Natives were the major spokesmen for nationality. Yet when both agreed on an issue, they usually failed to mention the circumstance.

Although the A.N.A. was encouraged by Bernard Ringrose Wise and James

<sup>34</sup> Sydney *Morning Herald*, Sept. 4, 1888. The radical *Australian Nationalist* expressed similar views (Aug. 8, 1888).

<sup>35</sup> R. Thomson, *Australian nationalism: an earnest appeal to the sons of Australia in favour of federation and independence of the states of our country* (Burwood, N.S.W., 1888), pp. 95-98. The Australian National Association, open to non-natives, egalitarian and republican, developed in Queensland and New South Wales in the late eighties.

<sup>36</sup> Sydney *Bulletin*, Feb. 1, Apr. 26, 1890.

Service, most politicians, being British by birth, disliked it. The old centaur of Sydney, Henry Parkes, Warwickshire born, declared that fifty turbulent years down under had made him more of an Australian than his native-born juniors.<sup>37</sup> Resentment of A.N.A. exclusivism and of its denunciations of the jealousies of local politicians probably explains why the federal conventions of 1890 and 1891 tended to ignore the A.N.A.'s work for federation. The press also had reservations. The Melbourne *Age*, even in its federationist phases, was cool to the Natives. Bush papers like the *Gippsland Times* and the Broken Hill *Silver Age* were nativist, but the latter discounted the influence of the A.N.A.

By 1890, however, the A.N.A. had become the repository of most of the political energy of Victoria. Deakin was a member, and officers such as Sir George Turner and Sir A. J. Peacock rose to the premiership. Thomas Hart, G. H. Wise, and Jefferson Connelly were Victorians of ability who never reached the level of national leadership. In a special category stood James Purves, a jovial bull of a man who was the driving force of the Natives' push for federation. The rule excluding non-natives deprived the A.N.A. of the old political giants, but it protected the A.N.A. from being overwhelmed by men of large stature and compromising commitments.

Not only Victorians shaped the public image of the Natives. In 1892, William J. Sowden, a South Australian journalist, gave a lecture in Adelaide on "Australia: a native's standpoint," later distributed by the A.N.A. as official propaganda. The A.N.A., Sowden declared, stood for Australia first but took pride in England's

greatness. The radicalism of the *Bulletin*, "one of the youngest and most robust of our comic papers," he rejected equally with the anglophilia of the *Argus*. The Natives, he claimed, were "the happy medium between undesirable extremes."<sup>38</sup> He had a long bill of particulars to bring against the old country, some of the charges heavily jocular. Britain had bequeathed the pests of convicts, rabbits, thistles, and globetrotters. He questioned the continuation of a costly monarchy. He condemned British protocol which forced the Honorable Jack Smith of Australia to drop his honorific when in England, where a higher order of Honorables held sway. He asked why solvent Australia could scarcely get a loan in London. He reminded England that the Anglo-Australian naval squadron was partly subsidized by Australia and—in peace time—mainly benefited British commerce. And he declared that Australian rawness was balanced by seminal ideas in society and politics. Few Australians, he gladly reported, would care to emulate the English gentleman "who, on account of moral weakness had sunk so low as to be almost destitute, in spite of his persistent sponging upon his friends, but who, through all his vicissitudes, had heroically kept his *dress suit!*"<sup>39</sup>

Sowden asked why Australian school children must be expected to thrill to the deeds of Simon de Montfort, when Australia's bushrangers were more respectable; why Australian sexual morality was questioned when the illegitimacy rates were lower than in England or Scotland; why a higher proportional consumption of alcohol in Australia was commented on without the clarifying information regarding the normal frontier

<sup>37</sup> Henry Parkes, *Fifty years in the making of Australian history* (London, 1892), p. 524. See also *Quar. meetings*, Mar. 17, 1891, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Sowden, pp. 1 n., 5-6; *Quar. meetings*, Dec. 14, 1892, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Sowden, p. 25 and *passim*.

preponderance of males in the population; why Australian cricket victories over the motherland were somehow twisted into proof of Australia's philistinism; why it was assumed that all Australians boiled their tea in billy-cans; why the antipodean nasal speech was more offensive than the drawl of the aristocratic globetrotter. Australia, he concluded, was the most democratic country in the world. Neither capital's nor labor's tyranny oppressed the people. The Queensland shearers' army of 1890 was not made up of violent arsonists, nor was the government which put them down a terrorist state. If Australia slammed the door on General Booth's unfortunates it was only that it was time to end the British habit of exporting human rubbish to Australia.

Sowden expressed the Natives' temper. But there was a more thoughtful kind of nativism with a small "n" which was most intelligently interpreted by a non-native, Henry Bournes Higgins. In an essay on "Australian Ideals" (1902), this stout liberal explained some aspects of the national creed which Sowden had ignored. He explained that preserving "White Australia" was the only way of preserving this delicate experiment in social harmony and was an extension of the tariff protection concept to society. Australians' tolerant views of military caste and civil privilege were worse dangers than any "dead level of equality" could be. The bushworker was still chained to poverty because of the unending war of special interests against the common welfare. He felt that Australians' love of titles must be replaced by the ideal of untitled noblemen such as Washington, Lincoln, Gladstone, Michael Davitt, and John Burns. But the saving grace of the Australians was their sim-

licity and self-sufficiency. The educational system was producing a generation capable of developing the continent fully. A cultural life was emerging on the "Red Page" of the *Bulletin*, crudely but vigorously communicating the life spirit of Australia and stimulating a people of action to much-needed thought. For, he pointed out, "We exhaust ourselves in distractions, in efforts to prevent thinking."<sup>40</sup>

Both Sowden and Higgins spoke in the native idiom. Higgins anticipated a wholly Australian utopia without England's inequalities. Sowden, in contrast, saw a need for voluntary ties with the mother country he dealt with so churlishly. At the outset of the new century, Sowden's native practicality had more immediate relevance to Australia's situation than did Higgins' insight. For the Natives avoided the snobbism of the anglophiles and the romantic delusions of the Left, and advanced some policies acceptable to both wings. Their nationalism was not revolutionary and their loyalty not servile.

Narrow nativism remained, as witness A.N.A. protests against the employment of foreign architects to design memorials and the demands that schools teach "Australian national music."<sup>41</sup> This same force differently directed had kept federation alive when the nation seemed tired of the subject, and it had fostered a painless transfer of colonial loyalty to Australia by changing the goal of nationalism from independence to equality within the empire.

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<sup>40</sup> Henry Bournes Higgins, "Australian ideals," *Austral light*, III, N.S. (Jan. 1, 1902), 9-19.

<sup>41</sup> *A.N.A.* (New South Wales), *Conf.*, Sydney, 1901, p. 13, 1903, p. 13.