

‘No “White Policy” in NZ’

FACT AND FICTION IN NEW ZEALAND’S ASIAN IMMIGRATION RECORD, 1946-1978



IN OCTOBER 1948, the New Zealand Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, made a stopover in Negombo, Ceylon, whilst on his way to the Prime Ministers’ Conference in London. At a press conference in the city’s airport, questions from the local press quickly turned to racially discriminatory immigration policies. ‘Did New Zealand have its own White Australia Policy?’ Fraser replied that there was no discrimination against ‘Indians’ in New Zealand ‘because no white policy on Australian lines operated there.’ Satisfied with the answer, Ceylon’s two national dailies carried the headlines: ‘No “White Policy” in NZ’. New Zealand was applauded for its position while Australia, and its notorious ‘White Australia Policy’, were once more discredited.¹ At a meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM) in Geneva in 1953 a memorandum from the New Zealand government insisted that: ‘No statutory provision is at present in force which specifically restricts entry into New Zealand on the basis of race, religion or nationality.’²

In both cases the New Zealand government and its representatives were not lying. Indians *within* New Zealand faced few legislative discriminations, and there was no statutory provision which restricted entry into New Zealand on the grounds of race, religion or nationality. In substance, however, the New Zealand government was not telling the truth. In Ceylon, Fraser had completely side-tracked the issue of immigration, and in the diversion indicted Australia for a crime it was no more guilty of than New Zealand. Both Australia and New Zealand maintained similar policies toward Indians within their countries in conformity with a number of Imperial Conference resolutions which had been passed in the interwar period.³ The question remained — did New Zealand discriminate against Asian migrants in the same way as Australia did? While the methods were different a truthful answer from Fraser would have been ‘yes’. A

1 *Ceylon Daily News*, 8 October 1948; *Times of Ceylon*, 8 October 1948.

2 Memorandum by the New Zealand Government to the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration, Geneva, 1953, New Zealand National Archives, Wellington (NZNA), PM 108/34/1 Pt 10.

3 If the question had been concerned with Chinese, Fraser would not have had such an escape because it was not until 1952 that all ‘official’ discriminations were removed against Chinese in New Zealand and they were allowed citizenship. See D. and P. Beatson, *Chinese New Zealanders*, Auckland, 1990, p.38.

truthful statement to the ICEM would have been that, although there were no statutory provisions discriminating on the grounds of race, New Zealand maintained a 'Whites Only' immigration policy.

In the postwar period the fact and fiction of New Zealand's Asian immigration policy were very much blurred — a condition the New Zealand government deliberately cultivated and attempted to perpetuate. The fact is that for much of the postwar period New Zealand maintained a policy which can be most conveniently labelled the 'White New Zealand Policy', but sought to hide this fact from the international community through a variety of techniques. In 1970 political scientist W.T. Roy noted that 'there is a gap in the historical literature which leaves unexplained the growth and determinants of immigration policy and legislation designed to maintain the initial pattern of ethnic homogeneity'.⁴ Twenty years later Roy's concerns remain largely unexamined. This paper is an attempt to look at some of them.

In the early postwar period the restriction of immigration on the grounds of race was increasingly seen by the emerging international community as untenable. Such views found voice in New Zealand — Walter Nash, for example, conceded that 'racial policies' would have to end and 'migration barriers' would have to be 'broken down' if the world desired peace.⁵ In both North America and Australasia, governments finally began to accept that their discriminatory immigration policies had some bearing on their foreign relations. The Americans responded by creating token quotas for select Asian nations, which were seen as the necessary price to pay to maintain friendly foreign relations while keeping the basic tenets of a 'whites only' immigration policy. The Canadians also accepted that the quota path was a tolerable solution to this conflict of national interests. In Australia, however, the government and supporters of the White Australia Policy did not regard quotas as an acceptable trade-off for maintaining friendly foreign relations. They believed that it was simply a problem of communication and that, if the White Australia Policy was better understood and Australia's sincerity demonstrated in other ways, racial discrimination could be maintained.

The New Zealand government had a clear choice. It could either follow the North American example and adopt quotas for specific Asian nations, or it could attempt to explain and justify why New Zealand considered it necessary to discriminate against Asians. Having witnessed the improvements in foreign relations that resulted immediately from the American quotas, the New Zealand Department of External Affairs concluded that quotas were the only practicable solution. In a 1947 Memorandum regarding the future of the country's immigration policy, the Department advised: 'America's gesture in permitting by her recent quota, 100 Indian immigrants a year was enthusiastically received in India . . . it is suggested that now is an opportune time for a gesture indicating an

4 W.T. Roy, 'Immigration Policy and Legislation', in E.W. Thompson and A.D. Trlin, eds, *Immigration in New Zealand*, Palmerston North, 1970, p.15.

5 W. Nash, *New Zealand: A Working Democracy*, New York, 1943, pp.203-6.

elimination of anti-Asiatic prejudice.⁶ The government, nonetheless, rejected the Department's advice: a quota allowing Asian migrants was viewed as too high a price to pay for any perceived advantage in foreign relations. Meanwhile, however, the Australian alternative had proven equally unattractive. Australia's attempts to justify Asian exclusion on such grounds as homogeneity and living standards were an utter failure, compounded by the fact that Australia was deporting those Asians who had sought sanctuary during the Pacific War. The Australians had only succeeded in making their policy better known and more despised. The New Zealand government was in a dilemma. It believed in the necessity of maintaining a discriminatory policy but could not justify it to the world.

It was after coming to this realization that the government decided on its own approach. The one major difference between the Australian and New Zealand policies was that the New Zealanders had never been as boisterous as their Antipodean neighbours in singing the praises of racial discrimination. While the Australians had vocalized the advantages of their exclusion policy and coined the phrase 'The White Australia Policy', New Zealanders had been more reserved. They had gone about restricting Asian migration with little fanfare. Although popular idiom embraced the term 'White New Zealand Policy', it never gained the heights of reverence 'White Australia' attained across the Tasman.⁷ Whereas a device such as the Australian dictation test was not an effective method of camouflaging racial prejudices because it was flaunted as such, the New Zealand government was more successful in maintaining a facade.⁸

In New Zealand, immigration had been the responsibility of the Minister of Customs. He and his officers were directly responsible for implementing the

6 Memorandum, 'New Zealand's Relations with Asiatic Countries', 28 February 1947, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1/ Pt2.

7 Roy has argued that New Zealand legislation would have been much more rigorous except for direct British influence. The disparity between what New Zealanders wanted and what they could achieve under British influence is reflected by the agitation and attitude directed towards local Asian communities. Such events more closely ally the New Zealand agitation with the North American rather than the Australian experience. In part this could also explain the fact that the White Australia Policy was seen by many New Zealanders as their policy also — a true expression of their feelings on racial exclusion. There are many examples of New Zealanders claiming the White Australia Policy was as much theirs as Australia's. In 1919 the *Auckland Star* had noted: "'White Australia" is not an empty form of words to the people of the Commonwealth and the policy which it represents must be our watchword if either the British Empire or the British civilisation is to endure.' *Star*, 21 January 1919. In 1939 Ian Milner claimed that 'New Zealanders' interests were felt to be inseparably linked with the "White Australia" policy.' See I.F.G. Milner, *New Zealand Interests and Policies in the Far East*, New York, 1939, p.18. In 1953 Walter Nash wrote to Reverend J.D. Salmond of Dunedin: 'We must abandon the White Australia Policy. We must recast our immigration law.' 15 May 1953, Private Papers of Walter Nash, NZNA, 950440. With regard to local anti-Asian agitation see J. Leckie, 'In Defence of Race and Empire: The White New Zealand League at Pukekohe', *New Zealand Journal of History*, XIX, 2, October 1985, pp.103-29; P.S. O'Connor, 'Keeping New Zealand White, 1908 - 1920', *New Zealand Journal of History*, II,1, April 1968, pp.41-65.

8 Dianne and Peter Beatson note that the 1920 Act was a 'White New Zealand Policy' but it was so structured that there was no legislative evidence that this was the case. Beatson, *Chinese New Zealanders*, p.34.

provisions of the 1920 Immigration Act. This Act invested in the Minister of Customs absolute power to determine who was eligible to enter New Zealand. A permit system was established as the most effective form of exclusion, removing a much discredited Education Test. It was decided that all migrants wishing to enter New Zealand would require an 'Entry Permit'. Permit Exemptions, however, were granted to individuals who were 'of British birth and parentage'.⁹ As a result non-British Europeans and all non-Europeans, as well as meeting normal passport and visa requirements, required a permit to enter New Zealand. The reality, however, was that permits were difficult to attain for non-British Europeans and virtually unattainable by non-Europeans unless the Minister had decreed that a certain number would be issued, which was uncommon. Mimicking an earlier Canadian practice of confidentially informing shipping companies of the types of individuals to be refused entry and requesting that passages not be sold to them, the New Zealand Customs Department, in equally confidential terms, informed shipping companies of those individuals who would need a permit to enter New Zealand and the types of individuals who would not be granted a permit, and requested that passages not be sold to these 'ineligible' migrants. Another cornerstone of the permit system was not to tell unsuccessful applicants why their applications for entry permits had failed, thus helping to avert possible charges of racial discrimination. In instructing the New Zealand chargé d'affaires in Paris of this procedure, the Prime Minister's Department noted: 'It has been found from experience that it has been expedient not to reveal the shortcomings of applications.'¹⁰

The system worked well with few problems until the early thirties when the Japanese government complained about its discriminatory aspects. After passing the 1920 Act, the Massey government had decided that the permit system would be relaxed for the citizens of its allies in the Great War. French, Belgian, Danish, Italian and American citizens could leave for New Zealand without a permit and be favoured with one on arrival. This concession, however, was not extended to all New Zealand's allies, notably Japan. In 1925 the Japanese government noted the existence of the concession and rather than extend it to Japan the New Zealand government announced the end of the arrangement. Secretly, however, the arrangement continued for Americans. Shipping companies were informed

9 For a précis of the Act see Roy, 'Immigration Policy and Legislation', pp.18-19. Roy notes: 'The Act of 1920 is of considerable importance because it hinged around a new and ingenious principle that met all the objections of a Britain increasingly sensitive to the demands of militant Indian nationalism and a world where opinion was rapidly moving in the direction of condemning overt displays of racial prejudice'. See also F.A. Ponton, 'Immigration Restriction in New Zealand: A Study of Policy, 1908-1939', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1946, p.48; and S. Sothirachgan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand: A Study of Attitudes and Legislation', MA thesis, Department of Geography, University of Otago, 1972, p.290.

10 J.S. Reid, Prime Minister's Department to New Zealand Legation, Paris, 2 March 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/63 Pt 1. This procedure, however, was starting to meet with criticism in the New Zealand press. In September 1950 an Anglo-Indian family's desire to migrate was refused with no explanation, causing the *New Zealand Truth* to write: 'Anglo-Indians are members of the British Commonwealth of Nations and, if they are not permitted to enter this country they and those who make representations on their behalf, are at least entitled to know why.' *Truth*, 15 September 1950.

that white Americans could continue to book passages to New Zealand without an entry permit.¹¹ In 1931 the American concession was exposed through a lapse by a shipping company. Through its representatives in Australia, the Japanese government strongly criticized the New Zealand government for making exceptions for Americans when Japan, under the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty — which was ratified by New Zealand in 1927 — had been granted most favoured foreign nation status.¹² It believed that its nationals, therefore, were entitled to the same admission procedures as American citizens. The New Zealand government successfully avoided a confrontation by creating a separate accreditation system for Japanese merchants. As the number of Japanese seeking entry was very small, the arrangement was a small price to pay to avoid a major conflict. More importantly the incident taught the New Zealand government that the policy had to be maintained as discreetly as possible and that flexibility could help in perpetuating, rather than undermining the policy. The value of the permit system was increasingly seen to lie not just in its being the most effective system for excluding non-Europeans while meeting British desires, but also in its secretive nature. A Prime Minister's Department report in December 1935 summed up the rationale of the permit system with a conviction that had not been as noticeable at its inception: 'The idea behind this permit system is to avoid as far as possible the appearance of undue discrimination on account of race or nationality.'¹³

In the early postwar period the New Zealand government maintained a system which had worked remarkably well in obscuring the discriminatory aspects of the country's immigration policy. That the same legislation was seen to apply to non-British Europeans had done much to deflect any charge of racial discrimination. New Zealand had also gained some favourable publicity from its decision on the eve of World War Two to allow the dependents of Chinese already in New Zealand to be evacuated from war-devastated China. The government, therefore, decided that the best approach was not that of the Australians or North Americans, but simply the perpetuation of the prewar New Zealand system with greater efforts at secrecy, public avoidance of the issue of discrimination and, if necessary, a denial of its existence. How long such charades could endure, however, was another question. The postwar environment differed greatly from the state of affairs which had produced the old system. A number of new factors and situations conspired against New Zealand's concealment strategy.

The early postwar period saw the rise of affordable and rapid mass transport from overseas. With the number of ships and then aircraft servicing New Zealand greatly increased, the circle of confidentiality regarding immigration policy had to be widened to a degree that would have been considered unacceptable in the

11 Ponton, 'Immigration Restriction in New Zealand', p.74.

12 The New Zealand government believed that this point had been met by its reservation in the Treaty, 'That nothing in the said Treaty or said Convention shall be deemed to affect any of the provisions of the Immigration Restriction Acts of New Zealand.' Prime Minister's Department to Minister for Customs, 25 November 1931, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 1A.

13 E.D. Good, 'Immigration Restriction', Prime Minister's Department, 9 December 1935, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 1A. Good was Comptroller of Customs.

prewar period. The government, however, had little choice if it desired to maintain its system. As a result, shipping and airline companies continued to receive confidential information on the types of individuals requiring permits and those who were ineligible to receive them.

Compounding this problem was the fact that New Zealand was seen increasingly as a migrant destination.¹⁴ In part this had been a product of New Zealand's own efforts to attract more migrants. British migrants were increasingly difficult to obtain because New Zealand was competing with aggressive Australian and Canadian immigration programmes, which meant that like the other Pacific dominions, it was a buyer not a seller in the migration arena and required a degree of publicity, especially in Europe where it was hoped to find suitable sources of migrants. The problem of hiding the discriminatory aspects while encouraging European immigration would haunt New Zealand immigration policy throughout the 1950s. In 1952 Dr Horace Belshaw of Victoria University College warned: 'One sees little disposition to open the gates to Asian populations, whose need is greatest . . . while there may be very good reasons for this attitude, the inferences likely to be drawn by those virtually excluded are not likely to lead to flattering resolutions before the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.'¹⁵

Yet another problem in the postwar period was the growth of travel agents, especially in North America. Shipping companies were no longer seeing the individuals who were applying for passage to New Zealand and therefore their ability to recognize individuals who were 'not wholly of European race' was extremely limited. Faced with this newest conundrum, the New Zealand government believed the only solution would be to inform agents which individuals would require an entry permit and who would be rejected. In 1950 the government published a manual for the use of American travel agents which categorically stated that non-Europeans, regardless of nationality, were 'undesirable' and therefore not eligible for an entry permit.

To New Zealand's foreign posts the plan was the height of foolishness and would stretch the circle of confidentiality to breaking point. While individual and confidential letters to shipping companies had not been a failsafe device, the manual was a new and totally unacceptable solution. In a memo to Wellington, the Counsellor of the Washington embassy noted:

It has always been our understanding of the Minister of Customs' policy towards entry into New Zealand that every case would be given equally careful consideration on its merits, and that the reasons for the Minister's decision in any case would not be given. The Minister has permitted certain privileges to be extended to certain categories, but we have always acted on the assumption that it was our rather difficult duty to implement these instructions without revealing either the basis of the discrimination or the fact that there

¹⁴ Even before the end of the war New Zealand's overseas posts were inundated with requests for information concerning migration. See for example W.J. Jordan, High Commissioner London, to External Affairs, 14 January 1944, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 1A.

¹⁵ H. Belshaw, *Immigration: Problems and Policies*, Wellington, 1952, p.23.

is any distinction made by categories; and, in particular, that the question of race and colour was a difficult and delicate one.

With reference to the manual he warned: 'It scarcely seems wise, particularly in view of comments we have made on the general question of race and colour . . . to single out people as especially undesirable.' The embassy's concern had been heightened by intelligence received that the Indian embassy in Washington was trying to prove the racist nature of New Zealand immigration policies by sending Indians to seek permits. Aware of the ploy, it had warned consular officials and those Indians wishing to visit New Zealand were quickly granted entry.¹⁶ The manual was withdrawn with a Cabinet note stating that 'though objections to Asiatic immigration in principle should not be emphasized in a public pamphlet, it should be stressed that New Zealand intends to develop as a European community'.¹⁷

The fact remained that New Zealand possessed unwritten laws barring Asians and other non-Europeans from settling in the country. In addition, the episode of the travel agents' manual highlighted the growing uneasiness with which New Zealand's foreign missions viewed the whole system. With the expansion of the country's overseas posts during the war and early postwar period, the administration of applications for entry fell to the newly created New Zealand Department of External Affairs.

Because so many of their instructions on the non-European issue were unwritten, they were inadequately informed as to what their role should be. There were no legislative guidelines telling them whom to restrict other than the insane, the politically hostile or those likely to become a burden on the public purse. In essence they really had no idea how to regulate the policy and the manual incident had only increased their confusion. One officer in Washington wrote to Wellington: 'We do not seem to have — although I may not have looked in the right places — the kind of statement on N.Z. immigration policy (with of course appropriate reference to the entry of non-Europeans) that might be used in replying to enquiries from reputable sources.'¹⁸ Persistent requests for advice were answered with copies of unenlightening legislation and instructions that the discriminatory realities were to be hidden at all costs. External Affairs officers in Wellington knew they were of little assistance to their colleagues abroad. One officer wrote to the Washington embassy:

I have always wondered how the Embassy — and other overseas posts for that matter — replied to inquiries about immigration law. You may remember that we have had some controversy in the office as to how we should handle these questions and when the

16 Counsellor to Alister McIntosh, 4 January 1950, NZNA, EA1, 32/3/63 Pt 1. A similar event happened in Australia when an incident involving the Pakistan High Commission was avoided through the issuing of a permit to a non-European. Memorandum for Mr Shanahan, 13 February 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 Pt 6.

17 Memorandum for Preparation of White Paper on Immigration, 1 January 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 Pt 6.

18 Malcolm Templeton to Aikman, 28 November 1951, NZNA, EA1 32/3/63 Pt 1.

inquiries came from Governments and research institutions we have avoided the issue by sending them copies of the relevant New Zealand legislation and left it to them to determine just what Section 5 of the Immigration Restriction Act really means. I am afraid that I cannot give you anything more definite in the way of suggestions at the moment although obviously you should endeavour to avoid specific reference to either our legislation or to the immigration formula if this is at all possible . . . I am far from clear what the answer can be so long as we do in fact intend to take active steps to exclude Asians and persons of non-British descent.¹⁹

Even in Wellington farces were being acted out, such as the comedy of manners resulting from the visit of the Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia. During his visit in April 1949 Mr Rahman sought to find the answer to the hardy perennial — did New Zealand have a White Australia Policy? After a day of investigation he left none the wiser, having been pushed from department to department and confused by explanations of permits as opposed to quotas.²⁰ External Affairs officers gleefully reported the way they had played their part by claiming total ignorance of New Zealand's immigration policy. While they may have been as confused as their colleagues overseas on how the policy actually operated, there is no doubt that they knew New Zealand discriminated against non-Europeans and that they conspired to hide this fact from the representative of a Commonwealth government.

The problems associated with the administration of a racially discriminatory immigration policy, which were illustrated by the manual incident, led to the formation of a cabinet committee on immigration to consider solutions. In a submission to the committee, External Affairs expressed its increasing difficulties in administering the current arrangements. The Department restated its long-held view that an exclusion policy was impracticable and that when the fraudulent nature of the current policy was revealed, New Zealand's international standing would suffer as a consequence. In a preliminary report on the issue, Foss Shanahan, a senior departmental officer, noted: 'Customs do not have a very imaginative approach to the problem and appear to ignore the political aspects of immigration and entry'; and added: 'The task of justifying the policy, which may well be criticised by the avoided countries, will fall on this department.'²¹ External Affairs' formal report to the committee warned that the present system would soon be revealed: 'While this position of ours has not up to the moment been contested by any of the Asiatic countries, we would be deluding ourselves if we did not recognise that it possibly will be in the future.'²²

A report by the committee in April 1950, however, was far from conclusive. One solution they considered was to implement a hard and fast legislative policy

19 C.C Aikman to Templeton, 4 January 1951, NZNA, EA1 32/3/63 Pt 1.

20 'Visit Mr Rahman High Commissioner for Pakistan in Australia', 18 April 1949, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1/ Pt 6.

21 Shanahan to Wade, 9 March 1950, NZNA, PM 32/3/34; External Affairs, 'Some Notes on Immigration', 3 March 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 Pt 6.

22 External Affairs, 'Report on Immigration to be submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Immigration', 20 March 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/34.

which noted the discrimination against Asians and which would remove the administrative difficulties. The committee, however, dismissed the concept: 'This approach states overtly a racial discrimination against Asians not in keeping with equal partnership of white and coloured nations in one Commonwealth This racial discrimination would be widely publicised, eg in Yearbook of Human Rights.' With few other apparent options, the committee decided on the continuation of the existing administrative policy and its propaganda haze because it was 'less likely to provoke objection overseas'. The committee, however, did note that if the current techniques were maintained and revealed, the government would be 'forced to admit that although the law no longer discriminates, the Government does'.²³ They continued to investigate the problem.

Fear of the publication of discriminatory aspects of the policy, however, was beginning to influence New Zealand foreign policy. The government began to shy away from any arrangement or international forum where there was an opportunity for New Zealand's discriminatory policy to be exposed. For example, it resisted American plans to streamline bilateral visa and passport arrangements between the two countries for fear it would not be able to prevent the entry of Asian and African Americans. It was in multilateral forums that such concerns were most evident. New Zealand fears were summed up by an External Affairs memorandum which noted: 'It is always possible that at international or Commonwealth Conferences some reference may be made to our emigration [sic] policy.'²⁴

Such was the background to New Zealand's involvement, or more correctly lack of involvement, in the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM). In 1951 the International Labor Organisation (ILO) sponsored a plan for a conference on European migration. The ILO had in mind the creation of an international agency to deal with European migration. As New Zealand was interested in acquiring European migrants, the conference appeared worth attending. This view, however, quickly changed when Australia reported to New Zealand and Canada that such a conference would place their immigration policies under the spotlight. The New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra reported to Wellington the Australian concern:

Although the I.L.O sets out to deal solely with European emigration, there is little doubt that pressure in the I.L.O for 'universality' and 'non-discrimination' are likely to prejudice attention to European emigration . . . and expose Governments whose selection standards are high to criticism on the ground of discrimination.

The Australians decided that the only course of action was to attend the conference and frustrate the ILO's attempts to internationalize migration. They and the Canadians began to lobby European nations to ensure that the ILO plan

23 Report, Cabinet Committee on Immigration, 24 April 1950, NZNA, EA1, PM 32/3/54.

24 Memorandum, Department of External Affairs, 'New Zealand Immigration Policy', 30 January 1950, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 Pt 6.

would be sabotaged. Such lobbying was intense as it appeared that preventing the plan would be a near run thing and that every obtainable vote should be secured. New Zealand, however, jeopardized Australian and Canadian efforts by deciding not to attend. While they completely agreed with the Australian and Canadian plans, attendance would have had an unacceptable side effect: New Zealand would be identified as a nation of immigration, and Asian nations especially would see it as a migrant destination practising a deception that would quickly be revealed. External Affairs head Alister McIntosh informed the New Zealand High Commission in London: 'The I.L.O have made proposals which we do not favour since they will be likely to bring our whole immigration policy into the forum of I.L.O discussion with Asians present, thereby inviting open criticism of it.'²⁵

New Zealand's decision not to be present was a self-interested act which could have greatly impaired the Australian and Canadian endeavour. Pangs of guilt, however, grew. Fearing their vote could well be crucial, the New Zealanders approached Britain and the United States to ascertain their position on the issue. To their horror they found Britain in the opposing camp while the Americans' refusal to commit themselves was also interpreted negatively. If the ILO succeeded it would not matter whether New Zealand did or did not have a discriminatory policy, it would be under great pressure to accept Asian immigrants. After reassessment the High Commission in London was ordered to send a New Zealand delegate to the conference at Naples with an instruction to confer 'informally' with the Australian delegation.²⁶ At the very last minute, however, the New Zealand government decided once more that the cost was too high and the delegate was not sent. With an American about-turn at the conference, Australian and Canadian desires were realized without the need for the New Zealand vote. The notion of an international immigration organization having been torpedoed, an informal intergovernmental body, the Provisional Intergovernmental Commission for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), was formed. Although invited, New Zealand did not join for fear that it would be recognized as a nation of immigration by Asian nations. Some years later when PICMME had been renamed the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, it quietly joined when it realized that the ICEM was of great benefit to countries of immigration.

Such episodes only reinforced the belief of External Affairs officers that New Zealand's immigration conundrum had to be solved as soon as possible. A new suggestion was a publicity campaign which would voice racial distinction positively, not negatively. The issue was not New Zealand's separateness from Asia but its closeness to Europe.²⁷ The idea, however, was rejected. Australia's attempts along such lines had resulted in unmitigated disaster. Such a campaign would only draw attention to New Zealand's discrimination against Asians.

25 McIntosh to Deputy High Commissioner, London, 28 September 1951, NZNA, EA2 1952/7F 108/34/1/ Pt 9.

26 *ibid.*

27 Memorandum, 20 April 1953, NZNA, PM 32/3/1 Pt 8.

Once again the only possible solution appeared to be a quota. During a flurry of correspondence between Wellington and the High Commission in Canberra over possible Australian plans for a new approach, the Minister of External Affairs alluded to the successful North American quotas: 'One possible approach we are considering is that of the Canadians — who have concluded agreements with India, Pakistan and Ceylon.'²⁸ Some government officials, in taking the North American line, tried to point out the advantages of such quotas. One noted: 'It is not impossible that we may be approached, as were the Canadians, by India and Pakistan who are anxious to establish the principle of non-discrimination, without being greatly pressed on its application.'²⁹ A quota system, however, remained the last resort. Only when the charade was exposed would it be appropriate to consider one. Some New Zealanders believed it would only be a matter of time: an Asian nation merely had to ask and it would receive.³⁰

In 1953, with the issue still unresolved, the cabinet committee on immigration thought of making entry into New Zealand even tougher for all potential migrants, thereby circumventing claims of discrimination. It discussed the idea of requiring all non-New Zealanders to obtain permits for entry. In this way the discrimination could be maintained without criticism based on the exemptions. Supporting such an alternative, an officer of the Employment and Immigration Division of the Department of Labour reasoned: 'Now that the United Kingdom is itself experiencing colour difficulties and, according to Press reports, is considering restricting the entry of at least some, if not all, British nationals other than United Kingdom citizens, the present seems a most opportune time for re-consideration of the objection.'³¹ This idea, however, attracted little support. New Zealand needed to streamline the system to attract more migrants, not add further impediments. External Affairs also advised that the change would still be interpreted as racial discrimination.³² Once again the committee decided that the only option was continuance of the old system. Time, however, was running out: confidentiality was breaking down as the circle of informed persons widened.

In Sydney, shipping and airline companies disregarded the confidential nature of the instructions they received from the New Zealand government, and produced a pamphlet on entry to New Zealand, which, amongst other information, noted that individuals 'not wholly of European race and colour' were restricted from entering. The High Commission in Canberra cabled Wellington: 'It had been our understanding that this fact was not publicized or certainly not printed in official texts, even though it must be well-known to shipping and air

28 Minister of External Affairs to New Zealand High Commissioner, Canberra, 21 March 1953, NZNA PM32/3/1 Pt 8.

29 Memorandum, 'White Paper on Immigration', undated, NZNA PM32/3/1 Pt 8.

30 The Fraser government had adopted a similar approach with China during the Pacific War. Peter Fraser informed British Secretary for Dominion Affairs, Clement Attlee, that New Zealand would maintain its immigration policy until such time as it was challenged by the Chinese. Fraser to Attlee, 22 October 1942, NZNA, EA1 264/3/2 Pt 7A.

31 Quentin-Baxter, Memorandum, Department of Labour, 11 November 1954, NZNA, PM32/3/1 Pt 8.

32 Cabinet Committee on Immigration, Minutes, 22 April 1953, NZNA, PM 32/3/1 Pt 8.

companies and many other people'.³³ One month later the embassy in Washington was reporting that a Japanese paper in New York, the *Hokubei Shimpo*, had printed an excerpt from the Pan American World Airways 'Blue Book of Clipper Travel' which stated that New Zealand discriminated against African and Asian Americans. After pointing to similar restrictions in other countries (but surprisingly not to those in Australia, Canada and the United States), the article concluded that 'each one of the countries listed is a member of the United Nations and supposedly subscribes to the principles of the world organisation's charter'.³⁴

So long as the government was not prepared to compromise with a quota it could expect one exposé after another. In its report of the *Hokubei Shimpo* article, the Washington Embassy could only recommend better efforts at subterfuge. This still appeared possible when the Australian policy — for so long criticized — escaped censure. If Australia could still deceive the world, New Zealand could continue to escape criticism, if it was more careful. The embassy report noted:

This article . . . provides further evidence of the difficulties into which New Zealand posts abroad are projected by the publication in travel manuals of too precise statements of our immigration policy. It is significant in this particular instance that Australia, whose immigration policy is much more discriminatory than our own, completely escaped criticism and . . . we assume from our experience of other such manuals that this is entirely due to the fact that their immigration requirements are couched in vague terms which do not give offence on racial grounds.

We feel bound to point out that we see no need at all for the publication of such details of discrimination among United States citizens, or even for travel agents to be informed confidentially.³⁵

The situation, however, had already deteriorated. A report was received from the consulate in San Francisco that shipping companies in that port were not even aware of their expected role as regulators, preventing travel by those without permits. Other shipping companies claimed it was the consulate's responsibility and not theirs to prevent passage — they had neither the staff to deal with such cases, nor the inclination to reject passengers on the basis of a confidential set of criteria. The airlines in San Francisco which operated across the Pacific had the information but not the time to handle such problems. The Consul-General reported to Wellington: 'The airlines frankly admitted that if a person as black as the ace of spades presented a passport with a valid visa and the cash for his fare, they would carry him.'³⁶

In addition to the San Francisco problem, the Washington Embassy reported that the Orient Line was publishing 'information we have always regarded as

33 High Commissioner for New Zealand in Canberra to External Affairs, 3 August 1955, NZNA, PM32/3/1 Pt 8.

34 NZ Embassy Washington DC to McIntosh, 1 September 1955, NZNA PM 32/3/1 Pt 8.

35 *ibid.*

36 R.M. Firth to McIntosh, February 1955, NZNA, PM 32/3/1 Pt 8.

being highly confidential concerning New Zealand immigration requirements'. The embassy again pointed to Australia in expressing its concerns:

The publication of this information in a form which will be given a wide distribution is potentially embarrassing to New Zealand's overseas posts in their administration of the Immigration Instructions and in any case, shows us up unfavourably in comparison with Australia whose immigration information as recorded in the brochures is devoid of any suggestion of racial discrimination whatsoever.³⁷

It was too late, however; Asia was seeing through the deception. In a warning to New Zealanders, the Reverend Dr Rajah B. Manikan, East Asia Secretary of the the International Missionary Council, noted: 'New Zealand is slightly shrewder than Australia, and does not use the "White Australia" expression which infuriates all Asian people . . . The policies, however, are exactly the same.'³⁸ With no apparent avenue of escape the government could only perpetuate the lie. In a major press statement on immigration policy in July 1955, the government, against the weight of evidence, insisted that the policy was non-discriminatory.³⁹ Time, however, was running out and new tactics had to be found.

In the late 1950s the world was growing increasingly intolerant of racial discrimination. South Africa's plight in the United Nations was regarded as indicative of the fact that Asian and African nations were seeking out and attempting forcibly to remove racially discriminatory policies all over the world. The misfortune of others, however, would provide New Zealand with a window of opportunity to perpetuate discrimination longer than could have been hoped possible. While evidence of racial discrimination was being sought by the Afro-Asian bloc, 'race friction' was also emerging as an intractable international problem. The struggles against 'Apartheid' in South Africa, against segregation in the United States, and racial troubles being experienced in Britain captured international attention. In Australia and North America such situations were used as irrefutable evidence of the foolishness of non-discriminatory immigration. New Zealand, however, found itself in an unusual position. There appeared little chance that the 'Notting Hills', the 'Little Rocks' or the 'Sharpevilles' would be replicated in New Zealand. White New Zealanders proudly announced to the world that racial harmony and equality characterized their society.⁴⁰ The Wellington *Dominion* supported such interpretations when it insisted that 'few nations are better qualified to pronounce upon racial matters than New

37 New Zealand Embassy to External Affairs, 24 March 1955, NZNA, EA1 32/3/1 Pt 8.

38 Sothirachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand', p.288.

39 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy', Press Statement, 8 July 1955, NZNA, PM 32/3/1 Pt 8.

40 Recent New Zealand historiography has come to see such beliefs in racial harmony and equality as products of 'paternalistic racism' and that such notions as the 'one family' or the 'one people' merely served Pakeha society and white domination. For contributions to this debate see: A. Buchanan, '150 Years of White Domination in New Zealand', *Race and Class*, XXXI, 4, April-June 1990, pp.73-79; P.W. Hohepa, 'Maori and Pakeha: the One-People Myth', in M. King, ed., *Tihei Mauri Ora*, Wellington, 1978; T. Loomis, *Pacific Migrant Labour, Class and Racism in New Zealand*, Aldershot, 1990.

Zealand'.⁴¹ This perception of harmonious race relations in New Zealand would play an important role in maintaining the racially discriminatory immigration policy. So long as the world appeared ready to accept that New Zealand's domestic policies towards Maori were non-racial — an almost universally held belief — then perhaps it would appear incongruous that their immigration policy could be racially discriminatory. Those who attempted to point at even a hint of division were not believed. Addressing a gathering in London in the late 1950s, Keith Sinclair could not convince his audience that inequities existed in New Zealand. He recalled: 'The audience appeared unimpressed and mildly amused. It seemed to them that, in comparison with many other multi-racial and bi-racial communities, New Zealand had no racial problem worth mentioning.'⁴² Race relations in New Zealand helped perpetuate a racially discriminatory immigration policy for some years longer than it was to last in North America and Australia. Of course such a position had its own influence on New Zealand's foreign policies. An illustrative episode occurred in 1958 when the New Zealand All Blacks were preparing for a test series in South Africa against the Springboks. The New Zealand Rugby Union was informed that no Maori would be allowed to be a part of the touring team. The fact that the Rugby Union accepted these terms led to a public outcry. More important, however, was the fear that the international community would see New Zealand as accepting discrimination against its Maori population. External Affairs officials were immediately called upon to report whether New Zealand's reputation as a nation with a good race relations record had been damaged by the incident.⁴³ It must be considered more than coincidence that less than a month later, New Zealand for the first time voted against apartheid in the United Nations.

The image of favourable Maori-Pakeha relations did much to divert attention from the bad publicity the immigration policy had attracted in the mid-1950s. The 1960s, however, made the elimination of racial inequality an even higher priority in the international community. The good press of favourable domestic race relations had subverted charges of racism in the 1950s, but the international spotlight became even more intense in the following decade. More had to be done to protect the policy.

The increasing international repugnance towards racial inequality, highlighted in the early 1960s by South Africa's continued trials in the United Nations and its departure from the Commonwealth, only reinforced concern that the good press concerning domestic racial relations might not last forever. In 1961 'the one remaining clause in otherwise technically non-discriminatory legislation' was removed. The Immigration Amendment Act of that year removed the permit exemption for British subjects of European descent, leaving only New Zealand citizens entitled to the exemption. This action had been much mooted in the 1950s but, as noted, was rejected by the cabinet committee on immigration

41 *Dominion*, 24 October 1958.

42 K. Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, London, 1961, p.272.

43 Minister of External Affairs to New Zealand Trade Commission, Sydney, 19 November 1959, Nash Papers, 202001.

because of its administrative consequences. An old solution to the administrative problems, however, was at hand. Just as white Americans had been able to travel without a permit in the interwar period because they would be immediately favoured with one on arrival, a similar system was organized for British subjects of European descent. Although the legislation was now non-discriminatory in wording, very little had changed.⁴⁴

The 1961 Amendment Act was consolidated in 1964 when the government passed a new Immigration Act. Within the new Act was a new exemption clause. Regardless of racial background any citizen of a Commonwealth country or the Republic of Ireland could enter New Zealand without a permit *if* he or she had qualified for permanent residency in Australia. By this condition the New Zealand government could maintain its discriminatory policy because the White Australia Policy was still very much in operation across the Tasman. It was practically impossible, therefore, for a non-European Commonwealth citizen to gain entry except by ministerial discretion. Although Australia was admitting a number of Asians under a 'Highly Distinguished' category, such migrants were usually moving to positions already reserved for them, thereby lessening any desire to migrate on to New Zealand. New Zealand was using Australian immigration laws as a convenient screening process for non-European citizens of Commonwealth countries. It could hide behind the discriminatory aspects of the Australian policy while appearing non-discriminatory. In introducing the Act, the Immigration Minister, Tom Shand, belied its non-discriminatory language and pointed to many of the defences used to maintain the policy. The new Act would preserve the 'characteristics' of New Zealand's 'multi-racial society without racial friction and obnoxious distinctions among the people who come here'.⁴⁵ He concluded:

Because of the unfortunate experience of many countries when attempting a too rapid mixing of ethnic groups and because we in this country have a special responsibility to the Maoris and to other racial minorities in our population, we are zealous to avoid the development of racial problems similar to those experienced in other countries, and for this reason we follow a policy of limiting the proportion of many of the ethnic groups which go to make up the world's population to what in the judgement of the Government and the circumstances of the time is considered to be the limit we can absorb without the risk of creating racial frictions and tensions in our country.⁴⁶

That the changes of 1961 and 1964 were not intended to be non-discriminatory was highlighted in 1966 when an Australian postgraduate student Adrian Chan was refused an exemption. Completing studies at Otago University, the Australian citizen of Chinese descent was only granted a six month entry permit,

44 Sothirachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand', p.290; Lai Chee Hun, 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy Towards Asians 1960-1974: A Policy of Rational Exclusion?', MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1974, p.9.

45 *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, (NZPD), 1964, 339, p.2085.

46 NZPD, 1964, 340, p.2712.

renewable for two years, and not the exemption white Australians were guaranteed.⁴⁷

After Australia liberalized its 'Highly Distinguished' category to 'Well Qualified' in 1966, the New Zealand government followed suit, allowing the entry of some Asian professionals. In 1971 a government periodical claimed: 'Although no active recruitment has been undertaken, Asians and other non-Europeans who hold professional or comparable technical qualifications that are recognized in New Zealand (e.g., medicine, engineering, teaching), whose English is satisfactory, and who meet normal entry requirements, can usually expect to be accepted as immigrants provided they have a specific job in their profession to come to.'⁴⁸ Such arrivals were also discriminated against by a very narrow definition of 'family' in connection with family reunions. While entry of western Europeans and North Americans under such schemes was only limited by their age and size of family, Asian migrants could bring only wives or husbands and unmarried children.⁴⁹

Researching into the discriminatory aspects of immigration in the mid-1960s, Roy claimed that New Zealand's policy was not as liberal as Australia's and that the government continued to rely on the favourable publicity from 'domestic inter-racial harmony'. He concluded: 'The record of immigration legislation and administration practice leads inexorably to the conclusion, that New Zealand does in fact have a "White New Zealand" policy matching its Australian counterpart'.⁵⁰ Other New Zealanders agreed. In calling for a quota system along American lines, G.F. Mills informed readers of the *New Zealand Monthly Review* that the permit system 'reeked of despotism' and that government policy remained consistent with the intolerance that was always manifested in the policy.⁵¹ Even the opposition Labour Party accused the incumbent National government of maintaining a 'White New Zealand Policy'.⁵² The emergence of yet another defence of the policy, however, meant that the government would resist such calls for change.

In contrast to its Asian policy, the government had been generous in permitting the arrival of a considerable number of Pacific Islanders. Such liberalization was considered inescapable for a number of reasons, including the fact that many of these migrants came from New Zealand's dependencies in Polynesia and were technically New Zealand citizens, while the economy was experiencing a labour shortage and the Pacific Islanders were an available source of unskilled migrants. Once again, however, the government used lack of discrimination against one group as grounds for exclusion of another. Because of its position in the world,

47 *Christchurch Press*, 4, 5 March 1966.

48 'Entry to New Zealand', *New Zealand Foreign Affairs Review*, XXI, 9, September 1971, p.17.

49 A. Trlin, 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy in the Early 1980's', in A. Trlin and P. Spoonley, eds, *New Zealand and International Migration*, Palmerston North, 1986, p.2.

50 W.T. Roy, 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy and External Affairs', *International Migration Review*, I, 1, October 1966, p.38.

51 G.F. Mills, 'The White New Zealand Policy', *New Zealand Monthly Review*, VIII, 78, May 1967, pp.9-10.

52 Hun, 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy Towards Asians', p.13.

New Zealand argued that its obligations lay first and foremost in the South Pacific and not Asia. The opening of the migration gates to Islanders was part of this obligation and New Zealand could do no more.⁵³ Under this rationale, it could continue to discriminate against Asians. Roy noted that 'this policy distinctly reduces the credibility of the charge that New Zealand immigration laws discriminate on the criterion of skin colour'.⁵⁴

This latest defence would continue till the end of discrimination, but a new dimension to it emerged when this new migrant source came to be seen as the harbinger of a number of societal ailments. The Islanders were seen to have disrupted New Zealand's 'racial balance', with associated stresses to the social fabric, and the talk was suddenly of New Zealand versions of Sharpeville and Notting Hill. Fears were expressed for 'social cohesion' and 'harmonious intergroup relations'. This new problem, of course, lent itself to an old defence which had been popular in Australia and North America: introduced racial minorities were a dangerous addition to any society. The fact that both the United States and Canada had rejected this notion and Australia was heading in the same direction escaped its New Zealand proponents who included Tom Shand. In a public speech in Auckland in 1968 he aired this viewpoint, insisting that to allow Asian migration would simply compound the problems that New Zealand had hitherto avoided.⁵⁵ In raising yet another defence of the policy he claimed that the New Zealand people themselves were the reason behind Asian exclusion. It was the intolerance of New Zealanders which stopped the government from acting.⁵⁶ The supposedly racially tolerant Pakeha community, which had been praised in the 1950s, was cursed for its intolerance in the late 1960s. The defences of Asian exclusion had turned 180 degrees. It had been cloaked because of good race relations in New Zealand; now a threat to these relations was yet another justification for discriminating against Asians.

With this range of excuses established the discriminatory policy survived the decade. In heralding New Zealand immigration policy for the 1970s the Immigration Division of the Department of Labour relied on all the defences which had emerged in the 1950s and 60s. The result was a hopeless jumble of contradictions. Claiming by way of introduction that in no way could New Zealand immigration policy be seen as racially discriminatory, the Department then claimed it was forced to discriminate against 'nationalities' which could not

53 See K. Rivett, ed., *Australia and the Non-White Migrant*, Melbourne, 1975, p.225. A section of this book dealt with race relations in New Zealand and its policy on Asian and Pacific Island emigration.

54 W.T. Roy, 'Immigration and Foreign Relations', *New Zealand Politics: A Reader*, Melbourne, 1975, p.452.

55 Roy, 'Immigration Policy and Legislation', pp.21-22.

56 Shand's forum was a public meeting on New Zealand Immigration Policy called by the Citizens' Association for Racial Equality (CARE). The Association had discovered a number of cases which demonstrated the 'racist nature' of the policy, as expressed in the discretionary powers of the Minister which were 'invariably exercised to the detriment of non-whites'. See M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Ten Years of C.A.R.E.*, Albany, 1974, p.10. CARE was one of a number of organizations, including the Race Relations Council, the New Zealand University Students Association and the churches, which were calling for a non-discriminatory immigration policy.

be 'absorbed in New Zealand without serious upset to the racial balance of our country'.

Contradicting former Minister Tom Shand's comments of 1968, the Department claimed that the 'vast majority' of New Zealanders were not racially prejudiced and such behaviour was 'frowned upon'. It then claimed, however, that if New Zealand allowed 'coloured' immigration, race prejudice would arise which 'could seriously affect the relationship between Maori and Pakeha'.

The document also contained a new justification for discrimination against Asians which came as part of a rare admission that New Zealand did in fact deliberately discriminate against Asian migrants. Between 1956 and 1966 New Zealand's Chinese population had increased from a modest 6,667 to an equally modest 9,982. Given the government's policy during these years it can only be assumed that the vast majority of this increase was the result of natural increase rather than migration. The Department, however, seized on the figures. The Chinese population had increased by well over 40% when the European population had only increased from 2,016,287 to 2,426,352 — an increase of only 20%. The racial balance was therefore threatened and therefore Asian — not just Chinese — migration should be limited. The report claimed the figures forced 'stricter limitations upon people from these [Asian] countries'. The report concluded: 'The only motivation of successive Governments has been to do what they consider is in the best interests of New Zealand.'⁵⁷

In 1972 the New Zealand Labour Party finally regained office on a public platform which included an immigration policy which made no reference to race. The Labour leader, Norman Kirk, had been personally swayed by the claims that New Zealand's immigration policy influenced its relations with Asia. With Britain from 1961 announcing its intention to enter the European community — a goal which was realized in 1973 — Asia appeared to Kirk and like-minded individuals to be of great importance to New Zealand's economic and strategic future. In opposition Kirk had taken several opportunities to speak of the importance of reconciling immigration policy and foreign policy. In June 1971, he insisted that if New Zealand was to improve its relations with Asia it would have to develop an 'immigration policy based on equality and ignoring questions of race, colour and religion. New Zealand's future lay with Asia and the Pacific. . . . It is vitally necessary to establish sincerity in the eyes of Asians. A fair and just immigration policy would be a way of showing good faith.'⁵⁸

Upon Labour gaining office it did appear that a non-discriminatory policy would be a reality. A review of immigration policy was made which resulted in changes being announced in May 1974. It was claimed that the new policy was aimed at securing 'a unified and non-discriminatory approach to New Zealand's

57 Department of Labour, Immigration Division, 'A Look at New Zealand's Immigration Policy', Wellington, 1970, pp.1-7.

58 *Christchurch Press*, 2 June 1971. Such concerns had been raised in the late 1960s. In 1969 one commentator noted that 'if New Zealand wishes to expand her markets in South East Asia, it may also be advisable to allow a good number of people from that region to come to New Zealand so that contacts with these countries can be safely built on knowledge and close relations'. W. Rosenberg, *A Guidebook to New Zealand's Future*, Christchurch, 1969, pp.213-14.

needs while reflecting the country's interests in the international community'. The Immigration Minister, Fraser Colman, insisted: 'The colour of their [migrants] skin will no longer be a factor as it was under the previous administration.'⁵⁹

Once again the language was non-discriminatory and it was even announced that negotiations had commenced for immigration agreements with Malaysia and Singapore. But the reality was quite different from the image painted. One student of the policy noted: 'It must be conceded that it has been more a change of rhetoric and emphasis than one of substance.'⁶⁰ Once again the government could only point to the removal of privileges for Europeans rather than the removal of the government's ability to discriminate. The major change claimed by the new government was the fact British citizens would no longer be allowed to receive an entry permit automatically on arrival. Of course this did not mean that ministerial discretion towards Asians had in any way changed. The cost of the change had also been slight. The government desired a slow-down in the level of British migration at a time when New Zealand was experiencing the end of full employment. Once again the utterances of the Minister belied the supposed significance of the changes. To take no account of 'ethnic' affinity was not in the 'best interests' of New Zealand. The changes did not compel the government to accept 'migrants from all countries or regions'.⁶¹

In North America and Australia, foreign pressure played a critical role in the liberalization of restrictive immigration policies.⁶² In the period up until the mid-1970s this had not really been New Zealand's experience. While Norman Kirk had expressed concerns about immigration policy and New Zealand/Asian relations, the issue had not become an important variable in such relations. Indeed in comparison to the North American and Australian experience New Zealand immigration policy had been inconsequential. There is little doubt the charades and misinformation had combined with its relative insignificance in Asian affairs to produce this result. Discrimination, therefore, continued in New Zealand when it had ended even in the bastion of anti-Asian immigration policies, Australia. In the late 1970s, however, immigration finally became an issue in the country's foreign relations — a situation which led to the end of racial discrimination against any migrant.

In November 1975 the National government of Robert Muldoon was elected. In its election campaign the National Party had attributed a number of New Zealand's societal ailments to the influx of Pacific Islanders, especially those who had entered on short term working visas and had failed to return home. Such concerns, as noted, had existed since the late 1960s but with the collapse of full employment, the Islanders were now also competition in a shrinking labour market. The government under the direction of the Immigration Minister, Frank

59 NZPD, 1974, 391, p.2612.

60 Hun, 'New Zealand's Immigration Policy Towards Asians', p.17.

61 *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, 1974*, E-21, pp.22-23.

62 For an examination of foreign relations and Asian immigration see Sean Brawley, 'The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1918-1973', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1992.

Gill, launched an all-out campaign against the Islander 'overstayers'.⁶³ While these overstayers were being specifically targeted in a series of police raids, the racial basis of the government's action was highlighted by the comparative ease with which white South Africans and Rhodesians were gaining entry to New Zealand.⁶⁴

As well as causing a local outcry the government's actions caused 'stress and strains' in relations with some of its closest neighbours. The overstay issue, as an example of New Zealand racial discrimination, 'mattered diplomatically'. One commentator warned that 'there should be no mistaking the fact that the overstay affair — and its attendant emphasis on intolerant strains in the New Zealand personality has put a "distance" between New Zealand and her neighbours'.⁶⁵ Referring to ministerial discretion, a report by Amnesty Aroha noted that the 'international public is entitled to know the basis for our Immigration decisions and the "we don't have to tell you" attitude just will not wash'.⁶⁶

Immigration was now a very real part of New Zealand's foreign relations and the government was forced into responding to the charges against it. It could, however, only try to explain why the government felt the need to discriminate. The Foreign Affairs Minister, Brian Talboys, was sent out into the Pacific to explain. New Zealand's neighbours simply misunderstood New Zealand's motivation. In Samoa, Talboys summed up his government's point of view:

The important thing to recognise is that the sort of relationship that exists between New Zealand and the countries of the South Pacific, between New Zealand and Western Samoa, such difficulties are not the result of intentionally damaging or obstructing policies. They arise almost invariably out of the absence of sufficient knowledge, the failure to take fully into account the others point of view.⁶⁷

As Australia had found 30 years before, however, attempts to justify discrimination were unrealizable. The foreign relations implications, as highlighted by the overstayers issue, compelled the New Zealand government to announce that the policy would become non-discriminatory in deed as well as word. In October 1978 it claimed that race would no longer be a determinant in its criteria for selecting migrants. Asians or any other non-Europeans were to be treated in the same way Europeans had been. The arrival of a large number of Indo-Chinese refugees in the early 1980s appeared to indicate that such was the case, but the Muldoon government's response to events such as the Lesa Case and its planned

63 *Auckland Star*, 23 October 1976; *Christchurch Press*, 9 February 1977; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1976.

64 *Evening Post*, 13 April 1977; *Star*, 13 October 1977. The apparent contradiction was noted in a report by the National Anti Apartheid Committee. 'International Action Brief: Racial Discrimination in New Zealand's Immigration Policy', Wellington, May 1977, p.1.

65 Anthony Haas, 'Home Thoughts From Abroad — Foreign Minister Brian Talboys' Five Nation Pacific Tour', Wellington, 1977, p.1.

66 Murray Jorgenson, 'Immigration Law Reform: A Role for Amnesty Aroha', Wellington, 1977.

67 Cited in Haas, 'Home Thoughts from Abroad', p.2.

Immigration Bill of December 1984 still attracted charges of racism.⁶⁸ A change of government in New Zealand brought yet another review of immigration and in August 1986 the Lange Labour government announced that the non-discriminatory features of the policy had been reinforced and an informal 'national origins' system which favoured 'traditional countries' removed.⁶⁹ Since 1986 there have been no major incidents that have led commentators to question the non-discriminatory nature of the policy. While Asian migrants may no longer be discriminated against on entry, however, internal discriminations remain.

In 1953 an External Affairs Memorandum titled 'Immigration into New Zealand: International Problems' noted:

Our immigration is based firmly on the principle that we are and intend to remain a country of European development. It is inevitably discriminatory against Asians — indeed against all persons who are not wholly of European race and colour. Whereas we have done much to *encourage* immigration from Europe, we do everything to *discourage* it from Asia.⁷⁰

In this context *everything* included sleights of hand, deceit, misinformation and straight-out fabrication. Anything and anyone were used to hide discrimination. For thirty years New Zealand succeeded in hiding this discrimination from the international community. When it finally became an issue of regional cognizance, as had always been feared, the policy was quickly ended. In the period 1946-1978 there was certainly more fiction than fact in government claims for New Zealand's immigration policy toward Asians.

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68 See Barrie Macdonald, 'The Lesa Case and the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982', in Trlin and Spoonley, *New Zealand and International Migration*, pp.73-80.

69 See Andrew Trlin, 'Change and Continuity. New Zealand Immigration Policy in the Late 1980s', in Trlin and Spoonley, *New Zealand and International Migration, Number 2*, Palmerston North, 1992, p.3.

70 Memorandum, 'Immigration into New Zealand: International Problems', Department of External Affairs, 1953, NZNA, PM 323/3/18 Pt 1.