CHAPTER 1

A White Australia

Introduction

As they toured in 1923 the Chinese soccer team was welcomed by all, and in the context of prevailing racist currents of thought in this period, this treatment appeared out of character for the Australian government, the press, and the people. For a country in which racial purity had been consolidated as a keystone of identity and policy - as evident in one of the first actions taken by the new Commonwealth government, the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) - the fact of the tour and its reception presented a marked contrast, one that did not fall within the monolith of understanding prescribed by a White Australia. The prevailing image of the Chinese – established through the nineteenth century – was as weak, emasculated, devious and unable to assimilate into Australian society: their threat was in undercutting the rights and dignity of male labour, of debauching white women, of corrupting society with the dark, secretive, sedentary pursuits of drugs and gambling. At every level this image challenged the core of the labourist, masculinist, muscular and collectivist themes in which Australian identity had been based. Since the 1850s the exclusion and elimination of all that the Chinese were taken to represent had informed policy, commentary and public opinion as part of the cultivation of a distinctively Australian sense of nation and society. Yet what was presented in 1923 on sporting fields around the country seemed to question if not unravel this monolith. These football players were educated, well-off, athletic Chinese who did not fit the entrenched, disparaging mould.
Not only did the tour appear to challenge this local consolidation, but it was also at variance with a more a sophisticated, highly refined defence of racial purity which served to unite the international company Australia was keeping among settler colonies turned modern nations by the end of the nineteenth century. To the nationalist populism readily available to politicians and journalists – ‘Australia for the White Man’ as the Bulletin’s famous credo – was added an international racial ‘science’ associated with the work of medical experts, anthropologists, lawyers and ‘men of letters’ that also found its way into public debate by the early twentieth century, and which located Australia in a global scheme of conceptualising racial hierarchy and aggressively defending ‘whiteness’. The incongruities evident in the more popular reception of the Chinese soccer players as a sporting team were complemented by the extent to which their tour, so carefully organised and widely discussed, seemed to question the prevalence of this globalised ‘scientific’ view.

This chapter begins by noting the extent to which the tour needs to be located at the intersection of these two forms of organised racism, both of which ‘set the scene’ for the tour’s impact. Equally importantly, however, I will explore three distinct lines of influence that provided the specific context for the events of 1923 – lines which revealed that this point of intersection in regard to views of the Chinese was by that point under some strain. These lines were the Trans-Pacific model of racial thinking, the Trans-Tasman dimension, and the Imperial perspective. The tour, I will argue, implicitly and explicitly challenged a delicate balance held by the 1920s between the national and international forms of racism and the political, economic and cultural influences that supported them. Prevailing notions about the link between population (white or coloured) and national development, about economic insecurity and protectionism, and about where Australia fitted into a British Empire that was itself inherently multi-racial, all started to unravel in the 1920s at the same time as the press
and the Australian public gathered in surprising numbers to watch the Chinese team perform on the soccer field. Australians were coming to view White Australia, and the racial question, differently, and the tour was an integral part of that process – not only in representing such questioning, but in engaging the interest and initiative of many who actively wished to break with older prejudices.

As this chapter will show, there was more on the minds of many in Australia in 1923 than just disparaging perceptions of market gardeners, laundrymen and shopkeepers. They were beginning to question the fundamentals of a policy of racial exclusion, and associated policies of protectionism and imperial deference, that had their origins decades before, but which after World War I were clearly needing reappraisal. Galvanising such questioning had been part of Millard’s motivation from the start, but over time he proved far from alone in his awareness of new agendas to be advanced through the part unlikely, part perfectly adapted, vehicle of a football tour.

By way of a brief summary, however, it is important to note that Australian antagonism towards the Chinese had existed since the early 1830s, when Chinese had begun arriving as indentured labour to work the farms of pastoralists. Their arrival caused concern for colonial governments which saw the Chinese as threatening the fabric of an already fraught colonial experiment. By the 1850s, these governments restricted their opportunity to migrate to Australia for fear of the degeneration of the population and their competition with white labour at lower costs.¹ These restrictions were the beginning of immigration barriers to the Chinese which would carry through into the twentieth century.

The development of these restrictive policies accelerated as the Chinese arrived to take part in the gold rushes from the mid-nineteenth century in the southern States and later in Queensland. The general concerns of the mainly British white population were with the inability of the Chinese to assimilate into an existing European society, and with the possibility of that society - itself being transformed by the European and American infusions of the gold miners - being swamped by increased migration from China. Thus, in the 1850s and 1860s, a number of Acts came into being in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, to curb this migration by use of an entry tax. These measures were largely successful in ending Chinese migration such that by 1867 all restrictive legislation had been repealed as no longer necessary. Even so, the pattern of restricting Chinese immigration, mainly through the entry tax, would be on the minds of Australian governments up until and after Federation.

Coming later in the progress of the gold rushes, the Queensland experience of racist anxiety had particular dimensions that also carried over into the twentieth century. The development of the new industries, such as sugar plantations after the 1860s, had been based on South Pacific Island labourers. The migration of Chinese to the goldfields of northern Queensland in the 1870s and 1880s fed debates about the capacity or appropriateness of white labour in the tropics, and the need in such circumstances of making exceptions to racial exclusion for the sake of development. Such health and environmental factors brought new elements into debates over race in Australia, and an increasingly trans-national exchange of ideas. In 1877 the Queensland government

\[3\] Willard, History of the White Australia Policy, 18-21.
\[4\] Willard, History of the White Australia Policy, 28-35.
investigated the proceedings of the American Commission into the Chinese immigration, which had concluded that the unrestricted entry of Chinese was ‘ruinous to our labouring classes, promotive of caste, and dangerous to free institutions’. From this point onwards, Australian parliamentarians increasingly opened their minds to the rising race questions of the larger white world. If initially through the expediency of cheap labour, then in vehement demands for exclusion drawing in international models, the Queensland perspective on race would feed through debate over the three lines or models of influence and challenge some rethinking on the absolute divisions of race and nation.

**Trans-Pacific model**

By the end of the nineteenth century, then, Australian notions of white superiority were not entirely local in origin. There were strong influences exerted on racial thinking from further afield, and especially from the United States of America. Those American arguments, in large part arising from the pressures to manage issues of slavery and its abolition, and the presence of an extensive black population, brought their own elements into Australian debates, particularly in relation to threats of miscegenation and the social, economic and cultural strains of incorporating large and mobile numbers of unskilled workers in an increasingly industrial economy. The influence of this international racial ‘science’ meant that Australians regarded the 1923 tour in terms very different to the ways in which they had once regarded the Chinese on the goldfields or in specific industries. By the 1920s, the issues raised by a commitment to White Australia, and by anti-Chinese sentiment, encompassed wider national, social and economic concerns.

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With regard to the USA, it was not only California that was studied, but the problem Americans noted in general of the south and its African-American population. By Federation, Australian interest in these issues was guided by the works of Charles Pearson and James Bryce. Their books, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* and *The American Commonwealth*, respectively, related concerns with any mixing of the white race with the coloured. Both texts discussed the problems of the non-white races, their over-population, and the need to limit their expansion into lands decreed as white by virtue of the advance of modern colonisation and the promise of economic development and productive transformation. Australia’s vast open spaces, Pearson warned, must become attractive to other countries, with their surplus populations, unless measures were taken to ensure that no large scale migration of coloured people meant that the continent became just another example where the ‘white man may soon be cramped for land’. Arguments such as this continued to appeal to Australian parliamentarians when they formulated the policies of White Australia.

In addition to the threat of immigration, there was also the more visual fear of miscegenation. From this perspective, Australian parliamentarians did not want to make a mistake similar to that of the United States in dealing with its Negro population in the wake of the Civil War. Prior to the war, two schools of thought prevailed among American racialists. Those most radical were for the integration of the free black ‘who would make a special and valuable contribution to national life and character’. The more conservative were of the view that the Negroes should return to Africa and resisted any proposal of black participation in American society. They ‘harboured the image of a future America that would be all white, or mainly so’. Abraham Lincoln fell

6 Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 37 (see intro., n. 6).
into the second category, and debates both about race in America at the time and about Lincoln’s racial attitudes provided for much fuel for discussion in Australia.\(^8\)

These debates were surveyed by Bryce who discussed America’s need for the right kind of people for its growth. As Bryce argued, the liberation of the African-American population of the south had become a problem for all governments in the united nation. By the end of the nineteenth century the Negroes constituted ‘the poorest and socially lowest stratum’.\(^9\) The fear was not primarily how to deal with the coloured population in the south, but what to do with them when they migrated to the more prosperous north. The problem was of race dilution, the low-caste Negroes mingling with the British and European whites. Bryce summed up the situation in the United States in no uncertain terms.

The peculiar feature of the race problem as it presents itself in the United States is, that the negroes are in many districts one-third or even one-half of the population, are forced to live in the closest contiguity with the whites, and are for the purposes of industry indispensible to the latter, yet are so sharply cut off from the whites by colour and all that colour means, that not merely a mingling of blood, but any social approximation, is regarded with horror, and perpetual severance is deemed a law of nature.\(^10\)

To Australian parliamentarians, this prognosis had an eerie similarity to what they feared may happen if the Chinese were to be allowed to immigrate. Not specifically the Chinese question in California, but the problem of the Negroes was echoed in Australian parliaments when race was brought into discussion. Australians, too, feared possible miscegenation with the Chinese and the dilution of all that their new nation stood for.

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Pearson, a migrant to Australia from England in 1864 and a parliamentarian in the Berry government of Victoria in 1878, also acknowledged the concerns of White Australia.\textsuperscript{11} He had travelled to the USA in 1868 where he surveyed the land and race situation of that country and professed that ‘(l)and in the temperate zone was limited: white men might soon be denied the chance to emigrate’.\textsuperscript{12} This thesis, sometimes termed ‘the white man under siege’, provided the basis for the opening chapter of \textit{National Life and Character: A Forecast}. The possibility of Chinese expansion was part of this concern. Pearson also foresaw the coming independence of ‘coloured races’ as inevitable\textsuperscript{13} and thus believed they would become a ‘serious competitor for the empire’. As Pearson warned, the colonisation of the Straits Settlements of South East Asia showed ‘what the race is capable of’.\textsuperscript{14} He noted that the ‘general law is that the lower race increases faster than the higher’ and from that perspective the possibility of being swamped by black and yellow races, once allowed into a national population, was inevitable.\textsuperscript{15} Only Australia, through its vigilant opposition, had kept the Chinese from becoming a power on its continent. And thus when it came to consolidate these colonial Acts, at the time of the first Commonwealth parliament, Prime Minister Edmund Barton quoted from Pearson to support the measures that comprised the White Australia policy – the \textit{Immigration Restriction Act} and the \textit{Pacific Islands Labourers’ Act}.

Barton chose one of Pearson’s chapter conclusions to re-enforce his argument. He stated that the globe would be circled by the black and yellow races and that it was inevitable that white races, and specifically Australians, ‘shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Lake and Reynolds, \textit{Drawing the Global Colour Line}, 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Pearson, \textit{National Life and Character}, 32.
\end{itemize}
upon as servile and thought of as bound always to minister to our needs’. The Acts were Australia’s chance to prevent this invasion.

Theodore Roosevelt, the soon-to-be President of the United States, was also intrigued by Pearson’s work and in 1893 published a review of his book. Roosevelt was a proponent of the white man owning the warm, yet not tropical, parts of the world. He wrote ‘Nineteenth century democracy needs no more complete vindication for its existence than the fact that it has kept for the white race the best portions of the new world’s surface, temperate America and Australia’. The two countries were the last bastions of white freedom. Thus, the project of White Australia ‘took shape in response to a new global history’, one that ‘chartered the population growth, migrations and political advancement of different races of men’.

These trans-national notions of race played a role not only within the development of Australian colonial government’s restrictive policies against the Chinese, or in the creation of the eventual Act that would bring these attitudes their power and legitimisation, but also in informing a very broadly held consensus on such issues. A more sophisticated approach to these questions was explored by parliamentarians such as Alfred Deakin and Henry Parkes, who believed that Australia’s federal fathers should learn from American history. They understood the consequences of Chinese settlement within Australia, using the challenges faced by the United States as a foundation for presenting what might befall Australia. These Australian leaders heeded Bryce’s warning of the racial problems which confronted America as one of the great secular problems of the world. They also noted Pearson’s concerns about the inevitable invasion of coloured races. The White Australia policy had its foundations in such

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thinking and Australia had drawn its ‘colour line’ - a line which remained firmly ensconced in policy and culture in the first decades of Federation.

**Trans-Tasman discussions**

Following World War I, however, there developed a more significant emphasis on security. Established views on the racial questions had to accommodate considerations of Australia’s position with the East. Could such a blunt instrument as the exclusion of the ‘servile’ continue to serve the interests of a new nation facing the economic as well as strategic challenges of its ‘Pacific’ region? This shift beyond Federation notions of racial exclusion affected both Australia and New Zealand. The question of Chinese immigration was not demoted, but that the rise of Japan as a stronger power in the Pacific placed it at a level that called for fresh debates in the two Antipodean countries. Yet it also brought to the fore the main debates in New Zealand which saw Australia as its first line of defence against the Asians. Thus a trans-Tasman focus emerged in discussions which took place in New Zealand, and while New Zealand did not face the same anxieties and issues as Australia, it was keen that Australia hold the line on the racial integrity of the white Dominions. New Zealand newspapers brought out this trans-Tasman conversation as it delved into the archives of Australian racism. For Henry Millard, as we shall discover in the next chapter, these trans-Tasman discussions formed his awareness of racial issues and would influence his objectives in instigating the tour of 1923.

Post World War I Australasian newspapers hosted lengthy debates on the two questions of race and security and how both issues were seen, either separately or together, as a threat to the notion of a balanced and healthy white society in the South Pacific. The papers allowed not only the journalists and editors to advance their arguments, but also for an extensive coverage of the views of politicians and academics. Further, these
papers often took different sides in the debates, creating a more open conversation about key topics and resisting any sense of an easy consensus on key issues. In these ways, race and racial exclusion became part of a vigorous public discourse and part of the day-to-day environment in which Millard, as a journalist worked and sought advancement. The primary arguments canvassed in these debates related to the northern areas of Australia, its security, its need to be populated and whether this should be by white or coloured settlers. For some New Zealanders, their major concern was that if Australia allowed coloured races into the north, it would be inevitable that the colour line would slowly move south until the whole nation was invaded and hence there would be no impediment for the migratory onslaught of coloured races to cross the Tasman.19

Thus, by the 1920s, the debates focused on the breaching of the natural barrier that existed north of the continent, between the Dutch East Indies and northern Australia. The security of Australasia was at stake. Japan was becoming a stronger threat, through its dominance in the Pacific. It had defeated both China and Russia prior to World War I and annexed a number of the German Pacific holdings. Japan was also described as the ‘sword of Asia’ and ‘capable of meeting on equal terms one of the great Powers of the West’.20 Together, Australasians thus considered themselves ‘uncomfortably close’ to any possible future clash between East and West, ‘which would inevitably draw the Commonwealth into its maelstrom’.21 The complexity of the East Asia situation meant Australia’s involvement was inevitable. To Japan’s chagrin, William Morris Hughes, Australia’s Prime Minister, even went as far to ensure that no ‘racial equality’ clause was inserted into the League of Nations charter at the end of World War I.22 Thus,

22 John Fitzgerald, Big White Lie, 157 (see intro., n. 5).
Hughes had created a justification to withhold entry to Australia to all races, whether Chinese or Japanese.

As New Zealand papers debated, the solution to the security problem lay with the populating of the northern parts of Australia. They followed initiatives such as the Sydney-based Northern Australia White Settlement Association, which was founded on the principle that the ‘peopling of its great northern area is the greatest and most urgent of Australia’s problems’, and was an outcome ‘of the patriotic enthusiasm of Major General W. L’Estrange Eames’, a medical practitioner and soldier. While, the association was unsuccessful in its aims, it gave a clear message to many that concern in the defence of the country was creeping steadily south, and inevitably raised issues of population purity.

There was also an Imperial dimension in relation to these Australian and New Zealand debates about populating the north as Britain was suffering large post-war unemployment. The Australian States became ports to ship some of this excess, and in doing so the migration helped the expanding industrial Dominions and ‘strengthen(ed) communities that are British in institutions and spirit, and extend British trade’. The Antipodean countries discussed this matter with urgency - New Zealand observing the proceedings of the Australian governments - as it related to the above issues of populating the north, keeping the lands white and providing more reliable men for the defence of the Antipodes, if the need arose. New Zealand thus also needed ‘her share of Britain’s surplus stock’ and had to follow the lead of the Australian States. Eventually,

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25 “Surplus Population,” Auckland Star, 10 April, 1922.
in May 1922, the British Parliament gave Royal Assent to the Empire Settlement Act to instigate the proceedings of migration.\(^{27}\)

With this in mind, the debates then turned to the composition of the population of the north. The security of the Antipodean nations relied on the right kind of people who resided at the northern boundary of Australia. While Hughes was adamant that this would not be by the coloured nations,\(^{28}\) others chose to disagree. Discussion on this topic became more pronounced in the early 1920s. Northern Australia was not part of the temperate zones that Roosevelt prescribed were suitable for white races, and regarded by some as unsuitable for white settlement. The question among those involved in these discussions was whether white labour could survive in the tropics or that tropical or indentured coloured labour would be required. The Chinese were already living in the Northern Territory and had shown their ability to perform the work required, yet others were more concerned with the control of migration to the south, echoing Bryce’s discussion of the Negroes of the American South.\(^{29}\)

At this time Australia was also involved in a more scientific analysis of race and the development of a better nation. A movement developed, through the work of Morris Miller, to study mental hygiene and deficiency of young individuals to control problems such as juvenile delinquency.\(^{30}\) It became part of what was known as the eugenics movement and involved a number of academics and medical practitioners.

The Chinese in Australia, whether of lower or middle class employment, did not fit with the approval of the emerging eugenic movement in Australia, dealing as it did with ‘the

\(^{27}\) United Kingdom, *Hansard HC Debates*, 31 May, 1922 vol. 154 cc 2182-3.


construction of a national body and the problems with it’. By the 1920s, the study of the body had become commonplace amongst the medical and scientific fraternity who ‘were recommending governance within an ostensibly physiological, and therefore racial, framework’.  

The request was for Australians to improve their race by improving the body of the young. Yet when the discussion arose of who would perform the labour in the north, these eugenics debates were strangely absent from the discussions.

The argument was instead directed towards whether to allow the tropical labour into northern Australia based on ideas that they could perform the tasks that whites were considered unable to do. The Auckland Star, for example, keenly reported the contention put forward by Sir Henry Barwell, the South Australian Premier, that

the people of Australia and the Empire must recognise that it is impossible to leave the tropical portions of Australia empty much longer; and that it is equally impossible to populate them with whites because the white races must invariably suffer physical degeneration and decay if they attempt to exist under tropical conditions.

Barwell insisted that white labour was unable to harvest the great resources of the North and that, in his opinion, ‘these cannot be developed without tropical labour’. Further, Barwell stated, ‘Australia must be developed, for the great empty spaces are undoubtedly a menace to Australia, and incidentally, New Zealand’. Barwell was opting for a Mediterranean development of the north. He envisaged people form the “tropical” European countries of Italy and Malta to be employed in Australia’s north.

American newspapers, though, misunderstood Barwell’s definition of tropical labour, believing it included Chinese and Japanese. While the New Zealand Herald allowed Barwell to refute these beliefs, by reprinting a New York Sun article the paper had

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31 Warwick Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness 155 (see intro., n. 7).
33 “White Australia,” New Zealand Herald, 10 July, 1922.
opened the minds of its readers to other possible solutions for the northern Australian question. Only two months prior, the *New Zealand Herald* had reproduced the thoughts of Griffith-Taylor that ‘it would be well to compromise on the colour question and admit Indian and Chinese for domestic service otherwise they would never get the white women to go there’.

These were the concerns debated in the New Zealand press. *The New Zealand Herald* was open to alternatives presented by Barwell, Griffith-Taylor and others. The choice by Australia for a pure white continent was still one of contention. Yet *the Auckland Star* was more explicit in its thoughts on the matter. The editor, in echoing Pearson, stated:

> The White Australia policy involves not only the future of Australia, but the future of civilisation and the prospects of the white races throughout the world. Experience has proven that the unrestricted competition of cheap labour inevitably lowers the standard of living for white workers and reduces them to a hopeless state of industrial and social degradation; while the moral effects of the introduction of alien elements into a white community – implying differences in social habits and standards of conduct – have always been disastrous wherever the experiment has been made. If Oriental labour, indentured or not, is once admitted into the Northern Territory, it must be only a question of time before the whole Continent would be submerged by “the rising tide of colour”; and what will happen in Australia must infallibly happen elsewhere if this precedent is once established, and the white races decide no longer to “draw the colour line.”

New Zealanders were very interested in the proceedings of the populating of northern Australia. Their heated participation in the discussion of another country’s concerns showed their own anxiety of what may happen to New Zealand. This trans-Tasman deliberation of Australian matters continued through to the inception of the tour and affected the proponents of the tour.

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34 “Sir H. Barwell’s ‘Policy’,” *New Zealand Herald*, 10 July, 1922.
The options put forward by the likes of Griffith-Taylor and reproduced in the *New Zealand Herald* would be echoed during the tour and again within an economic and industrial context. Yet, as the editor of the *Auckland Star* stated, the introduction of cheap labour will affect the fabric of the economy. Australia and New Zealand were emerging countries which sought to protect their borders, not only from the obsequious Chinese but against the range of strategic challenges intensifying after World War I, and also needing to maintain and build their fledgling economies.

**Imperial connections in Asia**

Australia had its American interests and its trans-national and post World War I influences, but sitting underneath all of this was a deeply unresolved Imperial discontent. Following the war, Australia had been independently represented at the Treaty of Versailles, separately from the British delegation. Hughes had secured this independence by arguing that his country had fought in the war to the effect of ‘600 000 dead’ for its own national safety and to insure its national integrity. Thus post-war Australian ties with Britain had to adjust to the changes wrought in an Asia-Pacific region specifically – a region increasingly dominated by Japan and the USA. At the 1921 Imperial Conference in London, Hughes had fought for the retention of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance so that he could use Britain to control Japanese interests in the Pacific. Yet, Hughes also made sure that if Britain was incapable of defending Australia, he could rely on the USA. Australia’s allegiance with Britain, at least politically, remained intact, yet from the late nineteenth century, the strength of this connection began to wane. Britain and Australia both had interests in Asia, but their

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differences were expanding and when the soccer tour was in full swing, discussions relating to these differences came to the fore.

Australia’s concerns with Britain and its development of trade with Asia became significant in the late nineteenth century. These concerns also, indirectly, played an important role in the development of the *Immigration Restriction Act*. Australia challenged the treaties that Britain had with the Asian countries as they countered the immigration restrictions that the Australian colonies were trying to enforce. Britain’s insistence on the Australian colonies accepting the treaties it had with China and Japan led to a galvanising of the colonies in opposition to the treaties and provided another reason for the federation of the colonies.

There was a tension in Australia with the British Imperial way of seeing the world. Empire areas of co-operation extended to China, India and Japan up until the 1930s, driven by economic interests. Yet for the colonies and the emerging Commonwealth, there was a heightened racist anxiety precisely because of fears of economic as well as racial competition. While Britain was trading with its Asian partners, Australia was causing them concerns through their restrictive policies. Equally, Britain was concerned that the offence arising from restrictive immigration policies would affect their trade with the ports in Asia.

In 1860 the Pekin Convention provided for the recruitment of coolies\(^\text{39}\) and thus their emigration to British Colonies. When Queensland tried to gain Royal assent for the restriction of Chinese to migrate, the British government rejected the Bill on the basis of the Pekin Convention. The British did not want to alter their trade relationship with the Chinese based on the requests for restrictive legislation by the colonies. They felt that all Chinese should be able to enter all Dominions without restrictions. This was

extended when in 1894 the Commerce and Navigation Treaty was signed by Britain and Japan. The treaty gave the Japanese ‘full liberty to enter, travel or reside in any part of the dominions’ \(^{40}\) which in turn meant the Japanese were allowed to migrate to Australia as well. This provision led to the Australian premiers extending the restriction on Chinese to all Asians.\(^{41}\)

The effect of Australia’s reaction to the British trade agreements with the Asian nations was to place Australia further away from becoming a strong trade partner with these same Asians. The culmination of the *Immigration Restriction Act* meant that overseas Asian merchantmen were unable to migrate to Australia to carry out trade with their home country. In 1906, from a report by J. B. Suttor, Australian commissioner to the East based in Kobe, the estimated percentage of imports by China from Australia compared to all imports was a ‘calamity’ of barely a quarter of one percent.\(^{42}\) This would improve little over the next decades leading to the 1920s when a trade commissioner was sent to China in an attempt to rectify the problem.

Australia’s trade with China was further affected, post Federation, by the imposition of tariffs on imports with the aim to protect the small manufacturers. Farmers were also protected, as were industrial workers through the arbitration system and welfare entitlements. The development of the living wage completed the protection of Australian industry on all fronts.\(^{43}\) The argument against free trade was strong as Australia was looking to promote economic welfare. These arguments sealed Australia into an Imperial contract: for the supply of raw products in the pastoral, agricultural and

mining sectors Australia gained access to manufactured goods and a remarkably high standard of living.\textsuperscript{44} For China, which had cheap labour to service the manufacturing industries but no access to the Australian market, it meant an imbalance of trade and less of a reliance on Australia’s products as imports.

The Australian Chinese, though, refused to remain without voice. Representing both themselves as merchantmen, and the general Chinese community, both the Melbourne and Sydney Chinese Chambers of Commerce, prior to 1920, had petitioned the government on numerous occasions to ease the discriminatory immigration restrictions, yet without success.\textsuperscript{45} They formed a national organisation with numerous branches around the country, yet even with support from the Chinese papers and the Consul General, it came to nothing. The middle-class Chinese merchantmen, though, recognised that there was a need to bring Australian Chinese together as one. One effect of the campaign was to help galvanise the Chinese ‘to acquire a community and a national spirit, and so to strengthen their ties with the Chinese communities’.\textsuperscript{46}

The Chinese-Australia business leaders again showed initiative towards the end of that second decade. They created the China-Australia Mail Steamship Line over the summer of 1917-18 in response to the high freight costs on the Japanese-registered shipping lines. During World War I all Australian-owned vessels were requisitioned for the war effort thus leaving a monopoly in the hands of unscrupulous Japanese traders. The initiative was unsuccessful, the company terminating business in 1924, yet it demonstrated that during this period Chinese businessmen in Australia, unable to alter

\textsuperscript{45}Fitzgerald, \textit{Big White Lie}, 186.
the Australian restrictive policies, searched for other methods to develop healthier trade relations with China.  

Thus, by the 1920s and the time of the soccer tour, trade relations between the burgeoning Chinese republic and Australia were poor. Even with the westernisation of parts of China, there was little effect on the exports from Australia of the plentiful supply of wheat and wool to China. Australian traders, emerging from the war were enthusiastic to open their products to the Chinese market and Chinese merchants were also looking to create a favourable commercial environment between the two countries. Yet, Australian tariffs, White Australia and its immigration restrictions hindered the ability for these to eventuate. Australian trade, also, was still constrained by strong Imperial ties, half of their exports going to Britain in 1920-21 year. Australia was unable to negotiate the problem of balancing trade with the race question, a concern that Millard would take up with earnest as the tour progressed.

**Australian public thinking**

Australian attitudes toward East Asia, by the early 1920s, were drawing on a number of key influences. Parliamentarians had become involved in a trans-Pacific exchange of ideas that extended beyond the Chinese question in California to that of the broader American concerns of the African-American population in the south and the issues of miscegenation. The open spaces of northern Australia drew in a conversation, in both Australia and New Zealand, relating, within an Asia-Pacific context, to who was to populate and protect this northern border of the continent. This discussion was also affected by the political manoeuvring of William Morris Hughes, following World War I, as he created a way to manage the potentially dangerous Japanese empire. Yet,

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Australians were still within the umbrella of the British empire and were affected by its own Imperial ideas of racial inclusion which countered the policies of White Australia, and which created economic imbalances as Australia tried to move into an industrial engagement in the region in trade and manufacturing.

The debates relating to trans-national thinking, whether it be from the United States of America, New Zealand or Great Britain, steadily created extensive public interest in these issues, separately and as a synthesis of issues, by 1923. The debates from Parliamentary chambers and scientific journals made their way into the public sphere of the newspapers, pamphlets and meetings, and developed a vigorous, well-informed public interest in the national and international dimensions of Australia’s health and security. Thus as the 1920s commenced, these concerns about racial purity were no longer the domain of the politician and academic, or of jingoistic nationalism, but there was a broad public exposure to them on a day to day basis. When the Chinese soccer players arrived, these issues were given additional attention. This depth of public engagement was exactly the kind of environment Millard was hoping to secure in first conceiving the idea of a touring Chinese soccer team.