

## Australian Assimilation

By Keith Windschuttle

With a pen stroke, Australian Prime Minister John Howard recently ended a concept that has dominated Australian immigration policy for more than 30 years: multiculturalism. A nation of immigrants, Australia has long tussled with two competing ideas about how to integrate new citizens. Traditionalists wanted immigrants to shed their past and adopt mainstream Australian values; multiculturalists wanted them to retain the cultural allegiances of their old countries intact. By renaming the Ministry for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs the Ministry for Immigration and Citizenship, the prime minister stamped his approval on the traditional approach.

This little change of title represented a big reversal for Australian immigration policy. Since the mid-1970s, all sides of the Australian political spectrum had endorsed multiculturalism and tried to persuade older Australians to accept the change with equanimity. The promise was that the policy would turn traditional Anglo-Australian mono-culture into a more diverse, vibrant and socially pluralist society. Intellectuals thought it would end old Australia's reputation for racism and xenophobia.

Both conservative and social-democratic governments vied for the ethnic vote by pouring money into immigrant associations and funding national public radio and television networks devoted to the ethnic cause. Housing, welfare and education policies encouraged some immigrant groups to form close communities and send their children to ethnic and religious schools. The most conspicuous of these were Lebanese Muslims who almost all became concentrated in the suburbs of southwestern Sydney.

The philosophy has led Australia into trouble. For at least a decade now, the evidence has shown that instead of ethnic communities living happily within the diversity of social pluralism, multiculturalism bred ghettos characterized by high levels of unemployment, welfare dependency, welfare abuse, crime and violence.

The social engineers responsible should have been well aware of the likely outcome, especially for young men. Numerous studies of similar ethnic ghettos in North America and Europe show they produce much the same result, whatever the color or ethnicity of their inhabitants. Ghetto culture for young males is characterized by interpersonal violence, sexual irresponsibility, incomplete education, substandard speech, a hypersensitivity about being disrespected and a feckless attitude toward work.

For some time now, Australia's political parties have struggled to find common ground on multiculturalism. The Labor Party pursued it most enthusiastically, with one former Labor Minister, Barry Jones, admitting it became "a tremendously important element" in building up a long-term, non-English speaking political constituency for his party. The conservative Liberal-National coalition responded more to older Australian values that stressed national cohesion more than diversity.

The irony is that mainstream Australia was doing just fine integrating its various,

diverse ethnic groups. One of the positive products of the original multicultural impetus has been the steady increase in the number of educated immigrants from south and east Asia. Today they account for about 40% of Australia's annual skilled immigrant intake. But the great majority have remained outside the socially engineered ghettos of multicultural policy and have integrated into the Australian community. The upshot is that instead of harboring racist or ethnocentric attitudes to these newcomers, old Australians are working with, marrying and having children with them.

Studies by Monash University's Bob Birell showed that by the end of the 1990s only a minority of second-generation marriages of persons of Asian descent in Australia were to someone from their parents' country. Only 6% of Australia's Indian community married within their ethnic group, as did only 16% of Australia's Chinese community. Without the help of intellectuals and multiculturalist policymakers, ordinary Australians have been rapidly creating a successful multiracial country.

This general trend toward assimilation is a point too often missed by defenders of multiculturalism on the left, who are still eager to find examples of old Australian

xenophobia and racism in every corner. Witness the reaction to a series of beach riots between Anglo-Australian and Lebanese Muslim youths in late 2005. Left-wing intellectuals claimed confirmation for their racism thesis. Writing in the *Age*, the feminist historian Marilyn Lake compared the Anglo-Australians to "the lynch mobs in the American south." But a look at general assimilation trends points observers in a different direction. In reality, the so-called riots were minor adolescent turf clashes in which no one was killed or even seriously injured.

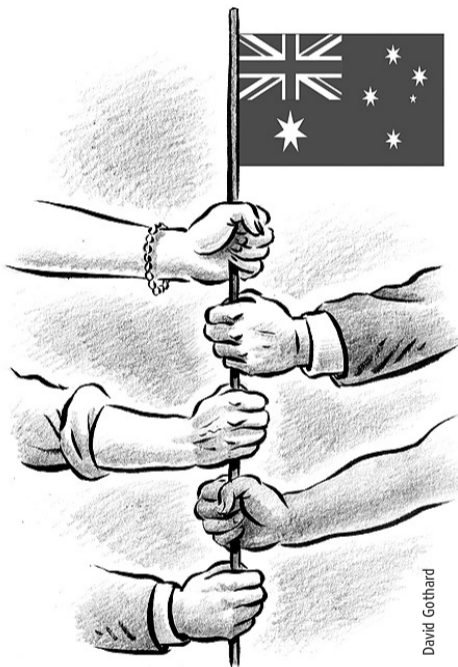
In fact, the only non-European immigrants who have posed serious problems as a group have been those who embraced multiculturalism most enthusiastically. Lebanese Muslims have stuck stubbornly to their own communities. A full 74% marry other Lebanese Muslims. This pattern fulfilled the community-building objective that Lebanese political and religious leaders worked for, but by isolating their constituents from the rest of Australia it produced more social problems than it solved.

What finally put paid to multiculturalism wasn't an academic debate about its philosophical underpinnings or some grand left-right struggle, but its practical outcomes. Coupled with the revival of Islamic jihad and fanned by some highly provocative misogynist statements by their religious leaders, the comparatively closed Muslim communities came to be seen by most Australians as a problem in their midst. The London tube bombings in July 2005 and the riots by Muslim youth across France in October and November of that year demonstrated outcomes that many critics of multiculturalism had predicted.

With the central rationale disproved and its inherent drawbacks so visibly on show, the demise of government enthusiasm for multiculturalism was only a matter of time.

Mr. Windschuttle is a historian and the author of, most recently, "The White Australia Policy" (Macleay Press, 2004).

### Multiculturalism is finally abandoned.



David Gothard

## From Bird to Person

By Peter D. Zimmerman

LONDON—The "deadly" H5N1 avian flu is back on the front pages of newspapers and TV news shows. The British environment minister has pledged quick action to "eradicate" the disease from the U.K., and over 150,000 turkeys on one farm have been culled. "This is," someone said on the BBC's "Breakfast" show Monday, "a disease of birds, not humans." And so it is.

The H5N1 virus has still not made the critical interspecies leap which would make it easy for an infected person to give the disease to another person. That may happen, or it may not; and nobody can predict the outcome or its timing with any degree of confidence. Meanwhile, as of the World Health Organization's compilation on Feb. 3, there had been a total of 271 laboratory-confirmed cases of the virus in humans, and of that number a staggering 165, or 61%, died, making it one of the most lethal pathogens in history, even if not one of the most infectious.

Still, just 18 months ago many experts were predicting a global pandemic in a matter of months, perhaps one that would kill millions. There is historical precedent: The 1918-1919 "Spanish Flu" swept around the world in a matter of weeks, and before the disease burned out, more than 50 million people had died. Today H5N1 is reminiscent only of the Asian "Swine flu," which threatened the U.S. in 1976 but never turned into a serious threat to human life (although the media hype surrounding it helped undermine Gerald Ford's presidency). In 2004, worried people rapidly bought up much of the world's supply of Tamiflu and Relenza, the only two drugs that seemed to have a chance of beating H5N1. Now most of us have forgotten the names of these drugs.

Influenza viruses have eight genes and these mutate rapidly. Two sites on the viral genome, called H and N, are well catalogued, and each of those genes can come in many forms. Those are the markers that trigger the human immune system. If your body has seen a whiff of a particular virus, it will produce large numbers of antibodies if you later become infected with a strain having the same markers. If you have never been exposed to a particular strain, there are no antibodies in your bloodstream, and your body will fight an uphill battle for survival. The more virulent the virus, the less chance you have.

So far as is known, no H5N1 virus has ever circulated on the planet. That means nobody has any natural immunity. Our good fortune last flu season was that the bird flu virus had not yet learned the trick of passing easily from human to human. The few confirmed victims were almost all people who'd worked very closely with infected fowl in extremely unsanitary conditions. One can suppose that they were massively exposed, allowing this "disease of birds, not humans" to develop in their bodies.

Almost all influenza viruses originate in migrating water fowl in South-East Asia, and by and large the birds don't get sick. However, those birds can pass their viruses to domesticated birds. In the great viral mixing pot of China, where people live in close contact with both their birds and their pigs, influenza viruses can readily pass from one species to another, and sometimes to an animal or person already infected with another flu bug.

In this environment, mutations are guaranteed to occur, and from time to time a new pathogen with the ability to pass between people develops. If it carries the same marker combination as one or another previous flu virus, much of the world's population will have a basic immunity. If it does not have familiar markers, much of humanity is at risk once that virus learns to jump from person to person. Each year a panel of experts tries to guess which strains of flu will pose the highest risk in the coming influenza season, and orders up vaccines to give the vulnerable some protection. H5N1 has not been selected, because it still hasn't

become contagious in our species. But it could make the jump at any time.

The last year has brought the world a major advantage, should H5N1 become a "disease of humans." The pharmaceutical industry has learned the difficult trick of making and producing a vaccine against a hitherto unknown disease. GlaxoSmithKline recently claimed that it had succeeded in developing a "second generation" bird flu vaccine that could be given in advance, even before knowing the detailed gene structure that would allow this bird flu to infect people. The vaccine could be given before the bug even learns that deadly trick. Other companies have also developed vaccines which appear to produce broad-spectrum antibodies against many strains of the virus, and many governments have ordered large stocks from various producers.

It is probably worth stockpiling many millions of doses before H5N1 escapes into the human population. Because none of us has any useful immunity, the virus could migrate around the world with the speed of commercial air travel, not the steamships

that powered the Spanish Flu. If H5N1 escapes, and if it becomes as virulent as the Spanish Flu (which killed 1% of those who developed the disease), the pessimistic predictions of millions of people dead within months could come true. Only if vaccine bottles were already on the shelf, ready for instant use, could the virus be contained.

However, deadly as it could be, and as harmless as it has so far been, the H5N1 avian flu will not be the last new influenza virus to develop. The process that produced H5N1 is at work every year, and the more intense the agribusiness of raising chickens in China becomes, the more rapidly new viruses can spread and mutate. Even if we may have dodged the H5N1 bullet, another pandemic like the Spanish Flu is inevitable and could break out into the human population so quickly that vaccines cannot be produced in time.

New types of influenza virus must be detected and combated while they are still diseases of birds, not humans. Detection of new viruses will happen where they originate. A global pathogen surveillance system—as Sen. Joseph Biden suggested almost five years ago—is necessary because the global first line of defense against influenza is not the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but the public health agencies of China, Vietnam and other nations in Asia. Those agencies need multilateral support and encouragement, and the United States must take the lead. And countries where flu viruses originate need the courage to recognize that reporting a new disease does not reveal weakness, but rather demonstrates the strength of their health systems.

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### Pepper . . . and Salt

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"I only appear to be goofing off. In actuality I'm an operator and I'm standing by."