

## Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation

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Volume 38, 1996

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/11t38art02>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Palmer, B. D. (1996). Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 38, 16–36.

Résumé de l'article

This speculative essay presents a preliminary statement on the paradoxical character of 19th-century class formation in the two white settler dominions of Canada and Australia. Outposts of empire, these social formations were early regarded with disdain, the one a classic mercantilist harvester of fish, fur, and wood, the other a dumping ground for convicts. By the mid-to-late 19th-century, however, Canada and Australia were the richest of colonies. Within their distinctive cultures and political economies, both supposedly dominated by staples, emerged working classes that were simultaneously combatative and accommodated. By the 1880s impressive organizational gains had been registered by labour in both countries, but the achievements of class were conditioned by particular relations of fragmentation, including those of 'race' and gender.

# Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation

Bryan D. Palmer

SO DIFFERENT, yet so alike, Canada and Australia were central to the experience of 19th-century empire. Among the most successful of British colonial dominions, they shared a history of subordination that was itself premised on subjugating aboriginal peoples and establishing complex home markets in labour, resources, and indigenous industrial development. Championed as the virtuous success story of white settler societies, these garrisons of the northern and southern hemispheres have long been associated with the economics of the staple and the politics of a peculiarly British imperial evolutionism in which the march from “colony to nation” was characterized by gradualism and the slow germination of responsible government. Peopled by convicts and loyalists, Irish immigrants and half-pay soldiers, these distant lands were nevertheless connected by the ties of rebellion and restraint, some of those transported to Australia and Tasmania having been exiled from Upper and Lower Canada in the aftermath of the suppressed Rebellions of 1837-1838. What follows is a preliminary statement on the paradoxical character of class formation in these two 19th-century social formations.

One paradox of development was that of material well-being. Outposts of empire, the one a dumping ground for convicts, the other a classic mercantilist harvester of the resources of forest and sea, Australia and Canada had become, by the mid-to-late 19th century, the richest of colonies.<sup>1</sup> Fogel and Engerman, in an admittedly partisan effort to establish that the American south was not particularly

<sup>1</sup>See Glen Williams, “Canada — The Case of the Wealthiest Colony,” *This Magazine*, 10 (February-March 1976); Williams, *Not for Export: The Political Economy of Canada's Arrested Industrialization* (Toronto 1983), 4-5.

backward on the eve of the Civil War, rank Australia first in their global assessment of per capita income from twenty nations and regions. Its constructed level of 144 outpaced other leading political economies, among them the United States North (140), Great Britain (126), the southern states and Switzerland (both at 100), and Canada, which had a respectable figure of 96. European nation states trailed both Australia and Canada, while a colony such as India, so favoured in the ideological and military accounting of imperial expansion, scored a dismal per capita income measure of nine, its robust indigenous population numbering in the hundreds of millions and driving British investment per capita down to 1.2 pounds. The equivalent Australian figure was 73 pounds.<sup>2</sup>

To begin with this frontier of British investment, Australia, we encounter a social formation in which aboriginal peoples were quickly displaced not by colonizing settlers, but by convicts. Prisoners from around the British Empire comprised the majority of the people who entered mainland Australia and Tasmania until transportation there ceased in 1840 and 1853 respectively. British and Irish convicts and ex-convicts comprised 71 per cent of the total labour force in 1840, dwarfing free immigrants (24 per cent) and the colonial born (5 per cent). In 1850 Western Australia had a non-aboriginal population smaller than the number of convicts who arrived after that date.<sup>3</sup> We might expect this original economy of unfree labour to exhibit or give rise to the features of crisis — material, ideological, and psychic — characteristic of regimes of accumulation scarred by such deep-seated dependence on bondage. Australia, it could be argued, should have looked something like the American south, the Siberian wasteland endowed with Tsarist Russia's convicts, or Devil's Island, France's 19th-century penal colony.<sup>4</sup> Yet by 1840 the Australian colonies consumed a greater value of British imports per head than any other territory, inside or outside the Empire. The convict period had created a strong home market with a lucrative exposure to, and seemingly infinite capacity to exhaust, international credit. By 1890, with public debt approaching 70

<sup>2</sup>Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston 1974), 250. For discussions of India's importance see the readings of imperialism in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York 1993), and Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire* (London 1993), while Donald Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* (Oxford 1983), 51, presents figures on British investment.

<sup>3</sup>For varied accounts of convict workers and their significance see Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (New York 1987); Stephen Nicholas, ed., *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past* (New York 1988); N. Butlin, "White Human Capital in Australia, 1780-1800," *Australian National University Papers in Economic History*, 32 (1985), 18-9. For aboriginal population figures see L.R. Smith, *The Aboriginal Population of Australia* (Canberra 1980).

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago 1959); Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge 1987).

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pounds per head in regions such as Queensland, Australia was the object of awe and alarm within the ever-predatory circles of British finance capital.<sup>5</sup>

Credit creates capacity, not the least of which was Australia's inflated reputation as a land of opportunity for emigrant labour. As Edward Said notes, 19th-century Australia was *the* narrative of progress, as "an irredeemable, unwanted excess of felons" managed to negotiate the apparent disorders of the bush and the *apartheid* of stigmatized conviction and transportation into one of the Empire's best poor man's countries.<sup>6</sup> Profit's possibilities soared with pastoral capitalism's explosive growth in the second quarter of the 19th century, the number of merino sheep climbing from 50,000 in 1813 to 16,000,000 by the 1850s. Australia was proclaimed a veritable Eden for labour in the 1830s. At least this was the global profile of well-being, which translated into the kind of literary representations of potentially prosperous migration that infused the Dickensian imagination of the Victorian English-speaking world. Australia's authority in the eyes of would-be emigrants lay in the "imagined community" of labour shortage that conditioned statements such as these:

I think ten thousand immigrants, including mechanics, farm servants, shepherds, cowherds, labourers, and household servants, would not be too great a number to import as soon as they can be procured, and, afterwards, about five or six thousand yearly.

Indeed, now that instructions have been given to raise the minimum price of land, in that colony, it seems but politic to increase the supply of labor, without which land can be of no value.

Emigrant labour contracts of the 1830s were often articulate statements of the concessionary climate within which workers jostled employers for increasingly better terms:

That we will give you during good behaviour for three years, that you may be in our service, Fifteen pounds per annum, a cottage rent free, a plot of ground for a garden, seven pounds of meat, also, the privilege of keeping a cow with pigs and poultry on condition of their getting into no mischief, and being soley for your own use, and after five years should you continue that time in our service, we will establish each of you as a tenant on fertile land taking the rent either in labour or in produce and during the first six months in our service to give your wife one half of the above allowance of provisions.

This was a language of labour's rights rarely heard in the "free markets" of the advanced industrial capitalist economies of the "old" world.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, 52.

<sup>6</sup>Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xv-xvi.

<sup>7</sup>Quotes and figures from Philip McMichael, *Settlers and the Agrarian Question: Capitalism in Colonial Australia* (New York 1984), 154-8; Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, 52. Note, as well, the general statement in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1983).

The colonies of British North America, situated as they were in the material and ideological shadow of revolutionary republicanism, undoubtedly offered more of a mixed reception to labour. Australia was clearly the destiny of choice for the more affluent of emigrants fleeing restricted "Old World" opportunities for the promise of new freedoms and economic possibilities. After 1850 British immigration to Australia increasingly took on a "respectable" tone as previous waves of transported convicts and assisted Irish Catholics were displaced by the more favoured Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock that best suited the new climate of moral regulation. As newspaper voices of the gentry rose in shrill opposition to what some saw as Catholicism's conspiratorial act of colonization, leading figures in the Australian elite distanced themselves from the danger of "tipperarifying the moral atmosphere." The result was an appreciation abroad that Australia, not the Canadas or the maritime colonies, was where men of property and standing would be best settled. "People who have left the shores of England for the Antipodes are more thorough representatives of the mother country than the generality of immigrants to America," remarked *The Times* in 1860, explaining that such people came "from a wealthier and more completely English class." Nova Scotia's Joseph Howe promoted the British North American Association in London in 1862 precisely because he felt that "for every one person that you meet who knows anything accurately about North America, there are ten who have either returned from or read something of Australia." Confederation, felt John A. Macdonald, would make the British take their North American provinces as seriously as they took Australia.<sup>8</sup>

All of this might well suggest difference rather than similarity in the Australian and Canadian experiences, but the divergences were more apparent than real. Both colonies shared much, including an original context of expropriation and marginalization, in which aboriginal populations were subordinated, if not decimated, by the incursions of merchants, pastoralists, settlers, and the para-military frontier police and militia forces that were themselves some of the first blocks in the building of the indigenous state. Connell and Irving refer to the "continent-wide, undeclared war" that left 20,000 Australian blacks dead and that saw episodic moments of racist attack flare in incidents such as the Myall Creek murders of 1837.<sup>9</sup> They suggestively link the process of Australian class formation with the making of race consciousness, whereby the emergence of the white working class over the course of the 19th century was always conditioned by the repressed existence of the aboriginal other, which made its mark of division in the markets

<sup>8</sup>On the shifting moral character of Australian migration and policy see Paula Hamilton, "Tipperarifying the Moral Atmosphere: Irish Catholic Immigration and the State, 1840-1960," in Sydney Labour History Group, *What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australian History* (Sydney 1982), 13-30. The quotes on British perception are from Ged Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-1867* (London 1995), 139-40.

<sup>9</sup>R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History* (Melbourne 1992), 33.

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of land and labour and the limitations of consciousness that registered in cleft solidarity and a penchant for collaboration. In regions such as Queensland, in economic sectors such as cattle raising, aboriginal peoples were employed through the 19th century, although those who worked casually or even illegally in this part of the pastoral economy could well outnumber those officially recorded in census and other figures. Still, this aboriginal presence was eventually to be tightly controlled in the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* of 1897, an indication that even with the success of aboriginal stockriders the "civilizing" of "coloured" labour in Queensland was a project that insured a race divide within the process of class formation. With labour in its Australian black skin excluded from participation in the workers movement, labour in its white Australian skin was never quite as free as it imagined itself to be:

the fact that a proportion of the Aboriginal population survived the onslaught had consequences for class structure. With forced relocation onto settlements and missions in the later nineteenth century, the state consolidated an economically marginal and dependent position for most of the survivors. They were partially integrated into the rural economy as servants and casual labourers, at wage rates far below white workers' norms. ... The simultaneous racial exclusion and partial economic integration of Aboriginal people created a lasting division in the working class, which was different from the ethnic rivalries among the settlers, and represented a crucial limit to working-class solidarity. The presence of a dispossessed, permanently subordinated minority, until recently geographically remote from the centres of labour organization, was a situation with which neither unions, nor parliamentary labour, nor colonial socialism cared to grapple.

With the working class born at this interface of demographic destruction, cultural genocide, and a regulatory pacification, the meaning of class could not help but take on racial characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

The situation in the colonies of British North America was, in spite of differences between the native peoples of the future Canadian dominion and Australian aborigines, instructive of a general process of white settler/native people contact, and the resulting one-sided devastation.<sup>11</sup> There is much controversy over the specifics of initial native-white contact in the various regions of early Canada, and many imaginative interpretive statements have indicated that aboriginal bands

<sup>10</sup>Ann Curthoys, "Good Christians and Useful Workers: Aborigines, church and state in New South Wales, 1870-1883," in *What Rough Beast*, 31-56; C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Canberra 1970); R.H.W. Reece, *Aborigines and Colonists* (Sydney 1974); H. Reynolds, "The Land, the Explorers, and the Aborigines," *Historical Studies*, 19 (1980), 213-36; Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (New York 1994).

<sup>11</sup>Robin Fisher, "The Impact of European Settlement on the Indigenous Peoples of Australia, New Zealand, and British Columbia," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 12 (1980), 1-14.

could be shrewd bargainers in trade.<sup>12</sup> But this research can not understate the intense disruption that descended on native peoples with the contact experience. Nor can ethnohistories, with their sensitive insistence on the need to address the longevity and resilience of the North American Indian's spirituality and cosmos, sidestep the trauma of what was, in essence, a colonization experience that ended in either demographic destruction or debasement.<sup>13</sup> Finally, if there were pockets of native proletarianization, indicated in Rolf Knight's study of Indian labour on the west coast, any sustained attempt to argue for the integration of aboriginal peoples into the broad national labour market is destined to falter on both sides of an equation bounded by native people's resistance and white antagonism: class formation was embedded in racial exclusion.<sup>14</sup>

At its most brutal, as in the case of the Beothucks of Newfoundland, white settlement in the absence of effective regulatory coercions of an established state and a simplified resource extractive political economy where tools (traps and nets) and product (dried fish) could be easily pilfered by migratory natives, resulted in almost genocidal campaigns. There were known instances of employers leading their fishermen labourers in punitive raids, beating natives to death with stolen traps. A governor reported the "barbarous system of killing [that] prevails amongst our People towards the native Indians ... whom our People always kill, when they can meet them."<sup>15</sup> Where land became the foundation of class formation, as in central Canada, more benign campaigns, of crosses and bibles, barrels of whiskey, or blankets, sometimes infested with smallpox, actually decimated native populations in less time. More dramatic in its destructiveness was the 18th- and early-19th

<sup>12</sup>See, for instance, Robin Fisher, *Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver 1992); A.J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto 1974); A.J. Ray and D.B. Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations between Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto 1978).

<sup>13</sup>See, among many important studies, Calvin Martin, "The European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquian Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (1974), 3-26; Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley 1978); Shepard Krech III, ed., *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade: A Critique of Keepers of the Game* (Athens 1981). For the demographic destruction of native peoples see William M. Denevan, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (Madison 1992).

<sup>14</sup>See Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* (Vancouver 1978); Ron Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis, and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism, and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy*, 12 (Fall 1983), 45-80. But note, for native resistance to proletarianization, E.E. Rich, "Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 26 (1960), 35-53.

<sup>15</sup>L.S.F. Upton, "The Extermination of the Beothucks of Newfoundland," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (1977), 133-53.

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century climate of war, in which rival imperialist powers routinely structured Indian tribes into alliances, pitting them against other contingents of intruding white colonizers and long-established groups of hunters and gatherers. As these forces drove native peoples into a downwardly spiralling swirl of chaotic disruptions, white accumulations of rights to the land became commonplace, sanctified in bargains that ended in the legal codification of property rights that were themselves the final blow to the traditional ways and continuities of native life. Over the course of the late-18th and early-19th centuries, the meaning of this dispossession dawned on native leaders. It mattered not that they had often helped their white brothers. A Mississauga chief told an English traveller in 1820: "You came as wind blown across the great Lake. The wind wafted you to our shores. We received you — we planted you — we nursed you. We protected you till you became a mighty tree that spread thro our hunting land. With its branches you now lash us."<sup>16</sup>

If that mighty tree can be conceived as capitalist development, many of its lashing branches struck native peoples as growths of class formation. In the far west of the Hudson's Bay Company dominance, millions of acres of the western interior were alienated, as they had been earlier from Prince Edward Island to Ontario, extinguishing aboriginal title to the land in a series of 1870s treaties bordered by overt rebellions of the native peoples and mixed-blood populations in 1870 and 1885. This was the economic premise of both western development and nationhood, a project of explicit racial rule captured nicely in the pronouncements of Adam Thom, Recorder of the Red River settlement. Company rule was for Thom in 1851 the rule of white, English-speaking mercantile authority. This comprised "one half of the population, nine-tenths of the wealth, and ninety-nine hundredths of the intelligence." Class formation would be inhibited by its essential precariousness unless whites outnumbered natives by far more than this 50-50 split, insuring, for Thom and others, the possibilities of capital accumulation which alone secured the survival of a privileged elite capable of sustaining true intelligence.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the points of difference separating out the experience of Indian removal or marginalization, 19th-century Canada is connected, across time and space, by the ultimate resolution of class formation's initial act of subordination: native people's displacement made proletarianization of other subordinate groups possible. As an act of power, this was not unrelated to gender. The precariousness of early white fur traders during the initial phase of European-native contact, for

<sup>16</sup>Donald B. Smith, "The Dispossession of the Mississauga Indians: A Missing Chapter in the Early History of Upper Canada," *Ontario History*, 73 (1981), 87. Also note Leo A. Johnson, *History of the County of Ontario, 1615-1875* (Whitby 1973), 1-37.

<sup>17</sup>Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto 1984); Kathryn Bindon, "Hudson's Bay Company Law: Adam Thom and the Institution of Order in Rupert's Land, 1839-1854," in David H. Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, Volume 1 (Toronto 1981), 43-87.

instance, was shored up through mixed marriages in which traders took Indian wives "after the fashion of the country." But as white settlement developed and a more diversified political economy emerged, one part of which was the increasing presence of white women, the possibility of native women negotiating a middle-ground for themselves between white and Indian men collapsed under the pressures of hardening lines of racism. As lower-class white women clung to a sense of superiority over their native counterparts they sacrificed the capacity to even address their class place, embracing an uncompromising consciousness of colour. One western fur trade figure declared in 1830 that, "this influx of white faces has cast a still deeper shade over the faces of our Brunettes in the eyes of many." Native women were treated with increasing scorn, captured in language that moved away from the terminology of marriage — "my women" and the "guid wife" — toward derogatory names such as "squaw" and ugly objectifications like "bit of brown." This erosion of sentiment and status was epitomized in brutal rapes that accompanied Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company battles for control of the western fur trade as native women became little more than property to defile in retribution. The situation in the more diversified Upper Canadian economy was not that dissimilar: an Indian uprising was only narrowly averted in 1796 after a soldier offered a native woman some rum and a dollar to sleep with him and, hours later, accompanied by two white settlers, precipitated a battle that left a chief and his wife dead. Tried for his actions, the soldier was acquitted. Such anecdotal evidence gestures to the ways in which the moment of primitive accumulation unfolded within the confines of social order characterized by powers both racial and patriarchal.<sup>18</sup>

It also suggests insights into the Australian/Canadian experiences as white settler dominions in the making, their class structures emerging in tandem with such developments. Central to the question of displacing native peoples, for instance, was the commodification of land, and in both dominions the 19th-century emergence of class orders was inseparable from the tortured Wakefieldian machinations that struggled to induce settlement in ways that would also preserve the hierarchies of class by keeping land priced so as to insure that poor labourers would remain landless and thus dependent on the wage. But the original requirement for such an "art of colonization" was of course the suppression of anything approximating aboriginal title to the land, an act that would be accomplished with an arsenal of brute force and high-minded Enlightenment "principle," drawing on

<sup>18</sup>See the works of Sylvia Van Kirk: *'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur Trade Society 1670-1870* (Winnipeg 1980), 201-2; Van Kirk, "'Women in Between': Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers* (1977), 31-46; Van Kirk, "'The Custom of the Country': An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices," in L.H. Thomas, ed., *Essays in Western History* (Edmonton 1976), 49-70. Also, Jennifer H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver 1980); Smith, "The Dispossession of the Mississauga."

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doctrinal inspirations as varied as Lockean natural law and divine right. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialized in 1838.

This vast land was to them [aboriginal peoples] a common — they bestowed no labour upon the land — their ownership, their right, was nothing more than that of the Emu or the Kangaroo. They bestowed no labour upon the land and that — and only that — it is which gives a right of property to it. Where, we ask, is the man endowed with even modicum of reasoning powers, who will assert that this great continent was ever intended by the Creator to remain an unproductive wilderness? ... The British people ... took possession ... and they had a perfect right to do so, under the Divine authority, by which man was commanded to go forth and people, and till the land. Herein we find the right to the dominion which the British Crown, or, more properly speaking, the British people, exercise over the continent of New Holland.

Having justified the imposition of property in land, and extinguished the claim and virtual presence of the original occupants, it was but a short step to the articulation of land policies in both the British North American colonies and Australia that tied systematic colonization, class formation, and self-government together in an unmistakable ideology of the need for capitalist “progress.”<sup>19</sup> Small wonder that those who have scrutinized the relationship of land policy and class formation in early 19th-century Canada and Australia have found their way to the same Wakefieldian passages, quoting Lord Goderich, Colonial Secretary of State.

What is not required is to check this extreme facility [land-granting] and to encourage the formation of a class of labourers for hire, as the only means of creating a market for the agricultural produce of the colony, of effecting various improvements, and of prosecuting the many branches of industry which are now neglected, while, at the same time, by enabling the agriculturalist to apply the great principle of the division of labour, his produce will be increased and afforded at a more reasonable rate.

Class formation in both settler hemispheres rested on policies and practices that secured a resolution of “race” before the clarifications of class could historically emerge. To return to our theme of paradox, the contradiction at the core of this process was that class was racialized in ways that obscured those very clarifications.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Note the discussion in Johnson, *History of the County of Ontario*, 223-52; L.S. Fallis, “The Idea of Progress in the Province of Canada, 1841-1867,” PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1966.

<sup>20</sup>The quotes in the above paragraph come from McMichael, *Settlers and the Agrarian Question*, 41-85, but see, as well, Leo A. Johnson, “Land Policy, Population Growth, and Social Structure in the Home District, 1793-1851,” in J.K. Johnson, ed., *History Essays on Upper Canada* (Toronto 1975), 49-50.

This problem of “whiteness” is further complicated by the meaning of Irish Catholicism, whose human material was the literal fuel that drove the early engines of settler proletarianization in both colonies. How the Irish became “white,” for they certainly were not of this stature for much of the first half of the 19th century, is a question that neither Australian nor Canadian historians have attended to with much persistence and sophistication.<sup>21</sup> It is entirely possible that the burden of “race” prejudice and *social apartheid* that the Irish struggled against in the colonies linked up with confrontations more directly associated with the emerging *class* regimes, where the unmistakably levelling exploitations of the wage drew Irish Catholics alongside of other peoples — francophones, Scots, English, Welsh, Yankees — in ways that bleached the bloodied Irish shirt of sectarian and “race” antagonism somewhat (if never thoroughly) clean.<sup>22</sup> But this process of the Irish becoming white was, of course, premised on the persistence of non-white otherness, marked in the colonies by the coerced shadowing of aboriginal, native peoples, or the shifting ground of nativism, which moved toward Asian labour and new immigrants as it withdrew the force of its attack on Irish Catholicism.

Gender also proved a complex, subtle, and ambiguous point of differentiation, for its imperatives infused state, class, and race formation with persistent, if malleable, understandings of the socially constructed nature of families, labours, and social spheres never abstracted from masculine/feminine dichotomies. As Canada and Australia emerged as nations, their characters were stamped and protected according to the virtues of gender, which also often coincided with those of “race.” Mid 19th-century Australian newspapers deplored the influx of pauper Irish Catholic women, whom they viewed as colonizers bent on accommodating “irreligious” bushmen to Popish purposes. This strategic embrace of the “mixed marriage” was depicted by the Melbourne *Argus* as “an underhanded and insidious attack upon our dearest interests.” More chivalrous, but no less insidious, was A.R.M. Lower’s 1946 contention that French Canadians were a “feminine people” to be courted as the very “womanly women” they were. As late as 1913 the Australian republican nationalist, A.G. Stephens, provided a curt statement on

<sup>21</sup>Insightful work on the United States experience includes David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London 1991); Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (London 1994); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London 1990); Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, Vol. I (London 1994).

<sup>22</sup>See, for Canada, the statements in Paul Campbell Appleton, “The Sunshine and the Shade: Labour Activism in Central Canada, 1850-1960,” unpublished MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1974; J.I. Cooper, “The Quebec Ship Labourers Benevolent Society,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 30 (1949), 336-43; and for Australia, Paula Hamilton, “‘No Irish need Apply’: Prejudice as a Factor in the development of Immigration Policy in New South Wales and Victoria, 1840-1870,” PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1979.

White Australia that epitomized the drift of Victorian colonial nationalism toward racist pro-imperialism. For Stephens national "character" was a gendered and racialized undertaking: its conscience was that of "the British breed"; its religion that of "duty," its instinct that of "devotion." Most of all national character was summed up in the "things that makes a man trust his race and a race trust its man."<sup>23</sup>

These fragmenting identities of race and gender undoubtedly competed with class in terms of people's identity, as many historians are currently suggesting.<sup>24</sup> But they did not displace class, and in both Canada and Australia the late 19th century saw the consolidation of class organizations and the unleashing of labour militancy in the political and economic arenas. Shorter hours movements swept skilled labour into a late-19th-century fray in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, and it never quite extricated itself from the ongoing struggle.<sup>25</sup> In spite of the catastrophic impact of the depression of the 1890s, which eroded trade union strength in both countries, reducing the percentage of the workforce organized to less than 5 per cent, the mass class mobilizations of the 1880s, and the rising militancy that saw escalating waves of strikes and increased political agitation, threatened bourgeois order and extracted concessions. If Canada's "Great Upheaval" and its prime mover, the Knights of Labor, like Australia's "new unionism," had succumbed with the passing of the tumultuous 1880s into the belt-tightening 1890s, it is nevertheless the case that the class residue of the late 19th century remained: in both countries workers were a force to be reckoned with, and accommodated, by the state. Events like the Queensland shearers' strike of 1891 and labour's first widespread intervention into Canadian electoral politics in 1886 placed the oppositional, even

<sup>23</sup>Note Lykke de la Cour, Cecilia Morgan, and Mariana Valverde, "Gender Regulation and State Formation in Nineteenth Century Canada," in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto 1992), 163-91; Hamilton, "Tipperarifying the moral atmosphere," 23; A.R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation* (1946), quoted in Ged Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation*, 3; John Docker, "Can the Centre hold? Conceptions of the State, 1890-1925," in *What Rough Beast?*, 75.

<sup>24</sup>For an Australian statement see Terry Irving, ed., *Challenges to Labour History* (Sydney 1994).

<sup>25</sup>On the eight-hour movements see Helen Hughes, "The Eight Hour Day and the Development of the Labour Movement in Victoria in the Eighteen Fifties," *Historical Studies*, 9 (1961), 396-412; J. Niland, "In Search of Shorter Hours: The 1861 and 1874 Iron Trades Disputes," *Labour History*, 12 (1967), 3-15; Niland, "The Birth of the Movement for an Eight Hour Working Day in New South Wales," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 14 (1968), 75-87; Bernard Ostry, "Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1870s," *Canadian Historical Review*, 41 (1960), 93-127; John Batty, "The Nine Hour Pioneers: Genesis of the Canadian Labour Movement," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), 25-56; Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montréal 1979); Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1860-1892* (Toronto 1980).

somewhat insurrectionary, nature of class, in heightened relief. Cautious union leaders were not above exaggerating the potential for civil war, a panic mode equally infectious among threatened employers and pressured politicians. W.G. Spence, leader of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union, noted that class conflict was contained only through the purposeful efforts of responsible trade union officialdom:

The fight was bitter. It could not be otherwise. The marvel was that it did not result in civil war. The efforts of the leaders to try to effect settlement on reasonable lines, and the fixed idea of the men that they were engaged in an industrial strike, alone saved the country from civil war ... The men were becoming very exasperated at that time, and had they gone to extremes they would have taken possession of the country.

Richard J. Kerrigan, a Canadian radical who began his quest for the One Big Union in the 1880s as a Knight of Labor, remembered the tempo of class struggle similarly, but saw its respectable resolution differently:

The Knights of Labor grew to alarming proportions in the country, and the Province of Quebec, always the political storm centre of Canada, had to get drastic treatment if it were to be kept safe and sane for law and order. Bishop Tashereau of Quebec launched his famous excommunication decree against the Knights of Labor. ... Shortly after the political landslide which placed the provincial Liberals in power, the Federal Conservative Government, reeking with financial scandals, and presumably on the principal of the more the merrier, took all the other scandals to its bosom and appealed to the country. So with Home Rule, land thievery, CPR scandals, Louis Riel, National Policy, jesuit machinations, etc., etc., as issues, the electorate would have been hogs for misfortune had they not had some reason to vote for or against the Conservative Government. The Labor issue was linked up with the Liberal and the Tory, and had its throat cut accordingly.

For all the relative successes of the Labor Party in Australia things were not that different. Contemporary opinion often stressed the extent to which Labor Party figures were hardly political advocates of the workers, but rather a wing of the Liberal Party with a special concern for labour issues and a high tariff.<sup>26</sup>

The dream and promise of the workers' movement of the 1880s was undeniably defeated. Yet that defeat also saw Wage Boards set up in the colony of Victoria from 1896 onwards, with equal representation from employers and workers, while New South Wales enacted compulsory conciliation and arbitration in 1901 and the Commonwealth did the same in 1904. A Canadian Royal Commission investigating the relations of Labour and Capital sat throughout the late 1880s, and led to the

<sup>26</sup>Spence and Kerrigan quoted in Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, 132; Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (New York 1982), 18-9. On the Australian Labor Party see T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, iv (Melbourne 1969), 2223.

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proclamation of Labour Day in 1893. The state recognition of working-class challenge in Canada ultimately produced Mackenzie King's Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907. These were all adversarial mechanisms that presupposed the challenge of class and the potential power of trade unions. This was done, paradoxically, at the point that labour seemed defeated.<sup>27</sup>

A possible answer as to why such class pressures were exerted at precisely the historical moment that capital and its servile state seemed victorious returns to the paradoxical character of proletarianization in the two Dominions, where class formation's origins lay in the early-to-mid 19th century. This meant that class structure crystallized in a particular economic context, in which the "high wage" and its purchase, in freedoms of movement and consciousness of independence, often gendered as "manly" and racialized as "whiteness," conditioned the forms of culture and thought in many working-class circles. The paradox is that the collective experience, institutions, and consciousness associated with this process of class had a life well beyond the material conditions that spawned it. Labour and capital, as well as the state, *reacted* to the essentially new conditions of the late 19th century on the basis of fundamental familiarities with what had, for many decades, been "normal" relations.

Such relations were by no means one-sidedly unfavourable to labour, broadly defined, in early Canada and Australia. This is evident in the case of the first transported convicts who faced an ironic Australian situation in 1788: a shortage of employers. Capital in the colony being scarce, the government retained the labour of men and women convicts, assigning them, over time, to the emerging employing class of settlers, reserving the right to withdraw the convict if any misbehaviour was detected on the part of either the employer or the transported worker. Pioneering conditions and the heat of the day led to the establishment of an official knock-off time of about 3 p.m. If an employer wanted the labour of any convict (one assigned to him or a neighbour, or one still working under the government), payment was required. In 1800 it was gazetted that a master might command the labour of his own assigned convict after hours by paying a wage of ten pounds a year, which had been set as the official wage in the colony of a free

<sup>27</sup>For only the beginnings of suggestive comment see T.G. Parsons, "Alfred Deakin and the Victorian Factory Acts of 1885: A Note," *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 14 (1972), 206-8; J. Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria, and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910* (Canberra 1976); Greg Kealey, ed., *Canada Investigates Industrialism: The Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, 1889* (Toronto 1973); Eugene Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902* (Toronto 1982); Forsey, "A Note on the Dominion Factory Bills of the 1880s," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 13 (1947), 580-3; Eric Tucker, *Administering Danger in the Workplace: The Law and Politics of Occupational Health and Safety Regulation in Ontario, 1850-1914* (Toronto 1990); Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto 1980).

agricultural labourer a few years earlier. Ten years later Governor Macquarie reported to London:

As yet no complaint has been made to me by any of the settlers respecting the high rate of wages given to such convict servants as are allowed them by the government; but if it should appear on further enquiry that the wages hitherto allowed are too burthensome to the settlers, I shall frame such new regulations on that head as may appear advisable.

In 1816 the convict minimum wage was raised, payable whether or not he or she was employed after hours, and a minimum wage for convict women was established for the first time, at 70 per cent of the male rate. Of course all was not benevolence: convicts were routinely charged with insolence and neglect, disobedience of orders, absenting themselves, threatening their overseers, feigning sickness, and assorted other crimes historically associated with bound forms of labour. As much as 40 per cent of the convict workforce were actually flogged. There were overt insurrections, at Castle Hill in 1804, where the cry was "Death or Liberty" and the demand was for a ship to take the convicts home, and Norfolk Island in 1834, not to mention countless risings. Such resistance was met with the brutality of state terror: rebels were hunted down, leaders hanged, and the challenge ruthlessly suppressed. But on balance masters and governors typically found "that pure coercion was bad business. The custom grew of supplementing the lash with incentives .... A muted but definite labour market developed ..., even within the penal framework of assignment."<sup>28</sup>

As J.W. McCarty suggested in a brilliant article in 1964, this embryonic economy, in which convict labour was literally the sole source of accumulation, grew speedily precisely because the Commissariat of the British jail in Australia was a purchasing arm that had a long and persistent reach for the staples of farm produce.<sup>29</sup> One hundred and sixty thousand convicts were transported to Australia, and provisioning them was the beginning of a significant home market. This managed domestic economy had 35 years to establish itself, especially around Sydney, and in the absence of any competitive threat it consolidated the agricultural infrastructure necessary to the later growth of pastoral capitalism and the export of fine wool. The coerced accumulations of the convict system, as well as the rations and extra income of the bound labourers themselves, fostered a peculiarly protected and expansive economy.

By 1823 this economy cried out for larger possibilities, and as the market moved offshore with the rise of the world economy, local convict wages, once an engine of consuming growth, became costs that curbed profit. As a series of

<sup>28</sup>Barrie Dyster, "Public Employment and Assignment to Private Masters, 1788-1821," in Nicholas, *Convict Workers*, 127-51; Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, 1; Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, 41-2.

<sup>29</sup>J.W. McCarty, "The Staple Approach to Australian Economic History," *Business Archives and History*, 4 (1964), 1-22.

imperial regulations, policies, and tariffs combined with pastoral development to enhance the profitability of the wool trade, the convict system came under attack, both ideologically from without and materially from within. The Imperial government believed the convict wage contradicted the punitive purposes of a convict colony. Governor Brisbane and his officials argued that it hampered Australia's metamorphosis as a supplier of wool and wheat to the rest of the Empire. As capitalists switched to the new staples, the compulsory convict wage was abolished in 1823 and the passage of about 250,000 migrants to Australia was paid. With revenues secured by the sale of Crown Lands now deemed necessary to the wool trade, assisted female and family migrations over the course of the 1850s intensified the local reproduction of labour and swelled the domestic market by creating more complex and settled household units. Conventional stress on the Gold Rush migrations in the 1850s, with its depiction of the frontier-like mentality of acquisitive individualism that appeared virtually instantaneously in Australia, misunderstands the extent to which convict "freedoms" and the acclimatization of bound labour to a compensatory wage had already created a language of working-class entitlement in the penal colony. As the New South Wales legislature attempted to pass a harsh Master and Servants Act in 1840, for instance, there was a vast instantaneous movement of the united trades in protest, a reflection of an embryonic labour consciousness. Within a week the small nominated legislature had withdrawn some of the provisions of the Act: a colony of convict labour was capable of twisting capital's arm, forcing recognition that free labour would never concede to come to Australia if punitive conditions were known to prevail. To be sure, there were still colonial regions and sectors of all colonial economies where the demand to renew the convict system might still be voiced. But on balance the townspeople and farmers on the mainland resisted the dilution or disintegration of the only market available to them, the one on their own doorsteps; a market that, ironically, had been created by the very convict labour that so many now wanted to suppress. Out of convict origins, the economic collapse of the 1840s, and the ways they conditioned the assisted migrations of the 1850s, came the demographic developments that would sustain booms in the economy and family formation into the 1880s. This set the stage for the labour solidarities and exclusiveness of the late 19th century, readily adaptable to militancy, political independence, and a class coalition dedicated to the myth of White Australia. Paradoxically, a system originating in bound labour had managed to secure the "freedoms" of the market, one of which was the high wage that disparaged peoples of colour might threaten. Paradoxically, a labour force born at the interface of intense oppression and subordination embraced exclusions and denials as arbitrary as any it had once known. The convicts had become "white."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup>See the old discussion of White Australia in Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, IV, a useful statement because of its historical proximity to the actual framing of the ideology. On the depression of the 1840s note Barrie Dyster, "The 1840s Depression Revisited," *Australian Historical Studies*, 101 (October 1993).

This process was accentuated by the geographical mobility associated with societies whose class formations were historically rooted in productions of staples, the continental pushing back of various economic and social frontiers, and the quest for independence and riches associated with phenomenon like Gold Rushes. Such movements through space, which uniformly served to weaken the objective rigidities of class structure by making production itself fluid rather than fixed, registered in the illusion and reality of the "free" markets of 19th-century Canada and Australia. As each successive generation exercised options of movement and adapted its own possessive individualism to new areas and new possibilities, modest acquisitions of property and the openings of new markets reinforced belief in the boundlessness of being. The mid-century gold rushes in both societies were expressions of the chaos of class formation. Australian mines were, in the words of one historian, "holes in the ground, owned by liars," while the British Columbia gold rushes saw "new mining camps [grow] up overnight; old mining towns vanished almost as quickly."<sup>31</sup>

Related to and paralleling this climate of expanding fluidity of seeming opportunity, at least up to the constraints of economic recession and depression associated with the last quarter of the 19th century, was the "high wage," on the one hand, and the saucy independence of labour, on the other. In Canada this is a history that runs from the complaints of gentlewomen such as Susanna Moodie through the diaries of artisans to Edward Young's compilation of wage rates on the eve of the Depression of the 1870s. Whatever the grievances of itinerant 19th-cen-

<sup>31</sup>Note the arguments and evidence in Peter Russell, *Attitudes to Social Structure and Mobility in Upper Canada, 1815-1840: 'Here We Are Laird Ourselves'* (Lewiston 1990); Graeme Wynn, "Ideology, Society, and State in the Maritime Colonies of British North America, 1840-1860," in Greer and Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan*, 284-328; Michael S. Cross, *The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment* (Toronto 1970); Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, *Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario* (Toronto 1994); David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto 1980); Peter Bischoff, "Des forges du Saint Maurice aux fonderies du Montréal: mobilité géographique, solidarité communautaire, et action syndicale des mouleurs, 1829-1881," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 43 (1989), 3-29; W. Peter Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939," in W. Peter Ward and R.A.J. McDonald, eds., *British Columbia: Historical Readings* (Vancouver 1981), esp. 589-90; S.D. Clark, *Social Development of Canada: An Introductory Study with Select Documents* (Toronto 1940); J.W. McCarty, "Australian Regional History," *Historical Studies*, 18 (1978), 88-105; K.S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists: An Exploration of Social History* (Melbourne 1978); Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, esp. 125-31; D.U. Cloher, "A Perspective on Australian Urbanization," in J.M. Powell and M. Williams, eds., *Australian Space, Australian Time: Geographical Perspectives* (Melbourne 1975), 125-6. Quotes from Denoon (128) and Clark (310). On the gold rushes see Jan Nicholson, "Procedures and Perceptions of Authority: the Gold Rush Camps of Australia, Canada and the United States," *Public Administration*, 32 (1973), 392-403.

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tury craftsmen, it was nevertheless apparent that their movements were calculated to pay dividends: William Fortier traversed the continent in 1864, travelling from Ontario to Victoria, British Columbia; he found work in the winter of 1864, building a house at "small pay"; before a year's time was out, however, he had sent his wife almost 50 letters and \$575 in bills of exchange. Wages in parts of the new Dominion were subject to a kind of spillover effect from the United States, where labour was often seen to be the best remunerated in the capitalist world. At Windsor the US Consul reported that the

mechanics partake of whatever advantages accrue to workingmen in Detroit through labour organizations. Employers here pay without question the scale of wages adopted by the various trades unions in Detroit and in vogue there. ... Windsor mechanics are content to let their Detroit brethren fight the battles, while [they] reap the benefits.

According to this source half of Windsor's mechanics owned their own homes in the 1880s and the working class enjoyed considerable prosperity. But this was by no means a repudiation of structured class difference. "There is very little chance for a working man to rise above the sphere in life he has chosen or which has been chosen for him," concluded the US Consul, echoing the testimonies of countless workers who appeared before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital. While many working-class commentators drew unfavourable comparisons between Canada and the United States, their remarks nevertheless often suggest the relative well-being of labour in the new settings: "Comparatively little overtime is worked," noted one migrant Lancashire artisan, "and it is always optional with the workman; he is *asked* not *ordered*."<sup>32</sup>

For labour in Australia the general context was not dissimilar; uneven development and the persistent fluctuation in the business cycle meant that the movement of wages insured that poverty constantly threatened the well being of various labour strata, but workers were nevertheless relatively highly remunerated. As early as 1859 the building trades workers in Victoria struck, and masons forwarded money and instructions to the English Society of Operative Stonemasons, attempting to prevent employers from importing labour at depressed wage rates and longer hours. If the 1860s was a decade of distress and chronic unemployment, the misery of

<sup>32</sup>Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush* (Ottawa 1988); National Archives of Canada (NAC), James Rose Diary, 1873-1875, MG 55/22 #89; NAC, William Fortier Diary, MG 29 C 53 Reel M-599; NAC, United States of America, Department of State, Consular Records, Reel M-689, Windsor, Charles Ewers Report, No. 52, 30 May 1884; Malcolm MacLeod (A Lancashire Artisan), *Practical Guide for Emigrants to the United States and Canada* (Manchester 1870), 33-4; Edward Young, *Labour in Europe and America. A Special Report on the Rates of Wages, the Cost of Subsistence and the Condition of the Working Class in Great Britain, Germany, France, Belgium and other Countries of Europe. Also on the United States and British America* (Washington 1875); Leo Panitch, "Dependency and Class in Canada Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy*, 6 (1981), 7-33.

those years seemed to pass, leaving Australian workers in better economic shape than their counterparts in much of the advanced capitalist world. Even the wage differential between skilled and unskilled seemed to be closing and Connell and Irving estimate that an experienced labourer might secure 80 per cent of the tradesman's rate.<sup>33</sup>

The point is not the simple *strawman*. Labour was not some uncomplicated and undifferentiated entity, characterized by an unproblematic solidarity and an unambiguous class consciousness. The regional, racial, and gendered differentiations within the working classes of both Canada and Australia insured that class formation was not of this kind. Indeed this kind of class experience was unknown anywhere. Rather, the point is of another, more paradoxical, sort. Relative prosperity produced a class formation relatively conducive to labour's many distresses being addressed, and powerfully so. In both Canada and Australia the late 19th century saw the processes of nation building and state formation unfold in ways that integrated labour into cross-class coalitions that acknowledged and accommodated workers' discontents somewhat at the same time as they displaced them. The paradoxes of labour's protections were nowhere more evident than in the anti-Oriental agitations and movements of opposition to assisted immigration whereby "white only" policies were promoted by those very social groups — trade unions and working-class reformers — whose own origins of oppression lay in the displacements of trans-oceanic migration and the exploitation of the wage. Had this exclusionary thrust of labour politics in the two Dominions operated in isolation from other politico-structural relations and developments it would have been more easily relegated to the ranks of a pure-and-simple racism. But "white" labour's programmatic assault on imported workers of colour challenged both employers and the emerging state, albeit in ways that those social forces could easily eventually recognize and legalize. In the meantime, however, the strengths of "white" labour were paradoxically translated into weaknesses that were then assimilated to the seeming strength of forging a place for workers in the politics of nationality/statehood.<sup>34</sup>

In Australia the federation of the six colonies, achieved in 1901, created a Common Market by breaking down intercolonial tariff barriers and raising a uniform tariff at the new national border. Canadian Confederation in 1867 and the

<sup>33</sup>Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, esp. 108-9; and the wide-ranging discussion in Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, esp. II and III.

<sup>34</sup>Consider Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, IV; A.A. Hayden, "New South Wales Immigration Policy, 1856-1900," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, 61 (1971), Part VI, 5-60; John Docker, "Can the Centre hold? Conceptions of the state, 1890-1925," in *What Rough Beast?*, esp. 71-8; Donald H. Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto 1993); Hilda Glynn-Ward, *The Writing on the Wall: Chinese and Japanese Immigration to BC* (Toronto 1974); Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montréal 1978).

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National Policy program of tariffs, settlement, and railroads aimed to create something quite similar. If the labour movements of both countries were not key players in this unfolding drama of the making of nation/state, neither were they quite ignored or dismissed out of hand, as the ongoing search for an industrial relations system suggests. There were, of course, many varied and conflicting interests and policies, but the structures that emerged in both Canada and Australia at the end of the 19th century, be they at the provincial, state, or federal levels, were reaching toward the reduced competition among employers that ironically strengthened oligopoly and concentrated ownership at the same time as they protected the domestic market, realizing to some extent the old producer alliance of manufacturer and mechanic and reducing the likelihood of wages being bid downwards, enterprise by enterprise.<sup>35</sup>

Brisbane's utopian, William Lane, founder of the *Boomerang* and later the *Worker*, voiced the mythic nationalism of this era, declaring, "We are for this Australia, for the nationality that is creeping to the verge of being, for the progressive people that is just plucking aside the curtain that veils its fate." His politics were not unlike those of a youthful Phillips Thompson, whose Canadian journey from nationalist to socialist touched down on issues of class, state, and nation in the gendered terms of fundamental Victorian unities:

Canada has attained national manhood alike in respect to age, development, and resources. There is no more reason why we should cling to colonialism than why a man of mature years should remain a subject to the orders of his father as a boy of ten.

... [W]e owe it to ourselves to claim an independent existence ... because a high standard of patriotism demands the assertion of national manhood, then sentiment will be arranged on the side of progress instead of in opposition to it.

Drawn to a defence of "honest labor," Thompson deplored the "genteel loafism" and "supercilious arrogance" of the privileged elite, presenting the Knights of Labor as a bulwark of progress and moral development. He would have applauded Lane's blistering rhetoric of challenge, which won the impulsive Queensland journalist an audience in every shearing-shed, miner's hut, and railway construction camp in Australia: "You can take all social injustices and industrial inequalities and vested privileges and strangle them one by one with your million-muscle hands," Lane thundered. If Thompson often pandered to the popular Canadian

<sup>35</sup>N.B. Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Labor Movement in New South Wales, 1870-1900* (Canberra 1973); Michael Bliss, *A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911* (Toronto 1974); Ben Forster, *A Conjunction of Interests: Business, Politics and Tariffs, 1825-1879* (Toronto 1986); Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict*, 97-123; Craig Heron, "Male Wage-Earners and the State in Canada," in Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton 1989), 240-63; Bernard Ostry, "Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1880s," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 27 (1961), 141-61.

prejudice against Oriental workers, however, he never quite plumbed the depths of racial exclusion characteristic of Lane's program and prose. Rivalling Lane's anti-Orientalism was a dubious distinction earned by the west coast labour reform editor, John Duval, whose Victoria, British Columbia newspaper, the *Industrial News* was a forum for the ugliest racism of the white working class.<sup>36</sup>

The paradox of class formation in Australia and Canada was that precisely this congealing of class opposition *and* integration, class solidarity *and* fragmentation, opening out of the demanding prosperity of the world's richest colonies and the contradictory meanings of being associated with a "high wage" proletariat, insured that the working-class mobilizations of the late 19th century had a serious impact on the material and ideological climate. The social cost of labour may have been kept relatively and "artificially" high by the sheer weight of working-class power, curbing entrepreneurial capital's quest for unambiguous control.<sup>37</sup> Politically, the state conceded much to working-class interests, although its arm was never twisted sufficiently to sever it from its organic connection to capital. Class formation's paradoxical history in 19th-century Canada and Australia was that as a class was made through struggle and solidarity, *gaining* much from capital and that state, it was also made against struggle and solidarity, *giving* much to capital and the state. The legacy of this historical making of white settler society working classes, mobile and unusual in their dependent independence, confined by the wage, but freed by its seeming boundlessness and the access to property that this conveyed, adept at bargaining terms within their own domestic markets, has perhaps gone unrecognized by most historians, who have opted out of examinations of the peculiarities of the Australians and the Canadians.<sup>38</sup> These were nations born on the bedrock of class formation, marking them out from the old European world or the new imperialist conquests of the Third World, where societies and states were forged, it could be argued, in the feudal (if futile) suppression of class.<sup>39</sup> Comparative history, paradoxically, reminds us of the particularities of our pasts.

<sup>36</sup>Vance Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties* (Melbourne 1954), esp. 79-84; Bryan D. Palmer, *Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto 1992), 125 and 141; Wade Chace Hall, "Principle is Eternal: T. Phillips Thompson and Early Canadian Labour Reform," MA thesis, Queen's University, 1994; Ramsay Cook, "The Professor and the Prophet of Unrest," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 4th Series, 13 (1975), 228-50; Russell Hann, "Brainworkers and the Knights of Labor: E.E. Sheppard, Phillips Thompson, and the *Toronto News*, 1883-1887," in Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warran, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto 1976), 35-57.

<sup>37</sup>Note the speculative argument in Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be*, esp. 30-3.

<sup>38</sup>See, as an example, E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," in Ralph Miliband and John Saville, eds., *The Socialist Register, 1965* (London 1965), 311-62; Panitch, "Dependency and Class in Canadian Political Economy."

<sup>39</sup>Consider the argument in Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London 1974).

*This paper was written by Bryan D. Palmer, but it was drafted with explicit attention to the unpublished remarks of Barrie Dyster, Department of Economic History, University of New South Wales, at the Canadian-Australian Comparative Labour History Conference, December 1993. The original intention was to have Barrie Dyster rework this original draft, but this proved impossible. This paper should therefore be regarded as a collaborative effort, an attempt to construct comparative history based on dual expertise and divergent perspectives.*