

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debate – Arthur Calwell, August 1945

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 2 August 1945, Vol. 184 Excerpt.

The Minister for Immigration and Information, Arthur Calwell

2 August 1945

If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific War now moving to a successful conclusion, it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers. We are but 7,000,000 people and we hold 3,000,000 square miles of this earth's surface. Our coastline extends for 12,000 miles and our density of population is only 2.5 persons per square mile. Much of our land is situated within a rain belt of less than 10 inches per annum and this area is, therefore, largely uninhabitable. In those parts more favourably situated, much development and settlement have yet to be undertaken. Our need to undertake it is urgent and imperative if we are to survive. While the world yearns for peace and abhors war, no one can guarantee that there will be no more war. A third world war is not impossible, and after a period of fitful peace, humanity may be face to face again with the horrors of another period of total war.

It would be prudent for us, therefore, not to ignore the possibility of a further formidable challenge within the next quarter of a century to our right to hold this land. We may have only those next 25 years in which to make the best possible use of our second chance to survive. Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for the

fullest expansion of our economy. We can increase our 7,000,000 by an increased birth-rate and by a policy of planned immigration within the limits of our existing legislation.

Immigration is, at best, only the counterpart of the most important phase of population building, natural increase. Any immigration policy, therefore, must be intimately related to those phases of Government policy that are directed towards stimulating the birth-rate and lowering the infant mortality rate in Australia itself. It must, further, be related to the whole social service programme of creating greater economic security and a higher standard of living, as an inducement to young Australian couples to have larger families. In this connection, the work of the new department must and will be closely integrated with the work of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health, and the Department of Labour and National Service.

We make two things clear, first to the British people, and then to other peoples who might make good Australian citizens. The one is that Australia wants, and will welcome, new healthy citizens who are determined to become good Australians by adoption. The second is that we will not mislead any intending immigrant by encouraging him to come to this country under any assisted to unassisted scheme until there is a reasonable assurance of his economic future...