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Executive Register  
11-2665

1 April 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Brig. General A. J. Goodpaster, USA  
Staff Secretary  
The White House

The Director asked that the attached be forwarded to you. As you will recall, the subject of Australian immigration policy came up at a recent NSC meeting. This question cannot be answered in a word or two; hence the length of the memorandum.

J. S. Earman  
Executive Officer

Attachment:

Memo for DCI from AD/SI,  
"Subject: Australian Immigration  
Policy," dated 31 Mar 59

Distribution:

Original - Addressee w/att

1 - JSE

1 - ER

1 - DCI *by cy att*

Approved for Release  
Date OCT 1999

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31 MAR 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH : Deputy Director (Intelligence)  
SUBJECT : Australian Immigration Policy

1. It is Australian policy to encourage and assist immigration into the Commonwealth, primarily of white British subjects but also, especially through formal agreements since World War II, of non-British Europeans. An immigration target of 115,000 was set for 1958. Although there is no federal legislation barring colored persons as such, exclusion of colored people is in fact achieved by discriminatory interpretation of prohibitions against "undesirables." The 1957 Official Year Book of the Commonwealth states, however, that "In pursuance of established policy, the general practice is not to permit Asians or other colored persons to enter Australia for the purpose of settling permanently."

2. Immigration to Australia is regulated by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, unofficially known as the White Australia Act, enacted by the first Commonwealth parliament. The Act contains no specific reference to race but defines categories of "prohibited

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immigrants" including the physically, mentally and morally unfit, and those likely to become a public charge. The principal device for excluding persons of colored races is embodied in the following citation from Section 3 of the Act: "The immigration into the Commonwealth of the persons described in any of the following paragraphs of this section is prohibited:

(a) Any person who, when asked to do so by any officer, fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of an officer a passage of 50 words in length in an European language directed by the officer...." In 1905, the Act was amended to read "Any person who fails to pass the dictation test: that is to say, who, when an officer dictates to him not less than 50 words in any prescribed language, fails to write them out in the presence of the officer." The Immigration Act permits exemptions at official discretion; according to the Official Year Book, permanent entry (over one year) may be granted to bona fide merchants, students and tourists while they remain in that status.

3. The White Australia policy is commonly regarded as excluding all persons of colored race, although it is aimed primarily at Asians. Apparently, the dictation test itself is not often applied since its mere existence is sufficient to keep out most "undesirables." It has,

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however, been used even to exclude undesirable white British subjects. In one case, Gaelic was the prescribed language; in the court case R. V. Davey Ex Parte Freer, concerning the use of an Italian test to exclude a white British subject considered undesirable, the judge commented that the dictation test "was never intended to be a real education test or provision guarding against the entry of illiterates. It was merely a convenient and polite device...for the purpose of enabling the Executive Government of Australia to prevent the immigration of persons deemed unsuitable because of their Asiatic or non-European race...it was officially stated that the dictation test was never intended to be applied to immigrants of an European race." External Affairs Minister Casey has defended Australian immigration policy as seeking to maintain the integrity, democratic institutions and living standards of the Australian community, pointing out that the term "White Australia" does not appear in any official document.

4. Restrictive legislation against colored races began to appear in the separate Australian colonial states in 1855 with the large-scale importation of Chinese miners during the gold rush of 1855-1860 and later of Pacific Island laborers. Restrictive laws were repealed during

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the following decade, but were reenacted in 1881. With the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901, however, immigration became the responsibility of the federal government, and a national policy of racial exclusion has been effected through administrative means rather than by any specific legislative prohibition. Since 1948, all aliens entering Australia are classified statistically both by nationality and by racial origin. There are four categories of racial origin: European, Asian, African, or Polynesian. Presumably an American Negro entering Australia would be classified as of American (US) nationality and of African race and generally excluded from permanent immigration.

5. Under the Nationality Act of 1948, creating the status of Australian citizenship, "prohibited immigrants" are generally excluded. While exemptions are sometimes granted, as in the case of a few Japanese brides of Australian servicemen, racial restrictions on naturalization continue. In 1955, for example, according to official statistics, naturalization certificates granted non-white persons numbered only two Burmese, four Chinese, and one Japanese.

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HUNTINGTON D. SEELDON  
Assistant Director,  
Current Intelligence

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