



MAKING 'GOOD AUSTRALIANS': THE WORK OF THREE
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EDUCATORS

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Thesis submitted for the Master of Arts degree

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May 1981.

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SUMMARY

This thesis began in response to two questions. What were children in South Australian state primary schools taught about Australia and themselves? In particular, when were they helped to understand that Australia was their country and that they were part of an Australian nation? Preliminary work further refined the questions. Why was it not until 1906 that the South Australian Education Department made a concerted effort to adapt the essentially English curriculum to Australian circumstances, so helping children to make Australia central to their ideas of country and nation? What does this indicate about the nature of the patriotism and nationalism experienced by Australians, a subject of considerable debate among historians?

As the Introduction explains, investigation of these questions draws on three inter-related areas of research: the history of education, Australian history and Australian historiography. The first serves to focus on the curriculum of schools, the text books used (especially for History) and educational ideas generally. But to understand how and why educators used all these to mould children's ideas of patriotism and nationalism, one needs the wider background of the other two areas, Australian history and historiography. They reveal both what was the experience of Australians and how that experience was interpreted by historians. Historians' interpretations especially were then translated by educators and writers of school text books for children, so completing the cycle.

Chapter I shows that educators from 1852 recognized the problem of how to adapt an English curriculum to Australian circumstances but were uncertain in their response. Thus, whereas adaptation was made in Geography, this was not found possible in History, Reading and Special Lessons. In the opinion of John Hartley, Inspector-General in the 1880s, there was no Australian history; neither was there an Australian nation. In this he was influenced not only by his perception of Australians at the time, but also by the views of current historians and writers, especially of Charles Dilke in his book Greater Britain: Australians, however modified, were still essentially Englishmen or, perhaps more accurately, Greater Britons. Thus, Hartley believed, children should be taught that while their country was South Australia, they themselves were citizens of Greater Britain.

Chapters II, III and IV are the most important in the thesis. They examine the innovative efforts in nation building of three reformers, George Henderson, Alfred Williams and Bertie Roach, to make Australia central to the curriculum in schools from 1902 to 1913. Children were to be taught that their country was Australia and that they belonged primarily to an Australian nation. They were to be 'good Australians'. Through this, they argued, children would learn to appreciate the Empire to which they also belonged; they would become Imperial patriots. While these efforts reflected all kinds of changes taking place in the lives of Australians, they also reflected the changing interpretations of historians: of Henderson himself in his writing and teaching; and more particularly of Richard Jebb in his book Studies in Colonial Nationalism.

Finally, Chapter V outlines and explains the fate of the reformers'

efforts in the period from 1914 to 1939. Their work had promised so much. Yet, within a few years, it was eclipsed by their successors' uncertain attitude towards Australia and their insistence that the British Empire should be the focal point of the curriculum and school life generally. Thus, the kind of patriotism and nationalism encouraged in schools was essentially British-based - a stagnant rather than innovative approach. This reflected the way in which World War I strengthened rather than weakened the Imperial sentiment of many South Australians. The emergence of the League of Nations, and, more particularly, its failure, had a similar effect. Australian patriotism and nationalism were seen as narrow and parochial. By contrast, feelings centred on the Empire appeared to be more international; they promised to lead to a more certain kind of security than that offered by the League. All this was seen in the work of historians W.K. Hancock and G.V. Portus.

The Conclusion is a reminder of how striking were the achievements of Henderson, Williams and Roach from 1902 to 1913 when seen in the context of the broader period. But further, the study of these and other educators shows how important the curriculum, especially History, has been in shaping Australian children's understanding of country and nation. It also indicates that the feelings encouraged in schools reflected, through the work of historians, the feelings held by Australians in the wider society. In this way it is possible to gain greater insight into Australians' understanding of patriotism and nationalism.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this thesis, I am indebted to two people in particular: Dr. John Tregenza, for his initial guidance; and my supervisor, Dr. Leon Atkinson, for his continual encouragement and perceptive criticism. Many others have helped me bring to life the three central figures of this work, but I owe special thanks to Mrs. Valerie Robertson, grand-daughter of Mr. B.S. Roach. My thanks are also due to Mr. W. Pattullo, an enthusiastic collector of old school text books, which are now, unfortunately, so rare.

Many organizations gave me access to their records and to them I am grateful: the University of Adelaide, the Education Department, the Australian Natives' Association, the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA), the Mecklenburgisches Kirchenbuchamt, Schwerin, DDR, the Australian Labor Party (South Australia), and the United Trades and Labour Council of SA. The staffs of several libraries were particularly helpful: the Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, the State Library of South Australia, the Mitchell Library, Sydney, the Fisher Library, University of Sydney and the State Library of Victoria.

I am also grateful to Mrs. Meg Burchell and Mrs. Elizabeth Milburn for their assistance in typing and proof-reading.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband, mother and daughter, without whose patience and tolerance this thesis would not have been written.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Australian Natives' Association
<u>CH</u>	<u>Children's Hour</u>
<u>EG</u>	<u>Education Gazette</u>
RGSA (SA)	Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch)
RS of SA	Royal Society of South Australia
SAA	South Australian Archives
<u>SAPD</u>	<u>South Australian Parliamentary Debates</u>
<u>SAPP</u>	<u>South Australian Parliamentary Papers</u>
SAP(S)TU	South Australian Public (School) Teachers' Union

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