Migratory process, ethnic relations and labour market segmentation

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It is important to analyse the labour market situation of specific groups in the context of such overall trends. Most studies in this area indicate that certain groups, defined on criteria of ethnicity and gender, have below average levels with regard to most labour market indicators. There is disagreement on the significance and the causes of these differences. This paper suggests that disadvantaged groups are also most affected by further factors which are hard to measure: hidden unemployment, underemployment, early withdrawal from the workforce, occupational health problems, marginal self-employment and informal sector work.

The policy implications of this analysis are the need for a well-balanced immigration program, linked to improved post-arrival services and multicultural policies. Programs to combat marginalisation of specific ethnic and gender groups on the labour market must be closely linked to general programs for the relocation and re-training of workers affected by economic restructuring and technological change.

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MIGRATORY PROCESS, ETHNIC RELATIONS
AND LABOUR MARKET SEGMENTATION

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Abstract

Much research on the labour market situation of migrants is marked by a narrow ahistorical approach, which deals with single characteristics of migrant workers, and is based on the assumption that they can and do behave as "economic men and women". In contrast, this paper proposes an approach which deals with labour migration to Australia as part of worldwide historical patterns of economic and social change. The migratory process is closely linked to changes in the international division of labour, which lead to concentration of capital, means of production and workers in certain areas. The latest stage, the so-called "new migration", arises through current trends towards industrialisation of Third World countries, which transforms social structures, leading both to increased industrial employment and to emigration, particularly of women. This matches shifts in economic structures in developed countries, which create a polarised demand both for highly-skilled and low-skilled migrant labour. In the case of Australia, this dualism is partially subsumed in the categories "skilled and business" and "family" migration.

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Migratory Process, Ethnic Relations and Labour Market Segmentation

Theoretical Approaches

In recent years, a lot of work has been done on the labour market position of migrants in Australia. We have considerable amount of data on topics like participation, unemployment, occupation and earnings. In other areas there are gaps in our knowledge: with regard to hidden unemployment, the impact of restructuring, the informal sector, the situation of smaller ethnic groups, and the work roles of women. Perhaps there is one point on which we can all agree: the category "migrant" has no meaning as an indicator of labour market position. Overseas-born persons are to be found at all levels and in all positions within the labour market. Aggregate data on migrants tells us very little. Their labour market experience varies widely.

Beyond that, there is considerable dispute among economists and other social scientists on how we are to assess and interpret this situation. The differences lie not in the empirical data used, but in the framework we use to order and understand them. There are nearly as many academic points of view as there are academics, but to simplify the matter we may say that there are two fundamental ways of looking at the socio-economic world.

On the one hand, the dominant neo-classical theory regards the economy as being made up of individuals: "economic men and women", who use their knowledge of the market to maximise their benefits and reduce their costs. Individuals may forego immediate consumption to invest in "human capital":
education, skills, or movement from low to high wage economies. Such persons have higher productivity, and since return to labour is assumed to be proportional to productivity, they will have higher earnings. Hence, earnings differentials are not based on discrimination or differences in social power, but are a rational market mechanism, which secures optimal efficiency.

The methodology of this "human capital approach" is to correct away the qualitative differences between groups, and to compare individuals who vary only in quantitative characteristics (e.g. years of schooling). Using this approach social scientists have found that migrants in Australia are not discriminated against in the labour market - the lower occupational status or earning of certain groups is based simply on lack of investment in human capital. Of course, most economists and sociologists using this approach admit that the labour market is not really a "perfect market" (unlike other markets which work in a rational and predictable way, like the stock market or the commodity futures market). Certain constraints, such as state intervention and the arbitration system, hinder the working of the "invisible hand", mainly by keeping wages too high.

The second approach is to examine the economy as a set of social relationships between groups of people. Individuals' labour market position is a result not only of their personal attributes, but also of characteristics which are possessed by or ascribed - rightly or wrongly - to the group to which they belong. Access to education and training is - like capital ownership - the result of historical processes. Assumptions on a group's work abilities are based on historical experience. The most important issue is why certain groups have the power to control resources and to decide over others. The categories which sum up such historical relationships are social
class, gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship and age. Some of these categories have an apparently natural basis. But the characteristics linked to them are social and historical constructs, based on past struggles, and forming the basis of contemporary struggles on the value of labour and control over it.

There is no time here for a general discourse on the merits and nuances of these theories. Nor do I want to get into the frequently rehearsed debate between neo-classical theory and dual labour market theory - a debate which is usually based on oversimplification and *reductio ad absurdum* of one or the other. For the rest of the time available to me, I wish to look at postwar migration as an historical process, and examine its consequences for the socio-economic relationships which specific groups of migrants enter into in Australia. I wish to emphasise that there is no point in looking at the "economic costs and benefits" of immigration, and then adding an ex post facto examination of the "social impact". The economic, social, cultural and political are always interwound in the historical processes which govern our lives. All economics is political economy. Economists who deny this can only do so by unquestioningly accepting current power-relationships as rational, given, and unchangeable.

The Migratory Process

Migration is not an event or an act. It is a process, which continuously pervades the lives of individuals, communities and societies. The history of the last two hundred years in Australia is, above all, the history of migratory processes. These can be examined at a macro or a micro level.

The macro level refers to the role of labour migration in the development of national economies and of the world economy. Large-scale use of migrant
labour has been a feature of most advanced economies since 1945. There is nothing new about this: industrialisation involves the concentration of materials, machinery and workers at new sites of production, and hence has always involved labour migration. The uneven development of the capitalist mode of production has created its own labour reserves: concentration of production in certain areas has been accompanied by colonisation and destruction of previous modes of production in others. Displaced workers in peripheral areas or colonies have always been available as migrant workers in the growth centres, as and when needed.

Labour migration is valuable for three reasons. First it provides additional workers to fuel production, consumption and capital formation. This point is particularly relevant to Australia, where the indigenous peoples were excluded from the growing settler capitalist economy. Migration has provided something like half the growth in the labour force since 1945.

Second, labour migration provides workers with specific characteristics as desired by the employers and government of the receiving country. Migrants may provide skills not available in the domestic population. Or, alternatively, their lack of education, skills and language proficiency may force them into low-status jobs, thus easing upward mobility for locals. Australia has used migrants in both ways: recruitment of skilled and highly-educated persons has made up for the deficiencies in our educational and training systems; unskilled migrants have been directed into dirty and dangerous jobs, or to work in in remote areas, or to do night and shift work. Migrant labour has played a part in employers' strategies for structural change, involving greater control of the labour force and de-skilling. This dual character of migrant labour is behind the very different labour market situation of
English-speaking, Northern European and - most recently - certain Asian migrants, compared with Southern European and Middle East migrants and South East Asian refugees.

Thirdly, labour migration can be used to regulate the labour market, by influencing the levels of wages and profits. Full employment (in general or in specific sectors) may allow improvements of wages and conditions. In response, employers seek measures which restore the "flexibility" of the labour market by increasing labour supply. Historically, this has been an important factor in many countries, including Australia. It is less significant at present, given the high levels of unemployment. Nonetheless, current talk of restoring economic growth through drastic increases in labour migration does evoke this concept.

Analysis of these issues is particularly complex in Australia. About a quarter of the labour force are migrants, with a great variety of backgrounds. Moreover, despite unemployment, migration continues, while changing with regard to composition and background. So we have to look at the situation of various ethnic groups in the labour market, while assessing potential impacts of various types of new migration. And we have to do all this against a background of changing terms of trade and industrial restructuring. These changes have left many labour-intensive manufacturing industries three options: automation, relocation overseas, or the pursuit of flexibility in working practices. Now we must ask questions such as: what happens to a workforce structured by gender and ethnicity if certain traditional job opportunities disappear? Does this open up prospects of breaking out of gender specific and ethnically segregated low pay segments of the labour market, or does it mean long-term unemployment? Is the collapse of job opportunities in manufacturing compensated for by new service sector jobs, or by absorption into marginal ethnic businesses (often as
unpaid family labour) or into the informal sector, or by new forms of "flexible" work?³

To fully understand these issues, we need to look at changes in patterns of labour migration at a global level. These include: the virtual curtailment of labour migration to W. Europe, changes in secular patterns of migration to North America and Australia (in particular the growing significance of migration from Latin America and Asia), the increasing proportion of "Third World" groups among ethnic minorities in most advanced industrial countries, migration to off-shore production areas in newly industrialising countries, migration to oil-rich countries, and the current trend to re-migration from these. All of these trends are summed up in a recent issue of International Migration Review.⁴

The relationship between the various factors which determine what has been called the "new migration" is complex. As Saskia Sassen-Koob has written with regard to female migrants:

The key is the systemic link between the formation of various components of this category in particular historico-geographic configurations and broader processes of social change, such as the development of commercial agriculture or the new export-led industrialisation. Migrations do not just happen: they are one outcome or one systemic tendency in a more general dynamic of change. The internal transformation of the category is similarly linked, with broader processes of social change.⁵

In her stimulating work on the growth of female labour migration (a world-wide tendency at present), Sassen-Koob uses this world-systems approach to explain such phenomena as: the simultaneous growth of wage employment and
of emigration in Third World countries, the co-existence of high rates of unemployment (particularly of ethnic minorities) and of large-scale new immigration in the USA, and the trend towards increased polarisation of labour markets into low and high-wage sectors. The impact on developed countries is summed up as follows:

The technical transformation of the work process underlying the redeployment of manufacturing and office jobs to less developed areas has also reshaped the job supply in the developed areas. Furthermore the spatial dispersion of plants and offices has created a need for an expanded, centralised management and servicing apparatus located mostly in highly developed areas. Both of these processes together with the overall shift to a service economy have directly and indirectly, created a significant increase in the supply of low-wage jobs, particularly female-typed jobs, in highly developed countries.6

In essence the argument is that the new internation division of labour leads to concentration of "global control capability" (financial, management, design and marketing activities of multi-nationals) into certain world cities, such as Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, London, Hong Kong and Sydney. This creates a demand for highly-qualified personnel, and thus generates skilled and business migration. But it also leads to "high-income gentrification" of these cities, creating a large demand for less skilled labour to service the needs of the corporate and government specialists. Somebody has to sew clothes for the boutiques, build the houses and swimming pools and cook in the ethnic restaurants. This demand is all the more marked in countries like Australia, where expanding tourism also calls for such labour. There is thus a second
current of migration, predominantly female and classified as unskilled, to the world cities.

The dualism of the "new migration" applies to Australia too, but is little recognised. Some of the highly-skilled migrants, moving within the hierarchies of transnational corporations, do not enter the settlement statistics: their stay is temporary, or they live and work in several countries simultaneously. Some top executives change their citizenship as readily as you or I change our coats, if it brings fiscal or legal advantages. Often the dualism is subsumed under the artificial division between skilled labour migration and family migration - as if the family members did not enter the workforce. The migrants who enter the services and some types of manufacturing are frequently not visible for Census-based labour market analysis. They are concealed as unpaid family workers, outworkers, or women involved in domestic duties.

Moreover, in this context, it is important to remind ourselves of the social construction of the concept of skill. The female worker in an ethnic restaurant or sewing clothes at home may have a very high level of work capabilities, without this being officially recognised as skill or qualification. Skill is constructed on lines of gender and ethnicity and has more to do with the power of the definers than the real work content. Human capital theory is necessarily blind to this problem, for it defines productivity as measured in income, and then comes to the tautological conclusion that people are payed according to their investment in human capital.

We have no time for a detailed discussion here, but I would stress that an understanding of the emerging world labour market is crucial if we wish to assess availability of migrants for Australia, the situation of these migrants, and
the type of social and economic pressures they are subject to. As the economy becomes ever more international, we need to examine migration, restructuring and the conditions of ethnic minorities on a global scale.7

We have discussed the meaning of migratory processes for economies and societies, and indeed for the world economy as a whole. We also need micro level analyses which examine the effects of migration for individuals, communities and social groups. The conditions of people's lives are affected by the processes of uneven development and social change referred to above. Individuals and families migrate because their previous ways of life and patterns of work become unviable, and they have to seek new options in other lands. The migratory process at this level is affected not only by these global changes, but in turn by the social, cultural and economic factors which form part of the migrants' background.

I have argued elsewhere8 that the migratory process may usefully be divided into three stages: the first stage is that of labour migration, in which young adults, particularly males predominate. Whatever the political and legal framework of migration (temporary or permanent, organised or spontaneous, labour migration or population building), a large proportion of migrants initially view their move as temporary - a way of accumulating funds to improve the situation at home. Many labour migrants do return home, whatever the intentions of the receiving country. The second stage is one of family reunion and demographic normalisation of migrant groups. Family reunion also takes place whether the receiving country wants it or not.9 Where regulations are restrictive, chain migration may take place in illegal and socially marginalised forms. The third stage is that of settlement and community formation. Again, the role of the state is crucial. Where political or economic factors lead to
official rejection of settlement, the result is the development of minorities stigmatised by legal discrimination and racism. Where the state accepts migrants as new citizens, and pursues appropriate policies to secure migrant rights and to remove barriers to equal opportunity, the result may be a diverse but open society. To Australia's credit, policies here tend more towards the latter model, although there are still problems. But that makes it all the more important to ensure that post-arrival programs and multicultural policies continue and are improved, especially in the light of proposals for increasing immigration in future.

The process of migration stretches across generations. Migrants maintain social and economic links with their countries of origin, and there is much evidence that this continues into the second and third generations and beyond. Ever since the abandonment of assimilationism in the 1960s, it has been clear that ethnic differences would - and should - remain, and that they are not inconsistent with national unity. However it should be pointed out that assimilationism was couched in cultural terms: migrants were not meant to be assimilated economically; rather they were incorporated in a differential way, into specific segments of the labour market. Many economists argue that that differential incorporation is a thing of the past, and that multiculturalism is accompanied by economic homogenisation. So we used to have cultural assimilation, but economic segregation; now it is said that we have cultural diversity, but economic assimilation. Personally I doubt this, as will be discussed in the next section.

Ethnic Segmentation in the Australian Labour Market

After these general considerations, designed to put migration in an international perspective, and to throw some light on current and future trends, I will return
summaries of the position of migrants. Without going into detail, the following points may be made:

- Male migrant workers are overrepresented in the industry categories manufacturing and construction, and underrepresented in agriculture; finance, property and business services. Within manufacturing they are especially concentrated in transport equipment; other machinery and equipment; basic metal products; and clothing and footwear.

- Female migrant workers are even more concentrated in manufacturing, particularly in clothing and footwear.

- Migrants are particularly concentrated in trades occupations, often as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. This applies most particularly to persons from Southern and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and to South East Asian refugees.

- Some migrant groups earn substantially less than the average for all employees. This affects Southern Europeans especially. No doubt Middle East and Indo-Chinese workers are also affected, though we lack data as yet. NESB migrant women are particularly disadvantaged with regard to earnings.

- Migrant workers have been hard hit by restructuring and the decline of manufacturing and construction since the mid-1970s.

- Unemployment rates for overseas-born workers have been higher on average than for the Australian born. In recession periods, their rates have risen faster than average. Rates have varied substantially by ethnic group, with some groups having below average rates, and others substantially higher. The highest rates at present are those of the Lebanese and Vietnamese, with between 20 and 40 % out of work.
- Youth unemployment is a particular problem among migrants, with extremely high rates for certain groups, and in certain areas.
- Labour market programs have had little impact on the migrant unemployed, and have rarely been targeted to meet their special needs.
- Children of migrants appear in many cases to achieve upward educational and occupational mobility compared with the parent generation. However, youth unemployment rates also appear to be high, indicating a bi-modal distribution for some groups.

Taking all these points together, it may be said there is no general crisis of migrant employment, but rather that certain groups defined by place of origin, type of migration, recency of arrival, gender and age, experience severe difficulties and disadvantage. Moreover, such groups tend to be spatially concentrated in areas where declining manufacturing industries, lack of amenities and growing population combine to produce urban crisis.

However, assessments vary widely. In its important report, based mainly on analysis of the 1981 Census and ABS labour market data, the Bureau of Labour Market Research concluded that "at the aggregate level, and on the basis of available evidence, migrants in the Australian labour market do as well as persons born in Australia after an initial period of adjustment". The BLMR indeed found that certain migrant groups were disadvantaged with regard to unemployment, occupation, earnings, etc, but considered that these differences were on the whole attributable to two factors: period of residence and English proficiency. With regard to period of residence the BLMR therefore recommended post-arrival programs to improve labour market information for migrants, to provide English courses, and to improve skill adaptation. For
longer-established NESB migrants, the BLMR recommended the implementation of proposals by the Kirby Committee and AIMA on vocationally-related English training.

By contrast, the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission adopted a different methodology for its study on The Role of Migrant Workers in the Victorian Labour Force: it sent out interviewers to ask 1465 migrant workers about their perceptions of employment barriers and change, in 28 different languages. There is no space to summarise all findings here, but for our purposes, the following were important:

- Workers in manufacturing were particularly likely to have experienced job related problems. This applied particularly to women. Problems changed in character over time, but often did not decrease in the long term.
- An increasing number of workers left jobs due to health problems.
- More recently arrived younger workers were more likely to be looking for future training. Older and more established respondents were least inclined to see future training as a realistic option.
- Workers who felt insecure at work were most likely to find the maintenance of ethnic culture and group structures important.

From this evidence, the VEAC investigators concluded that although length of residence was important in some respects, "certain problems associated with working for long periods in the manufacturing industries become entrenched over time". These problems included occupational health and safety, job security and overt prejudice. Many migrant workers were thus in a "no win situation", facing either being structured into a disadvantaged segment of the
workforce - with low pay and unhealthy work - or unemployment, since they lacked the skills or language proficiency to move into other types of work. VEAC identified an increasing polarisation of the migrant work force into "winners" and "losers". Existing retraining and language learning opportunities were largely inaccessible to the "losers" due to lack of previous education, pressure of work, and difficulty in getting to courses. The Report concluded that this labour market situation could lead to increased ethnic separatism:

Unless affirmative action is taken, divisions of inequality, based along patterns of employment engaged in principally by migrant workers will develop a "cultural significance". Employment frustrations have the propensity to become entrenched as "ethnic" frustrations which will further exacerbate ethnic segmentation. Under these conditions, discrimination, exploitation and prejudice become a structured process rather than manifestations of an attitude. Equality of opportunity and equality of outcome are therefore only attainable to the extent that particular migrant worker issues are addressed within the context of wider industrial and gender relations.\[^{13}\]

Clearly, the implications of this analysis go far further than that of the BMLR, demanding broadly-based programs for re-training, general and language education, and affirmative action to prevent discrimination in employment practices. Moreover, the VEAC calls for involvement of migrant and ethnic organisations in the planning and running of such programs. There is some common ground between the BMLR and VEAC reports: both call for educational and training measures - i.e. measures to improve workers' "human capital". But the VEAC proposals are more far-reaching, and imply an on-going role for the state in planning manpower needs. Moreover measures for
retraining and supporting workers affected by change are seen as part of a broader social justice strategy. The neo-classical approach of the BMLR team, by contrast, means merely providing short-term language courses for new arrivals and certain other groups, while leaving processes of structural adjustment to market forces.

**Marginality and Invisibility**

The contrast between the BLMR Report and that of the VEAC - in methodology, findings and implications - indicates that we are still far from consensus in our assessment of the labour market position of ethnic minorities. Indeed, I would go further, and suggest that there are still major gaps in our knowledge. These are not the result of lack of research, nor of deficiencies in methods, but are inherent in the marginalised and powerless position of certain groups: lacking a voice, they are often invisible to policy makers and researchers. The broad understanding of migrant labour which derives from an analysis of the migratory process may help us identify such gaps. We need to look at the following issues:

**Hidden Unemployment**

There have been various attempts to estimate the number of people who wish to take up paid work, but are not officially registered as unemployed. Such hidden unemployment is thought to be equal to at least half the number of officially registered unemployed. A further section of the labour force is underemployed: that is they would like to work more hours than are actually available to them. This affects women part-time workers in particular. Hidden unemployment and underemployment are known to particularly affect marginalised groups of the workforce, such as disadvantaged ethnic groups and
women. We may therefore assume that groups which have high official unemployment also have above average hidden unemployment. Analysis of changes in participation rates may help to clarify this point, but is not sufficient, as there are other factors affecting participation rates.

**Withdrawal from the workforce**

Studies of the relative situation of different groups in the labour market are generally based on people in the labour force. But work problems may lead to withdrawal from the labour force. Migrants may return to their country of origin, become pensioners, or return to home duties. A large (but not precisely known) number of workers is incapacitated by industrial injury or disease. The VEAC study indicates the very high incidence of such problems for migrant workers, and this is confirmed by research recently carried out on the workers compensation system at the Centre for Multicultural Studies. The low unemployment rates of certain Southern European groups may be due more to such enforced withdrawal from the workforce, than to labour market success. One consequence of this phenomenon is that the costs of industrial stress and change are transferred away from the employer, but only in part to the state. Often it is the individual migrant, the family or the ethnic community which bears the burden.

**Self employment, ethnic business and the informal sector**

An important trend in Australia is the growth of self-employment. While wage and salary employment rose by 13.6% from 1972 to 1984, non-farm self-employment grew by 51.7%. This is not because of a sudden burgeoning of the entrepreneurial spirit, but because of attempts by employers to deregulate the labour force, through practices of sub-contracting, outwork and franchising. In
an important study, TNC Workers Research shows how this trend has affected particularly areas with high concentrations of migrant workers, such as the Construction industry, and Clothing and Footwear. A detailed analysis of this trend would show how it fits into the pattern of restructuring of the world economy, with special emphasis on use of migrants and women as workers, as indicated above. A system is emerging, in which large companies, particularly in the clothing industry cut costs through use of ethnic minority men as subcontractors, with ethnic minority women as outworkers. At this stage of the game it is naive to celebrate the growth of ethnic business as a sign of social mobility, especially for Southern European women. We know far too little about the process by which migrant workers forced out of manufacturing sector become marginal and dependent entrepreneurs, bearing the burden of risk for bigger companies. There is a continuum between marginal employment, self-employment, ethnic business and the informal sector, which is in urgent need of further research.

Above all, it is important to look at the overall situation of the groups most disadvantaged by the way labour migration and the labour market function. A lot of empirical work concentrates, for methodological reasons, on one indicator or another: unemployment, participation, earnings, etc. Invariably, it is the same groups who emerge as experiencing difficulties: certain Southern European ethnicities, people from the Middle East, South East Asian refugees. There is also evidence which should cause us to look more closely at certain other groups: working-class UK migrants with occupational health or unemployment problems, Eastern Europeans and Northern Europeans, who came in the early post-war years as manual workers, many of whom have had to withdraw from the labour market, and sometimes face isolation and
impoverishment. We need to examine the overall socio-economic situation of such groups, rather than concentrating on single issues. That means complementing quantitative research through ethnographic studies of communities, where labour market performance is seen as just part of a broader picture.

**Conclusion**

In summary, I would argue that the available evidence indicates processes of labour market segmentation, which lead to a long-term marginalisation of certain groups. That does not indicate rigid divisions based on race, ethnicity or citizenship, as in some countries, but rather that certain groups have become heavily over-represented in certain disadvantaged positions. The main indicators of disadvantage are gender and membership of specific ethnic groups, particularly those from Southern Europe, the Middle East and Indo-China. That is not to deny that a certain number of people in each of these groups has done well, but the majority has not.

It is misleading to reduce the causes of this segmentation to a few specific factors, such as education, labour market experience or length of residence. The causes are far more complex, and can only be grasped in the context of an historical understanding of the processes of labour migration and settlement, and its roles in a changing world economy. The processes which cause segmentation and disadvantage are self-perpetuating: workers who are disadvantaged also lack the opportunities and the capabilities needed to move out of such positions.
It is idle to pretend that everybody has an interest in combatting the causes of segmentation and disadvantage. Cheap and controllable migrant labour in varying forms has always been a factor in capitalist industrialisation and development. That has not changed. In some countries this has taken extreme forms such as guest workers systems (in W. Europe and the oil states) or encouragement of illegal migration (in the USA). In Australia, migrant workers have been recruited in more humane ways, but their value to employers has been no less. In many cases, local workers have benefitted too from the opportunities of upward mobility eased by immigration. In other cases they have feared competition from migrants. As a strategy for mobilising and controlling labour, migration has an impact on industrial relations, and indeed on class relations in general.

It is therefore wrong to assume some general interest of "all Australians" when discussing policies on immigration, the labour market and ethnic relations. Some groups would gain from policies of large-scale expansion of labour migration, with simultaneous cuts in post-arrival and multicultural programs. Other groups would lose. The winners would be the large investors and employers, who have called for expanded immigration as part of a strategy for deregulation of the labour market. The losers would be many of the migrants themselves, who would find themselves forced - even more than they already are - into insecure and exploitative jobs, with little chance of promotion. Among the losers would also be some existing members of the workforce, whose employment and social situation might be worsened by such policies.

The point is that post-war immigration has had long-term beneficial effects for most social groups in Australia, because immigration, post-arrival and
multicultural policies have, on the whole, been well matched. Such benefits can continue, if appropriate steps are taken to make sure that new migrants get appropriate employment and have opportunities to upgrade education, skills and language proficiency. That requires a balanced immigration program with improved post-arrival services. But there is also a need for substantial changes in employment practices, training and educational opportunities for many of the migrants who have come in the last 40 years. Such improvements need to be related to general labour market programs, but must also be targeted to meet the needs of groups who have so far been denied access to such measures.

If we want an economy capable of modernising and reaching international standards, then attention must be paid to the quality and needs of the workforce. It will not do to simply leave the migrant generation which fuelled the post-war boom by the wayside. Plans for industrial restructuring must include programs for helping workers to relocate, and to gain the new capabilities needed. The recent ACTU Report Australia Reconstructed, drew that conclusion, and showed how countries like Sweden had tackled the issue. The report forgot to mention that relocation and retraining policies in such countries have paid special attention to the situation of migrant workers. That is a lesson which we all must learn.
The draft of this paper was read by Wiebke Wüstemberg, Michael Morrissey and Caroline Alcorso. I would like to acknowledge their helpful comments.


International Migration Review, Vol. 20, no. 76, Winter 1986, special issue on Temporary Worker Programs; see also IMR vol. 18, no. 68, Winter 1984, special issue on Women in Migration.


Ibid, p. 1152.


This is well known for European countries like West Germany, whose "guest-workers" turned into permanent ethnic minorities. In the meantime similar trends appear to be emerging even in oil-states, which have particularly stringent regulations to prevent this. See: J.S. Birks et al., Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf, in IMR, vol. 20, no. 4, Winter 1986.

BLMR, p. 155.

VEAC, p. 70.

VEAC, pp. 71-72.


