In the gold era, Australians had also experienced what is now called a multicultural society. Their experience convinced them that such a society didn’t work; and at that time clearly it didn’t work (p. 22).

The implication is that it will not work now, but Blainey seems to have forgotten that the economic, political and social contexts which existed then were different from our contemporary ones. And, at the cultural level, the white Anglo-Saxon Australians (WASA) of the gold rush days were not exposed to the multiplicity of cultures brought in by the immigrants of various races. It would not be too difficult to come to the conclusion that WASA in the 1980s are likely to be more tolerant of other races than their counterparts of the nineteenth century, simply because the former have had more exposure to and contact with people of other cultures. This view is even supported by Blainey himself as he has said that there has been a gradual increase and some “remarkable gains in tolerance and understanding .... in Australia in the last third of a century” (p. 25). So his opposition to multiculturalism because of racial tensions in the gold mining era is not based on a sound and critical analysis.

Let us first look at his opposition to multiculturalism. He argues that:

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While charging the immigration department with being "anti-British" (pp. 155-56), an accusation which is mostly unsubstantiated, Blainey appears to advocate a pro-British immigration policy: "There can be little doubt, however, that Australia gained far more and paid far less of the taxpayers' money for the young men from Britain (sponsored by the Big Brother Movement than from the young people from Kampuchea" (p. 114). The implication is that young men from Britain are therefore more desirable than the young people from Kampuchea.

His conspiracy charge against the government of favouring Asian immigrants is highlighted in Chapter 6, "The Secret Room", where the alleged "secret documents" are stored. In this room, which is supposed to be inaccessible to the public, lie "plans that run counter to the immigration principles" (p. 101). He even suggests that the "new Freedom of Information Act has not proved adequate for unlocking the door of this room" (p. 102). This is blatantly false! Dr. Andrew Markus, who lectures on Australian history at Monash University, points out that journalist Jack Waterford, through the Freedom of Information Act, has acquired access to this so-called secret room and its some 2,000 policy directives (Markus' review of All for Australia in The Age, 3 November 1984). Blainey has admitted that he himself has not tried to use the Information Act to gain access to the "secret room" (Canberra Times, 8 October 1984, reported in Markus' review). Moreover, the alleged "secret documents", e.g. Policy Circulars 37 and 1037, are supposed to be unavailable. But Markus has in his possession the latter circular on Lebanon. Blainey asserts that this document instructs immigration officers "to tinker with the (60 points) scoreboard in order to recruit immigrants from Lebanon" (p. 102). However, he does not explain the specific instructions this "tinkering" involved. Further, he neglects to explain the reasons why Lebanese immigrants were given special consideration, namely that their country was in political and civil turmoil. It was virtually at war, hence more immigrants were to be allowed in on humanitarian grounds.

On the question of public opinion he argues that "in June 1984 only three out of ten Australians supported the present immigration policy" (p. 44). This is used to justify his claim that present immigration policy is, to use his own word, "ahead" (p. 32) of public opinion. However, the question seldom asked is: To what extent have his widely publicised views influenced the public? In other words, Blainey may have not only reflected but also strongly shaped or formed public opinion since his Warrnambool talk in March 1984. But even if public opinion favours Asian immigration, Blainey would argue that "they (Asian immigrants) should come on our terms, through our choosing, and in numbers which our society can cope" (p. 24). He does not, however, define the terms on which they should come and does not say what criteria are used to constitute "our choosing". It is easy to state that we will only take in "numbers with which our society can cope". But by what process of calculation does Blainey come to determine the numbers? By public opinion polls? It seems so. He maintains that they reflect the views of a majority of Australians who regard the current intake of Asian immigrants as being too high. In that case, the majority of the polls conducted in the past have shown that the number of Southern European immigrants was thought to be too high; hence, according to Blainey, it would have been an unacceptable figure, one with which society would not have been able to cope. Yet history has shown this to be untrue! On the contrary, Australia as a nation has benefited from the invaluable contribution of these people. It seems that the above quote is one of those demands which only the victors in a conquest can afford to make. The ancestors of our present day Aborigines knew this too well. They, on the other hand, were not able to apply this rule to the early British settlers simply because their strength was no match for the gunpowder of the whites.

With regard to immigration restrictions, Blainey sees Australia as taking too soft a stand:

Our immigration policy is increasingly based on an appeal to international precepts that our neighbours sensibly refuse to practise (p. 54).

Too many of us look inwards and criticise our own people instead of sometimes looking across the seas and seeing there a more extreme version of the faults that we criticise at home (p. 43).

But why should we judge ourselves by the extreme standards of other nations? Rather, shouldn’t we judge ourselves by our consistency in practising the egalitarian principles which we uphold in theory? Blainey’s type of pragmatic relativism ought to be ignored.

He further argues that:

In calling for a strong, long-term flow of Third World migrants, it (present immigration policy) foreshadows the sacrificing of vital Australian interests on behalf of vague international creeds (p. 52).

Blainey is so emotionally charged that he reads too much into the present immigration policy by accusing it of wanting “a strong, long-term flow of Third World migrants”. Are we simply to accept such a statement without any evidence from him? And what exactly does he mean by the alleged "sacrificing of vital Australian interests"? Are we to understand that these vital interests are aligned with his own? In any case, we are still left in the dark as to the nature of these interests.

Blainey’s use of certain words is deplorable: war metaphors are readily found, e.g. “invaded suburbs” (p. 123), “frontline suburbs” (p. 124); some descriptions of immigrants border on paranoia, e.g. they “pour in and eat into social services” (p. 134, all emphases mine). The word “pour” is also used to describe the entry of the Chinese into the goldfields in the nineteenth century (p. 154). By now it should not be surprising to see Blainey use the word “snatch” in reference to immigrants taking on jobs (p. 138). These are the words of a man who claims that his “views are not on the extremes, but sit very much in the middle ground, and such views do not usually arouse redhot reactions” (p. 131). However, perhaps the reason that his views have, in fact, aroused such “redhot reactions” is because they are in reality
extreme views.
As for non-inclusive (or sexist) language, one does not have to look too hard to find examples like this:

If an Australian girl married a Sri Lankan man, she would be eligible, ultimately, to be a citizen, but if an Australian man married a Sri Lankan girl, he would not be eligible to become a citizen (p. 53, emphasis mine).

Now, no one would deny the injustice of the sexism above, even though it is not the point of Blainey's focus, and it is precisely because of that that he is unaware of his own attitude towards both sexes; for he calls the female in the case of reference a "girl" and the male a "man".

Blainey's offensiveness to Asian sensibilities is clear: "To be on the dole in Australia was like paradise compared to working hard in Indo-China. To find a well-paid job in Australia doubled the joys of paradise" (p.107). It illustrates how ill-informed he is on the cultural views of Asians toward work and unemployment. While he is quick to point out the cultural differences of Asian immigrants (p. 154), Blainey fails to understand that, for a large number of Asians, it is humiliating to be on the dole. Many would rather live off their relatives than register for unemployment benefits, while looking for jobs. Such statements expose Blainey's ethnocentric view of Asian attitudes. Most of the newly arrived Asian immigrants wish to settle down quickly and quietly without drawing attention to themselves. They would like to contribute to society by working hard and participating in the general cultural life of Australia. In the light of this, Blainey's comment can only be seen as insensitive and even provocative.

Moreover, if we allow immigrants from the Third World in too quickly, argues Blainey, pressures may then be exerted on our democratic institutions by these people. But he does not specify the nature of these pressures. The only clue given here is when he says that characteristics like "democratic government, freedom of speech, freedom to worship — are not common in Asia or the Third World" (p. 154). Thus, he seems to imply that because they may come from authoritarian regimes, their lifestyles might cause strain on our well-founded democracy. On reflection, this view is quite absurd because usually the main reason for migration is fear and impatience with authoritarianism; they would prefer the lifestyle which Australia has to offer than to revert to life under the old regimes.

While everyone has a right to their opinion, including Blainey, not everyone has equal access to the media to have their views publicised. Thus, Blainey has, with the maximum exposure given to his views, lent legitimation to racist attitudes prevailing in our society. Nowhere in the book has he conceded that these attitudes are morally wrong and that the social structure which engenders such views needs clarification. Neither has he made a call for a campaign against racism, nor said that the public needs to be educated on the issue. Rather, he prefers to have Asians kept out because public opinion is, for him, incapable of error.

Finally, if Blainey is correct (and this has not been established) that, on the whole, immigrants are taking more jobs than they are creating, and if the number of Asian immigrants constitutes 40 percent of the total intake (p. 172), why are they singled out as a target and not the other 60 percent of immigrants as well, who are also allegedly snatching jobs?

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According to Blainey, the current intake of Asian immigrants is 'too far ahead of public opinion'.