Naming Charlie: British Indian Identities in White Australia, 1901-1940

Kama Maclean
UNSW, Sydney

Workshop on Indian Migration to the Pacific and Indian Ocean States
University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
15 April 2015
The politics of naming

• Aliens
• Asiatics
• Hindoos
• Indians
• Natives of British India
We hold Ourselves bound to the Natives of Our Indian Territories by the same obligations of Duty which bind Us to all Our other Subjects; and those Obligations, by the Blessing of Almighty God, We shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

Firmly relying Ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of Religion, We disclaim alike the Right and the Desire to impose our Convictions on any of Our Subjects. We declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure that none be in any wise favored, none molested or disquieted by reason of their Religious Faith or Observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law: and We do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under Us, that they abstain from all interference with the Religious Belief or Worship of any of Our Subjects, on pain of Our highest Displeasure.

And it is Our further Will that, so far as may be, Our Subjects, of whatever Race or Creed, be freely and impartially admitted to Offices in Our Service, the Duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.
Indian Reactions to White Australia policy in India

• ‘Are not natives British Subjects, and has the British Government forgotten the late Queen Empress’ Proclamation promising equal treatment and rights to both her black and white subjects?’

Sir John Forrest.—How would the honorable member deal with our Indian-British subjects?

Sir William McMillan.—I said in my opening remarks—and nobody can be more seized of the difficulties and dangers of the position than I am—that we are a component part of the British Empire, which is made up of all sorts of races and classes of men. But the fact that these difficulties arise, and that we are a part of the British Empire renders it all the more necessary at this initial stage of our Commonwealth life that we should meet these difficulties straightforward, face to face, and that we should tell the Imperial Government that although we desire to cling to the British connexion for all time, we must not be hampered by these conditions which arise out of our union with the Empire. Furthermore, I deny that we
Repeating the Immigration Restriction Act—Calcium Carbide—Inter-State Customs Certificates.

Motion (by Mr. Barton) proposed—
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. WATSON (Bland).—I should like to direct the attention of the Prime Minister to a statement to the effect that a number of Hindoos have recently been admitted into Western Australia upon passing a test in the English language. If I recollect aright, the Government undertook, when the Immigration Restriction Bill was before the House, that the test which they proposed would prove in administration as effective in keeping out people who were held to be objectionable as that supported by a number of honorable members who wished for a more direct method. If, however, the statement to which I refer is true, the Act is not proving so effective as it was said it would be.

Debating the Immigration Restriction Act, 7 February 1902, Hansard, Reps p. 9870.
The question is then we require for some definite action being taken. It is said by some of those who object to legislation of this sort that, while we may be justified in keeping out Chinamen, Japanese, Malays, or Assyrians, we have no justification for attempting to keep out of Australia the coloured British subjects of His Majesty the King. I would direct the attention of people who think in that way to the fact that the British Government today admit the power of this Commonwealth and of the people of Australia to differentiate between Indian British subjects and white British subjects, because they themselves differentiate between them. The British Government do not think of putting the Hindoo or any other native of India upon the same plane as the people of the United Kingdom. The ground I take is that the natives of India are British subjects and subjects only, whilst the people of the United Kingdom are citizens as well, and British subjects in Australia are citizens also. That
I would like to bring to notice the fact that the word "native" gives offence in India, and to suggest that this fact be made known to Ministers and officials in Australia with a view to avoiding its use when referring to people of Eastern countries.
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, OSMOND SEPTIMUS MADDocks, the Collector of Customs for the State of QUEENSLAND, do hereby certify that Charlie Phillips (Note) hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be excepted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of three years from this date.

Date 12th February 1915.

Collectors of Customs.

DESCRIPTION.

Nationality Chinese Birthplace India
Age 55 years Complexion
Height Hair
Build Eyes
Particular marks

(For impression of hand see back of this document.)

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Full Face Profile
A coloured man, well known as "Charlie," was found dead on the public wharf on Saturday. It transpires that he had been in poor health for some time, and left home on that morning with the intention of going to the hospital for medical treatment. His remains were interred in the local cemetery yesterday.
Last Tuesday afternoon saw the last act in connection with the estate of Galeb Cashmere—or Charlie the Indian, as he was familiarly called. Charlie was well and very favorably known in Kilmore and for many miles around. He had travelled the district for over thirty years as an itinerant salesman of drapery and the usual adjuncts thereto. His integrity was never doubted, and during his long connection with the district he enjoyed what might be termed its freedom. His familiar turn-out of big wagon, drawn by the grey and bay horses—in too fat condition actually for strenuously rapid work—sauntered quietly from one place to another at fairly regular intervals, camping in appointed spots, where Charlie cooked his johnny cakes and poultry, he being very partial to the latter. These two items, with full supplies of milk and butter, made up the greater part of his modest bill of fare. He was, however, a master hand in the construction of curry, as is the wont of his nationality. He was devoted to his horses, and they reciprocated in no uncertain way, following him about in similar manner to pet dogs. After his long years of travel Charlie's health commenced to fail and during the last few weeks of his career he did little more than get about. He was of an independent disposition, and respectfully declined assistance offered him by friends. It was not until he collapsed at Kilmore East a few weeks ago that he gave in. He was brought to Kilmore hospital for treatment, and, at the request of his people, he was removed to Melbourne, where he passed away on the day after he left Kilmore.
Charlie Ammondeen’s Cart, c.1914. Comara, NSW
NAA, 9587296
THUMB PRINTS.

LEFT.  RIGHT.

THUMB PRINTS DISPENSED WITH
SEE PREVIOUS CERTIFICATE NO. 86/860
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, HENRY MACNAMARA ROBINSON, Act. Col. of Cts. for the State of QUEENSLAND, hereby certify that the person hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph 3 of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of six months from the date of his departure.

Date of departure: 7-2-16
Port of Embarkation: CAIRO
Date of return: 10-7-16
Port of Disembarkation: SYDNEY

NATIONALITY: Indian
AGE: 25 years
HEIGHT: 5 ft. 4 in.
WEIGHT: 9 st. 6 lb.
HAIR: Brown
EYES: Brown

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION ACT 1901-1911

1916

NAA 9104977
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, Henry Magnamara Robinson, the Collector of Customs for the State of Queensland, in the said Commonwealth, hereby certify that Charlie Bahadur Singh, an immigrant who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of three years from this date.

Date of departure: 7th February 1916
Port of Embarkation: Cairns
Ship: S.S. Mauritania
Destination: Calcutta
Date of return: 13th July 1916
Port: Sydney
Ship: S.S. Maitua

Henry Magnamara Robinson
Customs Officer

NAA 9110933
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, John Doe, Swear/re, the Collector of Customs for the State of
New South Wales, do hereby certify that
Charlie Dulap Singh (Signature)
hereinafter described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted
from the provisions of paragraph (e) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Com-
monwealth within three years from this date.

Date of departure: 30th Nov 1924
Port of Embarkation: Karachi
Ship: Tugman
Destination: India

Date of return: 14th Oct 1924
Ship: Kaal
Port: Karachi

No. 365
Form No. 28
DUPPLICATE

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Immigration Act 1901-1902 and Regulations.
No. 086

Nationality: Indian
Age: 35 years
Complexion: Dark
Height: 5 feet
Hair: Black
Build: Medium
Eyes: Brown

Particulars: (See back of this document.)

29th Nov 1924
Charlie Dulap Singh

1924
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

I, Rupert Brisbane Cord, Acting Collector of Customs for the State of Queensland, hereby certify that Charlie Duleep Singh of Carns, herein for described, who is leaving the Commonwealth temporarily, will be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (a) of Section 3 of the Act if he returns to the Commonwealth within a period of three years from the date of departure shown below.

Date of Departure: 19-1-37
Ship: Morella
Port of Embarkation: Townsville
Destination: India

Date of Return: 29-12-37
Ship: V.H.I. Cooper
Port: Brisbane

R. Blath
Acting Collector of Customs.

NATIONALITY: Indian
Age: 50 years
Height: 6 ft
Build: Medium
Particular mark: (For thumb prints, see back of this document.)

DESCRIPTION.
Birthplace: India (Beraput)
Complexion: Copper
Hair: White
Eyes: Brown
Album of L. G. Watt, New South Wales Board of Fire Commissioners, 1928
‘Indian Charlie and his Pipe’, 1928

State Records NSW

Harwood Island, NSW