

Historical background to the Australian Protectionist Party

While the Australian Protectionist Party is a new expression of an Australian Nationalist perspective, Protectionism is deeply rooted in Australian political history. Our first two Prime Ministers were Protectionists and our first federal government was a Protectionist government. Sir Edmund Barton and Sir Alfred Deakin were largely responsible for creating some of our most important institutions. Other less well known Protectionists had a strong community ethos and worked tirelessly for the advancement of Australian culture and society.

Sir Edmund Barton – the first Protectionist Prime Minister.

Sir Edmund Barton, our first Prime Minister, introduced the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act into Parliament to ensure that Australia would remain a predominately White country. During the second reading of the Immigration Restriction Act, Barton said he was pleased to be involved in debating a high policy of such importance rather than the more mundane legislation previously debated in the new Federal parliament. Barton quoted copiously from Charles Pearson's "*National Life and Character*" about the dangers of racial genocide and why the Immigration Restriction Act was of such importance. It was his intention to keep Australia a country populated predominately by people of European descent.

Barton not only wished to protect the Australian people from the long-term problems of Third World immigration, he also wanted to protect Australian jobs and industries by a moderate system of tariffs upon imported products. He said:

"The tariff will not be in any sense prohibitive. It will be a moderate tariff. ... I am a protectionist and I will endeavour to protect as far as possible the productions of our own soil. ... Our industries have grown up under protection and the Government will not be a party to a policy that would be their destruction. It will be a tariff that will produce sufficient revenue without discouraging industries. It will be a tariff calculated to maintain employment".

Sir Edmund lived a humble life as Prime Minister, living in the attic of Parliament house when it was in session, grilling chops over an open fire and sharing billy tea with his colleagues during long night time discussions. Sir Edmund was a selfless statesman dedicated to the enrichment and advancement of Australia, not of himself.

Sir Robert Menzies said of Barton:

"It was indeed a happy thing for Australia that, as she grew into nationhood ... she should have been served by so lofty a soul and so single-minded a patriot as Edmund Barton."

Sir Alfred Deakin – the second Protectionist Prime Minister.

Sir Alfred Deakin was the successor of Barton, becoming the head of the Protectionists in 1903 and Australia's second protectionist Prime Minister.

Deakin was largely responsible for laying the foundation stones of Australia's most important public institutions, as noted by Sir Robert Menzies:

"Deakin was a great constructor. He was responsible for what I would call the basic National Policies, irrigation, immigration, the creator of the High Court, the creation of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, defence, tariff policy. All of those things which became commonplace now in Australia, I think owed their creation primarily to Deakin. And I think that a man who builds the great foundations for the national edifice to be regarded as the 'great builder'."

Deakin was instrumental in setting up Australia's protectionist tariffs, a system designed to benefit and protect Australian industry and workers. The Commonwealth Conciliation Act of 1904 and the Customs Tariff (on agricultural machinery) led to the concept of the "basic wage" that stipulated, as put by Henry Bourne Higgins (President of the Arbitration Court and a Protectionist) that a "fair and reasonable" wage would provide "*the normal needs of the average employee, regarded as a human being in a civilised community*".



*Sir Edmund Barton
"The Protectionist"*



*Sir Alfred Deakin
"The great builder"*

Deakin also contributed to the foundation of Australia's traditional immigration policies, being the Attorney General at the time of the drafting of the Immigration Restriction Act. He stated:

“There are those who mock at the demand of a white Australia, and who point to what they consider our boundless opportunities for absorbing a far greater population than we at present possess, who dwell, if commercially-minded, on the opportunities for business we are neglecting by failing to import the cheapest labour to develop portions of our continent which have not as yet been put to use. ... The unity of Australia is nothing, if that does not imply a united race. A united race means not only that its members can intermix, intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies one inspired by the same ideas, and an aspiration towards the same ideals. ... At the very first instant of our national career we are as one for a white Australia. ... those in office and those out of office with the people behind them, are all united in the unalterable resolve that the Commonwealth of Australia shall mean a "white Australia", and that from now henceforward all alien elements within it shall be diminished. We are united in the resolve that this Commonwealth shall be established on the firm foundation of unity of race, so as to enable it to fulfil the promise of its founders”.

“Our civilization belongs to us, and we belong to it; we are bred in it, and it is bred in us. It fits us and is our means of progress and advancement. These people have their own independent development, their own qualities, and also the civilizations, forms of life and government which naturally attach to them ... The attitude of Australia is not an offensive one when it becomes understood that it is based upon these principles. It is not based upon any claim of superiority. Where is the standard of comparison just to both? ... arguments which are used in favour of exclusion do not call for any reflection whatever upon the character or capacity of the people excluded.”

Deakin was more than a “political machine man”. He was a member of the Eclectic Association of Victoria and the spiritualist movement. He wrote copiously for the Melbourne Age and contributed anonymous weekly letters to a London newspaper for the purpose of explaining Australian politics to the English to demonstrate that Australia was a full nation, not a mere outpost of the Empire.

Samuel Mauger – Protectionist, Social Reformer and Unionist.



*Samuel Mauger,
Protectionist and
Unionist*

Samuel Mauger (pronounced *Major*) was an Australian social reformer, a unionist and a Protectionist politician. Mauger was heavily committed to social ideals; he was a teacher at St Mark's Church of England, a Sunday school superintendent at St. Paul's Congregational Church, superintendent of the Fire Brigades' Association of Victoria and president of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board. He was also involved in many other social organisations that sought the betterment of social conditions for all Australians.

Mauger was one of the founders, and secretary, of the Anti-Sweating League, a body created to expose and prevent the exploitation of Australian workers in “sweatshops” by ruthless corporations and international capital.

Working with H.H. Champion, Mauger drafted the Factories and Shops Act (1896) to stop the exploitation of workers. He also campaigned for an extension of the wages-boards system beyond the original six sweated trades, and for the adoption of minimum wage principles by municipalities and statutory authorities. The term, New Protection, was coined at his shop in 1899 (where the Anti-Sweating League would meet) and popularised by Mauger at interstate protectionist conferences in 1900-01, where he

declared “unless protection went further than the Customs House, and protected the wages, the homes, and the lives of the people, it was not worth the name”.

These men, and many others like them, provide the bedrock on which we can build our Protectionist ideology and develop the *Australian Protectionist Party* into a broader social-political movement that will enshrine Protectionism into the Australian psyche and thus ensure a safe, free and prosperous Australia, and will protect the Australian people and our national identity as envisioned by our forefathers.

Join the *Australian Protectionist Party*

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