

*Redefining Citizenship in Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand* by Jatinder Mann, Peter Lang, New York, 2019, xi + 187 pp., [price], ISBN 978-1-4331-5108-8

Australia, Canada, and Aotearoa New Zealand share many commonalities. All three are largely English-speaking settler states that were colonised by the British whom left similar political, cultural and legal legacies. One such inheritance was a common conceptualisation of nationality centred on a collective status of British subject. In this monograph, Jatinder Mann explores how these three states reshaped, redesigned and redefined their legal and political understandings of citizenship between the 1950s and 1970s. Mann's central thesis is that the demise of the British World over this period, and the corresponding decline of the importance of 'Britishness' in each country, catalysed significant changes to citizenship laws. While in the 1950s each state privileged natural-born British subjects over migrants from outside the Commonwealth in various ways, including in less restrictive naturalisation requirements or even in the right to apply for public service jobs, by the end of the 1970s these distinctions had almost entirely been swept away. This period thus marked the transformation of an ethnically-based citizenship in Australia, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand into a civic-based one, predicated on the levelling of rights and responsibilities.

Mann's transnational study begins from the fact that, notwithstanding varied immigration patterns—and even the presence of a large francophone majority province in Canada—each country principally regarded itself as part of British society and a wider British world in 1950. Indeed, although each state had passed legislation in the late 1940s that established the concept of Australian, Canadian and New Zealand citizenship, all maintained the legal status of 'British subject'; a status that nationals from all over the Commonwealth shared. As Mann explains, however, three events in the 1950s and 1960s prompted each state to reconsider its position with regard the United Kingdom (UK) and redefine their citizenship. These were the 1956 Suez Crisis, the UK's 1961 application to enter into the European Economic Community, and the UK's 1967 decision to withdraw from military bases east of the Suez.

In careful and deliberate archival research, Mann reveals that these events provoked profound anxiety in the former colonies. A 'deathblow to British race patriotism' (57), they demonstrated the widening disjuncture between the interests of each Commonwealth country. The unravelling of Australia, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand's self-identification as British nations prompted legal reforms that withdrew the privileges previously afforded to natural-born British subjects. Of course, such reform was not simple and straightforward; opposition persisted into and beyond the period under examination (Australia: 27, Canada: 73, Aotearoa New Zealand: 117). Nevertheless, by the end of the 1970s, many if not all distinctions had been removed.

The shift that Mann traces was important for non-Commonwealth migrants, but it had particular consequences for the place of Indigenous peoples in each state. Reflecting a growing commitment to equal citizenship, each country sought to regularise the status of the First Nations peoples whose territory they possessed. In Australia, that involved legislative reform to grant the franchise to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as constitutional change to remove discriminatory provisions that symbolically, if not legally, excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the constitutional community (Chapter 1). In Canada, it also involved electoral reform to empower First Nations, Inuit and Metis people with the right to vote. Significantly, however, because of historical treaty

relationships between many First Nations peoples and the British and Canadian Crowns, a push for equal citizenship also required abolishing those treaties and eliminating the distinctive status of First Nations peoples (Chapter 2). In Aotearoa New Zealand, where the Treaty of Waitangi mediated the relationship between Māori and Pakeha, it encompassed an attempt to dismantle the unique Māori communal land ownership; that is, to ‘Europeanise’ Māori land (122).

Efforts to regularise Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizenship by dissolving Indigenous peoples’ distinctive status did not succeed. In noting the failure of the Canadian government’s 1969 White Paper (85) and the New Zealand Labour government’s 1974 reversal of ‘controversial’ land ownership reforms (126), Mann hints at but does not engage with the then-emerging current of Indigenous activism for differentiated citizenship. At one level, this is understandable; Mann’s focus is on how the decline of the British World influenced the reconceptualization of citizenship in these settler states. Nonetheless, it would have been valuable to consider, even if only briefly, how the consequent rise of settler nationalism and settler identity was met by Indigenous peoples’ claims for rights as distinct peoples, for these debates continue to play out today. Indeed, it is this project that underlies contemporary calls for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as recorded in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Intransigent federal government opposition to the Uluru Statement reveals that something as basic as the status and place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia remains uncertain and contested. ‘Britishness’ may no longer exercise a controlling force over notions of identity in Australia, but its decline has not yet opened sufficient space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, in any event, Mann’s valuable study enriches our understanding of how citizenship laws changed in response to the passing of the British World and gestures towards some of the motivations behind early Indigenous activism for distinctive citizenship rights.

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