

# SCANDINAVIAN IMMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

An International Symposium at the Institute of Migration

Migration research is by nature an international and interdisciplinary field, requiring co-operation and co-ordination, especially when long distances and a large geographical area are to be covered. An example of this is a Scandinavian-Australian research project which started a few years ago in co-operation between the Institute of Migration in Turku, Finland, and the House of Emigrants, Växjö, Sweden. The aim of the project is to promote research into Scandinavian immigration in Australia and New Zealand. The project's second symposium was held in Turku on February 17-19, 1982, attended by both Nordic and Australian scholars.

The first symposium of the project was held in Växjö, in March 1978. This first meeting - involving quite a large number of participants - proved a success, and consequently it was decided to develop a project on "Scandinavian Immigration to Australia and New Zealand". The project has received financial assistance for fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand from the Nordic Cultural Foundation in Copenhagen.

At the first meeting, it was decided that the aim of the project should be to collect archival material and personal documents, and of course to interview Scandinavian settlers, in Australia and New Zealand. It was also emphasized in Växjö that there is a lack of information about the Scandi-

navian immigration in Australia and New Zealand, although the Scandinavian immigrants were the second largest non-British immigration group in Australia in the early days of Australian immigration. It was also mentioned that there is much less information available on this immigration in the South Seas region compared with the situation in North America.

As a part of the project, four Scandinavian members of the Scandinavian-Australian project committee have visited Australia and New Zealand:

- In late 1980, Dr. Ulf Bejbom from The House of Emigrants made a contact visit to publicize the project.
- In February-April 1981, Dr. Olavi Koi-vukangas, Turku, visited all the Australian states and collected information about the Finns in Australia.
- In summer 1981, Mr. Ivo Holmqvist formerly of the University of Auckland, and now at Gränna College, Sweden, carried out fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand, the aim of his journey being mainly to collect material on the Danish immigrants.
- The latest visitor, Dr. Allan T. Nilson from the National Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden, had just returned from a visit to Australia and New Zealand before the second meeting in Turku.



Dr. Olavi Koivukangas from the Institute of Migration, Turku and Dr. Ulf Bejbom from the House of Emigrants, Växjö, Sweden, are in charge of the Scandinavian Immigration to Australia and New Zealand project.

Now, at the beginning of the next stage, the analysis of the collected material and the research work proper, it was considered important to arrange a second meeting for discussion of these processes and hopefully to obtain new ideas and fruitful criticism.

There were 16 participants at the symposium in Turku, five from Finland, seven from Sweden and four from Australia. This article summarizes the main points of the lectures, and reviews the studies in progress and future trends of the project.

#### **Summary of the papers presented**

*Dr. Olavi Koivukangas*, of the Institute of Migration in Turku, stated in the introduction to his lecture that after the Germans the next foreign infusion of importance to the early population of Australia came from Scandinavian countries; here, obviously,

lies a gap in both Australian and Scandinavian research. Koivukangas pointed out that there are only some very general studies on Scandinavians in Australia and New Zealand, the first investigation having been carried out by Jens Lyng, who produced two main studies. "Non-Britishers in Australia" (1927) gave an outline history of the non-British elements in Australia, including Scandinavians, although the chapter about the Finns is very short. Lyng's second main study, "The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific", published in 1939, is a general history of the Danes, Swedes and Norwegians in Australia. This book contains valuable observations on their assimilation, and provides biographical sketches of prominent Scandinavians in Australia. Since Lyng, the only systematic research on Scandinavians in Australia is that by Koivukangas himself, "Scandinavian Immigration and Settlement in Australia before World War II". This study is based on diversified data,

using a combined demographic and historical approach.

The Scandinavian immigration to Australia has taken place, continued Dr. Koivukangas, in several periods. From the historical point of view the first two Scandinavian to visit Australia were scientists on board Captain James Cook's ship in 1768-71, one of whom, H. D. Spöring, was born in Turku, Finland. The first real influx of Scandinavian immigrants was connected with the Gold Rush. Scandinavian seamen and gold-diggers from the Californian gold-fields were among the first to respond to the call of gold in 1851. Because of the dangers of the voyage and language difficulties, Scandinavians often arrived in groups and also stayed together on the gold-fields. Altogether about 5000 Scandinavians were attracted by Australian gold in the 1850's and 1860's. The peak of immigration of Scandinavians to Australia, however, took

place between 1870 and 1914. At the end of the 19th century, there were in Australia nearly 20 000 persons born in the Scandinavian countries. Due to high mortality and the lack of new arrivals, the number had decreased to 8365 by the Census of 1947. The major increase in the immigration of Scandinavians to Australia, however, took place between 1954 and 1961, and a striking feature is the preponderance of Finns, comprising 40 per cent of all Scandinavians in 1976 as compared with only 16 per cent in 1947. Turning to the ethnicity and acculturation of immigrants, Dr. Koivukangas stated that group settlements, longevity of ethnic institutions and retention of language are considered important factors in social and cultural adjustment; these were strongest among Finns and Danes, suggesting that these two nationalities integrated more slowly as compared to Swedes and Norwegians.



At the Scandinavian Immigration to Australia and New Zealand-symposium there were 16 participants. From the left: Dr. John S. Martin, University of Melbourne, Dr. Anthony Griffiths, Flinders University, Adelaide and Mr. Mark Garner, Victoria College, Melbourne.

*Dr. John S. Martin*, Senior Lecturer in Scandinavian Studie at the University of Melbourne, Australia, lectured on the ethnic identity and social organisations of the Scandinavian communities in Melbourne during 1870-1910. In recent decades much research has been directed to immigrant groups in the Australian community since World War II, but little on groups before this date; in his paper Dr. Martin examined how the Scandinavian settlers in Victoria behaved as a group between 1870 and 1910. The earlier date marks the collapse of the attempt to rally the Scandinavians to form a unified Lutheran congregation, while the latter date is connected with political events in Scandinavia: the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden had polarised the community and led to a revival of awareness of separate Norwegian and Swedish identity.

Dr. Martin dealt with two basic issues:

- a) The nature of the ethnic communal organisations in the Scandinavian communities and the role they played in maintaining ethnicity or in aiding assimilation.
- b) The extent to which the Scandinavians as a group assimilated to the Anglo-Celtic Australian community in language, patterns of living, customs etc.

The major sources for his survey are the newspapers "Norden" and "Kirketidende", and the archives of the Swedish church in Melbourne and the University of Melbourne. Dr. Martin examined in detail the informal and formal networks (clubs, church life, temperance societies etc.). The ethnic social organisations, he argued, had many goals. The first major role was protective. fundamentally the ethnic organisations are spontaneous expressions of individual needs through a corporate body, and these needs will dictate the particular form of protection. The second aspect of importance of the social organisations is cohesion, the organisation binds the members of the ethnic groups so

that it becomes aware of its own distinctiveness as compared with the dominant culture of the host community. The Scandinavian community in Melbourne during 1870-1910 constituted the second largest non-British ethnic group. Scandinavians established communal organisations for the benefit of the first-generation settlers, but not for the perpetuation of language or of national traditions. At the beginning of the century the first-generation immigrant families had a strong awareness and pride in their Scandinavian background, even though the language had been lost.

In the future, suggested Dr. Martin, we should study in detail the individuals who comprised the Scandinavian community, to ascertain their background, reasons for immigration, date and method of arrival, social status before and after emigration, patterns of life in Australia and their descendants.

*Miss Peija Ilpola*, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Oulu, Finland, gave a paper about multiculturalism in Australia. Multiculturalism, she stated, has become a popular word in Australia within the last few years, which indicates a great change in people's attitudes towards immigrants and the country's immigration policy. Respect for multiculturalism has increased recently; according to the first volume of "Population and Australia", published in Canberra in 1975, the migrants' cultural and social impact was not highly regarded, whereas in the last pages of the Supplementary Report, published three years later, the National Population Inquiry refers to the emphasis now placed on the merits of multiculturalism, and to the establishment of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council in 1977.

Behind the surveys there appears nevertheless to lie a persistence of the national stereotype, which gives first preference to the British and northern Europeans, middle (though improving) rank to the other continental Europeans, and the lowest ranking to the Asians. These attitudes

may imply a desire by Australians to sustain the image of cultural and racial homogeneity; certainly they seem anxious to preserve the British-Australian image.

Australian immigration policy is not dependent to the same extent on people's attitudes as it used to be in Calwell's days in the 1940's. For humanitarian reasons, and in spite of unemployment problems, refugees from Asian countries are being admitted. Non-European immigration has increased and is likely to rise further. Australia is more multicultural today than it was a generation ago, and continuing immigration will tend to increase the multicultural mixing in the future.

Miss Ilpola presented a number of research results which showed how middle-status non-British immigrants, especially the younger ones, have generally learnt to speak good English and made determined efforts

to regain the status and prestige which they had enjoyed in their home countries. These young people have integrated well, and become cosmopolitan, but at the same time retained many aspects of their former way of life. Children of middle-class European (e.g. Polish) fathers and Australian mothers have shown conspicuous academic success.

*Dr. Anthony Griffiths*, Senior Lecturer in Social Studies at the Flinders University of South Australia in Adelaide, gave a report on a case study about the Finnish families in a small community in the southeast of Australia. He had interviewed five separate households. The results give a good overview of the assimilation of Finnish immigrants in this community. Dr. Griffiths presented no summary or conclusion in his paper, but concentrated



Dr. Keith Battarbee, University of Turku, is planning to study Finnish miners in Australia. Behind the table from left: Sten Almqvist, Ivo Holmqvist, Hans Norman from Sweden and prof. Vilho Niitemaa from Turku.

on the detailed and sympathetic presentation of the data; the following quotation describes well the socialization of the Finnish families in this place:

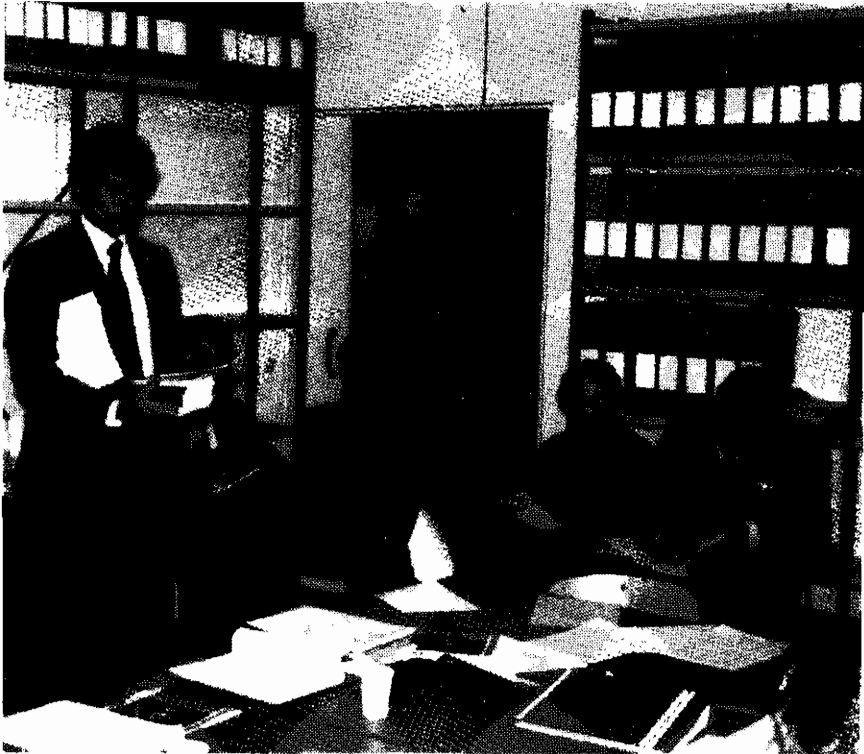
"The first family is Finnish Lutherans and attends church sometimes. They don't know whether they will become Australian citizens, eat Finnish food "fairly often", would not "Australianize" their name. Another family visited Finland for five weeks holiday in 1980. Their hobbies in Australia are fishing and hunting rabbits. A son of the second family was unusual among the Finns for saying "Probably" to the question "Will you become an Australian citizen?".

In the symposium two papers were also presented on planned future research: *Dr. K. J. Battarbee*, from the University of

Turku, Finland, is planning to study the ethnic problems of Australia and its European immigrants; the title of his study to be is "From Finnish farms to Australian mines".

*Ivo Holmqvist's* research plan had the title "Danes in New Zealand"; in his study he wants to cover the immigration to New Zealand from a historical point of view. Neither Holmqvist nor Battarbee stated any time schedules for their studies.

Mr. Jan Reksten, migration officer from the Australian Embassy in Stockholm, introduced the new system for the selection of immigrants, to be introduced in spring 1982. The idea of the new system is to allow in more relatives of settlers, but to concentrate on obtaining experts and highly-educated people to help develop the Australian economy.



Mr. Jan Reksten, migration officer from the Australian Embassy in Stockholm told about the new system for the selection of immigrants to Australia.

## Studies in progress and future plans

### Studies in progress:

As mentioned above, there are three studies proceeding at the moment: Ivo Holmqvist has collected material on the Danes in New Zealand; Mark Garner has interviewed Swedes in Australia; and Keith Battarbee is going to study Finnish immigrants in Australian mines. Olavi Koivukangas and Allan T. Nilson have separately collected material on immigrants in Australia, and Koivukangas is working on a book on Finns in Australia before World War II. Ulf Bejbom is planning to write a popular book on Swedes in Australia before 1920, while the former Swedish Ambassador in New Zealand, Sten Aminoff, is also writing a study on Swedes in New Zealand.

### Literature:

It was decided at the symposium that the co-ordination of the research literature is a very important task in the near future. The best way to achieve this goal is to collect a bibliography on Australian immigration; every participating country should make its own part for this bibliography. With the aid of this bibliography, it would be easier to collect and co-ordinate research material.

### Archives:

In developing the archives it was agreed that each country should make short summaries in English of the available material (tapes, interviews, printed material etc.). In this way, for example, the material of the Finnish archives would be easier for scholars from other countries to use.

It was also considered important that persons in Australia interested in Scandinavian immigration should participate in collecting archival, statistical material, etc. and literature. A catalogue and a bibliography should be made of holdings in Australia and New Zealand.

### Exhibitions:

Concerning exhibitions, it was stated that the Institute of Migration already has in Turku a small exhibition on Finnish immigration to Australia. In Sweden a corresponding exhibition is being prepared. For the future, a common exhibition concerning the whole of Scandinavian immigration to Australia should be built up by 1988, when European Australia will celebrate its Bicentennial.

### The next symposium:

In the final session of the symposium it was decided that in order to increase and co-ordinate the co-operation needed, a corresponding Scandinavian-Australian research committee should also be set up in Australia. The representatives of the University in Melbourne could function as co-ordinators, and at least one representative from each Australian state should belong to the committee.

It was recommended that the third symposium be held in Australia in 1988, in conjunction with the Bicentennial Celebration of Euro-Australian Settlement.

Olavi Koivukangas - Ismo Söderling