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‘Abroad Was Where It all Happened’: Inter-war and Post-war Sponsored Migration to the Commonwealth

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study of emigration from Britain to the Old Commonwealth scrutinises the motives and experiences of those who left in the years after the First and Second World Wars respectively, and the objectives and practices of those who encouraged or recruited them. It considers whether official policies and participants’ perspectives on settlement in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were characterised by continuity between the two periods, or whether there was a significant rethinking of attitudes to Commonwealth migration after 1945. It analyses the direct and indirect legacies of war, and evaluates the impact of the Empire Settlement Act on individuals and institutions during a century when confident imperialism was initially replaced by a more defensive attitude, and ultimately by the end of empire. It finds that the demise of institutional migration schemes reinforced a steady shift from the public perception of emigration as a partially corporate phenomenon to a more personal, individualistic process. The first part of the study makes extensive use of the records of Christ’s Hospital, Horsham to demonstrate the particular promotion of dominion emigration to public schoolboys, but also some of the challenges and tensions embedded in that policy. The second part draws on oral testimony from emigrants and recruiters, and evaluates briefly the role of film, radio and television in shaping the volume and direction of emigration.

KEYWORDS

Emigration; Canada; Australia; New Zealand; dominions; Christ’s Hospital; oral testimony; Empire Settlement Act

In the generation before the First World War the decisions of thousands of British emigrants to settle in the overseas empire were rooted in a foundation of confident imperialism. Empire settlement was promoted both for its practical benefits and because it offered emigrants continued membership of a global imperial family, which was allegedly bound together by a common memory, purpose and identity. In the aftermath of the conflict, however, as the concept of imperial unity was eroded by the uncertainties of the post-war

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world order, that confidence was replaced by a more defensive attitude, in which policy was shaped by the objectives of maintaining loyalty in a crumbling empire, as well as tackling unemployment and heading off potential social unrest at home.

Following the dislocation of the Second World War, those who emigrated after 1945 continued to reflect the priorities of previous generations in their pursuit of ambition, the deployment of a blend of personal connections and official mechanisms to implement their decisions, and the selective manipulation of ethnic, school and workplace networks to smooth their integration. Sponsors too followed their predecessors' priorities of advocating empire settlement over emigration to 'foreign' countries, particularly the United States. But these continuities operated alongside a subtle, progressive and ultimately complete shift in the perception of emigration from an enterprise that sometimes had a public and corporate face to a private lifestyle-choice that was associated with individuals and nuclear families rather than external organisations or extended communities.

This study uses a comparative framework to analyse the objectives and experiences of emigrants from Britain to the Old Commonwealth in the twentieth century, as well as the motives and actions of those who recruited and encouraged them. Focusing on the years after the First and Second World Wars, it asks whether the narrative of causation, articulated by participants, was one of continuity or change, when compared with earlier periods. It considers whether the attitudes and practices of politicians, propagandists and commentators, in home and host countries, were characterised by similarities to previous generations, or significant differences. It scrutinises the relationship between expectations and experiences, for both participants and promoters. And in particular, it evaluates the repercussions of these momentous decisions on the emigrants' lifestyles and sense of identity, as they adjusted to their new environments.

In addressing these issues the paper deploys a range of methodologies, including the scrutiny of archival records and the collection and analysis of oral testimony. For the inter-war period extensive use is made of the records of Christ's Hospital in Horsham, Sussex to demonstrate the particular targeting of public schoolboys, but also some of the controversy associated with promoting empire migration. The second part quotes from the testimony of emigrants and recruiters, and evaluates the impact of new technology – particularly radio and television – on attitudes and practices.

Traditional Patterns and New Departures in Inter-war Empire Emigration

From 1832 until the early twentieth century the United States was the dominant destination for emigrants from the British Isles. In the 1880s and 1890s fewer

than a third of British emigrants had gone to empire destinations, but in the following decade nearly half went to the dominions, rising to two-thirds in 1911 and 1912. The trend intensified in the 1920s, when over 65 per cent of departures were to the dominions. It was maintained – albeit at a lower level – during the depression years of the 1930s, when the dominions accounted for nearly 47 per cent of British emigrants.¹

From the perspective of Whitehall and Westminster the rekindling of interest in empire was a welcome response to the more interventionist approach that had begun to characterise official attitudes from about 1900. For most of the nineteenth century advocates of state-aided emigration to the empire had been voices in the wilderness, cohering briefly in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and in the 1880s in the unsuccessful eight-year lobbying campaign of the National Association for the Promotion of State-Directed Colonisation.² Governments whose actions were persistently shaped by laissez-faire economic philosophy generally turned a deaf ear to calls for state intervention. The making and implementing of decisions lay with individuals and families, recruitment and shipping agents, philanthropic or workplace societies, and overseas land companies or governments. The British government's role was confined to a loose oversight which was intended to ensure the safety of emigrants and prevent them being defrauded or otherwise abused. The Emigrants' Information Office, for instance, was created in 1886 with a purely advisory function.³

It was only with the turn of the century that official attitudes began to change, initially in response to cyclical depression and rising unemployment in Britain. The Unemployed Workmen Act in 1905 – largely publicly funded – assisted emigrants to Australia and Canada, with a few going to New Zealand and elsewhere. Philanthropic societies that had since the 1870s assisted the emigration of single women and destitute children intensified their efforts, emboldened by eugenic ideology and a confidence in the morally and physically regenerative benefits of rural life in the dominions. Lobbying by a Standing Emigration Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute ensured that empire development through assisted emigration was one of the themes discussed by the Dominions Royal Commission, and in 1915–16 the RCI sent Rider Haggard on a fact-finding tour of the dominions to solicit their co-operation in post-war land settlement schemes.⁴ The Dominions Royal Commission published its final report in 1917, five years after beginning its deliberations. Among its many recommendations was the appointment of a central emigration authority to streamline oversight and in particular to license passage brokers and their agents. The Emigration Bill of 1918 which was intended to give effect to that recommendation was abandoned after falling foul of both the supporters and opponents of emigration, but the issue of enhanced state involvement had been put firmly on the agenda for the post-war era. It gained significant traction in 1919 with the appointment to the Colonial Office of Lord Milner

and Leo Amery, both ardent imperialists who believed that the future of the Empire had become sufficiently precarious to warrant a significant change of policy and practice.

As Secretary of State and Under-Secretary respectively, Milner and (especially) Amery steered through unprecedented developments, notably in funding, that signalled the government's new commitment to empire migration. The toothless Emigrants' Information Office was immediately replaced by the much more authoritative Oversea Settlement Committee, which from 1920 incorporated as its women's branch the newly-formed Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women.⁵ Priority was initially given to the soldier settlement scheme, which between 1919 and 1923 assisted 86,027 war veterans and their dependents to relocate on land in the dominions.⁶ Before long, however, attention turned to civilian emigration, and the Empire Settlement Act, passed in May 1922, allocated up to £3 million a year in loans and grants to subsidise passages, land settlement and training courses in partnership with dominion governments or with public and private organisations in the UK or the dominions.

The Empire Settlement Act was the government's most significant intervention in emigration since the temporary prohibition it had imposed on overseas movement during the American War of Independence. As well as reversing a long history of non-interventionism, it was remarkable in that it survived the 'Geddes Axe' by which the Treasury slashed public expenditure in many sectors in the 1920s. Renewed at 15-year intervals, the legislation remained on the statute book, latterly as the Empire and Commonwealth Settlement Act, until 1972. It provided an injection of funding for existing organisations such as the Salvation Army, women's and children's migration societies, and generated a number of new programmes, particularly in Australia. The funding offered opportunities to all income groups, not least those who might not otherwise have been able to afford the expenses of emigrating. Eligibility was based on the economic needs of the dominions, favouring individuals with agricultural skills and institutions that provided training in farming.

Between 1922 and 1936 a total of 405,230 emigrants went overseas under the auspices of the Empire Settlement Act: 46 per cent to Canada, over 42 per cent to Australia and 11 per cent to New Zealand. Only 0.3 per cent went to South Africa, where there were no government-assisted passages or government-directed land settlement schemes. Together, the four dominions accounted for 36 per cent of all Empire migration in that period.⁷ But while the subsidies undoubtedly facilitated – indeed, often made possible – the decisions of the impoverished, it is unclear how many would have emigrated anyway, and it seems that some individuals may have shunned the scheme for fear of its hidden financial strings.⁸ The legislation probably had a bigger impact on the charities which by the 1920s had well-developed programmes for assisting women, children and the unemployed. The migration work of organisations

like the Salvation Army and Dr Barnardo's Homes, which had previously relied wholly on charitable donations, was able to expand, while at the same time a handful of new enterprises came into being to capitalise on the unprecedented offer of state funding.

Several programmes were designed for the unemployed, potentially unemployed, or those in blind alley occupations. It was with a view to alleviating unemployment that in 1926 the Ministry of Labour opened two residential training centres for men in Suffolk, at Claydon and Brandon, where recruits were trained for six months and then tested, with those who passed being given an assisted passage to Canada or Australia. In 1928, with support from the Canadian government, further centres were opened in different parts of England and Wales, as well as one at Carstairs in Lanarkshire. Many of the recruits were out-of-work colliers, 10,000 of whom it was intended to ship to Canada to help with the prairie harvest. In the event 8449 men were sent, over 81 per cent of whom returned to Britain, many at the expense of the British government when the harvest work ended and they could not find alternative employment.⁹ Meanwhile, the Hudson's Bay Company had made an unsuccessful attempt to climb onto the funding bandwagon. In 1925 it created a subsidiary company to initiate programmes to settle migrants either in its own service or in the employment of Canadian farmers, followed in 1927 by an approach to the Oversea Settlement Department to establish a jointly-funded farm at Brogborough in Bedfordshire to train men aged 16–35 for land settlement in Canada and Australia.¹⁰

Residential centres were also provided for women to be trained in domestic service for the overseas market. In 1927, in partnership with the Australian government and the Ministry of Labour, the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women opened a residential home at Market Harborough, with facilities to train up to 40 women at a time. Similar centres were subsequently opened at Cardiff, Newcastle, London, Leamington Spa and Lenzie. The programmes demonstrated a somewhat paradoxical blend of feminist influences on the expansion of female employment opportunities and traditional attitudes towards women's work, as successful recruits had to agree to enter domestic service.¹¹

According to the Australian scholar A.G. Scholes, it was amongst juvenile males that the new funding and the publicity that surrounded it probably had greatest effect. In his contemporary evaluation of the Empire Settlement Act's impact Scholes noted that

The effects of this change were specially marked in the migration of juveniles. The granting of free or reduced passages enabled increasing numbers to go overseas, while the greater security offered under schemes which earned the approval of Government allayed the fears of parents, and attracted a type of boy who would not ordinarily have considered seeking a career overseas.¹²

Some of these boys migrated under the auspices of pre-existing organisations or new ones such as the Big Brother Movement, the British Immigration and Colonization Association or the Royal Overseas League's Migration Bureau.¹³ At the same time the increased volume and intensity of the rhetoric that accompanied the legislation shaped the attitudes and actions of educational establishments which could not benefit directly from the new funding. Schools had long been regarded as vital conduits of imperial propaganda and an obvious vehicle for disseminating ideas to parents through their children. Since the 1870s dominion recruitment agents had donated atlases, organised essay competitions and loaned out lantern slides to schools throughout the length and breadth of Britain, and in the 1920s these traditional techniques were supplemented by new film technologies and subsequently by radio broadcasts. In 1932 Scholes explicitly urged schools to 'provide such instruction in the history and geography of the Empire, and the principles and practices of agriculture as will arouse interest in the overseas dominions and facilitate the flow of labour to those parts where it is most urgently required.'¹⁴

In advocating that the curricula in elementary and secondary schools should emphasise agriculture over industry, Scholes was failing to take account of the increasingly problematic disjunction between rural demand and urban supply. More explicitly elitist arguments were advanced by Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood. In a speech to the Overseas League in January 1925 he argued that emigration to the dominions should be promoted in order to reinforce their 'golden chain of devotion to the British Crown', warning that 'the time might come when other people would seek to fill them', and specifically commending group settlement. The concept of *noblesse oblige* was particularly relevant in public schools, which Birdwood urged should be canvassed by 'vigorous and capable men' sent by the High Commissions of Canada and Australia. Public schoolboys should take a lead in preserving an empire whose future he hinted was being imperilled by unsuitable emigrants.

He did not say that a mistake was being made in our migration policy by starting with the so-called lower classes; but he believed better progress would be made in Empire settlement if the more intelligent people – people of education and imagination – could be induced to go out, for they, more than the labouring classes, would spread at home a knowledge of the greatness and natural wealth of the Dominions ... A knowledge of the Empire would spread better downwards than upwards and help more towards the fulfilment of the need of the British people spreading themselves as much as possible over the Dominions.¹⁵

Some public schools responded to Birdwood's challenge, albeit partially. Attempts were made to foster imperial unity and indirectly encourage emigration through educational exchanges which emphasised agricultural opportunities. In particular, empire tours were organised for senior pupils, mainly under the umbrella of the School Empire Tour Committee, an elitist organisation which oversaw 22 expeditions from boys' schools and which liaised

closely with the British government.¹⁶ Most of the tours incorporated visits to colonisation projects and group settlement schemes subsidised from the Empire Settlement Act's coffers, particularly in Australia. The naïve and unequivocal commendation of these programmes would ring somewhat hollow in subsequent decades, not least the description of the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra in Western Australia in 1926 as a place which offered 'a promise of health and happiness otherwise undreamed of for its trainees' and a place 'where children from the slums of English industrial towns are given the advantage of a healthy country life'.¹⁷ As recent investigations have demonstrated, life for many at Pinjarra was characterised not by health and happiness, but by paralysing fear and appalling abuse.¹⁸

One of the eight members of the School Empire Tour Committee was W. Hamilton Fyfe, headmaster of Christ's Hospital in Horsham, Sussex from 1919 to 1930. Unlike many other public schools Christ's Hospital was committed to providing education for poor boys through a rigorous means test as well as examination. Boys chosen by examination were the cream of the East End's elementary schools, while others – chosen by 'presentation' – were nominated by school governors who might select the sons of impoverished relatives or acquaintances. Christ's Hospital also undertook to provide jobs for pupils when they left school. Those with aptitude applied for university scholarships, and the governors' connections ensured that others secured posts in the City. But a significant number were trained in farming methods at the institution's 'Manual School' and an associated farm, and were often clear candidates for a career in the dominions.¹⁹ This was an outcome strongly advocated by Fyfe, not least in the hope that it would become a self-perpetuating flow, particularly to locations like Western Australia and Ontario. He believed that such opportunities had been seriously under-rated, for while 'farming is very good training for boys of slower wits ... we also want clever boys. In the past bad boys and failures have emigrated, but the Dominions want brains.'²⁰

The farm training scheme, which was inaugurated in 1921 on 1000 acres of land owned by Christ's Hospital, was intended to address such perceived problems of inadequate training and low status. Described in the press as a 'commendable experiment in Imperialism' and 'a nursery for Dominion settlers', it was immediately publicised in *The Graphic* as a venture that would equip pupils for farm work 'to suit them for life in the daughter States beyond the seas'.²¹ In similarly imperialistic vein, it was endorsed by Sir George Perley, former Canadian High Commissioner, who during a visit with other Dominion dignitaries to the newly opened farm 'addressed the boys and impressed on them the importance of their remaining within the Empire if they left these islands.'²² Within a few months *The Times* reported that progress had been 'very satisfactory', with 'numerous' expressions of gratitude being expressed by the emigration authorities in all the dominions 'for launching a scheme which they believe to have great possibilities' in providing technical training to 800 boys. Particular

contacts had been made with Canada and Australia, and an offer had been made by Australian farmers to take two Christ's Hospital recruits free of charge, waiving the normal fee of £250 per pupil. Parental reluctance to part with their children would, *The Times* predicted, diminish as the scheme gained momentum.²³

At the same time, the problem of inadequate funding for equipment was met by a bequest of £5200 from Richard T. Prowse, a former pupil and enthusiastic supporter of the school's emigration scheme. In 1922 Prowse left the money 'in trust for Christ's Hospital ... for the general purposes of that institution more especially towards the successful working of the system of Farm Training designed to fit the boys at the School for life in the Dominions as recently introduced by the Governors.'²⁴ The scheme also attracted the commendation of parliamentarians debating the Empire Settlement Bill, including Lord Denman, who suggested that government funding should be made available to promote the settlement of Christ's Hospital boys overseas, since 'it would be a very excellent thing for the Empire' and would also encourage other public schools to follow suit.²⁵ Following a visit to the school a correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* added that newspaper's voice to the view that 'the vast resources and potentialities of our Empire overseas' could best be developed and consolidated by suitably trained youths from the public schools. Perhaps concerned that the new state funding would open up a Pandora's box of settlers who were deemed unsuitable, it echoed the headmaster's opinion that 'one of the greatest drawbacks to Empire emigration in the past has been that the wrong types have been chosen'.²⁶

Let us explore some of the outcomes of these recommendations. In 1923 six boys went out to New Zealand to take up farm work in North Auckland, having been urged by W. Hamilton Fyfe to 'blaze a trail' for subsequent emigration.²⁷ Chosen from a total of 240 applicants, they were nominated by the New Zealand Farmers' Union with the expectation that they would ultimately take up land of their own and become permanent settlers, perhaps with financial help from their parents.²⁸ In February 1924 they were followed by three Christ's Hospital boys in a party of eight pupils from a variety of public schools, to take up similar positions under the Dominion government's farm-training scheme.²⁹ By 1927 a branch of the 'Cordon Bleu' – the Old Boys' Club in London – had been formed in New Zealand, and a three-day reunion in Auckland attracted 23 attendees who were a mixture of recent arrivals and older immigrants.³⁰

Others went to Australia, perhaps having been inspired by the rhetoric of the Prince of Wales, who in 1926 – in his capacity as President of Christ's Hospital – chaired a meeting at the school on the topic of dominion emigration. After he had assured his audience of 850 boys that many of them 'would be far happier living the free and vigorous life overseas than occupying a job in a bank office' he handed over to Lord Forster, a former Governor General, who spoke of the

'immense possibilities' for farming in Australia, even without capital. 'If young men had grit and determination, coupled with reasonable luck, a golden future awaited them' he predicted, echoing the Prince's opinion when he added that 'life in the golden sunshine and open air was a man's life, whereas life in an office was the life of a mole.'³¹ By 1927 plans were underway to organise reunions of former pupils in New South Wales, and in 1936 the annual gathering in Sydney was attended by 17 old boys.³²

The focus was by no means entirely on the Antipodes. As already mentioned, the Empire Settlement Act accounted for a very small percentage of emigrants to South Africa. For political, financial and cultural reasons South Africa and Southern Rhodesia always had a much more marginal appeal than Australia, New Zealand or Canada, even in locations where there were established traditions of British settlement, and these sentiments intensified in the course of the twentieth century.³³ Yet the elitist 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association of South Africa (founded in Grahamstown in 1920 but with a London committee) did receive funding under the legislation to facilitate the settlement of wealthy farmers and public school boys, and about 20 per cent of emigrants who went from Britain to South Africa between 1921 and 1930 did so under the Association's auspices.³⁴ Such emigration took place against a backdrop of increasing Afrikaner opposition, particularly after the election of J.B.M. Hertzog as Prime Minister in 1924, a position which he retained until 1939. The consequent political tensions were reflected in the letters of a handful of Christ's Hospital old boys who went to South Africa. W. Duffon, writing from Cape Town in 1932, had intended to return to England because he believed that South Africa under its present government was 'no place for an Englishman'. But he had been persuaded otherwise by the climate. Having recently visited England on his fourth attempt to resettle there since 1920, he found 'When winter was approaching with its leaden skies, soot, grime and fog, I longed for the Cape with its lovely climate and azure blue skies ... it would be an earthly Paradise were it not for some of our politicians'.³⁵ In similar vein another former pupil, writing from Natal in 1933, was 'sorry to report that things are none too bright, either politically or economically in South Africa'. He went on to claim that the intention of the Afrikaner government seemed to be 'to make things as unpleasant as possible for the British', that Britain was 'too full of her own troubles and difficulties to bother about us', and that the effect of 'driving out a lot of good British stock' was welcomed by those 'who are still living in the time of the Boer War'.³⁶

Most of the overseas material in the Christ's Hospital school magazine relates to Canada, particularly in the form of correspondence from old boys who had settled there or articles advocating further education in Canadian institutions. In December 1932, at the request of the London-based Anglo-Canadian Education Committee, the magazine printed a lengthy promotional article about opportunities in Canadian universities. During the previous three years,

about 50 boys had left English public schools to take courses at Canadian universities in the belief not only that Canada offered better openings in general, but that it was the dominion 'most likely to make the earliest recovery from the present world depression'.³⁷ Success was dependent on adaptability, hard work and a good sense of humour, and the article – perhaps aware of the proclivities of some of its readers – warned the potential recruit against adopting a pretentious or superior demeanour, or passing 'premature judgement' which was likely to offend Canadian national pride. 'If he refrains from giving the impression that he considers things are necessarily worse because they are different, he will find that Canadians of all types are very willing to help him in his new venture. Even his English accent will be no handicap if it is not of the affected kind'.³⁸ University life was certainly different, with fewer restrictions on liberty outside lecture hours than at Oxford or Cambridge (the only alternative institutions mentioned in the article). On the other hand, lecture attendance was compulsory and there was less time for extra-curricular activities. Fees were about half those of Oxbridge and vacation work was readily available, as were employment opportunities after graduation.

The Blue gave particular coverage to a farming scholarship, launched in 1927, which allowed up to 25 public school boys a year from the UK to take a two-year diploma course at Macdonald College, which was part of Montreal's McGill University. After a two-week induction boys spent seven months working on farms in Quebec and Ontario before returning to the college for academic study. Christ's Hospital was normally allocated six places a year on the scheme, and by 1932 had enrolled 15 students. Several of them were among 25 former pupils visited that year by a staff member, Major G. Green, who reported positively on their progress and prospects. They included the first recruit from 1927, who had relinquished farming for employment by the Sun Life Insurance Company in Montreal and had been joined by his mother and sister; five recruits from 1930, one of whom had moved on to a degree course at the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph; and five recruits from 1931, all of whom were back in college after a variety of summer jobs on Canadian farms.

Green was generally optimistic about the scheme. He admitted it was 'early days' to predict whether it would be a 'complete success' but was confident that 'with real diligence and energy' any lack of capital could be overcome much more easily than in England, adding the slightly qualified assertion that 'English boys are liked very much, if likeable'. Three recruits had returned to England, one for health reasons and two because they were 'unsuited to, or by, the country'. Another 'seemed a little bewildered' by the poultry ranch to which he had been sent and 'does not seem to have found his feet quite as well as the others have', but Green predicted, somewhat dismissively, that he simply needed to 'wake up' to his opportunities in order to do well. He noted that boys were visited 'frequently' though he did not elaborate on

after-care arrangements, and tacitly acknowledged the existence of problems in his passing comment that 'a boy does not remain at a farm where he is not happy unless it is obviously his own fault'. Wages ranged from 10 to 40 dollars a month, with a move towards the lower figure since the onset of the depression.³⁹

The impact of the depression was frequently mentioned in letters from former pupils resident all over Canada and most directly in a letter from a Macdonald College student, Henry Webb, to Major Green, written in 1934. Webb had enjoyed his farm placements, had done well in his examinations, and was hoping to use his contacts to secure a summer job in one of the CPR chateau hotels. 'Such jobs are very hard to get without influence', he wrote, but 'fortunately I know personally the General Manager of the Bank of Montreal, and he ought to be able to do something for me if anyone in Canada could'. Yet despite these advantages, the thrust of his letter was negative on the grounds that, despite the undoubted qualities of the diploma course, depression-hit Canada held out 'no prospects' to those without private means. All the diploma students from whom he had heard had either returned to England or would if they could. Consequently, he wrote, 'I would not advise, in fact I should dissuade anybody from coming out here to take the Diploma course, unless he has capital or a good job to go to afterwards. Otherwise, apart from two years of good living, it is practically suicide at the present time under these conditions'.⁴⁰

These sentiments were clearly not what the letter's recipient wanted to hear. Major Green appended a note asserting that Webb's 'pessimistic opinions' were not shared 'by older and more experienced people' who predicted that Canada's recovery from current conditions would in due course provide hard-working emigrants with opportunities 'which will be the envy of those who have lingered shivering on the brink'.⁴¹ There was a further backlash against Webb's warnings in subsequent letters to the magazine from two former Macdonald College students, who strongly defended a programme which they felt had prepared them well for their current employment on farms in the province of Quebec. 'It certainly cannot be referred to as suicide', wrote H. Chambers, who claimed that a hired man's life was 'not only liveable but profitable', as well as being a stepping-stone to a farm manager's position.⁴² J. Sangster had been 'shocked and surprised' by Webb's letter and sang the praises of Canada to boys who were prepared to work hard and tolerate 'a certain amount of climatic discomfort'.⁴³

On the other side of the argument, reports from individuals and old boys' associations across Canada – and in many other locations – frequently warned against emigration as the depression deepened. W.H. Owens, writing in November 1931 and again in February 1932 from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, where he had lived for the past 20 years, described 'awful' business conditions, 'with little improvement in sight, and thousands of persons, of all classes, on relief, a thing unknown before'. He advised boys who did not have work lined up to postpone coming to Canada until times had improved.⁴⁴ In 1932,

the 37-strong association of old boys in Vancouver had given a Christmas gift to three or four members who were 'up against it' in a city that was suffering severe unemployment and in 1934 A.H. Reed, also in Vancouver, warned old boys against coming to Canada unless their future was assured.⁴⁵ By 1936, however, conditions in Vancouver were apparently improving, with the restoration of wage cuts, while from the other side of the country an old boy, who was happily employed on a duck farm in Quebec after completing the Macdonald College course, commended the programme, commented that trade and farming were steadily improving, and announced his intention to settle permanently in Canada.⁴⁶ Correspondence from other dominions and beyond echoed warnings about the impact of the depression, not least in New Zealand, from where D.F.W. Maclean and E. Harper wrote in 1931 and 1933 respectively, painting a bleak picture of farming opportunities in particular. In Harper's opinion, business and general conditions had 'never been so bad' during the 25 years he had lived there and he advised any old boys who wanted to come to New Zealand to farm that it was 'useless at present' unless they could buy their own property.⁴⁷

Even before the onset of depression, however, advocates of the emigration of schoolboys did not have things all their own way. T.E. Limmer, Clerk to the Governors of Christ's Hospital, was perhaps concerned that funding from the Empire Settlement Act would exacerbate an outflow of the 'unsuitable', and he retained a traditional patriarchal perspective on the responsibilities of empire-building. In May 1922 he wrote to *The Times*,

For some time past the Mother Country has been shipping to the Dominions thousands of men and boys of all ages, capacities, and moral fibre, with no guaranteed leaven. The latter is the great need – the mettle such as founded America. We have it in abundance in our public schools and secondary schools; all that is wanted is to cultivate the vision of the boys dominion-wards and to get the co-operation of the Government, the parents, and the schoolmasters. Girls can follow later on when the boys have won their way and made homes for their mothers and sisters.⁴⁸

Limmer returned to the same theme a year later when he compared the preparation and after-care he felt was bestowed on emigrants from Barnardo's Homes with the lackadaisical attitude of schools towards boys who were 'the very type which, if welcomed and given a proper start, would prove of the most value to the Dominions and to the future welfare and unity of the Empire'. He claimed there were presently 'hundreds' of such boys 'wandering about London in search of work for want of any encouragement to seek their fortunes overseas'. Limmer therefore exhorted schools to pool their resources in order to create an infrastructure of settlement and after-care that would assuage parental concerns and provide 'just that touch of human kindness which Government control, however well managed, can never give'.⁴⁹ His qualms about state involvement were coupled with a belief that emigration

should not be adopted as a cure for unemployment, since 'those who migrate for this reason start with discontent, and often end in failure'.⁵⁰

The problem of parental reluctance was the recurring refrain of Limmer's rhetoric. Addressing a Christ's Hospital Founders' Day dinner in 1928 he complained that in his recruitment efforts 'he was up against parents every time', not only because they did not want to part from their children, but because they had the 'wrong impression' that British-born children would be at a disadvantage compared with those born in the dominions.⁵¹ His views were echoed by W. Hamilton Fyfe, whose article in the school magazine in 1928 put parental reluctance into a wider context. He began by highlighting the 'salutary change' that had taken place in referring to the Commonwealth as an 'organic whole' rather than a series of disparate colonies which existed for the purpose of 'relieving the mother country'. He then speculated that half a century of increasing reluctance among boys to take up overseas opportunities was due partly to the shrinking size of families, partly to the lack of adequate training in schools, but largely to the misplaced caution of parents. 'I find parents of small families "think imperially" only about other people's children', he wrote, 'and are pathetically eager to ensconce their single sons into some safe corner of a bank or insurance office, so that they may live at home as long as possible and pursue their cautious tenor with one eye on a pension at the end. It is the boy who suffers'.⁵² In 1930, the year in which Fyfe exchanged his headship at Christ's Hospital for the post of Principal at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, he was part of a delegation of 16 headmasters who visited Canada at the invitation of the Anglo-Canadian Education Committee and the two main railway companies. The objective was to learn about the country's problems and prospects, particularly about university opportunities, and the headmasters were unanimous that the future was bright for boys who were 'independent, industrious and enterprising'.⁵³

Fyfe emphasised in 1930 that boys 'must find jobs for themselves' but the pages of Christ's Hospital's magazine are replete with indications of occupational and social networking among former pupils across the empire, as well as offers of assistance to new arrivals. The largest and most vibrant old boys' association overseas was in Vancouver, where by 1936 it numbered 44 members. Four years later it agreed unanimously that all old boys in Canada should be canvassed with a view to establishing a scholarship at their old school as a tangible expression of appreciation of their own training.⁵⁴ Among former pupils elsewhere in Canada were at least three employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, one of whom regretted that by the 1930s the company was recruiting more extensively within Canada and thus closing off a traditional outlet for adventure-seeking young men from Britain.⁵⁵ As we shall see later, however, that was not entirely true and the fur trade continued to attract young British recruits until as late as the 1980s.

It is evident that the inter-war period, at least until the depression set in, saw an intensification of the upsurge of movement to the dominions that had characterised British emigration in the years immediately before August 1914. That continuity may have reflected a lingering Kiplingesque enthusiasm for the romance of imperial adventure, a sentiment that was cultivated particularly in public schools such as Christ's Hospital. A greater stimulus, however, was probably the legislative scaffolding that was put in place to sustain and promote public interest in the economic, social and political importance of the empire, and particularly of the dominions as locations where hard-working British settlers could still fulfil the promise of improvement that had been held out to their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors. At a time when quota laws were restricting opportunities in the United States, it is not surprising that the spotlight remained on Canada, Australia, New Zealand and (to a much lesser extent) South Africa. The Empire Settlement Act not only piqued public interest in general: as we have seen, it also strengthened the hand of organisations that were already involved in assisting emigration to those destinations, and simultaneously encouraged new entrants to climb onto the bandwagon of philanthropic emigration.

Continuities and Changes After the Second World War

The years after the Second World War brought both continuities and changes. On 22 June 1948 George VI ceased to be 'Emperor of India', when a proclamation from Buckingham Palace announced that the monarch was revoking the imperial suffix to his title.⁵⁶ Decolonisation during the next two decades brought about the end of the empire, at the same time as the British government's enthusiasm for empire settlement waned in the face of concerns about a shrinking domestic workforce and economic competition from the dominions. Yet emigrants continued to favour empire destinations, which accounted for 74 per cent of the net outward movement from the UK ports in the four years 1946–9, a slightly higher proportion than in the 1920s.⁵⁷ Canada and Australia were the most popular locations. Between 1948 and 1957 Canada received 431,993 British settlers, Australia 413,836, New Zealand 108,612 and South Africa 71,551.⁵⁸

A handful of the sponsored migration schemes that had been inaugurated in the inter-war period – or even earlier – continued until the 1980s, though the imperial rhetoric gave way to a less explicitly agenda-laden emphasis on employment opportunities. The Big Brother Movement, for instance, operated intermittently between 1925 and 1983, with over 71 per cent of its juvenile recruits emigrating after 1945. The Australian Senate Inquiry into Child Migration in 2000–1 claimed that the scheme accounted for the largest component of post-war youth migration to Australia, possibly as much as 50 per cent, with most going to New South Wales.⁵⁹ Barnardos, Quarriers, the

Salvation Army and Catholic childcare homes continued to send child migrants to their partner institutions in Australia until 1970 – a total of 3170, with the peak years being 1947 and 1950–5.⁶⁰ The Fairbridge Society, which had been established in 1909 specifically to transfer child migrants from Britain to the Empire, existed until the early 1980s. Its enterprises in Australia, Canada and Southern Rhodesia were part-funded by the UK government under the empire settlement arrangements, and persisted after 1945, when almost 1000 children were sent to Australia and 329 to a residential farm school on Vancouver Island which operated between 1935 and 1951. The Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College near Bulawayo, established by a separate organisation, the Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial Association, took 276 children in the decade after 1946.⁶¹ Its objective of offering an elite boarding school education differentiated it from other child migration societies and approximated most closely to the ethos of British public schools such as Christ's Hospital, which – while retaining a tacit sympathy for empire migration through the teaching of imperial history and geography – no longer promoted or participated in settlement schemes after the war.

As previously mentioned, subsidisation of migration under the Empire and Commonwealth Settlement Acts remained available until 1972. After the war the main impetus, as well as most of the funding, came from the Antipodes in the form of the famous ten-pound passages, which saw around one million Britons settle in Australia between 1947 and 1972. Following the Japanese bombing of Darwin in 1942 and 1943 Australian politicians had become even more concerned to promote a 'White Australia' policy by encouraging British settlement, an increasingly controversial strategy that lingered until the early 1970s. Meanwhile New Zealand operated a less publicised version of the scheme, which lasted until 1975, and brought in 77,350 migrants from the UK.⁶²

The 1940s and 50s saw some parallels with the 1920s that were directly related to the war, not least a prevailing pessimism and disillusionment that were fuelled by economic austerity and housing shortages. Rationing did not end until mid-1954, and the Suez Crisis in 1956 contributed to the loss of confidence in Britain's imperial future and role as a world power.⁶³ In some ways the cumulative national disillusionment of that period mirrored, albeit in a less acute way, the sentiments of the 1920s when 'homes fit for heroes' had not materialised and victory seemed hollow in the face of economic depression and unemployment. The sense of dislocation had been more acute in the 1920s because of the way in which the Great War had shaken Britain's economic and political foundations, created new social and cultural uncertainties, and – in the field of empire migration – replaced a confidence in the durability and loyalty of empire with fears about the future. After 1945 there was a similar air of defeatism in a country which was perceived as having only a past and not a future, but it was less of a surprise than in the earlier era.

In the event there was no return to the economic wilderness scenario and acute hardships of the inter-war years, which may explain why apparently more frivolous factors, like persistent bad weather, feature prominently in the testimony of many who emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s. We should not underestimate the significance of notoriously severe winters such as those of 1947 and 1963. This was the era of the London pea-souper smogs, the most severe of which, in December 1952, may have killed around 12,000 people.⁶⁴ One of the most frequently recurring phrases in the testimony of emigrants from that era is that they were escaping from an environment where 'everything was grey'.⁶⁵

There was also a renewed link between military service and emigration. The ex-service free passage scheme that had assisted the settlement of First World War veterans in the dominions was reintroduced in a much truncated form for ten years after 1946, when almost 50,000 ex-service personnel and merchant seamen went to Australia under its auspices, mainly in the first three years of operation. Among veterans who had emigrated under the earlier programme 34,753 (over 42 per cent) had gone to Australia, but both there and in Canada they had encountered problems with uneconomic land, and many abandoned their farms. The resurrected scheme abandoned much of the rhetoric of empire migration and was presented simply as part of the process of demobilisation. The change was signalled by responsibility and funding for the scheme coming under the Ministry of Labour and National Service, rather than the Colonial Office or the new Commonwealth Relations Office, and there was a recognition (not present in 1919) that take-up was likely to be small. The dominions – with the exception of Australia – were also much less enthusiastic than in 1919, prioritising the resettlement of their own service personnel and unwilling to subscribe to British migration policy unless it was clearly to their own advantage. It was precisely the perception of advantage that explains Australia's support for the scheme: still reeling from its wartime experiences and aware of labour shortages, it saw veterans' settlement as a way to bolster national defences and expand the national economy. Its willingness to participate in the soldier settlement scheme was not because it wanted to help the resettlement of British veterans as part of a fraternal commitment to the Commonwealth family but as part of a wider immigration plan to boost Australia's economy and population.⁶⁶

Military service played a more indirect part in the decisions of a number of post-war emigrants, as it had done with their predecessors after 1918. In both eras the experience of serving alongside recruits from throughout the Commonwealth and beyond fuelled new ambitions among those whose horizons had previously been limited to the farm, factory or office. It was a trigger also identified in interviews with some of those who underwent National Service. In 1954 the late Paddy McFarlane from Edinburgh completed an engineering apprenticeship that had been interrupted by two years' National Service.

Alerted to opportunities in various Commonwealth countries, 20-year-old Paddy 'decided to look for greener fields' than Scotland offered, but his emigration to New Zealand came about partly by accident rather than specific design. As he explained:

Back then, after the Second World War, there was a lot of emigration to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Southern Rhodesia. A lad that I worked with had a brother in Southern Rhodesia, and gave me glowing reports of living in Southern Rhodesia, which is now Zimbabwe. And it finished up, my papers arrived from New Zealand House before the Southern Rhodesian ones, and I had my medical and my interview and was accepted before the Rhodesian ones come [*sic*] to light, so I was probably very lucky in a way.⁶⁷

Two years later Glaswegian Easton Vance had also considered going to Southern Rhodesia. Like Paddy, he reflected retrospectively on his relief at not having gone there. Easton's National Service in the RAF had brought him into contact with servicemen from across the Commonwealth, as well as taking him out of Scotland for the first time in his life. In an interview in 2008, he explained how, having been awakened to 'the lure of different places ... I got a little bit of a wanderlust'. During a follow-up conversation in 2017 he confirmed the significance of a National Service encounter in bringing him to Vancouver, where one of his RAF comrades had settled. There was, Vance stressed, 'no question about it – that's what did it for me'.⁶⁸

But Easton Vance's experience demonstrates that – as with most emigrants – a multiplicity of influences went into the decision to move overseas. Newly married, he and his wife were frustrated in their search for a house. At the same time he had been denied promotion at Colville's steel works in Motherwell. These frustrations coincided with a period when, as he recalled, 'practically every country in the Commonwealth and elsewhere were calling for emigrants'. Easton researched a variety of options.

What I did was acquire all the newspapers of the countries in which I was interested, and then decided from what I could glean from that what the cost of living would be like relative to the earning power. And then I settled on Canada, but on this particular part of Canada [Vancouver]. I didn't want to get into the extreme weather climates. New Zealand appealed to me, but it was economically in a pretty poor way, and so I decided that this was the place. Although I have to tell you, I was tempted to look at Rhodesia and I'm sure glad I didn't.⁶⁹

That emigration was rarely mono-causal is also evident in the experience of the Law family from Aberdeen. We see here, in particular, the combination of a post-war veteran's restlessness, the encouragement of a recruitment agent, a specific job offer, and the supportive presence of other emigrants, including family members. In 1950 Charlie Law's parents left Aberdeen when his father and some others were recruited to work in a paper mill in northern British Columbia. As Charlie explained,

My father had came [*sic*] out of the army in 1946, 47, couldn't really settle – he worked for the Electric Company in Aberdeen. Him and a few others went to a seminar on Canada in the Music Hall, and a few of them had got together – I met them – they used to come to the house, and they were all talking about going to Canada, a place called Ocean Falls.⁷⁰

Three years later Charlie's parents persuaded their son to join them in Ocean Falls on the grounds that it was a good place for him to find work after he had finished his engineering apprenticeship at an Aberdeen shipyard. He was soon joined by his fiancée, and over the next four decades Charlie, his wife and their children migrated back and forth between Canada and Scotland until the elder Laws retired to British Columbia's Sunshine Coast.

In a different way, parental precedent and the war also shaped the experiences of siblings Cathie and Calum Murray, in New Zealand and Canada respectively. Six years of their childhood, from 1927 to 1932, had been spent in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, where their Lewis-born father worked on grain elevators. When he was killed in a workplace accident his widow brought the children back to Lewis, but in 1947, while Cathie was working with the NAAFI in Germany, a chance conversation with a fellow worker from New Zealand led her to apply for a ten-pound passage. She had already written to Canada House with a view to returning across the Atlantic, but when her letter went unanswered she approached New Zealand House instead. Like Paddy McFarlane, she received a prompt reply, was accepted, and spent ten years in Wellington and Auckland before returning reluctantly to Lewis via Canada and the USA. Calum, meanwhile, followed in his father's footsteps by spending three decades commuting annually between Lewis and Canada, where he spent his summers freighting grain on the Great Lakes and the St Lawrence Seaway.⁷¹

All the triggers that shaped the decisions of the Murray siblings, the Law family, Easton Vance and Paddy McFarlane would have been familiar to emigrants in the 1920s. Employment, adventure and the perceived familiarity associated with precedent and chain migration were ever-present factors in the centuries-long narrative of human mobility. Ian Skinner's belief that 'abroad was where it all happened' (a comment which gives this paper its title) represented a widespread sentiment, particularly among those whose families and friends had sojourned or settled overseas. Ian, whose father was in the RAF, had been a sea-evacuee to the USA during the war, and his later career in the shipping business took him to Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan before his ultimate return to Edinburgh.⁷²

As we have seen, it was primarily to the dominions that British emigrants directed their steps in the decades after both World Wars, not because of any theoretical adherence to the virtues of empire, but simply because they were persuaded that it was in such locations that the best opportunities awaited them. After leaving agricultural college in 1951, 20-year-old Angus Pelham

Burn answered two job advertisements in the local paper, one for lumberjacks in Queensland and the other for a post with the Hudson's Bay Company. Only the latter responded and Angus subsequently spent seven formative years in northern Canada. His decision, he recalled, was not dictated by the destination.

I strongly suspect it was a desire to see 'those far away places with strange sounding names' and probably, if there had been an opening in the pampas of Argentina working on an estancia, I would have gone for it as it would have given me the chance to learn Spanish ... I could easily have gone almost anywhere so the advertisement made the decision for me in all probability ... I never thought about Commonwealth or Dominions although I recall ... that the 'red blobs in the atlas' were important but certainly had no effect on my decision.⁷³

For Angus, the key that unlocked his Canadian sojourn was the tried and trusted newspaper advertisement, which had been a staple of the promotion of emigration since the eighteenth century. Equally crucial for many emigrants, particularly in the choice of destination, was competitive canvassing by recruitment agents, a strategy which also had a centuries-long pedigree. Professionalisation of recruitment was led by Canada after Confederation but by the late nineteenth century all the traditional colonies of settlement, as well as the United States, employed a range of salaried and commissioned recruiters, backed up by an army of booking agents in villages, towns and cities across the British Isles. After would-be emigrants had been alerted by a press advertisement or a colourful poster, the standard diet was the public lecture, illustrated by lantern slides, and followed up by one-to-one interviews with interested parties, often in the premises of a booking agent or an employment exchange. In the battle for recruits the agents frequently contradicted each other's claims and on occasion even tore down rival posters.⁷⁴ Environmental and societal contrasts between Britain and the dominions were a favourite theme of lectures which injected the colour and glamour of overseas frontiers into the drab, predictable lives of those whose horizons were bounded by monotone grey domesticity.

Agents in the 1920s adopted the same techniques as their predecessors, while adding to their arsenal the new opportunities activated by the Empire Settlement Act. There was, however, a growing disparity between their determination to maintain momentum by capitalising on unprecedented public funding and the reluctance of dominion immigration departments to incur expenditure. Even before the depression agents in Britain complained that the effectiveness of their work was being impeded by the parsimony of policy-makers.⁷⁵

After the Second World War the message remained much the same as it had in earlier eras but the medium changed to take advantage of new technology, including talking movie films, radio and television. The Imperial Institute had begun to build up a substantial slide and film library in the 1920s and its growing collection was regularly borrowed by a variety of organisations. By

1950 some films were portraying real migrants acting their parts in docudramas, notably a clutch of promotional films produced by the New Zealand Labour Department. One of the few that survives, *Journey for Three*, wove a fictional romance into its portrayal of the experiences of three young settlers whose parts were played by real migrants. One, Margaret Armstrong, lived in the same hostel in Wellington where Cathie Murray from Lewis worked for two years after she arrived in New Zealand in 1947.⁷⁶

The post-war generation also had easy access to a powerful new recruitment medium at the flick of a switch in their own homes. From its inception in 1922 the BBC had been dedicated to the global projection of British identity and a determination to promote imperial unity.⁷⁷ Those objectives persisted into the 1950s and 60s and despite Britain's shrinking world role the imperial ethos continued to be imparted through productions such as 'Children of the Commonwealth', a 1950s series for *Children's Hour*. Recruitment was a direct objective and outcome of other radio programmes which focused particularly on opportunities in the dominions. While radio was the normal medium, television made an occasional contribution: after New Zealand had been explicitly promoted to teenagers in a 'Teleclub' programme in January 1955 the High Commission in London received 4600 letters in six days, along with enough counter enquiries to occupy four desk officers.⁷⁸

Radio broadcasts focused primarily on Canada, followed in turn by New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. The emphasis on the Commonwealth was clear: the USA featured in only one broadcast, which was something of a paradox at a time when American imports were dominating cinema and television screens. Post-war coverage began in 1948 when the Conservative politician Bernard Braine hosted *Lands in Search of People*. That seven-part series of 15-minute programmes began by presenting the justification for empire migration before scrutinising opportunities in five separate destinations, ending with the centuries-old advice about the need for hard work, perseverance and adaptability.⁷⁹ The theme was revisited in 1952 when the Home Service broadcast *New Lands for Old*. Presenter Iven Senson explored migration policies and practices through a series of interviews with government officials and participants, and came to the conclusion that 'almost everybody who emigrates to any of the Commonwealth countries settles in pretty well'.⁸⁰

While the emphasis was undoubtedly positive the BBC wanted to avoid potential criticism that it was simply a propaganda arm of the Commonwealth Relations Office. Negative experiences were therefore injected into programmes as a warning to listeners that migration was not an easy option, with a successful outcome guaranteed. The 'colonial empire', they were warned, brought particular challenges, and those without capital should not just 'go out and hope for the best'. In the dominions they were told to expect housing shortages and reminded of the need to pull their weight. Specifically, they were warned about the difficulties of integration in Afrikaans-speaking areas of South

Africa; the lack of openings for unskilled white workers in Rhodesia; New Zealand's allegedly limited cultural life; and the importance of not having overblown expectations. As one interviewee from Alberta put it: 'make sure you're mentally able to take the shock of finding that being British is not a passport to instant success'.⁸¹

The female perspective was not ignored. Listeners to *Woman's Hour* were warned about the potential for being misled by alluring images of an overseas Garden of Eden. During the notoriously harsh winter of 1947 one contributor to the programme described how she had been captivated by the 'enormous pictures' of sun-soaked cornfields, groaning fruit trees and gleaming towns that decorated the walls of the unnamed dominion office into which she stepped 'out of the snow and fog, sleet and slush'. But she went on to remind listeners that the dominions only wanted responsible migrants with perseverance, skills and enough capital to make a start, not those 'whose only qualification was wishful thinking and whose enthusiasm was born of a restlessness – the aftermath of war'.⁸²

Perhaps in an attempt to dispel wishful thinking, recruitment agents also seem to have become more circumspect after the war, though conflicts of interest could sometimes arise. In the 1950s Bob Smart spent thirteen months based in London as an interviewer and immigration counsellor for Ontario House. He and his colleagues provided advice rather than advocacy, but they worked alongside representatives of three Ontario employers who were engaged in specific recruitment drives, a situation that sometimes created tensions and dilemmas. Bob considered that the more under-stated government approach of the 1950s was significantly different from Canadian agency activity in earlier generations. He attributed this partly to improved communications, which meant the office was furnished with current Canadian newspapers and magazines, but he felt there was also a greater degree of integrity by the 1950s, citing railway company advertisements from an earlier generation as an example of bad practice.

I have seen those ads for Canadian Pacific. 'Come to the west and we'll have a farm for you'... And it was really just a land deal. They were just trying to fill up the land on each side of the railway tracks because that's the only way they were going to get any business... The Second World War had a lot to do with people's insight and appreciation. A lot of Canadians came over here and generally speaking you know were well received. We were Commonwealth, we were on the same side... Also I think there was a maturing that went through in Canada after the war.⁸³

Bob Smart compared the cautionary approach of the Ontario government with Australia's more indiscriminate push for immigrants, a disparity which he believed was a consequence of the wartime invasion scare.⁸⁴ But Gordon Ashley, a recruitment agent in the Australian government's emigration office in Glasgow in the late 1960s and early 1970s, also tried – like Bob – to

provide realistic advice as he questioned interviewees about why they wanted to emigrate.

Well, it was more to do with motivation, certainly to do with how much they understood where they were going to, did they understand at all, did they understand what they were up against in settlement ... And remember, many of them to begin with were staying in migrant hostels, so this was going to be a big, big cultural shock to the system, not easy to cope with.⁸⁵

The cautious approach of the BBC and dominion recruitment agents, along with migrants' qualms and criticisms, remind us that we are not dealing with a neutral phenomenon. Migration – outgoing and incoming – had been controversial for centuries, and it is no surprise that it remained so after both the First and Second World Wars. Political attitudes were always fuelled by economic arguments, the core of which related to whether those leaving were an asset or a liability to their native land. Criticism in the 1920s came from across the entire political spectrum as capitalists, communists, socialists and nationalists deplored, respectively, the squandering of investment in education, the failure to tackle domestic poverty and unemployment, and the neglect of state welfare provision. The counter-argument put forward by the imperial lobby was that emigrants who went to the dominions were simply joining a different branch of a British family which shared a common economic and cultural agenda.

After 1945, however, that stance became much more difficult to sustain. Bernard Braine conceded in 1948 that Britain could ill afford to lose young tradesmen and professionals who, he said, were 'once again taking the Empire trail', but he advocated looking at the situation in a wider strategic context, and claimed that a redistribution of population to match resources would strengthen Britain and the Commonwealth alike.⁸⁶ Yet on the whole the attitudes of even Conservative politicians towards empire migration shifted from support to reluctance. These views were shaped by fears about a shrinking population in Britain and possible economic competition from the dominions, fuelled by increasing concern about the 'brain drain' – a phrase coined in the 1960s with reference to the loss of skilled scientific, engineering and medical personnel.

At the same time, the Labour Party opposed each renewal of the Empire and Commonwealth Settlement Act in the 1950s and 60s, claiming it was a counsel of despair rather than a positive vehicle for ensuring the cohesion of the Commonwealth. In Scotland Willie Ross, who later became Secretary of State for Scotland, argued that the £1.5 million a year that was earmarked for developing Commonwealth emigration should instead be spent 'in getting some of the Scots back into Scotland', particularly into the depopulated Highlands.⁸⁷ His arguments were not dissimilar to those of many Scottish politicians in the 1920s who had argued that funding for empire settlement should have been spent on domestic economic development in Scotland.

But post-war Scottish opposition to emigration contained one particularly potent new ingredient: self-confident political nationalism. In the 1920s, when Scotland had lost a tenth of its population, commentators across the political spectrum had vehemently condemned emigration and its advocates. Three decades later that baton was taken up most stridently by a rejuvenated Scottish National Party. In 1956 Douglas Henderson, who would later become deputy leader of the SNP, lobbied the Prime Minister of New Zealand to withdraw all his emigration officers from Scotland. He claimed that their canvassing – which he attributed to malevolent encouragement by the English government – was resulting in a ‘disastrous drain of the finest and best of Scotland’s youth’.⁸⁸

Commonwealth Migration Reconfirmed or Reconceptualised? Some Concluding Reflections

Emigrants from Britain to the dominions between the wars, and those who encouraged or assisted them, set patterns of attitude and experience which were both replicated and reshaped by their successors to those Commonwealth countries after 1945. Each generation was, of course, impacted by global conflict and its legacies, including the wider horizons that were opened up as a result of military service and veterans’ settlement schemes. The unprecedented funding for civilian settlement that was released by the Empire and Commonwealth Settlement Acts provided an official policy backdrop that straddled both periods. Its provisions reinforced existing schemes of institutional migration and generated new ones, as well as making it possible for many individuals and families to make an otherwise unaffordable move. The long life-span of that legislation reflects the persistence and practical application of imperial rhetoric, its termination in 1972 coinciding with a period when unemployment in the UK and elsewhere was just about to increase substantially.

In the first decade after the Second World War 80 per cent of British migrants went to Commonwealth countries but there were significant changes in both official policy and commentators’ mood, as Britain’s economic and political interests were steadily realigned, and the feared return to a 1930s-type depression did not materialise. As we have seen, the veterans’ scheme operated only in Australia, for a short period, and was driven by Australia’s determination to strengthen its economy and its white population. The imperial rhetoric that had characterised the writings of Christ’s Hospital masters and former pupils gave way to more measured encouragement, a caution which was evident in the frustrations and dilemmas described by Bob Smart and Gordon Ashley. By the time Gordon was recruiting settlers for Australia the Commonwealth Settlement Act was off the statute book, decolonisation was virtually complete, and Britain had joined the EEC. There was a much less tangible sense – or advocacy – of a family of nations pulling together than had been

the case in earlier generations and much less emphasis on the romance and responsibility of empire. The demise of institutional migration schemes also reinforced a shift from the public perception of emigration as a partially corporate phenomenon to a more emphatically personal, private process. Churches, trades unions, ethnic associations and indeed entire communities had in previous centuries played a central role in the conception and implementation of emigration, and in the formation of emigrant identities. That role had already been significantly diminished by the inter-war period but gathered much more pace after 1945 in the context of an increasingly secular and individualistic culture.

Attitudes and experiences were also affected by technology. Mobility was, of course, the very essence of migration, and the ongoing mobility that characterised many migrants was facilitated by the communications revolution that had begun with the steamship and which by the 1950s embraced the aeroplane. When harnessed to the government subsidies that were available until 1972 it is perhaps not surprising that some post-war migrants became less committed to putting down roots overseas. In particular, the easy availability of subsidised emigration to Australia under the ten-pound passage seems to have been a two-edged sword for the Australian government. It was certainly concerned by a survey that suggested 29 per cent of Britons admitted to the country had returned by 1966, and there was also public indignation that migrants were treating the experience as a temporary experiment or two-year holiday at Australian government expense.⁸⁹

Previously easy entry to New Zealand and Canada was tempered by initial post-war housing shortages in the former and the introduction in 1967 of the points-based system in the latter. In South Africa ethical issues which had not troubled previous generations began to feature in the thinking of some post-war migrants, particularly by the 1960s. Their dilemmas are illustrated in a final piece of oral testimony, that of Janet Galt. Janet and her husband Eric moved from England to Johannesburg within a year of their marriage in 1966. Eric, a recently qualified chartered accountant, was unhappy in his job with Hawker Siddeley aircraft manufacturing in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, but the over-riding trigger for their emigration was the persistent interference of his mother with the couple's everyday life. Desperate to get away, Eric turned down Cooper Brothers' offer of a job in Canada because of the initial requirement to work in the firm's London office for two years, but when Coopers offered him a two-year contract in Johannesburg straight away, he accepted without hesitation. The Galts' choice of a country which had left the Commonwealth in 1961 was decided when they were presented with an immediate solution to their domestic desperation. Janet recalled that 'We didn't know much about South Africa – knew there was a colour issue there, but heard it was really safe. So as far as we were concerned it wasn't a problem'.⁹⁰ The decision was easier for her than for Eric, a peripatetic upbringing having been an

accompaniment of her father's employment with the RAF. Janet had spent part of her childhood in Peshawar, Pakistan, where she had learned Urdu as she played with other children in what she remembered as a colour-blind environment.

The Galts' standard of living in Johannesburg compared favourably with that in England. Janet loved the climate and leisured lifestyle, as well as the financial security, which meant they could start a family earlier than would have been possible at home. But at the same time Janet was increasingly troubled that they were being sucked insidiously into collusion with the apartheid regime. They were, she admitted, 'completely naïve', and it was only when they were given an induction by Coopers after their arrival that they became aware of the 'strict rules' within which society was organised.⁹¹ She was aware that her privileged position tempted her to make excuses for unacceptable practices, but it was only when Eric's contract was coming up for renewal that things came to a head.

When it was coming up to finish, we hummed and hawed, what are we going to do? And we were having that sort of conversation on a daily basis at home ... And I walked down the street with some friend's children – small children – and Janine assumed that the black man – she was four – she assumed that the black man coming towards us was going to walk off the pavement for her. And I said to Eric, 'If we do another two years even, Christopher, at a year, will be thinking like that. I can't have that. We need to come back now'. And that's what made us come back at that point.⁹²

The return to England was not easy. The climate was a shock, particularly to the children; the NHS did not measure up to the care they had received in Johannesburg; they were hard up financially; friends in their church congregation did not comprehend how they could have tolerated living in such an inequitable society; and their social life in a Sussex commuter town was much more restricted than it had been in Johannesburg. If they had gone to Australia or New Zealand, Janet reflected, 'I don't think we'd have come home. Cos we came home because of the colour situation ... we didn't want to be in England'.⁹³

Despite the Galts' experience and the changes in government strategy between the 1920s and the period after 1945, migration to the Commonwealth – and elsewhere – was not significantly reconceptualised after the Second World War. From a policy perspective the perennial arguments about ill-matched supply and demand did not disappear, although British concerns now focused on the so-called 'brain drain' rather than the loss of rural workers or artisans. On the whole, emigrants' priorities and practices displayed a remarkable continuity, not only between the two periods, but also when compared with departures in earlier generations. Irrespective of the era and area, emigrants were always characterised by the same set of core values and strategies: they strove to improve their own or their children's prospects; they deployed a combination of personal connections and official mechanisms to

effect their relocation; and they tapped into a variety of ethnic networks to facilitate their integration into new lands. An initial restlessness was often matched to a general perception that ‘abroad was where it all happened’, but their ultimate destination, as in the case of Cathie Murray, might well be dictated by serendipity or chance conversations. That the Old Commonwealth was consistently the dominant focus of migrants’ attention was a reflection of accident rather than design and certainly not a demonstration of loyalty to a retreating Empire.

Notes

1. Constantine, “Introduction: Empire Migration and Imperial Harmony,” 2.
2. For the post-Napoleonic period, see Vance, “The Politics of Emigration,” 37–60. For the 1880s, see Malchow, *Population Pressures*.
3. Constantine, “Empire Migration and Imperial Harmony,” 3.
4. Norfolk-born Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856–1925) is best remembered as a writer of romantic adventure fiction set in Africa, but he was also involved in agricultural reform. After spending time as a government official and farmer in Natal and the Transvaal from 1875 to 1881 he returned to England, where he trained as a lawyer. Appointed to the Dominions Royal Commission, he travelled widely on fact-finding missions to investigate dominion land settlement, of which he was a firm advocate. For a biography of Haggard, see Higgins, *Rider Haggard*.
5. Constantine, “Empire Migration and Imperial Harmony,” 4. When the committee of the Emigrants’ Information Office resigned in December 1918, it put on record that it ‘welcomed the decision of the Government to exercise closer supervision over emigration on the lines recommended by the Dominions Royal Commission’. (*House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, Cmd. 573*, p. 2), ‘Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee for the year ended 31st December 1919.
6. For a detailed study of the Soldier Settlement Scheme, see Kent Fedorowich, *Unfit for Heroes*.
7. Constantine, “Empire Migration and Imperial Harmony,” 16.
8. See, for instance, reservations expressed in the *Stornoway Gazette*, 11 February 1926, p4, c4.
9. Field, *Working Men’s Bodies*, 107–11; Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 30–1.
10. Selwood and Richtik, “The Hudson’s Bay Company’s Sponsored Agricultural Settlement,” 119–33; Field, *Working Men’s Bodies*, 114.
11. Field, *Working Men’s Bodies*, 178, 187–8; Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 228, 236. The domestic training schemes and the resentment they could cause among working-class Scottish women are also discussed in Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939*, 58, 84, 115–16.
12. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement*, 75–6.
13. Langfield, “Voluntarism, Salvation, and Rescue,” 86–114. See also Constantine, Harper, and Lynch, *Child Abuse and Scottish Children Sent Overseas through Child Migration Schemes*, Executive Summary, Appendix 1 (Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, June 2020) <https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/media/2520/child-abuse-and-scottish-children-sent-overseas-through-child-migration-scheme-executive-summary-june-2020-final-300620.pdf>.

14. Scholes, *Education for Empire Settlement*, 235.
15. "Public Schools and Migration," *The Times*, 24 January 1925, p7, c5.
16. There were also four schoolgirl tours, organised under the auspices of the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women. See, *inter alia*, Pickles, "Exhibiting Canada," 81–96; Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity*, 75–90.
17. Woolley, *Sometimes a Soldier*, 82; Walker, "A Schoolboy's Notes on Australia," 349–50. For detailed discussion of the School Tours of the Empire, see Harper, "Personal Contact Is Worth a Ton of Text-Books," 48–76.
18. Pinjarra was one of the schools investigated by the UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/document/child-migration-programmes-investigation-report-march-2018>; <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>). It was subsequently investigated by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry: Constantine, Harper, and Lynch, *Child Abuse and Scottish Children Sent Overseas through Child Migration Schemes Report*. <https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/news/child-abuse-and-scottish-children-sent-overseas-through-child-migration-schemes-report/>.
19. Letter from Christopher Fyfe (son of Sir William Fyfe) to author, 10 February 2005.
20. *The Times*, 4 February 1922, p7, c1. See also *Evening Post* (New Zealand), 1 April 1922, p16, c4. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/EP19220401.2.135>.
21. *The Graphic*, 25 June 1921, p11. See also *The Times*, 14 June 1921, p11, c4; 21 June 1921, p6, c5.
22. "Farm Training at Horsham," *The Times*, 3 February 1922, p10, c6; *The Mail* (Adelaide), 4 February 1922, p1, c7.
23. *The Times*, 3 February 1922, p10, c7. See also *Hull Daily Mail*, 17 June 1921.
24. Thanks to Martin Prowse, great-nephew of R.T. Prowse, for alerting me to this information. See also *The Times*, 26 January 1925, p7, c5.
25. *House of Lords Parliamentary Papers*, 29 May 1922, vol. 50, cc. 848–64.
26. *Daily Telegraph*, 4 December 1922, cutting in Christ's Hospital scrapbook. The boys' public school educational system was also exported to parts of the empire to 'improve' the colonies. See, for example, Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia*.
27. "Schoolboy Immigrants," *New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 1923, p8, c3.
28. "An Excellent Type," *Evening Post*, 20 March 1924, p6, c9.
29. *New Zealand Herald*, 7 February 1924, p9, c1.
30. *New Zealand Herald*, 4 June 1927, p10, c8.
31. *The Queenslander*, 5 June 1926, p19, c3.
32. *The Sun* (Sydney, NSW), 5 March 1927, p8, c1; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1936, p12, c5.
33. For analysis of emigration to Southern Africa, see MacKenzie and Dalziel, *The Scots in South Africa*; and Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, Chapter 5, "Africa South of the Sahara," 111–47. See also below, [17].
34. By 1936, only 1226 migrants had gone to Southern Africa (including Southern Rhodesia) under the Act. (Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 132–3). See also Fedorowich, "Anglicization and the Politicization of British Immigration," 222–46.
35. *The Blue*, vol. LX, no. 2, December 1932, p. 119.
36. *The Blue*, vol. LX, no. 1, November 1932, p. 40.
37. *The Blue*, vol. LX, no. 2, December 1932, pp. 54–8. The quote is from page 54.
38. *Ibid.*, 5.
39. G.G[reen], 'Old Blues in Canada', *The Blue*, vol. LX, no. 5, June 1933, pp. 209–15.

40. Henry Webb to Major Green, 11 February 1934, *The Blue*, vol. LXII, no. 4, March 1934, pp. 134–5.
41. *Ibid.*, 135.
42. *The Blue*, vol. LXI, no. 5, June 1934, p. 179.
43. *The Blue*, vol. LXI, no. 6, July 1934, pp. 239–40.
44. *The Blue*, vol. LIX, no. 1, November 1931, p. 29; vol. LX, no. 1, November 1932, p. 171.
45. *The Blue*, vol. LX, no. 1, November 1932, p. 171; vol. LXI, no. 5, June 1934, p. 217.
46. Report from G. Lancaster, Vancouver, *The Blue*, vol. LXIII, no. 5, June 1936, p. 259; letter from Stephen Morson, Broome Lake Duck Farm, Knowlton, Quebec, in *ibid.*, p. 259.
47. *The Blue*, vol. LVIII, no. 3, February 1931, p. 129; *ibid.*, vol. LXI, no. 2, December 1933, p. 80. For warnings about other locations, see, *inter alia*, letter from A.M. Pearson in Argentina, 15 January 1931 (*The Blue*, vol. LVIII, no. 4, March 1931, pp. 144–5).
48. *The Times*, 8 May 1922, p8, c5.
49. *The Times*, 19 April 1923, p14, c5.
50. *The Times*, 26 January 1925, p7, c5.
51. *Daily Telegraph*, 24 October 1928, cutting in Christ’s Hospital scrapbook, ‘Public school boys and girls and the empire. How Christ’s Hospital prepares for careers overseas’, *The Journal of Careers*, December 1928.
52. Fyfe, “The Empire and Its Chances,” 68–70 (cutting in Christ’s Hospital scrapbook). See also Fyfe, “Is the Public School a Handicap?”, an article in which he reiterated his view that the dominions afforded good opportunities to those willing to work hard, and that the main obstacle was parental reluctance.
53. Fyfe, “Canada for Youth,” cutting in Christ’s Hospital scrapbook. Fyfe was employed at Queen’s until 1936, when he returned to the UK to become Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Aberdeen University. He remained there until he retired in 1948.
54. *The Blue*, vol. LIV, no. 1, November 1936, p. 40; *ibid.*, vol. LXVII, no. 3, February 1940, pp. 94–5.
55. Letter from W.A. Wickham, *The Blue*, vol. LXIV, no. 2, December 1936, p. 93.
56. Taylor, “The Last Emperor,” 2–12.
57. Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p. 3. Between 1920 and 1929 71 per cent of emigrants from UK ports went to empire destinations.
58. Constantine, “Migrants and Settlers,” 167–8.
59. *Australian Senate Inquiry into Child Migration*, Submission by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, December 2000, pp. 28–9, in *Origins of the Child Migration Scheme – Parliament of Australia*, <https://www.aph.gov.au> > senate > child_migrat > submissions > sub42_pdf. Between 7000 and 11,000 boys emigrated under the auspices of the Big Brother Movement.
60. Evidence of Stephen Constantine to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, 27 February 2017. EWM00005_025, [2.2.8]. <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/child-migration/part-b-child-sexual-abuse-child-migration-programmes/1-brief-history-child-migration>.
61. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes, Investigation Report*, March 2018, 2.2.1. <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/child-migration/part-c-detailed-examination-institutional-responses/sending-institutions/22-fairbridge-society>.
62. <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/assisted-immigration/leaving-the-grey-uk> from *New Zealand Official Year Book*.
63. Kyle, *Suez*.

64. Davis, "The Great Smog"; Davis, Bell, and Fletcher, "A Look Back at the London Smog of 1952."
65. See, for instance, Harper, *Testimonies of Transition*, 35–6.
66. For a full discussion of the scheme, see Kelly, "Masters in Their Own House," 121–39.
67. Author's interview with the late Paddy McFarlane, Dunedin, 28 November 2010. Excerpts are at 02:03 and from 02:14 to 03:07.
68. Author's telephone interviews with Easton Vance, 8 July 2008 (track 1, 10:00 – 10:20) and 27 March 2017 (00:49 – 01:04 and 03:15 – 03:29). See also Harper, *Testimonies of Transition*, 34.
69. Author's telephone interview with Easton Vance, 9 July 2008. Excerpt is from 01:42 to 03:11.
70. Harper, *Testimonies of Transition*, 33.
71. *Ibid.*, 46–7.
72. *Ibid.*, 203–4. Author's interview with Ian Skinner, Edinburgh, 2 March 2016, 02:45 – 02:47.
73. Email from Angus Pelham Burn to author, 17 June 2020. See also Harper, *Scotland No More?*, 116–17.
74. Harper, "Enticing the Emigrant," 41–58.
75. See, for instance, the frustration of Anne Macdonald, the Canadian federal government's agent in the Scottish Highlands, who complained in 1924 that cost-cutting by the Canadian Immigration Department meant she was not given the written literature she needed in order to do her job properly. (Harper, *Emigration from Scotland*, 50–1).
76. *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1950, p6, c5. Margaret Armstrong played the fictional Cassie MacLeod.
77. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 1–17.
78. Archives New Zealand, L1 22/1/37 pt. 3, Monthly Report from Chief Migration Officer, London, as at January 1955, p. 1 (report dated 15 February 1955); *Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1955.
79. BBC Written Archives Centre [hereafter WAC], Home Service, *Enterprise and Achievement, Lands in Search of People*, 15 November 1948 – 3 January 1949.
80. BBC, WAC, Home Service, *New Lands for Old: A Report to the People on Commonwealth Emigration*, narrated by Iven Senson, 13 June 1952.
81. *Ibid.*
82. BBC WAC, Light Programme, *Woman's House Marian Cutler, 'Do you want to emigrate?'* 30 January 1947.
83. Author's interview with Bob Smart, Aberdeen, 29 April 2014, 38:22.
84. Harper, *Testimonies of Transition*, 81.
85. Harper, *Scotland No More?* 206.
86. *Ibid.*, 117.
87. *Ibid.*, 167.
88. Archives New Zealand, L1, 22/1/28, Suggestions and Criticisms, Pt 2, Douglas Henderson, National Secretary, The Nationalist Party of Scotland [sic], to Sidney Holland, 18 December 1956.
89. Appleyard, Ray, and Segal, *The Ten Pound Immigrants* (London, 1988), 103.
90. Author's interview with Janet Galt, Crowborough, Sussex, 27 September 2017. Excerpt is from 06:48 to 06:55.
91. *Ibid.*, 47:58.
92. *Ibid.*, 42:48 – 43:59.
93. *Ibid.*, 26:03.

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