

THE ETHICS OF CONQUEST, 1786

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'No one paused to ponder the effect on the aborigine', writes Manning Clark, in his account of the first British settlement in Australia.¹ None of the historians who have joined with him in the long debate about the reasons for settlement has spent much time on it either.² But while it may be true that the fate of the Aborigines did not concern the British government much, there were Englishmen outside the government who not only paused to think, but took up their pens and wrote in anger on the subject. Ministers acted against a background of vigorous public opinion, in which their policies were much opposed. Some of the arguments referring to Aborigines, all dating from the autumn of 1786, appear below.

Perhaps there is some excuse for the government. In spite of all that has been written lately, it is not yet clear what they meant to do with the new territory. They possibly saw themselves taking up Botany Bay alone, which according to current information would mean trespassing very little on native rights. To begin with they certainly gave no encouragement to any free enterprise worth the name, something very unusual in the forming of British colonies. So for the time being there was no chance of the country being overrun with adventurers. Possibly they expected the Governor to maintain such absolute power as to be able to deal justly (in his own terms) with the native people simply as the need arose. Admittedly, Phillip was given nominal control over all the territory lately discovered by Captain Cook, which may be evidence of large ideas for settlement. But perhaps this should be seen as establishing nothing more than a pre-emptive claim against other Europeans, the French and the Dutch in particular.³

The announcement of the Botany Bay expedition, in September 1786, sparked off a vigorous discussion among Londoners. During the autumn it became one of the chief topics of polite — and no doubt impolite — conversation, especially among the friends of Opposition.⁴ But since Parliament was in recess these latter gentlemen had to be satisfied with the newspapers as the only medium of public debate. It was quickly taken for granted in the papers that the new colony would be similar to the old ones in America; that 'many bold adventurers will soon resort to it, to make it a desirable situation for a commercial and enterprising people'.⁵ Whatever their own intentions may have been, Ministers seem to have made no effort to contradict this idea. They seem to have thought that they could best divide and confuse the Opposition by letting them believe that Botany Bay was intended as a bustling outpost of empire. If this is in fact what Ministers hoped, they were quite right.⁶

The fate of the Aborigines was discussed within this context. It was one of a number of issues raised, but it was the first and the most strongly debated. Also, except for the question of expense, all other points were more or less connected with it. At least this is

¹ Clark 1962:72.

² Martin 1978b, Frost 1980. Since this article was written Frost has published more on this theme (1981).

³ Atkinson 1978:206, Gammage 1981. Frost (1980) contains an important hypothesis and much new source material, but no conclusive argument.

⁴ *Public Advertiser*, 23 September 1786; Letter from 'Amicus', *Morning Chronicle*, 20 September 1786; Letter from 'A Friend to the Constitution', *Daily Universal Register*, 12 October 1786; *Daily Universal Register*, 18 October 1786; Letter from 'A Constant Reader', *Morning Chronicle*, 20 October 1786; *Morning Chronicle*, 28 November 1786; *Public Advertiser*, 28 November 1786.

⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, 19 October 1786.

⁶ Atkinson 1978.

what appears from the newspaper material which has survived. All such material relating to Aborigines is printed below. A number of contemporary newspapers have been lost so that the full debate, as it appeared in the press, is not available. But a certain conversational logic may be unravelled from the pieces that survive.⁷

The decision to settle Botany Bay with convicts was taken in Cabinet on or about 18 August.⁸ On 1 September a notice appeared in the *Morning Herald*, calling for shipping tenders. But it was not until 9 September that the *London Chronicle*, a paper which seems to have been close to Government sources, carried the first explanatory article. Comment seems to have begun in a third paper, the *Morning Chronicle*, on 15 September (No.1, below). This first piece of discussion was pro-government. The earliest piece of criticism comes from the *Morning Chronicle* in the following week (No.2). While the *Morning Chronicle* wrote in terms of justified invasion, the *Herald's* correspondent was wholly concerned with the rights, especially the territorial rights, of the native people. His protest seems to have led to a letter in the *Public Advertiser* (No.3) — 'It is not the intention of Government to annoy the natives' — which was in turn answered by a very sarcastic note in the same paper (No.4). On 6 October another writer in the *Advertiser* suggested that the new settlers might well find the Aborigines armed against invasion, and with 'expert soldiers' from France and Holland among them (No.5). This echoes the *Morning Chronicle's* early statement, that they were a ferocious and intrepid race (No.1). But everyone else seems to have assumed that they were quite the opposite, and that they would be entirely at the mercy of the settlers.

Attention now turned to the moral and religious character of those who made up the expedition. The convicts must have a chaplain. And they must have women equal to the number of men, or, as one writer declared, 'civil strife, and even worse consequences, will ensue'. Would they perhaps be calling at Tahiti for 'helpmates'?⁹ Or did the Government hope to see the male convicts 'incorporated by marriage' with the Aborigines?¹⁰ Either way, according to critics, the native brides must be ruined. 'A Plain Englishman', writing to the *English Chronicle* (No.7), called the future settlement a mission '*pro propaganda vitii Anglicanis*'. There would probably be no chaplain, he thought, and the convicts would almost certainly spread English vices far and wide among the people of New Holland, Tahiti and the entire South Seas. In such an argument, full of evangelical idealism, native rights were less important than the 'honour' of Britain itself, as a Christian nation. But by now it seems to have been settled that the Aborigines could not benefit in any moral sense from having a British colony among them. This is presumably why pro-government writers had given up that part of the question altogether. Instead they had begun to concentrate on the ways in which Botany Bay might benefit the Empire.

From 12 October the *General Advertiser*, so far apparently silent in the debate, began to publish extracts from James Matra's proposal for the settling of New South Wales. These appeared in a number of instalments, ending on 17 October. They set out all the points now familiar to historians: the apparent availability of flax and timber, and the advantages of the place from commercial and strategic points of view. These seem to have been new ideas at least to part of the public. The *Morning Chronicle* had earlier stated that New Holland was 'so much out of the way of navigators' that the convicts would have no chance of coming home again: one of the chief virtues of the place. Now the same paper agreed that a colony there would be 'of great convenience . . . to this maritime state'.¹¹ The

⁷ Most of the newspapers used are in the Burney Collection in the British Library, London. I have also used the *Daily Universal Register*, on microfilm in the National Library, Canberra. In spite of what Ged Martin has written in his otherwise very useful article, this last paper seems to have copied much of its news on Botany Bay from its contemporaries (see Martin 1978a).

⁸ Frost 1978:229.

⁹ 'Botany Bay: Letter II', *Public Advertiser*, 7 October 1786.

¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 31 October 1786.

¹¹ 14 October 1786.

Aborigines meanwhile became a marginal issue. Their sympathisers could only demand that they be given some kind of compensation for what was to be taken from them. An understanding of this point calls for a wider political perspective.

Contemporary supporters of the Botany Bay scheme assumed that criticism came mainly from members or friends of the Parliamentary Opposition, and the newspapers confirm this.¹² The Opposition of the time were usually referred to as the 'Patriots', either with pride or sarcasm. They acted within a Whiggish tradition, but some of them were beginning to behave with a new enthusiasm as if they meant to apply Whiggish ideas to all mankind. The most direct concern of Opposition was, as always, to cut down on government expenditure. But as Whigs they also aimed to defend the liberty of the subject, especially the propertied subject, and some were beginning to look to the rights, especially the property rights, of any national or quasi-national community that seemed to require it. Numbers of gentlemen in Opposition had, for example, sympathised with the revolutionary elite in America, and with the recent campaign in Ireland for the independence of the Dublin Parliament. These concerns meant that the Opposition drew on two main bodies of opinion: first, independent capitalists anxious to increase the scope of free enterprise, as against trade restrictions and the large monopolies chartered by government; and second, humanitarians and supporters of civil liberty, who were suspicious of any advance of government power, at home or abroad.

It was possible for these two branches of Patriot opinion to be nicely combined in a single Parliamentary campaign. A good example, at least in its early stages, was the impeachment of Warren Hastings, lately Governor of Bengal. This was mainly an attempt to expose the chartered greed of the East India Company, and its invasion of the 'rights, laws, and liberties' of 'the people of India'. Hastings' impeachment was launched during the spring of 1786, while Ministers were moving towards agreement on Botany Bay, and the speeches in prosecution were due to begin when Parliament reassembled early in 1787. Edmund Burke was the prime mover.¹³

In many ways the cause of the New Hollanders was very like that of the people of India. There was every chance that, like the Indians — the quotations are from Burke — 'Their blood, their opinions, and the soil of their country make one consistent piece, admitting no mixture, no adulteration, no improvement'; and as with the Indians, this ancient harmony could not survive 'the avarice of . . . English dominion'.¹⁴ One writer on Botany Bay almost echoed Burke when he said of the Aborigines that they were a people 'who are content with the spot nature has allotted them . . . and whose virtue, perhaps, exceeds our capacity of thinking' (No.9).

As with India then, humanitarians had good reason to be outraged at the prospect of their government breaking into the Aborigines' way of life. But from a party political point of view the Botany Bay question was more difficult than the Indian one. Humanitarian Patriots might be angry, but any man who valued free enterprise might well be pleased with such an advance of empire. The East India Company's monopoly of trade included not only India but the whole Indian and Pacific Oceans. In India the government was obviously in league with the Company, so that the impeachment of Hastings was a clear attack on Ministers. But according to the newspapers, the situation was to be different at Botany Bay. Press comment implied very clearly that the new settlement would open — a little at least — the door to the Indies, in spite of the great Company. 'Botany-Bay and the East Indies', as one newspaper put it, might now be considered 'your only places for adventurers to "better their fortunes as other folks do"'.¹⁵

¹² Documents No.2, 10; 'Botany Bay: Letter I', *Public Advertiser*, 30 September 1786; Letter from 'A Friend to the Constitution', *Daily Universal Register*, 12 October 1786; Letter from 'A Constant Reader', *Morning Chronicle*, 20 October 1786; Mock petition to the Prime Minister from '3,875 Prisoners', *Morning Herald*, 21 November 1786.

¹³ Mitchell 1971:104-117.

¹⁴ Burke [1788] 1887, 9:383.

¹⁵ *Daily Universal Register*, 13 November 1786.

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So by the end of October, when the newspaper debate was over, the Opposition apparently was at odds with itself, and when Parliament met in the New Year, its leaders had nothing to say. The Patriots were obviously not concerned with 'the avarice of . . . English dominion' as long as they could share in it themselves.

What was the logic of the humanitarians' position? There were two legitimate ways of treating the Aborigines, short of leaving them alone. One was to deal with them as a sovereign community, just as, say, His Majesty's government dealt with that of Louis XVI in France. But Englishmen had every reason for thinking this impossible. The Aborigines seemed to have no government that they could recognise as such, and their manners were not those of a people who knew about international relations.¹⁶ They were therefore not a sovereign community in any practical sense. The other alternative was to fill the gap and assume government over them. This had been implied in the procedure followed by Cook when he took possession of New South Wales in the King's name, an act confirmed by Governor Phillip's commission. But it did not follow that the native people were entirely subject to the whims of government. According to current thinking, their rights — both their primeval natural rights and their new rights as the King's subjects — were to be reconciled somehow with the Royal prerogative. Thus as 'A.Z.' pointed out in the *Morning Chronicle* (No.9), William Penn's title to land in North America had been founded not only on Royal grant but on purchase from the native people. (This was an opinion based more on ideas of equity than on strict law. Technically, only the Crown had a right to such purchase.)¹⁷ The same thing, he thought, should be done in New South Wales, if only one knew what to offer the people there. 'Can any one', wrote 'A.Z.', 'form an idea of what they may be willing to accept for their ground?'

It is worth stressing that 'A.Z.' was not talking about making a treaty, because he had no idea of the Aborigines possessing sovereignty. But as subjects of the King, they had certain property rights. Their land was to be acquired not by treaty, but by fair — if compulsory — purchase. Such an argument had its own internal logic. But it did depend on assuming that a people whose ideas did not allow for acts of treaty could yet negotiate the sale of land.

Among English observers there seems to have been a certain amount of agreement about the government's commitment in New South Wales. Some one suggested, on the basis of Cook's report, that the local inhabitants were few, and 'not attached to any particular spot', and would thus be free to move out of the way, preserving 'their morals from corruption, and their little property from depredation'.¹⁸ But others assumed that the Aborigines might be given their own place within the new body politic. An early report took it for granted that the local administration would include a 'Superintendent of the natives'.¹⁹ A supporter of the scheme stated elsewhere that the government meant not to 'annoy' the local people, but to 'form them into a more civil community' (No.3). Another spoke of 'the present undertaking of Government to colonize a part of this extensive track [sic], and civilize its inhabitants'.²⁰ As we have seen, some one else suggested that natives and convicts would intermarry.

The policy of the government itself is by no means clear. On the one hand Phillip's instructions clearly distinguished between 'our subjects' and the people 'inhabiting the neighbourhood of the intended settlement', and there was reference to 'our intercourse with these people', as if they were a community beyond the Empire. On the other hand Phillip was ordered to prevent 'any unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several

¹⁶ Hawkesworth 1773, 3:102,230. See also the evidence given by Sir Joseph Banks before the Select Committee on Convicts (House of Commons), Public Record Office (P.R.O.) (London), HO 7/1; Frost 1981:519-520.

¹⁷ Lester and Parker 1973:200-201, Cumming 1973:239.

¹⁸ 'Botany Bay: Letter I', *Public Advertiser*, 30 September 1786.

¹⁹ *Daily Universal Register*, 22 September 1786.

²⁰ *Daily Universal Register*, 27 September 1786.

occupations'. Englishmen who offended in this way were to be punished 'according to the degree of the offence'.²¹ The Aborigines were thus to be protected by English ideas of justice, and yet they were to be outside the formal jurisdiction of the courts, and the government made no commitment to 'civilizing' them. Their way of life (and therefore their personal property) was to be guaranteed more or less as if they were subjects, and yet their territory was to be taken from them as if they were aliens. Such a programme seems to have had no precedent in international law. One of Pitt's own ministers condemned their whole plan for Botany Bay as 'very undigested'.²² Certainly, as far as Aboriginal policy was concerned contemporary letters to the papers made more sense than the ideas of government.

The matter of compensation was possibly set at rest by the false report, on 24 November 1786, that 'an immense number of toys . . . for the natives' were to go with the First Fleet.²³ But discussion on this point was bound to run out of steam from a sheer lack of information. As 'A.Z.' pointed out, no-one knew enough about the Aborigines to do them justice (by which he meant English justice). A pro-government writer, as if in reply, declared that no-one knew enough to warrant sympathy (No.10). I have suggested earlier that opposition to the settlement itself failed through greed. The idea of compensation for settlement might be said to have failed through ignorance.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

APPENDIX I

1. *Morning Chronicle*, 15 September 1786

The scheme for transporting felons to New Holland, bids fair to answer better than any yet projected; that country lying so much out of the way of navigators that they will have no chance of returning clandestinely, to this country; and if they attempt to escape into the woods, they must meet with inevitable destruction, our late circum-navigators representing the natives as a race of cannibals, extremely fond of human flesh, and no less remarkable for their intrepidity than ferocity. They are not at all pleased even with occasional visitors, and will be still less so with settlers.

2. *Morning Herald*, 23 September 1786

Mr. Editor, The transportation of felons to Botany Bay, seems the most extraordinary of all the extraordinary measures adopted by the present immaculate administration. The climate is said to be good, but the inhabitants inhospitable. Those, therefore, who are the pests of Society in this country, are to be favored with a settlement in a much more delightful region than that from which they are removed; and the natives because they are justly and naturally jealous of such invasion, must be destroyed by the armed force which is sent out with the convicts, to support the occupancy of lands not their own. I should have thought that a slight regard to the common rights of mankind might have prevailed in the breasts of the ministers who consulted upon this plan; and that they would have revolted at the idea of so much human blood being spilled in such unjustifiable acquisitions.

²¹ 'Phillip's Instructions', 25 April 1787, *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. I, Part 2:89-90.

²² Duke of Richmond to William Pitt, 3 September 1786, Chatham Papers, P.R.O. (London), 30/8/171.

²³ *Public Advertiser*, 24 November 1786.

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The voyages of our late Navigators are full of shocking instances of murder, and shew us how improbable it is, that any plantations can be made upon the lately discovered islands on the continent [sic], without a cruel disregard for the lives of the natives. If, however, it be admitted for the sake of argument, that we could take peaceable possession of such part of the country as should seem good in our eyes; — what consequences can we expect from the settlement of such a colony? Of the most ignorant, most wicked, and most abandoned wretches under Heaven? Is the moral law to be inculcated by their *example*? Is our glorious system of Revelation to be preached by them? or rather, will not the innocent Pagans be corrupted, and vices, crimes and diseases unknown, be disseminated amongst them?

That this has been too much the case already, in consequence of the short visits of Europeans to the new discoveries, is beyond contradiction. — Bougainville's ship carried the Neapolitan fever to Otaheite, where, from the promiscuous commerce of the natives, it will in a few years doubtless annihilate the race, in the most dreadful manner, for the honour of Christian humanity: — What therefore may be expected from a permanent settlement, supported and encouraged by an armed and invincible force? I most seriously wish this scheme may be re-considered, before it be actually put into execution; but if it must proceed, I hope no man, who has a regard to truth, will hereafter talk of the justice of goodness of heart of the Minister.

Your's, &c
A MAN

3. *Public Advertiser*, 28 September 1786

Sir, In all the settlements which Europeans have made in new-discovered countries, Englishmen have ever been distinguished by their gentleness and humanity to the natives. The conquest of Mexico, the cruelties of the Dutch which exceed all belief, the barbarity of the Portuguese, are proofs of my assertion. Who has not heard of Cortes, and of Amboyna?

The excellent plan which is in contemplation for ridding us of such of our countrymen as have highly offended against the laws of society, reflects much honour on Administration. The island of which *Botany-Bay* is a part, is very thinly inhabited; it is at the same time in a temperate climate, and may be brought to a luxuriant state of cultivation in a few years. It is not the intention of Government to *annoy* the natives; they wish to form them into a more civil community, so as that they and our countrymen may reciprocally contribute to the felicity of one another. Englishmen detest the mode of securing the affections of mankind by gibbets, racks, and tortures, and those too under the specious pretext of *religion*, by which millions have been murdered.

As it is not probable we shall have this nation involved in war for many years, the settlement in New Wales [sic] may be brought to high maturity before such an unwished-for event. The vast population of that island may furnish us with men to stand our ground in the East Indies, as well as afford abundance of excellent provisions for our *navy* in that part of the globe on a short notice. This new colony will in all probability give us a decided superiority in the East Indies, which is an object of great consequence to a country whose defence must depend on her marine.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant.
NAUTICUS.

Sept.23.

4. *Public Advertiser*, 30 September 1786

We have been gravely told that Government, unwilling to annoy the natives of Botany Bay, wish rather to form them into a civil community; to ensure success of which laudable measure, and promote civilization among them, our prisons are to be ransacked

for Solons and Lycurguses! — Sanguine hopes have likewise been entertained of the number of men that may hereafter be drawn from thence to defend our possessions in the East. The consequence to this country from having colonized America with gaol-birds and saints of the Newgate Calender, would surely be sufficient to deter us from repeating the experiment, unless with a design to invite a similar return. Unacquainted with the arts of honest labour, and destitute of habits of industry, what is more naturally to be expected from such a colony as is now projecting by our ministerial wisecracs, than that, among the horrors to be dreaded from them, if disease and the length of the voyage should spare them to increase, they will turn pirates, to the terror of every vessel they can master?

5. *Morning Herald*, 2 October 1786

BOTANY BAY

'Is the intended transportation of convicts to Botany Bay disgraceful to a civilized community?'

This important question has been communicated to the conductors of the Westminster Forum, (late Coxe's museum) Spring-Gardens, by a gentleman of great eminence in the republic of letters, and will, at his particular request, be investigated this evening. — Chairs taken at eight o'clock.

Admittance to ladies and gentlemen, 6d. each.

6. *Public Advertiser*, 6 October 1786

Sir, I am just arrived from a journey through parts of France and Holland. In various companies I have heard the opinions of many respecting the island in the East Indian sea, to which we intend sending our convicts. As I apprehend neither France nor Holland would wish this very extensive country to become a colony of Great Britain, it is very probable our troops will find the natives not so unacquainted with the efficacy of powder and ball as they were when Captain Cook was with them; nor is it impossible that some very expert soldiers from both France and Holland may be found amongst the Aborigines. It will, therefore, occur to those who have the conduct of this settlement, that much circumspection upon landing the troops will be requisite. When we reflect that this island extends from the 10th to the 38th degree of south Latitude, we may easily guess how uneasy the Dutch are for fear we should rival them in the growth of what their SPICE ISLANDS produce, and which have proved to them of such immense value. That consideration alone is of great consequence; but how ought we be elated when we are well assured that indigo and silk may be cultivated there in vast abundance? Besides, rice and tobacco, and in the seas adjacent the whale fishery may be carried into a great extent; in short, with proper attention, the loss of the Thirteen Rebellious Provinces may soon be made up, with this scourge to *them* for their ingratitude that a rival in all their productions will be found to be in the power of a country from whom they cannot have the effrontery to expect much favour: and as the Loyalists, whom they have so inhumanly oppressed, will probably be the principal farmers on this new colony, every exertion on their part will be made to raise such articles as are more immediately calculated to cut them totally out of the *British* market, as well as to supplant them in every other European port. These are no small advantages. To which let us add others. In case of a rupture, our fleets in India will readily be supplied with fresh provisions, and recruits of men abundantly furnished on nearly the spot; at the same time our enemies must send to Europe for them.

I am, Sir,
your obedient servant,
MERCATOR

7. *English Chronicle*, 7-10 October 1786

Mr. Editor, I can scarcely think it possible, though our newspapers have repeatedly announced it as fact, that the King's Ministers can have it seriously in their intention, to transport so large a body as six or seven hundred convicts to New Holland, in the South Seas. I observe your correspondent Sylvanus [not found] takes the point so much for granted, that he has amused himself, and the readers of your paper, with no little pleasantry, by proposing by way of improvement to this most sagacious plan, to augment the new colony by an accompaniment upon the expedition, of all the *poachers* throughout the kingdom.

Sportively as this gentleman has treated the subject, I am inclined to consider it as a matter much intitled to a very grave and solemn discussion. For it appears to me an affair in which the *national honour* and *character* are deeply involved. According to the accounts we have received of the distant country, in which it is proposed to establish so *extraordinary* a colony, it is but thinly peopled. A circumstance of some consolation with respect to the few savages who may approach the confines of a society of *English banditti*. For that the manners and morals of even the natives of New Holland, could escape being rendered worse than they now are, by the contagion of such a neighbourhood, is next to *impossible*. I am afraid it would be altogether superfluous, to take *religion* into the consideration: for if its interests are to be as little regarded upon this occasion, as I understand it uniformly to have been on board the *ballast-lighters*, it is no unreasonable presumption to suppose, that this formidable emigration is to be unattended by a chaplain of any denomination whatsoever.

I am at a loss to conceive the degree of horror which a plan of this kind must excite in the minds of the foreign societies, *pro propaganda fide*: — will they not most naturally, with uplifted hands, exclaim against it, and bestow upon it, the appellation of a plan formed by some English society, *pro propaganda vitis Anglicanis*? And, however, in excuse, it may be alleged, that the propagation of vice upon the coast of New Holland, or, as it is generally called Botany Bay, is not likely to be very extensive amongst the New Hollanders, on account of the scantiness of their numbers: yet I am afraid such will be the zeal of these English Missioners, that this excuse will not be of any very long duration. Many of the islands in the South Seas, as we are assured by our late circum navigators, are exceedingly populous; — but they are not only populous, they are also extremely fertile; and they are inhabited by some of the handsomest women in the known world. Can any thing therefore be more probable than that parties of these abandoned wretches, will, after a while, be formed for a fresh transportation of themselves to better climates and more cultivated regions? The inevitable consequence of which will be, that the contagion of English vice, and English villainy, will be disseminated in the space of a few years, throughout every country, situated in the South Seas.

For the honour of the Christian religion, for the honour of humanity, and for the honour of my country, I very anxiously hope that a scheme so injurious to the interests of mankind in general, will not go forward; or if it does, that all imaginable care will be taken to prevent, as much as possible, the national disgrace, which will follow so probably [so] wide a diffusion of national iniquity, without some means to counteract its effects to this salutary end; it ought surely to be held indispensibly necessary, that every gentle method be employed of reclaiming, at least, in some degree, the intended exiles before they embark for the place of their destination. And in order to bring them to some sense of moral and religious duties, surely Government will take care that they be attended on their voyage by a clergyman of irreproachable character; for whom should be made a very ample provision, upon express condition, that he make New Holland his residence, as chaplain to this convict colony for the remainder of his days.

A PLAIN ENGLISHMAN

October 6, 1786.

8. *Daily Universal Register*, 14 October 1786

It is supposed that a gibbet will be the first *exotic* the poor natives of *Botany Bay* will see planted among them; and it is probable the first fruit it bears will be from the hopeful *blossoms* that are sent from this country to give examples of mortality to the new [sic] *Hollanders!*

9. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 October 1786

Sir, The convicts going to *Botany Bay*, will, if they arrive there, strike a panick in the inhabitants of that country already in some degree sensible of our hostilities as they denied a parley with those who have been visiting them, and in vain attempted to oppose their landing.

The *Great Penn*, when he obtained a grant from the King of Land in America, carried with him cloth and utensils, &c. suitable for the climate, and made the Indians sensible that if they would grant him so many furlongs of their land, he would give them so many yards of his cloth, &c. To this day his name is famous among the natives, and perhaps will be so to the latest posterity.

I hope the English annals will never be stained with shedding innocent blood. What are we to think of men who have already notoriously forfeited the friendship of their own countrymen, and been denied the benefit of our laws and society now going to colonize with guns, &c.? Will they at all benefit a race of men who are content with the spot nature has allotted them; whose wants are few and whose virtue, perhaps, exceeds our capacity of thinking; they go quite naked, so did Adam and Eve in Paradise.

Do we, can we carry or send out any thing to gain the favour of such a people? Is there no one acquainted with the desirables for such a climate? Can any one form an idea of what they may be willing to accept for their ground? Do they not despise toys and trinkets? For heaven's sake let some one speak. I am alarmed for those whom we may ignorantly style Barbarians. Colonization was the ruin of the Roman State, the empire was too widely extended. Is there not ground uncultivated nearer home? May not convicts male and female suffer sufficiently in the streets of London or highways of England? May they not be compelled to become hewers of wood, drawers of water, cleaners of streets, and menders of roads, or doomed to the labouring spade, and become tillers of the ground? Or may they not be sold to such as deal in the Slave-trade; any thing that may strike terror greater than that so frequent at the Old Bailey; those publick executions do not, nor perhaps ever will put a stop to the mal-practices of men. Do they not rather increase since death has been made less tremendous by being more instantaneous? Is there no method to be found of lessening the number of prostitutes? A virtuous woman does what she pleases with our sex - in her power it is to make heroes or philosophers, and a vicious one may influence the unguarded and thoughtless to become desperadoes and publick offenders: decrease the number of those, and we may expect better times.

These are instances of increasing immorality. May providence influence the Magistrates to exert themselves in their publick capacities to stop the torrent of wickedness!

I am, Sir,
Your's
&c. A.Z.

Friday, October 13, 1786

10. *Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1786

The patriots are the most virtuous souls on earth! It is distressing, in the highest degree, to their tender sensibility, to think that their countrymen are about to take possession of a single inch of the soil of *Botany Bay*. It is true they know nothing of the natives; it is true that the spot on which the settlement is to be made is, at present, unoccupied, and a perfect blank in nature so far as the productions of art go; and it is

likewise true, that the settlement in the Bay promises to be of general utility to this island; but still the idea of it wounds the feelings of the patriots, and inspire them with sentiments so pathetic and sublime, that all who mark them must admire them.

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