Members and friends of the Australian Population Association:

I am very honoured, and very pleased, to have been asked to give the Borrie lecture for 1998. First, Mick Borrie was my very competent, generous and encouraging ‘boss’ at the Australian National University, from my appointment late in 1951 until his retirement in 1978; and then my energetic and encouraging senior partner in the immigration work of the Academy of Social Sciences when he was its Director 1979-85. Since then he has given me much valuable help and advice.

Second, it pleases me greatly to speak on post-war immigration, a field in which the name of W.D. Borrie is very well known, both internationally and in this country; not only for his many publications but also for the important advice he gave many Australian Governments when a member of various immigration advisory and planning councils. I am indeed sad that he is not able to be with us this evening.

Post-war immigration to Australia is a truly vast subject, covering more than 50 years with over ten Prime Ministers and numerous Ministers of Immigration; Bob Hawke alone had six Ministers in his eight years as Prime Minister. I cannot possibly treat the whole topic and, as I have been asked to make this talk both non-technical and entertaining, I will deal with it in a very general way.

The Beginnings

The story starts with the Chifley Labor Government creating a Department of Immigration in 1945, with Arthur Calwell as Minister, and the subsequent report of an inter-departmental committee. This said that, in
view of Australia’s urgent need for a greater population for purposes of defence and development, the population should grow at the rate of two per cent per annum; one per cent from the then current natural increase and one per cent from immigration; that is some 75,000 immigrants a year.

The energetic Calwell at once made arrangements for large-scale British immigration, the Government paying all but £10 of passage costs, and providing subsidized hostel accommodation, for 80 per cent of those arriving. Also, when advised by Chifley in 1947 to visit the International Refugee Organization (IRO) camps in Europe, Calwell, hitherto very wary of refugee immigration, did so. He was most impressed and won Chifley’s approval to bring selected refugees to Australia, with Australia contributing £10 a head and IRO covering the rest. This arrangement considerably pipped Tasman (Tassie) Hayes, the hard-working and efficient Secretary of the Immigration Department, who was sure that, if Calwell had taken him on the overseas trip, he would have got the IRO to cover the whole cost.

The IRO immigrants also received subsidized hostel accommodation (often hastily converted army camps) and there are lovely stories about senior departmental officers dashing down to Bonegilla Camp with trucks of bedding and supplies, and working late into the night making up beds for the refugees (Displaced Persons) due to arrive next day (November 1947). Things worked out quite well and the scheme was continued by the Menzies Government until over 180,000 IRO refugees had arrived by the end of the scheme in 1952. Similar arrangements were then made with IRO’s successor (ICEM, i.e. Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration). In these later years voluntary societies helped the Government very considerably.

**Major Issues**

*The Assisted Program*

The matter of assisting immigrants with passage costs and accommodation was an important issue in post-war years. Having been the normal procedure for British immigrants to Australia in colonial days, and in the twentieth century up to the Great Depression, it was in the years following 1946 confined to British and IRO immigrants. Then, under much pressure from the Italian and other governments, it was gradually extended to Italians, Greeks and other Europeans. Under the energetic Billy Snedden,