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The appropriation of migrant labor in Australian football

Abstract

This paper examines the cancellation of Australia's National Soccer League (NSL) at the end of the 2003-2004 season and its replacement with the hyper-capitalist A-League competition. The A-League was initially established under the guise of a "one-team-one-city" North American model and restricted itself to private-equity franchises that could raise start-up capital of AUD1 million. The shift to the A-League resulted in the ethnic community clubs, which had formed the backbone of the NSL, being relegated to the various states premier leagues. The authors use a Marxist analysis to explain how the transference of fans' hopes and dreams on to the ethnic clubs and the transference by the part-time and volunteer labor forces of parts of themselves into the clubs have seen this accumulated capital (both financial and cultural) robbed and devalued by the A-League. The authors argue that the A-League used high minimum annual budget figures to "price" the ethnic clubs out of the marketplace. Fans and volunteer labor forces of the ethnic clubs have been alienated, in the Marxist sense, from the A-League, the A-League clubs, and the hegemonic clique that controls Football Federation Australia. By adopting a "ground zero" ideology in 2004-2005, this paper argues that the A-League power brokers have banished the ethnic clubs to a perpetual suburban obscurity.

Keywords: accounting, alienation, Australian football, Croatian diaspora, ethnic football, football, identity, Marxism.
JEL Classification: M14.

Introduction

A youtube.com video clip[1] shows highlights from a match played before a full-capacity night-time crowd at Melbourne Knights' home ground Somers Street, in Melbourne's working-class western suburbs, in December 1994. In this Australian National Soccer League (NSL) game, Croatian community club Melbourne Knights defeats arch-rival Greek community club South Melbourne 3 goals to 0. Future English Premier League and Socceroos[2] striker Mark Viduka, then a promising youngster, scores the last goal for the Knights from inside the penalty box. The "Knights Army" goes berserk, waving the red and white chequered flags of its native Croatia and exuberantly lighting and throwing flares.

The NSL was Australia's premier domestic football ("soccer") competition for the period from 1977 to 2004. It revolved around traditional ethnic community grassroots clubs, such as Melbourne Knights (formerly Melbourne Croatia and still often called by that name by supporters); South Melbourne (formerly South Melbourne Hellas); Preston Lions (formerly Preston Makedonia); Marconi Stallions (formerly Marconi Fairfield); Sydney United (formerly Sydney Croatia); Sydney Olympic; and Adelaide City (formerly Adelaide City Juventus). This ethnic community-based competition was Australia's first ever national sporting competition (NSW Migration Heritage Center and Powerhouse Museum, 2006; Skinner et al., n/d, p. 6; Warren, 2003), and, despite its many detractors from outside the ethnic communities, it survived for nearly 30 years, and produced many footballers that would play for the Socceroos and for leading club sides in Europe. The league's critics, as represented by the 2004 Lowy/Kemeny Taskforce into the restructuring of football, had to admit that "the NSL has proven to be remarkably resilient" (Lowy/Kemeny Taskforce Official Report, cited in Solly, 2004, p. 275).

The ethnic NSL clubs served a vital social role as meeting places for newly arrived migrants from southern and central Europe who often faced alienation and hostility from Australia's dominant Anglo-Celtic community (Carniel, 2006, p. 3; Hay, 1994, 2001; Jones and Moore, 1994, p. 23; Mosely, 1994, p. 33; Warren, 2003). As football commentator Les Murray (2006, p. 48) writes of the Hungarian club Pannonia that played in the lower divisions of the Illawarra League, "the club … provide[d] a source of recreational comfort for a small community otherwise stressed by its need to work and struggle while in transition from an old life into a new". The ethnic clubs also served an economic role in providing employment and a meeting-place for networking for the ethnic community members (Hay, 2001; Mosely, 1994, p. 33). Local ethnic businesses sponsored the clubs thus providing them with most of their economic support. Community members felt a sense of community with respect to their involvement with these clubs and ethnic businesses no doubt felt some sort of obligation to financially assist the clubs (Hay, 2001; Mosely, 1994, p. 33). These clubs were staffed largely by part-time staff and volunteers from the various ethnic communities.

Lastly, the clubs were clearly radical "political" entities in two respects: (a) they largely hailed from working-class suburbs of major cities and their eth-

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[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJDVBxeOr7g [accessed November 18, 2009].

[2] Australia's national football team has been referred to as the Socceroos since 1971.

nic identities were statements of resistance against Anglo-Australian cultural hegemony; and (b) the names "Croatia" and "Makedonia" served as statements of national identity during a period when Croatia and Makedonia were submerged politically within communist and Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. As Mosely (1994, p. 35) points out, "Croats deliberately used their soccer club[s] to express a political message that was denied them through political channels". Furthermore, "[m]ore than any other ethnic group in Australia the Croats used soccer for political means". Similarly, Hay (1994, p. 62) states that "[f]or Croatians, soccer was one of the few outlets they had to express their sense of national and collective identity". During this period the communist press in the "old country" would dismiss the supporters of clubs such as Melbourne Croatia with tags such as "separatist émigrés". When Melbourne Croatia played a friendly against Hajduk Split on June 10, 1990 the touring Hajduk Split players were encouraged to remove the red star from their playing jerseys and ultimately they did so[1].

Note: The three Melbourne Croatia players (in red shirts) are Josip Biskic, George Hannah, and Andrew Marth. Photo courtesy Roy Hay.

Fig. 1. Action from June 10, 1990 match between Melbourne Croatia and Hajduk Split, Somers Street, Sunshine North, Melbourne, Australia

The new national A-League competition was formally announced at a media conference held by Frank Lowy and John O'Neill on March 22, 2004 (Solly, 2004, p. 311) in response to the Crawford Report (Solly, 2004, pp. 224-231, 236-241) which had argued that poor management and the focus on ethnic clubs was preventing the broader Australian community from embracing the NSL and would lead to financial stagnation. The A-League was established with the view of having one or two clubs in each major city (Solly, 2004, p. 311) supported by both mainstream Anglo-Australians and by Europeans of a mix of ethnicities (John O'Neill, CEO, Football Federation Australia, cited in Solly, 2004, p. 312).

This paper examines the disbanding of the NSL by Football Federation Australia (FFA) at the end of 2003-2004 season and its replacement with the hyper-capitalist A-League competition. The A-League, initially, used a "one-team-one-city" North American model (Solly, 2004, p. 311), without promotion or relegation. Furthermore, it restricted itself to private-equity franchises controlled by professional investor consortiums that could invest AUD1 million of start-up capital and meet minimum annual budget hurdles (Solly, 2004, pp. 273-275, 311). The ethnic clubs, which had formed the backbone of the NSL, were forcibly relegated to the various state premier leagues, e.g., Victorian Premier League, New South Wales Premier League, etc. In this paper, we use a Marxist analysis to explain how the transference of fans' hopes and dreams on to the ethnic clubs and the transference by the part-time and volunteer labor forces of parts of themselves into the clubs have seen this accumulated capital (both financial and cultural) robbed and devalued by the A-League. We argue that the A-League used high minimum annual budget figures to "price" the ethnic clubs out of the marketplace (Johnny Warren, cited in Solly, 2004, p. 283). Solly (2004, p. 273) explains clearly that each new A-League team would need to invest start-up capital of AUD1 million and operate an annual budget of between AUD3.5 million to AUD4.5 million, increasing to AUD5.5 million by the fifth year. Players would need to be paid on average AUD100,000 per year, a

[1] http://scoreboardpressure.com/2012/03/02/around-the-soccer-grounds-sunshine-victoria-aami-park-victoria/ [accessed March 6, 2012].

dramatic rise of over 100% above NSL salary levels (Solly, 2004, p. 273). Such salary levels would make the league fully professional whereas the NSL had been semi-professional. The ethnic clubs could not contemplate being able to operate at such a high financial level. In the past, two of the strongest and best supported ethnic clubs, South Melbourne and Melbourne Knights, had recorded best annual turnovers of only AUD1.8 million and AUD1.2 to AUD1.3 million, respectively[1]. Fans and volunteer labor forces of the ethnic clubs have now been alienated, in the Marxist sense, from the A-League, the A-League clubs, and the hegemonic clique that controls the FFA and that approaches the game, increasingly, from an economic rationalist and neo-liberal stance. This alienation increasingly mirrors the alienation that these migrant communities face in Anglo-Australian dominated workplaces during the working week (Jones and Moore, 1994, p. 23; Mosely, 1994, p. 33). By adopting a "ground zero" ideology in 2004-2005, we suggest that the FFA powerbrokers have, perhaps unwittingly, banished the ethnic clubs to a perpetual suburban obscurity.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 1 traces out a brief history of the state leagues and the NSL beginning in the 1950s and concentrating most heavily on the New South Wales State League. Section 2 provides a Marxist analysis of the hyper-capitalist takeover of Australian football and the expelling of the ethnic clubs, whilst the final section concludes the paper and offers practical recommendations for change.

1. A brief history of Australian football club and the NSL

Former Socceroos captain the late Johnny Warren (2003), in his biography *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofters*, explains how Australian football in the 1950s was dominated by the various state premier leagues, especially those of the two most populous states New South Wales and Victoria; Australia's World Cup qualifying matches held once every four years; and friendly matches against visiting club and national teams. The mass migration of young men from war torn southern and central European countries to Australia at this time changed the face of Australian football irrevocably (Murray, 2006; Warren, 2003). Many of the ethnic communities set up their own football clubs in the major cities. Large numbers of Hungarians, including football commentator Les Murray (aka Laszlo Urge), fled Hungary at the time of the Soviet suppression of 1956 (Murray, 2006; Warren, 2003, pp. 263-265). These expatriate Hungarians formed the bulk of the support for the emergent Sydney club St. George Budapest. St. George Budapest unashamedly based its playing style on that of the highly successful 1950s Hungarian national team that had featured the legendary Ferenc Puskás (who, coincidentally, would go on to manage South Melbourne in the NSL from 1989-1991). This technical and attractive style of play was at variants with the Australian norm at that time which was based on the roughhouse, long-ball tactics of the (then) English First Division. Murray (2006, p. 50) has described St. George Budapest as "one of the great clubs in the annals of football in Australia".

By the second half of the 1950s these ethnic community clubs had begun to challenge the supremacy of the longstanding traditional Anglo-Australian clubs. In Sydney (New South Wales), the ethnic clubs were first banned from the top level of football competition by the football authority in that state, the NSW Soccer Football Association (NSWSFA), a situation which, remarkably, we have returned to in Australian football in the 2000s (Warren, 2003, p. 35). At that time the ethnic clubs were forced to play in the second division of the New South Wales (NSW) State League although many of these clubs had the playing talent and the supporter bases to play successfully in the top tier league (Warren, 2003, p. 35). A breakaway rebel league was formed in Sydney in 1957, and the same thing occurred in Melbourne (Victoria) one year later (Hay, 1994). In NSW a breakaway federation to administer the new league was also formed under the name of the NSW Soccer Federation (NSWSF) (Howe, 2008; Warren, 2003, p. 36)[2]. At the Sydney United History Page at Ozfootball.net, Andrew Howe (2008) has written that: "Intolerant of non-British migrants, the Anglo-Australian based NSWSFA deservingly became defunct". The NSW rebel league comprised some of the strongest ethnic clubs, such as Apia, Hakoah, Polonia, St. George Budapest, and Sydney FC Prague as well as some of the best Anglo-Australian clubs such as Auburn, Canterbury, and the Illawarra region's South Coast United. Joe Marston, who played for Preston North End against West Bromwich Albion in the 1954 FA Cup Final, has stated that "the north and south coastal strips of Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s [including the Illawarra region] were entrenched soccer communities" (cited in Hall, 2000, p. 15).

Warren (2003) refered to how he was offered a substantial pay rise to leave his club Canterbury, the 1961 NSW State League premiers (Murray, 2006, p.

[1] For the South Melbourne figure, applying to the 2002-2003 season, see Solly, 2004, p. 281; for the Melbourne Knights figure see first-mentioned author personal interview with Mr Ange Cimera, former Knights president, February 16, 2010.

[2] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSLclubs/SUHist.html [Sydney United History Page, written by Andrew Howe, accessed February 4, 2010].

99), to join St. George Budapest at the end of the 1962 season. Generally speaking it was the ethnic clubs that had the best financial positions and could offer players the best pay deals (Murray, 2006, p. 99). This development spelled the death knell for many Anglo-Australian clubs playing in the semi-professional leagues. Roy Hay (1994, Table 1, p. 56) provides a very insightful snap-shot of the composition of the Victorian First Division / State League / Premier League (as it has been called) at three dates: 1948, 1961, and 1992. It indicates to us how in Melbourne, as in Sydney, the arrival of the ethnic clubs in the 1950s drastically and quickly changed the compositions of the top-tier leagues. Apart from the obvious strategy of forming new ethnic clubs, Hay (1994, p. 57) notes how the extant Geelong Soccer Club was taken over by the Italian community and renamed IAMA (The Italian Australian Migrants Association). As Hay's (1994) Table 1 shows, change was much more rapid and significant between 1948 and 1961 than it was between 1961 and 1992. Some of the differences between the latter two dates can be explained by the rates of migration from central and southern Europe into Australia has slowed (Murray, 2006) and well-performing ethnic clubs, such as South Melbourne Hellas, has attained NSL status. The 1948 clubs were: Box Hill, Brighton, Moreland, Park Rangers, Prahran, Sunshine United, Western Suburbs, and Yallourn (all Anglo-Australian clubs). By 1961 the makeup of the league was, with each club's dominant ethnic group listed in brackets: Box Hill (English), Polonia (Polish), Moreland (Scottish), George Cross (Maltese), Wilhelmina (Dutch), Hakoah (Dutch), South Melbourne Hellas (Greek), Slavia (Czech), JUST (Serbian), Melbourne (Hungarian), Juventus (Italian), and Richmond (German).

Warren (2003) discusses in detail the unique multicultural environment that he experienced at the St. George Budapest club, the warm welcome that he received by the Hungarian supporters, and the professional manner in which the club was being run. In a classic State League (Sydney) final in 1964, the new face of Australian football was apparent with Italian community club Apia defeating St. George Budapest 7-2 (Warren, 2003, p. 59). Apia continued its dominance in the 1965 season with the margin over St George Budapest in the league final this time being a much reduced 2-0 (Warren, 2003, p. 61). St. George Budapest would have its revenge, winning the 1967 State League championship 5-2 over Apia (Murray, 2006, pp. 57, 59-60). Even in the 1960s it was certainly not the case that ethnic clubs would field teams containing exclusively, or even a majority of, players from the ethnic group that dominated the club. Warren (2003) and Murray (2006, pp. 61-63, 264) both talk at length about how St. George Budapest, even in its early years, wanted to expand its fan base beyond the Hungarian community and how the club employed Warren in a variety of capacities in the St. George area with that goal in mind.

After initial discussions held on April 5, 1975 among representatives of a number of leading Australian clubs, namely Adamstown (Newcastle), Adelaide City, Apia (Sydney), Brisbane City, Hakoah (Sydney), Lions (Brisbane), Marconi (Sydney), St. George, West Adelaide Hellas, and Western Suburbs (Sydney), it was decided to set up a National Soccer League to commence in the 1977 season (Murray, 2006, p. 63; Solly, 2004, p. 26; Warren, 2003, pp. 218-220). Leading prime movers in the creation of the NSL were veteran club administrators, the late Alex Pongrass of St. George Budapest and Frank Lowy of Hakoah (Warren, 2003, p. 217). The first NSL season, played in the winter of 1977, comprised the following fourteen clubs: Adelaide City Juventus, Apia, Brisbane City, Brisbane Lions, Canberra City, Footscray JUST, Hakoah, Heidelberg, Marconi Fairfield, Mooroolbark, South Melbourne, St. George, Sydney Olympic, and West Adelaide Hellas (Solly, 2004, p. 27; Warren, 2003, p. 220).

Initially it was decided to ban ethnic club names in the NSL (Solly, 2004, p. 27, 47), but this understanding was soon resisted (Solly, 2004, p. 47). In fact the popular Sydney Croatia gained admission to the NSL in 1984 using the Sydney Croatia name (Howe, 2008). On the field Sydney City Slickers, formerly Hakoah, performed exceptionally well, winning three consecutive NSL pennants over the period from 1980 to 1982, until the club was, amazingly, withdrawn by Frank Lowy because he was convinced that the club had no financial future at the NSL level (Solly, 2004, pp. 31-33). These early pennants were decided on a first past the post basis with the annual finals series being viewed as exhibition matches only. However, Heidelberg United today makes reference to the club's 4-0 victory over the Slickers in the 1980 decider match and implies that it was a premiership win (Heidelberg United FC, 2010)[1]. Adelaide City, Marconi Fairfield, Melbourne Knights, and South Melbourne were the dominant clubs on the field by the early-1990s, suggesting that no one city was capable of dominating the competition in an unhealthy manner (unlike, say, the city of Glasgow's dominance in the Scottish Premier League). A controversial report, the Bradley Report, written by accounting academic Dr. Graham Bradley, from The University of New South Wales, was released in 1990 (Carniel, 2006, p.

[1] http://www.heidelbergunitedsc.com.au/clubhistory.htm [accessed January 22, 2010].

4; Ozfootball, 2008; Skinner et al., n/d, p. 7; Solly, 2004, pp. 46-47, 50). This report recommended the banning of ethnic club names and foreign flags on club symbols (Carniel, 2006, p. 4).

During the mid- to late-1990s, under the leadership of the English-born Mr David Hill (1995-1998), a concerted effort was made to "anglicize", "mainstream", and "professionalize" the NSL (Cockerill, 1998, p. 161; Murray, 2006, pp. 222-223; Skinner et al., n/d, p. 8; Warren, 2003, pp. 362-365). For example, in 1997 Hill ordered that all ethnic insignia be removed from playing strips (Solly, 2004, p. 108). Unsuccessfully (Cockerill, 1998, p. 161; Solly, 2004, p. 102), Collingwood Warriors and Carlton Blues were introduced in the late-1990s, clubs clearly trying to draw support from the hugely popular Australian Rules Football (AFL) teams Collingwood and Carlton (Solly, 2004, pp. 101-102; Warren, 2003, p. 365)[1]. Collingwood Warriors was a joint partnership between the Collingwood AFL club and Heidelberg United FC. This experiment failed to attract crowds, although Carlton Blues was successful on the field during its short life span. The Collingwood Warriors also did not end its brief life without a trophy having been victorious in the 1996 National League Cup (Heidelberg United FC, 2010).

More successfully, Perth Glory was introduced for the 1996-1997 season, a non-ethnic club with a visually shocking purple playing strip. "The Glory" was widely held out as a highlight of the Hill era and a model for future non-ethnic teams (Cockerill, 1998, p. 162; Solly, 2004, pp. 99, 173, 283; Warren, 2003, p. 365). Perth Glory now plays in the A-League. Although Glory's former Chairman the roast chicken entrepreneur, Nick Tana has Greek roots he made every effort, in public statements, to distance the Glory from the "ethnic clubs". Ironically, one of the Glory's biggest crowd-pulling rivalries in its NSL years was with ethnic club South Melbourne. South Melbourne, by this time, had made gallant efforts to modernize its image, appeal to a broad cross-section of the community, and downplay (but not deny) its ethnic roots. Hellas was no longer part of the club's name. However, these pro-active strategic adjustments were not enough to save South Melbourne, perhaps the Australian football club with the richest traditions of them all, from continual ridicule during the NSL years and a new life post-2004 in the suburban obscurity of the Victorian Premier League (VPL). In addition to Perth Glory, a new Sydney-based non-ethnic club Northern Spirit was introduced for the 1998-1999 season, playing its home matches at North Sydney Oval in carnival atmosphere and attracting regular crowds of over 10,000 (Solly, 2004, p. 103)[2].

The ethnic clubs spent most of their energies attempting to survive the Hill era (Hall, 2000, p. 298), an era when "no one was safe" from expulsion from the league (Hall, 2000, p. 298). Mr Tony Labbozzetta, the charismatic president of the Sydney Italian community's Marconi Fairfield club, was lambasted by the New South Wales Liquor Administration Board and in the 1995 Stewart Report for "shady business dealings" including his inability to account for AUD275,000 of the AUD515,000 transfer fee proceeds for the transfer of Marconi's Paul Okon to Club Brugge of Belgium (Solly, 2004, pp. 55, 63-66). However, Labbozzetta has never been charged of anything in a legal court in relation to the "Okon case" (Hall, 2000, p. 295). Furthermore, he was defended frequently by Australian Labor Party (ALP) MPs Janice Crosio in Federal Parliament and Joe Tripodi in New South Wales State Parliament, both in relation to the Okon matter and other issues canvassed by Justice Donald Stewart and discussed in the Stewart Report (Solly, 2004, pp. 109, 129, 140, 158). Janice Crosio's electorate included within its boundaries the large and influential Marconi Social Club in Bossley Park (Solly, 2004, p. 140)[3]. Interestingly both of these MPs are members of Sydney's Italian community suggesting some polarization across ethnic lines in Australian society that extends through the various realms of Australian life including the inter-connected worlds of politics, business, and sport. The Australian Soccer Association (ASA) chose to suppress the contents of the Stewart Report, which it had commissioned, since it contained a number of startling accusations against a number of leading football identities that would have exposed the ASA to defamation suits it had been published (Cockerill, 1998, p. 32; Solly, 2004, pp. 83, 86). Amazingly, however, the Federal Senate chose to make the findings of the report public under the protection of parliamentary privilege (Cockerill, 1998, p. 32; Solly, 2004, p. 84). It then launched its own inquiry into the state of Australian football (Cockerill, 1998, p. 32)[4].

During the Hill era, the Marconi club was taken to task by officialdom for its club name and for the presence of the Italian national colors on its club

[1] This is a uniquely Australian code of football which draws on aspects of football, Gaelic Football, rugby league, and rugby union. It is traditionally the most popular football code in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth, whilst rugby league is traditionally the most popular football code in Sydney and Brisbane.

[2] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/9899/ALTable.html [accessed March 11, 2010].

[3] Ms Crosio retired from Federal Parliament in 2004.

[4] The Senate inquiry ruled that most of the damning accusations in the Stewart Report could not be supported by evidence.

emblem (Skinner et al., n/d, p. 8). Labbozzetta historically has, on a number of occasions spanning two decades, denied that the name "Marconi" is "ethnic". Labbozzetta cunningly has claimed that the historic figure Guglielmo Marconi, after whom the club is named, was a widely respected inventor who just happened to be an Italian (Solly, 2004, pp. 27, 47). The club also successfully fought to keep the Italian crest on its shirts during the Hill era (Solly, 2004, p. 109). The screen of secrecy that surrounded the ethnic clubs was seen as a sign of dishonesty, corruption, and fraud by Anglo-Australian crusaders, including Hill, who did not understand the cultures that they were dealing with or the fact that the ethnic clubs were bound to be run in clandestine fashion given that many members of these clubs felt marginalized by mainstream Australian society (Hay, 2001; Jones and Moore, 1994, p. 23; Warren, 2003).

Ethnic clubs to be forcibly removed from the NSL in the Hill era included Melbourne-based Brunswick, Sydney-based Parramatta Eagles (clubs normally associated with the Italian and Maltese communities, respectively) and the popular Greek/ Greek Macedonian Heidelberg United from Melbourne's north-eastern suburbs (Cockerill, 1998, p. 161; Hay, 2000, p. 298; Solly, 2004, pp. 97-98; Warren, 2003, p. 364). The Heidelberg United FC Club History page on its website states today, without mincing its words, that "Soccer Australia, led by David Hill began the 'cleansing process' of the league trying to remove all remnants of ethnicity by forcing Clubs [*sic*] to change their names" (Heidelberg United FC, 2010)[1]. Brunswick and Parramatta Eagles duly took out an injunction against the ASA for the decision to expel them from the 1995-1996 NSL competition (Solly, 2004, p. 98; Warren, 2003, p. 364). However, this injunction application proved unsuccessful (Ozfootball.net, 2008)[2]. The Hill era was controversial and yet, for the ethnic traditionalists, it was bearable since most clubs maintained their ongoing memberships in the NSL. In Mr Ange Cimera's words, in personal interview with the first-mentioned author (February 16, 2010), "we maintained our membership because without the ethnic clubs there was no league". The Hill era had its undeniable successes with Northern Spirit and Perth Glory (Solly, 2004, pp. 103, 113; Warren, 2003, p. 365). Although far surpassed now by the success of Melbourne Victory in the A-League, Solly (2004, p. 99) correctly commented that "[t]he Glory has gone on to be the NSL's most successful club ever, certainly for its fan base, sponsorship and revenue". The 1996-1997 NSL Grand Final, played in Brisbane on May 25, 1997 during Hill's reign, saw Brisbane Strikers defeat Sydney United, the former Sydney Croatia, 2-0 in front of 40,446 people (Cockerill, 1998, p. 81; Hall, 2000, p. 315)[3]. This game was a clear success story for Australian football. However, the "de-ethnicization" process was clearly a part of the Hill vision and agenda. Its time was not yet fully ripe, and Hill lacked the clout to defeat Labbozzetta and the other traditional club power brokers (Skinner et al., n/d, p. 8; Solly, 2004, pp. 110-113). As Solly (2004, p. 47) has written, "[b]y the early 1990s Tony Labbozzetta's influence and his powers of persuasion were a dominant force in Australian soccer". Murray (2006, p. 222) is much more critical than Solly (2004) of Hill's efforts, arguing that Hill's manner was confrontational rather than consultative, and that Hill's real vision was to "Anglicize", as opposed to "Australianize", both the NSL and Australian football as a whole. As Murray (2006, p. 222) perceptively points out:

"He was focussed on Australianizing the game, missing the point that – given Australia's multicultural social makeup – the game was actually very Australian. He appeared to be intent not on Australianization but on Anglicization – two very different things".

As we have seen, the NSL was besieged, from 1995 onwards, by hostile forces intent on restructuring the game, making it more marketable to Anglo-Australian audiences, and depriving it of its connections to the ethnic communities (Skinner et al., n/d; Solly, 2004). These moves were, for the most part, hostile, patronizing, and disrespectful of the clubs' ethnic connections, viewing them as blights on the game and sources of "imported hooliganism" (Mr Ange Cimera, personal interview with first-mentioned author, February 16, 2010; Hay, 1994, 2001; Mr Remo Nogarotto, cited in Solly, 2004, p. 230). There were mild crowd disturbances at occasional games, along ethnic lines, in both the NSL and in the state leagues especially at those few games involving Croatian and Serbian clubs. However, such games were a rarity as no Serbian club played in the NSL after Footscray JUST's relegation at the end of the 1989 season (Hay, 2001). As Hay (1994, 2001) points out, such crowd disturbances were frowned upon by the club leaderships and most games, even between Croatia and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia connected Footscray JUST (which is an acronym for Jugoslav United Soccer Team), passed without any incidents. Many Croa-

[1] http://www.heidelbergunitedsc.com.au/clubhistory.htm [accessed January 22, 2010].

[2] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/9697/ALTable.html [accessed February 4, 2010].

[3] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/9697/Playoff.html [accessed January 21, 2010].

tian Australians had fled Communist Party persecution in their homeland and so it is no surprise that there was silent tension between the fans of Croatia and JUST. Hay (1994, 2001) argues that, compared with events in the wider society, football matches involving Croatia and JUST in the 1960s to 1980s were relative havens of peace and tolerance.

Hughson (1996), Hay (2001), and Skinner et al. (n/d) report that Sydney Croatia in the 1980s and 1990s had a small group of hardcore supporters, named the Bad Blue Boys after the famous supporter group of Croatia-based club Dinamo Zagreb. Some of these Sydney Croatian fans mythologized the last independent Croatian government, the fascist, anti-Orthodox, and anti-Serbian Ustashi that ruled, with Nazi support, during World War II (1941-1945). These young supporters generally perceived that their parents had lost some of the hard-edged views that they themselves held concerning Croatian identity, history, and politics. When Sydney Croatia became Sydney United the Bad Blue Boys would interpret the U in the club logo to be a clandestine acknowledgement of the Ustashi (Hay, 2001, p. 89). However, as Mosely (1994, p. 35) maintains: "The Ustashi old guard did not control Sydney Croatia". The hardcore support group of Bad Blue Boys has given way to more modern groups such as Edensor Park Ultras and South West Firm which today follow Sydney United in the NSW Premier League (NSWPL)[1]. However, despite all the above, crowd disturbances during the NSL years were manageable and their seriousness much exaggerated by the opponents of the NSL and by the opponents of Australian football in general (Mr Ange Cimera, personal interview with first-mentioned author, February 16, 2010; Hay, 2001).

As far as the future of the ethnic clubs in the top tier league was concerned, a most unfortunate and widely publicized incident occurred on May 6, 2001 when Melbourne Knights met Perth Glory in the NSL Elimination Final first leg played at the Knights' Somers Street ground. The two sides played out a 0-0 draw in front of 5,380 mostly Melbourne Knights fans[2]. During the course of this otherwise unremarkable game Perth player Slobodan ("Bobby") Despotovski, of Serbian ethnicity, made an offensive three-fingered Serbian war salute to the Knights fans (Skinner et al., n/d, p. 9). After the match he and others in the Perth squad were attacked by a small group of Knights fans as the Perth players boarded the team bus (Skinner et al., n/d, p. 9). This latter event was not captured by TV cameras. The day's events made headlines across Australia. The news story of the event, broadcast originally by a Perth-based news crew, is still available on YouTube.com[3]. Here Perth Glory is portrayed as the new non-ethnic future of football with the Knights being subtly ridiculed as an out-of-date unassimilated club full of ethnic chauvinists. Knights' fans are called "soccer hooligans" by the TV news voice-over. Later on in the clip an interviewed Despotovski, somewhat hysterically, claims that he "feared for his life". The Knights' then president Harry Mrksa is interviewed by the television news (at 1:10 to 1:18) and clearly he is mocked by the news reporter as a hopeless ethnic from an exotic foreign realm of violence, passion, and intrigue. When he refuses to apologize for the events, because he quite reasonably "does not know who caused the problem", he is the one that the TV reporter tries to portray as being a conspirator aiming to shield "his" troublemakers for parochial reasons. Robert Hrzić, then General Manager of the Knights, tells a reporter that there was an out-of-control group "numbering no more than four or five". He says that "there are suggestions they were provoked" but that "the club will not tolerate that behavior". However, Hrzic does not share in the moralizing tone of the Anglo-Australian journalists, politicians, Glory officials, and the Glory's German coach Bernd Stange. In 2010 Mr Ange Cimera of Melbourne Knights reflects on these events of ten years ago as follows: "The war was on in Bosnia; that signal signified what was going on over there so the [Croatian] community got pissed off over it. He [Despotovski] just got a few matches suspension" (in personal interview with first-mentioned author, February 16, 2010)[4].

Many people inside and outside of football came to view this event as "typical" of violent ethnic fans who had controlled and destroyed the game in Australia for far too long. The end for the Knights as a top-tier club was fast approaching. As the Heidelberg United website puts it "time was running out for 'ethnic clubs'" (Heidelberg United FC, 2010)[5]. As a postscript to this event it is interesting and unjustifia-

[1] Interview with Pave Jusup and Kova of Melbourne Croatia Fans (MCF), Melbourne, January 11, 2011. At a Sydney United versus Melbourne Knights friendly at Edensor Park, Sydney on January 30, 2010, the Sydney United firm (average age 16 to 20) numbered around 100 out of a crowd of 2,000. The Melbourne Knights' hardcore travelling contingent, known as Melbourne Croatia Fans or MCF, numbered around 50. The goodwill at this all-Croatian friendly was evident when the crowd heard both groups of fans chanting the other team's name towards the end of the second half (not the official team names but "Melbourne Croatia" and "Sydney Croatia"). The game was well publicized by the local Croatian newspaper *CX* which included a one-page match preview by Ante Jukić (in English) alongside an advertisement for the game.

[2] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/20002001/Playoff.html [accessed February 4, 2010].

[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13JyIGMOPBU [accessed January 21, 2010].

[4] In actual fact the "Bosnian War" was over well before 2000-2001.

[5] http://www.heidelbergunitedsc.com.au/clubhistory.htm [accessed January 22, 2010].

ble that the Knights' hierarchy was blamed for the violence of a small group of its supporters who clearly acted on the spur of the moment and under provocation. By contrast, the administrations of English football clubs with known violent elements among their supporters are not asked to close down their clubs nor do they have to witness their clubs being forcibly relegated to lower tier competitions. Some might point out that Liverpool FC faced a ten year ban (later reduced to six years) from European competition due to the behavior of its fans at the 1985 European Cup Final against Juventus at Heysel Stadium. However, it faced no relegation or penalty within the English domestic league setup. As Mr Ange Cimera of the Melbourne Knights comments: "In England you don't get wiped clean [with the league powerbrokers] saying you don't exist anymore, we only want the A-League" (in personal interview with the first-mentioned author, February 16, 2010).

In an incredible display of hypocrisy, given the refusal to admit South Melbourne to the A-League, the Brisbane Roar A-League club's home playing strip today remains the orange of the Dutch national team reflecting the club's roots in the Dutch community of Brisbane. Important sociological issues are involved here (Carniel, 2006, p. 2) relating to official policies of multiculturalism, and the fraught theoretical concepts of "mainstream" (i.e. "us"), "ethnic" (i.e. "them"), and "non-ethnic" (viewed as having the same meaning and positive connotation as "mainstream"). There is a clear dichotomy being made, if mostly at the level of Carl Gustav Jung's (2001) "collective unconscious", between the "white" and Protestant English/Scottish/Dutch clubs (acceptable) and the "colored" non-Protestant (Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox) Croatian/Greek/Italian/Macedonian/Serbian clubs (not acceptable). When multiculturalism became an official Australian government policy in the 1970s it was never made clear whether this term meant the privileging of Anglo-Australian culture at the core, with other cultures at the periphery and subject to the core, or whether no one culture was to be given priority over any of the others (Stratton, 1998). It could be suggested that some in the football community, including the FFA powerbrokers, subscribe to the first of these two worldviews. However, Vamplew (1994, p. 11) writes that "such reverse multiculturalism runs counter to Australian political philosophy and legislation which encourages diversity of cultural experiences rather than assimilation into a mainstream one".

The last NSL season was held during the summer of 2003-2004, with the April 4, 1994 grand final score line being Perth Glory 1, Parramatta Power 0 (NSW Migration Heritage Center and Powerhouse Museum, 2006; Ozfootball, 2008)[1]. The last home and away fixture on February 29, 1994 attracted 8,423 people to Somers Street in Sunshine North (Melbourne) to watch Sydney United play Melbourne Knights[2], a sad day for both Croatian clubs and their supporter bases with neither side being considered likely to be a part of any future national league. In 2004 the NSL was disbanded by the then ASA (now FFA). Just prior to this, multi-billionaire, Frank Lowy, once owner of the Sydney City Slickers (aka Hakoah) and now the CEO of the Westfield property group, had been hired to restructure and reinvigorate Australian football. In October 2003 the ASA had appointed a Taskforce to investigate a replacement national competition, chaired by Sydney businessman and former Sydney City Slickers chairman Andrew Kemeny (Anonymous, 2003; Solly, 2004, p. 272, 275, 278, 280, 282). The Taskforce received 110 submissions and released its results on December 8, 2003 (Anonymous, 2003). Ultimately Tony Labbozzetta, Ange Cimera, and like-minded traditional club stalwarts were defeated and a revamped national league plan was promulgated that involved expelling the ethnic clubs to the premier leagues of the various states, utilizing a North American style "one-city-one-team" model, and encouraging hyper-capitalist private-equity franchise teams. Consistent with the North American model there would be no promotion or relegation and no domestic FA Cup style knockout competition. The new franchises had to be protected from the threat of relegation so that they could consolidate themselves financially and in marketing terms in their new markets. This is not a luxury that the ethnic clubs had enjoyed in the NSL. The only ex-NSL clubs to be part of the first Hyundai A-League season were the *acceptable* clubs Adelaide United, Newcastle United Jets, New Zealand Knights, Perth Glory, and Queensland Roar (formerly Brisbane Lions and now Brisbane Roar). The first A-League season commencement was delayed until August 2005 (Hyundai, 2004).

Projected budgets of AUD3.5 million to AUD4.5 million per year for the first year, rising to AUD5.5 million a year for the fifth year (Solly, 2004, p. 273), provided an effective and *apparently* non-discriminatory barrier to the ethnic clubs who could not contemplate being able to operate at such a level (Johnny Warren, cited in Solly, 2004, p. 283). Solly (2004, p. 283) quotes Warren as saying: "Maybe some of the traditional [i.e. ethnic] clubs who have

[1] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/20032004/Playoff.html [accessed January 21, 2010].

[2] http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/20032004/Round26.html [accessed January 21, 2010].

poured millions of dollars into the development of the game, who have contributed so much, may see the [financial] bar as being too high". South Melbourne officials stated that their best annual revenue had been in the region of AUD1.8 million (Solly, 2004, p. 281), which was respectable but nowhere good enough to compete in the new era. In personal interview with the first-mentioned author on February 16, 2010, Mr Ange Cimera, Melbourne Knights president during the back-to-back premiership years in the NSL, states that the Knights averaged turnover of AUD1.2 to AUD1.3 million per year in the NSL which has now dropped fivefold to AUD250 thousand per year in the VPL. The financial bar had been set unreasonably high by the FFA in 2004-2005 to ensure that South Melbourne, the "least ethnic" and the most outward- and forward-looking of all the ethnic clubs in many people's opinion, could not take its place at the starting gates. All other ethnic clubs were similarly excluded. In the words of Frank Lowy: "The present clubs playing at the present standard will not be able to exist" (cited in Solly, 2004, p. 286). Lowy, here, in a Freudian slip, admits that life in a state premier league is equivalent to non-existence from the perspective of the ordinary football club supporter.

In regards the minimum annual budget figures, we observe the use of accounting numbers by an economic rationalist and neo-liberal league hierarchy to institute exclusion of the unwanted ethnic community clubs from the new competition. The hierarchy could hide behind the perceived neutrality and technical veracity of accounting numbers to enact its own new "White Australia" football competition (Skinner et al., n/d). In the words of Skinner et al. (n/d, p. 5), "the entrenched attitudes and behaviors of the 'white Australia policy' failed to go away". With the exception of South Melbourne, none of the ethnic clubs did, or have since, applied for admission to the A-League. The recent failed Melbourne United bid was (incorrectly) perceived as having been associated with the Melbourne Knights since the bid team involved some Croatians who had or have Knights associations. South Melbourne's recent bid to become Melbourne's second A-League club was unfairly rejected, despite the club's impressive junior structure, tradition, supporter base, and facilities, in favor of a totally new franchise called Melbourne Heart. Interestingly, Scott Munn, CEO of Melbourne Heart, has stated that he wants the Heart to attract the supporters of "old soccer" (i.e. the NSL) that have failed to warm to A-League club Melbourne Victory (Lynch, 2010). As to whether his club can succeed in achieving such a difficult feat remains to be seen. During the 2011-2012 season average home crowds for Melbourne Heart are as low as 4,000 people.

In the period leading up to the first A-League season, the hostile official discourse continued unabated, aimed at battering the ethnic clubs into submission. The threat of financial punishment for miscreants and the lure of financial assistance for the favored became ever more important. Clearly a brutal form of hyper-capitalism was going to crush the traditional ethnic clubs and their volunteer labor forces. Accounting numbers were put into service to achieve the objectives of the dominant FFA ruling faction and to harm the interests of the predominantly working-class ethnic clubs. The clear result of Frank Lowy and his team's restructuring of football has been the "ethnic cleansing" of Australia's premier football league[1]. The Heidelberg United FC website, as we have seen, refers to "ethnic clubs" and "cleansing process" without going so far as to place the two words "ethnic" and "cleansing" next to one another in the same sentence. Although no guns or knives were used one undeniable result of Australia's football restructuring has been the *disappearance of obvious and visible ethnic presence from Australia's premier football league* (first-mentioned author personal interview with Mr Ange Cimera of Melbourne Knights, February 16, 2010; Skinner et al., n/d). Mr Ange Cimera of the Melbourne Knights, in interview with the first-mentioned author, is quite happy to use the term "ethnic cleansing" in this specific context. Mr Cimera answers as follows regarding his perceptions about the end of the NSL and the setting up of the A-League in 2004-2005:

"Look as far as the NSL is concerned, we were disappointed in the way that they did it. With the Crawford Report we knew what was coming, we suffered, and we didn't play in any competition for over a year. … I have no problems with what they were trying to do but the way they did it was not fair to clubs that have been there 50 years or so. They say they are bringing in more people to the league. I think some of the clubs such as Brisbane, Newcastle and Central Coast are struggling at the moment. The majority, the owners are putting up lots of money, how long can they still do it? They should have got the clubs that have been around 50 years involved but they pushed us aside. I don't think the standard of the game in the national league has improved that much [since the NSL era]. … Our last year NSL [Knights] defence virtually won the championship for Victory, [but] we [had] finished third last. Lowy gets a lot of credit for destroying the [ethnic] clubs; he should get a lot of credit for destroying the clubs. He's the man of the

[1] We prefer to talk about results rather than intentions since intentions cannot be proven.

time, everyone kisses his ass, but he destroyed every club that meant something to our soccer community, not only here but in Sydney as well. … Regarding Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory I don't give a shit who wins. I hope they all fall in a hole and disappear as that's what they did to my club."

When asked about what he sees as the immediate future for the Knights, now a VPL club, Mr Cimera replies as follows:

"We just want to stabilize the club; we have a young team now. We will survive; we have our core of supporters. We own our own ground and facilities. No-one can force us to do anything. In 30 or 40 years we will still be the Knights, backed by the Croatian community, but the second or third or fourth generation [Croatians]. Do we want to join the A-League? No, not the way it is set up now. If Marconi, Sydney United, we, and South [Melbourne] could get promoted and relegated, then 'yes' [we would be interested]. We would need three or four leagues, not just two. A small club needs to have a goal – to be able to get promoted to A-League. At the moment [without such leagues] we just want to survive until they stop ethnic cleansing. You are getting rid of the community that loves the game. In Europe every club is an ethnic club [this is an exaggeration but both Cimera and the interviewer at this point spontaneously name checked Tottenham Hotspur and Celtic FC of Scotland]".

Resentment and bitterness at the ethnic clubs as to how they were treated clearly continues to fester today in Australian football (as Ange Cimera's cited comments indicate). The youtube.com clip of the hardcore supporter group Melbourne Croatia Fans[1] shows a huge banner "Respect Traditional Clubs not just A-League Money" (at 2:31 of the clip). Clearly some fans view the expelling of the ethnic clubs as part of a culturally and economically hegemonic capitalist takeover of football by "Mainstream Australia". Another banner in the same video clip reads "Your Love is Endless" (at 0:31). This somewhat ambiguous banner hints at the passion of the ethnic clubs that the plastic franchises of the A-League cannot hope to replicate[2]. It also hints at the bonds of mutual support that have characterized the ethnic clubs since their inceptions in the 1950s. The theme song on the clip, an obscure heavy-metal song "Ready to Fight" by Fat President (Osijek, Croatia) which boasts a chorus line of "Every Day is a Struggle", sums up the harsh realities of life for members of an ethnic community in the working-class suburbs of Melbourne.

2. A Marxist analysis of the hyper-capitalist takeover of Australian football

When the ethnic clubs were excluded from the A-League this would have been a major blow to many supporters since it represented the officialdom deciding that these fans' life struggles were no longer capable of or worthy of public resolution and that the struggles must be removed from the public realm. If any fan wanted to continue following an ethnic club then she/he could only do so in the obscurity of a state premier league in front of small crowds and with no or very minimal media coverage from the mainstream (non-ethnic) press. The ethnic clubs, and the fans of these clubs, were removed from the national league stage and relegated to perpetual suburban obscurity. Faceless franchises were erected in the place of the ethnic clubs and all football fans were pressurized to immediately give their allegiances to such artificial entities. The "one-team-one-city" setup and its accompanying ideology removed choice of club from the fans. In Sydney you either gave your support to Sydney FC or you vanished from public view and from the public record. The same applied in Melbourne with the Victory and in Adelaide with United. No-one cared anymore, apart from those who actually attended the matches and the ethnic communities' more devoted football supporters, what the outcome of the Marconi Stallions match was or the Sydney Olympic match was. *In a sense the A-League stole the fans' transferred hopes and dreams that the fans had already transferred on to the clubs and to the players.* This is very similar to the process of "primitive accumulation", studied by Karl Marx (1976) in Volume 1 of *Capital*, whereby the English peasants had to be forced off the land and capital concentrated in a few hands before capital accumulation proper could begin. These fans' transferred identities, hopes, and dreams were ridiculed, denied, and devalued by the A-League. In the ideology of the A-League, club histories count for nothing because the A-League clubs have no histories. In Marxist terms the fans had no control over events surrounding the formation of the A-League and hence literally (not *just* metaphorically or emotionally) they are now "alienated" from the A-League and from the A-League clubs (Marx, 1975; Ollman, 1976). Fans are excluded from the bright new world *unless* they abandon their clubs and join forces with a new plastic franchise club (as indeed many have done, especially in Melbourne).

The Marxist analysis can be easily extended to the part-time and volunteer staff who worked for the ethnic clubs in the pre-NSL and NSL years. These people gave a part of themselves, literally, by putting it into their clubs (Marx, 1975; Ollman, 1976). We

[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSMGRLB3hBY [accessed November 18, 2009].
[2] The 2010 membership campaign of the Melbourne Knights included the slogan "Success is Temporary, Passion is Forever".

are not asserting that if these people had known what would happen to the ethnic clubs after the end of the NSL that they would have withheld their labor. However, clearly some people would have done so. In the English Premier League if a club is in the "relegation zone" many people already desert the ship and more leave after the relegation occurs. In normal capitalist economy the worker puts some of herself/himself, literally, into the products produced and, according to Marx (1975), this is then alienated by the capitalist firm which has legal ownership over the finished products and disposes of them as it sees fit with the objective of surplus-value maximization clearly uppermost in its corporate "mind". Surplus-value is literally unpaid labor time extracted from the workforce, as Marx would later explain in Volume 1 of *Capital* (Marx, 1976, Chapter 7; Ollman, 1976). In the case of the migrant labor at the ethnic NSL clubs, alienation was low in the NSL years as the workers strongly identified with the clubs and the ethnic communities felt a strong sense of shared ownership with respect to the clubs (whatever the legal details of the ownerships actually were) (Hay, 1994, p. 60; Jones and Moore, 1994, p. 29; Mosely, 1994, p. 33). The labor was, in the words of the King James Bible, a "labor of love" (First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians 1:3; Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews 6:10). Hay (1994, p. 60) makes the same point, sans the religious language, when he states that "[i]n an organization with high morale it is taken for granted that they [members and supporters] will make small sacrifices, and perhaps even large ones, for the sake of the organization". Murray (2006, p. 57) writes, regarding his whole family's volunteer work for the St. George Budapest club, "[t]he work was done on the fuel of love for the cause". The various ethnic communities could be said to "own" the NSL and pre-NSL clubs and this was not too much at odds with experienced reality (Jones and Moore, 1994, p. 29; Mosely, 1994, p. 33). Club workers gave up parts of themselves but they put it directly into a valued community asset (Hay, 1994, p. 60), watched over by loyal and relatively honest and sincere community members who served as club officials. Based at least upon Johnny Warren's (2003) and Les Murray's (2006) recollections, the St. George Budapest club of the 1950s through to the 1970s would fit into this picture. The NSL clubs were semi-capitalist organizations living on the fringes of the capitalist economy as players were semi-professional, coaches were mostly part-time, and sponsors were small local businesses run by ethnic community members rather than major listed companies. Marx (1981, p. 126) writes that "capital" is money "invested in order to produce a profit". A strong argument can be made that the *primary* objective of the ethnic NSL clubs was not profit-maximization but to serve as a container for the ethnic community's hopes and dreams. This was even more so the case for state league clubs in the pre-NSL era and for state premier league clubs today. So worker alienation could be said to technically exist at the ethnic NSL clubs but it was low. It could not be compared with the alienation that many Greek and Italian supporters of these clubs faced during the working week working with huge employers such as the Ford manufacturing plant at Broadmeadows in Melbourne's outer northern suburbs (Bramble, 2008; Hay, 2001; Ross, 2004). The Broadmeadows plant is located only a few kilometres from the home ground of the Macedonian community's Preston Lions Football Club and it could be that some fans of the Lions worked at the Ford plant in the NSL era.

The primitive appropriation of the accumulated labor of the NSL staff and volunteers can be seen in the fact that the A-League and its clubs, profit-making organizations financed by professional investors' private-equity capital, stole the goodwill and identity that the NSL had built up over 30 years. This communal goodwill and standing was *appropriated* and privatized and devoted to pure money-making ends. However, its creators were largely excluded. Note that what is appropriated is financial capital, but cultural capital is correlated positively with financial capital and is also appropriated. As accounting students and practitioners know, Goodwill is an asset that can appear on a Balance Sheet but, under current International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), can do so only after a corporate takeover when its value is objectivified and verified in the purchase price paid[1]. Part of this goodwill may exist in the purchased company prior to the takeover while another part may emerge only as a synergistic response to the combining of the two firms' operations under the common ownership. The financial capital, or accumulated labor, resident in the NSL at the end of its life, and attributable to the NSL rather than to its individual clubs, was used by the A-League to create present and future revenue streams on private-equity capital (and was attributed to that capital). This goodwill, capital or accumulated labor (for the Marxist economist all three words can be used to describe the same substance) relates to the national competition, whatever it is called, and it was clearly stolen because the laborers were not compensated nor was their permission to end the NSL sought. Mr Ange

[1] Paragraph 51(b) of Australian accounting standard AASB3: *Business Combinations*, the Australian adaptation of IFRS3, states that the acquirer shall "initially measure that goodwill at its cost, being the excess of the cost of the business combination over the acquirer's interest in the net fair value of the identifiable assets, liabilities and contingent liabilities recognized" (CPA Australia, 2005, p. 140).

Cimera of the Melbourne Knights agrees with this "theft of goodwill" thesis as it was put to him by the first-mentioned author. Mr Cimera also made the following comment at this point:

"We [the ethnic clubs] made the competition, we attracted the fans, it was like goodwill, they took it off us; they said you can't play here anymore. … We need to be recognized as the clubs that started the NSL, kept that tradition up, and got a kick in the guts later on".

Other parts of the capital or accumulated labor relate more directly to the individual NSL clubs (either as part of their own "goodwill" or as the capitalized value of existing physical facilities at the grounds) rather than to the national competition. As an example, the Melbourne Knights has freehold ownership of its stadium and land in the western Melbourne suburb of Sunshine North (first-mentioned author interview with Mr Ange Cimera, February 16, 2010). The land area, a former drive-in movie theatre site, is around 90,000m^2 and being only 12 kilometres west of the Melbourne city center, and commanding city views, the land value alone would be significant. However, with the Knights unlikely to sell this land the unlocked value remains largely academic; in accounting terms the "value-in-use" is what counts. This area of land includes the club office underneath the grandstand; the 4,000 capacity Mark Viduka Stand; the 15,000 capacity stadium; the adjoining Croatian Social Club on the opposite side of the stadium to the Viduka Stand; a large 1,200 space car park behind the Viduka Stand; and two full-sized enclosed practice pitches. The only government funds used on this project was AUD60 thousand for the light towers (first-mentioned author interview with Mr Ange Cimera, February 16, 2010). All other money was raised by members of Melbourne's Croatian community. The labor used was probably a mix of volunteer Croatian labor and paid Croatian labor hired by small Croatian-owned construction companies. Similarly, Murray (2006, p. 64) writes that St. George Budapest's stadium "stands [today] as a tottering, broken down monument to the dreams of the migrants who got their hands dirty to build it". Because the Knights and other ethnic ex-NSL clubs were not admitted to the A-League, this accumulated labor/financial capital has been, according to Marxist economic theory, "wasted" and "devalued" (Marx, 1978, pp. 205-206, 486; 1981, pp. 353-362; Yee et al., 2008). In other words, the labor invested by part-time and volunteer staff at the ethnic clubs can be viewed as still existing, in accumulated but devalued form, at state premier league level[1]. This accumulated past labor has now become wasted or devalued capital in that it can find no legal way of entry into the new, heavily policed world of the A-League. It has been shunted down into a lower league that operates at a fivefold reduced financial level in terms of annual revenues. Given that the A-League sets a cap on transfer fees payable to state premier league clubs at an extremely miserly AUD3,000 (first-mentioned author interview with Mr Ange Cimera of Melbourne Knights, February 16, 2010), another previously significant revenue stream for the ex-NSL clubs has shrunk to very close to zero. The Knights will, literally, not have the financial resources to develop "the next Mark Viduka" for the benefit of the European super-leagues. Capital devalues, financially, if the profit stream that the capital is expected to generate suffers serious and long-term expected decline (Marx, 1978, pp. 205-206, 486; 1981, pp. 353-362; Yee et al., 2008). This last sentence does not require a Marxist understanding of economics. The value of the Knights' freehold land may be high and increasing but the club does not plan to sell this land; the "value-in-use" of the Knights' land and facilities and its goodwill have suffered fivefold or worse reductions now that the club is restricted to fielding its senior team in the VPL.

In the Marxist sense, we now have a new and very severe form of alienation as the past accumulated labor (capital) of ethnic club staff and volunteers' counts for precious little since it cannot be utilized in the shiny new world of the A-League.

Conclusions and practical recommendations for change

This paper has examined the cancellation of the NSL at the end of the 2003-2004 season and its replacement with the hyper-capitalist A-League competition. As we have seen, the A-League initially used a "one-team-one-city" North American model and restricted itself to private-equity franchises funded by professional investor consortiums. The ethnic clubs, which had formed the backbone of the NSL, were relegated to the various state premier leagues such as the VPL, NSWPL, etc. We have used a Marxist analysis to explain how the transference of fans' hopes and dreams on to the ethnic clubs and the transference by the part-time and volunteer labor forces of parts of themselves into the clubs have seen this accumulated capital (both financial and cultural) robbed and devalued by the A-League.

If the suggestions of some online football fans were taken seriously and the ethnic clubs could find a home in a new national second-division "B-League", with promotion to the A-League being possible, there would be hope for these clubs and they would again be exposed to greater degrees of media coverage and public interest. The B-League possibility may

[1] However, if the worker walks away from the club she/he can no longer benefit from or experience the fruit of her/his accumulated past labor.

be viable if promotion to A-League was available each year and if the only promotion criterion was on-field performance. As Mr Ange Cimera of Melbourne Knights states, his club *would be willing to join* a national league setup if there was to be promotion and relegation between the various constituent leagues. Any discriminatory, but apparently fair and neutral, criteria for promotion such as form of club ownership (e.g., private ownership), enforced changes to club names, insignias, and/ or colors, minimum annual budgets, minimum stadium capacities, etc. that still function as effective exclusionary mechanisms would, however, be counterproductive. In other words, on-field performance, not financial accounting numbers, would be the sole determinant of which clubs would be admitted to the B-League or promoted to the A-League. As Les Murray (2006, p. 110) has asked rhetorically, "[i]f you play but cannot win fair and square, with sheer ability and on a level playing field, within the rules of the game and within the spirit of those rules, why do play at all?"

Note: Club President Ange Cimera is first left in the back row (wearing club scarf). Photo courtesy Melinda Cimera/Melbourne Knights FC.

Fig. 2. The Melbourne Knights' senior team at Knights' Stadium during the 2011 Victorian Premier League season

Note: Note the fan in the Celtic FC green-and-white hooped shirt, reflecting the strong relationship between the two clubs after Mark Viduka, an ex-Melbourne Knights' player, switched to Celtic from Dinamo Zagreb. Photo courtesy Melinda Cimera/Melbourne Knights FC.

Fig. 3. Melbourne Croatia Fans (MCF) cheer a home goal at Knights' Stadium, Sunshine North, Melbourne, Australia, 2011 Victorian Premier League season

Note: The graffiti on the fence bordering an industrial premises across the road from Melbourne Knights' home ground, Somers Street, Sunshine North, Melbourne, Australia, January 11, 2011. Photo from author's collection.

Fig. 4. "Melbourne Croatia" graffiti

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