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# SMOKE SIGNALS

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► The first thing I noticed when I got to Wilcannia was how resentful the townspeople, both white and Aboriginal, were of newspapermen. They soon dropped their guard for NEW DAWN, but I feel that the next newspaper man is going to have a pretty tough time getting information. Mick Rodden, the local Welfare Officer had warned me of the general resentment of journalists and “do-gooders” quite early and had shown me some of the inaccurate and unfair articles which had appeared in various newspapers. Local Aborigines too, complained to me how often they had had flying visits from “instant experts” from various organizations and from the universities. They made a lot of noise, criticized everything and everybody, then made a lot of promises. Then they disappeared. Nobody heard anything from them again.

The Sisters of Compassion, who have their mission on the reserve, put it this way: “It doesn’t matter *what* the authorities and the Aborigines themselves do to improve the life of their kids (and plenty are trying) the newspapers only ever report the bad side. All they want is sensation.” One reserve man had asked: “What do we have to do to be right?” The whole town resents the “splash” stories and the opportunists who promise the earth, leave, and are never heard of again.

► *Where have all the men gone?* Whenever I get near Aborigines, all the men disappear. There’s only ever WOMEN left to talk to. Just recently, I had three articles on women finished and had an appointment to see another woman about something else. A feller rang me up and said: “There’s this GIRL in Sydney I reckon you ought to do an article about.” See? Now the point is, if I don’t get more articles about MEN in this magazine soon, people are going to start to think funny things about the editor. We can’t have that, can we? So . . . anyone seen any men around?

► *Birth Notice* in the *Australian* newspaper last October:

William (Reeves)  
Are at it again  
At King George V on Wednesday October 21  
A boy—Guy.

► My Wilcannia visit was great. Do you know why? Because Mrs Elsie Jones made us welcome. Perfect strangers we were, too. We got to Wilcannia on a Saturday and spent Saturday night on the reserve. That was the quietest night for three years, said the reserve people. There wasn’t a peep all night. It hadn’t been so quiet since the big funeral back in 1967. Now that made me feel really good—to know that I have the same impact on people as a funeral!

Seriously though, have you thought that it is even necessary to be kind to that form of life known as editors? Because, you know, there have been plenty of times when this one has stood outside an Aborigine’s house and had to talk on the doorstep because no-one said “Come in, have a cup of tea.” Point is, I can’t really do good articles about Aborigines unless I talk to them properly. That is why it is necessary for them to be kind to editors. And Elsie Jones *was* kind.

As a matter of fact, if I knew who the Elsie Jones was on every reserve, I’d be wheedling the Department to let me go every week!

► On October 1, the Redfern All Blacks left Sydney for a tour of New Zealand, at the invitation of Maori M.P. Mr Matiu Rata. Sixteen players were accompanied by two coaches and two officials. The tour was financed by the National Aboriginal Sports Foundation. During their twelve day tour, the All Blacks played three matches, of which they won one. Their Maori hosts showed the team the quality of Maori hospitality by throwing a number of dinners, balls and informal functions. Highlights of the tour were a farewell dinner to members of the New Zealand World Cup team in Wellington soon after the All Blacks’ arrival in New Zealand, a royal welcome from the Maori Queen at Ngarawahia and a farewell, in Auckland, from officials from the Department of Maori and Island Affairs, the New Zealand Rugby League Control Board and Mr Matiu Rata himself.

Long time Aboriginal rights leader Mr Herbert Stanley Groves, J.P., died in hospital on Monday, 28th December, 1970. His death was the culmination of a series of heart attacks throughout October. Mr Groves’ achievements for his own people are well known. May I extend my sympathy to the Aboriginal people who knew him and to his relations and family as well.