

technological age, one of the most complex and important jobs, since it is dealing with people's lives, not just their possessions.

One of the most disappointing features of the present situation is that while the Welfare Board laboriously works on, there are, at its disposal but unasked, the very men in the Universities' Departments of Sociology and Social Work who could best contribute to its functioning. It must be recognized that to-day "commonsense" "won't do" in Aboriginal Welfare. Even the process of coming to grips with the nature and dimension of the problems involved is a very lengthy, complicated and expensive one. Years of "experience with Aborigines" is no substitute for the technical competence of sociology. When we have asked the right questions about what is needed in provision for Aborigines, in order to enjoy the benefits and responsibilities of our society, then we will need trained sociologists to provide the answers. Such men are available.

When the Board has managed to broaden its conceptions and understanding of "the problem" it will be free to have a fuller and healthier relationship with the Aborigines, the voluntary organisations and the public. Instead of suggesting that voluntary organisations "can increase the understanding (of the community) of Government policy"¹ its desire may be that the community understand the Aborigines and not just the Government.

Mr. Kingsmill explained how the Board responds to prejudice and discrimination against the Aborigines:

"It is aiming to remove the conditions that give rise to such misgivings."²

(9) Not only has the Board failed to work to eliminate the frequent friction, stereotypes and hostility that are a barrier to the advancement of Aborigines, but it seems, on a number of occasions, to have given way to "these misgivings." When the Welfare Board's efforts to obtain land to build homes at Lismore were obstructed by the Town Clerk and Town Council, the Board's power was not exercised. It has the legal right, by virtue of Clause 7(b)(1A)(a), the final power in acquiring land, yet did not use it. Thus the "goodwill of the community" is treated as a delicate flower to be nourished by the "patience and conviction that things will come with the years".³

1 Aborigines Welfare Board Report 1964-65, (46) p.10.

2 Sydney Morning Herald, 24.2.65, p.2.

3 Proceedings of Conference on N.S.W. Aborigines, Armidale, May 1959 p. 27 & 39.

In N.S.W. most of the causes of friction between the races and social discrimination is due to a failure of communication, sheer ignorance, or a ready acceptance of a stereotype. All Aborigines are dirty and drunken, therefore none must be admitted to our school (Lismore), baths (Moree and Kempsey), or our picture theatre (Bowraville). We are not up against generations of racial indoctrination, only misunderstanding, ignorance and a dislike of change. In many of these situations, a trustful, friendly but firm consultation from the Board, together with other Aborigines to provide the liaison with those living on Reserves, could have eliminated tensions and the barriers of resentment and inferred inferiority that have proved impassable to so many Aborigines. While these, and such problems as the rights of Police to enter homes on Stations without permission or warrant at any time, are often what the Aborigines feel to be their most pressing problems, the Senior Welfare Officer and his staff are quite unconcerned and even hostile to the suggestion that these problems exist.

The above analysis is intended to provide an interpretive approach to the "failure" of Aborigines to adapt to the European culture, and all that this entails in terms of hygiene, work-habits, educational advancement and housing. We hope we have shown that this "failure" has been largely the result of an uninformed approach to the social problems which confront Aborigines, both in managing their own lives, and adapting to the larger Australian community. In order to take our analysis further, we shall offer suggestions to the Select Committee, for future policy, based on a careful reading of social advancement and welfare work in other countries.

II. MODELS FOR POLICY MAKING.

(1) The types of policy and welfare provision for the Aborigines in this State have become traditional, and have evolved along lines that are very different from the way other groups have been thought about and provided for, in the past. In fact, in the context of social policy our Aboriginal Welfare policy, with a Board of Public Servants, stations and station managers, seems extraordinary, and yet these features have marked the boundary of welfare thinking. We have come to regard them as the only kind of policy that can deal with Aboriginal problems. In fact, Aboriginal affairs are not thought of at all in connection with Social Services or provision, in the same way as the rest of the community's entitlement to such

provision. Aborigines are regarded as a special kind of needy person who actually, in many cases, string out their whole existence on some kind of unemployment or sickness benefit, and yet are catered for in a special way, by being clustered together on Reserves. These Reserves then turn into ghettos, because they are inhabited by the people of a distinctly different race. With this policy grow up the attendant ill-effects of poverty, ill-health, scorn of the white community, lack of ambition, and hopelessness.

(2) To evaluate present Aboriginal Welfare Policy and thinking it is necessary to have some notion of the "alternatives". For this reason we intend to touch briefly upon a number of policies and programmes from areas other than Aboriginal Welfare, particularly some lesser known overseas ones, that have relevance. In this way we hope to provide some examples of the variety of "models" for welfare provision that can be found in operation. As a preliminary to programme policy making, it would be necessary to attend to a wide range of detailed information about such programmes and policies. We, however, have restricted ourselves to several from "New Society."

(3) (a) Family Service Project.

In many ways the problems of the Aborigines are similar to those of other depressed minority groups. There is an expanding literature of experimental work being done with such groups that should be valuable background to future policy. The work of the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence Family Service Project, Melbourne, has immediate relevance to Aboriginal welfare.¹ The project is concerned with a group, which, like many Aborigines, has failed to meet satisfactory standards of home management, child care and rent payments.

The project's techniques were, basically, intensive family casework; a very different approach to that of most Aboriginal Welfare work in N.S.W., based on scanty visits by Welfare Officers. In most cases there has been continued progress in aspects such as home management, child care, community participation and, in some cases, improvement in employment and rent payment.

(b) Race Relations.

In Great Britain a good deal of attention has been given to the causes of social friction in housing, work, education and social life generally, principally involving Commonwealth immigrants.² This vital area has been

1 Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, Report on Family Service Project, July 1958-June 1959.

2 New Society, 19th March, 1965, p.18.

almost totally neglected in N.S.W.

"Consultative Committees" have been set up in conjunction with local authorities. They have shown that a few enthusiastic people can change the atmosphere of a whole borough. The Committees are as broadly based as possible, with representatives of the political parties, welfare organisations, churches, trade unions and borough councils. Town Hall facilities are made available and grants are advanced from rates (conditional on supplementary fund raising).

The Committee's functions include:

- (i) to see that the press representatives and news items are well informed;
- (ii) to examine local housing, educational and occupational problems and make suggestions for the future;
- (iii) most important of all, to foster integration. This is done by means of -

(A) clubs, which interested Commonwealth immigrants wish to start.

These have included young people's social clubs, travel clubs, adult education lessons, and Social Action groups (which, for example, care for the homes of the aged).

(B) liaison work, with individuals, which involves, for example, legal problems of Commonwealth migrants, social clubs and talks to schools.

(C) a conciliation panel, which visits places of social friction, in pairs, one of white skin and one coloured, to see if friction can be resolved.

As "New Society" points out, these are very delicate (but vitally important) tasks that cannot be well handled by a government or political structure, with limited freedom of movement. Total community representation is essential.

- (iv) other activities include efforts to improve the relations between Police and the depressed racial minority group. Conferences on political problems as well as pamphlets for the education of the population in race relations, are sponsored by the Committee, and local neighbourhood meetings held. This lack of interest in educating the population as a whole in racial issues exposes a deplorable

inadequacy in N.S.W. (Ref. Section IV this report).

Apart from the functions undertaken by these Committees, their special significance lies in the way that their vital work is linked up with local government, and a sense of community action. In Australia we leave these functions, if not unattempted, to voluntary groups of a very wide range of objects and methods; few of them have the local centre from which to operate.

Such a committee would minimise the element of paternalism still strong in N.S.W. Aboriginal Welfare provision, because of the little participation afforded to Aborigines, at any level. These committees could function very well in this State.

(c) America's War on Poverty Programme.¹

This programme is vitally relevant to the Aboriginal situation because it represents an original, comprehensive and urgent approach to the problem of both long term and immediate betterment of people, low in skills and often branded as failures.

Its basic endeavour is to combat poverty on a community-wide basis by means of concentrated local programmes, to be heavily subsidised from a Federal level. This is different from our idea of implementing a general policy, to be locally administered, and our trifling with State finances, when a national problem is at issue, even though it does have different ramifications in each State.

The Americans believe aid must rely on local initiative and the approach must be a comprehensive one, not restricted just to welfare work, or education alone.

An important section of the programme is reminiscent of the New Deal, and our own scheme to repatriate W.W.II ex-servicemen, with provision of loans for rural and industrial investment likely to increase family income, on a long range basis.

- (i) The most significant section of the programme is the work-training projects, directed for unskilled and unemployed young people, as well as unemployed fathers and other members of needy families. These people acquire skills as they work in three stages of employment, which are:
- (A) A short period of work on public projects, (which in this country

1 New Society, 16th July, 1964.