

SMOKE SIGNALS

►As Aborigines who organize things such as dances, conferences and so forth know, it is necessary to decide upon a starting time, a clock time. Then they also know that there is such a thing as "Aboriginal time" and this is what drives organizers stark bonkers. I've had to laugh at the number of notices of Aboriginal functions I've seen, which hopefully carry the message:

Starts at 8 p.m. SHARP.

No one takes a blind bit of notice, because Aboriginal time is "when we get there" which depends on a wide range of unpredictables such as whether the family can find Johnny who disappeared at lunch time, whether Uncle Bill's car gets a flat tyre, whether Mum's cardigan has dried in time, whether Uncle Bill might decide to go to Wee Waa instead and so on. Meanwhile, the organizers are tearing their hair. Maybe it's a good job too. We're so very organized these days that perhaps the custom of Aboriginal time—doing things when and if you're ready—is one way by which people could save their sanity?

►At the June Advisory Council meeting of Aboriginal mothers, Lex Grey told the mothers: "We hear a lot about how Aborigines have deficiencies. In the past, too, we used to hear about how dark people were the 'white man's burden'. This burden is as nothing, compared to the burden, the sheer load of 12 million whites, which is carried by the Aboriginal people. That load is their *only* deficiency. It is the root cause of every other problem of the Aboriginal people."

►The day Jock Smith, an Aboriginal stockman, died at Theodore in Central Queensland, rain fell on the town. The locals reckoned it was Jock's last rain-making effort. When Jock first tried his hand at rain-making, the Theodore area had been in the grip of a 10-year drought. After his dance, 4 in to 5 in fell and the Dawson River overflowed its weir. Jock seems to have been the last of his line. Both his grandfather and father were rain-makers. But though Jock Smith left eight grown-up children, "Not one of them seems to be a rainmaker," said one of the locals, taking a look at Theodore's blue, blue sky.

►A credit union has formed at Walgett. It is the first attempt to bring Aborigines into a credit union and will be a pilot for a plan to take credit unions to other areas. It has the backing of the ACT Credit Union League.

►Mr John Lugnan of Urunga has passed a correspondence course and received his 2nd Class Building and Bridge Inspector's Certificate. The course took 4½ years and represented a mighty effort as John's education was very limited. Originally engaged by the N.S.W. Railways as a painter, determination kept Mr Lugnan at his study. Anyone who has ever done part-time study while holding down a full-time job will know what this means in sheer effort. The arrival of the certificate was a happy surprise to the family because John had kept his activities secret. As soon as he had passed, he was put on Inspector's wages while awaiting a vacancy. However he has not finished yet. He has already started another correspondence course to enable him to qualify as a civil engineer over a period of 3 years. This will include 6 months face to face instruction at Sydney Technical College. Pictured are Mr and Mrs Lugnan with Joseph, Maria, and Rory. Joseph is in 3rd form at Bellingen High School.

