

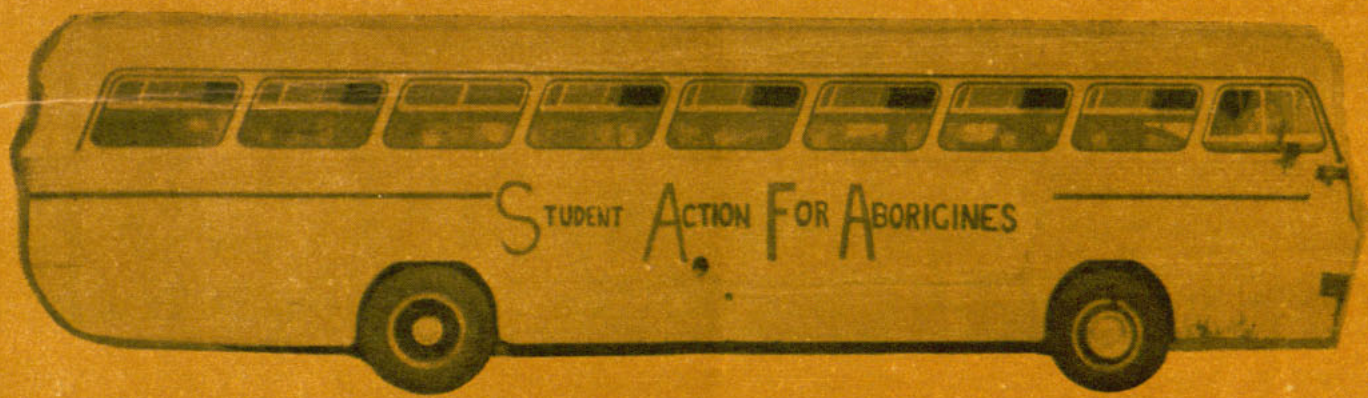
OUTLOOK

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**THE STUDENT BUS
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THE STUDENT BUS

SAFA
interviewed

When Sydney University students, in Orientation Week 1964, demonstrated outside the US Consulate for Negro civil rights, some people said, 'What about our civil rights problem here in Australia? Why don't you do something about the Aborigines?' They took this to heart. A demonstration was organised outside Parliament House, then a lecture on Aboriginal civil rights. A group of students decided to form an organisation specifically for Aboriginal rights, and invited participation from every University political and religious club. **Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA)** was the result, with **Charles Perkins**, one of the first Abschol students in Sydney, as Chairman. SAFA is now an independent club, determined not to be a 'political front' for anybody.

In February 1965, SAFA sent a busload of students for two weeks to investigate Aboriginal conditions in some of the country towns of northern New South Wales, and carry out protest action. On their return, **OUTLOOK** interviewed some of them:

What was SAFA aiming to do on the tour?

Spigelman: In discussions beforehand, we thought that short-term student action should try to draw attention to Aboriginal problems in housing, education and so on. This became our prime aim. Second, we should try to integrate as many facilities as we could by student action. And third, we aimed to get the Aborigines interested in standing up for themselves and opposing segregated facilities.

How did you raise the money to get the tour under way?

Healy: We held several lunchtime concerts — a lot of the folkies gave their services free — and a monster concert at the Paddington Town Hall. Quite a few people gave us money. Everyone who went on the bus trip put in ten pounds. On the trip, it was amazing and cheering that we kept getting letters from people we'd never heard of wishing us luck and sending money as well.

What about these lectures and briefings you had before the trip?

Dawson: I went to all except one. We had one by the head of the Social Work Department, who told us about doing a sociological survey — how to approach people.

Perkins: I think we learned quite a lot from these seminars. You couldn't perhaps weigh it up — this plus that equals the other...

Spigelman: The important thing about the seminars — especially those from Alan Duncan, tutor in Aboriginal Adult Education, on the location of Aborigines in settlements, reserves, towns, etc. and from Mrs Pam Beasley

Charles Perkins, 29, Arts III, Chairman of SAFA
Jim Spigelman, 19, Arts III, tour executive and secretary of SAFA

Patricia Healy, 20, Arts III, member of the tour executive

Patrick Dawson, 19, Arts II, investigating individual cases of discrimination

John Butterworth, 20, General Science III, investigating education.

The questions are asked by **G.W. Ford**, lecturer in Economics at the University of NSW. When in the US on a Fulbright scholarship, Bill Ford went on the Freedom Ride to Jackson, Mississippi.

We believe that the students have taken an important initiative in their direct approach to our own civil rights problem, and that SAFA deserves support from students and public. We are happy to publish this record. (Photographs: *Daily Mirror*, Sydney.)

on the anthropological aspects — is that we all learned something we didn't know about before. This undoubtedly helped us in the arguments we had in the towns we came to, but we still had to play it by ear on the tour.

Charles, how about the organisation? the sub-committees?

Perkins: We always had a general meeting if there were any committees to be set up. We had demonstration committees, catering committees and so on. It was on a very organised level and everybody fulfilled whatever office they had. On the tour we had medical students and teachers' college students who looked into hygiene and education.

How did you feel as the bus moved out of the University into the distance?

Spigelman: At the outset, I think we set off looking as if we were on a two-weeks' holiday. A lot of us were thinking about what we would see, what we could achieve — but very few of us expressed our opinions at that stage.

Dawson: I disagree. We weren't going on a holiday. We were all rather wary of what was happening — and rather lonely. We were going out very individually. I was rather lonely.

Perkins: Actually, I was quite frightened: I thought that anything could happen, and that we could get involved in all sorts of very difficult situations. None of us had done anything like this before...

Butterworth: I was primarily interested in what we would find out there. I'd lived at Moree for a while — my relatives live at Moree. I'd seen how the Aborigines were treated there, and I was interested to see what we

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would come up against in the country towns, because I knew of the attitude of the white people. I wanted to see their living conditions for myself; I'd only glimpsed the reserve and heard about it. . . . And of course, there was a fair amount of excitement about going round New South Wales, as well.

Healy : Most of us knew the Aborigines lived in shocking conditions, but none quite knew what to expect; we were doubtful about the whole thing.

Spigelman : At the outset we were not yet a unit — and didn't become one till Wellington.

Healy : Many of us thought we might be involved in a lot more violence than we were — though we were involved in enough. We thought we might face all sorts of trouble, police and so on. We were ready to face any difficulties and overcome them.

Dawson : I remember at the beginning that I would hum 'We shall overcome' and be shouted down: we weren't Americans! By the end of the trip we dramatised the situation and began to feel we were martyrs.

Many people expected — and I think the press were looking for this — that when you came into the towns there would be Aboriginal resentment that you were stirring up trouble. What was your reaction, Charles, and how did the Aborigines treat you?

Perkins : I was quite surprised. I expected a fair amount of support, seventy per cent or so, from the Aborigines, but I think we got ninety-eight per cent. A few people were reluctant to help us and apprehensive about who we were and what we were doing; and then a few others wanted to preserve the *status quo* and were afraid we would upset the few privileges they had gained. But on the whole, I think we won support.

Butterworth : This has been proved since by the Aborigines themselves, in towns we've been to, carrying on with demonstrations, and so on. In Bowraville they decided to boycott the theatre.

Spigelman : There was an interesting case here. Mr Raymond, the theatre owner, asked an Aborigine to carry his films down to the theatre for him, and the Aborigine said, 'What will you pay me?' He replied, 'I'll give you a free ticket to the pictures'. 'I'm not allowed to go to the pictures', was the Aborigine's reaction, 'and anyway, I don't want to go' . . .

Butterworth : People have said that the children we took to the swimming pools in Moree and Kempsey didn't know what they were going for. This isn't so; the children knew what they were going for — it was explained to them beforehand. And in Moree, after our first visit, the children went back the next night and sat outside the door waiting to get in.

Dawson : The Aborigines seemed to realise our sympathies were with them. In Walgett they supported us in times of violence. At Moree they stood around, and I'm pretty sure this was in case somebody might try to bash us — and they would come in on our side.

Spigelman : There's no doubt we were helped considerably by having Charles along on the trip.

Healy : Another thing was the publicity. As we got further on the tour, they had heard more about us — they became even more willing to help us.

Spigelman : In Walgett, early in the tour before the big blurb of publicity, there were various arguments going on outside the RSL Club. At first the Aborigines were standing in a group just behind the students or just sitting there; but after about half an hour or an hour they started joining in the arguments and sticking up for themselves.

One of the problems the American students faced going into the Deep South was that the old people — white and Negro — couldn't at first accustom themselves to youth taking the lead. Did you notice any dichotomy between the younger and the older Aborigines?

The press reported . . .

MOREE

There was no colour bar in Moree, only discrimination on the grounds of hygiene, the Mayor of Moree, Alderman W.A. Lloyd, said yesterday.

He said that the Sydney University students' visit to the town would put relations between whites and part-aborigines back 10 years.

Assimilation of part-Aborigines living in and around Moree had been gradually taking place, and there had town would put relations between whites and part-race relations in the past.

However, with the visit of the students, feeling in the town would begin to 'fester'. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Feb. 1965).

SOUTH GRAFTON

The touring Sydney University students were stranded with little money and without transport on the southern bank of the Clarence River this afternoon.

Their bus-driver has refused to take them further because he said the mission had become 'far too dangerous' . . .

'They still have at least one more trouble spot to visit and I'm not going to take any chances by being there'. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Feb. 1965).

MOREE

The students were calm yesterday after yesterday's incident . . . They spent the morning cleaning egg and tomato stains off the sides of the bus.

At Moree some of the students were punched and jostled, and a former alderman who had sided with them was dropped into a gutter.

The students' departure was marked by a barrage of flying eggs and rotten fruit.

Some people in the crowd hissed and spat at the students when they staged a sit-down demonstration outside Moree swimming pool.

When council employees used wire to bind a hastily-erected barricade, youths in the crowd began shouting, 'Let's string them up!'

The students were trying to gain admission for nine aboriginal children they had brought with them. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Feb. 1965).

Spigelman : In Walgett, I know a lot of the young kids were sticking up for themselves much more openly than the oldies.

Dawson : I don't think the older people resented us, though.

Butterworth : It's the same as with white people — the older people tend to be complacent and accept the situation.

Healy : The older people were more suspicious of us because they've had anthropologists and God knows what running round investigating for so many years.

Butterworth : But the older people were *aware* of the situation. It wasn't so much that they'd accepted it, as that they didn't know what they could do about it.

Healy : Yes, they were *aware*; but they were just a little suspicious of our motives at the time.

Charles, did you strike any 'Uncle Toms' up there ?

Perkins : Oh yes, there were definitely a few scattered here and there. We have them in the city as well, you know; Aborigines in a fairly privileged position who want to retain whatever small privileges they have and don't want to upset anything.

Having gone into these areas, how did you yourselves feel, seeing the conditions under which the Aborigines live ?

Healy : First, complete numbness and shock. You *know* roughly before you go what you are going to face, but you simply don't realise until you get there and see for yourself. Take the houses they live in. I could hardly believe it when I first saw it. And yet when you see more and more of it you become almost *blasé* in the end. As Charlie has often said, you come to differentiate between 'good-class' shacks and 'bad-class' shacks. . . . But when it first hits you, you're almost numb from shock that in a country like Australia where you've been told so often there's *no* discrimination, there's such blatant discrimination in practically every country town you come to.

Dawson : It's *social* discrimination. And also, the discrimination strikes you as being thorough-going; in every aspect of the Aborigines' life it's shown up. But it isn't always 'blatant'.

Healy : At least everyone accepts it; all the people in the towns accepted it as just the status quo.

Dawson : Is it racial prejudice, or just the attitude of the white community towards a less affluent class ?

Spigelman : I think class prejudice is involved. Discussion often shows some sort of racial overtone. It's not quite the out-and-out racial segregation stuff you might find in the Deep South, except in individual instances; but the general attitude is to treat Aborigines as a lower class group.

Dawson : Until we've taken away their depressed economic position and made them economically as well-off as the white community, we can't be sure it's not social discrimination. If there still is discrimination after this, it's racial discrimination, since there's no other reason for it.

Butterworth : Even so, I don't know which is worse — racial prejudice or just apathy. At least when you've

got racial prejudice it's out in the open. . . . I was pleasantly surprised at what the education survey revealed. The Education Department seems to be doing a pretty good job. Except on one point: that it still has some Aboriginal schools. It was quite obvious that children in primary schools were getting together pretty well. It's in secondary schools that there's a noticeable drop in the performance of Aboriginal children. I believe this is due to the development of class or racial consciousness, whichever it is. I think it's caused by the difference in living standards and the social barriers. You can't expect children to accept one another when they're together in school but separated in the swimming pool and the theatre.

Spigelman : One chap in Lismore told me he wouldn't continue at secondary school because there were no other Aborigines at the school and he didn't want to go on alone.

Butterworth : Other factors come in here, we found. Not only discrimination by white people, but also the fact that the Aborigines are wary of white people.

Perkins : In a few cases, it was definitely out-and-out racial discrimination. For instance, they debarred me from the pool at Kempsey on the basis of racial origin — this wasn't social discrimination. At Moree, it was much the same. It's on the books; it's got Aborigines specifically as a race. At the theatre in Bowraville, it was race again; it was *Aborigines* that were barred, not lower-class Aborigines. Yet in some other towns, it tended towards class distinction and class discrimination.

Spigelman : We don't know how much of the discrimination is racial; and we won't know until we've removed the basis for every other rationalisation.

Butterworth : It's these overt discriminatory incidents we've got to get rid of first. White children *must* assume there's something wrong with or inferior about the Aboriginal child: they know he's not *unhealthy* — they can play with him at school — yet he must live on the outskirts of town and they're not allowed to sit with him in the theatre or go with him to the swimming pool.

Spigelman : Everyone noticed that in Bowraville there seemed to be much more racial discrimination than social and class discrimination. This affected the general outlook of the Aborigines. When I asked people in other towns which pubs or cafes discriminated, they would say, 'We're not allowed in this place' or 'We're not allowed in that place'. In Bowraville, the Aborigine I asked said, 'we *are* allowed in such and such a place'. It was a complete reversal of emphasis.

Butterworth : One thing that shocked me at Bowraville was the school. When we talked about the schools in other places, they told us that when they finally decided to assimilate the school, it went ahead fairly easily. The people were apathetic and there was a bit of opposition, but assimilation was accepted. But in Bowraville, they were trying to assimilate the school for eighteen months; every time they tried it there was such an uproar among the townspeople that they couldn't go ahead. Increased pressure this year has resulted in the enrolment of six Aboriginal children at the High School.



Charles Perkins and Aboriginal children seek admission to Moree Baths.

Is this perhaps because Bowraville is poorer than any of the other communities?

Healy: This might be an influence. In Bowraville we found economic conditions so bad that all the progressive Aborigines who might have led the people had gone off to get jobs somewhere else. Unemployment was worse there than anywhere else.

Spigelman: More competition for jobs, especially at the lower level.

Dawson: But you found the same discrimination in Walgett, where there were not enough jobs to go round as in Moree, where there were too many jobs.

Butterworth: A lot of people seemed scared that the Aboriginal population would eventually outnumber the white population.

Spigelman: This came up, I think, in Walgett — it was a pressing problem because Aborigines there are about to outnumber the white population. And in Boggabilla it was the same.

Butterworth: People in Moree were scared that this would happen, though Moree has a much higher percentage of white people.

Do you think this is a challenge to white supremacy in this area? In the US, one of the problems was to get the poor white to accept the Negro, because he was the first to lose economically — he was the person under challenge for his particular job. Some of the strongest racialists are the people facing the first economic loss. Did you find this up north?

Spigelman: I didn't particularly notice this myself, though I know that anthropologists have done work on it; a study in Walgett a couple of years ago did find this. We didn't have time to mix . . .

Dawson: If there was any mixing, it was with the lower strata of society. If there were any bitchy women in a crowd, generally they looked quite affluent.

Healy: The Aboriginal problem is so tied up with the economic problem in these country towns, where the only jobs are unskilled. The Aborigine isn't educated to a

level where he can take skilled jobs anyway, and there is constant competition for the unskilled ones.

Spigelman: The extreme lower classes of the white population have got nobody to feel superior to except the Aborigines; they get a tendency to superiority, put on social airs . . .

What signs of overt discrimination did you see?

Healy: Often legal ones — like councils barring Aborigines from swimming pools.

Spigelman: Though even in Moree they sometimes waive the council resolution and allow them in. But one instance does point to a colour barrier. There's a woman with four daughters, two lighter-skinned than the others; the manager allows the two lighter-skinned in, and keeps the other two out. It's purely on the manager's discretion.

Healy: Many people in the country towns didn't know that there were statutes on the books banning Aborigines, or if they did know, wouldn't admit it. I pointed out to the manager of the pool at Moree that there was a council statute specifically barring Aborigines. He said, 'No, there's not'. He claimed we were confusing a Council Statute with a letter from the Headmaster of the High School, applying for permission for Aboriginal pupils to enter the pool for school sports and carnivals. I said, 'The fact that special permission had to be sought for Aboriginal pupils surely proves that there must be a statute restricting entry of Aborigines'. . . But he wouldn't have it.

ON THE BOOKS: '3. *Patronage of Baths and Memorial Hall.* That no person, being a full-blooded or half-caste aboriginal of Australia, or being a person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood, shall use or occupy or be present in or upon, or be allowed or permitted or invited to use or occupy or be present in or upon, the premises of the Council known as the Memorial Hall or in or upon any of the buildings or places ancillary thereto, including the Supper Room, Kitchen, Servery, Toilets and Passages AND THAT no such person as aforesaid shall use or occupy or be present in or upon, or be allowed or permitted to use or occupy or be present in or upon, the Premises of the Council known as the Bore Baths or in or upon any of the buildings or places therewith.' (Minute of the Moree Municipal Council, December 1955).

Butterworth : One thing we did was to bring out the point that though this statute was not enforced strictly and a lot of Aborigines got into the pool, it can be put into force by someone who likes to press it, as the Moree Council did after our first visit.

After the 'Four Corners' interview that Charles flew down to do, I heard women commenting on the frock-shop that wouldn't let Aborigines try on dresses. They said, 'We're not interested in going to an RSL club, or going to a pub, but when we go to a frock shop we have to be able to try on a dress'; and 'If you expect people to be well-dressed, you've got to let them try on a frock'. They saw this as a significant form of discrimination. Did you find other examples of this?

Perkins : We only investigated the one frock shop. The criterion here was that some Aboriginal women carried diseases, which might be caught by a white person. The inference was that the proprietor would lose a lot of customers if she let Aboriginal women try on the dresses.

Dawson : These were the rationalisations. The aim of our social survey was to find out whether they had any basis — what was the incidence of various diseases? were they infectious? can white people justifiably discriminate on these grounds?

Spigelman : Why not let Aboriginal girls who are obviously clean try on dresses? Skin colour is the easiest criterion to use, so nobody is prepared to go to the trouble of finding out whether they're clean or dirty. This is one of the injustices you find all round.

Healy : The overt instances of racialism, mainly legal ones and coming from the top businessmen of the town, are the easiest to see. The people of the town who condone or uphold this, or do nothing about it, are also racialist — though less so.

Dawson : We were fighting apathy. Charles has called it 'criminal apathy', and I'm inclined to agree.

One of the things we hoped would come out of the tour was that as you weren't an official or a welfare group, or the press, the Aborigines would be able to express to you their hopes and aims. What did they want for the future?

Perkins : One of the things the survey will show is that only a few of them — the older ones — want to live on

reserves. Most want to live in the community, to participate in everything that goes on.

Butterworth : Higher education — the parents were adamant about that. But talking to Aboriginal pupils, when you asked them, 'Do you want to go on to higher education?' they would say, 'Why?' They could see no way to use it.

Perkins : The stumbling-block is that in many places, no matter how good they are, even if they do get a good education, they can't get jobs. In Walgett, nobody will employ them. Half the town is composed of Aboriginal people, yet not one of them is in a white-collar position.

Did many feel, 'If we could get to the city we'd be OK'?

Perkins : The younger people want to come to the city to make a go of it because they realise their opportunities are limited up there; but the older people often feel, 'Perhaps we might be able to make a go of it here eventually'.

Healy : Older people assume that the children have to come to the city. I'd ask the mothers how many children they had, and they'd mention those who were 'off in Sydney getting jobs'. I'd say, 'Couldn't they get anything up here?' 'No, nothing for them up here, they have to go to Sydney'.

Spigelman : Of course this is an overall problem for country town kids. It's just accentuated in the case of the Aborigines.

Perkins : But there's a difference. Only a minority of white people feel they have to come to the city, but a majority of young Aborigines do.

Where do you see the real need for government action?

Dawson : First, a sort of 'anti-poverty' campaign. Treat them as a socially-depressed class and try to bring their social and economic standards up to the white community's — by money, planning, surveys such as the one we've done which suggest how to go about it. Then I hope the white community will accept the Aborigines. If not, we'll have to force it.

Spigelman : Often there's a vicious circle. The Aborigines are a depressed group, and the rationalisation is that 'They don't want anything better', 'They'll work only for a time and then go and drink it', 'They'll pull down their houses', and so on. Then discrimination makes

Reaction . . .

CONSTANT READER

Sir, — Aren't University students wonderful? They are always ready to take up a cause with the greatest enthusiasm and very little knowledge of the subject! Anyway, what do they need knowledge for? It's enough for them to barnstorm quickly through the country causing dissatisfaction, even minor violence, and then scuttle back to their fine comfortable homes and leave the country townspeople to cope with the havoc they have caused.

Have any of them ever lived in a country town where aborigines have their camps? Have they ever seen them on endowment day? Straight to the pub for the men and straight to the chain-stores for the women — load the kids up with cheap toys, sweets, ice-cream and as

much 'lolly water' as they can hold? . . . (From a letter by Mrs B. Booth, of Turramurra, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Feb. 1965).

NO COMMENT

The Chief Secretary, Mr C.A. Kelly, who is responsible for aboriginal welfare, has declined to be interviewed on reports of discrimination against aborigines in NSW country centres.

The chairman of the Aborigines Welfare Board, Mr A.G. Kingsmill, also refused to comment . . . Superintendent of Aboriginal Welfare, Mr H.J. Green, has been reported as 'absent in the country' . . .

With the State elections approaching, all parties are concerned not to antagonise white voters in country electorates. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Feb. 1965).

the Aborigine feel that he can't better himself anyway, so why try? I think we should try to break the vicious circle by having some sort of civil rights clause in all relevant acts, like the Local Government Act.

Perkins: You must change the environment. Only the government has the initiative, the power, the resources. They should spend fifteen times the amount they're spending now on housing and so on; there should be a crash programme of education, and once Aborigines have got the education there should be opportunities for employment. A civil rights clause should be in the Commonwealth Constitution, putting the Aboriginal question on a Commonwealth basis, under something like a Bureau for Aboriginal Affairs. Get it away from the States — they've proved their incompetence over the years.

Spigelman: The Commonwealth government has the money and the States haven't; and there's the sheer injustice of the differentiation from State to State. An Aborigine in NSW is treated to some extent as a human being; in Queensland he just *isn't* — he's a complete racial underdog.

Butterworth: There's another vicious circle — education. You can't educate the children properly while they're living in present conditions; and until they're educated, most people in the towns won't accept them anyway.

Perkins: The Commonwealth has fallen down as far as tribal Aborigines are concerned, but it has shown some initiative in places like Alice Springs. I've just been there, and it's a completely integrated community; Aborigines are living the same as everyone else, they've got white collar positions and all the prospects of going ahead. I think the States must give over their powers over Aborigines to the Commonwealth.

Spigelman: Though recent Commonwealth legislation has been in response to international pressure rather than benevolence on the part of the lords in Canberra.

Butterworth: One thing I changed my ideas about while we were on the trip. When I left I believed the claim that we must 'start with the children'. But you can't; you've got to start with children *and* adults, and run them parallel.

Spigelman: Yes, how can you go home and study if you haven't got electricity, proper seating and that kind of thing? And it struck us that until about sixth class Aboriginal kids were doing quite well; then after that some change seems to take place — they realise they've got no future in the community, their mates start treating



SAFA students and crowd wait to see if Charles Perkins will be allowed into Baths with Aboriginal children.

them differently on the ground that 'You've got no hope anyway so you're no mate of mine' — and they get involved in the overall community attitude of resentment and suppression. This saps their initiative. 95% don't get past second year, and 98% don't get past third year.

Butterworth: You get the argument, of course, that Aborigines won't pay rent on their houses, or are years behind in their rent. But if overt discrimination ends and Aborigines live in acceptable conditions in the community, the *children* will learn to accept the same responsibilities as white citizens. If this doesn't happen, the next generation will be no better off.

Perkins: Aborigines should be given the same facilities that are available to everyone else — electricity, water, a good house, bathrooms or showers, education — and then you'll see some progress.

Spigelman: But I disagree that they should be treated 'just the same'. There was the New Zealand Cabinet Minister who said about the Maoris that the way to get rid of the problems is to discriminate *in favour of* the particular race.

Perkins: Yes, I don't deny that you mustn't just abandon them; you must discriminate *for* them.

Spigelman: About social services, we often heard, 'You ought to go down there on Thursday when they get the social services and the pubs are full'; and, 'They bludge and don't do any work because they can get the unemployment benefit'.

and response . . .

REPLY TO CONSTANT READER

Mrs Booth claims the students should have devoted their efforts to aboriginal scholarships. Students at Australian universities have been raising money for aboriginal scholarships since the early 1950's and many of the riders on the SAFA bus have devoted considerable attention to this cause. In fact the leader of the group is an aboriginal scholar who is at the University of Sydney because university students all over Australia raised the money for his scholarship. If he had waited for the adults of our community to become interested in aboriginal education his children may have been lucky to have gained the opportunity of a university education.

OUTLOOK, April, 1965

The SAFA group not only worked hard raising money for their tour but they spent many of the hot January nights listening to lectures on such topics as anthropology, problems of social welfare, how to conduct social surveys . . .

In the last few days a group of students has highlighted an extremely complex problem which all Australians must face. It is to be hoped that their elders will use their energies to look for some solutions to the problem, rather than attacking the students for shattering our complacency, and exposing our own failings. (From a letter by G.W. Ford, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 Feb. 1965).

Dawson: This is like the rationalisation about drinking. People generalise from this minority. But though the whites in the town are the first to tell you that some of the Aborigines are the best people you could wish to meet, they don't generalise from *that* minority.

Butterworth: If you're living on a reserve in the conditions they're living in, you don't have many responsibilities with money. If a white person doesn't have to save money, he won't.

Spigelman: I don't know to what extent the concept of property is formed in their minds, but the point is that the home isn't theirs, and neither is the land. They haven't got any responsibility for them.

Butterworth: I asked one Aborigine at Walgett whether he would rather have a house given to him, or rent it. He nearly jumped down my throat. 'If they gave me a house,' he said, 'I'd tear it down and burn it; I don't want to be treated like a pet. I wouldn't rent a house because I'd hate to be paying out money and never owning it. I'd like to buy a house, but I wouldn't buy it in Walgett because people won't accept me'.

What effect did the tour have on you as individuals?

Dawson: It made me commit myself. I'm far more committed to the Aboriginal problem than I was, and I think everyone on the tour is now rather evangelical about it. There are at least 30 people in SAFA who are very active and enthusiastic.

Butterworth: Yes, I feel now that I want to get out and do more — not necessarily in the same way, but something to wake the people of Australia up to the fact that the Aborigines have a problem.

Healy: The sort of knowledge we gained from the two-weeks' tour just can't be ignored.

Spigelman: We've all had an insight into the sheer complexity of the problem.

When you came back SAFA had a big meeting with about 350-400 students during Orientation Week. The students listened intently to the four speakers — Rev. Noffs, Charles, Jim and I — in a way I've rarely seen in all my contact with student affairs. Do you feel you've given students in general at Sydney University a feeling of social involvement?

Spigelman: One of the main results of the tour is that the Aboriginal question is now a live political question — this is reflected in the student community.

Butterworth: I think the freshers at this meeting were a bit overcome by the impact SAFA has had. I don't know whether this will hold up when the pressure is not on.

Dawson: 'Freedom Rider' has an air of glamour. But if SAFA maintains its momentum, it will become the main stream of social protest at the University because it has had a success. So often you get into a cause and nothing comes of it; you get battered, you come up against the Establishment and you never get anywhere. For once, we've had Professor Baxter come out in favour, we've had the *Herald* and the *Sun* with editorials in favour, we've had the police given directions from above — and the police have been marvellous. For once we've seen something constructive and good happening, and this in itself is an impetus.



Students leave Baths after assurance that Mayor and three aldermen will support rescission of council resolution barring Aborigines from Moree Baths. Students were pelted and abused by crowd.

Spigelman: And SAFA covers a cross-section of almost every club in the University.

Dawson: So it won't get bogged down in factions.

Healy: This problem is so close to home. In things like CND, you're fighting the top men of the world. Here we're fighting the Australian government, and we know we can put pressure on it because we're citizens of this country. We can do something about this.

What reactions have you had from the government so far?

Butterworth: Mr Renshaw came on a television debate with Jim and Charles.

Spigelman: The very fact that the Premier of the State would come out and debate in public — even if he was doing it just to get his face on TV before a State election . . . but the fact that he felt worried enough and that the issue was big enough for him to debate in public was very significant.

Healy: We've obviously put the government on the defensive about this.

Dawson: The *Herald* used it in an editorial — for other reasons, certainly, to get the Labor Party out; but still, we want to make it a political issue.

Where does SAFA go from here?

Dawson: To the hustings!

Spigelman: We've not decided yet on future policy, but personally I intend to move that SAFA have a voter-registration drive. Many Aborigines are not enrolled for the vote in Federal, State or local council elections.

Dawson: We've already decided to go to political rallies of all parties at the State elections and make it as big an issue as we can.

Healy: The main thing is to keep the pressure on, to keep the whole problem in the limelight and make it a very live political issue.

Spigelman: To keep the public conscience squirming!

How are you taking it to other States, other Universities, other students outside the Universities?

Spigelman: I've written suggesting that other Universities set up similar bodies, and have had some response already. SAFA seems to be definitely on the way!