

A.A.L. Newsletter, No. 25, October, 1969

Editorial - INTERNATIONAL CONTACT FORCE THINKING ON "BLACK POWER"

Four visits over recent weeks by coloured people from overseas have brought an international element into the thinking of some Victorian Aborigines - and, through them, to others throughout Australia.

There was Leo Hannel, on a whirlwind visit to put the view of the Bougainville people on the acquisition of their land.

Then, in case you hadn't noticed, there was Dr. Roosevelt Brown, chairman of the Caribbean and Latin American district of the World Black Power Movement.

Then there came quietly into the League's offices a group of petite nuns from India, on their way to Burke to work amongst Aboriginal women and children.

And then Albert Maori Kiki, secretary of the Pangu Pati in New Guinea and member of the Legislative Assembly.

The visits particularly Roosevelt Brown's - threw into the open a matter which was due for public airing, "black power". To their credit, the Aboriginal people coped with the concept much better than the news media the administrators and some white supporters of "Aboriginal advancement".

By a happy co-incidence, the League's annual meeting took place immediately following the visit of Roosevelt Brown and issued the following statement on black power:

To use the words of Jean-Paul Satre, "Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives".

That is white power.

Since the end of World War II, many of the coloured peoples who lived under white colonial rule have gained their independence and coloured minorities in multi-racial nations are claiming the right to determine the course of their own affairs in contradiction to the inferior state under which they had lived.

That is black power.

Black power is not one single style of action. It does not necessarily mean violence or black supremacy, although in some expressions it has used violence and sought black supremacy. Those expressions have gained publicity because of their dramatic nature.

Black power also means what Dr. Barrie Pittock has described as follows: "The Black Power idea in essence is that black people are more likely to achieve freedom and justice for themselves by working together as a group, pursuing their goals by the same processes of democratic action as any other common-interest pressure group such as returned servicemen or chambers of commerce. Up to this point Black Power is hardly controversial, and the idea, whether known by that name or not, is widely accepted amongst Aborigines who are active in their own cause."

In fact, several expressions of that kind of black power can be seen, in which Victorian Aborigines are involved. The take-over of the Easter conference of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders by the

Aboriginal delegates was one. The Victorian Aboriginal Tribal Council is another. The United Council of Aboriginal Women is another.

The Aborigines Advancement League supports the principle of black power, without necessarily condoning all the ways by which it expresses itself in various parts of the world, or indeed, in Australia.

It is inevitable and health that there will be differences in the ways Aboriginal people understand black power and in the methods which they are prepared to use to obtain their ends. The League is able to provide a forum where all views can be discussed.

The League exists for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Its Aboriginal members are in a position to tell the League what it should be and do to best serve the interests of the Aboriginal people. Its non-Aboriginal members will stand back while those decisions are being made, and will work to put them into effect in collaboration with the Aboriginal members.