

## A Review

# NOMADS IN NO-MAN'S LAND

In August, 1959, Mr. Albert Namitjira died at Alice Springs.

Sadness reached all corners of the country. Not since Bennelong was caught and introduced to "civilisation" at Sydney's convict settlement has the European-Australian community been so interested in the domestication to Western ways of an aboriginal man.

T. G. H. Strehlow (who, like Namitjira, spent his childhood in the country west of Alice Springs) suggested in the booklet "Nomads in No-Man's Land" that the central tragedy of this remarkable life is found in the loss of self-respect. Namitjira's intuitive knowledge of how to live proudly and with satisfaction was shattered.

On the one hand Namitjira's place in the community which had nurtured him and to which he was tied by kinship and training was challenged by new experiences. On the other were the partly-comprehended attractions of a society which he could enter, providing he came alone.

Strehlow suggests that tragedies of this kind are inevitable unless the Australian community eradicates superiority and prejudice. Then, at greater length, he goes on to assert that we must understand that men can live effectively only when they are members of a functioning group. A man's estimate of himself depends upon his roles and status in groups which accept him, and whose terms are acceptable to him.

Namitjira secured an honourable place in the local Aranda society through his family relationships, ritual initiation, and personal qualities. A five figure income, lionisation by business tycoons, sleight-of-hand with legal aspects of citizenship, or the faithful aping of the alcoholic habits of Caucasian stockmen could not provide him with a satisfying place in any segment of "white" society. "Albert Namitjira's personal tragedy was an inevitable result of our failure to realise that no man can stand successfully on his very own, as an individual divorced from the group to which he belongs by race, culture, and inclination."

The implication of Strehlow's thesis is that there must be a re-orientation of the "assimilation" policies which are pursued through the activities of governmental and denominational agencies. "Many long established aboriginal settlements are furnishing much sad evidence about the aberrations of individuals who have become aimless pieces of driftwood". The decay of those elements of aboriginal society which are vital to the psychological and moral well-being of a people facing the added stresses of irreversible social change must be arrested.

The author does not attempt to suggest in detail how the vast gap separating two cultures can be bridged. However, particular mention is made of topics such as the need for "mixed" organisations in our own community with a membership of both dark and "white" Australians. He also discusses the retention of traditional methods of authority and social control, legal provisions relating to intoxicating liquor, and the place of co-operative economic ventures in community activity.

This booklet will commend itself (as a Christmas gift) for those interested in the life of Albert Namitjira. It is essential reading for those who think seriously about community and government.



(Continued from page 14)

## HOW TO FEED A GROWING CHILD

Despite varying explanations by psychologists, routine discipline will usually help the child to eat a reasonable amount.

Boys, whose activity is usually greater, generally need to eat more than girls. Again there are the exceptions—such as the athletic girl and the quiet, gentler boy.

But whatever the case, all children should eat three meals a day at regular times, for childhood is the time to form good food habits.

(With grateful acknowledgements to *Womens Day*.)



Tony Peachey and Reggie Stanley, of Nanima