

## Aboriginal Family Educational Centre (A.F.E.C.s)

# LOOK! THEY CAN MAKE THINGS NEW

### The Coffs Harbour Advisory Council Meeting, 14th Nov. 1970

The above meeting was tremendously satisfying for all the people concerned with it. Recently, I asked Lex Grey what he felt were the major achievements of the meeting. He suggested:

Firstly, the setting up of the Woongala Aboriginal Council, to replace the original Aboriginal Advancement Committee at Coffs Harbour. The old Advancement Committee's white members were invited to act as advisers to the Aboriginal office-holders in the new Council. It is interesting to see the Aborigines now conducting Aboriginal affairs themselves. The new Woongala Council acted as hosts for the A.F.E.C. visitors at the Coffs Harbour meeting.

Secondly, there were the first clear signs that A.F.E.C.'s Maori supervisors were achieving their intention of injecting a pride of culture into the Aboriginal people with whom they are working. This was shown by the fact that Aborigines

contributed solo items (songs, etc.) in their own language. There was the usual snickering by Aboriginal teenagers at this meeting, but this stopped when they saw that the whites and the Maoris took this matter seriously. Also, the young Aboriginal children who attend the weekly A.F.E.C. meetings don't laugh—they are too busy learning the old songs. Pride was also shown by the reactions to Kath Walker's poetry reading. Out of this came the Sydney A.F.E.C.s decision to set up an evening discussion programme so that members would learn to speak well in public, run a meeting and discuss topics of importance to Aborigines.

Thirdly, the meeting gave a very successful puppet making demonstration in which Aboriginal parents joined. Puppet-making has been carried on with since this meeting. The children also gave a fine demonstration of how to make mook-mooks. Under the auspices of the Commonwealth Literary Fund and organized by the University of New England at this Sydney University gathering at Coffs Harbour, Kath Walker read selections of her poetry from her new book *My People*, to a large mixed audience. She led a very spirited discussion in the hour that followed. Mrs Walker was the unanimous choice of the Woongala Council to present the Letters of Acknowledgment of completion of the first A.F.E.C. Workbook to thirty Aboriginal mothers and grandmothers.



*A normal A.F.E.C. scene.*