



Mr Helmut Pareroultja (centre), vice-president of Central Australian Aborigines Congress, discussing with Pitjantjatjara tribesmen the general concept of C.A.A.C. (Docker River)

The major purpose of this meeting was to establish a new and representative Aboriginal organization, equipped with both flexible and a viable constitution. This purpose was ultimately achieved.

The meeting was well attended by approximately 100 Aboriginal representatives from Alice Springs, Aileron, Areyonga, Amoonguna, Docker River, Ernabella, Finke, Haasts Bluff, Hermannsburg, Jay Creek, Kai Kaily, Maryvale Cattle Station, Papunya, Santa Teresa, Warrabri, Willowra Station and Yuendumu. The following important business was conducted:

1. Name of Organization

After much discussion, it was resolved that the new Aboriginal organization be called the Central Australian Aborigines Congress in preference to the Central Australian Aboriginal Rights Council. It was noted that certain sections of the community at Alice Springs were antagonized by the name and existence of an Aboriginal Rights Council. So in accordance with our new policy principles and objects it was desired that we create a fresh image of an Aboriginal group which is prepared to work towards constructive goals in Aboriginal Affairs, and to promote greater mutual respect and understanding between Aboriginal Australians and other Australians.

2. Definition of an "Aboriginal"

Interesting discussion was focused upon defining the term "Aboriginal". It was finally resolved that the term "Aboriginal Australian" be employed, for the purposes of the new constitution and as a flexible definition of Australians of Aboriginal descent. "Aboriginal Australian" means essentially a descendent, whether full-blood or part-blood, of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, who

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On Saturday, 9th June, 1973, an historic meeting took place at the Institute

identifies as such and is accepted as such by the Aboriginal community in which he or she lives. The following points among others, were raised about this new definition:

- (i) It allows for the descendants of the original inhabitants of this continent to be regarded as a distinctive race of people with a unique culture and values.
- (ii) It takes into account both full-blood, tribal and the part-blood people, who express a strong desire to maintain kinship ties and to identify with each other.
- (iii) It indicates the close affinity of Aboriginal people with the land of Australia.
- (iv) It allows for people of Aboriginal descent to identify proudly as both Aboriginals and Australians within the context of modern Australian society.
- (v) Finally, the term is not an arbitrary one. Its definition and application is by choice. People of Aboriginal descent do not have to identify as Aboriginal Australians if they do not want to.

3. Policy and Principles

A constitution drafted and circulated by Mr Neville Perkins was accepted and adopted after the necessary and appropriate amendments were made. The policy and principles of the Congress read as follows:

Aboriginal Australians should be:

- (i) Recognized as a distinct and viable cultural group.
- (ii) Subject to the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as other Australians.
- (iii) Guaranteed the right to retain, as they wish, their own culture languages and institutions.
- (iv) Enabled to participate fully in the formulation of any programmes designed to change the existing structure of their communities.
- (v) Guaranteed ownership and mineral rights, collective or individual, over the lands which they have occupied traditionally.