

ALCHURINGA



Vol. 1, No. 2 MARCH - MAY, 1972

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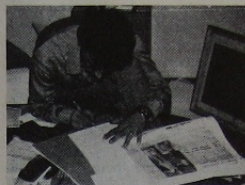
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Editorial...

ALCHURINGA

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Vol. 1, No. 2



Many people, especially Aborigines, have long awaited the birth of a magazine that would state the true facts of the Aboriginal situation without fear, favour, or official censorship.

This is the task that "ALCHURINGA" attempts to fulfill. Supporters of truth are scarce. Truth makes enemies. Truth hurts. Truth is embarrassing. That is why even Aborigines who know what the true facts of a given situation are, will publicly deny it to avoid discomfort. We have some recent examples of this both at Purfleet and in Sydney. Despite such denials, we feel that the task of this magazine is to present what facts are available and to hold to those facts until proven wrong.

Prior to the Prime Minister's Australia Day statement denying land rights to Aborigines, I received several indications from older members of the Aboriginal community that they were deeply concerned about the denial that was obviously coming. With this in mind, I approached Michael Anderson, Billy Craigie, Gary Williams, Gary Foley and Tony Koorie and instructed them as to the need for a permanent, peaceful demonstration outside Parliament House. I further stressed that the Aboriginal land claim was easy to dismiss because it had never been defined. Because of the potential back-lash from the "security to tenure" threat to white property, a bogey gleefully used by politicians, I urged them *not* to make any statement on land until a legal definition had been arrived at, on the basis of consultation with the Aboriginal people. They agreed to this, and I went ahead and arranged for a union to supply funds and a car for the trip to Canberra.

Parole restrictions have prevented me from visiting Canberra to keep sense amongst the Embassy. Several of my attempts to go have been refused. As soon as it was set up, however, "professional" Aborigines from all quarters swooped on Canberra and there helped Michael Anderson to fall into the political trap that had been laid for the Embassy. Undoubtedly, no-one there could've read the full text of the Australia Day statement, or, surely, they wouldn't have been so stupid. They released a version of the Aboriginal land claim that was perfectly designed to strengthen the justification for land denial. The claim for "state rights for the Northern Territory" and "ownership of certain areas of certain cities" is particularly damaging. Not only is it loose waffle, but it could well kill the Aboriginal land claim for another generation.

Not only do Aborigines have to suffer injustice and oppression from the white power structure, but they also have to carry the results of this bungling by juvenile egotists and professional band-wagon jumpers. No sincere person, or union, interested in seeing justice come to the Aboriginal people, could morally or financially support the Embassy until it publicly retracts its stupid, damaging claims and begins to use the moneys it receives for practical purposes instead of to fund the jet flights, motel costs and elbow bending of boys playing at being men.

When the Thief is the Judge . . .

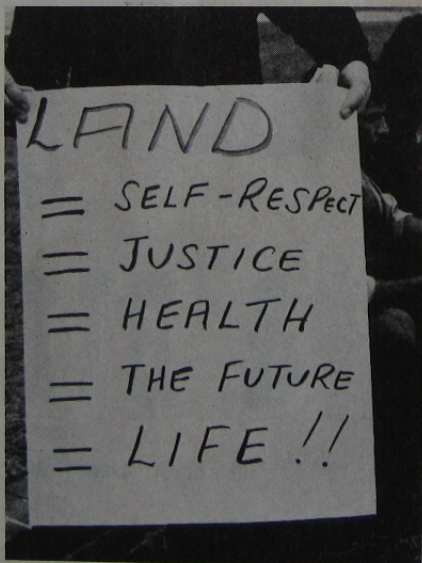
In view of the amount of publicity that has been given to the Aboriginal situation over the last few years, I have, in the last few months come to the realization that only a certain type of letter or article will be accepted for publication by the established press. Newspapers are prepared to accept articles of a sensational nature, or those written to belittle Aborigines as a race. At a pinch, criticism of government policy is published, but a series of letters by me giving a non-sensational and positive approach to the "problem" have somehow failed to appear in print. It is possible for a daily newspaper to give a double-page spread to an irrational article by a self-styled "black power leader" but any article which intelligently outlines the Aboriginal situation is ignored. In short, the guts of the Aboriginal position in society can't get a hearing.

The crux of the Aboriginal question is *land*. The original theft of all Aboriginal land is the root-cause of the whole complex of ills that go to make up the "Aboriginal problem". The people are *victims*, not problems. You don't solve victims. But 200 years after the original theft, it is still possible for public opinion to make governments cease compounding the felony and make restitution to the victims. You *can* make reparation for wrongs done and restore to people who are victims a state of justice and human dignity. Instead, the Aboriginal people have nothing, not even token justice. McMahon's recent land policy is Australia's latest attempt to keep the Aboriginal status quo at nothing.

Any attempt to gain recognition of the plight of Aborigines is deliberately thwarted by governments at every turn, especially in Canberra, Northern Territory and Queensland. It is not possible to enter any of the reserves to our north without government permission—a good insurance against any awakening of Aborigines on our northern reserves as to their potential power in certain electorates where they are in the majority and could unseat M.P.'s. who work against the Aboriginal interest. In Alice Springs, Aborigines are living in scrap iron and bag shelters erected in dry creek beds. They must crawl on hands and knees to enter their "dwellings". There is no employment for them. Misery and racial denigration ensure that alcohol consumption is rife. Poverty and the degradation of old cultural standards ensure that alcohol consumption is rife. In many cases, the people have no alternative left to them but prostitution in order to survive. Twelve-year olds become prostitutes and can be seen staggering off to school next day suffering

from hangovers. The people have suppurating sores, trachoma, scurvy and leprosy equal to anything seen amongst the survivors of Bangla Desh. Our government has announced that another \$4m. will go to relieve Bangla Desh, on top of the \$2m. "already in the pipe-line". The Aborigines at the Alice at one stage requested an ablation block and shelters. They got nothing. Meanwhile Aborigines are wondering just what *have* we got to do to get even recognition of the plight of our people? The Australian government will not admit that we have horrors equal to any seen in the most benighted Third World country. Why this selective blindness? Don't we want to admit to the existence of a national scandal? Blinkered, must we keep reassuring ourselves that "it couldn't happen in Australia" when it damned well *is* happening?

I have found that there are two things which a good many white people cannot get their minds around—the question of white responsibility for the welfare of blacks in this country today, and the Aboriginal view of a white conspiracy. Dealing with the former, a common white view is 'I've made it, why can't they? I never miss a day from work, I've got a house and a car, if I can



do it, why can't they?' The point is, that many Aborigines literally cannot. Alien in spirit from the ethic of 'work to get on' that animates so many whites, they find that they cannot conform. Always on the basic wage or below, if employment is available at all, money does not go far when it is to be shared by whoever claims help. A white man can refuse to feed his neighbour, an Aboriginal cannot. And what is the point of doing monotonous work all day for a wage that is little over the social service allowance anyway? Also, if work is available to Aborigines it must be total, for everybody. Then all will work and shirking will not be tolerated. But if there are thirty men and five jobs, what is the use of working for the five men who have the jobs when they must share what they made? Might as well all be on the dole, for you are no worse off.

Blacks can get the jobs which whites don't want, at the meanest pay. They can't conform to white life styles. Because of these and many related considerations, Europeans are responsible, morally responsible for blacks in this country today. Before you came, the Aborigines had land, a proud stone-age culture, a rich spiritual heritage, satisfaction and self-sufficiency. Diet was varied and health good. With the white theft of land, the Aboriginal culture crumbled. Bush tucker was replaced with flour, sugar, 'bacey and tea—even today because of long custom, many Aborigines' staple diet is damper and fat or jam. The inadequate diet and introduced diseases have multiplied Aboriginal diseases. Brain damaged infants are common. A ruined people are left, most in a psychological condition below apathy whose constant companions are emotions of despair and hatred of the white man. It is my contention that while it is the white man's responsibility to help the black man, that aid must come in a highly specific way which is totally Aboriginal defined and administered. Nothing else will work. But of that, more later.



Black Australia's Heritage

The second thing that white people cannot quite credit is the Aboriginal view of a white conspiracy against black aspirations. Yet it is the Aborigines' experience that all government schemes designed to help them tend to give the shadow rather than the substance of real help. The key decision making jobs invariably go to whites and the subsidiary "advisory" jobs always go to those Aborigines who have been long tamed to the white line. In 1968 the Federal government triumphantly announced its Capital Fund for Aboriginal Enterprises. The initial payment into the Fund was \$4,650,000 and was to be used to encourage Aborigines to engage in business enterprises. It looked good. It is also a standing joke in the Aboriginal community whose members say 'Just try to get a loan.' Very few applications are approved. In over three years only 131 loans were approved for a total of \$1,760,685 for the whole of Australia! If one is to ask around the Aboriginal community, it soon becomes apparent that it is the common experience of all Aborigines who do not walk a white dominated line, to be thwarted at every turn. In view of this fact, the continuing police persecution, job discrimination, the gagging of Aboriginal views and the constant disadvantage of Aborigines in a white society, is it any wonder that a theory of white conspiracy has arisen?

THE NATURE OF DIGNITY—Senator R. J. D. Turnbull, recently wanted to know if there was a law to prevent the Aboriginal land rights protesters camping opposite Parliament House. Alleging his complete sympathy (for what that is worth) with the protesters, he stated that their continued presence there did not add "to the dignity of our capital or to the dignity of Parliament". Yet the original reason for the protesters' presence before Parliament House—the denial of land justice which continues to impugn the national dignity—is ignored. Can the capital or its Parliament claim the right to dignity while a section of Australian citizens starve amidst plenty? Has anyone much respect for a country like South Africa? Is there no indictment for inhumanity and racist oppression of the rights of a coloured minority? What chance have Aborigines to state their case in the teeth of an amorphous oppressor—white racist consensus—which stifles genuine expression in the daily press and now attempts to crush the Embassy in Canberra, in the name of dignity!

McMahon, Hunt, the vested interest urgers and various land hatchet men certainly do not intend to allow Aborigines to assert their dignity as free men in a free country. So, they use tricks to keep the blacks down. For instance, the Australia Day statement on Aborigines raised the

bogey of risk to security to tenure if land grants were made to Aborigines. This was a clever, indeed potent ground on which to justify the continuing affirmation of land theft and the refusal to accord Aborigines life and dignity.

The statement "The government understands fully the desire of the Aboriginal people to have their affinity with the land with which they have been associated recognized by law" is without integrity. It seems that the government understands much more that it is *not* going to give the Aborigines what they want. The statement goes on about how the government is "deeply concerned to assist them to feel it has, in fact, been recognized and to enable them, in the current circumstances, to have some security in their relationship with the land, and, in particular, to give continuing Aboriginal groups and communities, the opportunity of obtaining an appropriate title under Australian law over lands on reserves which they are interested in to use and develop for economic and social purposes." What that means, Jack, is that you don't get land that they can't take back off you. Nor can you rent land to do with as you will as Europeans do. And also, if you are not a "continuing Aboriginal group" that is, if whitey has already managed totally to wreck your tribal structure, as in the southern states, then you don't even get to renting your father's land in the first place. Some recognition of traditional affinity with the land!

Recognition of an Aboriginal land claim is liable to "introduce a new and probably confusing component, the implications of which could not clearly be foreseen and which could lead to uncertainty and possible challenge in relation to land titles elsewhere in Australia which are at present unquestioned and secure," McMahon went on to claim. The issue of injustice to blacks aside for a moment, let's consider the issue of uncertainty as to who will own Australia by the time the present Liberal Party has finished. As A.L.P. man Al Grassby has suggested, the current sell-out to foreign investors is at danger level. More than 71% of our mining industry is foreign owned and a big proportion of other basic resources, land, manufacturing and processing industries are being taken over as well. The country is being sold out to speculators and developers. The Australian voting public must look to the safeguarding of its equity in Australian resources. The time can be envisaged when Australians are left with an empty shell of a continent and no resources unless they exercise some discretion at the polling booth. (Is the 18 year olds' greater realization of this and similar government sell-outs and hypocries the reason why they were denied the vote this year?)

To support the Liberals' new policy Howson claimed that the motion of "freehold title to land is alien to Aboriginal thought and custom." New legislation providing for leases was to be introduced—presumably the lease concept is *not* held alien to Aboriginal thought and custom. Howson then claimed that the new swindle represented "an imaginative attempt to adapt Australian forms to fit in with Aboriginal ideas in relation to land". With this type of cheap sophistry Aborigines are once again shielded from the nitty gritty by men who have been told over and over again by anthropologists such as W. E. H. Stanner that "when we took what we call 'land' we took what to them meant hearth, home, the source and locus of life, and everlastingness of spirit . . . I have seen an Aboriginal embrace the earth he walked on." The Aboriginal relationship with the land was indeed not a coldly legalistic or economic relationship—it was one with him in a continuous stream of creation—the creatures of the land where his flesh, the natural features, his Creation Heroes, his everlasting Dreaming."

Today, even in the de-cultured, de-tribalized southern states, part Aborigines continue to have strong emotional ties with the land. The refusal of land rights to them has taken on another dimension—it is the outright refusal of the government and the Australian people to admit that wrong was done. When the thief and the judge are one, what chance justice? The continuing denial of at least some of the land, a share in Australia, is a denial of the symbol and substance of justice. And white man, how they hate you for your double-twisting hypocrisy!

Howson has claimed that in an interview with McMahan, Roy Marika and other members of the Yirrkala community intimated that they were contemplating applying for a general purpose lease in the Gove area, this proving that "already there are Aboriginal communities that are prepared to endorse this new policy and participate in it." Endorse they do not. According to Mr. Frank Purcell, the legal adviser to the Yirrkala, the people not only do not endorse the leases but have stated that they will *hold* their land, that they will not accept guns from black power interests but will obtain their own when necessary. He clearly indicated that the acceptance of a lease was not, to them, an endorsement of the new land policy, but merely the means of getting the best out of a bad situation while continuing to press their claim for complete land ownership. The Aborigines may not be familiar with the concept of freehold, but they are willing and eager to learn . . .

In part of his Australia Day sell to the people of Australia, the Prime Minister commented that

"In health too, good progress is being made . . . There are some difficulties, particularly the incidence of child morbidity . . ." The "difficulties" include, I presume, the recent doubling of the Aboriginal infant mortality rate in central Australia, the unknown members of infants who, because of depressed home backgrounds, suffer mental retardation due to poor nutrition, and the exotic diseases, almost unknown today amongst the European population, that are common amongst Aborigines. Or are the "difficulties" seen as those factors which inhibit an even faster application of the official policy of genocide and racial extinction called "assimilation?"

Recently a sincere European supporter of Aboriginal progress, a person of unquestioned integrity stated that she had been directly involved in Aboriginal affairs for fifteen years. She said that she was staggered at the way nothing had changed. The people at meetings complain of exactly the same things they did fifteen years ago—identical stories of racism, degradation, unemployment, rent problems, malnutrition, drunkenness, infant mortality and non-identity. Nothing has changed.

Nothing will change until government policy undergoes a radical re-orientation. In the final analysis, only Aborigines themselves can help Aborigines. Piecemeal approaches by governments or advancement bodies have proved their own failure. Governments could erect pent-houses on reserves and they would be vandalised, because the people do not identify with them. Whereas anything that is planned by Aborigines, erected with their labour and *achieved* by them according to their needs is valued for then, they say, "It is ours". No white "do-gooder" however sincere, can from the outside mend the results of cultural destruction. Whiteman, you cannot change anything, but your sincere support can bring about a framework within which Aborigines can bring

about their own change, at their own pace and determination. And the foundation for this framework must be land. Australians will never do anything constructive about their "Aboriginal problem" until they face the implications of a truly viable and workable Aboriginal policy. The foundations must be land and the framework must be just compensation for past wrongs. Without these things, creative change will never come. Without these things, a foundation for a return to wholeness and integrity of race, only chaos can result as the Aboriginal population increases and becomes better educated.

Just what is the land claim of Aborigines? In the first place, the McMahon red-herring about security of tenure may be ignored. Aborigines do not claim Capitol Hill. They are not after your backyard, nor Mrs. McMahon's Bellevue Hill palace or any such nonsense. The Aboriginal land claim is for:

- the recognition that Aborigines have *some rights* to this country.
- the recognition that the land was taken by force without the Aborigines' consent. (They were robbed . . . How would YOU feel?)

The article *Just What is the Aboriginal Land Claim?* on p. 13 of this issue, is an outline of a Bill now being prepared by a panel of legal experts under the aegis of Abschol. It clearly sets out what the Aboriginal people are demanding in reparation from the government. A particular feature of the Bill is the emphasis on *Aboriginal control* of all facets of the administration of compensation land and moneys to be given by government.

Many politicians would like to sell the idea that articles such as these are not representative of Aboriginal thinking generally. Perhaps the sophistications and elaborations—terms such as "deeded in perpetuity", "reparation" and so forth may be foreign to a people who have not been schooled in the tricks of the English language. But they one and all know that they were robbed of all "land ownership". They know that they have been deprived for generations.

As the Australia Day statement shows, politicians intend to continue to deprive Aborigines. They don't even like them to have a voice. Recently, a well-known . . . in the N.S.W. government, Child Welfare Minister Waddy complained that the media had put too much emphasis on publicity for the militant Aborigines at the expense of those working for Aboriginal advancement. He said that of the 150,000 Aborigines in Australia and 30,000 in N.S.W., only 200 belonged to any militant group. Of this number, only 50 were actively militant. As we know, such tricky use



Black Australia's Heritage

of figures proves very little. Of the 12m. Australians, what tiny percentage are due-paying members of a political party? How many less than that are politically active or are actually politicians? Certainly, spokesmen for the Aboriginal people are a small minority whether they are moderate or extreme in their views. But that does not mean that one can discount what they are saying. The militant voice is as real as that of the moderates. But it gets more publicity because it lays the facts on the line, and facts are embarrassing to governments.

What the Aboriginal situation needs above all, at the moment, is sincere aid from public and unions to fund *practical* development programmes in Aboriginal communities as an interim measure until we get land and compensation from the government. All such funds should be earmarked for specific projects and accounted for to the donor body. There is altogether too much abuse and misuse of funds at the moment. Because of the debasement of Aboriginality, Aboriginal affairs are infested by more than its share of scum—of human parasites. A number of these, the professional Aborigines, have not worked for years. They can be seen mouthing their way about the country on money supplied by unions

and well-wishers, or, if nothing else offers, on money got by misappropriations from donations to Aboriginal welfare developments. They achieve nothing. They don't even come up with any useful ideas. Their sole purpose is to avoid having to work for a living. They grow fat on the real misery of their people. At best, they spend their time arranging endless, repetitive conferences which become mere ego forums. The resolutions emerging from these conferences are universally ignored. I appeal to all private citizens, trades unions, church bodies, and groups such as Freedom from Hunger, the Australian Council of Churches, Abschol and so on to curtail their support of individuals as well as organizations which hold endless conferences and channel their funds into non-practical and generally undefined projects. Check where your money goes. Earmark it for specific projects. Stop funding the jet flights and motel expenses of individuals who achieve nothing, while money is so badly needed for real projects, practical developments and positive aid schemes. Such measures may temporarily put some noses out of joint, but it is the only long-term way to bring some discipline and direction into the at present rudderless ship of Aboriginal affairs.

BITS

Nationalism is a wonderful thing. Especially Australian nationalism, that is if you're white, acceptable, and vote Liberal. Because of this, we thought we'd write a new Australia Day anthem. To be sung to the tune of *Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Jack*.

You can't get your tribal land back, Jack,
Can't get your tribal land back
Our Billy's made it a fact, Jack,
You can't have your tribal land back—
Altogether now . . .

If the cap fits . . . a journal reports that:

"An Ethiopian worker walking along the street remarked to a friend, 'It is a rotten government.' A member of the security forces passing by grabbed him and barked, 'You are under arrest.' 'What for?' demanded the worker. 'Because you said it is a rotten government.' The worker protested, 'I never said which government.' 'No good' replied the agent, 'There is only one rotten government and you know it.'

* * *

The *successes* of Aborigines aren't news! Despite clear notification to newspapers and T.V. news departments, no-one was interested enough to cover the Certificate Presentation evening held at Sydney University on 24th November. Aboriginal women were being presented with certificates acknowledging their achievements in the Van Leer Project's pre-school 'learning and doing' programme. Not even a photographer from any of the newspapers turned up. Yet isn't it odd how any fool can get his face (or his wife's legs) into the social pages?

"My darkness had been filled with the light of intelligence, and behold, the outer day-lit world was stumbling and groping in social blindness. At first I was most unhappy; but deeper study restored my confidence. By learning the sufferings and burdens of men, I became aware as never before of the life-power that has survived the forces of darkness—the power which, though never completely victorious, is continuously conquering."—Helen Keller.

Just what is the Aboriginal Land Claim?

by Kevin Gilbert

This Aboriginal land rights banner was strung up between two pine trees opposite Parliament House in March 1969. Yet government recognition of the validity of the Aborigines' claim has not advanced one inch, despite all the conferences, seminars and protests that have been held on the subject of land in the last few years. The Australian public as a whole are becoming increasingly aware of the justice of the Aboriginal land claim, but politicians have nevertheless been able to continue to deny us our land justice.

I believe that the reason why governments have been able to avoid facing the land issue is because the *Aboriginal land claim has never been defined*. It is for that reason that people have been able to say 'What, give them Martin Place, or Benelong Point, I suppose!' shrug, and dismiss land rights from their minds.

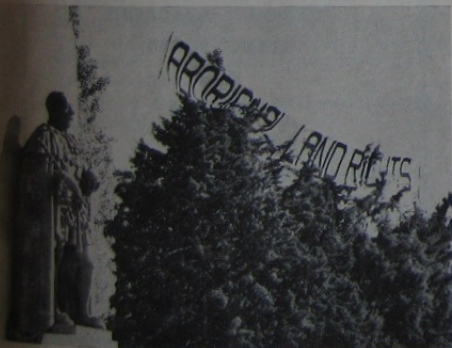
It is for this reason, in order to define the Aboriginal land claim, that I consulted Frank Purcell, the solicitor representing the Yirrkala tribesmen, as well as representatives from the Gurindji, Woodenbong, Purfleet, Condobolin, Cowra and other N.S.W. Aborigines, and some of our people from Victoria, Western Australia, the Territory, South Australia and Queensland. Unfortunately there were no representatives from Tasmania—they had been taken care of by that state long ago. As a representative of the Australian Council of Churches Aboriginal Development Commission, I recently travelled to Melbourne in company with Pastor Frank Roberts of the N.S.W. Land Board to attend an Abschol meeting convened to discuss the land situation. In consultation with a panel of legal experts there,

we drafted a Bill of legislation which reflects the Aboriginal need and claim for land and can serve as a guide to politicians who cannot credit that a legal definition of the Aboriginal land claim is possible.

The Land Rights Bill was drawn up so as to cover the whole of Australia including the Territories (excluding Papua), the Torres Strait Islands and all states. The ideas underlying the Bill are as follows:

All land has been stolen from Aborigines, therefore Aborigines demand from the government:

- the return of all "Crown Lands" recognized as Aboriginal reserves.
- that these reserves be deeded in perpetuity to the Aboriginal people and administered by them.
- that any "Crown Lands" which are of traditional or sacred significance to Aborigines be deemed to them in perpetuity.
- that all sites of anthropological or traditional significance discovered apart from on reserves or "Crown Lands" be preserved and made accessible to Aborigines.
- that all hunting and fishing rights and areas be open to the use of Aborigines without fee or constraint.
- that where Aborigines have been removed from land reserves in accordance with government land alienation policies and otherwise, fair land compensation grants be made, preferably from established "Crown Lands" or areas bought by governments in reparation, to restore a land base to Aborigines and to purchase additional suitable land for Aborigines.
- to provide Aborigines in each state with corporate ownership and control of all reserves.
- to exempt all such lands from the provisions of the relevant mining acts.
- to grant in these areas, ownership rights over minerals to corporate Aboriginal groups so as to give them effective priority in prospecting and mining rights.
- that no mineral exploration or exploitation occur in Aboriginal areas without prior consultation and approval by local Aborigines.



—to establish, as an act of compensation for the loss of all other parts of the continent, a national Aborigines Trust Fund for Aboriginal developments and enterprise. This is to be reparation and under Aboriginal administrative control and to be in addition to normal government assistance to Aborigines as Australian citizens.

The Contents of the Bill is as follows:

1. The Bill will commence with a statement in principle which recognizes Aboriginal Land Rights. The Canadian Bill provides a model for this.
2. The Bill will provide for the establishment in each State and one for the Territories, of an Aboriginal Land Trust which will consist of 12 members elected by Aborigines from that particular State or Territory. (The function of the State Land Trust will be to hold title to the land vested in it. Aboriginal ownership of this land is for perpetuity, however there should be an ability to lease provided in the act.

The land that Aboriginal Land Trust will hold will be:-

1. All land presently reserved for the use and benefit of Aboriginal people; i.e. all reserves in that particular State or Territory.
2. Title to a land grant to each Aboriginal Land Trust, the size of the land grant being:

% of dispossessed Aborigines in each State

Total population of State

X *Area of State*

1

3. Sites which are of traditional, sacred or historical significance to Aborigines.
4. Customary Land—land traditionally and/or currently occupied by Aboriginal groups not living on reserves. This land to be bought by Government and returned to Aboriginal Land Trust ownership.
5. Any Land subsequently purchased by each Land Trust.

The Bill will provide for the establishment of a National Aboriginal Development Commission. This Commission will be constituted by the appointment from each Aboriginal Land Trust of two of its members to serve on the Commission.

The Commission function will be to hold compensation monies made out to Aboriginal groups and to act as a financing body for Aboriginal development. It will hand over funds to State Aboriginal Lands Trusts for small scale

development projects within that State. The Commission will directly fund or raise finance for large scale or national development projects.

The Bill will provide for the appointment by each Land Trust of adjudicators of disputes between Aboriginal groups on claims to compensation and to Land title under the customary Land and sites section of the Bill.

The Bill will provide for the establishment of Aboriginal Land Tribunals for each State or Territory which will hear claims for Land Title under the customary and sites sections of the bill and fix compensation.

The Tribunal will be constituted by four persons appointed by the Aboriginal Land Trust and three persons appointed by the Commonwealth of Australia—who are acceptable to the Aboriginal people.

Compensation will be fixed as the value of land taken from Aboriginal groups at the time of taking, 1770, calculated at the English land upset price of that time, plus interest on this, together with an inflation factor (to be set by the Commonwealth Statistician).

The Bill will provide for no Federal, State or local taxation for land held by Land Trusts, except that land that is income earning land, that income earning land to be tax free for 50 years and then this provision to be examined at the end of this time.

State Land Trusts and the National Aboriginal Development Commission to be exempt from income tax for the first 50 years and this provision to be examined at the end of this time.

Just what is the Aboriginal land claim ?

IT IS NOT

- a claim to Capitol Hill
- a grab for the choicest real estate in Canberra, Perth and so on
- a ploy to grab your backyard
- a gulp at Mrs. McMahon's Bellevue Hill palace
- a tilt at Howson's house
- or any other such fantastic nonsense

THE ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIM IS FOR

- the recognition that Aborigines have some rights to this country
 - the recognition that the land was taken by force without the Aborigines' consent. (They were robbed . . . How would YOU feel?)
-

Mining: The Western Australian act provides the model here. Bill to include timber rights—only relevant for Commonwealth territories with provision for complimentary State legislation. The Bill should provide for the turning over to each Land Trust an amount equal to 1/10th of the State or Territory Aboriginal welfare budget for the repurchase of Land which is to be added to present reserve lands to make them viable economic units. This provision to operate for ten years.

*This is the draft to date. Reader's comments are invited.

(As we were going to press, a letter arrived from Tony Lawson of Abschol to say that the legal drafting of the bill was about one quarter finished. It is difficult, painstaking work, but Abschol hopes to have the first draft of the bill ready soon. Meanwhile they have sent the A.L.P. a motion to foreshadow the bill which will be presented to Parliament later on. We hope that by the time the Bill is presented, the chances for a successful recognition of our claims will not have been totally destroyed by the Embassy fools in Canberra).

BITS

The denial of justice is something that creates a peculiar effect on the human psychology. At first it causes protest. Continued injustice, without redress, sours the mind. The final stage is apathy, hopelessness. How many white people realize the effects of generations of injustice on the group psychology of the Aboriginal people? Their land was stolen—completely. Justice has never been considered. That fact is a never healing sore, and underlies the thinking, the core ideas of every Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal person in this country. Is that why Aborigines drink? Refuse to toe your line?

* * *

It pays to be one of the family—Karen McLeod, daughter of the manager of Comalco at Weipa has been appointed as the local Aboriginal Welfare officer at Weipa south. The position was specially created for her . . .

* * *

And a recent visitor to Weipa reports that the replanting programme initiated by Comalco to "restore" areas ruined by its mining activities has to be seen to be believed. There are some sad, wilting little shrubs struggling to stay alive with the help of water from a can wielded by a bored Aboriginal employee of the company . . . Restoration?

* * *

Don't get too friendly with the blacks up north, either. The locals don't like it. It seems that intruders might give the Aborigines ideas beyond their station. Anyone who tries to treat them as normal human beings soon finds himself without

transport, petrol and provisions. In those areas, it's real effective. Department of Native Welfare officials also, are constantly on your hammer. Some people even go so far as to suggest that it is all part of an unspoken conspiracy to keep the blacks politically naive. In terms of numbers, they'd swing a few electorates, and in a closely fought election, they could even decide the government. Could *that* be the real reason why they are so closely "protected" and "welfare'd"?



"Alchuringa" is the hottest news in Aboriginal affairs for a decade! Yet when N.S.W. Aboriginal Welfare Liaison officer Herb Simms was offered Vol. 1, No. 1 for the incredibly cheap price of 20c he refused to buy! Either he can't tell a bargain when he sees one, or else he is not really interested in Aboriginal affairs at crunch level (something that we've suspected for a long time). Or is he afraid that he might learn something?

No matter how it's got, a positive self-image is a worthwhile thing. Some black kids were amongst a group of white youngsters awaiting their turn at the Metropolitan Children's Court in Sydney not long ago. Don't know how or why, but anyhow the blacks were sitting in the sun, while the shade was occupied by white kids. So, the black kids made an official complaint of discrimination and what's more the authorities took it seriously. The whole business was a storm in a tea-cup, but the implications of it weren't. For the first time, thanks to the pride injected into those kids by the militants—call them Black Power if you will—they had the courage to make a protest. It is something that would have been unheard of not so very many years ago.

Remember when the little Aboriginal boy was asked "Who are you?" and he replied "I'm nothin'?" Well, he's not "nothin'" any more and the sooner he realizes it the better off he'll be!

Archie Kalokerinos . . . if you were sincerely interested in dying Aboriginal kids and less interested in proving a point to get the Nobel Prize, wouldn't you have sent those photos, facts and figures that you promised to forward for an address to the Australian Council of Churches General Meeting last February 18th?

Quote of the month—February: "The sheer urgency of the Aboriginal dilemma warrants my dying."—Gary Foley, self appointed Black Power leader, in an article in the *Daily Mirror*, Feb. 22, 1972. Dying, fair enough. But will the Aboriginal situation ever reach that further point of urgency that will motivate Gary to *work* to overcome it?

Dear, oh dear. Doesn't the establishment get romantic in its sillier moments? It had to invent a Black Power Death List yet, and then elect Howson and our own Uncle Tom, Senator Bonner, as prime targets.

A plane, sixteen cops, fifty-six vehicles and a hundred baying locals were necessary to hunt down Western Australian black Lionel Brockman who had escaped from jail. He was in there for the crime of stealing food for his kids, after he couldn't get a job and Native Welfare had refused to give his family any rations. It must've all cost a packet. Wouldn't it have been cheaper to give Lionel some food for his kids in the first place?

If we didn't have the odd relatively genuine politicians' performance to look back upon—for example men like N.S.W. ex-Child Welfare minister Hewitt—then we could be excused for thinking that the job of Minister for Aboriginal Welfare always seems to go to the bottom of the political barrel. It always seems to be the least senior ministerial job. Someone said that in N.S.W., Waddy got the Welfare throne after being Assistant Minister to someone or other for a long time. Then he became a real Minister in his own right and it was alleged, at once distinguished himself by referring to his new Aboriginal charges as "bloody boongs". Since taking office, he has also successfully managed to keep the Aborigines Advisory Council from having any sort of effect on the N.S.W. Aboriginal situation. At the federal level, the Aboriginal fares no better. One public servant calls his master, Howson, "that man"—or something. That same person has suggested that Howson can't possibly survive as Minister of anything, whether the Libs. win or lose the next election. He is famous for his role in raising the security of tenure bogey that helped swindle the Aboriginal people out of their legitimate land claim. Famous also for rejecting as many of the sensible suggestions of the Council and Office of Aboriginal Affairs as he can get away with. There is even a current whisper that such a tame pup as the Aboriginal Publications Foundation's magazine IDENTITY is under Ministerial dis-favour. It also seems to be ready to get the financial axe . . .

By the way—ain't IDENTITY boring?

There is a version of the Aboriginal land claim circulating at the moment which makes you wonder whether there are any brains (or political awareness) at all in the Aboriginal community. Every responsible adult Koori who has seen it shudders at the naivety of this "land claim". When boys try to do a man's job, they manage not only to bring a just cause to ridicule, but also endanger the Aboriginal land claim by playing right into the politicians' hands. Makes you wonder whose side they're on, doesn't it?

Listen, Mr. Ambassador. When I planned and got the funds to kick off the Embassy that got you to your lofty position, it seemed like the greatest idea yet presented to advance the land claim. Isn't it a pity that you weren't big enough to handle it and allowed fools to dictate nonsense to you? Isn't it about time you got back to swamping at the big E?

BLACK DEMO

by Pat Eatock

The success of the demonstration in Canberra on February 22 must surely convince white people in general and the government in particular that the Aboriginal people cannot continue to be deceived, manoeuvred or diverted any longer from their stand for land rights.

That the Aboriginal people flatly deny the validity of McMahon's ridiculous Australia Day statement was obvious as bus loads of angry Aboriginals converged on Parliament House for the opening of the current session of Parliament.

More than two hundred people from Sydney, Melbourne, Taree and Purfleet rallied to support the Aboriginal Embassy before Parliament House to demonstrate their rejection of the Liberal government's land policy.

Militancy and solidarity was the keynote of the demonstration. All black movements from the arch-conservatives to the most radical groups were represented and there were Aboriginals from every state, including the Northern Territory, present. Militant black leaders, one after the other, mounted the speakers platform to voice their objections. The only white speaker to address the crowd was Mr. Gough Whitlam, leader of the Federal Opposition.

Mr. Whitlam said that on the issue of land rights, an A.L.P. government would follow U.S. and Canadian precedents and legislate for tribal or clan tenure of land where there is "a discoverable connection" between a tribe or clan and a given piece of land. On the question of the administration of the Northern Territory, Labour would ensure that the Legislature was composed entirely of elected persons and that the administration of the law there would conform to proper international standards. Labour would also adhere to the considerable number of international conventions affecting civil rights—conventions which Australia has not yet ratified. Mr. Whitlam also guaranteed that legal representation at public expense would become much more freely available.

A weakness in Labour Party policy towards land rights and compensation is indicated in regard to urbanised and part-Aboriginal people. The A.L.P. has to do a lot more thinking and consultation with Aboriginals before it has a viable



On the left, Pat Eatock

policy to deal with a fast growing sector which is becoming more militant all the time.

Another speaker urged caution, and denied that any government, including a Labour government, had the right to dictate through legislation, whether any individual should be classed as black or white, on a "percentage of colour" basis and use this arbitrary division to disadvantage part-Aboriginals. Such a stratagem on the part of white Australia must be resisted as it would divide and greatly weaken the Aboriginal community, the speaker added.

Only three points tended to distract from the demonstration. The first was the lack of coverage given in the Australian mass media. Newspapers and T.V. gave very little, if any, coverage—an indication of the right-wing orientation of much of the news media. This ensures that white suburbia remains largely ignorant of our struggle and that a potential supporting force is lost to the Aboriginal people. That white suburbia is favourably inclined to our aspirations was well demonstrated by the results of the 1967 Referendum. We must enlist this support again.

On the contrary, overseas coverage of the demonstration was very good. The *New York Times* carried a front page story and also featured a follow up story. The *London Times* also covered the demonstration.

The second point of weakness concerns the lack of organizational strength shown by the Sydney area. The bus from Sydney had several

empty seats possibly due to insufficient publicity amongst the people, prior to the departure of the bus. Or was it fear, fear of militancy taking an upper hand and provoking police violence? I prefer to think that the former reason stands, but either way Sydney people will have to learn from their mistakes.

The third issue which I feel *should be raised, although not unduly stressed* is the presence in our midst of a few "ego-trippers" who appear to give land rights secondary import behind the consideration of their own personal glory within the movement. This type of attitude is common in the early stages of any militant movement and

will, no doubt, be solved as the movement develops and when the Aboriginal people have demonstrated to the egotists that they will have to pull their heads in, or be ignored. While leadership *within the black movement* is important, the white community must be made to see that it is the Aboriginal people *as a whole* who are demanding land rights. The danger inherent in the elevation of a handful of egotists is that, because of the weakness that patently underlies their inflated self-esteem, they may at a later date be easily corrupted by the establishment to a position where they may be used to defuse positive Aboriginal militancy.

THE POLICY MAKERS

Our tribesmen raised a banner
In a just and noble manner
And the tramp of feet go seeking
Human rights in its own way.
Yet I yearn to see the working
Of real men, above mere clerking
Who take, and keep an office
For reasons truer than pay.

Oh, those stupid sneering faces
Peering from appointed places
Where honesty as virtue
Is rarely ever found
Where "manhood" stands for treason
Against all common reason
And children's flesh is devoured
By the cruel and bloody pound.

Can't you see that men of error
Are a human, jungle terror
Let loose within the office
Of a man "who should have cared?"
And the arrant, heartless city
Spawns a man devoid of pity
To prey on the misfortune of the souls
So helpless bared.

Can't you change, or pause a moment,
Cure your heartsick soul's sad foment
Can't you listen to an ego
Or a voice that's not your own?
Please remember, Mr. Kicker
That the flesh was made but quicker
And a man must grow in stature
Of the soul to match his throne.

—K. J. Gilbert



Purfleet Kids at Taree Court

It was intended, in this issue of "Alchuringa", to do a special feature article on Purfleet. The intended article, which examines the situation on a typical N.S.W. reserve in depth, cannot go into this issue because of space reasons. While it would be possible to shorten it, we believe that its impact would be lost. The total situation at Purfleet, as in other reserves, provides a cogent argument for the discontinuance of the current 'patch it up and hope it will hang together' nature of today's federal and state Aboriginal policies. It shows *why* land is of such primary importance and *why* no Aboriginal policy which refuses to face the issue of granting land rights, compensation and Aboriginal self-determination is ever going to succeed. Watch for it in the next issue of "Alchuringa!"

"NO ONE IN POWER IS CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES"

The practical and psychological damage being done to Aborigines by the continuing denial of land rights is well demonstrated by the two letters below. The first letter is a copy of correspondence to the Australian Council of Churches Commission on Aboriginal Development, which body has agreed to the reproduction of the letter in *Alchuringa*.

OPERATIONS IN THE ARNHEM LAND RESERVE AND ITS EFFECT UPON THE LOCAL PEOPLE

There have been several large-scale encroachments of mining operations in the Reserve, many of which have caused dismay and resentment and general disruption to the Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal people have been led by the Government to believe that the Reserve belongs to them, and yet, in the past five years, they have seen parties of Europeans come and dig trenches and take away specimens of the soil and rock, and later build air strips and erect buildings and begin large-scale diggings. On many occasions such operations have desecrated sacred sites and ceremonial areas, which has caused great distress and fear for many of the people. To quote one elder from Oenpelli: "They are taking away our land—they are killing us." The unusual instance of drunkenness in September last, which prompted Professor Berndt's now famous statement, is believed by many who know the Aboriginal people to be the result of the *deep sense of insecurity created in the people by the local mining operations. It is believed that this insecurity will continue to produce undesirable and quite devastating results unless it can be eradicated by the Aboriginal people being given some sense of involvement and participation in the mining operations.*

Participation and involvement are only very partially and inadequately met by the degree of employment and training which the mining companies offer. It has been suggested, therefore, that the mining companies should be required by Government to pay a royalty which becomes available directly to the local people. Such a royalty could be paid to a Trust managed and controlled entirely by the local Aborigines. This could help them to initiate agricultural, fishing and even mining projects of their own. They would thus feel that they were receiving a direct benefit from the operations they see taking place on their land.

There is a good example of this on Groote Eylandt where the mining company pays a royalty direct to the Groote Eylandt Aboriginal Trust, which is managed by seven Aborigines with the help and advice of the Welfare Division and the local mission. Much of the sense of frustration and bitterness has been thus removed from the Groote Eylandt situation, which might very well have been otherwise.

The Rev. S. W. Giltrap
(Church Missionary Society of Australia)

The above letter was written in December last year. The other letter, which was written in March of this year does not carry a heading like the A.C.C. letter. If it had, then the heading might well have read:

WHO WANTS TO DEVELOP SOMEBODY ELSE'S LAND?

Dear Sir,

This letter is the result of the 14th Co-operative Summer School for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders held at the Tranby Co-operative College, Glebe, New South Wales. Aborigines attending the seminars at the college represent the states of Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. A series of seminars have been held to study Co-operative Community Development amongst Aborigines in Australia.

The main problem confronting us as Aborigines rests solely in the security of the land which we wish to develop.

For example, representatives of the Yarrabah Aboriginal Settlement in North Queensland have set up a commercial club which aims to develop a Co-operative Society. "On the formation of a Co-operative Society by the club, the business of the club shall be taken over by the Co-operative." (Constitution and Rules of Yarrabah Commercial Club).

This club has made several attempts to form a co-operative, however, *the people have felt reluctant to develop something on leased land which could be terminated at any time.*

While the State Government has said "yes" by word of mouth to our requests, the people have been discouraged by follow-up Government

action. We feel that many past and current events indicate that the Government of the State *does not want* Aborigines of the State to engage in community projects.

We feel that we are best suited to undertake community projects owing to our economic and social position. The community at Yarrabah aims to set up many activities as part of the Yarrabah Community Co-operative. To do this we need a written statement giving the Community complete control of the Reserve for the benefit of the Aborigines of the State at the Yarrabah Aboriginal Settlement, in the name of the community.

The members of this seminar representing Yarrabah and the whole Aboriginal Movement ask you to give your immediate attention to this problem as it affects the lives of the Aborigines for which you are concerned.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) Harrison George,
Secretary,

14th Aboriginal Co-operative Summer School,
Tranby College.

(Copies were sent to the Prime Minister, Mr. McMahon, Senator Bonner, Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, Senator Jim Keefe, the Premier of Queensland, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, Qld. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Mr. Hewitt, the Queensland leader of the Opposition, Eddie Wallis-Smith, M.L.A. and R. Jones, M.L.A.).

It is clear from letters such as these that in very few places in Australia are Aborigines being given any sort of meaningful say in their own affairs. There is no more certain way to ensure the continuing demoralization of the Aboriginal people than by withholding land from them. The following commentary, from an American writer talking about the situation in Alaska might well have been written with Australia in mind: "No one in power is considering alternatives. Many Alaskan Natives would prefer a development on their own, rather than on Western precepts. In the current oil boom aboriginal values—the virtues of hunting, fishing, cultural freedom, and self-determination—seem to carry no weight. White culture is only asking the native peoples for their price—not for alternative directions affecting themselves and their land. There is still no adequate means for allowing native peoples to evolve their own priorities. Those Natives who value wilderness and its resources have little chance to create their own future, a future likely to be in better harmony with the processes of the earth."

BITS

Mr. Bob Saunders, a London B.B.C. television producer recently stated: "You Australians should throw out the Aboriginal Welfare Department and send in the Red Cross. The Aborigines in Alice Springs have the status of animals. What everyone seems to forget is that these people are Australians . . . There is absolutely no excuse for people being forced to live like this . . . They are a people stripped of all dignity. It beats me how people can peddle the Aboriginal folk lore in the shops on the one hand and kick them in the guts on the other." Bob, don't you know that selective blindness hand in hand with the profit motive won't stop at ANYTHING?

The tucker at Canberra leaves bush tucker for dead, they say. One fat black likes it so much that he's now OBESE. ("Obese" just means blacker and *fatter* but he likes it, because it sounds flash). Think he might be persuaded to send some of the leavings to some of those skinny little outback kids?

Mr. Phillip Hall of Walgett Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs said recently that a big family of Aboriginal seasonal workers at Wee Waa could together earn \$400 a week, but wouldn't keep it long. Bingo games with \$100 stakes and grog soon have them broke again. Seems a waste, but you can't blame them. If they do save it, it'll soon go when they return to their home areas to go on the dole for the rest of the year. Besides, what would they put a few hundred dollars into? They have no land, no identity, no pride and consequently nothing to build for, save for, work for . . . So, eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you will indeed die . . .

Hush little baby . . . At a meeting recently, a European stood up with the usual white 'keep it cool, boys' line: "I feel that demonstrations against conditions would aggravate situations and white opinions about the Aboriginal situation." Said an infuriated Aboriginal, coolly: "Aggra-bloody-vate? It *can't* get any bloody worse!

We hear that the Queen of Conferences is seeking money for yet another one of her public extravaganzas. Wouldn't it be a blessing to see *all* public and union moneys being used *only* for *practical developments* instead of the promotion of hot air fiestas and ego trips?

FOUNDATION FUNDAMENTALS

Well, the goodies won again. In December, the Gilberts started a love-in with the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. Here's what happened:

At December's Annual General Meeting the two 'never to be reconciled' actions of F.A.A. members met for their annual joust. What is optimistically called "Black Power" arrived to yell grievances and obscenities and the Foundation Conservatives came to prove once again that they would stay in power because they rig things more efficiently and also can bellow with a will.

The Cons. won, as usual. On this occasion, they had a slab of proxy votes prepared (a dodge the Black Power *never* seems to have woken up to . . .). Also, Apoo made sure that the new Executive would not be polluted, by fielding six old pals from his home-town, Bundaberg, Queensland, on the ticket. The fact that this isn't quite regular didn't seem to worry anyone and the Conservative donkey-vote ensured that Apoo's How to Vote ticket won the day.

But there was a catch. Kevin John Gilbert and his Offsider managed to appear on both the Con. ticket and the Black Power ticket. This is because Kevin John doesn't care *who* he is allied with, so long as that alliance produces a practical benefit for the Aboriginal people—something positive and real. Anyway, being on both tickets, Kevin and Offsider couldn't miss sailing in.



Manager Apoo

In bed that night, Kevin John told Offsider that he would give the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs three, maybe four nights of his time in Executive meetings. If by then the air hadn't got a great deal clearer, then he would quit because firstly, his time is valuable, and secondly, he felt that he couldn't afford to associate his good name with a decaying organization unless that organization began to shape up.

Next, Kevin John had several serious private talks with Manager Apoo. What he tried to sell him was first, that Aborigines are not necessarily "rubbish", "no-hopers", "what-sits", "drunks", "prostitutes" and so forth, second, that Aborigines get pushed around and abused enough by the white man, without also getting it from another black and third, that you can't tell a drunk who comes to the only welfare organization he knows, to push off, sober up, clean up and come back later. 'Because,' said Kevin John, 'That drunk has no money, no job, nowhere to clean himself up, no clothes and he will probably be picked up for vagrancy anyway. If he can't get Foundation help when he needs it, what good is the Foundation?'

Apoo objected that before he came as Manager, drunks, bludgers and things had over-run the Foundation. They had cost it a fortune in useless "hand-outs" and the hand-out policy was crazy. True, said Kevin John, but so was the 'get lost until you've solved your problem' approach. What was needed was a policy which called for a Solomon-like combination of tact, sympathy, strength, intelligence and understanding on the part of the Manager. First, he said, you must lift the drunk's self-esteem. You have to try to give him his manhood back. You talk to him as a man and let him have a shower and a shave. You give him a good suit of clean clothes and a meal. Dried out, spruced up and fed, the man should then again be spoken to and told where he could get a job. Should he come back again, drunk and jobless, he would again be spoken to and again helped. The Manager should then say something like 'Look brother, this is your second chance. The money that I am using to set you on your feet is money that could be going to help Aboriginal women and kids who need it more. You are a man and I expect you to *behave* like a man. I'm putting you on your feet this second time, but after that you're on your own.' The man would then leave the Foundation knowing that he had been reasonably and fairly treated. To some incorrigibles, it would make little difference, but to a good few others, an encouraging

word would make *all* the difference. This, said Kevin John, was a human approach. After all, he argued, it is necessary to run the Foundation with compassion, firmness, intelligence, but above all, HEART.

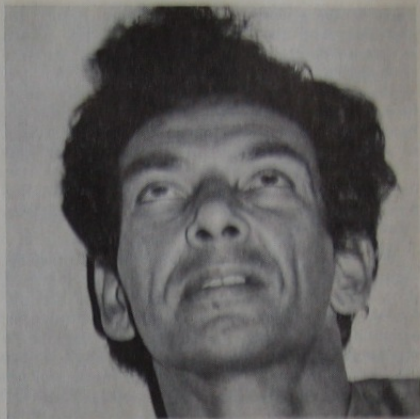
The Manager did not catch on. He continued to yell at, abuse, and generally push some Aborigines around. Which is understandable, because he has neither understanding nor feeling for the people and shares a typical white middle class attitude with his white masters: 'I made it by lots of hard work and cunning, why can't they?'

Kevin John decided that talking to Appoo was a waste of time. Appoo decided that Kevin John was dangerous. So, he tried to slander Kevin John at the third Executive meeting. The dodge was to have the Manager's Report read *by* the Chairman privately, but not *to* the Executive. Then Manager could rely on Chairman to tell the rest of the Executive during the coffee break or whatever, what a bad lot Kevin John was. That idea was spiked when this end of the table demanded that the Manager's Report be read out to all. Here's what it contained:

—People attending the first night of Kevin John's theatre workshop the previous Tuesday had left the back door open. (In fact the workshop participants later said that no-one had come near the back door as they had no reason to do so).

—Booze had been consumed on the F.A.A. premises. This was not allowed. (Tuesday night was the first meeting of the Australian Aboriginal Theatre workshop. Because interested visitors were expected for the first hour only, Gilbert went so far as to provide wine, lemonade and crackers for them. He didn't know about the no-boozie rule and it never occurred to him that there would be anything wrong with providing a social drink for a social occasion. The Manager, in fact, had supplied the paper cups for the drinks. He saw the wine then, so why didn't he object? (Or did he want to save it up for Executive meeting?) Anyway, apart from those considerations, the Foundation has always had alcoholic drinks on for social occasions. If you don't believe it, ask Eileen Lester . . .).

—Someone (the Theatre group and/or Kevin John by innuendo) had lifted \$200 worth of band equipment belonging to Jimmy Little, who had left it lying on the stage in the public hall since Sunday night's concert! Jimmy saw the stuff on Monday, but not on Tuesday. It was certainly not there on Tuesday evening, but anyway, the Manager put it in his report as an innuendo against the Theatre group.



Kevin John photographed at his last Foundation Meeting, wondering would it ever end.

Unstated, but implicit, was the idea that Appoo sorely regretted having fielded Kevin John on his Conservative ticket. Kevin John, with an eye to the amount of wasted time he was giving the Foundation moved that a Special Executive meeting be called to discuss the dismissal of the Manager.

That is why most of the team met on Wednesday, February 9th. It was obvious from the start that Kevin John was going to get ploughed. Several possibly sympathetic Aborigines solved their discomfort by not turning up. Several others, who in their hearts know that what Gilbert had been saying was true, had been persuaded of their error. These people are Koorie enough to know the truth when they hear it, but not Koorie enough to turn this knowledge into action. Overawed, as they have always been by the real strength in the Executive, the white conservative group, they voted right down that group's line, as, when the crunch comes, they always do. Kevin John optimistically continued to plead the case for a Manager with some heart and human understanding. What hope against a Conservative bloc which only understands a cheque book and the 'Why-can't-they-make-it-like-I-did' line!

So anyway, the Cons. won. Whereupon Kevin John and Offsider, with an eye to their good name, heaved a sigh of relief and resigned.

And what did the Foundation end up with? The Conservative line, victorious. The white middle class line, victorious. The point of view of the Ofavs, the 'systems and objects' men, victorious. The whole team, including a certain

party in the government, presumably, happy and glorious. And they kept Apoo. In the future, it would seem, the Aborigines would be "encouraged to improve their attitude to work," pay the rent, never be apathetic, never be allowed to be happy in an Aboriginal way, never be assailed by any human understanding, and be encouraged to join the middle class. The Con. victory kept several more jobs than that of the Manager safe, and ensured the continuity of an attitude that hasn't ever got an iota's worth of response from Aborigines yet.

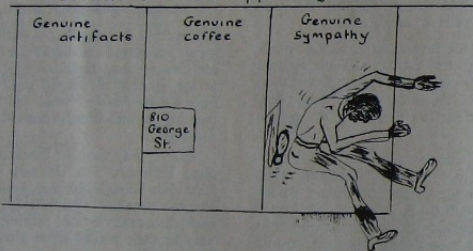
Why won't it, can't it? Because despite the white man's determination to deny the existence of a separate Aboriginality, Aborigines are different. They don't want what whites, and the articulate near-white Aborigines who assume to represent them say they want. They don't want a job on an assembly line at G.M.H., a car on H.P., a second mortgage and ulcers. They DO

want, and need, self-determination, for the white man to get his beak out of their business, and some guts in action from some of their own kind in high places. What hope have they when the cheque book minds of 'systems and objects' men run the Foundation? Can't these men get their public glory by joining an Anti-Litter campaign committee and leave the Aborigines alone?

Anyhow, the Foundation was kept safe for democracy, the goodies and the Conservative way. As a result, the F.A.A. will *continue* to alienate Aborigines, will *continue* not to be considered a centre for Aboriginal affairs, will *continue* to be as dead as a dodo, and will *continue* to be the non-event of the decade. What price victory?

(As we were going to press, we heard that David Kirk has put Apoo up for the Presidency of Kirinari. David claims to be on the side of the people. Hoboy!)

Foundation for Apoo-riginal Affairs



The dead heart of Sydney

BITS

Can't tell you anything about the Woodenbong rent situation. Tess Brill was supposed to send a report in about it, but didn't. Funny thing, though, that an "Anonymous" person paid the \$251 back rent to the Child Welfare Department and later demanded (and got) it back. How do you pay back money to an anonymous donor? Or was he a member of the welfare family?

In February Dr. Coombs told the Senate Committee currently looking into the Aboriginal situation that Australia is producing a race of Aboriginal cripples. "Unless the vicious circle of

paternalism, dependence and pauperism is broken within the decade of the '70s, the problem will become much more difficult, if not impossible, to solve," he said. "Evidence of malnutrition is widespread; infant and maternal mortality is many times the general Australian level. Respiratory diseases, ear diseases, and serious eye infections, hook-worm and leprosy are markedly more common than among other Australians." The Aboriginal population will double within the next twenty years. Given adequate finance, it should be possible to improve the Aboriginal situation while the population was relatively small, said Dr. Coombs.

On being notified of the Gilberts' resignation from the F.A.A. Executive (see story *Foundation Fundamentals*) Chairman Pastor David Kirk said: 'You get A for effort, but even the U.N.O. doesn't work as it should.' No, true. But it *could* be made to work, anything can work, if first you clean out all the pockets of self interest in an organization and demand integrity and effort from all involved.

Aboriginal art a national treasure? The largest display of Aboriginal bark paintings ever is now showing at the Field Museum of Natural History, in Chicago. Australians have never seen such a large collection and they are not likely to either, because it is owned by a Californian. It is no longer so easy to get Aboriginal art works out of this country as it once was. Yet a continuing disregard for Aboriginal art is still shown by the fact that the works of a major traditional artist such as Yirawala is allowed to remain under the control of a private individual. Couldn't an Aboriginal Art Trust or some similar body be set up to hold such treasures until such time as the Aboriginal people apply to use them in their own museums and galleries?

So now the Federal government plans to build six new Aboriginal reserves worth \$1m. near

Greetings from . . .

STAN VINCENT'S Friendly COMMERCIAL HOTEL

PRINCES HIGHWAY, PAMBULA

Established 1878 — still going strong

- ★ Excellent accommodation
- ★ Reasonable tariff
- ★ Tooheys Ales
- ★ Home cooked counter lunches
- ★ Pambula River oysters—fresh on shell

PHONE: PAMBULA 12

Alice Springs. Haven't they learnt yet? The mayor of Alice Springs feels sure that things will now improve. When, when, WHEN will they finally learn that there is NO substitute for land, compensation, self-help and self-determination if there is to be a return to dignity and identity?

Invitation to the Hon. John: Quite a few of your statements since you took office show clearly that you have neither understanding nor sympathy for the plight of the Aboriginal in this society. You flew here and there and shook hands with welfare officials and town dignitaries and called this 'looking into the Aboriginal situation'. Your visit to Purfleet was a classic. The people there said that your alleged offer to employ men at the reserve to paint the houses there must have been shouted at them from the top of the hill as you went past them. Your only stop at Purfleet mission was briefly at the Gillawarra gift shop. The people say that you did not speak to one of the reserve dwellers. Now you don't learn much about a human situation in this way. So why don't you come with us on one of our trips? Come with us, on our terms and in our way, as an anonymous guest staying with us on the missions? Without your official trappings and no longer shielded from reality, perhaps you would come to some understanding. And what's more, it would cost the tax payers a lot less!

At a recent Land Board conference, Chikka Dixon, supported by Paul Coe stated that everyone who was genuine and sincere would be at Purfleet the following week to support the local people in their cry for justice. Chikka moved that anyone who didn't go, and any organization present at that meeting that didn't send a delegate, would be black-listed. Came next week, at Purfleet. Where were you, Chikka? And Paul? Where was the genuineness and sincerity? It was conspicuously absent there, as it was at Wallaga Lake the following week. Talk is cheap. Real achievement means hours of sloggling effort, without reward. And it also means losing the popularity contest, because you rock too many boats.

A common white attitude: "Why can't Aborigines make it like I did?" Here's just some of the reasons why: You aren't in a psychological vacuum because of historical and current causes. You are almost invariably better educated and

can take advantage of opportunities. You, unlike most Aborigines, have been brought up to be competitive—you have the necessary "shark" instinct. You are not the victim of loss of identity and cultural denigration. You are not discriminated against because of colour, values or life-style. And of course, you do not feel compelled to share your earnings with others of your race who are in need.

Once Aborigines are completely at their ease, and being themselves, Europeans are fascinated by the natural flow of wit and humour that pours out of them. It's irresistible. Makes you think, that if our people would only put just half that energy into the cry for land rights, we'd get a lot further. Yet, where would the Koorie be without that lovely humour? Without the ability to laugh at the stupid values that European society tries to force upon him?

An academic at one of our universities was interested in doing research on the impact of Aboriginal bloodlines on the way of life and attitudes of some of Australia's grazing families. It appears that he was gently encouraged to turn his researches to another field (no pun intended). Say, though, wouldn't it have been fascinating?

— LETTERS —

Racism

SIRS, congratulations on the appearance of the first edition of *Alchuringa*. The article *Aborigines on Stage* was one of the best reportages I read in a long time. . . . May I ask you just one question? Would it be possible to delete racism from your magazine? Although I see the point of an "all-Aboriginal" magazine in terms of public relations value, the idea of it is the exact replica of Nazi theories. Why not try, through your own example, to prove that co-operation, even if only in producing a magazine, can be done superbly? I refer of course, to the Letter to the Editor in your last issue from Lester Morris, Narrandera, N.S.W.

It is a sad anomaly that one should advocate a black, editor, black staff but white governmental financial support. Can't you see that co-operation is the only answer to a peaceful solution? So please, try not to become racists. The world has enough trouble without adding to it.

Eva Sandor (Kings Cross)

(As sure as there is white governmental support, or indeed white control in any Aboriginal development, then sooner or later we find that co-operation is replaced by suppression of the Aboriginal view. It is

Many Aborigines claim blood relationship with the feudal grazier families of their area, because of the well known yen for local black satin and the country sport of "gin jockeying". And, in keeping with the warmer climate of the land, many a black stockman has been corralled when a grazer's wife brought forth a too deeply sun-tanned Australian. There are cases where a grazing son tried to do the right thing by his part-Aboriginal progeny and was subsequently disinherited by the "respectable" side of the family. Many of our great families have a dash of tar in there somewhere, for 200 years is a long time and the country does get lonely. In some areas, whites have a guilt load because their ancestors are remembered for their "nigger hunts". Ancient guilt, a family skeleton in the cupboard and the modern hypocrisy of the "gin jockey" does a lot to explain the passion with which some country people hate Aborigines. Could guilt/shame explain why sections of the Liberal-Country party coalition are so fervently working against Aboriginal aspirations? It's a potent black-lash and the real reasons for it would be denied by the lashers. Nevertheless, many a Koorie believes that if apartheid were a fact, a good cross-section of our Greater Australians would be on reserves. And . . . it mightn't be allowed, but—sixty per cent of white South Africans have a recognisable amount of coloured blood in their veins according to a report in *The Australian* on March 22.

too much to expect any minority to attempt a Utopian level of co-operation when confronted constantly and at all levels by white racism as Aborigines are. As one of the authors of *The Rights of Man*, a book about the Declaration of Human Rights, you should know better than most how many Articles are at present being violated by the various Australian governments. (Ed.)

Land

SIR, I refer to the recent court trials taking all title to the land away from the Aborigines. This follows closely the Indian problems of the U.S.A. where the white designated areas for the Indians and then re-neged on these promises in later years. Often the reason is that valuable minerals are found on the land as is true in Arnhem Land, or the place becomes a tourist attraction as is true for Ayres Rock. For some reason the land is suddenly not the Aborigines' but they are allowed to remain out of the good graces of the Government.

Traditional law says that a white man can go and live on a piece of land for a number of years and then

make a claim to that land. Should not the Aborigines be able to do the same since their ancestors have lived on the land for thousands of years?

The basic argument is that not until the white man came were there any "improvements" to the land. The Aborigines did not have to "improve" the land; they were living in harmony with it. Has the white man improved the land? I would say that exploit, ruin, pollute and rape are synonymous of terms. The white man's definition of title to the land, improvements to the land and who is involved. I am against the present government's action in this case.

Ronald M. Stizzinger (Neutral Bay)

McMahon and the Embassy

SIR, thank you very much for *Alchuringa* and all success to it. Incidentally, I was astonished to see an ad. for Nabalco on the back cover—a change of heart? Or do they think it is good p.r. to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds?

Judging by my bulging file, press coverage on Aboriginal affairs is getting very good. Do you think more Aborigines are reading newspapers now that the focus of attention is at last swinging their way? A library/news centre where ALL newspapers were available would be very useful—or some kind of Aboriginal News Service . . .

Congratulations on your Australia Day article in the *Australian*. How inept of McMahon to make his hollow pronouncements on that date! At least the general purpose lease is some small gain. All strength to the Aboriginal Embassy . . . apart from anything else they provide a focus of attention, fulfilling this necessity for Aborigines to be both seen and heard. And a constant source of public embarrassment to the government. Beautiful!

Elaine Mayer (Lane Cove)

(Regrettably, we couldn't do anything about the inclusion of the Nabalco ad., as the advertising side of



this magazine is not in our hands. The "Spirit of Gove" has come to symbolize exploitation and oppression of blacks in Australia. It seems ironic that some of the returns from this exploitation is being used to help support a magazine that attacks all that the "Spirit of Gove" stands for. But that's free enterprise for you! Later on, when funds permit, we are contemplating having a weekly Aboriginal News sheet—if we're sure that it would fulfill a real need.—Ed.).

Land

SIR, it must be about ten years since I attended a summer school which was held for the express purpose of finding methods to improve the social situation of Australian Aborigines. I remember the Director for the British Co-operatives in the Pacific region, whose headquarters were in Fiji, addressing the group on the positive response of many Fijian and New Guinean communities to the co-operative concept. At the end of his address, a question was asked—"Do you know of any other people in the region who lack motivation as much as Australian Aborigines?"

His answer, after a thoughtful pause, was to this effect—"Yes, there is a group of people whose homeland was a small island near Fiji. Their island was submerged in a climatic upheaval and the people were taken to Fiji. These dispossessed people were not given any land they could feel was their own and they were lacking in motivation as much as Australian Aborigines."

I wonder, after all these years, whether any concerned Australian has researched the significance of this statement.

Perhaps Aborigines do know best regarding their own primary need. Certainly their call for land ownership (land right in today's parlance) is practically unanimous.

Di Graham (Roseville)

SIR, the article *Race Relations in New Zealand* in the last issue of *Alchuringa* was of special interest to me for I once lived in New Zealand. History shows that the more the Aborigines put into the struggle for justice, the more they are likely to gain a tangible

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success. It is a sad reflection on our values that operation and goodwill has counted for little but the language of 'fight is right' meets with instant understanding and respect.

In the 1920's, race relations in N.Z. were on the whole good, though Maoris had a real fear that their educated leaders would be separated from their tribal brothers and turned into show pieces like Sir Maui Pomare who became Minister for Education. But by 1945, the attitudes of both races had changed. The mass media propagated a conception of the Maori as a sub-standard human. Educated Maoris now had a common attitude—I must go back and help my people. The Maori experience has two lessons for Aborigines. The first is the urgent necessity for intelligently directed struggle, the second—keep your educated leaders with your tribal citizens. Land rights are a serious business.

E. B. Wilson (Russell Vale)

A Place in the Sun

SIR, I am pleased to see that a development like *Alchuringa* has come about—it is good to see young writers emerging among the Aboriginal people. At this university we have many exciting developments among young Papuans and New Guineans who are taking part in creative writing and who are turning out a growing number of publications. Actually, I hope one day we will get some young Aboriginal people to come here as students. It would be an extremely stimulating and rewarding experience for them and would open their eyes to the many possibilities which there are. Some of our students are first generation educated from quite primitive communities and yet they are rapidly achieving and proving their abilities here and will become leaders and professionals able to fully replace the overseas "experts" in time . . .

Dr. Ruth Latukeyu
(Department of Anthropology, University of Papua and New Guinea)

Wot You Think This Mean?

SIR, the Prime Minister has asked me to acknowledge your telegram about land for Aborigines, and to send you an official copy of his statement of 26 January. He has noted your Association's views on the question of land for Aborigines.

Mr. McMahon has also asked that I explain that the Ministerial Committee, mentioned in the opening

section of his statement, is continuing with the task of reviewing the Government's policies concerning Aborigines.

I. F. Grigg,
Principal Private Secretary

The Cost of Inhumanity

SIR, Wendy Bacon's article on prison life (*Review*, March 5, 1972) once again points out the extremely high proportion of our prison population which is of Aboriginal descent. The majority of these prisoners are short-stay prisoners convicted for drunkenness or vagrancy, often time after time.

Rather than sweeping out of sight the results of the failure of white society to provide a proper place for the original inhabitants of Australia we should be trying to devise social and educational policies to enable the two peoples to live together on terms of equality and dignity. For those to whom arguments of morality or humanity have little import, I would suggest that even on economic grounds such policies would be cheaper than maintaining so many Koories in jail for offences which indict the society itself rather than the despairing individuals who commit them.

Dr. M. R. Megaw,
(History Department, Sydney University)

Real Education

SIR, I quote from a letter I got from my mother in England in January: "I suppose a few of the white Australians will learn some of the lessons the land and the people have for them, or will they always be superficial and destructive? The drought, the immensity and the little things that have learnt to live in it will win, of course, when the white man has destroyed the larger animals and much of the beauty . . ." My mother is a geographer which explains the emphasis on the environment.

John Clegg,
(Anthropology Department, Sydney University)

(Large tracts of our semi-arid outback have already been destroyed by overstocking which has upset the delicate ecological balance of these areas. Like the beaches which have been devastated by sand mining along the N.S.W. coast, these outback areas stand as a continuing reminder of Australian greed. In many areas not even little things still survive, but the Aborigines fear that they will learn them too late.—Ed.)

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ILBARANA

by Donald Stuart

Georgian House, Melbourne, 1971

In our society, on sports fields and in pubs and so forth, we often hear the exhortation "Be a man!!" Yet I would suggest that very few Australians, in this day and age, would have a mental picture of what manliness is, what it entails. Our society seems to be almost totally geared to the concepts of "What you can get away with," "the least work for the most return," and "getting a quid", usually at the expense of the other fellow. The idea that an individual has responsibilities to the group, the idea that *everybody* counts is quite alien to our modern thinking and this explains the continuing disgrace of inadequate social services, pensions which pauperize the aged and the Australian tolerance of national scandals such as the mortality rate of Aboriginal infants in our country areas. In a society which stresses the ethic "Everyone for himself" who has time to give more than a nodding recognition to the existence of wide-spread human misery in our midst?

In a society as large and amorphous as ours, it is easier for the spineless to dodge social responsibility. And no-one ever accuses them of unmanliness, whatever else they may be called. Yet surely, if a man has strength and power and wealth, then he fulfills his manhood by helping those who are weaker than he? If he uses his strength only to get more wealth for his own enjoyment then isn't he a maggot of the meanest sort, feeding on the bodies of others? Can we truly call him a man? Should we not rather, have only contempt for him? This seems to be commonsense, yet it is obvious that we do not see the numerous swindlers, tricksters, exploiters and man-magots in political and business spheres an unmanly. Rather, we accord them titles and honours for their achievements in out-sharking other humans. Does anyone ever call a well-known multi-millionaire or the expensive female whom he bought from the U.S.A. scum for spending millions on self-indulgence while children starve?

Protected from each other by high walls and anonymity, it is possible for many people to shield themselves, all their lives, from too harsh a reality. People can successfully protect themselves from the abusive effect of the environment and other people. They can refuse to see what life is about, what misery is. Selectively blind, or uncaring, these are the people whose slimy self-interest, the secret cunning thoughts of profit and pleasure, plays havoc with the moral order of society. They might retain "respectability", but dear, oh dear, how they abuse the meaning of manhood!

On the other hand, in a small society where each member is aware of the actions of all others, it is easier to keep tabs on a man's integrity. This is even truer if the environment is harsh and the entire group is tied closely together for survival through inter-dependence. Then a man must be a man with full responsibility for the welfare of others—he cannot live for himself alone. It is in such a society that finer definition of manliness will emerge. Such a society was

that of the Australian Aboriginal tribes in the days before the white man came.

The book *ILBARANA* by Donald Stuart gives white readers a rare opportunity to look into the culture, environment and spiritual world of the Aboriginal tribal people of the inland. One is taken through the veil of time into the very life experiences of Ilbarana, the book introduces Ilbarana to us as a child and shows us the sensual contentment, the gut satisfaction of being a child in the camps of the Old People:

"Ngooora, he thinks dimly, as sleep drifts over him. Ngooora, the camp, ngooora.

The smell, the sound, the sight, all make ngooora good, most desirable.

Smell of woodsmoke, of meat cooking in the coals of the fire, smell of dry dust, and the waters-mell of the pool, weed-grown under high rockface.

Sound of quiet laughing, sound of the evening songs, faintly the sound of cicadas in the scatter trees at the end of the pool.

Sight, dimly seen. Flicker of firelight against starlight, darkness, sight of moving figures, unburied between the fires by the water below the looming rockface. Star, solitary star, hanging remote in darkness above the height of rock.

Smell, and sound, and sight, all make ngooora, the camp. But best there is the smell of his mother, the warm smell of milk and sweat, and the sound of her speaking most gently, the sight of her as she bends over him. And in his mouth the taste of her milk, the taste of widgeonoo meat she has chewed for him. The sand-hollow she has scooped for him is soft and warm, and he sleeps. The fires fall, the stars move, and he sleeps on."

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Ibarana as pookooloo or infant, has the freedom, privileges and no responsibilities of all Aboriginal children. As he grows, privileges begin to be withdrawn and responsibilities are given him, to toughen and train him in the ways of survival in a harsh land. As hardan, or young boy, he must learn from the women the skills of finding seeds, roots and small animals for food. Then gradually he grows towards puberty and he then becomes mallaloo—a boy who is taken in hand by his father's eldest brother to be prepared for his long road towards manhood.

After his initial training in hunting, tribal relationships and the secret names of watering places, Ibarana is taken by four proper men-initiates—on the first of many initiation journeys. In company with another mallaloo, Mindjoona, Ibarana is kept moving for days with minimal sleep, water or food. At each stage the proper men are relieved by others, but there is no rest for the two mallaloo, either from the gruelling pace or the constant reminders that they are of no importance, are poor, sickly weaking things, who must be guided along the long path towards manhood or remain useless all their lives. It is a test of their endurance against hunger, thirst, distance and weariness and also a test of humility. Meanwhile they are relentlessly taught the sacred chants of their people so that these mantras become part of the very fibre of their minds.

When finally the boys reach their totemic holy place, they are shown the two rocks which are their two brothers, their own flesh and spirit. Here at the creation heroes of the Dreaming, who have rested for untold ages in these rocks and have now reincarnated themselves in the two boys. They touch their sleeping flesh, the rocks, and feel the strength go into them. Here they are important, here is a place of revival for them, always.

They are taught the songs that brought the various birds and animals into being and their relationships with the eternal brothers, the great ever-present ones who made the Land and the People and the Law. Always they will know that there is a world, a meaning beyond that seen with the eye and they will know that they, too, are more than flesh.

The journeys across the tribal lands begin again—the unending fatigue as they are tried and tested and learn the chants, legends and sacred approaches to waterholes of time immemorial. Their fatigue level is constantly kept near the unbearable, with few respites, but always Ibarana has before him his father's promise that the responsibilities would never be more than a man could bear. With the prize of manhood before him, how could he fail? Despite his aching fatigue how could one of the immortal brothers fail?

Ibarana and Mindjoona are taken before the tribe and found to be fit for manhood. Their pride mingles with fear, as, leaving the camp, they hear the ritual crying for the departed—the tribe has lost two sons.

What is ahead of them? First, the two are urged to a run all through that aching, shuddering day they are kept on the move, running by relays of proper men who relieve each other. They run, in agony until they have crossed a new threshold of pain and fatigue . . . then INITIATION!

A kaleidoscope of sensory impressions, the feeling of another man's blood spurting on their bodies, the circumcising agony, the sounding bullroarer keeping the women far away, the sacred chants coursing through his head . . . It is finished—they have been born again—here are now two new men in the tribe.

The author comments: "The awful running, that too had its place, natural and fitting the pattern. It had deadened their reactions to the pain of the jagged quartz knife, and yet, in some mysterious way, it had heightened their awareness, had made them spiritually receptive to the meaning of the ceremony. The blood that had spattered on them, as they had lain each of them held on the bodies of three men, that too had been most meaningful. How could a man cry out, or in any way show himself less than a man, when the blood of a proper man was mingling with the blood of his own ordeal?"

After the healing come more lessons from the older men. Still the young initiates are silent, respectful. It is not until later that they come to the shocked realization that they have indeed become honoured men when for the first time, they are given the choicest portion of the meat which they themselves have hunted. With this gesture comes the fierce surge of pride and satisfaction that makes life so meaningful for tribal men.

With the completion of the final stage of his initiation, the cutting of the man-marks across his chest, Ibarana achieves the full status of proper man, the status that all sound young men want. Now he may speak and be heard in silence, take a wife and be in the rejoicing of his manhood.

Throughout the book, Donald Stuart gives examples of his understanding of the totality, the fullness of Aboriginal tribal life. He writes:

"Here, in the glowing, splendid Land, were the People, men of wisdom and knowledge, and their women, lean hard women, and the younger ones, and the children, every one of the People tied to every other one, and here were the species that were food for

the People, and here were the waterplaces, each place a part of the life of man and beast and bird . . . Here in the Land of his People, were the Creation Heroes, ever-present, and every one of the People was flesh and spirit of one or another of them, who had made the Land and the People and all beasts and birds, and who made the Law by which the People lived and continued. Here across the Land were the secret traverses of the Creators, here, guarded jealously from all but the initiated men, were the sacred resting places of the Mangun (Ancestral Beings of the Dreamtime) to whom all the People, all the beings of the Land, returned when their time in the flesh should be finished."

The book ends with the reported sighting of strange-toe-less men, with light coloured faces and hands accompanied by strange creatures, huge, with long legs and a long curved neck. For the first time ever, men who are leaders of the tribe hesitate. What to do? They look to Ibarana for a lead. He has decided that though the strangers are obviously naive in the skills of survival—they have been seen passing watering places when thirsty—they must nevertheless be proper men of their own kind, to have survived as they have done. He will therefore go and greet them, in peace, and show them the sacred places and give them food and

friendship. As he approaches the strangers, his spears in the position of friendship, Ibarana is shot dead—between the eyebrows. On that note, the book ends.

But the story does not end. What became of Ibarana's wife Koorring and the child she bore? What continues to become of their descendants—the part Aboriginals of Australia, still little less alien in spirit from their white conquerors than Ibarana was? We know that the people are still killed, not now by bullets, but by racist oppression, discrimination, alcohol, unemployment, disease, malnutrition, government apathy and the constant denigration of their human dignity.

Ibarana is a valuable book. The understanding it gives its white readers, the understanding of an utterly alien culture, is an important contribution to the development of a tolerance based on knowledge. Because it is extremely readable, it must have a wider impact than anthropological treatise could ever have. And it presents a vision of manhood, a status earned by endurance, proved in agony, and daily re-asserted by mature responsibility for all those younger and weaker in the tribe, that may well be meditated upon by those pitiless sharks who would call themselves men in this society.

BITS

Heard a whisper that the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation is disgusted with the racist attitude of some of the Taree teachers who were born in Taree. After listening to some of the stories of Aboriginal schoolchildren's experiences and seeing how those children now refuse to go to school, even though their parents are willing to keep them on there to get a higher education, it seems there's room for disgust.

Salut Coombs, salut Dexter! The 'to-the-death' struggle between the humane and anti-assimilationist forces in the Office and Council for Aboriginal Affairs and the 'keep-the-blacks-down' views of the Department of the Interior resulted in the lousy Australia Day concession of "general purpose leases". Sure, it stinks. But how many people are aware of the incredible amount of in-fighting it took to get even this concession?

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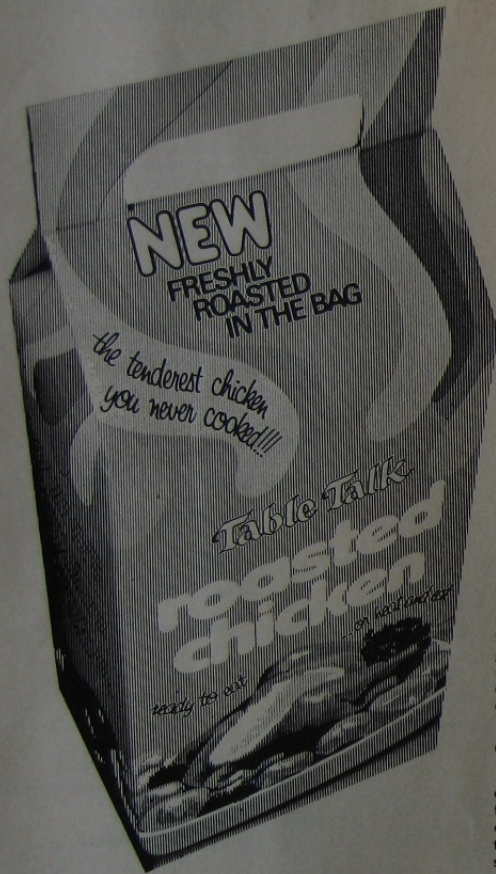


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