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YUENDUMU SCHOOL POST PRIMARY PROJECT*

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Education outside the four walls of the classroom has long been an integral part of the program of social change at Yuendumu School.

In mid October, while 80 children from the middle part of the school went on a trip to Alice Springs, the Post Primary School undertook an educational experiment which lasted for three days. There were 35 young men, 20 young women, 4 Teaching Assistants and 5 teachers involved. We chose one of the most dilapidated empty houses in the village, and undertook to renovate it. It stood empty and bare in a line of houses. Not a window or door or chimney adorned any of the 6 houses in the line; the water tanks were broken, the gardens arid, and the walls and floor, both inside and outside, were covered with unsubtle graffiti and an occasional graphic display.

The school strongly feels that it must be a servant of the community. Its service must be conspicuous, and its actions undoubtedly speak more persuasively than words. So we undertook the venture in the belief that education will bring tangible results.

Our specific aims were two fold:

- a. to repair the house, then give it to a young married man who applied for it and promised to look after it.
- b. to show that anybody can repair a house, so long as he is prepared to work. In other words, we hoped that others would follow suit.

In order to make our second aim possible, we used no money or purchased items. Nor a cent was spent by anybody on the project. Some materials were given by the school, but a lot of the internal furnishings were made by renovating old chairs, stools, and tables found at the rubbish dump. We made a point of taking all 55 students to the rubbish dump to nose out some good reparable gear.

Manual Training - repaired chimney and water tank. Measured and made louvres. Fixed up a door. Painted inside walls. Made furniture - table, wall hooks, stools, wash-stand. Tiled the floor.

Domestic Science - Made curtains, wall hangings, table cloth, towels and tea-towels, tins for tea, sugar, flour etc., painted stools.

Unskilled Labour (Headmaster etc.) - scrubbed walls and floor (more than once), planted grass and trees. Neville, a Teaching Assistant, painted and mounted a picture to hang over the fireplace.

Was it Successful?

1. The house was given to a young married Teaching Assistant, Garry, who was soon to become a father. At the time of writing - 2 months after the repair - the house is still in very good repair. The grass is growing and there have been no breakages.

2. More significantly, each of the six houses in that hitherto barren line of dwellings now has a door and louvres. There are gardens in three of them, lino in one house, and paint in odd spots. The disease is infectious. In other parts of the village there is equal enthusiasm and at weekends there are welding machines and scrubbing brushes and gardening tools being used consistently. Any handyman should know how long it takes to measure and cut 48 louvres, repair a hinge on a door, and grow a green garden in Central Australia's uniquely arid area.

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ADVENTURE CAMP IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Special Schools Bulletin of December 1972 reported on an adventure camp run by the Bamyili School in cooperation with the Katherine Area School. Nineteen senior boys from Bamyili, Katherine and Beswick schools participated in a widely varied program for five days. The range of activities provided opportunity for the boys to live, work and learn together.

The following topics were dealt with: practical and compass work, simple emergency work with motor vehicles (e.g. simple fault finding if engine won't start; getting out of bogs; changing a wheel), raft building, erection of shelters, first aid and swimming and rescue work. During this course, all nineteen boys trained for and passed their R.L.S.S. Water Safety and Safe Swimmer Certificates.

The Special Schools Bulletin reports on the camp as follows:

"The camp proved to be most beneficial from all points of view and the way in which the boys worked and lived together was most impressive. It certainly gave them an excellent opportunity to get to know one another thoroughly.

Whilst such camps may be conducted with children from one school, experience here has shown that children and teachers from the different schools can enjoy a mutually profitable experience".