



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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is particularly worth reading. Here Rowley sounds a quiet but insistent alarm to White Australia:

"In one way or another, Aboriginal leaders will come to the fore and develop political pressures. Governments may negotiate with leaders willing to operate within the political system or face others who have rejected it." (p.422)

The alternative to conflict, he believes, is to strengthen the political influence of Aboriginal people, to grant greater autonomy. The traditional solution to the "Aboriginal problem" was to reduce Aboriginal autonomy. We have inherited the fruits of that "solution": frustration and impaired flexibility in the Aboriginal people. In order to restore flexibility, to enable Aboriginals to determine their future in a changing European Australia, we must restore the right and ability of genuine decision-making to the Aboriginal people. There is fear among European Australians that greater autonomy for Aboriginals would be a divisive influence. Perhaps in the short run it would, but in the longer term it is doubtful that we could sow greater tensions than are created by the present situation.

Rowley's views ought to be known to every Australian. They deal with an important issue - one which it will become increasingly difficult to ignore. For Australian teachers, there is special reason to reflect on the future of the two peoples of Australia. Even in our school textbooks we blandly ignore the first 30,000 for the last 200 years of Australian history, and then frequently present distortions, omissions and outright lies to compound our children's ignorance about the Aboriginal people and their place in Australian society.

For teachers in Aboriginal schools, this book and others like it are indispensable reading. Whatever the future of Aboriginal Australians - and there are many different futures predicted - the role of education in achieving that future must be a significant one.

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Kearney, G.E., De Lacey, P.R. & Davidson, G.R. (Eds.) *The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians*. John Wiley & Sons A'sia. Pty. Ltd. 1973. (446 pp.)

S. Pauling, Sydney, N.S.W.

May I say at this stage that this book is in my opinion long over-due for those of us in this field of education. This

is especially so where we have limited contact with others so that we miss many publications with relevant research. No matter how hard I try to keep up on the literature I still fall back on the compendium style of publication which has traditionally been years out of date by the time it is published. This book is excitingly recent and for that alone most commendable, and a definite must for my library shelf.

The section on Cultural Deprivation and Language Deficit, at which I looked particularly, is, of course, quite familiar to many of us. It does, however, in a book of this scope overcome to some extent the question of the detribalized rural Aboriginal which is in the minds of New South Wales teachers when they read work based on the Northern Territory Aboriginals and try to fit the conclusions to the children in their classes.

Nurcombe's statement, "The language of primary school is Standard English, and it is to this that the Aboriginal child must adapt", may well give encouragement to those who have examined the "separate culture" concept in education and found little hope of application to our people in rural towns in New South Wales. I assume that what we wanted was to stop feeling guilty about the basic premise of integration in educational aims. It has not been without effect that the teacher who is aware has examined his own aims nor without effect that we are even less sure of where we are going particularly as more and more teachers are experimenting, reading and talking about the issue of Aboriginal education.

The bibliography in the book is a most comprehensive one and as a starting point for students the book seems to me most suitable. It certainly pulls in the threads for those like myself who are semi-literate on the subject.

(Note: In view of the wide compass of the book, a further review will be published in the next issue.)

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