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TUITION BEFORE RIGHTS :
ABORIGINAL ADULT EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA
1800 - 1983

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Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, one could detect an inexorable logic in the development of Aboriginal affairs from the time of the initial conquest of the country until at least the Second World War. The assumption of what Mr Justice Blackburn¹ termed the "legal fiction" of peaceful settlement of *terra nullius* (an empty land) notwithstanding, the entire country was, in the view of its long-term inhabitants, definitely not empty, nor without law and government. (Even the South Australian Colonisation Committee seems to have concurred in this view by assuring intending settlers that they would be protected from hostile savages, in 1834, two years *before* formal settlement.

The non-fictional fact of conquest, however, placed at the doors of colonial administrations the responsibility for those conquered remnants who survived the process of settlement. But since the *raison d'être* of settlement required the fiction of empty and available land, the proprietary rights of its owners had to be denied from the first. To this was rapidly added the impropriety of heathen representing themselves or giving evidence in court, since they could not take the oath. Thus, although Walmadjeri and Tanganekald alike were henceforth British subjects and liable in British law, certain of their legal rights had to be postponed until they could understand their full importance - which could take an indefinitely long time during which they might die out anyway. Understandably, with British civilisation at the pinnacle of human evolution, ahead of even the French, the German and of course the Hindu civilisations, and Aboriginal barbarism at or even below its base - George Grey surmised that Aboriginal life must represent some animal regression from that of the Garden of Eden - this period of apprenticeship for civilisation was a necessary burden for those with Christian charity to bear (Rowley, 1972:126)

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¹ Milirrpum et al.v. Nabalco (Aust.) Ltd et al., 1971.

The upshot of so much of this laborious sanctimony was that the people had to be controlled and their children removed from them, to be raised free from their corrupting influences. After the first experiments with schools, at which Aboriginal children often did surprisingly well, opinion was divided over whether some sort of 'indenture' system could be implemented, or a self-contained 'village' system, with a view to providing a ready labour supply, could be created. Grey, in the early 1840s in South Australia, argued for training institutions and schools, but also for forms of apprenticeships or indentures:

Grey argued that a settler who trained an Aboriginal worker added a labourer to the workforce as definitely as one who brought out a migrant and that such a settler should be rewarded by grant of additional land or by remission of part of the land purchase price. This would be far better than dependence on training in a few institutions; and it would be in the settlers' own interests properly to encourage and reward the Aboriginal worker... In the settled areas, he recommended the use of Aboriginal road building and maintenance gangs, with their own hunters to supply meat, and proper standards of management. Any Aboriginal who had been employed for three years should be given a grant of land in his own country, with a sum of money from the land revenue to enable him to stock it.

(Rowley, 1972:134-5)

However, since out on the frontier settlers were using land beyond their grant and shooting Aboriginal potential labourers, even with police assistance, Grey's ideas seem somewhat academic. But Australia, conceived by a lie out of expediency, born in blood and misery, raised by hypocrisy and brutal exploitation, has lived with this basic flaw in its composition for so long that we forget the basic educational problem: how to re-educate whites (Marchant, 1981:60)

Colonial administrations, however, with all the religiosity and pomposity of the reformed, framed their policies towards the pre-existing settlers in terms of tuition for civilisation, tuition before equal rights: a basic principle of Aboriginal policy at least until the Whitlam years, this form of social control has gone through a dreary repetition of initiation, early success, harassment, failure, depression, withdrawal of rights, regrouping, initiation, and so on. The vehicle of this policy cycle has generally been the multi-purpose institution, a sort of college for the lifelong learning of peasant and domestic skills. Not that these institutions were conceived as such in the very earliest years - apart from Grey, few

governors had the evil genius to be so Machiavellian. The standard pattern tended, however, to begin with the granting of land to missions for the purposes of setting up a school for local Aboriginal children (South Australia: Hart, 1970:19; Western Australia: Marchant, 1981:47; Victoria: Reynolds, 1972:157-8; New South Wales: Rowley, 1972:95, 97). In fact, this was common practice in Canada and New Zealand as well: as the Canadian Indian leader, Dr Hank Adams, remarked:

It is a typical colonial pattern, one that has existed in all other imperialist systems of the world, for churches to be given control of education of the native people. A study of the history of African countries in the colonial period shows how completely the churches dominated native education. In their liberation struggle these countries have had to fight the church and other authorities in order to overcome the situation.

(Bowles, *et al*, 1972:101)

In New Zealand, too, mission societies instituted schools from 1814 onwards, and set up secondary colleges from the 1870s (Williams, 1969:22). Not that these schools and colleges had entirely negative purposes or consequences: by 1900, Maori doctors and lawyers, graduates mainly from Te Aute College on Hawkes Bay, were forming the backbone of the Young Maori Party, a major force in the Maori Renaissance (Williams, 1969:151). However, in the case of Australian Aboriginal educational change, such institutions caused far greater disruption to the processes of cultural maintenance and transmission. Here the people were regarded from the first as 'untutored children' rather than 'noble savages'. Thus a prerequisite was the removal of children from the influence of their parents: as Eyre, noted sheep-drover, Aboriginal-killer, explorer and educational sociologist, pointed out -

With all my past experience I cannot persuade myself that any real or permanent good will ever be affected until the influence exercised over the young by the adults be destroyed, and they be freed from the contagious effects of their example.

(Gale and Brookman, 1975:55)

To this end, early schools were soon made residential: in 1843 the Adelaide school, and in 1844 the Walkerville school, were converted to boarding schools. However, the children ran away from them in such numbers that they were merged in 1845 (Hart, 1970:22). Similar problems of truancy have been reported in Canadian Indian schools (Adams, in Bowles *et al*, 1972:102), in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in the U.S., (Fuchs and Havighurst, 1972:49) and in countless

reports on Aboriginal schools. These boarding schools represent the first attempts at assimilation (Havighurst, 1973:9). Their descendants exist still: Havighurst reports that over one third of Navaho school children were, in 1973, in such institutions, often up to a thousand miles from home for years at a time (p.14). One could speculate about the purpose of residential Aboriginal secondary schools.

The policy of removing children was taken one step further in many parts of Australia: in South Australia, those children who could be kept in school in Adelaide were moved, as adolescents and young people, to Poonindie in 1849 and 1850, to form the cadre of multi-purpose institutions: combined schools, farms, further education colleges and villages. Hart remarks that the main purpose of Poonindie was to promote the values of civilisation and to provide vocational training for life in agricultural labour (Hart, 1970: 29-42). The principles as stated by the Anglican Bishop Short of Adelaide included: isolation; industrial education; schooling for children; marriage and sober living; separate dwellings for each family; hiring and service for wages; gradual and progressive moral improvement based upon Christian instruction, Christian worship and Christian superintendence (as stated in 1853: Hart, 1970:33).

A remarkable but by no means uncommon result of much of this schooling, which tended to put such enterprises in some jeopardy, was the successful assimilation of curricula by Aboriginal children: at Macquarie's school at Parramatta, an Aboriginal girl, with only three or four years schooling, came first in a competition with white children from neighbouring schools (Woolmington, 1973:25). Children at the Adelaide school could often read effectively within nine months. Montagu reported many years ago that children at the Ramahyuck Aboriginal School in Victoria gained the highest number of marks of any school in the state for some years running (Montagu, 1961:99). Characteristically, these results were obtained so long as children were *not* separated from their parents. As one early observer, Francis Dutton, concluded, relying solely on schooling for the young was useless -

unless the civilisation and education of the natives, both adult and child, can be carried on, on a sufficiently extended scale, to include both parent and child in its sphere...

(Gale & Brookman, 1975:55)

Dutton was writing of South Australian conditions in 1856, at a time when policy tended against his findings. Perhaps for these reasons above all others, the early missions around Melbourne were closed by 1850: as Latrobe, that paragon of righteousness, declaimed -

The Wesleyan Mission has failed. After labouring for ten years to inculcate the truth and lessons of Christianity upon the tribes within their reach, and to induce application to the arts of civilisation, under circumstances of far greater promise seemingly than those which attended the formation and conduct of the several Government establishments, it is admitted that not a single individual has been either Christianised or civilised and the Mission is now on the point of final abandonment.

(Reynolds, 1972:158)

Missions, however, faced a dilemma: if they failed their land grant was usually terminated (Rowley, 1972:97); while, if they looked like succeeding, neighbouring settlers took this to signify that the land was valuable on the one hand, and that labour was not likely to be offered cheaply by the mission inmates to their neighbours. Outcries usually resulted in the grants being revoked or terminated: even though Bishop Hale had bought the land on which Poonindie stood, in 1851, and conferred the title to the Aboriginal residents in 1857 by a Deed of Trust, settler pressure forced its sale in 1889 and the removal of its Aboriginal owners to Point MacLeay and Point Pearce (Hart, 1970:31, 35-36). Perusal of the Government Gazette suggests, however, that Hale bought only the lease, for which an annual rental fee was charged until the 1890s. Perhaps the land had been declared in the interim to be an Aboriginal Reserve, implying that it could be leased to anybody and the revenue accrued be applied to cover some of the costs incurred by the Department of Lands in its capacity as the body responsible for natives.

Nevertheless, the granting of land to, and the fitting out of multi-purpose institutions seems to have been one major strategy from the days of Macquarie's planned farm-school-village at Moss Vale (Rowley, 1972:90) in 1820, through to the setting up of Point Pearce in South Australia in 1868, to the Carrolup settlement in Western Australia in 1914 (Rowley, 1973:96-7), that of Murrin Bridge in New South Wales in 1949, (Rowley, 1973:73, 81, 268-9) even to the establishment of Amata in the early sixties. Even as late as 1973, von Sturmer could write of reserves in Queensland (as could easily have been written in 1873):

Administrators see the community itself as an educational device: for example, the store teaches people to handle a Western cash economy and to learn family budgeting; housing of an increasingly better type...is provided so that the Aborigines will learn to live in houses and to look after them; Western-style employment is provided for learning skills and for learning how a Western economic structure, based on permanent specialised employment and wages operates. (In days not so long past work was compulsory

so that a work ethic would be instilled.) We could run through the whole range of activities offering and see the same basic rationale at work...

and he surmises that

...both of them being conceived as part of a general education scheme, the community and the school are failing for basically similar reasons.

(von Sturmer, 1973:7-8)

von Sturmer could have added that most of whatever was earned by Aboriginal workers was held back and supposedly put into bank accounts 'on behalf of' its earners.

However, despite the problems of cross-cultural mobility, of settler harassment and of poor resources, many early institutions appear to have experienced a fair degree of success: Poonindie was self-sufficient within three or four years (Hart, 1970:33-35); Point Macleay, on the early route between Adelaide and Melbourne, captured the wool-washing monopoly during the 1880s until its decline in 1900-1902 (Hart, 1970:51); Tabralgar, near Dubbo in New South Wales, gained a degree of prosperity in the 1880s (Rowley, 1973:186-7). New Norcia in Western Australia, set up by Spanish Benedictine monks, was a pioneer in vocational and technical training, in the 1870s and 1880s (Rowley, 1972:106) and provided more or less full employment for the Aboriginal workers among a population of nearly 150 by 1900, despite anti-Catholic, and most definitely anti-Aboriginal, state governments (Marchant, 1981:47-60). One can go back as far as 1837 when the Wellington Valley (NSW) institution made its superintendent "much pleased" with its progress (Harris, 1978:25); and as close to the present as 1966 on Gerard near Berri,

where, if we continue with the rate of development that has been undertaken in the last four years, it is more than possible that the produce from that reserve, particularly during the seasons when crops are ripe, is going to take more labour than we have on the reserve.

(Busbridge; 1966:105)

Such success was usually quite short-lived: the promise of security, of the conferral of equal rights or of rights to self-determination was invariably broken. Inmates - for although innocent, they were permanently condemned to remain thus while they stayed in close association or on their own land - adapted as best they could and passed their experience on to their children and grandchildren, down to the present generation.

With the passage of time, institutions tended to become more rigidly controlled, more bureaucratic, and with greater distance between decision-makers and inhabitants. In the long run, the defeat of such enterprises as educational venues was probably inevitable: as Rowley sums up one of his chapters -

The tragedy is that sacrifice and goodwill cannot in themselves promote changes, except in individuals. There is no hope of social change leading to a general betterment of Aboriginal conditions in any system of this kind: for one thing which we have learned over the last few decades is that imposed programs, either in institutions or outside them and irrespective of how laudable the intentions may be, are self-defeating.

(Rowley, 1973:126)

And as far as educational achievements are concerned, apart from such relatively free settlements as New Norcia, he adds:

Even where considerable equipment and effort is devoted to training for outside employment, the results appear meagre. I have not heard of an Aboriginal training centre of this type anywhere which has ever sent out a flow of workers properly trained for any trade or industry and equipped with certified qualifications which are recognised in a particular trade.

(Rowley, 1973:126)

Rowley is careful to lay responsibility for this failure, not on the Aboriginal people nor on their instructors, but on "the ineffectiveness of the controlled settlements as preparation to live and work 'outside'." (Rowley, 1973:127)

Apart from loss of autonomy then, and the never-ending land-hunger of settlers, other obstacles to Aboriginal equality were foreshadowed: the lower classes, who had early on been expected to mix with Aboriginal people on a social basis, refused to do so on any grounds other than those already utilised by the squatters and other 'better' classes: that is, for the purposes of sexual liaisons. With the characteristic egalitarianism of fascist in-groups, Jack was not only as good as his master but, more significantly for any possible solidarity with the oppressed and exploited, Jack was better than any black. With the establishment of Herrenvolk governments in most states, pastoralist interests always over-rode those of the Aboriginal people: even as late as 1953, the Director of

Native Affairs in Western Australia, could write that -

where the recommendations of [his] Department conflicted with political self-interest [of the Government] they were frequently shelved or put aside.

(Stevens, 1971:75)

At the outset of universal compulsory education in Australia, pressure was exerted by parents to exclude Aboriginal children from common schools. In New South Wales, this policy was modified in the 1940s by requiring Aboriginal children to produce a medical certificate as evidence that they would not infect white children with any infectious or contagious disease. In the intervening sixty to eighty years, Aboriginal children had either no education at all, or had inflicted on them totally unqualified schoolmasters who also doubled as postmen, station managers, and in one case, night-soil collectors. In New South Wales, the alternative to such managed stations was the fringe-camp, which itself provoked harassment from local government functionaries and police. Thus, stations and settlements became, and have remained, refuges and asylums.

Since fringe camps had earlier been the first manifestations of an Aboriginal 'problem', in Adelaide in the late 1830s as in Sydney in the 1790s, one can see that a certain cyclical character can be detected in Aboriginal policy: sure enough, in the New South Wales of the 1880s, Parliament deliberated on the need "to take the 'near-white' children from their mothers and to 'train' them in institutions". (Rowley, 1973:10)

Again, at the 1937 Conference of State and Federal Ministers for Native Welfare, much hot air was expelled on the subject of merging the 'half-castes', those paler, into the general community (no doubt by a process of osmosis) and of segregating, in controlled conditions, those darker, in the expectation that those paler could be assimilated and those darker would continue to 'die out' (on reflection, an amazingly stupid phrase: are people expected to become progressively more transparent, or to instantaneously vanish, or helpfully walk off into the uncharted outback, never to be seen again? The reality, of utter degradation, of painful, half-delirious stinking death, of drunken, violent death, of lingering, suffering death - is but the reflection of what is in the soul of 'white Australia').

Not that the swing from assimilation to segregation policies was clear-cut or mutually exclusive: in the Orwellian world of Aboriginal Affairs, a change in policy towards assimilation generally meant an enforced regrouping of Aboriginal people on settlements, in

preparation for assimilation: in fact, in almost every state, stations or missions were initiated at the beginning of the change in policy towards assimilation: Gerard was set up in the mid-1940s and Murrin Bridge in New South Wales in 1949. These could be justified as being necessary 'for training in citizenship', or as preparing the inmates for 'readiness for equality' (Rowley, 1973: 268-9, 274). In Western Australia, the people of Carrolup had been moved to Moore River in 1922, and the boys sent from there in 1951 to the Merribank Farm School, to be instructed in peasant crafts no doubt. (When the Government relinquished control over Moore River in that year, almost the entire population immediately abandoned the institution.)

Such was the permanently schizophrenic situation facing Aboriginal people that the decision to leave the mission or settlement must have faced daily reconsideration: in the Northern Territory until the sixties (and possibly up to the present in much of pastoral Australia) station managers could flout the most basic laws protecting labour, with bureaucratic blessing:

...the Director of Welfare was also empowered to approve rates below the miniscule four dollars per week in the case of those employees whose productivity was impeded by social or physical factors. During a period of fifteen years' administration of the Ordinance no higher rates were negotiated by the Director of Welfare, whilst several hundred "slow worker" permits were issued to lessen labour costs for the station owners. This principle of policy administration took place in the face of the admission by employers that many of the Aboriginal stockmen were equal to, or even better than many European employees. Further, although clear conditions for improved accommodation and sustenance were laid down by the Ordinance, up to 1968 *not one employer in the Territory met those standards and not one employer was fined for breach.*

(Stevens, 1971:75-6)

If we trace the development of those factors impinging on the vocational and basic training of Aboriginal people from about the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth centuries, one can discern a hardening of attitudes, a decline in status, a cramping of destinies. Somewhat reminiscent of the fining of Maoris in the 1870s and 1880s for eel-fishing in their own streams and races, closer settlement rendered traditional hunting and food-gathering more difficult: people were forced back to smaller, meaner, missions and settlements where -

It has also been common to prescribe that Aborigines on managed reserves must, if not employed elsewhere, work on the station tasks at chores which became 'training' with the adoption of the assimilation policy. During the depression such tasks could be unpaid, with refusal of rations as the sanction.

(Rowley, 1973:54)

As late as 1965, the Director of our own Aboriginal Affairs Department, Mr Don Busbridge, could write at length about the necessity for compulsory employment on reserves, citing full employment possibilities as one rationale, and dire consequences for any other strategy (Busbridge, 1966:108). In fact, the South Australian Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962, Section 20, set out that the Minister could declare an Aboriginal to be a 'trainee' if he had consented to enter or remain within an institution; in such case the trainee 'must remain and complete his training to the satisfaction of the Minister'. It was, in fact, an offence for an Aboriginal to thereafter leave an institution until his training was completed (Rowley, 1973:93).

Periods of assimilation policy tended to witness greater Aboriginal labour availability: one could speculate that assimilation was favoured in areas and at times which experienced shortages of labour (and, conversely, during depressions or local slumps, anti-Aboriginal and segregationist policies were promoted). Thus, the reports of the Protector of Aborigines at Wellington in South Australia in the 1840s and 1850s speak repeatedly of the peaceable nature of the blacks and of the fact that all the able-bodied men were away working for settlers. Twenty years later, Taplin at Point MacLeay recorded often that all the men had gone away to work for neighbours. (Taplin, Journals). One hundred years later, Edwards wrote of the feasibility of using migrant labour from the north-west to work in southern fruit and vegetable harvests (Edwards, 1966:119-144).

Speaking further about the possibilities of migrant Pitjantjatjara labour from Ernabella, Bill Edwards pointed out that the policy of the mission was to provide work for as many people as possible: in fact, work was provided for all the *women* residing on the station as well as for the men. In its role as a training centre, Ernabella offered experience in the full range of station work with both sheep and cattle, and grew its own food and produced craftwork as well (Edwards, 1966:119-120). Shades of Wellington Valley 130 years before! Yet, in the same papers, Miller could declare, with scant regard for historical details,

The Aboriginal population of Australia provides, at the present time, a large, untapped, undeveloped and untrained labour force which is continually increasing in number without being economically or efficiently deployed in the total development of the national resources.

(Miller, 1966:17)

Somewhat more accurately, in terms of the historical record, Stevens wrote five years later :

The failure of the Australian Government to correct the unbridled exploitation of Aborigines in the pastoral industry in North Australia must stand as one of the greatest impediments to its acceptance as an honourable nation in the eyes of the world. For not only have civil servants turned their backs on the rule of law, the Australian community and trade union movement have coalesced in the administration of a labour system which has had few parallels in the history of industrial man.

(Stevens, 1971:74)

Stevens knew what he was talking about: he spent some years and travelled fifty thousand miles across the north of Australia, visiting practically every station and settlement.

With shabby treatment from Governments in housing, employment protection and in educational facilities or opportunities, it is small wonder that the Aboriginal people entered the 1970s with scandalously low educational levels. Busbridge is content to fix responsibility for this situation on the victims themselves:

A great many fail to see the relationship between education and increased vocational opportunities and all too often there is little or no encouragement from parents. This low standard of education poses problems in vocational training. Few have the educational requirements necessary for formal training and consequently most are only able to obtain unskilled and semi-skilled employment.

(Busbridge, 1966:103)

One would like to ask whose responsibility it was to design and implement education courses for young people, in order to bridge the obvious gap between attainment and requirement. It is easy to forget that such bureaucrats are creatures of the nineteenth century when commentators such as Leonard Broom can point out that -

Like other economies moving into an advanced technology, Australia requires a declining number of unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers...The educational system is hard pressed to supply personnel for the best-equipped category, but the adult Aboriginal population is frozen into the shrinking sector.

Broom, 1970:151)

So effective has been the exclusion of Aboriginal children from white schools that skills probably suffered a decline over the past one hundred years. Whereas Aboriginal workers could match any others in rural industry at the end of the last century -- after all, the record for the number of hand-shorn sheep which still stands, was won by an Aboriginal worker, Jackie Howe, in the 1890s -- they now face near-total exclusion from the national economy on the basis of their comparative lack of appropriate skills. Meanwhile, perhaps thousands of bureaucrats have forged lifelong careers out of the lives of the Aboriginal people.

A number of factors, however, brought these policies of segregation-assimilation into question : Third World independence, the conduct of affairs in Papua and New Guinea, the Black struggles in America and the Freedom Rides in New South Wales, all cast Australian policies towards its indigenous people in a bad light. The 1967 Referendum and the conflicting anomalies concerning the rights of Aborigines in one state should they travel to another, in effect, concerning who was and who was not Aboriginal, put pressure on the Federal government to assume responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs, and also revealed it as presumptuous and dictatorial for any non-Aboriginal to testify as to anybody else's Aboriginality. Self-description, self-definition and self-determination were in the air at the same time that Justice Blackburn denied the Yirrkala people the rights to their own land in favour of Nabalco. The election of Whitlam as Prime Minister forced the re-assessment of the entire Aboriginal policy. This more or less co-incided with the publications by Rowley of his three-volume analysis of Australian history and the Aboriginal experience, publications which have had profound effects on government policy. Every aspect of Aboriginal policy was re-examined in the next three years. One general, radically different view -- different, that is, from those of the past -- was expressed by McLay and Bucknall, concerning education:

...education was...a European imposition, a further facet of the introduced alien culture...as part of the assimilation process, the school was not designed specifically to reinforce and aid the growth of the indigenous people's mores and value system...to a large extent the community was excluded from participation in the program. (McLay and Bucknall, 1973:38)

The typical assimilationist curriculum rejected Aboriginal content and excluded those matters which were held in highest esteem in Aboriginal society. As for adult education:

Adult education needs to be given far more emphasis and needs to be properly planned and co-ordinated into the total educational program of a community.

(McClay and Bucknall, 1973:43)

Community government itself has since become a major area for adult education, particularly through the Aboriginal-controlled and -run (there is a crucial difference) Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute in Sydney. However, especially in the south, tremendous damage had been done in two hundred years to self-esteem, to aspirations and to the natural links between economic well-being, cultural celebration and education. For these reasons, when McClay and Bucknall suggest that the school -

must turn full circle and become a viable part of that community assisting in its development from within rather than attempting to dictate its future course from outside...

(McClay and Bucknall, 1973:43)

they touch on what is likely to be a complex, long-drawn-out and difficult process of restoring faith in the value or purpose of education among Aboriginal people and confidence in their own efforts and in their own trained personnel. I do not think that either faith or confidence has returned yet: in fact, it is possible that we are still witnessing the unfolding of this lack of faith, the incomplete break with the assimilationist and anti-Aboriginal curriculum of the past (which, after all, still predominates, although in less explicit form than a generation ago). It is possible that communities may even decide that they simply do not want schools, literacy, Westernisation in any form, or education as we know it. This is not to say that they will not devise their own forms of learning. The independent school system based at Strelley in the Pilbara began in 1974 and now includes at least five schools on three Aboriginal-run cattle stations, teaching in the vernacular: they

use teaching teams which include members of the local Aboriginal community and a few non-Aboriginals [including the above-mentioned Bucknall - J.L.] all chosen and employed by that community. As Aboriginal community schools in the true sense, they prove undeniably that Aboriginal communities can and do run their own schools effectively and with unique parental involvement not seen in schools run by external authorities.

(Sherwood, 1982:46)

Strelley's schools are staffed with Aboriginal elders as the teachers, assisted by qualified non-Aboriginal teachers working as aides. In this way, the elders keep control of what is passed on and of course keep in touch with the education of their children and grandchildren. They alone decide what is relevant and simultaneously retain power, and control the rate of adaptations and modifications. Learning is integrated with work for the young men. In this way community and school, work and education are bound together. By contrast, most Aboriginal communities still effectively have non-Aboriginal control, or rely on non-Aboriginal expertise, in a rather simplistic interpretation of self-management as the right to hire and fire. In such circumstances, communities may not be able to clearly articulate or think out what they consider to be their requirements. As Marsh suggests, they may ask for further education courses, for example, only because they feel obliged to ask for *something*. I can corroborate Marsh's lament that -

If a decision is made to set up a project to teach certain skills 'because we think they need them' then past experience has been that the skills generally are not used. If a European acts as foreman then although the project may run well while the foreman is present the same may not be true once his influence is gone. The enterprise may be regarded as a particular European's rather than the Aboriginal community's.

(Marsh, 1979:20)

As Marsh suggests, perhaps one tactic of value in overcoming this problem would necessitate a far greater degree of access to a far greater range of courses: an assurance that when the community or individuals decide that a course is required, then it will be made available if at all possible. He cites many examples of the programs which are available at present in the north-west. Similarly, Willmot points out that, in 1975, there were over two hundred courses available throughout Western Australia to Aboriginal people, at over seventy centres (Willmot, 1975:13. He would not have included many of the tertiary courses then being set up at Mt Lawley and WAIT.

In South Australia, pioneering programs have included the Aboriginal Task Force at the SAIT and the Aboriginal Community College, both begun in 1973, the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music, the Aboriginal Adult Education Centre at Davenport near Port Augusta (from where an off-campus teacher education program has been run for five years, producing five graduates last year) and the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs. These last-mentioned programs were initiated in 1978 (as yet there is only one of them in operation: the on-campus program here at Underdale) and the Anangu Teacher

Education Program, offered in the Pitjantjatjara Homelands in the vernacular, is due to enrol students later this year. As in other states, an Aboriginal Education section has been set up within the Department of TAFE, with an Aboriginal head and several Aboriginal teaching and support staff. In many states also, great play is made of the appointment of scores of teacher's aides, or education workers (Bolton, 1978:3-7; More, 1978:3-21). These support staff, who now must number many hundreds, are envisaged as performing two roles: to eventually go on to become teachers themselves, and to provide valuable role models for Aboriginal children (and communities, one would add). But it is far more difficult in the 'settled' areas than in the 'colonial' North to bring about that integration of education and community: the complexity of this situation is touched on by Willmot:

The value of much initiative and funding in education is lost in its isolation from economic, social and cultural realities. A more positive approach might be to build educational programs in conjunction with the overall development of a region or group.

(Willmot, 1975:14)

But again, who decides in which direction this development will go? Again and again, the necessity of Aboriginal control of their own education, along with the control of their own government, welfare and finances, is a prerequisite for the enhancement of well-being and cohesion. After all, government policy has for nearly two hundred years been moving in precisely the opposite direction. And perhaps, *plus ça change...*

Many questions await answers: should Aboriginal people seek to adapt to Westernisation or strive to retain or rebuild their own frames of reference? Has the dominant society really changed enough for them to hope for long-term autonomy and control over their own affairs? Or will self-determination be yet another 'legal fiction', a fraud perpetrated by the majority on a minority?

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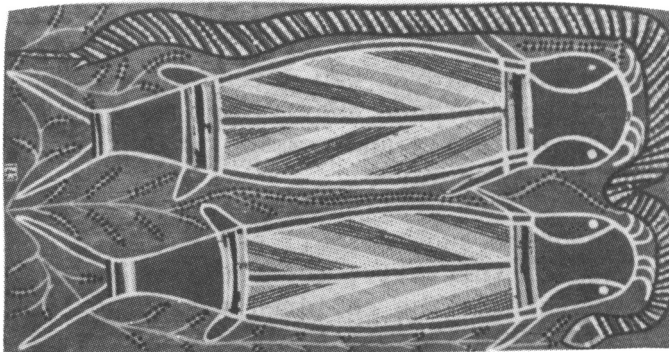
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Above illustration and those on pp. 12 & 26, from Louis A. Allen: *Time Before Morning - Art and Myth of the Australian Aborigines*. Rigby Limited, 1975.