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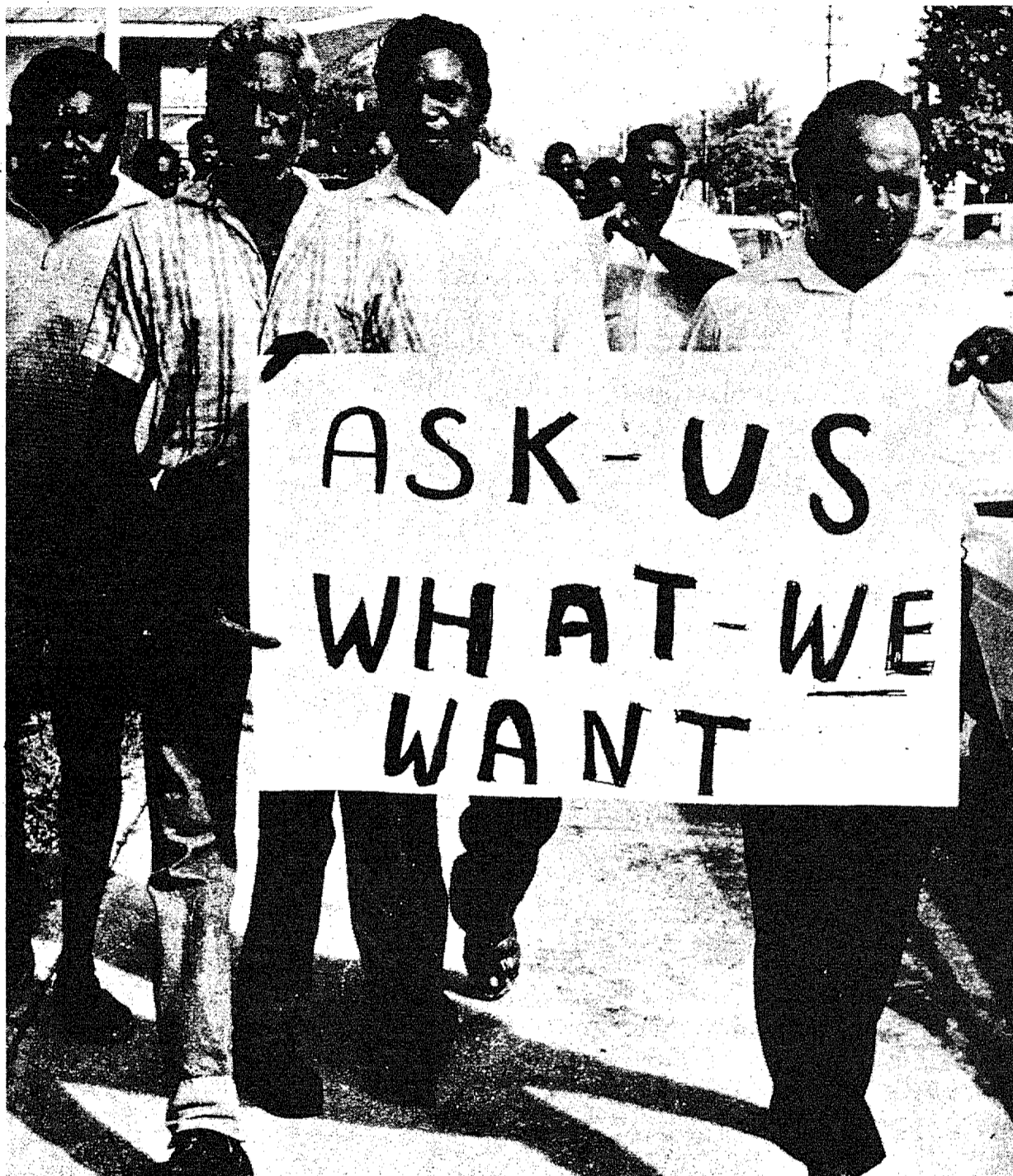
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Special Edition

MONDAY, JUNE 17, 1968

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS & ADVANCEMENT



EDITORIAL

Mr. Wentworth, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, has been battling to get Cabinet to agree to a grant of land to the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory. In both Cabinet and the Party room he has been strenuously opposed. The vested interests of Pastoralists and Graziers have been vigorous in this opposition to this grant to the Gurindji people.

There is a vital principle involved which goes far beyond the particular Gurindji claim. It is that Aborigines are entitled to, indeed should expect ownership of part at least of their traditional lands.

For 180 years Aborigines have suf-

fered seizure after seizure. Time and time again land set aside for Aboriginal use has become valuable for some white Australian purpose and it has been taken. Even in the last ten "enlightened" years over one million acres has been alienated.

In Papua-New Guinea (where the United Nations looks on) Australia has followed a policy of "respect for native land ownership." But for Aboriginal Australians a different standard has been adopted.

The Gurindji claim is important by itself. An Aboriginal group has decided to take action on its own behalf and has persisted despite some

quite active opposition by various Government officials. Vestey's, the present lessee's of "Wave Hill" have bled the land, have exploited the Aborigine. They have little claim to continued possession of traditional Aboriginal land.

But more important this claim is a precedent in the fight for land justice. If it is lost the Land Rights Campaign will have suffered a body blow. The Pastoralists have attacked what they say is a precedent, they are under no illusions. If they win Aborigines will have no second chance.

This is a crucial battle on a war against large commercial interests.

Aborigines don't have full time paid lobbyists in Canberra (or anywhere else), they don't have large financial resources, but they have the support of many ordinary European Australians.

Will you be counted amongst those supporter when the action starts. On Wednesday every Abschol in Australia will hold a 24 hour Vigil in support of Aboriginal Land Rights. A nationwide action will aid Wentworth in his Cabinet battle. He won't win unless public support is more important than vested interests.

Take a few hours off and stand up and be counted on the side of justice.

ABSCHOL SPECIAL FORUM

S.A. ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL

JUNE 26, 1968

1.00 P.M., PORTUS ROOM

Mrs. Natasha McNamara —

— Treasurer — Aboriginal Land's Trust Board.

Mrs. Maud Tongerie —
— Vice-President. Member of United Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Council.

Miss Margaret Lawrey —
— Exec. Member of Women's Council;
Matron of Aboriginal Women's Hostel;
Member of United Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Council.

ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN
HEARING THE VIEWPOINT
OF THE ABORIGINE
WELCOME

COMBAT EXPLORATION BY PASTORALISTS SUPPORT ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS

Come to the All Night Vigil from 7 p.m. on 19th
- 7 p.m. on 20th June Outside Police Headquarters
Victoria Square.

ABSCHOL TUTORIAL SCHEME

The tutorial scheme has been in operation at most universities since 1965 although Monash Abschol is now organising such a scheme.

In Adelaide, the first step taken each year is the despatch of a circular to the headmasters of all metropolitan secondary schools. The circular requests the names and addresses of all students of Aboriginal descent enrolled at the school.

This year the response from the headmasters was hastened considerably by the circularised approval of the Minister of Education and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

At the moment only secondary school students are tutored because an examination of the numbers of Aboriginal children at primary schools last year showed that the tutors available could not cope with the extra students.

A second circular is posted to the Aboriginal students. This circular explains that the tutoring is available (emphasising that it is also free) and requests the students to reply to the Coaching Secretary as soon as possible with details of their weak subjects and of a suitable time and place for tutoring. Response to this circular is rather poor. This year only about half of the students contacted have replied to the circular which was posted some ten or twelve weeks ago. Apparently many of these students are rather shy about answering letters and eventually tutors have to be dispatched to their homes without any idea of which subjects they are required to tutor.

Every year Abschol advertises around the University campus for tutors and the response is usually very good as it is not unusual to have up to twice as many tutors as are needed. The more we have the better — that way we can avoid having to send out final year arts students to tutor intermediate maths and such-like! We always try to match the student's weakness with the tutors strength as much as possible. NUAUS Abschol produces a tutoring handbook which is sent to all tutors.

Primarily the tutoring is aimed at improved performance in the student's weak subjects but perhaps more so than with tutoring of other students elsewhere, it is hoped that the tutor can foster some interest in learning for its own sake. This type of response is most likely to be received by a tutor who is interested in and excited by his tutoring and can convincingly express the belief that knowledge and education will lead to a more exciting and responsible life. It is hoped that pointing out the advantages of a good education will particularly benefit those students who appear uninterested, 'lazy' or irresponsible in their approach. This optimism may be regarded rather sceptically by some, but above all it is essential that the student regards the tutor as a friend rather than just another adult like the teachers at school.

It is not surprising that many of these children possess greater than average ability and that their parents are keen for them to pursue their studies as far as possible. The tutors emphasize to the students and their parents that university and secondary scholarships are available to students of Aboriginal descent.

Tutors should encourage their students to read (without swamping the student's home with reject books from the tutor's family!) since below average reading performance (not ability) often hampers education.

Visits to the zoo, art galleries, museums and similar places of interest may also help foster the student's interest in the world around him. Sometimes the student or his family may be suspicious of the tutor as many Aboriginal people reject European approaches and this can lead to a cultural clash. Patience and respect from the tutor usually avoid any serious clash.

Aboriginal children on reservations and on the fringes of many country towns are often strongly influenced by elderly tribal Aboriginals and attracted to the old way of life. It is hoped that the scholarships and tutoring provided by Abschol may produce more well educated leaders from the children of Aboriginal parents who have assimilated with the European communities of metropolitan areas.

Dave Tough
Coaching Sec.

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS DIMINISHING

Over the last 200 years, a race of people has been set adrift. Torn by the intrusion of the European into his land from a way of life which possessed rigid social organisation and profound spiritual and cultural value, the Aborigine is now suspended between two societies. He is becalmed by apathy on the one hand and writhes under the insensitive blows of paternalism on the other. For many, it is impossible to return to the traditional way of life, for it no longer exists for them. To advance, to integrate into a white society seems an insurmountable task for those who wish to; but many have given up hope. They have been forced to recognise futility in ambition, forced to expect that they will always live upon the fringe of a white society, to float upon the wake of a rapidly progressing White Australia. The Aborigine has nothing to which he can cling, no crutch from which to gain support in order that he might move towards equality. He exists in a vacuum, his past being eroded away, his progress barred by mountainous difficulties.

Charity has been prevalent in past examples of assistance to the Aborigine, but he, as anyone else, possesses dignity. To refuse charity, however, is rarely practicable; what is given, whatever its manner, is required. Thus every handout, every gesture of more charity is an incremental destruction of the Aborigine's self-respect. To be required to subsist to a large extent upon the spasmodic handouts of a dominant race is steadily undermining the confidence and hope of the Aborigine.

The alternative is easily discernible but not yet provided. The Aborigine must possess land. His land. Australia is the only English-speaking nation in the world which does not recognise the right of its indigenous people to own land, as a people. The North American Indian possesses land rights, the Maori and the colored South African, yet the Aborigine does not. There are great material advantages for the Aborigine in the possession of land, for he would be autonomous in its management, he would shape his future for himself, but perhaps more importantly the Aborigine recognises most significant social and spiritual ties with the land. Land is the symbol of fertility. Social relationships were once recognised by place of birth. For many Aborigines, culture and religion still centre upon the land. Its possession was a source of security, motivation and provided the freedom of existence which the Aborigine does not possess today. To return to the Aborigine part of his land, would be to resurrect these fundamental aspects of life, necessary to everyone.

Financial compensation is not sufficient, even if it were contemplated. Money cannot necessarily provide security: it certainly cannot satisfy spiritual needs. The only alternative is to provide the Aborigine with land. Yet today, the reverse still occurs in many States of Australia. Although the Aborigine possesses no land, the government reserves upon which many Aborigines live are being devoured by commercial expansion. Since 1959, two million acres of "reserve" land have been confiscated, and prior to that enormous areas were seized by proclamation. The Woomera Rocket Range deprived many hundreds of Aborigines of traditional hunting grounds, the Aborigine being removed from the area. Giles Meteorological Station was constructed upon one of the most fertile areas of the Great Central Reserve, next to a water hole, disturbing wild life and decreasing food supplies for the nomadic Aborigines. In 1957 the Queensland Government granted mining rights to Comalco covering 2,800 square miles of "reserve" and Aborigines were forcibly evicted from Mapoon and Weipa and the land, much of which is suitable for grazing, ravished by the bauxite mining methods which rip the top three feet off the land and leave it bare. 140 square miles of the Arnhem Land Reserve, in the vicinity of Yirrkala Mission, were leased for bauxite mining in 1963. Traditional Aboriginal hunting grounds were confiscated without consultation. The Aborigines, however, petitioned Parliament and a Select Committee instituted as a result, concluded that the Aborigines had a moral right to the land on the grounds of their ancestry. The effect of the decision remains in doubt. The Victorian Government closed Lake Tyers Reserve in Eastern Victoria and the population was moved to a neighboring white community.

Understandably they were unhappy with their new way of life, the forced integration, and failed to adjust.

The Aborigine, however, is not sitting idly. Many believe that the time has come to enforce his rights. The Gurindji stockmen at Wave Hill Station, owned by Vestey's, have been on strike for 18 months. They are demanding at least eight square miles of their traditional lands out of the station area and intend to set up a town, similar to white settlements, along the banks of Wattie Creek.

In 1957, Convention 107 concerning the "Protection and Integration of Indigenous and other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries" was adopted by the International Labor Organisation and sent to governments for ratification. Part II concerned land and included Article 11 which stated: "The right of ownership, collective and individual of the members of the population concerned over the lands which these populations traditionally occupy shall be recognised." Part II also provides for the prevention of removal of populations from such "habitual territories," and also provides for the development of such lands. Australian Government delegates abstained from voting on the grounds that the subject matter, in certain respects, including citizenship and land tenure, went beyond the constitutional and traditional competence of the International Labor Organisation and, moreover, the International Labor Conference was not qualified to adopt international standards on such matters.

As a result, it has been left to the discretion of the States to provide lands for the Aborigine. Perhaps the only State to have approached the requirements of Part II of Convention 107 is South Australia, in its Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966, which provides for the transfer of lands for the Aborigine to a trust, comprising Aborigines.

Nevertheless, since 1967 the Federal Government has had a clear mandate to legislate for the Aborigine. Ninety per cent of the eligible population voted "Yes" in a referendum to give the Federal Parliament the power to provide opportunity and a degree of equality for the Aborigine. The white Australian now has the chance to prove his sincerity by supporting the claim of the Aborigine to his land. If the white Australian does not do this the words of Mrs. Kath Walker, speaking at the May Abschol Conference will ring true. Speaking of the Referendum, Mrs. Walker said: "What it has done, however, is to clear the guilt from the conscience of the majority of European Australians who feel that they have done their duty to the Aborigine by placing a large "Yes" on a ballot paper. This noble deed no doubt gives them a clear conscience and they feel they can dismiss the Aborigine from their minds."

Mr. William Wentworth (MHR) has recently been appointed Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. A comprehensive tour of Reserves in the Northern Territory, a deviation from the usual unrevealing itinerary, gave Mr. Wentworth a first hand idea of Aboriginal conditions in the Northern Territory. He visited Wattie Creek and conferred with the Gurindji tribal elders over the strike and listened to their demands for land. Mr. Wentworth appears to have a sincere interest in the Aborigine. He is quoted in the press as saying:

"What we have got to do is to restore to these people the responsibility for their own destiny — a destiny we have taken away from them." every other way on handouts."

"We have taken away their self-reliance and independence and made them dependent spiritually as well as

Mr. Wentworth supports the returning of land to the Aborigine. He has to convince the Federal Government of the necessity of positive legislative action to implement such a policy.

There is nothing more convincing than the demands of a public, a public comprising both Aborigines and white Australians, that its government should act now.

DAVID COLE

THE ABORIGINAL QUARTERLY

This year Abschol, the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of our National Union of Australian University Students, has produced the first national paper on the social and political problems, education and living conditions of Aborigines in Australia.

Briefly, the aim of "Aboriginal Quarterly" is to put you in the know, along with Prince Phillip, about that part of us which is not White Australia.

Abscholars have done the work — you reap the benefit: an added awareness of our place, Australia. A new dimension to our population; not just Australians and New Australians but First Australians too.

In the "Aboriginal Quarterly," the viewpoint of the individual is expressed by that individual and for the first time all Australians can share experiences.

The fresher of orientation week reading a poem by the Aboriginal poetess, Kath Walker:

"We could not understand
Your strange cult of uniformity,
This mass obedience to clocks,
time-tables"

or the idealist,

"Puzzled, we wonder why
The importance to you, urgent
and essential,
of ties and gloves, shoe-polish,
uniforms."

the demonstrator (?)

"New to us were jails and orphanages,
Rents and taxes, banks and mortgages."

For the first time the New Australian and the First Australian can share an understanding about living with the Aussies.

"Eagerly we must learn to change,
Learn new needs we never wanted,
New compulsions never needed,
The price of survival."

The "Aboriginal Quarterly," is not all pleasant reading. However, it is the truth. In the first issue (March, 1968) Frank Stevens, a Research Fellow of the ANU gave a clear and constructive criticism of the welfare Branch of the NT.

Unfortunately, with knowledge comes that nagging feeling of responsibility and if you would rather avoid this and live in ignorance then don't read the article of Queensland's Palm Island and you'll never know what one group of Australians is doing to another group of Australians. Incidentally, you would not be alone. There have been many people down the years who have claimed to have known nothing about for what they have later found themselves on trial.

The next issue, Vol. 2, will contain a supplement on Land Rights, articles by Kath Walker, and Charles Perkins and by Dr. G. Fay Gale on urban movement of Aborigines. Wentworth writes on Federal Policies and, closer to the student front, a series of questions asked by the 1968 Koonibba work campers will be answered by our Ministers.

Vol. 2 of the "Aboriginal Quarterly" will be available (a few copies of the first issue are still available) after June 17, at the SRC Office. Unfortunately finances are limited and in order to cover the costs of printing, the paper will cost you a whole 10c. For this 10 cents (four times a year) you will receive a tiny prick of guilt, a wealth of information about all sorts of Australians and, we hope, a certain feeling of happiness and pleasure in sharing cultures with the second race to reach Australia.

by Paquita McEwin

ABORIGINAL QUARTERLY

ON SALE 10c SRC OFFICE

If you wish to be informed of Aboriginal Affairs Buy . . . ABORIGINAL QUARTERLY