Ngurra Malgija

JIM DOWNING

COUNTRY OF MY SPIRIT

Monograph

Australian National University North Australia Research Unit

Darwin 1988

NGURRA WALYTJA,
COUNTRY OF MY SPIRIT.

A study of the 'Outstation' or Homelands movement - a movement of Aboriginal people away from larger settlements into small communities in remote areas, generally in their own tribal 'homelands', where there are many areas of sacred importance to the anscestor/creation stories of their clans. They desired to 'look after' those places by tending the sacred areas.

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with
Colleague and Cultural Interpreter
Mr Munti Smith of Fregon, S.A.

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Nyinnga
at Alpara

Welcome to Walinya
(Cave Hill)

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[Photos by John Downing].

Editor's Note

I was invited by the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia to edit Rev Jim Downing's *Country of My Spirit* at a time when it was increasingly evident that, far from being a settled matter, the outstation movement in Australia was under significant threat. It was also a time when the Uniting Church was pursuing seriously its own engagement with an evolving process of reconciliation with the Indigenous people of this country. Political assertions such as that which characterised Indigenous community and outstation life as "a lifestyle choice" indicated with frightening clarity the great gulf that continued to exist between the dominant non-Indigenous population and the Indigenous people.

That gulf is deepened by the almost inevitable and inaccurate depiction of Indigenous people by governments in Australia as being, apparently without exception, dependent on Government support of one sort or another – and as being regular defaulters in terms of their requisite responsibilities under the terms of this support. It is no surprise to some that a Federal Government map of the centres of greatest CDEP defaulters, for example, is an almost perfect overlay of a map of the most traditional cultural centres of population. (That is without considering that there is no real work available to undertake for CDEP in even the best organised Indigenous communities.) The dominant non-Indigenous population has been and is still being conditioned to accept an image of an unmotivated, work-shy and dependent Indigenous population.

We non-Indigenous people too easily accept that "sorry business" is an excuse for idleness. Few, outside those closely engaged with Indigenous people, are able to recognise that it is less the case that '"sorry business" interrupts everyday life' than that 'everyday life interrupts almost constant "sorry business"'.

This re-publication of Downing's monograph on outstations is timely as a reminder of the history of the outstation movement and to present reasons that it continues to be vital to be the well-being of the First Peoples of this land.

The original monograph was prepared in the 1980s and was based on Rev Downing's twenty or so years of experience predominantly in Central Australia, although he makes considerable reference also to Arnhem Land and north-western Australia. What is clear is that state borders mean little to the Indigenous people as they maintain connection with their traditional lands and sacred sites.

Some readers will be perturbed by what appears to be considerable repetition in the stories that are being recorded here. However, as I proceeded with the editing task, I became convinced that this monograph has much more in common with Indigenous story telling or oral history than it has with a traditional Western cultural expectation of history. It is less about a timeline of 'facts' than perceptions – and part of Downing's argument surely is that multiple consistent perceptions of a geographic and historical range of Indigenous viewpoints as to the need for and the benefits of outstations presents a powerful case for their continuance. Indeed, Downing's argument, based on comprehensive evidence, suggests that the encouragement and facilitation of outstations will serve to enhance the growth of independence among Indigenous people and enable them to find ways to support themselves with a diminishing need to rely on Government support, notwithstanding the need for some support based on their remoteness and relative isolation.

In presenting the many Indigenous voices as well as academic viewpoints, Downing has presented an argument that clearly favours the importance of outstations to the Indigenous people.

Despite the degree of validity in his positing an ongoing hostility between "White Men" and "The People" it seemed to me as an editor that such language was unduly simplistic. Where possible, then, I have attempted to portray the "Whites" more accurately as either "pastoralists", "missionaries", "teachers" or "government agents". (I have attempted to avoid politically loaded terms such as "settlers" or "invaders".) So far as is possible I have tried to allow the original voices to be heard.

Dr Wendy Beresford-Maning
Darwin
2019

Introduction to the second edition of Jim Downing's "Country of my Spirit"

The bulk of this text was written by Jim Downing in the 1980s. In it he set out the case for the Aboriginal people to live on their own land. When he died, aged 82 in 2009, he was content that that part of his astounding contribution to the well-being of Aboriginal people had been fulfilled. Not so. Shame on us. Here, a quarter of a century later, we have again the task of defending outstations.

Why should we give this account any attention? Because, for fifty years Jim "did the hard yards" with Aboriginal people. Because he earned great street- and bush-cred from illiterate bushies to Members of Parliament and most people in between. Jim was above all else a "people person". He was the four year old perched on the front fence talking to passers-by; the larrikin leading others kids on dubious pranks; the youth club leader imaginatively turning young 'uns towards positive values. He was the politically savvy clergyman who could crash through social barriers, the cross-cultural social worker, social activist, language teacher, encourager, pastor, friend to all.

Inherent in the concept of a people person is the deep conviction that each one of us has the potential to be a vehicle of the Holy Spirit and, as such, is to be given respect and the hope of a good productive life.

This little eulogy is written by a loving widow.

Shirley Downing
Darwin
2017

Explanatory Notes

Though the people showed me many sacred areas and objects and told me many stories about the ancestor beings and their activities relating to those places, that material is not found here. The reason is that much of it is secret/sacred. Even the totemic names associated with those places have mostly been deleted on the advice of Yami Lester and in respect for the sensitivities of the people about such matters.

On occasion only the English name of a person is used in this text with ….. signifying the Aboriginal name. The reason is that amongst Pitjantjatjarra people some names are a legacy from childhood, relating to some childhood practice, for example – dirt eater, and are therefore embarrassing though often used by others outside the hearing of that person. The Pitjantjatjarra themselves generally use either English names or relationship identifications, such as 'So and so's wife' or 'son' or 'father' or 'mother', though some Aboriginal names are used.

Some of the Aboriginal people refer to me in conversation as *tjilpi*. This is the word used for a grey or white-haired person. It is how the desert people commonly address me or they may add my surname and say "tjilpi Downing" to be specific where required. The term *tjipi* will crop up in transcripts or accounts of conversation in the text. Another Western Desert word which crops up in the text frequently is *ngaparrtji* or *ngaparrtji ngaparrtji*. It is a much used word which embodies an important concept, which I believe has to do with the mutual obligations and privileges of the kinship system. The nearest we can get to this concept in English is 'in turn' or, as the people would say in English, 'turn about', or 'turn about turn about'.

As far as the spelling of Aboriginal names is concerned there is a mix of orthographies. I like the convention that uses 'rr' for a trilled 'r', and have used that, and the double vowel for a long vowel sound, such as 'waaka' for the Pitjantjatjarra word for work. Pitjantjatjarra spelling does not use either. Ngaatjatjarra and Warlpiri both use the convention of an 'r' before a retroflex consonant, as in Warlpiri.

In referring to Aboriginal Law I have used a capital letter throughout the text to distinguish it from White man's law. This to indicate the different nature of the two concepts. For the Aboriginal person Law embodies his creation stories, his religion, his social relationships and behaviour, his identify. It corresponds more to the fullness of the Biblical concept 'Word'. 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God … All things were made through him … In him was life …' (John, 1:1-4). European law on the other hand is a code of conduct which does not embody those deep meanings for our communal life.

Preface
Journey into another World

Shortly after my arrival in Alice Springs in July 1965 to do social work with Aboriginal people I began hearing from tribal people of two deep anxieties. The first was their concern about their sacred land, their fear that it was being and would continue to be violated, and their desire to protect it. The second was their fear that their children were 'getting away from them', rejecting the law and the values of their parents for the white man's law and ways, but obeying neither and no-one. They expressed a deep desire to be given back control over their children. I heard this cry from all over the Northern Territory and from South Australian and Western Australian Aboriginal people also. Those concerns and many other factors led to a movement of people out from large centres, from government settlements and from church missions, to more remote areas where they established much smaller communities, generally of the clan or extended family group. This became know as the Outstation or Homelands Centres movement.

There was much opposition to the movement initially and much still remains. Some administrators saw it as poor economics. After all, they had gathered the people together into these large communities and concentrated services there for them. The outstation movement was seen as untidy. Some politicians opposed the movement for similar reasons. Some governments opposed it for reasons of philosophy and the policy, for example in Western Australia and Queensland. Others saw this movement and its results as being positive and hopeful and as a means of survival for a much damaged people. I hold the latter view.

From 1959 to 1965 I worked in Redfern, inner-city Sydney, as Superintendent of the Congregational Metropolitan Mission, a group of four run-down churches with a considerable social work load. I became concerned for a number of Aboriginal young people who used to hang around a milk bar in the area. A detective told me that these young people had mostly poor backgrounds and needed someone to take an interest in them. I contacted them and began a non-directive youth club largely for their needs and benefit. Then I became involved in the courts on their behalf helping them to get legal counsel. Later their parents and families began to contact me for help in their myriad social problems and difficulties. I learned much from the people, and came to realise that they had gone through a long damaging process caused by the impact of our White culture upon them. Most of their traditional culture had been lost, or was considerably modified. Their culture was distinct from White culture, but was in many ways different from their earlier tribal culture. Only remnants of their languages remained, and one of the basic tenets of their modified culture was, 'Koories [people of Aboriginal descent] stick together and help one another. We are different from Whites. We think Aboriginal and live Aboriginal'.

Many of the men had lost their self respect and hope through long term unemployment and other crushing experiences and sought solace in alcohol. The women had a more definable and positive role in the care and raising of children, so that their role had not changed in essence. They had assumed a more dominant role than appeared to be the case in traditional tribal society. It was a very damaged society, in which the women appeared to play the main stabilising role.

I began to hope for the opportunity to work with tribal people before they had gone too far into that culture distorting and socially damaging process. I hoped, by means of community development,

to help equip them to understand and better cope with the changes being forced upon them, as well as those to which they were attracted. That opportunity came with a call to the United Church of North Australia in 1965, and a government social work grant to work with Aboriginal people. I worked mostly with Pitjantjatjarra and related people up to 400 km south and 750 km west of Alice Springs and had some contact with people to the north and north-east of Alice Springs, as far as Lake Nash on the Queensland border. The people taught me much about their culture and beliefs. They shared many of their fears and hopes with me. Consequently I was able to watch the development of the movement to outstations and homeland centres and to understand some of the reasons for it. I saw many positive results for the Aboriginal people as this movement developed.

In their Annual Report for 1978 the Australian Mining Industry Council (AMIC) spoke strongly against the outstation movement, suggesting that it was a form of apartheid and arguing that no Australian government should support apartheid. When that report began to be widely quoted on that subject in 1979 I felt it should be answered in some way. The fundamental argument of the report was that to encourage separate communities in such a way is against the principles of Australian life and that we are a people of one law and Aboriginal people should take their place within that framework. The argument is subtle and appealing. It is also, in my belief, an argument that is very misleading and damaging to the life and future of Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people to whom I spoke about this were deeply disturbed. They said, "We know what they want. They want this land empty so they can go where they like without challenge, and dig where they like and take out lots of minerals. They are just thinking of money. We want to look after our land in the proper way".

Because of the people's concern and my own feeling about the negative publicity and the campaign of the AMIC against land rights, which later became quite explicit, I applied to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for a grant to study the outstation and homelands movement. My purpose was to visit homeland centre communities and to interview people in the Pitjantjatjarra language and record on tape in their own language their "true word" about their movement and their motives for moving out into these small communities.

It is the Aboriginal world view which has largely prompted the movement back to homelands. In this study I wished to find out from the people themselves what caused them to leave their homelands in the first place and what had kept them in the larger settlements for so long. Then I wished to know why they left the larger settlements, how the homeland centre movement developed and, finally, what they saw of the future for themselves and their children. I asked people those questions and taped the interviews in their own language. Many conversations were held with men and women when camping with them, or when visiting sacred places with the men. I could not go to women's sacred places because of strong taboos against men seeing them, and of course because the women kept them secret from men. In those conversations they shared some of their fascinating and tragic history and their incredible knowledge of their land and all its plants and creatures and its moods, their love for it and their fears for its security and therefore for their own security.

Interviews were also taped with Europeans who had been involved with Aboriginal people for many years, in larger settlements, and also in the outstation and homelands movement. Some had been involved in helping the people to visit their sacred places over the years. Some comparative material was obtained, firstly on the outstation movement from Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission on the Finke River, 128 km west of Alice Springs. This is based on writings of staff members, on

personal communications, and on a taped interview with Pastor John Fitzner, who was involved in the development of the movement. Other material on the homeland centres movement in Arnhem Land is also included. This material is drawn from writings and studies of this movement, and from translations of interviews which were taped with the people in their own languages by others for other purposes.

In the process of the study I visited homeland communities in what is loosely known as Pitjantjatjarra country stretching from Ernabella Mission across to Warburton Mission 600 km to the west and roughly 150 km north into the Northern Territory and 180 km south into South Australia. The country in the south and east of this area is occupied by the Yankuntjatjarra people whose country stretches across to Oodnadatta on the north-south railway. The country in the west of the area is occupied by the Ngaatjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra people whose country stretches across to Laverton in the west. Those people are related to the Pitjantjatjarra both in marriage and language and they share many of the same sacred areas and ceremonies.

The people in those areas led and still lead a largely traditional lifestyle. Before the coming of White men the people travelled their respective areas of country in small clan or extended family groups. Life was prescribed by the sacred Law and ceremonial demands and daily life was largely determined by the hunting and gathering necessary to survive. They came together in larger congregations at certain times to share a common food source in season, or to engage in important joint ceremonies, and sometimes to get wives from those adjoining tribes. The Aranta people to the north of Finke (Aputula) on the north-south railway and the Luritja people to the south used to meet in the vicinity of Finke and relate in those ways. These latter gatherings were dictated by the availability of adequate food and water supplies and so were sporadic in that harsh country. In times of prolonged drought many years might elapse before the people could gather at certain very sacred places for important ceremonies. However as Rev Bill Edwards, who worked with the Pitjantjatjarra for some seventeen years, and others closely involved with Aboriginal culture testify they still maintained and cared for their sacred land by holding ceremonies at related sites which were accessible.

Because of the scarceness and the scattered nature of rainfall and reliable water supplies in that country and therefore of game and bulk food supplies, the Western Desert tribes traversed vast areas of their country, caring for the sacred places and so tending their country, visiting specific areas as fruits came into season and where game would gather. Their seasonal movement around their country was thus intended to utilise the country's resources. The late T G H Strehlow, an anthropologist and child of missionary parents, had grown up with the Aranta people on the Mission at Hermannsburg. He wrote:

> Pitjandjara … wander over the Mann and Tonkinson Ranges, depending on an intimate knowledge of the whereabouts of water supplies to keep ahead of thirst. After good rains they tour their territory to its remotest bounds [*underlining mine*], falling back on their more permanent waters as the dry season advances. The boundaries of each tribe's and each clan's country were ill defined. They could not be so clearly defined as in the Western Aranta country in the Macdonnelll Ranges around Alice Springs, with their many reliable waters and plentiful game and prominent features with which to define boundaries. People would be forced by drought to seek out reliable waters and food in the territory of other tribes perhaps hundreds of miles from their own territory (Strehlow, 1965, 122-125).

Anthropologist Robert Layton found evidence amongst the tribes around Ayers Rock, the Olgas and Mt Conner area of the mutual ownership and sharing of water supplies that were near their joint boundary, the latter being often unclearly defined (Ayers Rock-Mt Olga National Park Traditional Land Claim, 1979, 10). This inter-relatedness places enables a clearer perspective on Tindale's comments, cited by Layton in the Ayers Rock Claim Book, on the displacement of Yankuntjatjarra people from their country by the Pitjantjatjarra who were forced eastward by drought. Layton and others involved in the claim point out that this cannot be equated with the annexing of the people's country by pastoralists for grazing, and the displacement of people in that process. Aboriginal movements did not introduce a totally different lifestyle and an alien dominant power. Often those movements were legitimised by the intruding men marrying local girls (1979, 50).

Traditionally, in times of necessity, the people were able to use each other's country, and both ownership and need were recognised and respected (Strehlow 1956, 10). Though extremes of need would sometimes cause displacement, it was not the same destructive process as the intrusion of White people. Today the Pitjantjatjarra, Yankuntjatjarra, Luritja, Ngaatjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra people still share many common sacred dreaming sites, stores and ceremonies and are interrelated by marriage.

The shared important ceremonies take large groups of people on treks of up to 1,500 km ranging within an area stretching from Jigalong Mission in the Northern Western corner of the Gibson Desert to Wiluna and Laverton far over in the west to Yalata near the South Australian coast, to Areyonga, Papunya and Yuendumu settlements and to Willowra Station 290 km north-west of Alice Springs.

Today the people of the so-called Pitjantjatjarra area are still largely governed by Aboriginal Law. Ceremony is still all important and can bring to a halt some of those projects thought to be important by the White administrators, though the people do make some accommodations. Theirs is still another world with a totally different world view from our western one. The people want and need some of the services and benefits of the western world but these are additions and compromises within the context of traditional life. These trappings of the white man's world cause many politicians and administrators to assume mistakenly that the Aboriginal people are pursing a western lifestyle and that their thinking is in harmony with our own. This leads to many blunders and to complaints such as "But I/we consulted with them and they agreed to that", or "they said that was what they wanted".

In spite of the vast area covered, and at times shared, by the Pitjantjatjarra and related peoples, this is not to say that there is such a thing as pan-Aboriginality in the sense of an Australian-wide cohesive peoples with common Law and customs. Even amongst the Pitjantjatjarra themselves, each family has its own autonomy and there is a resentment of other families or individuals intruding into that area of traditional rights. There is, however, a recognition by Aboriginal people of common threads that weave through their traditions and Law which does link them together in a way and which marks them as very different from White people. This is recognised by many

White people with a vested political or economic interest in Aboriginal people, and especially in their land. And there are many forces and processes working to divide Aboriginal people and to prevent any kind of strength through unity emerging.

Much has been written on the outstation movement, mostly in papers and articles presented at seminars and gathered together by editors in various books. These writings show that there is a variety of lifestyles in outstations, usually because of the varieties of terrain, climate and geography in which different tribes or groups live. They also reveal a variety of motives, some traditional, some political, some arising out of the stresses of cross-cultural relationships, but all of them have to do with survival in one way or another. What have been the motives or the processes in one area will not necessarily apply to another area. I believe however that there are some consistent underlying motives in most areas where traditional tribal customs and authority have not been too much undermined or damaged.

The actual process of this study was determined by the Law. The original intention was to visit all the outstations in the area chosen as a familiarisation exercise then to concentrate on four or five places for the purposes of the study. In mind were Waltjitjata near Lake Wilson, Pipalyatjarra (Mt Davies), Irrunytju (Wingellina) just over the border in Western Australia, Papulangkutja (Blackstone) and Marntamaru (Jamieson). It was anticipated that the Law men would sooner or later interpret my role as requiring them to show me sacred places and objects so that I would understand properly their feelings for the land and the nature of their attachment to those places. In return, *ngaparrtji,* I might tell the government their "true story" and help their cause. In fact that decision was made on the first visit to the first homeland community and, from then on, via the Pitjantjatjarra radio communities were informed of my visit and purpose.

In almost every place men were waiting for my arrival in order to take me around the countryside and show me their important sacred places and sacred objects. They wanted me to tell the government not the details but their feelings for and their concern about those places. They wanted to convey the great importance of them, their very real fears that they would be violated with drastic consequences and their desire to look after them properly.

From the first trip came a request for "Ranger trucks" to help them to look after the places. They had obviously thought a lot about this. They had noted that White people had rangers to look after National Parks and areas important to them. The government provided the rangers with trucks to do that job. The men pointed out that the sacred areas and places were of vital importance to their whole life and Law. Many of those places were remote and hard to access, but they should be properly maintained. They were afraid of miners and others going into those areas without their knowledge and violating those sacred places in search of minerals. They told me of places where damage had already been done. Hence, the need for "Ranger trucks".

The men had worked out how they intended to look after those special trucks. They said they would be independent of, and separate from, community trucks, as the latter had many functions to perform and were often absent. On the other hand they would keep the Ranger trucks in each area for the special purposes of maintaining the sacred places in good order, looking for the vehicle tracks of strangers, checking visitors' permits and generally guarding the areas. They said that the trucks would be kept under the care of the authority person or persons for a particular area or story. They themselves would pay for petrol and oil and maintain the trucks. That request was forwarded to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and was subsequently refused.

The result of that early response by the men in showing me sacred places and objects had the effect of greatly expanding the area and content of the intended study. Since I was to seek the people's own views and gather their own "true word", I could not afford to ignore such concerns. Since the places were of such obvious and considerable importance to the people and to the motivation for the homelands movement, I felt bound to expand the study accordingly.

Outstation and homeland communities were visited with my colleague Munti Smith from Fregon, who helped with explanations and interpretations where necessary. Places visited were in the area described and the names were Kunamata, Angatja, Nyapari, Kanpi, Aparatjarra, Inarrk, Walkitjata, Putaputa, Pipalyatjarra, Kalka, Kunytjanu, Ilturr (Coffin Hill), Irrunytju, Kata Ala, Papulangkutja, Munyintjanya, Marntamaru, Warakurna (Giles), Walinya and Aniyana (see map 1).

Both the terms **outstation** and **homeland centre** appear in the study. The reason is that, for some Aboriginal people, the places to which they have gone are their own sacred country or homeland. For some who live in settlements that area is in fact their homeland, the country within which they have always lived and where their sacred land is. For others, it is not possible to return to their homelands as they have been alienated. Nonetheless, they want to get away from some of the pressures of settlement living. I mostly use the term **outstation** to cover both possibilities for reasons of consistency.

The first chapter deals both with some research and writing on the history of early contact and some of the old people's own recollections of some of the happenings of that era. It gives a picture of some of the horrors and oppression that drove many of them from their sacred country. It explores the later actions by governments for the benefit of tourism and shows how those actions and the establishment of defence and other installations, which saw the annexation of large tracts of people's land, also drove them out.

The second chapter deals with the segregation and resettlement of the people that resulted. It shows the new kind of oppression that came from the vested interests of pastoralists, miners, governments and churches and their agreement to the resettlement arising from quite a variety of motives. It presents some of the people's reactions to the stressful and pressured life of settlements and their constant anxiety about sacred areas and longing for their homelands.

The third chapter deals with the growing response of the people to those pressures. It describes some very early homeland and outstation development and tells of government initiatives that stimulated the major, comparatively recent outstation movement.

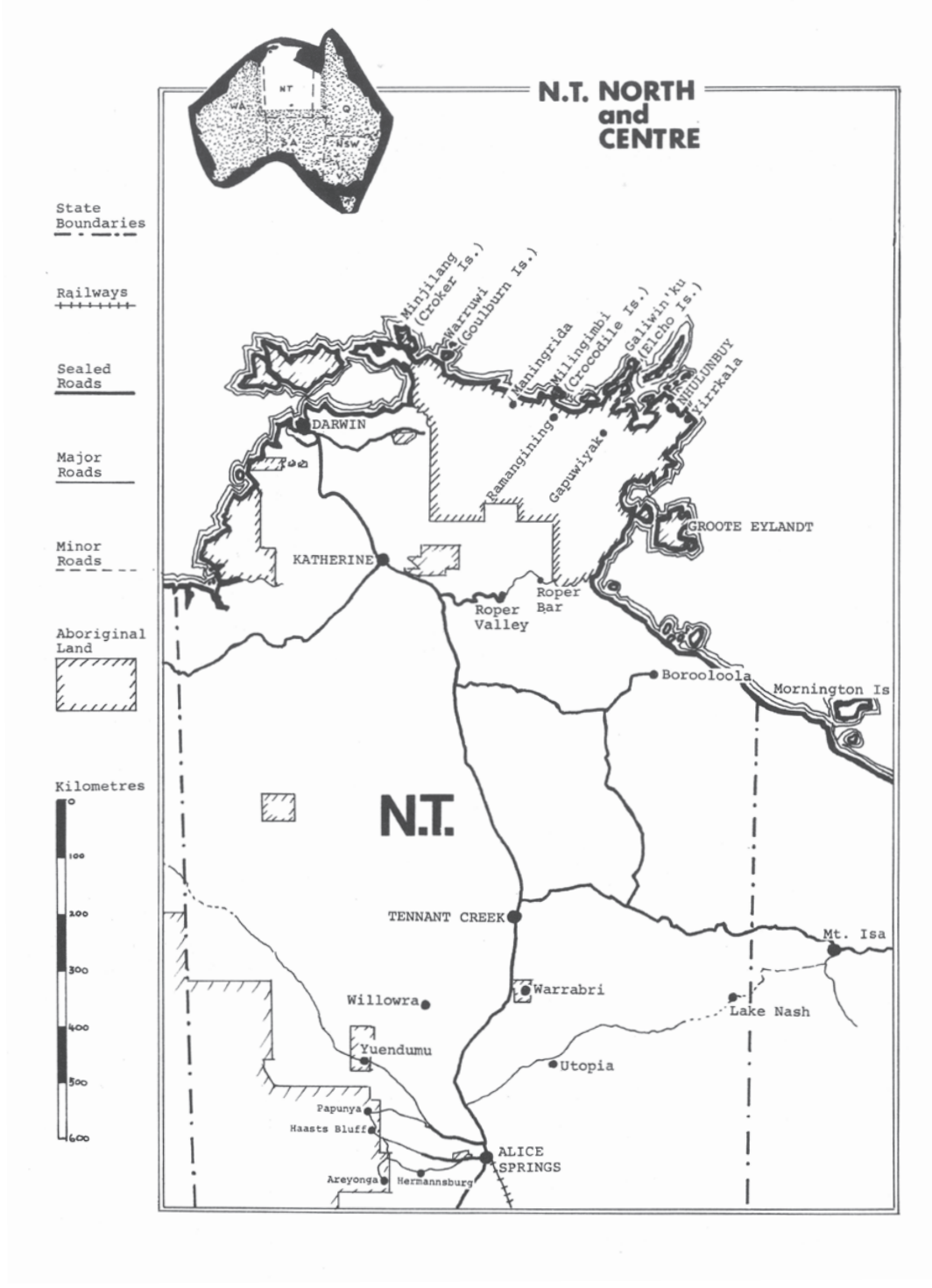
Chapter four explores the people's own motivation which caused the movement to become so widespread and sustained.

Chapter five outlines some of the positive and creative results of the move, commented upon by the people themselves, and seen and remarked upon by many observers often with amazement. I point out that these results are what governments and others aimed at, despite using the wrong tools of resettlement and assimilation.

In chapter six I summarise the benefits of the movement set out in chapter five and examine the inflexibility of administrations as a barrier to the growth and development of those benefits and of the self-determination and self-management promised by governments.

In chapter seven I look at some academic comments on the movement and its future.

Rev. Jim Downing AM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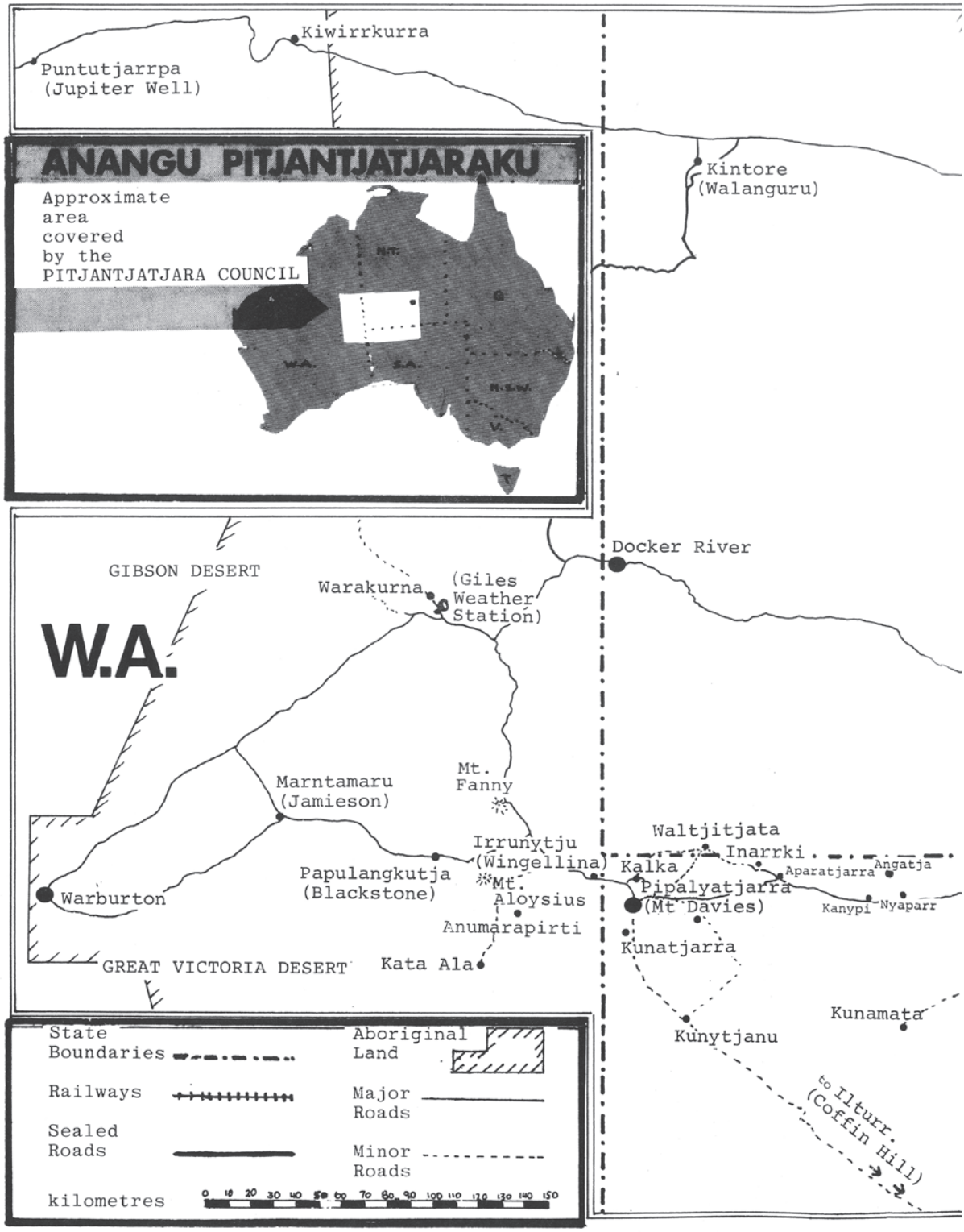
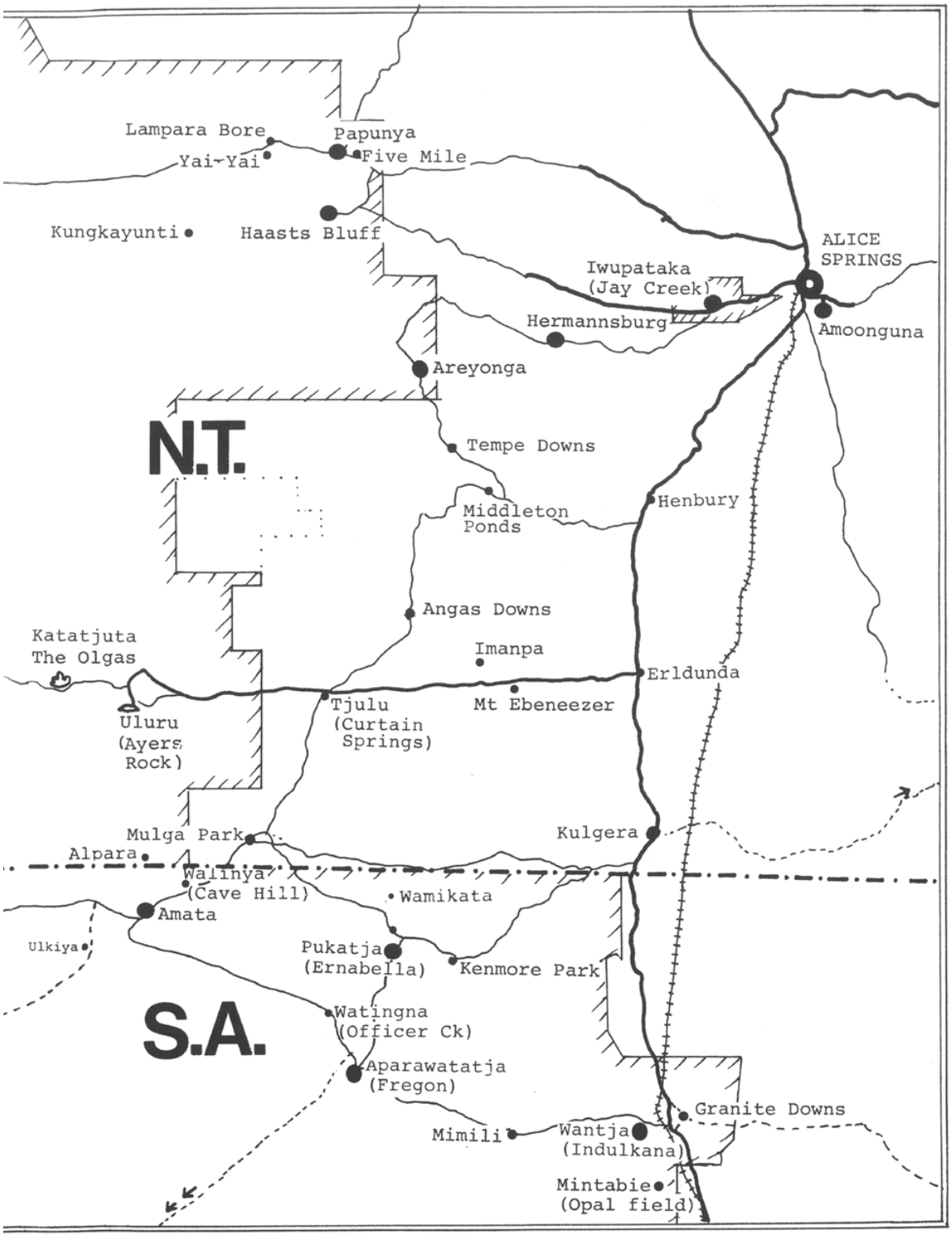
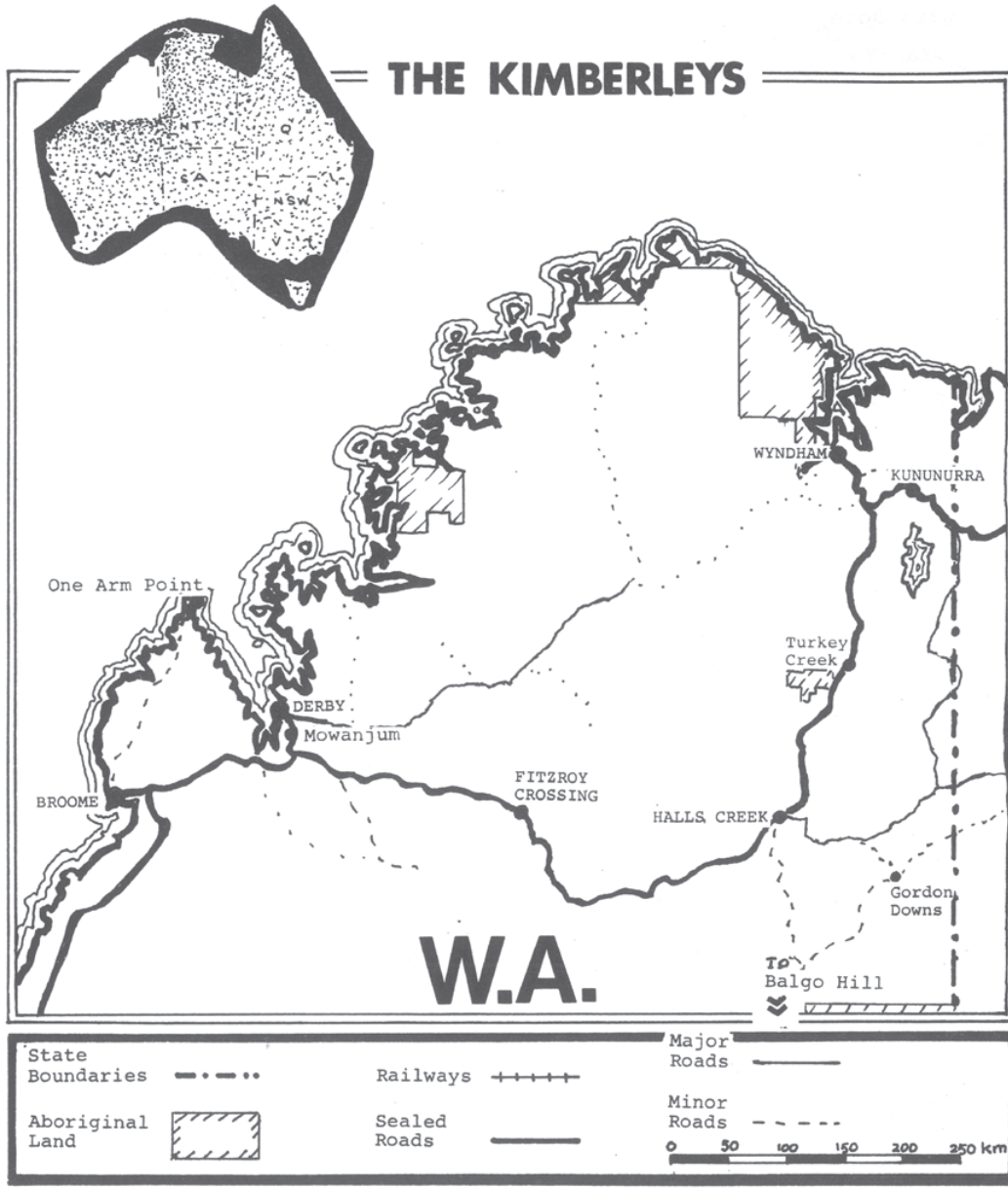
SA
NSW
V
State Boundaries
Railways
Sealed Roads
Major Roads
Minor Roads
Aboriginal Land
Kilometres
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
Minjilang (Croker Is.)
Warruwi (Goulburn Is.)
Maningrida
Milingimbi (Crocodile Is.)
Galiwin'ku (Elcho Is.)
WHULUNBUY
Yirrkala
DARWIN
Ramangining
Gapuwiyak
GROOTE EYLANDT
KATHERINE
Roper Valley
Roper Bar
Borooloola
Mornington Is
N.T.
TENNANT CREEK
Mt. Isa
Warrabri
Willowra
Lake Nash
Yuendumu
Utopia
Papunya
Haasts Bluff
ALICE SPRINGS
Areyonga
Hermannsburg


Kiwirrkurra
Puntutjarrpa
(Jupiter Well)
ANANGU PITJANTJATJARAKU
Approximate
area
covered
by the
PITJANTJATJARA COUNCIL
N.T.
W.A.
S.A.
N.S.W.
V.
Kintore
(Walanguru)
Docker River
GIBSON DESERT
Warakurna
(Giles
Weather
Station)
W.A.
Marntamaru
(Jamieson)
Mt.
Fanny
Irrunytju
(Wingellina)
Waltjitjata
Inarrki
Angatja
Kalka
Aparatjarra
Pipalyatjarra
(Mt Davies)
Kanypi
Nyaparr
Papulangkutja
(Blackstone)
Mt.
Aloysius
Warburton
Anumarapirti
Kata Ala
Kunatjarra
GREAT VICTORIA DESERT
Kunamata
Kunytjanu
to Ilturr
(Coffin Hill)
State
Boundaries
Railways
Sealed
Roads
kilometres
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150
Aboriginal
Land
Major
Roads
Minor
Roads


Lampara Bore
Papunya
Yai-Yai
Five Mile
Kungkayunti
Haasts Bluff
ALICE SPRINGS
Iwupataka (Jay Creek)
Hermannsburg
Amoonguna
Areyonga
N.T.
Tempe Downs
Middleton Ponds
Henbury
Angas Downs
Katatjuta The Olgas
Imanpa
Erldunda
Uluru (Ayers Rock)
Tjulu (Curtain Springs)
Mt Ebeneezer
Mulga Park
Kulgera
Alpara
Walinya (Cave Hill)
Wamikata
Amata
Ulkiya
Pukatja (Ernabella)
Kenmore Park
S.A.
Watingna (Officer Ck)
Aparawatatja (Fregon)
Granite Downs
Mimili
Wantja (Indulkana)
Mintabie (Opal field)


THE KIMBERLEYS
NT
QLD
WA
SA
NSW
WYNDHAM
KUNUNURRA
One Arm Point
Turkey Creek
DERBY
Mowanjum
FITZROY CROSSING
BROOME
HALLS CREEK
Gordon Downs
W.A.
TO
Balgo Hill
State Boundaries
Aboriginal Land
Railways
Sealed Roads
Major Roads
Minor Roads
0 50 100 150 200 250 km

Chapter 1

The Relentless Tide

History of the Movement away from Traditional Country towards Areas of Settlement

Central Australia attracted many adventurers, explorers, gold-seekers, cattle men and the occasional missionary. The effects of many of those intrusions on the Aboriginal people were devastating and caused some people to leave their tribal areas.

At the very least there were seventy-one gold-seeking expeditions into the Central Australian area, around the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, between 1896 and 1931. Michael Terry, who lists them, says that 'there are many private parties omitted because of the absence of records and the impossibility of tracing all travellers' (1925, 272-278). Dick Kimber claims that 'similarly there must have been upwards of 100 parties searching for Lasseter's Reef between 1930 and 1950' (Paper, Pressures on the Pitjantjatjarra of the Claim Area … ' 1979, 4). These earlier intrusions led to deep misunderstandings and conflicts. It was not the easy unobstructed progress which our history books would have us believe. White men were speared, sometimes because people were protecting a water source which was essential to their staying alive. More often it was because the White men took young women and failed to honour Aboriginal custom in such matters.

Tjutjapai, an old Pitjantjatjarra man with whom we camped, told how a member of one party on first contact tried to cut off the beard of an Aboriginal 'doctor man' (ngangkarri). The old man, who had considerable authority and status in his own group, was very upset. He cried out in Pitjantjatjarra, 'No, stop! That's a part of me.' The White man boorishly persisted, which then upset the old man further and made him suspect that the stranger was seeking to cut his throat under cover of that heavy horseplay. When told later that the interloper was bathing himself up the hill in a sacred rockhole, the doctor man got his spears and killed him. There was retaliation of course. It seems part of the same story that the revenge party, unable to catch the people in the hills, shot a very old man whom the people had left lying on his back in camp because he was unable to get around. They found him on his back dead, with one knee up over the other, his hands on his knees, and a large nail driven right through them.

Tjutjapai's wife, Tinimai, told me how some White men from the west had called them, saying they had some good meat for them. They went to the camp and were eating the meat when one of them noticed some black skin on part of it. They realised to their horror that they were eating one of their own people, and were violently ill. She said they were greatly afraid and ran away to another part of the country.

The people at Kalka also described how the desire of Tjutjapai's grandfather to try the White man's food, about which he had heard, led to tragedy. He saw a White man when he was returning from a hunt. He put down the kangaroo which he had speared and called out 'Walypala (Whitefellow) puuu' and waved. The White man called him waved, saying 'come on'. As the old man left his meat and his spears and walked towards him, the White man surreptitiously put his rifle up over the saddle of his horse and shot the old man through the chest, killing him.

These kinds of incidents were fairly common, as becomes evident when you hear the people discussing them around the campfire, which they do without obvious bitterness, although there is deep and lasting hurt. The contract conflicts escalated. "They would shoot us, and in return (ngaparrtji) we would spear them'. 'We would spear them and they would shoot us, turn about' (ngaparrtji ngaparrtji). However, the power was greater on the side of the White man, and the end results were always tragic for the Aboriginal people. Some of the atrocities caused people to flee their land. It is possible that the people keep alive this contact history by passing down such stories in order to maintain awareness of what was done to them, to maintain mistrust of and some distance from the White man, and to reinforce the attitude which has so often been expressed to me, "You can't trust the White man'.

Pressures causing Aboriginal people to leave their homelands

The controversy which has arisen over Aboriginal land rights has led some White people, especially in the Northern Territory (NT), to assert that Aboriginal people in many areas left their homelands and showed no further interest in them. That attitude supposedly legitimised the White man's exploitation of 'abandoned' country. To balance those assertions it is essential to examine some of the pressures which forced people from their land in many areas and, coupled with the availability of the White man's food and work, encouraged them to stay away for long periods when they could have returned to live there. When this happened, marital ties with other groups, and the birth of children in the country to which they had moved, tended to keep them there.

Police and Pastoralist Pressures

The settlement of land for pastoral purposes led to inevitable conflict, to cries of outrage and demands by the incomers for police protection and government action against the 'treacherous' natives. Some of the police of that era did their work with such 'murderous zeal', ably supported by bands of eager pastoralists, that our history is dotted with stories of massacres. That conflict caused damage to the culture of many Aboriginal groups, and the consequent displacement from their land, as well as the near extinction of some.

By the 1880s much of Central Australia was taken up by cattle stations. Schmeichen wrote that the Hermannsburg Mission was surrounded by them (1971, 73). Pastoralists had by this time taken up much of the country around Ayers Rock and Mt Conner and also around Alice Springs. Aborigines and settlers were competing for the same valued commodity – water. When Aboriginal men saw what a herd of cattle could do to a limited water supply and how they could foul it, and when they saw how cattle frightened away native game, competed for the sparse vegetation and cleaned out some bush foods, they were driven to resist the intrusion.

Many of the early settlers had wanted Aboriginal women. There were no White women in those remote areas. Some took them by force, violating tribal Law. Others, out of ignorance about tribal Law, refused to fulfil their obligations to their new 'in-laws' and murderous tensions often resulted. A few White men were speared, generally for some such offence. Those spearings resulted in a great outcry for police protection and punitive expeditions. Hartwig wrote, 'It is probable that many Aboriginal "atrocities" were committed from a desire to retaliate for cruel treatment, shootings, the illicit sexual relationships some settlers had with Aboriginal women, and the desecration of sacred sites' (1965, 406).

As the white man extended his rule it became less and less possible for Aboriginal men to express their hostility or to retaliate in any way. In 1929 J W Bleakley wrote:

> It was complained that motor car loads of men from bush townships and construction camps bent on "ginsprees", in other words, drink and prostitution orgies, had given trouble on stations even a 100 miles distant. The manager on one station complained that he had even been compelled to display firearms to protect himself from such a party, who resented his interference (1929.9).

Even as late as 1968 the lives of the people of Aputula (Finke), who lived on the sandhills around the railway town of Finke in Central Australia were disrupted every fortnight by railway fettlers who would come from up and down the line on pay week-ends. Finke had the only pub between Alice Springs and Oodnadatta. It had a 24 hour licence. The fettlers would enter the camp with their supplies of 'grog' and get as many people drunk as they could, and would then use the women. To the concerned people who protested they would say, 'if you don't like it – piss off!'. The people felt helpless to stop the drunkenness and promiscuity. The fettlers would leave enough drink or money in the camp to keep it in a state of disruption for the rest of the week.

Strengthened by the community development skills and the support of missionary Margaret Bain, the people became fed up with the oppression and the resulting violence and on one occasion, when a group of about fifteen railway fettlers bought every flagon of wine in the hotel and tried to take over the camp, the Aputula people - both men and women and mostly elderly - had a pitched battle with them and threw the fettlers out bodily. After that incident the fettlers were afraid to enter the camp.

From the beginning however, there was a ready-made conflict of interest in the settlers' water requirements and demands, and in the spearing and frightening of cattle, especially in times of drought when native animals and bush foods were scarce. F J Gillen wrote of the Aborigines who came into ration depots established in the early nineties – 'the condition of those old people, and indeed many of the young and delicate, was deplorable … and one cannot wonder that cattle killing was rampant' (quoted in Hartwig 1965, 405). However, it seems that the beasts were speared not only for food, but also at times to harass the powerful intruder, and to drive him out of the tribal lands (Hartwig 1965, 405-406).

The relationship of the early Hermannsburg missionaries with the Aboriginal people showed that a conciliatory approach and a working relationship were possible, but the mood of the day did not encourage such an approach. Early explorers had found that where there had been previous contact, there would be tentative approaches from Aboriginal men, or they might occur if they stayed a long time in one place. 'Again curiosity and acquisition appear to have been the strongest motives of Aboriginals who made approaches, and women and children were usually absent during the first approaches' (Hartwig 1965, 390).

The desire for Aboriginal land, the rejection of any Aboriginal form of ownership, the prevailing attitude that Aborigines were the lowest of savages and little more than animals, together with the demands for protection of the settlers' investment and, on occasion, his life, created a climate in which tentative approaches were met with suspicion and hostility. The climate of opinion supported police and settlers in the decimation of the Aboriginal tribes which followed.

The efforts of Hermannsburg missionaries to save the lives of the Western Aranta, and to see justice done, were met with hostility and criticism from settlers and police. Mounted Constable Willshire and others described Hermannsburg as a 'refuge for outlaws' (Hartwig 1965.410). Missionary Kempe stated in 1885:

> In ten years time there will not be many blacks left in this area, and this is just what the white man wants. With all the shooting that is taking place, it is hard to conceive that the native people have any kind of future, and our only hope is that they are rescued from this intolerable position (quoted by Lohe 1977, 17).

Through the missionaries' attempts to save the Aranta people from total destruction, Hermannsburg was a refuge in that fear of exposure prevented police and settlers from entering the mission to wreak their summary and illegal 'justice'.

In 1885 the missionaries could report that the tribes on or near the mission remained relatively stable in their numbers, whereas the tribes near the cattle stations were rapidly decreasing. In some cases they reported that only women and girls remained of what were once strong tribes (Hartwig 1965, 397). Such was the joyful zeal with which the two mounted constables, Willshire and Wurmbrand, led their bands of settlers and trackers around the country in the task of 'pacifying' or 'dispersing the blacks'.

Many areas were combed for cattle-killers and the people dispersed. In the early 1880s cattle were being speared on Undoolya near Alice Springs. A trooper and then station hands went in pursuit. Hartwig wrote:

> It was probably this party or one of the many others which carried out raids on cattle-killers to the east of Alice Springs during the next few years that affected the "Blackfellow Bones" massacre. "Blackfellow Bones" is the European name for "Italinja", a honey ant totemic centre on the northern edge of Harts Range. Contemporary sources are silent as to the origin of this name, but the name itself and the tradition among both black and white people in the Centre leave little doubt that some time in the eighties a party of police, trackers and settlers shot a large number of Unmatjera (Anmatjirra) (perhaps fifty, perhaps one hundred) who were gathered there on a ceremonial occasion (1965, 397-398).

Hartwig quoted Spencer and Gillen on the murderous zeal of the tandem police team of that time. Willshire and Wurmbrand led the only parties know to have pursued the Unmatjera after their attack on Annas Reservoir. They claimed that they shot only five, but in 1901 Baldwin Spencer noted that the Unmatjera were:

> Now early wiped out, partly by drought and partly by the fact that they had years ago been what is called "dispersed" after having attacked one or two white men (Figg and Coombs) whose intrusion into their country they resented, with results unfortunate to themselves (quoted in Hartwig 1965, 411-412).

Mounted Constable Wurmbrand picked up three suspected cattle-killers on Glen Helen Station. He passed through Hermannsburg with the suspects in chains. Hearing rumours that the men

had been shot nearby, missionaries investigated. They found the bodies huddled together in Glen Helen Gorge still in their chains. As missionary Schwarz so effectively understated it, 'this made the trooper's excuse that they were attempting an escape seem highly inadequate for the severe action he had taken' (quoted in Schmiechen, 1971, 85).

After an apparent and thwarted attempt by Aborigines to burn down Glen Helen Station, Wurmbrand led a party of four trackers and two settlers in search of the men. He claimed he shot one and wounded others at the foot of Mt Sonder only after two of his trackers were injured. One of the station hands who accompanied him told the missionaries that seventeen Aborigines had been shot dead (Hartwig 1965, 399).

Cattle killing broke out on Undoolya station again soon after that incident and at least four parties were led throughout Eastern Aranta Territory by Willshire and Wurmbrand. The results can only be surmised for, as Hartwig wrote, 'they made few reports and no arrests' (Hartwig 1965, 400). Hartwig also reported other such raids in different parts of the Centre in those days. Erldunda and Tempe Downs are amongst the stations mentioned.

T G H Strehlow observed that:

> … for several years previously all the "mulga wires" in aboriginal Central Australia had ben running hot with never-ending stories of the alleged murderous zeal of this police officer [Willshire] in going out and shooting down tribesmen in any area from which stories of cattle-killing had been sent to him by worried pioneer cattlemen (1969, 43).

Constable Willshire was happy that he had performed his duty well, and boasted in 1876:

> I am proud to be able to submit to paper that the Government at the time told me off as the officer of police parties to go out and do as the law provides in such cases. I worked hard for ten months, sometimes with seven or eight white men, and, latterly, with black trackers, and now I say, 'All's well that ends well' (Willshire, 1886, 20).

Willshire seemed to have the habit of putting his thoughts to paper in a self-revealing manner, and strange thoughts some of them were. By no means the strangest of his written expressions, but strange enough, is his account of a dawn raid upon a camp of Northern Aboriginals:

> They scattered in all directions … It's no use mincing matters – the Martini-Henry carbines at this critical moment were talking English in the silent majesty of those great eternal rocks. The mountain was swathed in a regal robe of fiery grandeur, and its ominous roar was close upon us. The weird, awful beauty of the scene held us spellbound for a few seconds (Willshire, 1886, 41).

After another such grand dawn raid on the Tempe Downs camp in 1891, in which two Aboriginal police trackers shot two of the men dead on Willshire's orders, his bloody rule in the Centre came to an end. Frank J. Gillen, of later anthropological fame, was then a Justice of the Peace working at the Telegraph Station. He carried out an investigation which revealed that the bodies of the two men killed by the trackers were burnt. Aboriginal evidence was given that Willshire had enlisted the aid of a white station hand to help him to carry out the incineration of the bodies. He was

committed for trial in Port Augusta on a charge of murder. Grateful Central Australia settlers raised the two thousand pounds set for bail, and the considerable money required to retain eminent legal counsel, Sir John Downer, Q.C. Willshire was acquitted, but the police department did not send him back to the Centre. The many concerned complaints of missionaries and others had finally brought his killing days to an end (Strehlow, 1969, 47-48).

It was obvious that the cattle killing was costly at times and a great nuisance, but it was not the real reason for the killings. Something much darker and deeper ruled the times, for as Hartwig points out:

> [White] cattle and horse thieves, on the other hand, who began operations in a small way in the eighties, were soon widely accepted and even esteemed. 'I doubt if ever they (the Aborigines) killed as many cattle as the whites did during the Ruby excitement', wrote an 'Overlander' in 1890, 'more than half the men on the field never bought beef; they objected to pay sixpence per pound when they could get it for nothing' (*NT Times*, 28 February 1890, quoted in Hartwig, 1965, 348).

There is little doubt that the conflict between settlers and Aborigines over the desire of the former to take over the land and waters of the Aborigine was bloody, culminating again and again in the massacre of the Aboriginal people. The presence of police like Willshire and Wurmbrand, and the official condoning of their efforts at 'dispersion', legitimized the settlers taking the law into their own hands, and loaned them a heavy authority. It decimated many tribes and drove many more from their land.

The fear and apprehension generated by the ruthlessness of policy in those days still persists, and colours the attitude of many Aborigines towards policy today. There are still men and women who can remember the atrocities, and who lost relatives through them. Some forty years after the eighties, E E Kramer of the Aborigines' Friends' Association wrote a report on a trip to the Centre in 1928, '… same day encountered the first native woman with children by her little fire. Great excitement prevailed, but when assured we were not policemen, they showed us their camp and water' (1938, 39).

It should not be thought that the kinds of attitudes which enabled, indeed encouraged, Constables Willshire and Wurmbrand and others to hunt and destroy Aborigines like vermin, died with the end of the 19th century. These attitudes were alive and well into the mid-twentieth century; and indeed are still expressed by some White people in Central and Northern Australia today.

The Coniston Massacre

On 7 August 1928, a dogger (one who lived from dingo scalp bounties) named Brooks was killed by Warlpiri Aborigines on Coniston Station over trouble that arose from his living with an Aboriginal women, and not observing the tribal customs and the expectations which resulted. Aboriginal people said he was aggressive, and would not return the woman to her family (Hartwig, 1960, 20-21).

A retribution party was organised by Constable-Protector Murray. The resulting slaughter became known as the Coniston Massacre. The party killed an admitted seventeen Aborigines, including two women and brought two men in on a charge of murder. At the succeeding trial it was revealed that 'a band of wild natives, knowing no word of English, had approached the police party waving

twigs (the recognised sign among tribes to denote peaceful intentions), and had been shot dead' (Bennett, 1930, 80-81).

Shortly after this incident, a settler named Morton, and another named Tilmouth, were attacked. Detailed evidence gathered for the Willowra Land Claim in 1980, made it clear that the Aboriginal people had gathered in large numbers on the Lander River because of severe drought (Wafer, 1980, 25) and for ceremonies, and that the two settlers had driven cattle on to the remaining, and dwindling, waterholes and, at Liilpara (white stone), Tilmouth despoiled a sacred site with 1500 head of cattle (Hartwig, 1960, 62: quoted in Wafer 1980, 23). Trouble grew from the presence of the cattle and the fouling of the people's water supplies. The tension was exacerbated by the fact that Fred Brooks and Nugget Morton, having taken Aboriginal women, were not only refusing to return them to their husbands, but also failing to observe the obligations which that entailed (Read 1979, 77-78).

Morton and Tilmouth summoned the police party, then joined them in the search, which meant that neither man could have been badly hurt. It was admitted that this party killed 'twenty and a number of others'. The two parties (Constable-Protector Murray's party and this one) thus admitted killing at least thirty-seven people. Strehlow put the record straighter when he wrote:

> The police admitted that thirty-two people had been shot in Cockatoo Creek-Lander River area in these two raids, but local station owners who had been members of these expeditions gave me a very much higher unofficial figure in 1932: according to their calculations at least a hundred Aboriginal men and women had been shot (Strehlow 1970, 107).

The Willowra Land Claim documentation suggests that the number of men, women, and children killed could be much higher than a hundred. Meredith Rowell and Petronella Wafer, who worked on gathering claim evidence from the people, say that there are great gaps in the genealogies which support that assumption (personal comment).

Bennett's account of the trial in Darwin of the only two Aborigines charged in the whole matter, states that Judge Mallan observed that 'the police mowed the natives down wholesale' (1930, 81). The two men were acquitted. At the time of these massacres, an official was in the Territory for the express purpose of investigating charges of ill treatment of Aborigines (Bennett 1930, 82).

There was public outcry in the South, with letters from missionaries and others in Central Australia calling for an enquiry. No inquest was held to ascertain the exact number killed, or to investigate the causes of their deaths. Instead, a panel of three police officers was appointed to conduct an enquiry. No evidence whatever was taken from Aboriginal people. Constable-Protector Murray's evidence was so different from his report that the *South Australian Register* stated, 'the two accounts could not be recognised as describing the same set of incidents' (quoted in Bennett 1930, 83).

The Board of Enquiry found unanimously that all of the shootings were justified. The only criticism offered by the presiding Police Magistrate was the slovenliness of the police reports. The Government Resident said in evidence, '… in every incident that has come under the Government Resident's notice, the attacks by blacks have been unprovoked, their one object to kill and loot', and 'in this case the natives brought trouble on themselves' (Willowra Land Claim 1980).

The Board's findings agreed with the Government Resident, and ignored the evidence of a missionary who had worked for twenty-three years with Aboriginal people, Sister Lock, who said that the White men at Harding's Soak had Aboriginal women with them, 'refusing to let them go, and threatening the natives who demanded their wives' though 'it is well known that interference of White men with native women is one of the most prolific causes of native attacks on White men'. Instead of heeding Sister Lock's evidence, the Board found that one of the reasons for these depredations and attacks by Aborigines on White men was 'a women missionary living amongst naked blacks, thus lowering their respect for Whites' (Bennett 1930, 84-85).

It is very interesting to note Bleakley's words on the same subject of women missionaries. 'The religious mission has a value in the outback apart from its aboriginal work … and in isolated places where white women are not known, the presence of lady missionaries is admitted to be a restraining and refining influence' (1929, 25). Bleakley begs the question of the relationship of White men with Aboriginal women, and does not reflect in any way the derogatory opinion of the Board of Enquiry with relation to the influence of lady missionaries on Aboriginal people.

These massacres caused the Warlpiri and Anmatjirra people in the Lander River area to leave what Strehlow called 'the best watered part of the Walbiri country' and to scatter widely to avoid further reprisals. Very few of them returned to their own country (1970, 107). Some eventually arrived in Tennant Creek, others moved back into the desert, and to the Vaughan Springs-Mt Singleton-Mt Doreen area, and some went as far away as the Granites and the Tanami (Meggitt 1962, 25). The Board of Enquiry findings stated that the killings were justified in that 'the natives killed in the various encounters were all members of the Walmulla tribe from Western Australia who were on a marauding expedition with the avowed object of wiping out the White settlers and native boys employed on these stations' (Government Resident, 1929, 6).

In fact, both in the enquiry and more recently in the Willowra Land Claim hearings, the evidence clearly showed that all of those killed were Walrpiri and Anmatjirra people from the Lander River and surrounding areas. 'Indeed mature Lander Warlpiri clearly remember details of the deaths, though the memory saddens and angers them' (Wafer 1980, 26). It was people from those groups who fled in fear from their homelands.

Old Station Massacre

Another massacre, known to the Aranta and Pitjantjatjarra people as the 'Old Station' killings took place around the same time as the Coniston incident, or possibly a few years earlier. It raised no outcry, and in fact does not seem to have been reported publicly. It caused many Aranta people to flee from their homelands.

The story of this massacre was told to me several times over the years by Pitjantjatjarra people spread over a very wide area. At a meeting of the Pitjantjatjarra Council with Dr H C Coombs in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs office in Alice Springs in early 1979, an officer who had worked at Areyonga settlement for a few years commented that Areyonga was a disorientated community. The reasons he gave were years of poor staff, and an early massacre in the area. He said the people had shown him human bones at Tempe Gap [From my notes taken at the meeting].

Living in a valley somewhere between the James and Krichauff Ranges was a 'stock agent' named McNamara. Aboriginal informants who live at Areyonga settlement on the site of McNamara's lease, Archie Coulthard and Tiger said of McNamara, 'he used to steal bullocks and shoot

Aboriginals'. They described how McNamara would raid the four stations adjoining his property - Hermannsburg, Tempe Downs, Ragggert Well and Henbury - and put his brand on all the cleanskins he found, before grazing them on remote parts of his property and later selling them. In the 1920s somewhere near the time of Pastor F W Albrecht's arrival at Hermannsburg Mission in 1926, a party of 'soldiers' (Warrmala) went from Docker River and Ernabella areas to retaliate for a raid carried out on their people by men from Hermannsburg. On the way back they turned into the ranges near Areyonga, because they had heard about bullock meat, and wished to try it. From what I have been told, I would expect such a party to consist of between twenty and forty men. Strehlow mention a war party of fifty or so men in another situation.

McNamara had young Aboriginal girls there to look after his place and tend his herd of goats. Through Mayana, who was said to be one of his wives, McNamara warned the men not to stay on his place. Mayana tried to warn them that he might kill them, but they wouldn't listen. They speared two or three bullocks, one of which happened to be a milking cow with a bell around its neck. The cow arrived back at the homestead dragging the spears. McNamara is said to have shot it and given the meat to the men. He told them they could dig him a well in return, 'ngaparrtji', and the men agreed. They dug a well somewhere near the homestead.

McNamara is said to have sent a message to the police. One of the Aboriginal men overhead talk and, understanding some of it, he too tried to warn the others. 'Hey', he said, 'this White man is talkin' strange. We should go'. But the others wouldn't believe him. Some of the men, who were from the Ernabella side, were said to have become afraid, and to have gone to Waltanta (Erldunda) where they stayed for a while [from transcript of an interview with Archie Coulthard and Tiger]. That makes feasible Dick Kimber's assumption that about twelve men were eventually shot, based on questions asked of a number of informants over a long period [interview transcript].

When the police arrived McNamara told the men, 'We'll stay until tomorrow, then we'll have to go in to Alice Springs for work'. The men were neck-chained and taken off. Mayana was afraid that something bad was going to happen, so she followed the party, staying under cover. The men were halted just through Tempe Gap, near Areyonga, and, according to one tradition, were told that a well was required there. They were directed to dig it longer and wider than usual. When a large hole was dug, some say they were again chained, and blind-folded, then shot. Their bodies fell into the hole.

One man was not killed and huddled under other bodies. A part-Aboriginal man working for McNamara saw him breathing, and told him to wait until the White man had gone away. But the man was over anxious and jumped up too quickly and, instead of running up the creek bed where there was cover, he ran out into the open towards the hillside. McNamara saw him, chased him on his horse, and shot him. His body was thrown onto the others. Then plenty of wood was piled on top, kerosene thrown all over it, and the bodies burnt.

Mayana had watched from her hiding place on top of the gap. When she heard the shots and saw the men fall, she ran back to the homestead and wept secretly, for fear McNamara saw her and realised that she knew what had happened. She was grief-stricken for her relations, but feared McNamara would kill her if he found out that she had witnessed the massacre (interview transcript. Coulthard, Mayana's nephew, said that he heard the story over the years from his auntie).

As a result of this massacre many people left the area. Some fled to Tempe Downs, where there was a ration depot, and stayed there. Others went to Hermannsburg, where the missionaries looked

after them. Because of cattle spearings and shootings, Albrecht encouraged people to settle on Hermannsburg for safety, as had Strehlow and others before him. The late Emeritus Professor Elkin said at a Missions-Administration Conference in Darwin in 1967 that, if it had not been for the way that Hermannsburg Mission stood between the pastoralists and police and the Aboriginal people in those days, there would have been no Western Aranta left' (from my notes taken at the conference).

This story was also told to me by Kantji at Mimili Station as he had heard it over the years from his brother-in-law, Paddy Uluru, and by Nganyintja, whose father was amongst the men from the Ernabella area who were in the party that went on to McNamara's lease, but who became afraid and fled to Erldunda. In yarning around a campfire at Kalka near Mt Davies I also heard the story from Tjujupai, an old man who was nephew to Mayana and Anyina, McNamara's 'wives', and who had heard a story from them.

In June 1980, I went to Areyonga and spoke with a group of men about the 'Old Station' incident. Archie Coulthard and old Tiger took me to the remains of McNamara's old homestead, hidden away in a valley in the ranges between Areyonga and Tempe Downs. We sat with our backs to the old stone kitchen-living room, which is still standing, while I recorded their story. They then took me to a watercourse near a gap, which they told me they believed was the site of the massacre. Later I visited the site with two interested staff from Areyonga School. Two or three inches below the surface we found a layer of grey earth and charcoal full of fragments of human bones. Our digging efforts were very tentative and more a scratching of the surface because of fear that we could mess up a site which experts might wish to properly investigate at a later date. A small quantity of bone fragments were sent to Canberra for analysis. The bone fragments were said to be those of an Aboriginal woman, which does not resolve the question of the massacre, but raises a further question of how the charred bones of a woman came to be at that spot, since cremation was not practised by the Aranta or Pitjantjatjarra people.

Ayers Rock Shooting

The shootings continued. In 1934 a young man transgressed badly against the Aboriginal Law, by showing a very sacred place and its special mark or feature near Atilanya (Mt Conner) to his girlfriend. The old men detailed Paddy Uluru, his brother and some other young men, to execute him according to their Law. (Paddy Uluru was recognised widely by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia; as 'number one' for Ayers Rock-Uluru. He was its main custodian).

Strehlow wrote that Paddy and the execution party took the transgressor out hunting and killed him with a rifle borrowed from a white dingo scalper called Bob Hughes (1970, 121). The dead man's girlfriend told a white man who had a station near Mt Conner. He called in the police. Constable W McKinnon speedily rounded up the men and chained and handcuffed them. An Aboriginal tracker with the police party taunted the men saying, 'Don't sleep tonight. We've been talking. We are going to get more bullets now, and tomorrow you'll all be dead. Lie awake and think about it'. (This and most of the following material is from taped interviews with Kantji, Paddy Uluru's brother-in-law from Mimili).

Paddy had picked up a piece of wire and hidden it in his beard. When it was dark, he picked the locks and the men escaped. They made a forced march through the night towards Ayers Rock, a

distance of about 90 km. The police party followed next day on their horses and caught up with the men. They fired at them and wounded Paddy's brother, but the men all escaped by hiding in the thick low scrub.

Eventually they reached the Rock. They were resting at Maggies Spring, when the police party surprised them. They hid in the recesses of the cave there, but the police shot Paddy Uluru's brother. He called out that he was finished, and told Paddy to take the sacred objects and flee to a far country lest they kill him also. The account of W E (Bill) Harney makes interesting reading:

> The trembling aborigines were jammed into a rocky crevice of the 'Nose', listening to the white man's law climbing up towards them. The policeman, peering into the darkness of the crevice could see nothing and would have gone away but for his tracker who claimed he could smell the sweat from the unwashed bodies of the wanted men … the four men hiding in the crevice could hear the talking. Then faintly they heard footsteps creeping in, and in desperation, one of the escapees on the outside who was too stout to creep further into the narrow cleft of the mountain, leapt out with a stone in his hand in an effort to create surprise, and thus get away. Now spoke the rifle of the white man's law, and the doomed man toppled onto the floor of the crevice. Then a strange thing happened. The dying man, with a super-human effort, crawled out of the cave and neither threats nor promises could make him reveal where the others were hidden (1963. 41).

The account told by Paddy to Kantji around the camp fire over the years was a little different. Because of his wounds, Paddy's brother was unable to crawl into a hole in the far recesses of the cave as the others did. The hiding men heard footsteps just inside the mouth of the cave and then someone called something from outside. The man in the cave called out, 'Wait till I finish this bastard'. Then shots were fired. After that more shots were fired into the cave, but none of the police party would go right inside into the darkness.

At the handing over of Uluru to the traditional owners on October 26, 1985, I met an old man named Joseph …, whom I had known many years before. He was visiting from Docker River. In discussing with him the Old Station massacre, I discovered that he had been one of the party detailed to execute the young man who had betrayed the Law at Mt Conner in 1934. He told the story on to tape in Pitjantjatjarra. He kept insisting throughout the story: "it was those other fellows who killed him. I was away hunting. But the police grabbed everyone'. He was obviously afraid that the white man would take action against him even after fifty-two years.

He described how the men were sitting on top of Maggies cave in the sun resting. The police suddenly came around the rock and began shooting at them. The men dropped through holes at the top into the cave. The only man shot was Paddy Uluru's brother, who had previously been wounded. He described how they waited for a long time until they were sure the police party had gone. Then they buried Paddy's brother and Paddy hid those sacred objects that were too long or heavy to carry. Taking the others, Paddy set out for a far country. Arriving eventually at Mimili Station in South Australia, then called Everard Park, he settled there and married Kantji's sister.

Some of the men were eventually caught, for Strehlow reported that Ngantji and Nambala were each sentenced to ten years imprisonment by Judge T A Wells on 21 February 1935, during the first Supreme Court session ever to be held in Alice Springs.

> The unusual severity of the sentence – 'tribal killers' were normally acquitted by the Northern Territory Courts till the 1950s – was without doubt due to the grave concern felt by members of the European jury that a rifle borrowed from a European dogger had been used to shoot the victim. Had the latter been speared in the normal way, no alarm would have been aroused (Strehlow, 1970, 121).

It is not to be wondered that these kinds of murderous incursions into Aboriginal lands caused many tribes to flee to missions and to areas of settlement for protection (also Rudder, 1978, 4).

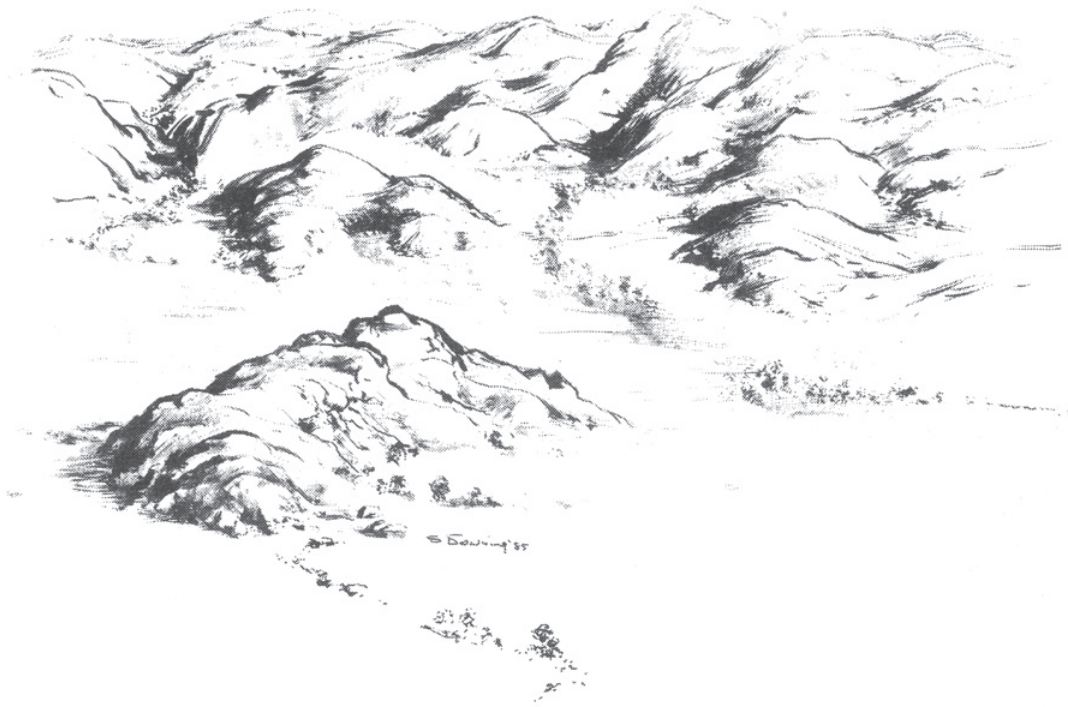
Whenever I visited Mimili in the late 1960s and early 70s, Paddy would ask me plaintively, 'What about Uluru? I'll die before I get back to my country'. In 1972 Uluru was taken back to his country by a party which included Rev Bill Edwards, who had then worked amongst the Pitjantjatjarra people for some twelve years. Edwards had a good knowledge of the language and much of the ceremony. Paddy and others were taken there to carry out ceremony which they had been unable to perform at Uluru for more than thirty years, due to the white man's intrusions. Edwards described to me how the old man finally led them to the place where the sacred objects had been hidden on that fateful day some thirty-eight years before.

Paddy's anxiety over the years, often expressed to me, and told to Edwards on tape, as well as the constant efforts by the people to go back into the area, demonstrate clearly their concern, and the fact that they did not forget the sacred places at Uluru, or 'give the place away', Paddy said.

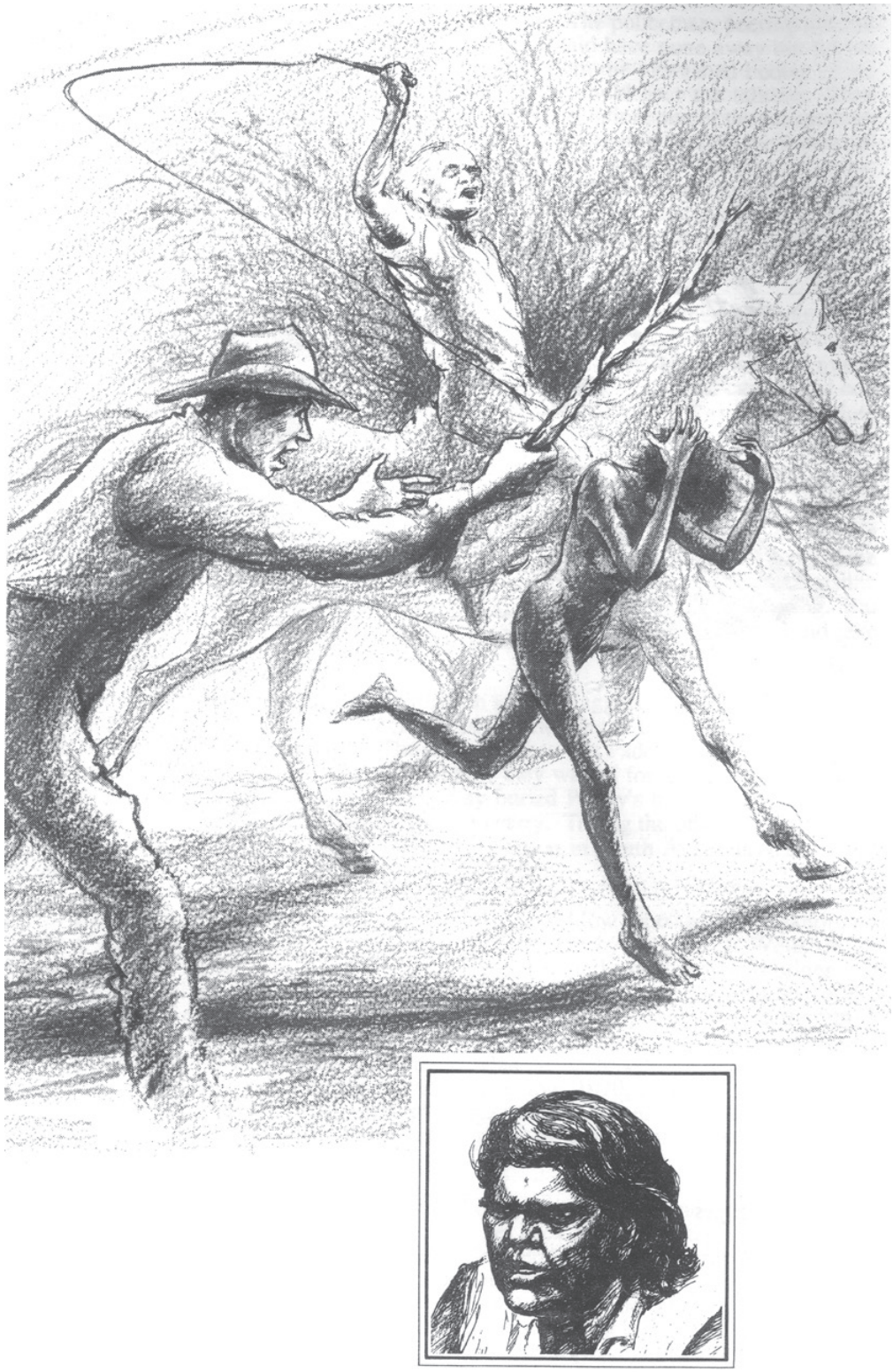
> The whitefellows having frightened me, chased me away – having gone from that place – I wandered around – having left my [sacred] *things* there, I moved around … Yes, I went around here and there – finished! … The policeman having frightened me, chased me away from there … It is my camp, Uluru is my camp. This is mine, this holy cave. My fathers and grandfathers entrusted me with this cave. This holy cave. And girls have broken [the sanctity of] this thing of mine. And I have become very sad. This is my great ceremony, my great camp with its holy tree [Ngaltawata – the ceremonial sacred pole] and *mutitju* [cave] on this side is holy. Ayer's Rock is holy. I am Uluru and these things are mine – and a girl has broken that which is mine. A white girl has gone through my holy cave and I am constantly sad (Edwards in Wallace 1977, 60).

Of all the comments about the irresistible tide of tourists and the people's helplessness, I like that of Nosepeg Tjupurrula as he expressed it to Dick Kimber: 'Alright first time, there was only little mob with camels. Then that Ayers Rock, he just like a big cake – got those piss ants all over him. Too late then. Can't stop all that tourist mob' (evidence presented to the Uluru (Ayers Rock) National Park and Lake Amadeus-Luritija Land Claim hearing 1979, 5).

On 26 October 1985 the wheel came full circle and title to Ayers Rock was handed back to the traditional custodians by the Governor General of Australia, Sir Ninian Stephens - but not without a great deal of criticism and a costly propaganda campaign against it by the NT Government. It was a great and significant happening for Aboriginal people who came from all parts of Australia to participate in the event. Paddy Uluru returned to live there a few years before, but sadly had died before he could see Uluru returned to his people.



Musgrave Ranges
near Amata.



Nganyintja remembers a terrifying girlhood incident at Kenmore Park.

Kenmore Park Beatings

Nganyintja told us of a terrifying incident at Kenmore Park Station near Ernabella when she was a young adolescent schoolgirl, in the early 1940s. In the school holidays a group of people went to camp on Kenmore for the holidays. It had been a good season with plenty of bush foods and game about, and for some of the party Kenmore was their homeland. Nganyintja went with her tribal relations, her parents staying behind. They planned a holiday, hunting game and gathering bush foods. She said that the men hunted kangaroos near one of the bores, but did not touch the bullocks, though the latter were frightened and ran about. The station owner sent for the police.

From the hills where they were gathering food, the women saw the men rounded up by white men on horseback who were firing rifles near them. They secured the older men with chains. Others were sent out to round up the women. Some women hid in a cave, but then decided to join their people. They were taken to Kenmore Park with horsemen surrounding them all the way. The white men then went into the house for a cup of tea. Afterwards they got more bullets for their rifles and talked about shooting all of the people. Two of the Aboriginal men who understood English a little told their captors that they came from Ernabella Mission, and wanted to go back there. 'Okay, you can go', they were told, 'but you can leave all your blankets and food and everything here in a heap, spears and all, and we are going to beat you'.

The white men lined up. The policeman had a stockwhip, others had thick sticks, and some had rifles. They made the men run the gauntlet one by one, and whipped and beat them, chasing them on the horses and firing the rifles. Then it was the turn of the segregated lads. Then came the women. Because Nganyintja was alone and the other women were afraid, they made her go first. She ran, chased by the men, who beat her on the buttocks with the sticks, chasing her a long way on the horses and firing their rifles. Then all the other girls and women had to go through the ordeal. They camped that night without food or blankets, and reached Ernabella the next day. They were bruised and distressed. They had seen the men strike one of the Aboriginal men on the head, felling him to the ground. They thought him dead, along with one other man who failed to return.

J R B Love, who was the missionary in charge at Ernabella, heard their story. Immediately he rode to Kenmore to enquire. He found that the police had arrested the two men and taken them to Oodnadatta. They returned to the Mission later amidst great rejoicing. Because of that incident and the attitudes displayed by the white men, however, the people were afraid to hunt on Kenmore Park property. Thus were some pushed out of their homelands.

Justice Denied

As late as 1941, there is evidence of a shocking lack of commitment to the cause of justice by the proper legal authorities and a lingering callous, if not murderous, attitude on the part of some pastoralists, in the matter of the almost certain murder of an Aboriginal man. The relatives had returned to Ernabella in a state of deep grief and reported seeing two station men hit the man, Lalili, on the head with a pistol butt and then loop fencing wire around his neck and attach it to a truck and drive towards the homestead. The police at Finke acted with far greater speed than the mission authorities, who took weeks to report the matter. The two men were tried, and admitted doing what was alleged, because it was necessary to be 'firm with aboriginals' (Duguid 1963, 76). They also admitted driving the four-speed truck in third gear which meant that it would have been virtually impossible for the man to have kept on his feet.

Many inquiries were made, two men were arrested, and an inquest was held in Alice Springs on January 29th and 30th, 1941. Five Aborigines gave evidence, and the exhibits in court consisted of a Luger pistol, a Lee-Enfield rifle, a piece of wire, and a human head, or skull. This was said to be the head of Lalili, though the Government Medical Officer said that it was more like a female's than a male's and that he could discern no signs of injury. Despite this the coroner found that the two white men had 'murdered an Aborigine called Lullilicki [Lalili] or Lollylegs on or about December 1940' (Duguid, 1963, 75).

Over two months prior to the trial, Dr Charles Duguid, as President of the Aborigines Protection League in South Australia, had written to the Minister for the Interior. He pointed out that the Government Medical Officer had expressed doubt that the head [skull] was that of a male, and urged that the whole body be examined to remove any doubt in the matter. The Minister wrote two months before the trial promising to have enquiries made and to communicate with the League when in a position to do so. Nothing more was heard (Duguid 1963, 76-77).

The two men were tried for murder at Alice Springs on 16th and 17th April 1941. Even though it was the invariable custom in the Northern Territory for Aboriginal witnesses to be kept in custody until a trial was over, it was stated in court that three of the five Aboriginal witnesses had 'run away'. Nor was the arresting Constable present to give evidence (Duguid, 1963, 75). The whole body was not produced at the trial, and the defence argued that the head was not that of Lalili. As Duguid points out, there should have been a searching investigation into whose head it was in that case. The two men were acquitted. The only [implied] reprimand was that the station had its permission to employ Aborigines withdrawn (Duguid, 1963, 76).

Duguid cites two examples of station-owners and police meting out very rough 'justice' to Aboriginal groups and individuals in 1944, resulting in their wurleys and few possessions being burnt and billy cans holed, the latter in hot weather in Central Australia. He quotes two more cases of station owners tying up Aborigines and flogging them. In one case that included being chained by the neck to a tree and pistol whipped. In that case the assailant was found guilty and fined. 'Several station people declared that they regarded that verdict as a "challenge" to their "control" of natives' (Duguid, 1963, 78-79)

Duguid also gives an example of the generally prevailing attitudes of the time. Constable V C Hall of the Northern Territory Police force found appalling conditions at a mining camp. No wages were being paid to Aboriginal workers, their food was very inadequate, and no food of any kind was being provided for their dependants, who were in a desperate state. Constable Hall was adjudged by his superior officer to have been too impetuous in cancelling the licence. He resigned (Duguid, 1963, 77).

Annette Hamilton wrote that many men spoke of similar events to those reported from other parts of Australia during the expansion of pastoral holdings. She camped at the Aboriginal camp on Everard Park station (now named Mimili and owned by the people) for some six months while carrying out anthropological research amongst the people. She wrote:

> The most senior and respected man in the Everard group recalls being taken in chains and handcuffs, when a young boy, up one of the hills where he watched as two of his companions were thrown to the rocks below, in retaliation for spearing a sheep … Others remember the dogger who gave

> them poisoned flour and the two women who died from eating it. They describe the frothing mouths and rolling eyes of the victims with no sense of injustice or outrage – it was just one of the things that happened, one of the things that white people did (Hamilton, 'Health among the Pitjantjara paper, NARU Library).

Use and Control of Aboriginal Labour

Pastoralist pressures came not only from conflict over water, women, cattle spearing, and the skirmishes and reprisals that followed; they arose also from the demands and expectations of the powerful invader with regard to the availability of labour and control of movement on the pastoral properties.

There was little change over the decades from the situation reported by Love in 1915:

> On the cattle stations, as far north as the Macdonnell Ranges, the usual custom is for the black's camp to be placed near the station homestead, within a quarter of a mile. The station managers insist that the blacks shall camp near the homestead, and forbid them to camp at their pleasure on any part of the run. With the blacks near the station, the manager knows that the cattle are fairly safe. If the blacks were scattered about on the run, they would, of course, help themselves to beef at their pleasure … When they wish to hunt for kangaroos, goannas, roots, seeds or any other edible commodity, they will inform the manager as to the direction they propose to take. He will then make it his business to ride that way, and see that the cattle are not molested (quoted in Kimber 1979, 4).

Within the Central Australian area this was a long-standing practice. The few Aboriginal men used for stock work and, in some cases their immediate families, were made to camp near the homestead, but all others had to camp at a distance. As cattle spearing ceased, so that distance extended. Often the other people were discouraged altogether from entering or staying on the property. This notwithstanding a condition of cattle station leases in South Australia and the Northern Territory that Aboriginal people had the right to hunt game, gather bush foods, and use waters on the lease area – in other words, to use the land traditionally. This was the case well into the 1960s and 70s.

Sister 'Dot' Forbes, who carried out patrols through the area from Amata from early 1965 for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, South Australia, and was later Nursing Sister at Indulkana, finally becoming Superintendent there, wrote that on Granite Downs Station when she arrived on the scene the people were accustomed to obeying the dictates of the owner as to where they went and where they camped on the property. The 'home camp' near the homestead housed those workers who were essential to the daily running of the place. Up to two or three miles away was the camp of the stockmen, and a few miles further out was the 'big camp', which included the old people and those not employed, or having a spell. The movements of all were strictly controlled.

When McLachlan took over the station it was made clear that he intended to employ whites only, as on his other properties, and that 'hangers on' would not be kept. It was also clear that he had no intention of running a store where the Aboriginal people living on Granite Downs could buy their food. When Indulkana Settlement was established nearby with a clinic, store, a

limited and transported but effective water supply, and a system of cashing widow's and old age pension cheques, it was sufficient inducement to attract those people who saw value in such services (personal comment).

Prior to the establishment of Indulkana, the South Australian Pastoral Board advocated transfer of the people in the area to Amata Settlement in the North West Reserve, some 400 km away. The tribal men of the Granite Downs area strongly resisted such a move. So while it cannot be said that McLachlan banished people from their land, his policies regarding work and stores left them little alternative but to move. They also left little alternative for the Government at the time but to set up a settlement into which the people could move. In 1971 some of the men from Indulkana took me to a number of sacred sites in the district, and expressed their feelings about the restriction of the settlement and about their sacred land. It seemed to me that the men felt considerable restraints about travelling around Granite Downs to those sacred places to perform ceremony. Some of the sacred places are of considerable importance to Pitjantjatjarra and Yankuntjatjarra people from many hundreds of kilometres away.

General conditions and practices did not change much on pastoral properties at all in the first seventy years of the twentieth century. This was changed by the 1965 Equal Wages Case, the Northern Territory Land Rights Act, and the payment of unemployment and other benefits, all in the late sixties or early seventies.

The Bleakley Report to the Federal Government in 1929 stated:

> While one fairly generous employer supplied his workers and their families with food, clothes, tobacco and reasonable extras, and also fed all the camp people [that is, the rest of the tribe whose hunting grounds the Government had leased to him] his neighbour, not so kindly disposed, fed and clothed the workers only, and took the clothes away from them when leaving (1929, 7).

In the late 1960s the same range of employer behaviour and attitude was evident. Forbes wrote of another station in the north west of South Australia:

> Wages were booked up and each stockman would be requested to pick various goods from the stock and station catalogues for ordering. In this way, the men chose the stock clothes plus the saddles, swags, etc that were necessary for work purposes. Whilst the chaps were at the station, this gear was there to be used by them. However, if the chap went off anywhere, the gear was not his to take, and remained station property (personal comment).

She commented to Aboriginal people on that station about the very few people living there, and was told consistently 'he hunts people away, and kicks them in the arse if they won't go. He puts people on the back of the truck and drives them a distance away then dumps them, and says 'don't' come back' (personal comment). On another station in the area, the owner would not allow the Indulkana and other men on to the property for initiation ceremonies, and to sites important for the purpose. They told me this when I enquired why they referred to him as 'lirru' (poisonous snake), when he drove past us on the highway.

The general effect of these oppressive attitudes and practices was to drive people away from their homelands eventually, and so they were prevented from caring for their sacred sites and conducting

ceremonies properly and fully – practices essential to the maintenance of their Law – and hence to their social fabric and community well being.

Enlightened Pastoralists

By contrast there were pastoralists like the late J Edgar Parkinson who took over Willowra Station in 1946. H C Coombs wrote of him:

> In mid 1968 Edgar Parkinson … suggested to H Giese, then Director of Social Welfare in the Northern Territory administration, that the government might buy the Willowra lease for the resident Aboriginal Community. Parkinson wished to sell because of age and health considerations and was anxious to protect the interests of the Aboriginal community whose help and support he believed had made it possible for him to establish and develop the property (1978, 177).

Coombs went on to state that bureaucratic and ministerial arguments held up this project for years, 'but the willingness of the owner to hang on and the continued interest of Stumpy Martin and his people prevented it from dying absolutely' (1978, 179).

The new Labor Government in December 1972 speedily effected the purchase (Coombs 1978, 180). During the first two years of its operation, I was shown over the Aboriginal station by Stumpy Martin Tjampitjinpa, their spokesman, and some of the traditional leaders of the community. They proudly showed me on several occasions the different kinds of work they were doing, with the comment, 'Old Edgar Parkinson taught us that'.

Similar good relationships existed on Utopia and McDonald Downs Stations, owned by the Chalmers family. Mac and Rose Chalmers seemed to have a real concern for the people living there. I was told by people who knew him that Mac spoke the language of the people well, paid award wages, and entrusted his workers with responsibility. He also allowed the old men on McDonald Downs (the most traditional group) to choose who should work for him whenever he needed labour.

After attending the Arbitration hearings on award wages in the cattle industry, held in Alice Springs in 1965, I visited Utopia and asked Mac Chalmers some questions based on the kinds of things said in evidence for the pastoralists concerning Aboriginal labour. I asked, 'Mac, do you send your Aboriginal workers out on their own to fix bores and to other jobs necessary around the station?' 'Yes', was the reply. Mac is a man of few words. 'Do they do those jobs properly?' 'Yes'. 'Don't you have to supervise them all the time?' 'No', he said, looking at me by now as though I was asking stupid questions, which of course, in that setting, I was. Utopia was later sold to the Government for the Aboriginal people living there.

There are other people with similar managerial approaches to those men, but the prevailing attitudes were generally those which, both by design and accident, pushed Aboriginal people off their homelands and largely dispossessed them.

Government Pressures

Government actions have over the years created pressure and distress and have forced Aboriginal people from their homelands, or kept them away from those lands. The history of the dealings of government with Aborigines in Australia is a history of providing land which was unsuitable,

largely unwanted by white men, and out of the traditional tribal areas of people whom they wished to relocate in such reserves. In addition, where people did settle in those places, history records the whittling away of the Reserves at the request of vested interests for farming, mining or other purposes as discoveries made the land attractive for development and exploitation.

So it continues today, with a bitter and concerted attack by those same vested interests, and by some state governments, on the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) introduced by the Federal government in 1976 which was the first sign of hope for tribal Aborigines.

Though the Act applies only to the Northern Territory, where the Federal government had control, some of the states see it as a threat to their autonomy and exhibit fear of the Federal government's overriding power to make laws for the benefit of Aboriginal people. The states generally do not want a similar law imposed upon them as they see it giving Aborigines too much power. It is not an insignificant factor in the states' reactions that mining, pastoral and other vested interests have made their opposition to the Federal Land Rights Act heard and felt.

Administrative interference in the lives of Aboriginal people and communities has been one of persistent pressure. It continues to the present day. In earlier days it allowed for the arbitrary removal of people. Bleakley discussed removing old Aboriginal people from station camps to institutions where they could be cared for protected, but he rejected that course on the grounds that 'Their whole life is bound up in the totemic associations of their tribal habitat and the strange country has unnamed terrors for them' (1929, 9).

Imagine the debilitating effects of actions such as the following:

> During the previous year, a number of natives from the vicinity of Alice Springs were sent to Hermannsburg Mission Station for the purpose of keeping them a distance from the railway construction works. On the completion of the railway, the necessity to keep them so far away disappeared and the natives were permitted to return to their former district (Government Resident, 1939, 4).

Duguid records the dilemma expressed to him in 1936 by Dr McCann of the Commonwealth Health Department, Alice Springs, who,

> … told me emphatically, if the black man is to be saved he must be allowed to live in his own hunting and ceremonial grounds. But there is not much chance of that. Cattle and gold interests are believed to be more important. We've knocked down the props on which the blackfellow has leaned for thousands of years and left him completely bewildered. He doesn't know where he is (1972, 104).

Pressures of Woomera Rocket Range

Arbitrary relocation and disruption of Aboriginal life continued, however, and the government defence requirements overrode Aboriginal needs and contributed to that disruption as Gould testified:

> … the climax came in the years following World War II with construction of the Woomera Rocket Establishment in South Australia. Government patrols equipped with four-wheel drive vehicles were sent out to reconnoitre the

> Gibson Desert and adjacent areas in search of Aborigines who, when found, were relocated in settlements like the ones at Warburton and Laverton (1969, 167).

The establishment of the Maralinga testing ground for the testing of atomic bombs caused the relocation of other people at Yalata Mission hundreds of kilometres to the south. Not only was there arbitrary relocation but William Grayden, a Western Australian MLA, stated that there was little or no preparation of the people or consultation with them, nor was there any real concern shown about their welfare (1957, 65-66).

The Commonwealth government appointed two Welfare Officers to cover the vast area of South and Western Australia and to keep contact with people displaced by the Woomera and Maralinga Range areas. Their task was to locate any parties going into the area and see to their welfare. That also meant their removal from the area. One officer, the late Walter McDougall, had years of experience in working with Aborigines in the early years of Mowanjum Mission and also at Ernabella, but confessed to language difficulties with the people at Giles. The other officer, Macaulay, was not experienced with Aborigines and had no knowledge of the language (Grayden, 1957, 62).

These men were given an impossible task. McDougall had to cover the whole Woomera-Maralinga Range area alone. He patrolled out into the desert area two or three times a year, and had a very good relationship with Aboriginal people. He also had a remarkable knowledge of small family groups and their area of country. However, many people could have ranged through the rocket range and the bomb testing areas with nobody knowing. Evidence before the 1984 Royal Commission into the effects upon servicemen and Aboriginal people of atomic bomb testing at Emu Junction and Maralinga shows that they did so. McDougall himself felt that the authorities took little notice of his reports and recommendations, and that he was a conscience-salver for an unconcerned government (personal comment from McDougall). The Royal Commission has brought to light McDougall's reports and diary, which had been kept in a 'secret' file. They are said to be scathingly critical of the Government for its neglect of the needs and safety of Aboriginal people in the area.

The extent of the disturbance to the lives of Aboriginal people can be seen in comments made at the time. In debate on the issue of the disruption of the Aboriginal people in the Western Desert areas by the Commonwealth establishment of Woomera, Maralinga and Giles Weather Station, the Hon J J Brady, Minister for Native Welfare, Western Australia, said on 21 December 1956, 'These people have been isolated from not thousands of acres, but millions of acres of land where they normally based their activities and where they found their food' (quoted in Grayden, 1957, 50). It should be noted that this was desert and semi-desert land with some small mountain ranges and, until the establishment of the rocket range, was of little interest to white men.

At the time of the establishment of these facilities, the Commonwealth government gave assurances that proper consultation would take place with various appropriate bodies, and with government officers, to see that a minimum of disruption would be caused to the way of life and the beliefs of the Aboriginal people displaced by Woomera and Maralinga, and that their sacred sites would not be interfered with. Apart from the appointment of two patrol officers to cover that vast area, it seems that little or nothing was done to honour those assurances. Grayden wrote:

> … notwithstanding the fact that for some considerable time the Commonwealth government's own Native Welfare Officers have been

> submitting reports which make obvious the extent of Commonwealth interference, nothing has been done to act on the reports (1957, 66)

Personnel in close contact with people at Warburton Mission in Western Australia and also Ernabella Mission and Amata Reserve in South Australia who were displaced or affected by the Government's actions, reported that there was great fear amongst the people about the bomb tests. Some thought it was going to be the white man's "final solution", and that a bomb was going to be dropped on them. Others thought that a foreign country was going to drop a bomb on them or their country. It was inconceivable that their own Government would do such a thing (personal comment). Grayden wrote of the people's great concern about the bomb, and their inability to conceive that the Australian Government would drop a bomb for testing purposes, so they tended to think some foreign country was doing it (1957, 4-5). Billy Kayipipi, an old man living at Ernabella, while discussing during this study the reasons that people left their land said, 'The bomb, a big bomb', indicating the fears of the people at the time. The effect of this disruption upon tribal people must have been considerable. They were bewildered and anxious, with a growing sense of helplessness.

Another patrol officer, Bob Verburght, was asked by some Pintupi men at Papunya to take them back to their own country. When he refused, one man cried. In his role as patrol officer, Verburght had persuaded them to come in to the food supplies and 'safety' of Papunya, a settlement of about 700 people at the time, with many separate camps and a number of different languages. He said that:

> [the Pintupi] were set upon by the resident Aborigines, some Pintupi-Ngalia, Aranta and Pitjantjatjarra principally – who, like all wary antagonists, bridling dogs or human beings, kicked hell out of the newcomers. [Concerning taking people back to their country, he said] I can't – the Administration won't allow it. Now that the Aboriginals are citizens the policy is to civilise them (Grenway 1973, 282).

Mark de Graaf speaks of 'patrol activity by Woomera and the NT Welfare Branch, especially [hastening] the process of depopulation' of the desert people's homelands (1976). As late as 1964 a Western Australian Native Welfare patrol, with a patrol from the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory and a team from the Federal Weapons Research Establishment at Woomera, made an expedition into the desert country of Western Australia. Duguid wrote:

> On 29 April it was reported from Perth, and in *The Advertiser* on 30th, that 'Many of Western Australia's last primitive Aboriginals in the western desert region want to abandon their sand and spinifex hunting grounds and move into the fringe of white civilization … 42 were taken <u>at their own request</u> to the Papunya Native Settlement 300 miles away in the Northern Territory (Duguid, 1964). [The underlining is Duguid's who wrote strongly about this incident.]

Duguid points up the difference in approach between patrols from the Western Australian Department of Native Welfare and the Northern Territory Welfare Branch (who had control of all work with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory). Each, when contact was made with nomadic families, gave them food. If they showed no desire to come into where food was available, the West Australian patrol would promise to come back in three months. The Northern Territory

patrol would go out with two or three Aboriginal guides and a truck loaded with foodstuffs and second-hand dresses, trousers and shirts. The people were given the food and clothing and told that there is plenty more in Papunya but they cannot have it in their own country. So 42 out of 71 contacted were persuaded to go to Papunya (Duguid, 1964).

At Papunya the nomads had to mingle with more than 700 people of various language groups, who were in various states of social breakdown. Duguid forecast that tribal fighting under those circumstances was almost inevitable (Duguid, 1964). Verburght attested that tribal fighting did occur. A friend who was a nursing sister at Papunya during those years told me of many bloody battles involving up to thirty men at a time. They treated numbers of bad wounds from spears, knives and boomerangs. These were mostly due to young men from other language groups, who were ignoring their traditional Law, chasing after Pintupi women and breaking their marriage laws. Alcohol often aggravated the troubles. During this period the Director of Social Welfare, H C Giese was telling Missions-Administration conference delegates how successful the Department was in enabling the different language groups to live together in government settlements.

The 1964 expedition reported the desert Aboriginals as 'slim and wiry, and their general health appeared to be good'. 'Why then are they being enticed and impressed to leave their own homeland for a crowded settlement and to a life utterly foreign to them?' Duguid asked (1964). Why indeed? As he pointed out, those people were not starving. There were roads into their territory from defence and oil exploration activities. Why not regular patrols and depots at intervals, with minimal interference in what was a well integrated life-style?

Staff at Papunya during this period told me of the deterioration of the Pintubi. They lost much of their life motivation, since their children were fed three meals a day, seven days a week under the supervision of white staff and, because cultural avoidance relationships meant that certain men and women could not be together in the same room, the women and men were fed separately in the mass dining facilities. The Assistant Director of the Social Welfare Branch stated in 1971 to a Missions-Administration conference in Darwin that you had to 'break down the old traditions in order to impose the new' (from my personal notes taken at the conference) – a recipe for disaster.

Disaster followed. Social health deteriorated. A nursing sister and a linguist and his wife, who worked closely with the people for several years, told me of two occasions when the Pintupi seemed to give up hope altogether and went on hunger strikes. Their leaders said they were 'finished' and 'the Pintupi have to die out'. On the first occasion two older people died before they were persuaded to end their voluntary starvation. The Pintupi did not cease to worry about their homelands and to long for them.

Pressure of Giles Meteorological Station

The development of the Meteorological Station at Giles (Warakurna) displaced other Aboriginal people. The Commonwealth government established Giles in the early 1950s with no consultation with the Aboriginal people or with those who might be able to advise as to how the establishment of the weather station would affect the people, and with no knowledge whatever of the people's culture, their sacred areas, or of what those things meant to them (Grayden, 1957, 60).

In fact, Giles was established on a sacred possum track and near to very sacred areas. It has been a constant bone of contention between the Meteorological Department and the Aboriginal people who gathered there. The possum story is one known only to older men and is high in Aboriginal

Law. Giles was excised from the Aboriginal reserve and built within five miles of Sladen Waters. As Grayden noted, this water supply enabled the people to make use of most of the northern half of the Reserve because they had a secure base to which they could return in the event of less permanent waters drying up. 'When they return now they are in a civilized area and it is no longer possible for them to lead their normal nomadic way of life free from contact with Whites' (1975. 36).

Grayden warned of other violations of the reserve in 1956, including an area in excess of 4,000,000 acres which was made available to a mining company for the purpose of prospecting for nickel. These were within the area of the reserve most 'favourable to the Aboriginal people in their constant search for food and water' (1957, 36), hence a vital part of their whole physical, social, cultural and spiritual life system. In the first year of his appointment as Commonwealth Patrol Officer to the Woomera-Maralinga-Giles area, Walter McDougall was told by the people that a very sacred board had been taken from its hiding place in the creek next to the weather station. They were afraid some calamity would happen if the board was not returned. Mr McDougall investigated and retrieved the board from the room of the staff member who had taken it (personal comment).

In addition to that early upset, shots were fired whenever Aboriginal people appeared near the weather station. I remember as a young man hearing Pastor Doug (later Sir Douglas) Nichols' address a men's meeting in the Seddon Congregational Church, Melbourne. I haven't forgotten the burning sense of injustice which he stirred in me. He told of a visit to Giles with an official party to inspect the situation of the Aboriginal people. While they were talking to a staff member a desert family approached. Nichols though they may have been seeking water. The staff member excused himself, hurried into a building and returned with a gun which he fired into the air above the family. They turned tail and quickly disappeared. Nichols was shocked and indignant. 'What did you do that for'? he demanded. 'Blacks are not allowed on the station,' was the reply, 'so we do it to scare them off.' The policy certainly had the desired effect. For that and other reasons – fear, uncertainty about how far white people might go, lack of knowledge of any rights, and lack of power – the people raised no vociferous objections to the presence of the weather station until the late 1970s.

Over the years relationships had improved between the weather station staff and the Aboriginal people. Gradually a community of about three hundred people developed near the station. It had swelled in number following the stimulation of the Woodward Land Inquiry. However, by 1976 relationships had deteriorated somewhat. I had heard on good authority that the time was fast approaching when the Meteorological Bureau would have to renew some of its very old equipment and also its lease of that part of the reserve. I saw possibilities for a mutually desirable relocation of the weather station, so I had talks with Ray Acaster, Regional Head of the Bureau, and invited him to accompany me on a visit to Giles to speak with the Aboriginal community about those matters, and also to related communities in the area. In June 1976 we visited Warakurna (Giles), Irrunytji (Wingellina), Papulangkutja (Blackstone), Marntamaru (Jamieson) and Warburton, and I acted as interpreter for much of the discussion.

The people camped near the weather station told Acaster and myself about shots being fired in the old days, and about the long past incident when Walter McDougall recovered a sacred board stolen by a Giles staff member. They said that they became afraid because of that, and removed their sacred objects to a hiding place in the bush, but in all the years since they had been apprehensive lest a woman or a child should discover them. That would be a bad violation of their Law. As a result,

they lived in a constant state of anxiety because the sacred objects were not in their proper place therefore they were not caring for them properly and this could cause something bad to happen.

Acaster explained to the Warakurna people, as he did to all the communities visited, that it was likely that the Bureau would have to begin replacing equipment at considerable cost, and that the station lease was coming up for renewal. In the light of present strained relationships he had come to give information and seek the communities' wishes in the matter. These he would report to the Department and any change would be up to them. He said that he could not give the people any promises, but would report faithfully the content and results of the discussions.

He explained the importance of a weather station in the west, but said it did not have to be right at Giles. He also spoke of his experience in New Guinea training native people to take over the functions of weather stations, and said that he was interested in training Aboriginal people to do the same. In every community concern was expressed at the present location of the station and interest expressed in people being trained to take over weather station functions eventually. They also showed interest in people in the homeland communities being trained in weather observation and reporting. Various alternative locations were discussed, and it became clear that Warburton Mission was the obvious and favoured choice. Warburton had the advantage of a larger European and Aboriginal community and already had a hospital, school, store and all necessary facilities. Acaster said that this would make it possible to use married staff.

Warburton people had already heard of our enquiries on the 'grape vine', and were a little touchy about establishing a weather station there. However, when the nature of the exercise was explained their concern evaporated. It was made clear that we did not want answers on the spot, but would return at a later date after the people had time to think over the idea. Acaster told them that one building only would be needed to house the equipment and two houses for staff. They could be some distance from the Mission, and would purchase power and water from the Mission, and use the other services. After 12 months of training, which could begin at Giles, the local people would probably be ready to take over the station and the staff of the Meteorological Department would leave, provided that the Department accepted the plan.

Later the same day, Tommy Simms, the council chairman at Warburton and several councillors, called us over and said, 'you tell this man we don't need to think any more about this, we want those jobs'. Acaster felt that there was a genuine interest in such jobs becoming available and that the communities showed considerable signs of stability and permanence. He was impressed with the obvious keenness and intelligence of some of the men, and told me that he was convinced that several of them would be quite capable of being trained in weather observation and the use of radar and other equipment, and that he would be recommending such a course to the Department.

His report and recommendations were submitted to the Department, and caused some high level talks between the Department of Meteorology and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The head of the Meteorological Department came from Adelaide and made a quick visit to Giles. He then explained to me in Alice Springs why it would be too costly to move the Station, why no Aboriginal people were employed at Giles, why it was impossible to train Aboriginal people for that type of work, and to insist what good relationships they had with the Aboriginal community there. He said that the people at Warakurna definitely wanted the Station left where it was. How such consultation could take place effectively in such a short visit with no background of language and culture is open to question.

I did not agree with the validity of that reasoning, and felt certain that the Departments of Meteorology and Aboriginal Affairs missed an excellent opportunity to resolve a long standing problem and to advance the aspirations of Aboriginal people in the area. It seemed from comments made by Bureau staff at the time that, like Antarctica, Giles is a glamour station, an adventure appointment, and that some within the Department of Meteorology wanted to cling to it at all costs.

The idea of purchasing Giles as a positive means of helping the Aboriginal people of the area was also put forward by Professor John Cawte, a psychiatrist who has written much on Aboriginal health and cross-cultural pressures. He made a tour of Western Desert communities to assess their situation and state of health. He saw some future employment for the people in maintenance and construction of roads … for the desert dweller's convenience and for defence'. He also wrote, 'The Giles tracking station in the Rawlinsons, with 13 good bores, is ideally situated as a highways base for Aboriginal road making teams and could be acquired cheaply' (1973. 225). The opportunity was lost.

Pressure Applied to Keep People Away from Ayers Rock

The intransigence of governments and government departments towards Aboriginal desires to have their sacred land left alone, to be cared for by themselves, has been consistent through the years where those Aboriginal desires conflict in the slightest way with government policy. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in Government action to remove people from the vicinity of Ayers Rock, and the statements of some that the Aborigines had shown no interest in the Rock. Duguid wrote that 'very strong efforts were made recently to have Aborigines banned from Ayres [sic] Rock' (Duguid, 1964). Some tourist operators and station people still tell tourists glibly, 'oh, there were no blackfellows here when white men came; they had given the place away long ago' and 'They are just jumping on the Land Rights bandwagon'.

Paddy Uluru's story, and his finding of the sacred objects hidden by him some thirty-eight years before, gives the lie to such assertions. So also does the report by E E Kramer. In the early 1920s he made an extensive trip through Central Australia with J E Edgar, for the Aborigines Friends Association. He wrote, 'Ayers Rock, called Uluru, is the most sacred spot in all the country around. Here the natives come for their ceremonies, and certain sections are not allowed to Aboriginal women on pain of sure death' (1928). The shooting of Paddy Uluru's brother at Ayers Rock caused the people to leave the area. The drought of 1939 also drove people from the general country surrounding the Rock. Then in 1952, the establishment of Areyonga Settlement by the Lutheran Finke River Mission drew people from the general area of the Petermanns, Ayers Rock and the Olgas.

The Central Aboriginal Reserve was gazetted in 1920 in line with the government's policy of 'preserving' and 'bettering' the Aboriginal people. In 1940 a large area north of the rock was revoked. Duguid believed that this was a reaction to pressure by gold prospecting interests and opposed it strongly on the grounds that the creation of such a corridor would encourage the intrusion of white people into the Reserve, with consequent damage to the Aboriginal people (Australian Archives file A659, Item 41/1/221 quoted in the Ayers Rock Claim Book 1979, 63). It put the Rock only one mile within the Reserve and travelling parties would have the excuse of visiting the Rock for water.

The area was nonetheless excised from the Reserve.

Ayers Rock and the Olgas were excised for tourism in 1958, after Eddie Connellan and other tour operators had made strong representations. Patrol Officer Sweeney strongly opposed the move on the grounds that many Aboriginal people travelling in large groups on ceremonial routes were dependent upon its waters and its very sacred sites, and that tourism would seriously disadvantage and endanger those people. The Western Australian League of Women Voters also presented strong opposition to the excision (Ayers Rock Claim Book, 1979, 63, 64).

During the 1960s there was a concerted drive by officers of the Social Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory administration to keep people out of the area and the cattle stations adjoining Ayers Rock. The motives at the time were mixed. There seemed a genuine concern about health, especially that of the children, but there appeared to be no objective criteria on which that concern was based. There was also a deep concern about education of the children in line with the then current policy of assimilation, but as the anthropologist Rose commented. 'The stated policy of the Government is to give the Aboriginal children an education. How efficient the education is may be a matter of doubt, and moreover, the opportunities for using it are almost non-existent' (1965, 37).

The third clear motive of the Branch, and perhaps the overriding one, was concern that temporary Aboriginal camps on the tourist routes to Ayers Rock were giving the Department of Welfare a bad image. Rose wrote:

Ayers Rock is (or was in 1962) nominally on an Aboriginal Reserve, and is a most important totemic centre, but nevertheless, the policy of the Northern Territory Administration is to keep the Aboriginals away from the Rock, and as far away from any direct contacts with tourists as possible (Rose 1965, 57).

The pressure to force the people out of the area was already being applied in mid-1964. The Central Land council secured correspondence from the files of the Social Welfare Branch as evidence in the 1979 Uluru (Ayers Rock) National Park and Lake Amadeus-Luritja Land Claim hearing. The material was mislaid and was found too late for inclusion in the evidence. I obtained photocopies of the correspondence. The Director of Social Welfare, H C Giese wrote to the Assistant Director, Southern Region, asking for 'some indication as to whether you can make a patrol officer available to carry out regular patrols, particularly on the road between Angas Downs and Ayers Rock so that we can if possible avoid the congregation of large numbers of Aborigines in these areas' (12 May 1974. File No 58/1/768). Again, on 29 July 1964 the Director wrote: 'You will appreciate that groups such as these can do considerable harm to the public image of the work we are attempting to do and therefore all possible steps should be taken to reduce their number and their assemblies as much as possible' (File No 65/379).

The Assistant Director reported to the Director on 8 June 1964:

> I have to advise that the Aboriginals who were congregated at Wilbia Bore have now either returned to Areyonga, or are at the Angas Downs homestead … We have informed Mr Liddle (the station owner) that the maintenance of this group will not be payable if he encourages them to remain on his station (File No 64/44/10).

The same threat was made to other station owners in the area who had Aboriginal people on their

properties, and one Aboriginal leader of a group was told that he would not receive rations at those stations as one of many steps taken to force him to go to Areyonga Settlement, as the Patrol Officer's report to the District Welfare Officer states (9 October 1964). The report went on to say, 'another important side effect in this has been a considerable saving in maintenance paid to stations in the area' (File No 64/44/18).

The pressure was maintained. The report of the Patrol Officer to the Assistant Director Southern, 3 November 1965, stated:

> 14. All stations in the south west area have been advised not to ration these itinerants as if they do so it will be at their own expense. [The pressure on the Aboriginal people was also maintained, as para 5 stated], The itinerant aboriginals in the South West area have been told in no uncertain terms over a number of years that the Welfare Branch is not happy with them wandering over the country and keeping their children away from school and that they would not be maintained by the branch while they live this way, but that food, clothing and other services are available to them at places such as Areyonga. Despite this threat, which has been put into action, it has done little to solve the problem (File No 64/44/33). (Underlining is mine).

An earlier report, 28 October 1965, spelled out that 'The reason for the large congregation of these aboriginals was for ceremonials to be held so that important tribal beliefs and rituals could be passed on from the Elders to the up and coming influential middle-aged men.' … 'it is estimated 250 were there at the peek [sic] of the ceremonials' (File No 64/44/31). Many comments in these reports from the 1960s bear out the evidence given in the Ayers Rock land claim, that the area around Ayers Rock and including the Rock, is of great ceremonial significance to Aboriginal people. They also bear out the contention in evidence that many of the people who moved around that area and resisted strongly attempts to remove them, were primarily associated with Uluru.

The dilemma and the ambivalence of members of the Department is also expressed in the report by the District Welfare Officer to his Assistant Director (Southern), 3 November 1965:

> It is difficult to know what other action to take to make them desist. On the one hand it is good to see people are self-reliant, and are no expense to the Government, but on the other hand it is unfortunate that this way of life does a considerable amount of harm to their own image and to the branch public image, as well as preventing their children from receiving proper education, and exposing them to all sorts of problems associated with poor hygiene (File No 64/44/34) (Underlining is mine).

No evidence seems to have been given to back up the last statement. On the other hand, epidemics on government settlements, and Health Department reports on places like Papunya, would seem to indicate that the danger lay much more in the concentration of people on some settlements.

One officer expressed his frustration in a handwritten report to the District Welfare Officer, 9 September 1967:

> You will note from the file that reports have been coming in on the 'Aboriginal Problem' on these tourist roads for years. If the behaviour problem, and

> the problem of depression is found to be correct what can be done? The aborigines are there of their own volition usually having left places where education, health and hygiene facilities, employment, etc were available and I am sure that the aborigines themselves to not have the feeling about their 'plight' as we Europeans have about their plight. Another thing that gets me in is that you can find aborigines in this condition all over the place, including our settlements. But it is only where they come into the public eye and destroy the aesthetic effect of the NT in the eyes of the tourist or tourism promoter that there is [sic] shocked outcries culminating in threats by this Branch to use the one legal means available to take action re the child Welfare Ord (File No 66/44/47).

On 20 July 1965 the Director wrote to his Assistant Director (Southern), 'that with the establishment of a depot [settlement] in the Petermanns, many of these people will migrate to the area' (File no 65/379). In 1968-69 the Docker River Settlement was established there. The people strongly continued to resist efforts to move them. The Assistant Director had reported to the Director on 29 June 1965 that, 'they seem to prefer to take their chance in this area than settle permanently on the Missions and Settlements in the area'. (These were hardly 'in the area', being approximately between 270 and 330 km from Ayers Rock, while the stations from which attempts were being made to push the people away were much nearer to the Rock, as well as having associated areas of significance). As this officer went on to say, 'Attempts are always made to try and persuade them to take their children and settle in these centres' [i.e. missions and settlements]. (File No 64/44/29).

Many reports indicated that the Aboriginal people used the tourists as a source of income, from the sale of artefacts. It is intriguing to note that interest in such trade dropped off considerably in July 1966. The local Patrol Officer reported to the District Welfare Officer on 18 July 1966 saying:

> The reason for this it would seem is that the general rains on several occasions this year have brought about a good season providing plenty of surface water and some wild-life, thus providing natural foods … Another large group of itinerants … were living off 'bush tucker' … (12 children of school age) … I paid particular attention to the health of the children and there were no ailments at all. It is obvious the children are not receiving an adequate variation of diet, however at the time I visited the various camps all children appeared happy and in good health (File No 64/44/38).

'Bush tucker' does in fact give some variation of diet generally, and was obviously quite adequate on that occasion, judging by the apparent contradiction in the last two sentences. It provided a much more balanced and varied diet when available that the basic bread, meat and tinned foods of the settlements. On 17 September 1968 the District Welfare Officer reported a fairly large group of Aborigines camped on the Mulga Park turn off on the Ayers Rock Road. He wrote, 'I noticed quite a few children, many of school age, in this group but all appeared to be in reasonably good health' (File No 64/44/63).

The District Welfare Officer's comments on the general health of the children seem to remove one of the reasons given for chasing people away from the area and on to settlements. The main concern seemed persistently to be anxiety about public image.

The people were persistent in resisting the pressure placed upon them to disperse to the settlements. The District Welfare Officer's report of 2 April 1968 stated:

> We suggested to them that the group move to Areyonga settlement but they opposed this suggestion strongly. Also, they were not interested in a move to Docker River. This group wish to remain at Angas Downs, and I can therefore make no recommendation to provide for their welfare other than a concentration of welfare activity at a centre on the Angas Downs lease.
>
> The owner of Angas Downs is willing for a settlement to be established on the lease and action has already commenced to start a school. I would like to see the school established at Wilbia Bore … with a view to expanding the centre to settlement proportions. I feel that the Angas Downs population could then be established and the centre could also avail itself of any benefits obtainable from the tourist industry. Some gardening and farming could be carried out and labour could be supplied on a casual basis to Angas Downs and other surrounding stations (File No 64/44/48).

Of the group who wished to remain on Angas Downs, he wrote on 17 September 1968:

> '… if any attempt is to be made to stabilise this group I think the only place they will regard as 'home' will be Angas Downs … It is therefore my intention to write to Mr Liddle, the owner of Angas Downs, informing him that payment of his maintenance claims will not be met unless the Aboriginals involved are permanently resident at the station homestead site' (File No 64/44/64).

The Patrol Officer reported on 19 August 1968, 'I visited Angas Downs and Curtain Springs Stations for the purpose of moving part of the Aboriginal population to Docker River Settlement'. The same Patrol Officer told me at the time how he had put pressure on the people in order to 'resolve the problem'. Some people finally agreed to go to Docker River on the Western Australian border, but naturally wanted to take their transport with them, since they would be very isolated and somewhat cut off from the ceremonial gatherings so important to them. The Patrol Officer told me with pride how he had resisted all such attempts, and that not a single camel nor even a dog would go to Docker River, and that he had also refused to allow an old truck to be taken from Curtain Springs (personal comment). In his report he stated that: 'the men were quite adamant that they were going to take their camels to Docker River, even though I gave firm warning that they may be destroyed' (File No 64/44/57).

It would seem that the recommendation of his District Welfare Officer in April 1968, that a settlement be established at Wilbia Bore, had been forgotten. In fact, the owner of Angas Downs, Arthur Liddle, complained to me in about 1969 that he had fought hard and long to get a mobile school with ablution facilities, and a mobile home for a teacher, through the Social Welfare Branch. Eventually, five large vans were placed at Angas Downs, one schoolroom, two ablution vans, one kitchen for mass feeding at lunch times and a three bedroom flat for the teacher. Shortly after this a Patrol Officer from the same Department had turned up with trucks and pressed the people into going to Docker River (personal comment).

About 100 people were living in a semi-permanent camp on Angas Downs at the time. Liddle

told me in an interview in 1980 that he had built ten rooms for pensioners, and toilets and bins for rubbish, so that the people could care for themselves. It was about a quarter of a mile from the homestead. He said that he offered to fence the area, get a school, and encourage the people to have gardens, but the Welfare Branch was not interested in leasing the area. Liddle said, 'There is nothing at Docker River. I have fencing and stock work for fourteen people here. Will the Department have proper jobs there for people, and after all the trouble and expense to put the school here, they will come and cart it away again. The people did not really want to go, but they have kept on pushing them. What are they trying to do to the people'? After placing the school complex at Angas Downs then removing the people, Liddle claimed that it took the Department two more years to remove the vans for use elsewhere (from interview notes).

Following sensational reporting in an Alice Springs paper of the ceremony held at Ayers Rock in 1972 when the Federal Government arranged for a hundred or so people who were related to Uluru to carry out ceremony there, Bob James, Superintendent of Amata Settlement in South Australia, wrote to the Assistant Director of Social Welfare on 5 April 1972 saying:

> I attended [the corroboree] … I understand that a number of the Aboriginal people 'owning' that area are concerned about the 'inroads' made by tourists to their sacred sites. One of the prime purposes of the visit was to point out such sites to the Head Ranger at Ayers Rock, and to seek his co-operation in keeping people away from these sites (File No 64/44/72).

The frantic efforts of the Welfare Branch to push the people into settlements finally wore them down. Though the Branch's motives were mixed, their main preoccupation seemed to be with their public image. In spite of talk in the reports of the self-reliance of the people and the general good health of the children, they were not prepared to foster that self-reliance and good health, but did everything to break down the former, and in doing so, endangered the latter.

It is interesting to note that the leaders quoted as being the most stubborn, Nipper, Captain No 1, and Harry Brumby, were all men with claims in the Ayers Rock area. Due to the deaths of older men, Nipper Winmati is now living in a house at the rock, and his 'ownership' is accepted. So over a great many years, and though a variety of pressures, the people were pushed out of yet another area of great sacred significance to them.

Pressure of Recurring Drought

Periodically people were forced out of their country by drought. It was only in times of severe or prolonged drought that people were forced to stay away for a long time, during which other events could happen which would stop or hinder them from returning to their country. Bennett writes of a prolonged drought in the Centre in 1982:

> This country has been in a state of drought for some years – only two inches thirty-seven points of rain fell at Alice Springs in 1928. Settlers lost great numbers of stock and were hard put to it to save what remained. An old well sinker described how natives, who had been fed by stock owners and encouraged to hang around the homestead so as to be handy for station work, were now chased away 'bush', beyond the lease-hold on their tribal territory, as yet unleased, where the wild tribes had not lost their art in the game of subsisting; the wild tribes chased the semi-civilized trespassers from

> their failing waters; hungry and desperate, the hunted natives speared goats and cattle, and many of them were sentenced to imprisonment – Alice Springs gaol being small they served their sentences neck chained to each other with heavy chains (1930, 78-79).

It was probably this severe drought that forced people to go to Ernabella prior to the establishment of the Mission in 1936. Again in 1939 Charles Duguid went on patrol with T G H Strehlow: 'to find out why so many tribal Aborigines were migrating from the Reserve to cattle stations which lay hundreds of miles East'. Tjuwintjarra, their guide, told them that there had been a prolonged drought in the Petermann Ranges and that many of the people had died. A number of survivors had decided that it was better to leave their tribal territory (Duguid 1972, 131-133).

Nganyintja spoke of her girlhood at Angatja, and how the 'soldiers' warrmala came because of the good food and water in the country, and they fought her people. It seems likely that the 'soldiers' were themselves pushed from the West by the drought which soon after came upon Nganyintja's Country. The warrmala don't seem to have forced the people out of their country, but the following drought did so. Many became very thin and died. A lot of people went to Ernabella and stayed. Ernabella seemed to be one of the refuge places to which people went in times of drought, though the waters there were not completely reliable (Edgar 1928, 28).

If they survived on the waters and the animals which were attracted to them, the people would then return to their own country. On the occasion reported by Nganyintja they found a missionary at Ernabella with sheep. The new meat was so easy to spear that the people had a gala day. Some were taken to Oodnadatta by police to serve sentences while their people waited for them at the mission. During that time they were introduced to other things which the Missionary had, such as flour, tea and sugar, school and many new things which he wished to teach them; so they stayed.

As Robert Layton comments:

> The difference between the consequence of movement in this and previous centuries, however, lies in the fact that people moving their locus of residence and substance southward and eastward now encountered white settlement advancing from the opposite direction. Unrestricted practice of the traditional way of life was no longer possible, and people were instead offered the position of dependence on the white community. The relative security the latter offered in the face of drought may have encouraged people to move towards white settlement (Ayers Rock Claim Book 1979, 57).

The area around Pipalyatjarra (Mt Davies), like most of Central Australia, is affected by recurring drought. Lindsay Wamantjaku tells how 'water ran out and some people died. They went away and came back again after good rain, when water was lying in the clay pans. It happened again that way. Then a man on a camel brought tea and flour, and they followed him east'. This was probably a missionary named White, whom the people called 'alleluia'. He took some people to Ernabella.

A death from drought is reported as late as 1963. The death of a child in Hunt's family while travelling East of Warburton in the summer of that year caused them to go into the Mission. He said in interview, 'We went to the Mission because we had no food, and we didn't know what to think. This is our place, and we stayed here without food. So we went to buy food with dingo scalps. One by one we went and stayed a long time in that rubbish place'.

The term 'rubbish place' – 'ngurra rapitji' – came to mean a house or place, the name of which had become taboo because of a death there. In this case the death of a young man in 1976 caused the name Warburton to become taboo because the first syllable in his name sounded like the first syllable in 'Warburton', so 'ngurra rapitji' became one of the substitute names for the mission at that time. Hunt remembers it by that name (personal comment from Amee Glass, UAM Linguist, at Warburton for some twelve years).

Other Factors which kept People from Returning to their Country

Another reason for more prolonged absences from people's traditional country, also relating to drought, is given by Dick Kimber:

> Clear evidence does exist, however, for movement from the SA-NT border area to the South … Although Daisy Bates and to some extent V E Turner suggest that railway line as the attraction, reference in Giles and occasional other references indicate that the movement was traditional; primarily was of a north-south and return nature; and that the more permanent movements South coincided with times of drought which prevented return travel for such time as to result in birth-place, marital and other ties at Ooldea and other southern points of contact (1979, 5).

The place where a child is born is important to that child, and growing up in a place is seen to cement deep ties and a sense of security. The child learns and knows that country and develops an important part of his sense of identify from it. This makes parents loath to uproot a child and take him to their own distant country, and often resulted in them staying for years in a country owned by someone else. Parents at Areyonga have told me that is the reason many of them did not return to live a Docker River. Others have said that their children, having grown up a Ernabella and Amata, would be unhappy if taken back to the parent's tribal country.

Parent's country is, however, also of great importance to Aboriginal people and their place in the scheme of things. Father and mother would constantly teach the child about their country and how that child related to it. When those children became adults, many parents expect their help in settling in their homelands, in return – ngaparrtji – for staying with their children. People also have a traditional obligation to care for father's and grandfather's country.

It is more than likely that drought caused some people to move towards areas of white settlement in search of food. Relatives followed. Some walked amazing distances to get food for their families. Other factors often caused them to stay away from their homeland for long periods.

Attraction of White Man's Food

Not all the forces causing people to leave their homelands, or keeping them away from their homelands were negative. At least once contact was made the people's own desires played a part. The introduction of white man's food to the people, its seemingly inexhaustible supply and the ease with which it could be acquired in times of drought and shortages of natural foods, all tended to attract, and sometimes to hold, people to centres of European population and influence, and to 'food depots':

> When the people originally moved into these [the larger settlements] they found it much easier to obtain the supplies of Western cultural material

> items and food, than it was in the nomadic situation. Though their need for them was minimal, the comparative abundance of goods at the communities was overwhelming (Rudder, 1978).

Rudder was speaking of Northern Australian coastal people. People in the Centre had far greater need for supplementary food supplies than the 'minimal' needs of the northerners. Paul Eckert gives as the main reason why Pitjantjatjarra people moved towards western civilization at first the fact that:

> … western foods were tried and liked … the primary motivation for the Pitj people coming to Ernabella when it was set up in 1937 … food was available to those in dire need at first (normally food was only given in return for work) [It was a time of drought] … it continued to be available free to the aged. [These were rations funded by the Government. Another big attraction in that harsh country was] water from the wells … a reliable source that did not have to be worked for. In accepting some (western foods) as staples into their diet they unwittingly began to take on other aspects and values from western culture which created considerable added stress (Eckert, 1980).

Non-Indigenous people often underestimate the natural curiosity of Aboriginal people, and their desire to try for themselves those experiences of which they hear from others. Nganyintja described how her father and uncle set out to go to Ernabella and bring back some of the White man's food. Leaving the family in their country they set off to walk more than 250 km to the mission to trade dingo scalps for this new food. About two weeks later the family saw smoke and said 'Look, they're coming back, they're not far'. Next day the smoke was nearer. Finally they arrived. On his head her father carried a bag of flour with emu eggs in it for safe keeping. He also carried tea and jam. Her uncle carried a bag of sugar. The children, dancing with excitement, rushed to meet them. When they tasted the sugar and the jam they cried out in delight 'Oh, isn't it sweet' (interview transcript).

Fred Forbes of Papulangkutja, in a letter written in Ngaanyatjarra to Senator Cavenagh, Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, December 1973, sought help in setting up and equipping the outstation there. He pleaded for help in getting a reliable store service – the translation reads, 'You see, because the children have become used to white people's food [at Warburton[, and they even cry for it'. So Fred felt at the time that they would not be able to go out to the outstation without a lot of help and support from white men. In April 1974, Forbes wrote again, having gone to Papulangkutja, to tell about a crisis and to plead for a better store service.

> Three weeks we've been sitting here unable to think what to do, and it keeps on raining. Another truck should also bring food, two trucks. You see there are an immense number of men and children and women too … The flour finished up the weetbix finished up. We couldn't think what to do. We ate rice … The sugar has finished up and we are drinking milk.

In that harsh climate where not only drought but, for short periods, prolonged rain could hinder movement and the successful hunting of the sparse game and, in modern times, make the dirt roads impassable, a reliable food supply becomes very important. The white man's system obviously had the capacity to secure and transport quantities of food, and that attracted people.

Attraction of Work

It probably will come as a surprise to many, given Western stereotypes of Aborigines as 'dirty', 'lazy', and so on, that one of the reasons given by Aboriginal people for their attraction to areas of settlement, to stations and missions, was 'work'. 'Waaka' (work) in Pitjantjatjarra is borrowed from the English language and is related to tasks taught by white people. Nowadays it is also used to describe Aboriginal pursuits, or work done for their own communities and organised in their own way for their own purposes. The people talk of 'Aboriginal work'. Many statements have been made to me by Aboriginal people, including some in the interviews for this study, to the effect that they liked learning about work, and learning new skills. Rose noted that the Angas Downs community were attracted to the station by the easily acquired food, which cut out a lot of hard work hunting and gathering. This caused them to stay and, in turn, led to the desire to work and earn money to purchase that food (1965, 31).

To get supplies of the white man's food the Aboriginal people had to adopt some of his ways. The first and most significant was work. As Eckert points out, the kind of work available to the Pitjantjatjarra did not impose great stress upon them because it fitted in with their life-style. The first work was 'dogging':

> … hunting and killing dingos and exchanging their scalps with some white man dogger for food – flour, sugar and tea being the basic exchange items … The second type of work which many Pitjantjatjarra people were involved in was shepherding sheep for the production of wool … Traditional hunting and gathering was able to be practised alongside the shepherding of sheep, even the hunting of dingos (1980).

Other related tasks followed, such as fencing, well-digging and shearing. As the range of skills broadened, so also did the level of stress. However, people spoke with appreciation of the various work skills they had learned.

At Kuntjanu, two old men, Peter Wara and Kutatji, spoke of the work they learned in their years at Fregon. They spoke of building fences at Fregon and of 'working and working and working', and of their desire now to work and build things at Kuntjanu. Tommy Wangi at Kanpi, a man of about 50 years of age, said 'I am not ignorant of work. I learnt about bullock work and … worked with bullocks for years and years, and again I used to make paddocks … at Mulga Park. At Amata … I was a warden, and I worked as a policeman'.

Andy Tjilari, about 40 years of age, also said at Kanpi, 'I learnt work from white men at Ernabella, fencing, caring for sheep … to count sheep for rations. Later at Fregon I learned fencing, baking and Church work'. A younger man from Makiri, Adrian, spoke of being happy to have work. He said, 'I learnt work from my father and mother'. He talked of skills he had learnt from Alan Steel, a builder and manual arts teacher at Ernabella, and of his desire to teach those skills, such as building and welding, to his children in turn. He said. 'We are not sad to be working, but happy, and we happily get up to do all the work'.

Nganyintja is an older woman with eleven children and possessed of great intelligence and drive. She spoke of the work she and her generation learnt at Ernabella and Amata, and her dream of establishing an outstanding at Angatja (her father's place) where she can teach her children and offer both the things of their grandfathers and the skills they learnt from white people. 'That work

is a craft room … for my daughters to learn on the sewing machines how to sew their clothes, and perhaps the young girls will be knitting jumpers before long … And the work that we've learnt, others will make – batik – it's done with wax … Maybe they will tell sons and daughters: this is your work. You look after the garden. You look after the truck. You look after the craft room. You wash the clothes. You cook the food, and so on … White people have done all the work, looked after books and writing, teaching us all the time. We have learned and want to do it out there.'

So the people were both driven and attracted out of their homelands. They were driven through fear of the murderous superiority of the white man; they were attracted through the desire to some of the things which the white man's material culture offered. While it was mostly fear that drove the people out of their own country in order to survive, for some it was the comparative safety, and the attraction of readily available foods, and new things and new skills to learn which kept many close to centres of settlement where their reserve or crown land was still open to them or was not too far away. Others were forced to go far from their homelands. The people and their lands thus became open for exploitation.

The destructive effects of the contact and the bloody nature of the ensuing conflict caused concerned people and governments to seek solutions to those problems. The answer was the segregation era, the protection and the reserves, the years of the captivity. The results of these were another kind of oppression: the undermining of Aboriginal authority, the sapping of initiative and energy, and the apathy of institutionalization. We will next examine the captive years.

Chapter 2
The Captive Years

> I believe that the Aborigines who live in the pastoral areas north of the latitude of Port Augusta are not capable of looking after their own affairs, in particular the management of land. The North-West Reserve dwellers are the second most primitive of the primitive … many of their tribal customs are, in a way, animal – not in the derogative sense, but that is the way of life they have; their tribal customs can be likened in many ways to the habits of animals (quoted in Gale & Brookman, 1975, 16).

That extract from the minutes of evidence given in 1966 before a select committee of the South Australian Parliament appointed to consider the Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill exemplifies the fact that, though the massacres are over, the attitudes linger and the opposition has become social and political.

European settlers in Australia entered into no treaties with the Aboriginal people, because of their certainty that they were dealing with a grossly inferior people 'no better than animals'. After all, they didn't grow crops or graze cattle or in any way 'use' the land. It didn't seem to enter the thinking of the time that there were no suitable grains or animals indigenous to the country for those purposes. The tragedies of early attempts to establish white settlements on Australia's Northern coastal fringes fundamentally occurred because of an inability to live in harmony with the land, or to live from its resources as the Aborigines did. These realities are often overlooked. Instead, Europeans propounded Darwinian theories about the survival of the fittest and the Aborigines' low status on the evolutionary scale to justify the ensuing massacres. Roberts cites many accounts of massacres, and goes on to say, '… the native people were a pest to be exterminated' (1978, 19-20).

The occupation of Australia was not the peaceful taking-over of a largely unoccupied country, as much of our written history would have us believe. It was protracted guerrilla warfare. The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Aborigines (British Settlements) 1837 stated 'their land has been taken from them without the assertion of any other title than that of superior force' (quoted in Harris, 1979, vii).

The Government Resident of the Northern Territory stated in 1889:

> After careful inquiry I'm of the opinion that this is the attitude of the aborigines towards Europeans. Entrance into their country is an act of invasion. It is a declaration of war, and they will halt at no opportunity of attacking the white invaders (quoted in Peterson, 1982, 442).

The governments of the day were not able to control the violence which their encouragement of settlers unleased. Their general solution was to segregate the Aborigines on reserves. This served two purposes. It got Aborigines out of the way in many areas, and it salved the national conscience – the government was doing something for them. As far as the 'war' was concerned, superiority in weapons and poisons, and the support of the full might of western law forced tribes to come to terms with the powerful invaders in order to survive.

There was always a minority in Australian society who felt compassion for what was happening to Aboriginal persons and to the whole fabric of their lives. These people, motivated by humanitarian and sometimes Christian principles, never ceased to prod a reluctant officialdom to put a stop to the murders and to take action to minimize the damage done to Aboriginal people's life-style, culture and health by this alien intrusion. Slowly, ever so slowly, they prevailed and the public conscience was stirred. The solution was seen to be segregation. The government Resident of the Northern Territory recommended reserves to which the Aborigines would be 'given absolute rights and sole control' (quoted in Peterson, 1982, 442).

Reserves were established in 1890 but, far from giving the Aborigines absolute rights and sole control, their lives, decisions and future were placed in the hands of white authorities, either mission or government. Reserve Lands were never safeguarded as such but companies and individuals from the white population were able, over time, to have areas excised for mining leases, farming and grazing. Even as late as 1955 the Aboriginal Protection Board leased an area near Pipalyatjarra (Mt Davies, South Australia), to South West Mining Pty Ltd. It was part of the North West Aboriginal Reserve.

The attempts to exploit Aboriginal land for white economic pursuits went on and Vachon reported that in the following year:

> … in response to pastoral interests, a request made by the Pastoral Board to carry out 'an inspection and investigation of the North-West Reserve in regard to the possibility of establishing a cattle industry (Report of the Aborigines Protection Board 1956/7) was granted. But, again, the Pastoral Board was not impressed with the prospects (Vachon 1982, 475).

Had the Pastoral Board been impressed there is little doubt that large areas of the north-west Reserve would have been leased to pastoral interests for the purpose of establishing cattle stations.

So it was that segregation became the answer after the early conflict and bloodshed. It suited many pastoralists. It suited the governments, who felt obliged to take some action to protect Aboriginal people from the evils of white society while seeing that they did not suffer more than was necessary as they inevitably died out. And it suited the missions who also wanted to protect them from the evils of society and, at the same time, to convert them to the 'blessings' of the Christian life, and to 'civilize' them (Gale & Brookman, 1975, 28-29; also Strehlow, 1964, 26, Coombs, 1973, 2). Many of the early missions were damaging to the culture of the Aboriginal people, though often being at the same time their only means of surviving in an alien and hostile world (Gale & Brookman, 1975, 29).

Some later missions became the means by which Aboriginal languages were written and preserved, and by which the culture was respected and encouraged. The missions were sought after by governments, and all states offered grants of money and land to assist with their establishment. As government-funded bodies, however, the missions were under obligation to pursue government policy. In the early days mission and government policies tended to coincide. That honeymoon period was long, but the marriage eventually became argumentative, if not stormy. Missions found that their generally deep concern for Aboriginal persons and their spiritual and social health did not sit happily with some government attempts at 'social engineering'.

Hermannsburg was the first mission to be established in Central Australia in 1877. The early missionaries were implacably opposed to the pre-existing culture. They saw it as heathen and satanic. They made the eternal mistake of concentrating on the children. As a result, they estranged themselves from the men for a very long time, and the men regarded the Christian faith as a childish thing (Strehlow, 1964, 11-12). It would seem that they did not consider the women as having an important place in the scheme of things, and our western culture and officialdom has perpetuated this. On the other hand, the presence of the mission as a refuge, and of the missionaries who protected Aranta people from police and pastoralists who seemed bent on wiping them out, and their exposure of some dark and murderous secrets about the activities of certain policemen and others, saved the Western Aranta from extinction.

Strehlow, who grew up at Hermannsburg and later became a renowned anthropologist working with the Western Aranta, commented:

> Had, for instance, Hermannsburg Mission not been established in 1877, the Western Aranda would certainly have died out just as the Central Aranda, the Hale River Aranda and the two Southern Aranda groups (Upper and Lower) have since done. For all of these Aranda groups had their territories turned over to white settlers or missionaries before the close of the 19th century (1964, 29).

[The Hale River Aranta did not die out completely, though their land was taken and we might assume from Strehlow's comments that they were 'dispersed'. In late 1984 their descendants were in the process of making a claim to some of their traditional and. Missionary policies later underwent changes, and missionaries began to realise that the Aranta had much to teach them.]

Some later missions began with a much more enlightened view. The Methodist Church commissioned Rev James Watson do a survey of Arnhem Land in 1914. He established their first mission at South Goulburn Island (Warruwi) in 1916. Milingimbi was next established in 1923. Rev John Burton, general secretary of the Overseas Mission Board, visited the area in 1927 when Rev T T Webb was appointed to Milingimbi. McKenzie wrote that:

> After visiting both stations, Burton deplored the fact that none of the missionaries had made a serious attempt to learn any of the local languages. He believed it was imperative that the missionaries learn to achieve real communication with these people whose minds were so different from their own, and he appealed strongly for a change of policy that would insist on this (McKenzie, 1976, 39).

Encouraged by Burton and sometimes assisted by anthropologist Dr Warner, Webb struggled hard to learn something of the language at Milingimbi. Eventually he came to learn much about the social organization and beliefs of the people he had gone to serve (1976, 44-45).

In light of what the people taught him about their structures Webb opposed the forceful abolition of polygamy. He wrote that such a policy 'would mean the dislocation and destruction of the Aborigine's whole pattern of life, which can be altered without disaster only by slow adaption, and not by abrupt compulsory revolution'. He believed that as the society became more static and developed a different economic basis, polygamy would gradually disappear (1976, 45).

In 1933 the crew of a Japanese lugger and an investigating policeman, Constable McColl, were speared to death at Caledon Bay on the Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land. The authorities planned a punitive expedition. Because of the resultant outcry from the churches and the public that expedition was called off. Four men were later apprehended, tried and found guilty. One, Takiara, was sentence to death by Judge Wells. The others were sentenced to twenty years hard labour. Donald Thomson, an anthropologist of some standing, who had lived amongst tribal people on the Cape York Peninsula, and who would be commissioned later by the Federal Government to live and carry out necessary research amongst the people in the area of the killings, reported that:

> Takiara was found guilty of the 'murder' of the policeman who, according to evidence of witnesses at the time, had first handcuffed and later raped Takiara's wife and then emptied his revolver at her husband who had come at her call for help. If he had been a white man his action would have been self-defence and on other grounds, justifiable homicide (Thomson, 1983, 23).

The Methodist Church had offered to establish a mission in the area where the killings took place, Caledon Bay, and the government accepted. They made a wise choice in Wilbur Chaseling. In 1934 he established Yirrkala near Cape Arnhem, the eastern tip of Arnhem Land. His stated objective was:

> … to preserve Yulengor culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies, and to stimulate in the people an appreciation of their own social organisation, which has often suffered from alien contact. It is unjust for any alien to come amongst primitive people for the purpose of upsetting their mode of life and converting them to living and thinking as he does; and there is no one so pathetic as a de-tribalized Aboriginal (Chaseling, 1957, 19).

In Central Australia Duguid, a Scottish surgeon, was mainly responsible for the setting up of Ernabella Mission in 1937. He had made an assessment of the general area in 1935 with Pastor F W Albrecht of Hermannsburg. It was a time of severe drought. The people were being exploited by white doggers, who traded flour, tea and sugar for dingo scalps, for which they received the government bounty. Duguid wrote:

> … I had seen that the Pitjantjatjarra people of the Musgrave Ranges were so far uncontaminated by contact with the White man and I was determined that they should be given a chance to survive in their own country. It seemed that the best way to do this would be to establish a Christian mission at the eastern end of the Ranges, … and that this mission should act as a buffer between the Aborigines and the encroaching White man (1972, 115).

The principles which he persuaded the church to adopt were in harmony with those of Chaseling and Webb in Arnhem Land, and ahead of their time.

Missionaries at Ernabella were expected to learn the language and to respect the culture. Children were not to be forced to go to school or to wear clothes in school. The people came to trust some of the staff and to show them some of their ceremonies, sacred areas and sites. Of course there were amongst mission staff, even on those missions with more enlightened policies, a few totally inappropriate and sometimes disturbed staff. The Aboriginal people themselves however came to realise that generally mission staff would stay much longer than government staff and were usually

caring people who had no career structure to worry about, and could be trusted. On the other hand missions were often forced to carry out policies with which neither they nor the people were happy. The government 'paid the piper' and thus 'called the tune'.

One example of such a resented policy is mass feeding. In South Australia the Aborigines Protection Board insisted that Ernabella Mission introduce mass feeding. At first they were paid child endowment to feed the children. The staff considered this to have a bad effect on family life. The South Australian authorities were impressed by William Grayden's book about the plight of the Western Desert Aborigines affected by the Woomera Rocket Range. As a result the Protector of Aborigines forced the mission to extend the feeding to adults, and dining facilities were built.

Soon came the drought of 1959, when only two inches of rain fell for the year. There was never enough money for the feeding and, as spinach was the only vegetable that could be grown that year, meals were incredibly monotonous. About four years later when the mission was able to convince the authorities that the gardens had developed and mass feeding was not required, it was dropped. The people asked the mission to provide meals for the pensioners in return for a small payment out of their pension.

Some of the women were employed in cooking the meals. This was one of the practices at Ernabella about which a senior Department of Aboriginal Affairs officer from the South Australian Department had complained in 1965, when I talked with him on my way to take up work in the Northern Territory. He said they were trying to force the mission to stop the practice. It seemed to me that some departmental officers were so suspicious of missions that they were not prepared to allow the Aboriginal people the freedom even to make decisions about the feeding of their pensioners and implement them.

The intensity of the people's dislike for mass feeding was revealed dramatically to me by some drawings done for the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs by Albert Lennon from Fregon. I asked him to draw some scenes of Aboriginal family life based around the traditional hunting and gathering and sharing of food, then during the time that white men came on the scene, and also the mission and some scenes set in today's situation. His drawings, unfortunately since lost, were lively and colourful, the more modern settings reminding me of the work of the Mexican revolutionary artists.

In the early scene the husband speared kangaroo, the women and children gathered bush foods and small game, and the family sat around their campfire and shared the food. Then, in the next scene, doggers and missionaries came and traded flour, tea and sugar for dingo scalps. The family supplemented their bush foods with the new food, and still shared it around the fire. Next came the mission days when people were taught to wear and to wash clothes. After that came the masterpiece. It was a perspective of the interior of a large hall. At each side was a view of the outside with rows of colourful people shuffling into the hall. Inside were long tables with people sitting crowded at them. Every other picture was colourful and lively. in this picture, the area outside the hall was colourful, but inside the hall all was a dreary grey: the people were grey, almost featureless and their clothes were grey. It was a drab and depressing scene. I felt that it expressed a thorough dislike of mass feeding, perhaps unconsciously, as art can do.

Another lively picture followed of a man receiving wages, a woman collecting her child endowment and both shopping at the store. Then the family were seen at home sitting on a blanket sharing

Yami Lester's mother
flees with him
from police
at Mimili

Ivan Baker
with baby Kunmanara
at Kalka.

their meal together. Given my suspicions about the mass dining situation, I asked, 'Albert, how did the people feel about the time when they used to have their meals all together in the dining hall?' 'Kurra!' he replied, [Terrible!].

About the same time that Ernabella was putting an end to mass feeding, the Social Welfare Branch in the Northern Territory was introducing mass feeding into the settlements there. The Social Welfare authorities tried to force Hermannsburg Mission to adopt mass feeding. Pastor Paul Albrecht said that the people hated the idea and the mission refused to introduce the practice (personal comment). The Branch then funded the mission to build a kitchen and dining facilities to feed the children. Once these were built, the mission was pressured to feed the adults also. Gary Stoll, for many years superintendent there, told me that he reported their refusal to do so to H C Giese, the Director of Social Welfare. Giese suggested that in that case the Branch might have to consider 'adjusting' the mission subsidies (even though the mission was not being subsidized to feed the adults). Stoll told the Director that if the subsidies were cut the newspapers would certainly hear the story. No more was said about it (personal comment).

Settlements and missions became the instruments of the assimilation policy. Senior officers of the Welfare Branch in the Northern Territory stated quite clearly that the purpose of that policy was to persuade Aboriginal people to drop their culture and accept the values and customs and lifestyles of white society and eventually become absorbed into the dominant culture. A senior departmental official said in 1975:

> Some few years ago, when the Aboriginal people of Central Australia were being hard pressed by the spread of pastoral development and mineral exploration carried out by white Australians, the then government reserved the land for Aboriginal use and established settlements, such as Papunya, to provide places where Aboriginals could learn to cope with and attain the benefits of organized urban living (Papunya Report, 1975, 25, underlining mine).

Prior to the assimilation era and during the 1920s-30s were the era of the Aboriginals Ordinance, and the time of Protectors, most of whom were policemen (Papunya Report 1975, 25). One can imagine quite a conflict of roles here. During that period the lives of many Aboriginal people became regulated by the Protectors, who had the power of government decree to make decisions on their behalf. The Protectors decided where the people should live, where they could go, or work, whether they could marry a white person – or, for that matter, whether they could marry a tribal Aboriginal person if they happened to be part-Aboriginal. Protectors decided what they could spend their money on – if they happened by chance to have any. Protectors were custodians of Aboriginal people's bank accounts. On odd occasions in Alice Springs during the 1970s I helped a Queensland Aboriginal person to contact his local policeman-Protector to ask him to send money for a fare, or a purchase, and to ask permission to purchase that desired object, on one occasion, a guitar. In Queensland managers of Aboriginal reserves had power over the daily lives and activities of Aborigines right into the 1970s (Roberts 1978, 44-45).

All Protectors could and did see that part-Aboriginal children were removed by force from their tribal mothers to be brought up in white institutions. Missions too had some of those powers and, depending on their theology, either attacked Aboriginal culture and arbitrarily ruled the lives of the people, or they respected the culture and tried to learn from the people and to stand alongside

them. During this period massacres slowly came to a halt. Public opinion had been aroused, often by the missions and churches. Because the earlier lawless 'solutions' were no longer open to whites who wanted to exploit the Aborigines' land, other solutions had to be found. Both missionaries and squatters wanted the same thing, but for different reasons, namely the segregation of the Aborigines.

A Royal Commission held in Western Australia in 1927 was told:

> … the native was suffering under the impact from the White man, that the present law and order up there (the north-west) was useless, and that the future of the squatter depended on getting rid of the native, even though he represented cheap labour, and if only by segregation (Gale & Brookman 1975, 57-58).

Meat industry representatives, pastoralists, church and government were all agreed on the principle of segregation. This makes laughable the present cry of apartheid by vested interests who object to the people's wish to return to their own land.

Under the same principle the Northern Territory administration created settlements in the northern area of the Territory, and later in the Centre. They were persuaded by Hermannsburg Mission to create the Haasts Bluff Reserve in 1940, in this case against the objections of the pastoral interests, who wanted the land (Papunya Report, 1977, 13). The mission then opened a ration depot at Haasts Bluff to distribute rations funded by the Administration to women and children and the aged. Others were encouraged to hunt and gather. The mission traded food for dingo scalps and kangaroo hides, as there was a tannery at Hermannsburg. The people were encouraged to camp on the waterholes along the range. They also set up another ration depot at Areyonga in the Krichauff Range 240 km west of Alice Springs in 1943. At Haasts Bluff the mission appointed a cattle manager in order to provide work for the people. Soon after, about 1953, the Northern Territory administration took over Haasts Bluff, and the cattle manager stayed on to work for them. They took over the management of Areyonga soon after. Those two places then became settlements for carrying out the policy of the Social Welfare Branch of the administration.

H C Giese was appointed Director of Social Welfare in 1954. The policy of assimilation then came into effect with the new Welfare ordinance, with emphasis on training and education to that end. There followed a spate of settlement building. As a result of the high salts content in the water at Haasts Bluff, which was declared unfit for humans, Papunya was built in 1959 and people transferred from Haasts Bluff. However, a number of people continued to live at Haasts Bluff. For some it was in or near their country. During the same period settlements were built at Warrabri, about 100 km south of Tennant Creek, Amoonguna about 11 km east of Alice Springs, and Jay Creek about 50 km west of Alice Springs. Then followed Maningrida in Arnhem Land, about 400 km east of Darwin, Yuendumu 290 km north-west of Alice Springs, and Hooker Creek (Lajamanu) some 300 km north of Yuendumu.

The policy of assimilation was made official government policy in 1954. It simply ratified existing practice. It declared:

> The policy of the Commonwealth Government with respect to Aborigines in the Northern Territory is to promote and direct social change amongst them in such a way that, whilst retaining connections with and pride in

> their Aboriginal ancestry, they will become indistinguishable from other members of the Australian community in manner of life, standards of living, occupations, and participation in community affairs … [The Aboriginal people were to be] encouraged to detach themselves from their present situation of group separateness and solidarity and become merged as individuals in the general community (Papunya Report, 1977, 26).

Social workers used to comment, during my training, that Australia was fifty years behind America in its policies regarding its Indigenous people. Hamilton points out that as early as 1928 the Bureau of Indian Affairs had ruled assimilation a 'complete failure, resulting only in social disorganization and increased dependence on government charity', and that this was well documented (172, 36). In spite of the American experience, the Director of Social Welfare set out the basic principles of the assimilation policy for Northern Territory Aborigines in 1964, two of which are:

> [Point 5] To be assimilated each individual must change; change must concern itself with a 'discarding of tribal ideas, values, traditions, loyalties and an acceptance of standards of conduct, social conventions and general purposes of the Australian community … and
>
> [Point 8] Emphasis had necessarily to be on the younger Aborigines but there should be no separation of children from adults since 'family life is strong in these people' and the 'integrity of the family group in our welfare measures should be accepted and in fact emphasized (Papunya Report, 1977, 28).

As will be shown, the very tools used to attempt to bring about assimilation destroyed the integrity of the family.

The powers given under the Social Welfare Ordinance to control the lives of Aborigines living on settlements turned those settlements into institutions. Jeremy Long, with his years of experience in the Social Welfare Branch, described them as such. He went on to say that the symptoms of the 'disease' called 'institutionalization', which are well documented about the inmates of prisons, mental hospitals and refugee camps, can be seen in most settlement communities. People tend to become passive and, as Long wrote:

> … unable to think of, or to fight for, changes whose need they are content merely to grumble about and unable and unwilling to leave the familiar environment, where they feel safe, and to make a successful adjustment to life 'outside' … because Aborigines in all the settlement communities have so obviously lost their independence (and much more than their economic independence is lost) their attitude has tended, or is tending, to become one of hostile dependence (Long 1970, 181).

What did it mean to live in a settlement community in the 1960s and 70s, and what were the stresses which it placed upon Aboriginal people? An enlightening example can be seen in what happened to the Pintupi. By all accounts they were a wiry, proud but shy people living with dignity and in harmony with their harsh desert environment. They were independent, the head of each extended family having authority and autonomy in his group, but having none over other groups outside of his own. Life was purposeful, centring around family relationships, care and control, the provision of food and water, and the ceremonies that would ensure continued supplies of these.

To survive in that environment required almost continual and concerted effort, and an incredible knowledge of the country. To go hunting with the Pintupi is to be over-awed by their encyclopaedic knowledge of the flora and fauna, of the habits and behaviour patterns of the latter, and their peerless skills in tracking and bushcraft. Suddenly, those shy people were wrenched, stunned and frightened, into the twentieth century. The impact of this devastated them as a people, and caused the death of many.

They arrived at Papunya. Many had not seen a vehicle before they were picked up and driven in trucks to the settlement. MacDougall, who was ranger for the Woomera rocket range, told of finding a woman sitting alone in the desert mourning her people. It was a short time after the last group had been taken into Papunya in 1964. She was the second wife of one of the men. She was out food gathering and in the confusion her absence was overlooked when the people got into the trucks. She found her people's tracks disappearing into the tracks of some great monster. So she sat alone, stunned and grieving. MacDougall took her to her people (personal comment).

Hordes of people lived in Papunya, a number of them white staff. Some of the Pintupi had not seen white people before, or else believed that white people shot Aborigines. As late as 1964 a field officer with the expedition which brought in a large number of the people said, 'On initial contact they said they had expected us to attack. But their fears were soon overcome' (Papunya Report, 1977, 20). Even before that group of people were brought in it seems that some senior officers of the Welfare Branch had made up their minds that they would be brought in and assimilated. There has been much argument since as to whether they were heavily coerced. In 1962 a senior officer of the Branch had stated, 'the children require education, and this means that the parents will come in to the settlements' (Papunya Report, 1977, 20, underlining mine). A command may not have been intended, but it fitted the manner in which the policy was administered at the time.

Those shy, isolated people found themselves living in a sprawling settlement of seven or eight hundred people. They were then subjected to the assimilation policy, the unashamed aim of which was to make them give up their tribal affiliations and become lost in the white society as individuals and presumably bred out or whitened. However, the Director of Social Welfare had said nice things also about the integrity of family life and the need to respect this.

The first thing that happened was that the women were stripped of their primary role as gatherers and preparers of food for their families. Their children were taken and placed in school where they were taught white man's values. They were also fed meals three times a day under the supervision of teachers and settlement staff. Nothing of the reason for this was conveyed to the parents, supposing it could have been communicated across the cultures and justified in their thinking. Next the parents were fed all their meals in the mass dining halls. One of the longest serving teachers at Papunya at the time described the scene:

> I have never seen anything like it. They were dying the poor souls. [Which may confirm what Long said about the condition of some of the Pintupi who were brought in.] They were herded into the kitchen and given food they had never seen before. They threw vegetables on the floor. No one thought to get kangaroo for them. Children four years old were under 20lb. They were too sick to come to school and were dreadfully frightened and clung to their mothers … (Papunya Report, 1977, 58).

It appeared that no-one with the authority to change the approach heeded what was known about the people's culture, or pointed out the likely damage to its fabric. For very good reasons there are strong avoidance relationships between in-laws in the tribal culture. A man cannot be in a face-to-face situation with his mother-in-law for instance, or with any of the several women who would be in that class of relationship to him. It is a strong law, still observed in many tribal communities. It had the effect of minimizing interference and conflicts and of keeping the marriage law strong. Now those laws were threatened by the mass feeding situation on settlements. The Pintupi and many other groups reacted to this problem by the men going into the dining rooms first and having their meals while the women waited outside, then the women filed in for their meals. Where was the much vaunted integrity of family life being upheld here?

The Director of Social Welfare claimed at Missions-Administration conferences in the late sixties that the process was a success at Maningrida, and that families were sitting together for their meals in the dining room. At the time I commented upon this:

> Where over a period the pressure of the situation and the words of authority-figures urging a change of practice bring about the seating of men and women together, the question arises whether the Aboriginal social structure has in fact been broken down. I have yet to see evidence that such procedures have been slow enough for the people to absorb, or that we have put anything adequate in place for that which we so speedily broke down. I have heard many expressions, from the people, of strong dislike of the mass feeding in a variety of institutional situations (Downing 1971, 88).

In almost every culture in the world it seems that the 'hearth' or meal time was the symbol of family life, the time when families relaxed and shared together. In these enforced Aboriginal settlements mothers, fathers and children all ate separately for many years. Both partners lost their traditional role of providing for the family. A few of the men could perhaps get work on the settlements in those days, but it was much harder for the women. A nursing sister friend, Mrs Win Eldridge, who worked at Papunya for many years told me, 'The women have lost their family role and have nothing to do all day except sit around and play cards, gossip and fight' (personal comment).

Eating habits and food preferences are amongst the hardest of all cultural patterns to change. I have observed the feeding of school children under the supervision of white staff at Amoonguna settlement. The staff didn't like the duty and seemed to pay little attention except to curb any excesses of rowdy behaviour. The children ate the meat, bread and fruit when provided. Drums of vegetables were thrown out daily. Pigs on settlements had a very healthy diet. The same eating preferences were often evident in the adults. Mass cooked food, often overcooked, loses much of its nutritional value. Since Aboriginal adults tended to undercook meat on a campfire it would have been better nutritionally, and for family cohesion, had they been allowed to take the food away and cook it on their own camp fires.

The mother's role was usurped even in relation to her younger children. Others prepared the food and the mothers were required to bring the infants to feeding centres. There they fed the children under the supervision of settlement staff, generally nursing sisters. At those feeding centres the children also received a multi-vitamin supplement. I observed many sessions of infant and pre-school feeding. There was always an atmosphere of tension. The mothers thoroughly disliked the

situation and, as I have observed, some tried to shovel the food into the mouths of reluctant crying children, a most un-Aboriginal act, or quickly ate the food themselves when no-one was looking in order to get out of that disturbing atmosphere. Nursing sister, Mrs Eldridge, confirmed my observations.

Lest it be thought that the mothers had a choice, here is a story from Yuendumu settlement. The Baptist Pastor, Tom Flemming, who had worked at Yuendumu for some thirty years, told me:

> The mothers are made to bring their children every day for feeding. This is under the supervision of a partly trained white lass of about eighteen. Her language is terrible and she harangues the mothers constantly with loud comments like, 'You lazy so and so's, if you'd get up off your fat arses your kids wouldn't get sick'. It's an awful atmosphere, and she goes on all the time like this to dignified women old enough to be her mother. One of the women, a very good worker with a lot of self-respect decided she wouldn't put up with this any more and announced that she would feed her child herself at home. The superintendent told her that if she didn't come to the feeding station she would be sacked from her settlement job. She depended on the job, but refused to be subject to that degrading treatment any longer and gave up her job (personal comment about 1970).

We might well ask why, in the name of God or humanity, the authorities did not concentrate on teaching people to understand the new foods which they came to depend upon, and to prepare a balanced diet for their children using what they had. What they had was generally a wurley (a simple shelter), or a one room 'house', a bare shell without electricity or water, and a camp fire and a couple of billy cans. But the policy of assimilation with its social engineering demanded that, if the women were taught anything, it was in white style Home Management Centres with electric jugs, stoves, floor polishers and all mod-cons. It could not have been less relevant.

Much effort was expended in sending promising young girls away for six-month home management courses in the vain hope that they would come back and introduce new skills and values. When they returned to Papunya there was no iron, sewing machine or oven accessible to those young women for the exercise of those recently learnt skills. As for introducing new skills or values, they could not be so brash as to 'tell their grandmothers how to suck eggs', or to pass on any new knowledge to older women with cultural status and authority far superior to their own. Nor would their peers accept that they had any authority to teach them. Settlement staff around the Centre often told me that when those girls returned in 'flash new clothes and shoes', their relations would feel their new and foreign status to be a threat. They would remove the threat by asking at once, 'What are you trying to be, a whitefeller?' It seems as if this was the ultimate insult, for the smart new home management certificate-holder would quickly give away her new clothes, (which probably fitted traditional behaviour anyway) and settle right back into camp life, showing little interest in demonstrating any new skills. One would think that the whole process must have involved some trauma.

It is almost certain that the whole mass feeding and home management farce was used deliberately as a tool of social engineering, that much loved institutional concept which allowed well-meaning officers to carry out the most destructive policies in the belief that you 'have to break down the old tradition in order to impose the new', as an Assistant Director of Welfare once observed at

a conference. In the meantime, the nutritional status of people on settlements remained poor. Malnutrition amongst children under five years was higher than that on Missions and only slightly lower than on cattle stations, where there were no resident sisters generally, and few if any services (Kirke, 1968, 53).

Dr Kerry Kirke, who later became Director of Health, Southern Region, NT, was at the time a paediatrician at Alice Springs hospital working under the guidance of Professor Maxwell of Royal Adelaide Children's Hospital. Kirke carried out research into the illnesses and health status of Aboriginal children in Central Australia. His study showed a malnutrition rate of 4.3 per cent for government settlements where there were resident nursing sisters and mass feeding programs; 1.1 percent for missions where there were also resident sisters, but no mass feeding programs; and 4.5 percent for cattle stations where there were neither, except the odd place where the owner's wife was a nursing sister. Kirke stated that under stations he included children living in establishments and camps around Alice Springs township. As many of those children would really come from settlements and missions, he pointed out that a misleadingly high figure could result in the column for other diseases (1968, 53). (It could also be assumed that rationalizing the figures on that basis could result in a higher percentage of malnutrition under the settlement heading, and a lower one for stations. Missions figures were already so low by comparison that they would still remain much lower than the others.)

The late Emeritus Professor Elkin said in 1969, 'Mass feeding is one of the most destructive things the government has done with Aboriginal people, and the practice should stop at once' (from my notes taken at the Missions-Administration conference, Darwin, 1969). There was consternation in the administration ranks. Soon after the Director of Social Welfare began making statements along the following lines: 'We are moving away from mass feeding. Now that people receive higher wages they can afford to buy their food at the canteens. Dining facilities will become cafes where we will encourage families to have meals together as Europeans do'. I would have thought that the exception rather than the rule in white society.

At the very same time that the Welfare Branch was making 'we are not having mass feeding any more' noises, it was quietly offering strong financial inducements to cattle station managements to build dining facilities and introduce mass feeding where this had not existed before. Sir William Gunn's station at Roper River was the first to comply. The young school teacher there told me how he had persuaded the Welfare Branch to bring in mass feeding in the belief that it would raise the nutritional status of the children. Research does not seem to support this view.

The Welfare Branch seemed to need little persuading. A very experienced nutritionist with the Department of Health, Hazel Sinclair, told me at the time of her great concern at this move. The Director of Welfare had written to the Director of Health to seek the support of the Health Department. He in turn referred it to the nutritionist for her opinion. She was horrified and recommended against it, but the mass feeding was introduced at Rpoer Valley regardless (personal comment). It seems that the Health Department chose to remain neutral. This all happened after Elkin's speech against mass feeding, and while the Branch was assuring everyone that it was dropping mass feeding on it settlements. It was little wonder that mass feeding was a failure. It flew in the face of tribal Law and family cohesion. Most of the efforts to teach nutrition was with school children. Children are neither the moulders nor the changers of cultural practice.

Some church missions also introduced mass feeding on the basis of 'We must get hold of the children'. Those did not resist government blandishments or threats, but welcomed mass feeding and dormitory systems. They thought that by isolating children largely from the parents and the camp, and indoctrinating them, the future would be won in terms of that mission's policy. During that period bodies as theologically diverse as the United Aborigines Mission in Western Australia (UAM), and the Catholic Church in the north of Australia, separated children considerably from the influence of their families and people.

Wilf Douglas of Kalgoorlie, a skilled linguist of the UAM for twenty years or more, once told a Pitjantjatjarra language class at Adelaide University, in which I was assisting him, that he sought in vain from the older people at Warburton Mission for some of the rich children's stories that he knew belonged to their tradition. The old people told him, "We have lost our stories. The mission took our children away from us and put them in dormitories for many years. We don't know those stories any more'. People who know Warburton Mission speak of the damage to culture and family life that those early policies caused.

It was the same on some of the Catholic Missions. Paul Albrecht once told me of a young Hermannsburg man who went to visit relatives at Santa Teresa Mission. He was shocked to find that he was not allowed to stay with his relations in the camp, but had to be locked for the night in the single men's dormitory. The idea of changing society through its children did great damage to the family. There is much indication that autocratic policies have left Aboriginal people ill equipped to cope with European culture, or with the handling of new problems and responsibilities. There is some evidence that those missions whose interference with family and cultural structures was minimal and usually unwitting, and who believed in the people's capacity to handle their own affairs, are today seeing communities and individuals grow in that capacity. Today those disempowering policies have changed, but the damage was done. Governments generally applauded such practices and at times threatened the funding of missions who opposed such policies. Though there were exceptions, most government officers believed that the future lay with the children. That attitude only began to change definitely in the 1970s.

Statements were made by officers of the Social Welfare Branch and some of its teachers to the effect that 'you have to write off the grown ups, you can't do anything with them. The children are the only hope for the future' (personal comment, see also Papunya Report, 1975, 28: Gibb Report, 1971, 58). Such officers often saw the parents as their enemies, and it coloured their relationships with the people. An American sociologist, M Ross, has said, 'Effective communication … depends to a considerable extent on the quality of the relationships between the people involved. Where hostility, fear, aggression, distrust, disrespect predominate in these relationships, communication will be far less effective than were there are friendliness, mutual respect and trust' (1955, 170). Some officers had positive relationships and seemed to motivate the people creatively, but they were not numerous or powerful enough to overcome the effects of a bad policy and its assumptions.

Oppressive power in the hands of white settlement staff added to the distress and apathy caused by the destruction of family life. This was typified in section 18 of the Welfare Ordinance, which gave superintendents arbitrary power to remove 'trouble-makers' from the settlement. This often came to mean anyone with dignity and spirit who stood up to the superintendent to preserve his rights. A superintendent at Amoonguna once told me, 'The magistrate is getting a bit sticky about these [section 18 applications] but so long as I get the right wording on them he puts them through. I'm

kicking all the trouble-makers off the place. Where I was before I would 'vag' them straightaway, but here it takes six weeks'.

Aboriginal people themselves once used the discipline of sending people away but, because the power to do so now rested only in the hands of the superintendent until the early 1970s, they would sometimes ask a superintendent to exercise it on their behalf. They would usually find that the white man's strange law was no help to them. At Papunya some of the leading men asked the superintendent to send away a Luritja man who was continually chasing after the wives of the Pintupi men. They were asking in support of an aggrieved husband and were afraid that the trouble would end in violence. They were told, 'There is no law against that. I can't do anything'. Later the husband took action, as his own Law and his standing in the community required him to do, and wounded the offender with a knife. It was then that the white man's law leapt into action. The superintendent called the police, who took into custody the one who was seen to be wronged against in his own culture and who took appropriate action when all else failed. He was hauled into court on a charge of malicious wounding.

In several institutional situations I have heard change agents put forward such views as those expressed at Amoonguna settlement. 'You can't give these people responsibility, they can't handle it. It's no good letting them choose their own leaders, they choose all the wrong blokes'. The tendency often is then to put pressure on the community to change its mind. At this point the community is likely to do so. They can see that white people are not happy with the results of their choice. Then the Indigenous people will let the whitefeller have his way and generally lose all interest in the exercise.

Possibly the worst example of this attitude is that of the Amoonguna superintendent quoted earlier, who scrapped his Council. He told me: 'When I wanted a meeting I could never get them together, half of them were drunk. I appointed some better blokes and told them they were the settlement leaders, and better than the bunch down there'. His attitude to councils was that you used them to convey what you wanted to the people, and to discuss any trouble which arose; not trouble about which the community was necessarily concerned, but what you defined as trouble. He said: 'You can only work these things when you get a good group and isolate them from the rest'.

Strehlow expressed his concern about this general process and its effects on Aboriginal people, and tried to warn authorities about it. He wrote, 'Responsible authorities should … cease undermining the last traces of Aboriginal authority. Once the latter has gone completely, the white authorities will have to expect much lawless, even criminal behaviour on their settlements, coupled with complete shiftlessness and general apathy towards all schemes of social progress' (Strehlow 1961, 31).

The breakdown of which Strehlow warned duly occurred. Widespread abuse of alcohol, petrol sniffing, increases in both petty and serious crime, and the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in gaols are the signs. Aboriginal people have constantly expressed their concern over what was happening to them. At Jay Creek (Iwupataka) near Alice Springs, where school records prior to 1970 were said to speak of twelve and thirteen year old girls being absent, or unable to concentrate because they were suffering from hangovers (personal comment), some of the leading men expressed their anguish to me. They said that their authority had been taken away, and the young men, who were not 'rubbish' were regularly getting schoolgirls drunk. The men felt frustrated and helpless and without any authority to deal with it. One old man expressed the general feeling when he said, 'The government must want to destroy our people. They gave us this right to drink, and our people are

being killed. But they won't give us back the authority to deal with our own people, so they must want this to happen'.

It should not be thought that such oppressive attitudes and rules, and the incidents arising from them were confined to the Northern Territory. They were inherent in the settlement system and the assimilation policy. They were mitigated a little by the good superintendents, and seriously aggravated by the bad ones. At Amata in South Australia a superintendent once told me, 'You have to get these people stirred up before you can get anything out of them'. His policy extended to staff, whom he played off against one another to keep them off balance. He instituted punishment days when he would close the store because someone had annoyed him, sometimes simply by standing up to him. At Papunya also access to the dining room was sometimes used as an instrument of discipline (Papunya Report, 1977, 50).

In settlements, where the store was the only food outlet and most of the people had no means of storing food, its closure could be a serious imposition. Amata Sister, Margaret Baker, who had had considerable experience in the area, stepped in when the superintendent proposed a three day punishment store closure. She told him, "When you do this you are imposing great hardship on the people. Now you have gone too far. You are wrong to punish the whole community because someone has annoyed you. Mothers will be unable to get food for their infants, and some of them are going to get sick. The condition of some means that they may die. I am going to hold you responsible and report you to the authorities if anything goes wrong'. Punishment days ceased (personal comment from Sister Baker). Aerial Medical staff also told me of those happenings with disgust. They said, 'Once when we went to Amata people would be singing, some people would be making artefacts, and everyone would be doing something. There was a happy air about the place. Now there is no singing. People don't call out greetings any more. They are sitting around sullen and doing nothing (personal comment).

Community development writings in the past have stressed the need to study and know the structures, values and cultural processes of the community with which you are working. Margaret Mead wrote, 'we must know the leadership structure, and be able to use effectively the community's leaders' (1955, 261). We need to study the community in order to know its social values.

> The role of the change agent involves authority and leadership with the group [deriving] from his knowledge of the group and its problems and from his ability to help solve them. Therefore his first job is to collect data about the group and its problems so that he knows more about it in certain fields then do its members' (Tully, 1964).

The Mexican post-revolutionary government quickly recognized the need for knowledge of the community, and for training to be centred in the community. Teams of missioners with different teaching skills and knowledge would go to a village central to area. For two weeks they would do nothing but get acquainted with the local community, soaking up local colour, gossip, problems etc and pooling their knowledge and impressions. After that, the course for the local community would begin. It would be related to the problems which the community itself saw as its own (Sanchez 1936, 78-84).

The policy of assimilation, however, did not allow that there was anything worth studying in the Aboriginal culture. The policy was re-stated in 1961 to say that '… all Aborigines and part-

Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians'. Either this was not strong enough or the beggars were not doing the right thing, because in 1965 it was altered to leave no doubt as to what was going to happen. It now read '… seeks that all persons of Aboriginal descent will choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living to that of other Australians' (Coombs, 1978, 105; underlining mine).

The Aborigines were the ones required to do all the learning – foreign languages, foreign values and customs – so that white society could change their whole way of life. How could such a totally ethnocentric policy allow that there might be something of value to learn from the Aborigines? It was not even seen to be necessary for the purpose of carrying out programs effectively.

Effective communication and effective work with people depends much on mutual respect. In a settlement or mission, so much of the necessary mutual respect was dependent upon staff and, in particular, on the superintendent. There has in the past been a singular lack of adequate preparation of such people for working in a different culture. For example, at the beginning of the 1968 school year, four teachers from Papunya met me at Alice Springs. They had heard that I ran a language class, and were interested. One teacher said, with general agreement from the others, 'I have slaved my guts out for two weeks out there and I've taught nothing. Why? Because my boys haven't understood a word I've said, and I haven't understood a word they've said. We have just finished a two weeks' orientation course in Darwin, and no-one warned us that the children didn't understand or speak English'. While objectively something may have been said, there was failure to prepare those teachers for the reality of their situation.

Without this preparation, culture shock can shatter the friendliness and mutual respect with which a change agent and the client community may approach each other. When the familiar stimulus-response patterns fail because of lack of cultural understanding, feelings of insecurity take over. Expected task performances are threatened. Change agents are likely to overlook any attractiveness of the people and view the situation critically and, with no sense of cultural understanding or context, seeing only dirtiness, laziness, shiftlessness, ingratitude, unintelligence and general hopelessness. Then their reactions become judgemental and hostile. A senior office at Amoonguna settlement once complained bitterly to me, 'I used to do a lot for these people, but no more. They are ungrateful, lazy and hopeless. Now I'm a 9 to 5 public servant. I do nothing outside my required duties and time. These people have knocked all the dedication out of me'.

A superintendent on the same settlement who later left the Department kept referring to the adults as children, and he would say, 'You have to treat them like children'. On one occasion he used a visiting police patrol, which was going to drive around the people's housing area at night, to notify the people that he wanted everyone up at the recreation hut at once for an important meeting. It has been so much a part of our system of government to call meetings at the convenience of a senior man, so that he can pass on the information or instructions that he wishes to impart. How easily this prepares us for the pattern of expecting Aboriginal people to assemble for white authority figures when they wish, with the implication that any of the Indigenous people's own pursuits at the time will not be very important. So the policy reinforced a certain arrogance in the dominant culture's approach to Aboriginal people, often quite unconsciously, and led to an inherent lack of communication and an unwillingness to consult which persists to the present day.

Consider also the effect on communication of the attitudes held by many people in the white community, in this case several police officers. In the mid-1970s there were many complaints

from Aborigines and others of police attitudes and behaviour towards Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. A barmaid from the Bull Bar of a local hotel (at which police gathered after work) told a community development workshop, which included policemen who were denying that such attitudes existed amongst them, 'Oh, come on! You come into the bull Bar with all the others when you come off duty. I hear you guys all the time talking about 'rock apes'. The men were embarrassed and did not deny that charge. Those are the kinds of attitudes which, in an earlier age, justified the callous and brutal treatment meted out to Aborigines and condoned the murders that occurred.

'But I consulted them, and they said, yes, they wanted …'. That scandalized comment has echoed and re-echoed down the corridors of power. Every time a costly project failed, or people became upset with the department and expressed their anger, the cry was heard. There are decaying buildings, defunct piggeries, poultry projects, fishing ventures, dairies, and more, standing as monuments to the pet enthusiasms and the total lack of understanding of government and of some mission officials of the processes of consultation and decision making in Aboriginal communities. They have cost the tax-payer millions of dollars unnecessarily, and have done little for Aboriginal people except earn them more hostility from a dominant culture that characterises them as lazy and shiftless. Such projects have increased the pressure on Aboriginal communities as a result of a landslide of imposed and bewildering tasks and responsibilities which they did not understand, and had not really wanted. It showed an ongoing lack of willingness to learn about Aboriginal people and their culture, which was enshrined in the assimilation policy.

Pitjantjatjarra people used to describe many government officers' as *kupikupi purunypa* – 'like a whirlwind' – and Aranta people had a similar description. Some Aranta told Albrecht junior, 'they rush in, race about, do a lot of talking, stir everything up, then race off again. After they have gone everything slowly settles down again and nothing changes' (personal comment). There have always been some sensitive officers, of course, and still are – but they are often handicapped by the policies and expectations of their departments. They are appreciated by the people, but the experience of the people overall has resulted in the whirlwind description.

A Senate committee of inquiry into the use of volatile substances visited Ernabella in early 1986 to seek local opinions and ideas on the problem of petrol sniffing. They spent four hours there, which included a three hour tour of some outstations, and a one hour meeting at Ernabella (personal comment). Such meetings cannot possibly produce considered and informed opinion, and are in danger of grossly misleading people as to the true nature of the problems, or the people's feelings about them. The people themselves complain that they are sick to death of such meetings. They say, 'You white people keep coming here and talking talking talking. We tell you how we feel over and over, but you don't help us. Nothing happens'.

Dr Barry Whittenbury, variously aerial-medical doctor, hospital superintendent, acting regional director, and district medical officer, in the Northern Territory from 1964 to 1983, wrote of these problems in 1975:

> Consultation – much has been made of 'consultation, usually with either a so called village council or with a large group e.g. the whole male population. The 'consultation' has usually taken the form of direct questioning in English, to be answered on the spot by whoever is present. Some of the decisions taken by DAA [Department of Aboriginal Affairs] following such farcical 'consultation' have been of the utmost importance. Some criticisms of this

method are:

(a) Ignorance of all the basic principles of communication, e.g. lack of the use of interpreters, but most importantly the tacit acceptance by DAA officials (and others) that a village council or any other collection of Aboriginal people is a decision making body.

Dr Gordon White, the Rev L Reece and sometimes myself conducted several discussions with certain people at Papunya in September-October 1973. These discussions were basically to try to determine if the people at Papunya wanted any of their traditional healers to work at the Papunya Health Centre. Repeated discussion was necessary, and I spent most of my time bringing up very old men from certain camps, and occasionally younger men from various places where they were working around the settlement. We appeared to reach a dead end after several visits and talks, and left the situation to develop with the people if it was important to them. In October 1974 I was talking to a group of councillors about another matter when they suddenly said 'we have the two men'. Mystified, I asked which two men? 'The ones you were talking about – the wati-ngangkari [Aboriginal doctors] for the Hospital – they are ready now'.

So it had taken eleven months for some sort of decision making process to answer what to Europeans was a simple question. Can anyone believe that government departments would wait this long for an answer to a simple question? Does it not appear that the decision making processes of Aboriginal people should be understood by people who force decisions on them? The study of such processes would be a job for an expert in this field, and would probably have to be done for each Settlement. Until this is done most decisions apparently made by the Aboriginal people must be, to say the least, suspect. I would be very interested to know if Aborigines had ever said no to any direct questions asked of them whether they understood the questions or not' (Whittenbury, 1975).'

To enable this so-called consultation to take place, the Welfare Branch instituted village councils. At first these consisted usually of a few Aboriginal men and as many white staff. The men have told me that in those days they could understand very little of the English used by the staff, or the complexities of the government policies and proposals which they were supposed to discuss and advise upon. One superintendent at Yuendumu told me in about 1967, 'I bring these old fellows up for the meetings as an advisory council. They can't understand half of what we are talking about. If we do get advice from them, no matter how important, and it conflicts in any way with policy, I have to reject it. The whole thing is a farce. These old fellows are no fools. Sooner or later they will wake up that they are being conned'. Later the communities were required to elect a council of their own, but it wasn't until the policy of self-determination was introduced by the Labor government in Canberra that councils began to have any real authority.

The development of community councils in the self-determination era however, imposed a further destructive pressure on Aboriginal people. Whittenbury sums up the situation, 'the structure of village councils as such is foreign to the Aboriginal people and not understood, and in my opinion

they cannot make meaningful decisions' (1975). One of the main reasons lies in the fact that, ignoring or being ignorant of Aboriginal authority and decision making structures, the government introduced a totally European system of elections. This has no correspondence with the Aboriginal ways, and was not understood. Everywhere, the electoral system for creating Aboriginal councils has given more opportunity for power struggles, and led to conflict and breakdown.

Hermannsburg Mission was ahead of the field in attempting to teach people to understand that process and to use it responsibly. People seemed to take it seriously and to choose say twelve councillors out of eighteen candidates with a lower donkey vote than that in European elections. Photographs were used and methods adapted for non-literate people. Despite all this, the system of government by council collapsed, as will be dealt with further in the next chapter. The mechanics of that collapse are the same as I have heard and seen in various stages on most settlements and missions in the Northern Territory.

Because of departmental policy, officers of the Social Welfare Branch were actively discouraged from becoming familiar with Aboriginal culture and ceremony and learning their language. The Aboriginal people had to learn English and white ways, and all efforts were directed to that end (personal comment from some officers). This was particularly frustrating to officers who had attended long term courses – some 18 months – at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) Mosman, New South Wales, before they ceased in 1974. Some officers said at the time, 'We learned about anthropology and about community development, but none of the things we were taught are happening in the Northern Territory. We are discouraged from putting them into practice' (personal comment).

As a result, none of the knowledge which those junior officers learned, both from ASOPA and from the Aboriginal people themselves, had any effect upon policy and little upon its implementation. The result was that totally inappropriate and disturbing European procedures were imposed on the people. Elections took no account of the fact that Aboriginal society had its own leaders and authorities. Those men and women were generally born, not made. It was a traditional and hereditary authority although it is also true that, on occasion, people of exceptional ability, and/or tenacity, could gain power. There were traditional processes by which authority for land or ceremonies could be conferred on others in special circumstances. White authorities ignored all that and imposed Western procedures with which they were familiar and comfortable.

So it was that the Pintupi (to follow through our example) not only found themselves under the authority of powerful white officers, but also of the Aborigines to whom those officers chose to give authority for a variety of functions. Those Aboriginal men generally spoke another language. Some of them were younger men with a growing contempt for the discipline of their own traditional Law. Some were violating that Law in chasing after Pintupi women. It couldn't work. When it came to the crunch a man would resent or challenge that alien authority vested in an alien Aboriginal person. Arguments would result. Work programs would break down. But the worst feature of that system was that it created power struggles and gave non-entities backing against their own authorities.

In community after community over the last fifteen years or more I have heard complaints that 'the council is not working', or 'the council doesn't look after us' … 'doesn't tell us anything', and so on. Frustrated government officers also complained that the councils didn't work. 'They agree to something and the next day they change their minds'. The reasons for this have to do with official

expectations. Government representatives expect councils to function just like equivalent Western bodies. They expect the councils to make decisions on the spot after they have been 'consulted' or the situation has been 'explained' to them. Because of the demands of white 'authority', the councils do give their consent to a proposed plan or project. Then, as I have seen or heard of in three states, the issue may be discussed around the camp-fire, and the real Indigenous authorities – who are rarely on councils and who may own the land on which the settlement is built – make their demands. They may say, 'You can't do that' or 'You said the wrong thing'. Their authority prevails and the council 'changes its mind'. The council feels, being caught between two cultures, it has no authority.

White people have often bolstered a council, or encouraged a chairman, to exercise an authority which is foreign, and which they shouldn't have. It works like this. A man with no authority in the community becomes chairman because those 'whitefeller things' are not important. Government ministers and officers want to talk to him when they visit. Ministers may try to encourage the man by saying, 'You're doing a good job here, you're a good leader. We'll back you up'. It's heady wine. Next, that man tells the people, 'I'm the boss here. You see how all those big men from Canberra always come and talk to me. That's because I'm the boss. I got you all those trucks, and buildings and wages. It all comes through me, because I'm the boss. If you don't keep me here it will all finish'. That sort of thing often worries people, because they have seen a kind of magic in the white man's endless supply of money and goods, therefore this man must have the appropriate magic, or corroboree, to get those things. It fitted their own thought world. An additional problem is that councils have no authority over clans and clan leaders.

Whittenbury commented:

> It is common on Aboriginal settlements (in Central Australia) to find a bewildered people who are being forced into a situation they do not, and can not understand. To expect these people to undertake the duties and responsibilities of what would amount to a local council in the South is to further increase pressures on them that they do not understand. I maintain that unless a certain body of knowledge is available to a group of people, to expect them to work in areas that directly stem from this necessary knowledge is impossible (1975).

Even in ex-mission communities along the Arnhem Land coast people were still wrestling with those issues in 1984.

At Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) mission in Arnhem Land the council was experiencing the kinds of difficulties being discussed here. In 1976 Ken Nowland, then training officer for the United Church Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services (AADS), conducted an exercise designed to help the community to understand councils and structures. I was invited to participate as a resource person. The power struggle between young men on the council and older authority men was evident in their interactions. It was causing some of the elders a great deal of distress. Nowland and I facilitated separate discussions about structures and roles amongst both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, before bringing them together for further discussion. There were about sixty non-Indigenous people on the island at the time, including school teachers. The outcome of this exercise was that the community sacked the existing

council and replaced with a new council comprising the clan leaders who then met as the council. The people themselves declared that this new council worked effectively for about nine months. The a DAA officer arrived and told them, 'You can't do this. It is against the law. The constitution says you must have an election'. The local people knew nothing about their council constitution which they were being told was 'law'. They were apprehensive, so they submitted. Because they came from numerically powerful clans, the same council that they had replaced was re-elected. In 1984 the then council chairman reported that the council had not worked effectively since its re-election.

During 1983 the chairman of the council had several conversations with Nowland, then acting Director of AADS, about his concern over the role of the council and of the clans in relation to the people's unrealistic expectations and lack of support for the council. He asked for an exercise to be conducted on those matters. The exercise occurred in February 1984 and was confined to clan leaders at the chairman's insistence. He himself was a clan leader and traditional owner of the mission area. He conducted the four day exercise brilliantly, encouraging all clans to be present and to wrestle together with the issues confronting them. He gave them all the time they wished to discuss the issues, think them through and get things clear in their own minds. When a decision was reached he pushed the people to think though the implications of what they had decided. All the discussion was conducted in the local languages. Interpreters ensured that both Nowland and Downing understood both the discussions and the ultimate outcome.

Diagrams were used at the outset to demonstrate the growth and types of councils, using some of the local people's own symbols. These diagrams included both a council comprising clan leaders and also one comprising representatives of three groups of three clans each. The latter model was derived from the results of an exercise completed on another mission some years previously. Each group of clans was tied together by a major ceremony. In Djambarrpuyungu language such ceremonies are called 'ringgitj'. After detailed working through these options by groups of clans, the Galiwin'ku clan leaders chose to change their constitution to enable the council to be composed of representatives from each 'ringgitj'. That took four days. The people then sought the assistance of the resident linguist to produce a booklet in both Djambarrpuyungu and English including the diagrams so that each of the clan leaders could explain to his clan the thinking used by the leaders to arrive at their decisions. They also asked the linguist's help to produce a video in which they explained the process. The video was produced in six local languages and was shown in the store for two full days so that most people in the 1500 strong community would have the opportunity to see it. Then they planned a community meeting at which they would ask the community to ratify the new structure. This the people did without any fuss because they had been so thoroughly informed.

What government department has ever spent four full days on one issue in this manner in order that the community can work through the issue effectively on its own terms, and then allowed the community to take its own time and methods to reach a clear and reasoned decision? An exercise such as this is only the beginning of what is necessary. The people will need other such exercises to understand the sections of their constitutions so they can, as necessary, change the constitution to reflect and be consistent with their

cultural structures and values. Unless such an exchange occurs, the damaging power struggles and failures within the communities will continue.

There is, however, a danger in idealising such processes and achievements. Over the next two years at Galiwin'ku the new structure did not actually work because, it appears, a white staff member aligned himself with the chairman and was in a powerful enough position for the two of them to 'govern' the community without the council, and to make all the necessary decisions unilaterally. The chairman resigned and, at the time of writing, a new council is endeavouring to function more effectively. As is always the case in such situations, it will take time for the people to work though the thinking and application of their own structures in community management. Like any people, Aboriginal people have always had their own politicians and political struggles. European intervention – in the form of the support and power of white officials and staff with a powerful materialistic culture behind them, not to mention those staff who come with vested interest – has introduced a wild card into the mix. This has widened the arena of Aboriginal power politics, and has inhibited the traditional authorities, powers, and checks and balances in their operation.

Community after community has been set up for failure. Europeans have written constitutions for those communities, often in pseudo-legal jargon and with little or no consultation with the people, nor with much understanding by the people. Nevertheless the people are expected to run the equivalent of town councils without the benefit of a cohesive community who understand properly the language of the people in government. Aboriginal communities have to deal with complex foreign and foreign values in a foreign language. It seems that no-one has taught the people to understand what constitutions are. Adult educators have tended to shy away from the subject because the Department of Education warns them against involvement in anything 'political'. So people are bound by rules which they didn't make, don't understand and, in many cases, don't even know exist. It is only when the council comes under stress that they call for help. Either there are complaints and rejection of the council by the community, or power struggles and the council cannot carry out its role, or it becomes heavily indebted and, as a result, the government stops its funding.

The Northern Territory Department of Community Development (NTDCD) has been preoccupied in the past with town management functions (and consequent expenditure) only, and has ignored other monies that the council must handle, and the social problems which unsettle communities. It appeared in 1986 as though the NTDCD was beginning to grasp the fact that, when problems of community authority and structure disturbed the people, these take up all the community's attention and energy. They are unable even to think about the things that may be concerning the government. Given such circumstances, the policies and practices imposed upon the Aboriginal people by governments are oppressive. The functions of the NTDCD became divided in 1987 into those of a welfare provider through a new mega-department, Health and Community Welfare, with most of the functions of funding and management in Aboriginal communities being handled by the Department of Local Government.

Another crushing burden is the government's desire to spend large sums of money 'developing' those communities. The Northern Territory government produced a five

year plan. Each large community was to get a bitumen airstrip, bitumen roads and footpaths (bit tough on bare feet in northern summers), a new barge landing, upgraded power house, sewerage and so on. The 'Aboriginal Industry' is a very important source of income for both the government and non-Indigenous contractors.

The method of consultation used to initiate the five year plan left a great deal to be desired. Our staff in communities said that an officer called with 'a list of goodies'. He spent perhaps an hour talking to the people, saying, 'You would like to have ..... wouldn't you?' The answer, of course, was 'Yes'. (As the Papunya report says of the 'consultation', 'All three of the writers have attended meetings where proposals were forcefully put by settlement staff, after which a request was made for the Aborigines to agree, with a chorus of yeses' (1977,24). In Ramingining community in Arnhem Land the people were saying, 'Hang on! We haven't had time to think about the first things you told us', but it made no difference. To be fair, the Department of Transport and Works did try to explain sewerage works later, but failed for reasons that will become clear.

In that same community of about 300 people there were five contracting teams of white people living and working there at the one time in 1982. They were working on roads, sewerage, airstrip, barge landing and store. The chairman was a local traditional land owner, a man of about 30 years of age with a reasonable grasp of things. He told our resident community development worker, 'they took us around and showed us where that sewer would go and we said 'yes'. But when they come and do it it's always different'. He was referring to the fact that they were totally unable to comprehend trenches going 15 and 20 feet into the earth and ripping out great rocks. He said, 'My brother said yes, when they asked if he wanted a big tank on his land. But he didn't know they were going to go so deep into the earth with those poles (the big tank supports). He got sick, and he is still sick. Now I'm worried I'll get sick, because they are cutting deep into my mother and ripping out great rocks'. He did get sick from anxiety, and was unable to function properly for months (Personal comment from the resident Outstation Resource Centre (ORC) co-ordinator about 1982).

It is common to hear tribal people refer to the land as their 'mother'. Several clan and ceremonial leaders at Galiwin'ku explained their relationship to the land, and its vital importance to them, in a small booklet published by their school's Literature Publications Centre, Rev Djiniyini Gondarra expressed it in these terms:

> The land is my mother. Like a human mother, the land gives us protection, enjoyment, and provides for all our needs – economic, social and religious. We have a human relationship with the land: mother – daughter, son. When the land is taken from us or destroyed, we feel hurt because we belong to the land and we are part of it (1980, 8).

That relationship is often given as the reason why the people must 'look after the land properly'.

Another of the contractors at the aforementioned community, which was so overwhelmed by contractors, unwittingly bulldozed a sacred site for gravel. The traditional owner complained to the community development worker, who took him and his son to the office to tell the contractor he could not get gravel there. He was trembling all over. Our worker asked: 'Are you frightened?'

'Yes' was the answer. The workers said, 'You don't need to be frightened, just tell him he can't get it there'. The old man said, 'You can't tell Whitefellers 'no', they'll shoot you'. He still remembered a massacre in the area in 1929. He was supported in saying 'no', and immediately went out to an outstation and stayed out of the way.

The contractors were up at the office every day demanding of the Aboriginal Council that they loan this equipment, shift this, or do that, and all the hundred and one demands that go with carrying out big projects. As well as that constant pressure the Council had to handle the extra $1m or more going through their books as a result. This was expected of people who certainly are bright, and some can read and write English, but they have never been properly trained to cope with such tasks and pressures. Almost the whole council cracked under the strain and went on a 'bender' in Darwin for two to three weeks and everything ground to a halt (personal comment from the ORC co-ordinator). Government officers, except for the very few, don't begin to understand those fears. And you can't just wipe out beliefs re-enforced by 40,000 years of sacred story, song, dance, body painting, Law, your land, your relationships and your proper behaviour to others, and the myriad things which go to make up your culture and tell you who you are.

As a result of our comments at an inter-departmental meeting, a group of officers from different departments went out and saw the people. They asked 'Where can we get gravel for the roads?' The men said, 'We don't know. We'll have to talk to the right people and do the ceremonies first, and it's going to take a long time to find out'. The officers said, 'But we need a thousand loads of gravel for the roads?' The men asked 'Couldn't you bring it out from Darwin?' That reply blew the minds of the officers. They could see that the people couldn't care about roads at that point, so they postponed the contract. That small gesture is not getting to the root of the problem however. The problem is the continued assumption that the dominant culture has the best and only way of life, and the Aboriginal people must fall in with us. As members of the dominant culture, we fail to learn from the people. We don't understand how they think or what motivates them. In other words, we are still attempting to do 'social engineering' from a distance. We are not so ruthless as was once the case and we talk about self-management, a subtle change that seems to put all the responsibility on the people to perform. The result is still an 'Aboriginal Industry' which makes a good living for a large number of white people, but destroys Aboriginal initiative and Aboriginal people.

All through the settlement era was this unwillingness to involve the people in the planning of policies and projects. It went further. It became arbitrary decision making for communities, and this lingered well into the 1970s. It happened in every state. In Western Australia at the large outstation of over one hundred people, Marntamaru (Jamieson), the community services officer tried to build up the people in decision making skills, by feeding them adequate information, discussing it fully, and allowing the community to decide. DAA told the community services officer that the community would get a new pre-fabricated air-conditioned school, but that they would need a better power supply. The community had already signed for their grant of $30,000 for electrical requirements for the year, and had planned and secured a good price and arrangement for the required work. The people were being taught by their community services officer to plan, and to manage a simple electrical system which required only the unplugging of one alternator and the plugging in of another in the event of a breakdown.

Without any consultation, DAA cancelled their contracts and orders and handed over their $30,000 to the West Australia State Electricity Commission (SEC). The departments had determined together that the SEC would handle all the electrical needs of WA Aboriginal communities. They planned a good modular system so that, in the event of a breakdown the SEC would fly in staff by costly air charter to replace the faulty module. It could have been done far more cheaply from Alice Springs, as the people had planned. The SEC scheme was efficient but costly, and it would keep Aboriginal people in their state of total dependence on white people for their planning and maintenance. That kind of action is demotivating, and makes a mockery of self-determination.

An earlier example of the deadly hand of the bureaucracy when it places efficiency above people, comes from Galiwin'ku where the people had a modest fishing business going. It was carried out on a clan basis using their own dinghies. They could carry it out with minimum interference with their life-style, and earn money above the local wages, according to their needs. Wage levels at the time were low. The mission paid for barramundi by the pound and sold it in Darwin. The Social Welfare Branch considered it inefficient and not economically viable; they were demanding that award wages be paid, but the fishing business couldn't sustain these. They put great pressure on the mission to accept funds for a fishing industry. It was to be run on behalf of the fishermen who were formed into a committee. Eventually a large fishing boat with radar and very sophisticated equipment was purchased. Immediately they had to get a white skipper. The people eventually withdrew from the committee and stopped fishing with their small boats. Everything had been taken out of their hands. The large business couldn't support award wages and failed. The boat was relocated. Because of the trouble and hurt involved it was several years before the people began to fish commercially again using their small boats (Clarke, 1978).

Even today some authorities use grants and other funds as weapons. It is easier than doing the long term but much more effective thing of sitting down with people and really communicating. Or helping them to fully understand and work through the implications of something, be it wrong use of funds, an unfortunate staff appointment, or a desired action or project, finding out if they really want the latter, then helping them to do it and later to assess what succeeds and what goes wrong. From three states I have heard consistently over a period of twenty years, 'The white man is a liar. You can't trust him'. It is the end result of our failure properly to consult and to community with Aboriginal people. Often it is based simply on the misunderstandings and false expectations which arise because of the totally different world views of the two cultures.

When we go into elaborate details asking Aboriginal tribal and tribally-oriented people what they want in the way of specific services, land rights, and so on, they believe we must be going to give or do those things. Otherwise why would we talk about them? It then becomes a promise which we have made. That is why effective interpreters are needed in most serious discussions. Some people have an understanding of English and speak it well. But it is still a foreign language rooted in foreign concepts. Even today younger men constantly ask in meetings, 'Why do whitefellows always talk too hard English?' One young man expressed that anxiety to the United Church Commission of Enquiry in Arnhem Land in 1974 saying,

> That is what we were trying to find out ourselves about what is really meant by what we are talking about. Some of the older men did not know the meaning of the big words and I myself can understand only a little bit but can not understand it properly (1974, 23).

That was after three months of preparation visits for the Commission by a Fijian worker, Jonetani Rika, a man who knew the people and the language.

There are many situations however, where we must wear the label of 'liar'. When some Aboriginal men whose land was affected by the Ranger project, and who had not been consulted as the Land Rights Act required, took out a court injunction to stop the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs from signing the agreement, the Federal Government under Prime Minister Fraser informed them that they would amend the Land Rights Act to make that consultation unnecessary and would make it retrospective. Their injunction application would then be invalid. Though the plaintiffs were told they still had legal avenues through which to fight this action of the government, they gave up. All the stuffing had been knocked out of them by that move. One of the men, Dick Malwagu, a fine elder with a deep concern for the future of his people, and previously a fighter on their behalf, said 'You can't beat the government, they are liars. They change laws how they like'. He retreated back to his community at Minjilang (Croker Island) a disheartened man.

The government did in fact pass that amendment to the Land Rights (NT) Act. It removes one of the main safeguards which Justice Woodward recommended to protect the people. The amendment allows that any contract entered into with mining companies or other persons shall remain valid if signed by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Chairman of the Land council, notwithstanding that they have not consulted all the affected traditional owners as required by the Land Rights (NT) Act. They no longer had to make it retrospective however.

In June 1981 I flew some of the World Council of churches investigating team to Minjilang. Dick and his brother Jumbo Gungidjbara, the two leading traditional land owners, said they would talk to the team. They asked me, 'What do you want us to talk about first, land rights, roads, mining or what'? I said, 'These people want to know what do you worry about most in here (indicating the gut), what do you worry about all the time?' With one voice the two men said 'Truth!' We worry about the truth. Our Law is truth. Our Law doesn't change. But the White man's law is a lie. He makes a law then, if he doesn't like it, he changes it the next week, or the next month, or the next year. We don't know where we are. When White men, government people or anyone, talk to us, we sit there worrying inside all the time. Can we believe this man? Is he telling the trust? Can we trust him'? When asked 'What do you do about those who hurt you?' Dick answered 'What can we do? We have no power'. They were then asked 'Well what will you do in the future?' and answered 'We don't know. I expect we'll just pass our hurts on to our children'.

The result of all the official interference we have been examining is that people are hurt and bewildered. It produced the very institutionalisation that Long spoke about. People lose hope, they become crushed in spirit, apathetic, disinterested (1979, 178-181). That spirit infects whole communities and leads to the very kinds of lawless behaviour of which Strehlow warned (Strehlow, 1961, 33). I believe that the widespread drunkenness and petrol sniffing and crime which is so concerning authorities today, is the inevitable outcome of past policies. No wonder the people made efforts to move away from such distressful environments. No wonder that the homeland movement burgeoned the moment it received official encouragement.

We could multiply these stories a hundredfold. They are very common. There were some unsuitable, some sick and disturbed people in charge of Aborigines in various roles on settlements. There were also some fine caring people, men and women, but they couldn't beat the system. They were trapped in a policy and an attitude, and many of them were frustrated and hurting too. Those

attitudes persist though policies have changed. Officers of departments and, indeed, of some of the new Aboriginal organisations still tend to rush into communities like whirlwinds, stay a very short while, and demand important decisions without sensitivity to the people's own decision making processes. Many still fail to give information in a form and a language that will help it to be understood.

Some with considerable years of experience still ask tribal people such questions as, 'Well, have you canvassed all the issues yet?', and get in language the kind of response it deserves, the gist of which is, 'White fellows think they are clever and use big words. Do they think we are children? If they can't talk properly and stop confusing us they can go back where they came from and stay out of our country'. In 1984 that old speaker's community of Groote Eylandt was suffering long-term distress from the pressure of large numbers of white people living there, earlier missionaries and later, miners, school teachers and various kinds of officials and, as he expressed it, 'from White people making all the decisions for us'. The church too has to share that sort of criticism in some places. Is it any wonder that with that kind of history, and the large influx of white workers with all kinds of attitudes and values that Groote has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people charged before the courts and in gaol than anywhere else in Australia?

What we have seen is a picture of a 'socially engineered' people, for whom the white man knew what was best. A people whose culture was at best honoured by lip service, but was more generally, by word or attitude, denigrated. A people not consulted about the decisions made about their lives by outsiders, many of which caused considerable disturbance. It is a picture of an oppressed and damaged people. The manipulation and the stresses, the worry about their land and their children, made it inevitable that there would be a reaction. The reaction proved to be a vote with their feet, the movement to outstations and homelands. That movement awaited only the knowledge that the government would not abandon people for it to spread like wildfire. The Federal government gave that assurance. The return [to country] began.

Chapter 3

A Movement Waiting to Happen

The homelands movement is not something new. It has been going on ever since Aboriginal people were forced into or attracted to the larger settlement and mission communities. Where it was possible to visit one's country for ceremony and the care of sacred sites there is much evidence of consistent movement between the settlements and the homelands. Even where it was not possible to return because the land had been occupied by a pastoralist who forbade or discouraged the people from doing so, or because of harsh conditions such as sustained drought, the people still cared for those places through ceremony at related sacred sites. They did not stop thinking about them. When other factors strengthened their motivation, and when help and encouragement made it possible to return to their sacred country, a great many people did so.

Dick Kimber taught at Papunya settlement 250 km west of Alice Springs. From 1970-1980 he had a great deal to do with the Pintupi people and their country, doing much work of an anthropological nature with them, and is looked upon as a trusted friend. He commented:

> Every outstation was an outstation or homeland of the mind before it became [a geographic reality] and had been thought about very strongly before people had been rounded up and kept in Papunya or Yuendumu, or been kept in by drought … There had been an effective notion of living in these places for twenty years or forty years, whatever, before that, but there were several things required before this could become a real possibility other than fairly short visits in the days of camels and donkeys (interview transcript).

Dr H C (Nugget) Coombs also speaks of people making periodic visits to their homelands to participate in ceremonies, to educate their children and to enjoy hunting and gathering activities, and of a growing desire to return to the homeland territories more permanently, but they were conscious that they were now substantially dependent on the stores and services available from the Missions and Settlements. He also stated that 'With some exceptions, administrators were at first reluctant to provide services for Aborigines on a more decentralised basis' (1978, 226).

A few Aboriginal groups strongly resisted the lure of the white man's settlements and goods, and stayed in their own country, though of necessity having contact with the settlements. The Djapu people at Caledon Bay in Arnhem Land stayed in their country, as did the Dhalwangu people at Gurrumuru on South Arnhem Bay, and developed a relationship with Yirrkala Methodist Mission which they visited occasionally and from which they received services. Other extended families stayed in their country around the mouth of the Blyth River, east of Maningrida, but had some contact with the settlement. They now receive a minimal service from the Maningrida Outstation Resource Centre.

This resistance was possible for the people of the Arnhem Land coastal area, with its rich resources of food, both land and sea foods, and water. For the people in Central Australia, with its vast semi-arid and arid areas and its ten inches and less annual rainfall, where clay pans, rock holes and timely showers sometimes determined whether people survived or not, there was no such choice. It is no accident that many of the most sacred places are related to water. Over the years men took me to some with great excitement and I often imagined an oasis in the desert with a cool permanent pool, only to find a tiny rock hole, or a soak, or a completely dried up depression. But from time to time

water was there, and that attracted game. It was life and the people were grateful, so that place was often sacred.

One group of men took me to a very sacred area near Wingellina just across the West Australian border. There were two small blowholes in a limestone bed in a wilderness of mulga scrub and rocky hills. They were dry, and the men cleaned out the accumulated dirt and tended the area. Then they demonstrated how people were able to survive as they traversed this ceremonial route on foot in the days before motor cars. Maybe fifty or sixty people would be travelling. The men lay down and reached into the small holes at arms length clutching a clump of grass. They told me that the people then withdrew the grass and sucked the water out of it, or squeezed it into coolamons, and they lived. That was an important place.

When white men competed with them for that precious commodity in the more desirable areas, small wonder that the people had to come to terms. They could not choose to stay in their homelands as Arnhem Land people could. It was difficult even to withdraw to parts of their sacred country for times of ceremony or refreshment, as the white people controlling some areas had to be agreeable, and often were not, and in other areas conditions had to be right or it was a hazardous undertaking.

Early Homelands Movements

Many happenings prepared the way and led to the recent more concerted move to return to homelands. In some church mission situations, in both Central Australia and Arnhem Land, for many years groups of Aboriginal people were encouraged to return to the particular land to which they were related.

Harold Shepherdson (Sheppy) worked for fifty years in Eastern Arnhem Land, much of that time as Superintendent at Elcho Island (Galiwin'ku). For a great many years Sheppy encouraged Aboriginal extended families to stay in their homelands, or to establish themselves on outstations. He did so at first in response to the peoples' desire to stay or to go and live in their own country to which they were tied by Law and ceremony. The first outstation was established at Gattji in 1936. It was on the mainland ten miles south of Milingimbi. In 1947 Sheppy encouraged the people at Buckingham Bay south-east of Elcho, to build an airstrip so that he could service them with the plane which he flew. Seventy people were living there at that time. In 1953 a strip was built on the Wessel Islands, and in 1954 another was established at Caledon Bay, and many more followed. Sheppy became a one-man Outstation Resource Service, flying in supplementary supplies (Ella Shepherdson, 1981, 35-37). Only in the last few years has the Federal government accepted the necessity for servicing outstation and homeland communities and for funding resource services.

As early as the mid-fifties 'de-facto decentralisation' took place in Western Australia, in areas such as Blackstone, Wingellina, Giles, Mulga Queen, Snake Well, Manayin, and at Mt Davies in South Australia. But those desert areas slowly became depopulated through the influence and attraction of missions and larger settlements. The activities of patrols from Woomera and the Northern Territory Welfare Branch hastened that process of depopulation (de Graaf, 1976). The lack of official support made it difficult, even hazardous for many small groups to stay in the inhospitable country at times, especially in the hot season; and the official pressure upon people to move into the larger settlements made it impossible for many groups.

Ernabella mission began with the idea of being sensitive to the people's culture and language and ways. Therefore the staff were generally sympathetic with the people's often expressed desire to get

out to their homelands. Rev Bill Edwards, who was at Ernabella from 1959 to 1976, eleven of those years as Superintendent, described the mission practice of helping people to go back to their homelands twice a year, at dingo pupping season and again at Christmas when mission activity came to a standstill. Trucks would take supplies to a number of important areas such as Kanpi, Pipalyatjarra (Mt Davies), and to the site of the later settlement at Fregon. The people themselves travelled on camels, horses and donkeys, or on foot, and kept in touch with their traditional way of life. With no Commonwealth funding, few trucks, and dangerously unreliable waters, a real movement to homelands was impossible.

What was almost certainly the first concrete suggestion for an outstation movement in Central Australia came from Rev Victor Coombs, then Secretary of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions. Edwards stated that in 1959 drought was affecting the work at Ernabella. There was an increase in population and limited opportunities for young people coming through the school. Coombs put up a proposal for a string of outstations centred on Ernabella, thus potentially making it possible for people to go back to the Western Musgraves, the Tonkinson and Mann Ranges, and even into Western Australia and the Petermans. He proposed that the church administer this through Ernabella, and that the outstations be kept small with small sheep and cattle projects and other employment possibilities. He emphasised the need to find sites with plenty of water and firewood.

Edwards and John Fletcher were appointed by the Board of Missions to set up such outstations. Despite Ernabella's success in setting up remote sheep camps under the care of Aboriginal shepherds, however, the south Australian Aboriginal Protection Board was decidedly cool on the idea. In 1959 the Protection Board had put down bores in the Musgraves and decided to start their own station, which the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs established in 1961. Instead of becoming an outstation it became a large settlement known as Musgrave Park, later Amata. The result of that reaction by the Aboriginal Protection Board cut off any possibility of Ernabella helping people to set up homeland communities in their sacred country to the west. There was also a threat that Ernabella would have some of the pastoral land in the southern part of their lease taken from them, so Fregon was started in 1961 as an outstation, both to secure the land for the people and to help some of them to move closer to their tribal lands.

Prior to that move people had already been shepherding sheep at Shirley Well, some 54 km south of Ernabella. Some people were obviously interested in that area to the south, so the mission staff discussed the establishment of Fregon and the choice of a site with that particular group. It was this core group who established Fregon 65 km south of Ernabella. As will be shown to be a consistent pattern throughout these movements, people moved closer to their homelands as opportunity offered. The people who moved to Fregon were, according to Edwards, mainly the 'pilatja' or plains people, whereas those who moved from Ernabella to Amata were the 'apu mirrputja' or hills people. Those moving to Fregon were mostly the people who belonged to the spinifex country, to Fregon and to Mt Lindsay and Coffin Hill areas ranging up to 200 km further south and west.

Ernabella had established a system of serviced outstations early in its history. These were the sheep camps established in the country around Ernabella some time around 1940 and continuing until 1969, when policy changes and killings by dingos caused sheep work to cease. Men could take their families and go out and camp and work in those areas as shepherds and have rations taken out to them. Mike Last, agriculturalist and later community adviser at Ernabella between 1968 and 1979,

said 'there was a very good structure, and it helped. It was probably one of the best situations I've seen between a European direction … and Aboriginal people. The policy of the area … was for it [the sheep camp system] to be a buffer between [Western intrusion and traditional culture]' (tape transcript). I had visited some sheep camps between 1965 and 1979 and found them always to have a peaceable air about them. I believe that in some cases people would camp in those sheep camps because it was in or near their sacred land. Certainly that the buffer system gave people a health-preserving refuge from the institutionalised stresses of the larger settlement at the mission.

The Musgrave Park settlement was established about 145 km by road west of Ernabella in 1961 by DAA South Australia. After some difficulty, caused by one or two officers' inability to hear what Aboriginal people were saying, the name was changed to that by which Aboriginal people had always referred to the area – Amata. A senior officer of the Department told me in 1965 that the settlement was established in order to force Ernabella to change practices with which the government did not agree, and to increase the pace of change. The practices referred to at that time were the outcome of consultation with the people and had their support. One example was the retaining of portion of the aged pension in return for the provision of one cooked meal a day.

The Department was much more inclined to force the pace at Amata. It had a reputation, both amongst the people themselves and many informed observers, for poor performance and a lack of consultation with the people. This varied with superintendents, though departmental policy tended to handicap the more enlightened. David Hope was superintendent at Amata from 1968-72. He became an anthropologist with the Department of Community Welfare in South Australia then moved to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra in 1980. He later became senior lecturer in charge of the Aboriginal Task Force bridging education course at the South Australian Institute of Technology.

> David Hope said of his period at Amata: 'People spoke to me endlessly about their need to go back to their country at Mt Davies and at Kunamata. As an employee of DAA in 1968 I was supposed to uphold a policy of assimilation and had to see that the people were domiciled at Amata and acquired good work habits. I was prohibited from taking people for rides or giving handouts. It was acknowledged that if the people chose to live on the Reserve outside Amata this was their prerogative, but it didn't follow that I should support them. All kinds of exceptions occurred to that rule. I found at times I was bound to uphold it, but there were other times when I felt it was an absurdity that I wasn't really able to live with. So there were schemes afoot to make it possible for people to live out in the bush, and sometimes we had to resort to subterfuges which could be accepted administratively' (interview transcript).

So the people were supported out bush for making artefacts and other work, and sometimes just because it was common-sense. Over the years consultation improved but, by contrast with other places, Ernabella was far ahead. A number of people were attracted to Amata from Ernabella, partly because of the greater amount of government money spent there, but largely because those people belonged to the country around Amata or further west. As Noel Wallace states so strongly, it was a movement back towards their sacred land (1974).

At that time the Aboriginal Protection Board, which was advising the South Australian Government, seemed to be acting from an all-pervading anti-mission feeling. This was borne out in conversations

I had with senior Departmental officers over several years from 1965. There was a tendency to make judgement on the 'progress' at Ernabella compared with Amata, yet much of that 'progress' at Amata was made possible by key Aboriginal persons who had been well trained over the years at Ernabella mission. It seemed too that Ernabella suffered bureaucratic delays in the establishment of pre-school and other services despite earlier preparatory work and satisfactory submissions by the mission, so that Amata could be seen to be first in establishing those services. This era of apparent jealousy and poor co-operation prevented the implementation of what was a very far-sighted plan put forward by Victor Coombs for the establishment of properly serviced outstations. It also added to the frustration and stress experienced by Aboriginal people and contributed to social and cultural breakdown, leading to 'acting out' delinquent behaviour and the pressures helping to motivate the movement to outstations.

The South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs asked me to carry out an assessment of juvenile delinquency in the communities of the North West Reserve in 1968. In looking at Ernabella and Amata communities in particular, I found a lower level of such behaviour at Ernabella at the time. I assessed Ernabella as the more stable community. Amata had alcohol problems which Ernabella did not have. The Ernabella elders firmly nipped in the bud any attempts to bring alcohol into the community at the time, and also seemed to have fewer of other stress signs, such as petrol sniffing and breaking and entering. On the other hand, Amata had, in my experience, been subjected to more management and interference over the years and had no form of retreat camps, although some staff unofficially helped people travel to their country out west, and made it possible for some to stay out there (1968). At Pipalyatjarra, Paul Eckert set up a school and taught in it for two years. He then moved to Ernabella in about 1977. From 1978 he has been engaged in Bible translation and linguistics. He confirmed my observations about the differences between Ernabella and Amata in relation to stress symptoms. In a paper written for a study course in the United States, Eckert commented on the development of unbearable stress and consequent symptoms of anxiety among the Pitjantjatjarra:

> … this was and is particularly evident at Amata – drunkenness amongst some of the adults and the late teens and early twenties of the men, delinquency amongst teenagers including petrol sniffing, and a general attitude of apathy in regard to community development by the adults. The assimilationist policies applied, often rigorously, at Amata was a significant reason why this community had and is having more problems than Ernabella (1980).

It is interesting to note that Amata did not have a community council until funding requirements demanded incorporation of the community in 1973, though the people had long been asking for one as a means of consultation with government authorities. Bob James, Superintendent from 1972 to 1977, had tried to seek advice from a few old men. The first Council appointed was of nine men and one woman. An able man, Nyinnga Stewart, was the first chairman. Ernabella had long had a council. In the early days there were too many staff on it and they were seen by the people to dominate the discussion and decision making. Nevertheless, the people knew what was going on and they had a forum in which they could state their feelings and wishes as I have heard them do, forcefully at times, though they did not always carry the day.

Chrysoprase mining and gemstone cutting and polishing were thought to be a good projects to help the people at Amata towards some economic self-reliance. Don Busbridge, a senior officer

of the South Australian DAA, proposed in 1968 the establishment of an Aboriginal mining and gemstone operation at Amata. The people who were related to the Pipalyatjarra and the gemstone operation at Amata. The people, who were related to the many sacred areas at and around Mt Davies, happily agreed. That mining venture was a prime example of the difficulty that white people have had repeatedly in consulting with Aboriginal people. White people frequently fail to recognise that they and the Aboriginal people are thinking on two totally different wave-lengths, and operating out of different mindsets and concepts. White people become enthusiastic about the schemes which are their own brainchild, genuinely desiring to help Aboriginal people, but failing to understand the motivation of the people and what it is that **they** want to achieve.

Also acting to undermine the best intentions of non-Indigenous people is a little understood Aboriginal cultural 'no-no'. It is 'bad form' in tribal culture to question or disparage another person's idea. That idea belongs peculiarly to him, and others have no right to judge it publicly. So there is almost always agreement: 'uwa' or 'manymak' or 'yeah! good idea'. It can also mean, 'You're a persistent bugger, and we want you to hell out of here fast'. Or it can mean, 'We like you and, since you seem so keen on this idea, we don't wish to hurt your feelings'. If the people think privately that it is a bad idea they will find all kinds of alternate routes around it, or will delay or ultimately frustrate its implementation. So communication fails. Whitefeller enthusiasms carry us along – and persuade the people, too, on occasion. Then the pressures of government forward planning, and of little-understood financial requirements and government regulations take over. The end result of all this is the collapse of most of our white-oriented projects.

Marcia Langton, Aboriginal university graduate and Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders at the time commented on this pressure:

> They [government funding procedures] are calculated to co-opt Aboriginal leaders and stifle Aboriginal initiative. The Department requires submissions for grants in aid to be made on pink forms. They are subject to an incomprehensible set of rules and regulations known as the 'pink book'. It is impossible for the reality of Aboriginal needs to be communicated through this highly bureaucratised procedure. The effect of this is to make Aboriginals dependent on white experts, even to make application to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for a grant. For instance, if a community requires a truck to take people to ceremonies, they are required to employ a white expert adviser who will devise a scheme such as a market gardening proposal that will meet the Department's requirements and eventually allow the community to purchase a truck, allegedly to operate their market garden. Aboriginal needs per se are not regarded as worthwhile or important by the Australian government. It is only when a project satisfies the values and prejudices of the white assessors that it can be funded. (in Introduction to Self-determination as Oppression, paper by Coombs, 1978b)

In the case of the Pipalyatjarra mining, the people were not motivated to mine but rather to get back into their sacred country and to look after it. That was their overriding motivation. Anything that would help them to achieve that goal was seen to be good and readily assented to. In fact there was a history of association with white miners, enabling the people from both Warburton Mission and Amata to visit and at times to stay in some of their sacred country, which lay in the semi-arid land and desert, and in the ranges between those two places. In earlier years there was nickel and

chrysoprase mining at Irrunytju (Wingellina) and Papulangkutja (Blackstone). The white miners sometimes gave employment to the people for a limited wage. They had stores where food could be purchased to supplement hunting and gathering, and a reliable water supply. An old man, Jacky Tjupurru, spoke of his relationship with the miners at Blackstone as being a happy one. It seemed to be accepted at the time as a mutually beneficial arrangement.

It was probably that kind of remembrance which prompted the ready acceptance of the Department's offer to set up a mining and gemstone business. Jimmy Martin, an old man whose country lies near Pipalyatjarra, spoke of their motivation. 'I wanted to live here. A lot of people came out here to dig – to look after the place – and so they did. The truck was used for business of the highest priority to the men, the visiting and care of sacred sites and the performance of ceremonies. A rival chrysoprase business started up at Wingellina and the Amata mining business ran down. The Department had unknowingly helped the men to achieve what they had wanted to achieve all along, but they had not communicated.

The following story illustrates the harshness of the country and the reason why the people needed the kind of support which the chrysoprase mining offered in order to be able to stay in their country in dry times. About 1970 a large ceremonial party of men, women and children travelled to Pipalyatjarra for ceremonies. Bob Capp, a teacher at Ernabella and Fregon from 1964 to 1975 and well versed in the people's language and ceremonies, accompanied the party. Capp described the scene to me: 'The weather was extremely hot. People dug holes to get away from the heat and sponged down dehydrated people. Transport broke down and some people had to walk back about 200 miles.' (interview transcript). I think it was in relation to this trek that I heard that two young children died from dehydration.

The Indulkana settlement was forced upon the Labor government of South Australia. The then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Don Dunstan, negotiated with McLachlan, owner of Granite Downs and other stations in that state, for the resumption of 100 square miles of tribal land which included some bores, for the purpose of establishing a settlement. This was triggered by McLachlan's refusal to handle rations or allow a store when he took over the property. The Aboriginal people had to move.

McLachlan would agree only to the sale of 12 square miles of barren stony ridges with no bores. The sale price was $15,044. The agreement was signed by the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (SA) on 21 April 1967. One of the conditions of sale imposed by McLachlan was that the government should build a dog-proof fence at an estimated $32,000. A stated reason was that the company intended to run sheep. They never did so. Sister Dot Forbes wrote, 'Camp-dogs in my experience stayed thereabouts or with their masters, and were never any threat to cattle' (personal comment). In spite of the fact that it took two or three years to get the fence up, because the steep ranges in the south made it an unattractive proposition, and that there had been no problem from dogs during that time, McLachlan still insisted that the agreement be kept. In the end $40,000 of the taxpayers' money had to be spent on a useless fence. A letter which I received from the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, dated 26 May 1972, stated that if the government of the day had not agreed to erect the dog-proof fence 'the Proprietor would not have sold the land'.

The fence had two results. It stopped kangaroos getting to a spring and to other areas inside the fence where the men traditionally hunted them, and it greatly depressed the spirit of the people. The men complained bitterly to Sister Forbes about those things. They said, 'We're not dogs to be

fenced in'. In 1971 some of the men from Indulkana took me to a number of sacred sites in the district and expressed to me their feelings about the fence and their land. It seemed to me that, notwithstanding the Minister's letter stating that 'the fence does not deprive the Aboriginal people of the Undulkana Reserve free access to their sacred sites. The lessees are bound by the conditions of a Crown Lease pursuant to section 46(a) of the Pastoral Act 1036-60', the men felt considerable restraints about travelling around Granite Downs and carrying out ceremony. Some of those sacred places were of considerable importance to Pitjantjatjarra and Yankuntjatjarra people from hundreds of kilometres away.

The Pitjantjatjarra Homelands Movement: the first wave

Putaputa, some 182 km west of Amata, is an area of considerable importance to the people of the malu (kangaroo) totem, being central to a number of very important sacred sites in the surrounding country. In 1971 a group of four men and three women moved out there, led by an old man of considerable authority in that ceremony. By 1974 there were some fifty people living between Amata and Warburton, according to John Tregenza, then an officer of the Department of Community Welfare at Amata. Most were gathered at Putaputa, though a few were at Pipalyatjarra (Mt Davies). David Hope commented, 'There were certain old people who would trek by foot between Amata and Warburton [some 500 km], so in that sense there were people at Mt Davies permanently.' (interview transcript).

The flow of people was steadily increasing as, encouraged by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' support for the mining at Pipalyatjarra, the people moved out to their own significant areas. Yaluyalu, 155 km west of Amata on one of the many roads put through the area by Len Beadell in connection with Woomera and Maralinga, was the next site to be occupied. A small hill there is extremely sacred to the people of the related totem. Through lack of proper consultation, the South Australian Mines Department drilled a bore right in the middle of the site, greatly distressing the people of that totem. It was claimed in the records of that Department that when good water was found the Aboriginal men were no longer worried by the desecration (Wallace 1974), but the men belonging to that totem told me as late as 1980 about the desecration, and of their continuing apprehension as a result. They had in the meantime moved their outstation a distance away from Yaluyalu to Aparatjarra.

Kunamata, 135 km in a direct line south-west of Amata, was the next place to be settled. It is a very important ceremonial area. The people connected to that area had been voicing their concern about it for years. Edwards reported that the people began to show their sacred sites in the area to Ernabella staff in 1962. The late Walter McDougall, a ranger attached to the Woomera and Maralinga projects, established a vehicle track there in 1962, when he and Edwards were taken to visit the site. It later became the route for a road. The Pitjantjatjarra and other Western Desert tribes showed McDougall an amazing number of sacred sites. 'Almost everywhere that the people took me during this current study, along tracks to the most remote areas, they would tell me animatedly, 'Nyangatja Mita McDougalku iwarra (this is Mr McDougall's road)' (personal comment).

I took about twenty men by truck to Kunamata in 1971 to see the sacred sites and to hear their 'true story', so that I could inform the Kapaminta (the government) of the great importance of the area to them, and also so that they could instruct some of their sons. About twenty more men and women joined us, having been taken there by Alan West, Curator of the Melbourne Museum, and Capp, then headmaster at Fregon. We walked several kilometres to a site of great importance where

A small 'oasis'; simple housing at Walinya (Cave Hill).

Cool, cool shade. Bush architecture; attractive shade at Walinya.

Everyone loves a story. Testing NT Department of Education outstation story books, Walinya.

Story time again.

the men performed ceremony. We then returned to the area where we had camped to see other sites and to hear their stories. One man in his late middle age wept when he saw the sites. He had been taken from the area to Yalata mission, hundreds of kilometres south when a boy, and had not seen his country since. In November 1971, I sent a report of that visit to Kunamata to the appropriate South Australian authorities.

At a Pan-Pitjantjatjarra conference called by the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs at Ernabella in July 1975, the members expressed their disappointment at the length of time it was taking the Department to give the Kunamata people the little help required to enable them to move out to their country. They were asking for a reliable water supply and transport so that they could live in the area and care for it. Some time later the outstation was established. Cave Hill (Walinya) was established around the same time. It is a site important to both men and women of the Kungkarangkalpa totem (Seven Sisters star cluster). The first move there was in 1974, when the death of a relatively young man, about 35 years of age, caused Amata to empty. Some two hundred people moved to Walinya. Later, after the appropriate time and processes required by their Law, most of the people moved back, but some stayed.

In 1974 Bob Edwards, an anthropologist of the South Australian Museum and Arts Board came up with the idea of an on-site museum at Walinya. He had seen such museums operated successfully by Indians in the United States. Unfortunately, the usual problems of consultation arose between the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Museum and Arts Board, and the Aboriginal people. It was not realised apparently that the cave in question as the site contained not only a section of the cave with some paintings open to women, but also a section further into the cave with sacred paintings to be seen only by men.

A series of meetings were held in 1974 between the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and some of the people related to the Cave Hill area. Donald Fraser, an Ernabella man, and I were asked to attend a meeting in August to act as interpreters because of the confusion that had arisen. We came away concerned that the people had little concept of what the influx of large bodies of tourists might mean to their sacred area. They seemed blinded by visions of the vehicle which they believed they had been promised and the large amounts of money which they thought they would collect from tourists. Even Fraser and I did not fully realise the extent of the gaps in communication at that time.

As a result of the decision to go ahead with the scheme, Billy Kayipipi, a key authority for the site, painted over ancient and rich sacred paintings with relatively meaningless surface symbols for fear that women tourists would see the sacred ones (Wallace, 1977, 84). That undoubtedly would have a damaging effect on the story traditions and upon the people of the Seven Sisters totem. The scheme for an on-site museum fell through, and at the time of my visits to Walinya in 1979-80, there was a small peaceful community of about twenty people living there.

Irrunytju (Wingellina) is important to yet another totem. It was also the site of early nickel and chrysoprase mining conducted by white operators. Some of the people of that country were enabled to stay there because of the services and the work offered by the company at the time, and because of nursing care given by a sympathetic white woman with nursing training. In 1966 there were two or three Aboriginal families living at Wingellina (Wallace 1974). People related to Irrunytju asked welfare officer John Tregenza to help them establish a homeland community there in 1975. In the same year Lauren Bishop, an officer of the Department of Native Welfare based

at Kalgoorlie, had invited the Institute for Aboriginal Development (Alice Springs) to contract with Irrunytju, Warakurna (Giles Weather Station), Papulangkutja (Blackstone) and Marntamaru (Jamieson), to help them identify and support suitable community services officers. On 9 October 1975 a meeting occurred at Irrunytju for that purpose. John Tregenza and I were present, together with about fifty people from Amata and Pipalyatjarra who were related to this country or interested in the possibility of setting up a homeland community there.

A contract was drawn up in agreement with the people and this was then signed by community representatives, and by myself as a representative of the Institute for Aboriginal Development. In a separate meeting the people present asked me to invite John Tregenza to become their community services officer, an invitation which he later accepted. Within a few weeks some sixty people had moved out to establish their homeland community. The community was a balance of old people, middle aged people with grown families, young marrieds and children. John Tregenza expressed his surprise to me at the number of young people prepared to go to outstations. This is one of the homeland communities which maintained its population and its proportion of young adults, as can be seen in the population list of late 1980 (appendix 1).

Once again people followed the pattern of congregating at an outstation somewhere in the general vicinity of their sacred land to await their chance to move from there into their own country.

Election of a Labor Party Federal government and a Change of Direction

H C Coombs made no secret of his delight at the action of the new government in the field of Aboriginal Affairs. He wrote:

> The Council for Aboriginal Affairs had had a volatile and at times difficult relationship with the previous Liberal Country Party government. The election of a Labor government in 1972 brought new attitudes and thinking into the arena, and greatly encouraged the Office in its efforts to establish justice and respect for Aboriginal Australians (Coombs, 1976B, 25).

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam made a policy statement to the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council in Adelaide on 6 April, 1973, in which he said:

> The basic object of my Government's policy is to restore to the … Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs … to enable Aboriginal groups and communities to incorporate for the conduct of their own affairs, determining their own decision-making processes, choosing their own leaders and executives in ways they will themselves decide as the primary instruments of Aboriginal authority at the local and community level … An opportunity for self-determination and independent action would serve little purpose if Aborigines continued to be economically and socially deprived … The government, on behalf of the Australian people, accepts responsibility for their active and progressive rehabilitation (Whitlam 1973, 345-347).

It was a historic and high minded speech. Unfortunately, the machinery existing to put it into effect was the same as that which so single-mindedly pursued the goal of assimilation.

Hamilton observed:

> The Labor government is prepared to spend a considerable amount of money on Aboriginal affairs and has created a humane policy. Nonetheless, the same old structure is there behind it all, and the same old paternalistic attitude. White Australia will do as much as it can to help Aborigines achieve their own aims as long as the means used and the final result conform to the accepted norms of white Australia. In other words the money is there, but the power still lies in the hands of whites and will always do so while the whites continue to hold the purse-strings and play games such as 'enlightened Administrator'. Under past administrations money was there too, but the amount that actually trickled into the possession of Aborigines was a minute proportion of the total. It looks like the same things will happen again (Hamilton 1974, 21; also Coombs, 1978, 218).

However, there were new attitudes, a new excitement and a new policy, the policy of 'self-determination'. The Labor government also made specific commitments to grant land rights, to establish a land fund to buy back alienated lands, and to pass anti-discrimination legislation; in a word – to discriminate positively towards Aborigines to help them rise from the depths of hopelessness into which they had been pushed by white contact history and subsequent events.

It led to one major occurrence which caused considerable excitement amongst Aboriginal people and greatly raised their hopes. That was the establishment of the Woodward Commission of Inquiry into Land Rights for the Northern Territory, and its meetings with Aboriginal people around the country. It did not confine its discussions to people from the Northern Territory alone for good reasons. Those reasons were expressed by people from the three adjoining states: South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. 'We didn't draw those lines [state borders] Whitefellows drew them. Our country, our Law and our people can't be divided up like that'. So people from all three states took part in the discussions held in Alice Springs, the first being held on 8 – 9 September, 1973.

Those discussions greatly stimulated the hopes of a man from Warburton Mission, and led to the setting up of the outstations at Papulankutja, Warakuna and Mantamaru in Western Australia. Fred Forbes, a middle-aged man of considerable traditional authority told me, 'The men asked me to go to that meeting in Alice Springs and to speak for them'. He spoke so well in his own language, Ngaatjatjarra, that I overheard a Queen's Counsel on the Commission say to a colleague, 'I don't know what he is saying, but what wouldn't you give for that eloquence and that kind of presence in court?'

Fred said of that meeting, 'I told them "It is Aboriginal men's land and rocks and hills, and white men came later and made towns and raised children." So I took a map back to Warburton and showed them. Then Miss Hackett [a United Aborigines Mission linguist at Warburton] helped me to apply for incorporation. I paid a shilling and waited four or five weeks. After that I was told I could go out and sit in my country and look after it, Warutja mission, and I came here [to Papulangkutja]' (taped interview).

It is my firm belief that the quiet dynamic enthusiasm of Fred Forbes, his response to the Woodward Commission and his full reporting to the people at Warburton Mission, stimulated the establishment of Mantamaru and Warakuna also, though it is probably true to say that the presence

of the Giles Weather Station as an exploitable resource at Warakurna encouraged people to stay near there and look after their sacred places once the policy of driving them away was discontinued. I have no doubt, however, that Fred added to the people's determination. By 1975 communities were established at both Warakuna and Mantamaru, and the Warakuna community had the help of their own community services officer, previously an employee of the weather station.

There is no doubt that the Woodward Land Rights Commission, and the boost given to the Aboriginal Land Rights movement by the election of a Labor Government in 1972 which favoured Land Rights, greatly influenced the moves away from larger settlements and into people's home country (Gray 1977, 116). Despite the complexities of the issues and of the white man's procedures, what the Aboriginal people seemed clearly to hear the government saying was that they understood their concern for their land and would help the people get traditional land back under their control.

Land rights had become very much a topic of camp fire conversations, not only in the adjoining areas of the three states, called Central Australia, but all over Australia. In Arnhem Land, in the north of Australia, it had some influence in the movement out from the government settlement at Maningrida. Though most of the people had lived there since 1957, and many of those born there had had little or no contact with their sacred country, by 1974 there were some five hundred people living in homeland communities out from Maningrida. This was more than half the population. By 1977 this number had risen to about eight hundred people (Meehan and Jones 1978, 134-135).

The Woodward Commission's effect was not confined to the Northern Territory. The media publicity about the desire of the Aurukun and Mornington Island people to set up outstations, and the Queensland government's oppressive response in May 1977, showed the widespread nature of the Commission's impact. I suspect that the movement of people in the Kimberley region of Western Australia was also a result of this whole ferment of anxiety, desire and discussion to which the Woodward Commission contributed. The Kimberley people had to 'squat' on the pastoral land from which they were forced and coerced in recent times.

The Western Australian government led by Sir Charles Court was strongly opposed to the concept of Aboriginal land rights and to the setting up of outstations. The Minister for Community Welfare, Mr Hassell, took a hard line on Aboriginal matters. Hassell wrote to the Director of Community Welfare, Mr Keith Maine, instructing him to remind all DCW officers that the council [Kimberley Land Council] was not a recognised body and officers should not deal with its members. Mr Hassell's instructions were issued at the same time as a World Council of Churches delegation arrived in Australia to investigate the treatment of Aborigines. Mr Hassell issued a similar instruction to officers last year when the Commissioner for Community Relations, Mr Al Grassby, visited the Kimberley. 'Some community welfare officers are understood to be upset by the Government's instruction' (*The West Australian*, 27 June 1981).

Department of Community Welfare staff told me they had been warned from head office to have no association with members of the Kimberley Land Council, either during or outside working hours. They also reported a departmental threat to remove from the area any staff who disobeyed the order. That threat was carried out. One married couple who had worked in the area for nine years were said to have been moved away against their wishes then placed in jobs 80 km apart around Perth. Other staff and a Uniting Church Minister in the area described them as good caring officers (personal comment). As the Kimberley Land Council was the only Aboriginal

body in the area at the time which seemed widely representative, the action by the Department was counter-productive, foolish and oppressive.

I was invited to a Kimberley Land Council meeting at Ringer's Soak on Gordon Downs Station in 1981. About two hundred or more people had gathered from all over the Kimberley. I was impressed with their dignity, their deep concern, their grasp of what the issues were about, and their determination. They knew that they would have to fight hard for every little gain they might achieve. They received no government help. Most communities existed on social security cheques and a 'chuck-in' system which provided a little money for community needs. It is ironical that these same people, in the past, provided the almost free labour which had enabled pastoralists to build up properties and herds in the area, and some to make not inconsiderable family fortunes. Those Aboriginal people today survive on 'chuck-in'.

The election of a Labor government in Western Australia in 1983 seemed to change that picture somewhat. The new government set up an enquiry into Aboriginal land rights headed by barrister Paul Seaman. They also funded the Kimberley Land Council at the time to help them to prepare their submission. An officer of the Department of Community Development told me what a relief it was to work in the atmosphere of freedom and co-operation which then came to prevail in the Department. Government policies have an all-pervading effect on departments and their people in the field, and thus upon Aboriginal people. Relationships with the Kimberley Land Council were then encouraged.

However, Mr Seaman's interim discussion paper spurred the mining industry and the Australian League of Rights (the League) into a frenzy of opposition. The League grossly misinformed and frightened farmers and rural councils while the West Australian Chamber of Mines mounted a very costly media attack, which was racist, fear-mongering and dishonest. Fearful of the results of their propaganda in terms of an election backlash, the Burke government shelved the Seaman Report and went back on their promises to Aboriginal people before attaining government, causing bitter disappointment to the people.

Ernabella – the second wave

A second movement to develop outstations or satellite communities on the mission lease, close to the central community and its facilities, began at Ernabella in South Australia in the late 1970s. Mike Last, who was community adviser, said that the people had begun discussing the move about 1976. For some this is their homeland. As Mike explained, '… these people around Ernabella, in a sense, had a need to move out but they also had a lot of benefits in the Ernabella setting as well. They didn't live under the frustrations the people lived under at Amata. There just wasn't the pressure to force people off … One of the things we did in the earlier part was to make the road systems [within Ernabella] very good … people used to go out, and they are related to their country very much' (interview transcript).

Three small outstations had been established by the end of 1980. The first, Katjikatjitjarra, was 15 km north of Ernabella. It was begun by a few older men in the latter years of their working life. They took with them about a dozen pensioners, and two younger couples with no children, so they had no need of a school. Katjikatjitjarra has a 12 volt wind generator to provide some lights and run a 12 volt refrigerator. Their hot water is provided by solar panels.

Wamikata, about 15 km north-west of Ernabella, was next established. There was only one small family group of about eight people there. They established grapevines early and looked forward

to harvesting grapes at the end of 1980. The people were carting water by hand to keep the plants going. At Itjinpirri, a small waterhole 9 km north of Ernabella, the people planned a recreation area. They installed an eighteen foot windmill and a large tank, from which the overflow will keep the waterhole topped up with fresh water for swimming. Michael Atiratira belongs to the area and planned to look after it for the people. He had already planted grapes, fruit trees and vegetables by 1981.

Ngarutjarra was established next about 35 km west by road. It is the country of Peter Nyaningu, who trained at Nungalinya College, Darwin, for the Christian ministry. He planned a small healing community there, where he could help his own people who were damaged by the social change and pressures upon them. He had a vision of a quiet haven where alcoholic adults and petrol sniffing children could be reunited with their Law and their land; a place where they could be exposed also 'to the love of Jesus Christ and the healing power of his spirit' (personal comment from Nyaningu). He has begun with the establishment of training courses there for church elders from around the Pitjantjatjarra area, and is planning other services to his people.

Others at Ernabella were also talking of setting up outstations within the lease area. Even in the township itself people have been thinking and planning separate pockets of housing a little away from the main centre. There was a group of houses a short distance away to the east, and another planned just over the hills on the south side of the town. Alan Steele, who followed Last as the community adviser, commented that the people felt 'jammed up in the township of Ernabella, and wanted to live a little apart in their extended family groupings'. He said that this development had 'reduced the pressure of tribal people living in a settled state' (interview transcript, 1980). By May 1984 another three satellite communities had been established, making six occupied by family groups, and another four were in the process of setting up.

People had been continually asking about their sacred lands over the years and expressing their concern about sacred matters to those whom they came to trust. If not asking, they were thinking about them. From time to time, if able, they would visit those sites to perform ceremonies. If unable to go to key sites, people would care for them by performing the ceremony at a related site that was accessible. There is a real sense in which the people never left their country, but remained in it in spirit. Mr Hunt, a vigorous old tribal man, took his family to a remote range in the Western Desert, Munyintjanya, about 40 km north of Papulankutja, where he walked the hills hunting wallabies. Prior to that move he had spent a few years at Warburton mission because of a family bereavement and drought. When asked why he left his sacred land he answered indignantly, 'I never left it'.

By performing the appropriate ceremonies at accessible related sites the people maintained their relationship with their sacred land. They were still tending the land and caring for it according to the beliefs and Law of their culture. When people sing their song cycles they are singing about every aspect of their land, creation, ancestor history, Law, development and naming of features of the landscape, and of the flora and fauna, the relationship of the people to their land, social behaviour, and a whole host of things which maintain the identify of the people of that place, group and totem. Dick Kimber helped many Pintupi to visit their homelands between 1970 and 1980. He comments on the same feeling for and contact with their country through ceremony that caused Mr Hunt to say 'I never left it'. 'People always maintained contact with their homeland,

and when they were cut off from it they still maintained contact by ceremonial life. I think far more contact than was generally recognised by settlement staff (interview transcript. 1980).

The insistence of many white people that Aboriginal people showed no interest in a particular area, and therefore should not be granted rights to it, is often at best ignorance about the nature of Aboriginal people's relationship with their land and what constitutes care of the land. The dogged resistance of the people related to Ayers Rock to the pressure for them to move away from the area highlights that relationship (see chapter 1). For a variety of historical political and climatic reasons it was not possible for most of the groups covered in this study to stay in their sacred country and to care for their important sites. Nevertheless they repeatedly seized opportunities to return to it, as evidenced by the movement of people whenever a settlement of any kind was established closer to their tribal area.

Aboriginal men from Indulkana settlement in South Australia guided me around Granite Downs station in 1971 because they wanted to show me sacred sites associated with the Kangaroo and Euro story (Wati Kutjarra), and another very important secret-sacred story. They explained that white people did not understand the importance of such places to them. They were instructing me so that I could tell the 'true story' to the government about how they related to their sacred land. They expressed anxiety about their places and an undiminished desire to care for them properly. Although the sites were off the Reserve, they wanted the Reserve boundaries of the tiny Indulkana settlement widened to include those areas. I conveyed that information to the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

When the men expressed those concerns to me again in early 1972, I encouraged them to write to the government themselves explaining their feelings and the nature of their attachment to the land. They did so in Yankuntjatjarra, explaining some of the sacred story of Kangaroo and Euro ancestors. The translation read in part: 'It's a very important dreaming, and we greatly long for our places … you lot don't understand about our dreaming, and now that I'm fully informing you, you will understand a lot more, and this men's dreaming is not just a little thing but most important … and we are desperately pleading with you from Indulkana for this land'. It was signed by nine of the key men for that area.

Whitlam Government policy stimulates further moves to outstations.

One important policy decision of the Whitlam government which greatly stimulated the movement into homelands was the decision in 1973 to assist groups who wished to move. In the early heady days of the Labor government around that time some extravagant help was given, and some rash promises made, raising people's expectations to great heights. That levelled out, however, and aid has been considerably restricted since those days but the movement continues.

The hope and encouragement which that decision gave the Aboriginal people, especially in the harsh conditions of Central Australia, cannot be over-estimated. Fred Forbes spoke of this: 'then [on return to Warburton Mission from Woodward Land Rights meetings in Alice Springs] a white man and a white woman came from Canberra [Woodward Commission barristers] and they talked about giving us our father's and grandfather's land. From that I thought to myself, "the government is not really hard after all"'. Immediately he took action to incorporate and to settle at Papulangkutja. Hunt also commented: 'the government sent word through the mission, "Go and stay in your country and look after it"'.

A Pan-Pitjantjatjarra conference at Ernabella in July 1975 was taken up by the many requests of people for help in returning to their homelands. Larry Nelson said, 'People want to go to Kata'ala (Murray Bore) and look after it'. They asked for a bore and suitable water so they could try themselves out. It became clear though that some outstation communities wanted more than just a quiet life free from the white man's presence and his functions, perhaps without realising the implications. In the case of Pipalyatjarra, Paul Eckert points out that:

> This community went beyond the well windmill and tank and vehicle and requested funds for a white community adviser (they had already found someone to fill that position themselves). And along with that request came further requests for a caravan for him to live in, funds for wages for men and women to work in developing the community and funds to develop a chrysoprase mine nearby.

They also asked for a store and school teacher. Paul Eckert became the first teacher there in 1980.

Charlie …, an older man, spoke for Kunamata. 'The Kunamata people are the ones really wanting to go back. The first thing we are thinking about is a bore. We need water. We need to be incorporated and we need a motor car. We want houses, one garage, a hospital [clinic], petrol. We want work, and I want to make a farm'. I drew them out in discussion and, with diagrams, showed them how many white people they were asking for to run services and who would be living amongst them, particularly as they wanted married people to work with them. They were appalled. They had not realised the implications of their requests. 'One white person, perhaps', they said, 'but that's enough. We don't want all those white people'. In fact the Kunamata people went out as soon as good water was available and a windmill installed. They lived in wurlies and Charlie fenced and planted his garden.

Raymond Tjilya pointed out at the conference that some persons related to Kunamata had already learnt some of the necessary skills. 'I have learnt the store here', he said, '… Purrka has been learning in the hospital for many years and she can go to Kunamata. Yalariti has been learning in the garage for some years and he can work out there … there would have to be a school and a hospital, then we could all go out'. Raymond reflects what many of the younger men and women feel: they have enjoyed the white facilities of settlements and missions for years and do not want to leave them. They feel they need the facilities they are used to such as a store, school, garage, clinic, and would want those services. At the end of 1980 neither Raymond nor the two people he mentioned were living at Kunamata. Yalariti was making it possible for his family to live there by regular servicing of the small group. Purrki was enrolled in a long course in Adelaide, and Raymond showed little inclination to leave Ernabella and the linguistic work he was doing there.

This demonstrates one of the dilemmas of the movement. The old people are saying to their sons and daughters, 'We stayed away from our country all those years for you until you grew up. Now it's our turn, and you should help us settle in our homeland, turn and turn about (ngaparrtji – ngaparrtji)'. Many of the younger people have learned another way and have become used to the comforts and activities in the larger settlements and are loath to leave. However, it is true that in the more western outstation and homeland communities, from Pipalyatjarra through to Warburton, there are a considerable number of younger men and women. These are the people who mostly carry out the everyday running of the services in the communities, and who run the Pitjantjatjarra Medical Service based at Kalka near Pipalyatjarra. Many others, though not

prepared to live permanently in those communities, spend much time and effort in servicing them, thus enabling their parents and grandparents to live in their homelands or closer to them.

People at the Pan-Pitjantjatjarra conference spoke for many places. Their main plea was for water, for windmills and tanks to ensure a reliable supply. This was at odds with the thinking of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs at the time, which required the people to prove their motivation by living in their outstation for a couple of years, before becoming eligible for a small setting-up grant. In Central Australia that was almost impossible for some groups and, in summer or very dry times, downright dangerous. Notwithstanding, one or two groups moved out and carted water in drums and hung on. In Arnhem Land the situation is quite different, as water is much more plentiful in many areas.

Water then was the primary need in the development of outstations in the Centre. It didn't take much to encourage some people to move. Kutatji, an old man living at Fregon was told by another man that a bore had been sunk close to his country at Kuntjanu. It had no mill or pump on it. Kutatji said, '… so I camped out there and got water with a jam tin on a rope'. His sons then helped him to set up an outstation. By 1980 it had an airstrip, a shed for a store and a large garden with fruit trees, grapevines, watermelons and vegetables.

Both Forbes and Hunt spoke of two bores which had been sunk at Blackstone as an important factor enabling them to settle in their country. Jimmy Martin, an old man who moved from Amata to Pipulyatjarra and later from there to this place at Kunatjarra, further to the south-west, said, 'We couldn't think how we would look after our sacred places and our family; and different places began to get bores, then we looked after it'.

Water was not the only requirement however. Paul Eckert listed the basic needs expressed by the homeland's people as:

1. a well, windmill and tank.
2. a vehicle.
3. a store or some means of easy access to a store that was stocked with a good range of food and clothing and tools and firearms.
4. money with which to buy stores (and also private vehicles). This money could be obtained by:
   (i) working for wages provided through government grant to the community. This necessitated a white person to supervise and organise work and distribute wages; or by
   (ii) not working for wages, that is by obtaining unemployment benefits from the Social Security Department
5. a white community advisor to fulfil the duties outlined above and also to keep the store in good shape. However, not every homeland centre wanted a white person there. Some centres had access to Pitjantjatjarra people who were able and competent enough to fulfil these functions.
6. a school for their children, so they could learn 'the three r's' including English. This means of course a considerable level of support and some dependence upon the settlement at Amata for service (Eckert, 1980).

Early outstations at Hermannsburg

An early system of outstations was tried out at the Lutheran mission at Hermannsburg which was founded in 1877, and is also known as the Finke River Mission. Pastor F W Albrecht had set up a system of cattle outstations probably in the 1950s. The scheme lasted for fifteen years and was economically successful. The individual men in the scheme faithfully paid back their loans and returned stock horses and gear loaned to them; but they did not persist with the work or remain in the outstations. Albrecht felt that the men had too much taste for white man's food and clothing and were not motivated to return to the bush (Albrecht, F W 1977, 76). It is interesting to note their strong motivation to do so in recent years.

Albrecht's son Paul became a Lutheran Pastor and succeeded his father as superintendent of the Finke River Mission with oversight of all Lutheran work in Central Australia. In an undated paper titled *Hermannsburg a Meeting Place of Cultures: Personal Reflections*, Albrecht describes how, through the 1960s and early 1970s, the mission had made a serious attempt to hand over responsibility for its management to an elected Aboriginal council. [In this they were well ahead of the Federal government which, through its Social Welfare Branch in the Northern Territory, had encouraged the formation of elected Aboriginal councils but were loath to give them any real authority.] At Hermannsburg, responsibility for the handling of the finances was handed over to the Council in 1973. The results were quite unexpected. Albrecht said that people became distressed. Demands on white staff escalated. There was more drunkenness and fighting than ever before which the council was unable to control (Albrecht, undated, 16-17). People accused staff: 'You missionaries have abandoned us. This is all your fault' (personal comment).

Pained and bewildered, the mission staff tried to discover what had gone wrong. At that time the Hermannsburg School head teacher, Rex Ziersch, was in Brisbane studying anthropology. He wrote back to fellow staff and urged them to sit with certain old men and to ask questions which would give the raw data to work out kinship relationships. John von Sturmer, his lecturer, later went to Hermannsburg and helped staff to understand the genealogies and kinship structure and to identify the real authorities. The staff discovered that they had not paid enough heed to, nor had they really understood the Aranta people's own authority structures. On occasion they had unwittingly bolstered non-leaders in positions of power and had helped to create power struggles in the community (Fargher and Ziersch, 1982).

They found that they did not have one homogenous community at Hermannsburg as they had thought but rather some twenty-two competing clans, none of which had any authority over the others, nor any responsibility traditionally for other clans or groups. The staff also discovered that two clans had dominated the council and were looking after their relations in the matter of jobs and housing and other benefits as their traditional Law required of them. As a result of this the majority of people in Hermannsburg were missing out and were under considerable stress.

Pastor John Fitzner, Pastor at Hermannsburg since 1969, described to me the process that took place. Since his arrival there he had concentrated on language study which gave him a tool for relating to the Aranta people. In the first two years he felt he was not getting far in understanding the people or finding out what their real concerns were. Prompted by Rex Ziersch, he began asking the suggested questions of an old man named Esrom. The old man began to talk about his sacred country and his dreaming and to spell out in those terms **who he was**. Fitzner described it as a whole new world opening up. (This and the following information relating to Hermannsburg is from the transcript of an interview with Fitzner.)

There was an exodus from the Hermannsburg town area as the various extended family groups began to establish their own outstations. The move was almost certainly because of the stimulus of that questioning, which had caused the people to verbalise who they were and how they related to their land. The first to move out was the family of old William Unggwanaka. His son Nahassen had been for some years the chairman of the Hermannsburg School Council, a Council which developed to the stage of working out curricula and directing the activities of the European school teachers. Nahassen was intelligent and imaginative and was looked upon by staff as one of the leaders of the future. He moved out with his father and came under his father's authority. He has since established his own outstation.

William Unggwanaka's family moved to Ellery's Creek, though his country is said to be right down the Finke River, near a place called Running Waters. Fitzner surmised that that was probably the nearest they could get to it. William's family negotiated with the owners of the area in which they wished to settle. This is an interesting feature of the outstation movement. The families each recognise the ownership of land by other groups and, if unable to go to their homelands, will not simply settle in a place of their choosing. They negotiate with the owners for permission to set up a community on their land. This even applies to land around towns in Central Australia where people have established town camps.

Having received the landowner's permission and moved out from Hermannsburg, old William's family speedily put in a fenced garden and simple housing at Ellery's Creek without asking for any help from mission or government. Following their move, other clans moved out from the mission and established their own outstations, mainly along Ellery's Creek and the Finke River. Fitzner said the people had been talking of moving out long before 1974. 'They had been hearing lots of ideas about Aboriginal independence of thought and action, and sensed that there was much more acceptance of them doing their own thing. It coincided with the Labor government coming into power in Canberra. The people had some expectation that they would get a better deal, and that more money might be available. It was a good year with plenty of water around, so it was easy for people to move out'.

The movement out of Hermannsburg took place at a time when, according to Fitzner, the mission provided lots of opportunities for employment. More than a hundred people were employed. Most able-bodied people who wanted employment could get it. Neither those opportunities nor the large well equipped school, nor the houses with water and electricity laid on kept people at the mission. They obviously saw greater benefits in living separately in their clan groups. The movement seemed to coincide with a renewed interest in and concern for one's own country and a renewed caring for sacred land and specific sites. Other groups moved out when government money became available for setting up outstations. Eventually some twenty clan groups moved out. After six years only one group had moved back into Hermannsburg because 'the situation defeated them' (interview transcript).

The Pintupi: displacement, longing and return

Pintupi were brought in from the Western Desert in 1957 and placed in the multi-tribal situation at Papunya government settlement, some 250 km west of Alice Springs. This caused them considerable distress and they were constantly longing for their own country. It led to a great deal of movement back and forth to outstations. Linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Ken and Leslie Hansen, had worked with the Pintupi for more than fifteen years from 1964. Ken

was an electrician and Leslie a teacher before entering linguistic work. For six to nine months of each year the Hansens lived in a caravan in the midst of the Pintupi camp, and moved to outstations with the people. Working in close relationships with informants they produced a Pintupi/Luritja Dictionary and Grammar. (Luritja is a related Western Desert dialect which had become intermixed with Pintupi language). Through their camp living and close relationships the Hansens were able to learn much from the people about their intricate social and religious beliefs and practices and their fears and hopes. They were my informants for much of the following material on the Pintupi outstation movement.

In earlier years because of water shortages at Haasts Bluff the people were encouraged by the Lutheran pastor to move out from time to time and camp on the waterholes along the range. It may have been that pattern which influenced Nosepeg Tjupurrula in 1966 when he encouraged some Pintupi/Luritja people to move out to Llambera (Lampara) Bore, Waruwiya and various waterholes west of Papunya. He expressed a desire to be in such places with relations of a like age (middle-aged) and persuaded Superintendents to run rations out to them and check on their health. Nosepeg would stay about two months then return to Papunya for about four months, then visit the outstation again for another period. Groups of people stayed out.

Nosepeg Tjupurrula appeared to have had a hand in the development of all the earlier outstations from Papunya. He is an engaging character who seems to have a certain amount of authority, not a little of it because of his own intelligence and shrewdness. Dick Kimber describes Nosepeg as an amazing political figure who is able to extract maximum gain from Europeans without them realising it. Dick described a violent incident at Lampara Bore in the 1960s when the response of white staff was to close down the outstation. Nosepeg realised that some major gesture of reconciliation was required or they would be removed. He made formal apology to the departmental community adviser. 'We are sorry for what we have done. We did a bad thing. We'll burn all our weapons.' So all the boomerangs and spears and fighting sticks were placed in a big heap and burnt. Nosepeg knew that this gesture was necessary and it worked. They stayed there. He also knew that even if no weapons were kept aside and hidden they could go out and make some more the next week (interview transcript). Because of his intelligence and charm Nosepeg has been involved in a great variety of western style experiences, from acting and helping in the production of films on Aboriginal life, to riding in the cockpit of Dick Smith's chartered Boeing 747 as a guide on the flight over the Lasseter's Reef area, a great distance south-west of Papunya.

There was considerable ambivalence and some opposition on the part of the Social Welfare Branch staff to the people's desire to move to outstations. There was no such ambivalence on the part of Mr H C Giese, the Director of Social Welfare in the Northern Territory. Coombs reports that he discussed with Giese the expressed desire of many Yirrkala people to return to their traditional homelands,

> … and was surprised at the vehemence of his antagonism. Briefly he saw such moves as inconsistent with the assimilationist objectives of the then accepted policy, as encouraging Aborigines to maintain their traditional ways, weakening mission and administration control and as impairing the education of the children in the ways of white society. These views were generally, although less vehemently, shared by the missionaries (178, 68).

If you wished to teach Aboriginal children white values and adults to eat with knives and forks

in mass dining situations, you had to discourage people officially from going out to outstations. Some staff were sympathetic. Jeremy Long, then an anthropologist with the Welfare Branch, was concerned at the social distress and deaths amongst the Pintupi as a result of living in a large multi-tribe settlement. He had manned the latter expeditions which brought large groups in from the Western Desert. He recommended to the Department that the Pintupi be moved into smaller communities as far west as the West Australian border. He anticipated that they would be much happier there (1962). His advice was not taken.

Pintupi people kept asking to go out to a bore to the west. The Welfare Branch argued as to whether cattle and people could mix. Branch policy was to develop Haasts Bluff, by this time a government settlement, as a cattle operation. They wanted to use the land along the range and west of Papunya for raising cattle. They did not want people camped by the bores. In 1969-70, about one hundred people went out of their own volition and camped on Lampara Bore. A teacher named Terry Parry went with them and a small work program was established by a European named Wally Lumsden. When some trouble arose which required police to go out to the community, the branch used the opportunity to force the people to return to Papunya. Kimber stated that, after a so-called riot in 1970, Social Welfare officials decided, 'Right. We're the bosses. You are going to come in [to Papunya] and come under our control.' Kimber claims that, from that moment, the people continued to try to get out again (interview transcript).

During the time the people had been there, Parry was able to report that the community gave him good support: there were no absentee problems, and general community morale was high. Later there was a similar report from the outstation school at Yayayi (Papunya Report, 1977, 63). This is in marked contrast to the situation as reported from the Papunya headmaster concerning schooling of Pintupi children in Papunya (Papunya Report, 58).

Later a group was allowed to go to Waruwiya. It was a good hunting area so the people didn't have the difficulty of running a store. Eventually a man struck his wife who was said to be unfaithful. The blow killed her and the whole group then moved back into Papunya. The Department of Health had been putting pressure on the people to return at that time because of the high nitrate content in the water at Waruwiya.

The same group, swelled by additional people from the Pintupi who had moved into Haasts Bluff in the 1930s, moved west to another camping area in 1973. It was at Yayayi about 40 km from Papunya. Some of the ex-Welfare staff of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs who had taken over from the Social Welfare branch following the election of a Labor government in Canberra in 1972, did not want people on this bore and had been procrastinating about the provision of a water supply. The people became fed up with the delay and the broken promises, and the whole group simply voted with their feet and walked out to Yayayi. I remember a nursing sister who was working with the Pintupi at the time expressing her concern and anger because some of the people who walked out were on medication. She wanted them brought back, but the people were determined to stay at Yayayi. Considerations such as western medical and educational services were low on their list of priorities.

In that move more than two hundred people went to the outstation. As in earlier moves they negotiated with the Aranta/Luritja traditional owners of the land for permission to set up a community there. It was a tentative move in the direction of their own country. Laurie Owens, the superintendent of Papunya at the time, had presented a submission for funds for a *Proposed*

Relocation Program for the Pintupi Community in May 1973. It was not long after this that the people had their 'walk out' in response to the procrastination. Officially the Department was in support of such moves and soon after this the people at Yayayi were encouraged in their efforts by the Department. The initial opposition bears out the comments of Annette Hamilton that the same machinery and some of the same entrenched attitudes were still there at the interface to distort or hinder the new Labor policy (1974. 21).

Government money was now forthcoming to help the Pintupi to set up at Yayayi. From the departmental discussions about this money and how they could be self-determining, there were great expectations on the part of the people. They were going to have a utopian community with a small store, a clinic, work programs: in short a mini-settlement but run by themselves. Because of this support they felt that the Government had sanctified their move, much as the agreement of the traditional owners of that area had done.

The recognised leader of the general Pintupi tribe, Shorty Bruno Tjangala, felt that the government had placed him there as the boss and that he had got the trucks and wages and land for the people. In their opinion, all this was endorsed by the Government. Although the self-determination aspect didn't work and it became obvious to the people that they could not control work and vehicles and all the European things, the whole morale of the group lifted tremendously, according to the Hansens. There was no more talk of the Pintupi dying out. From the point of view some officers of the Department, Yayayi was a failure. None of their projects worked. But from the people's point of view, they were happy to be there, to be recognised by the government and to be receiving money one way or another. They were not worried about what they did for the money and they could hunt and gather and teach their children about their country, to live the life that they wanted. They were much happier than in Papunya.

In spite of these moves there was still a lot of anxiety on the part of the Pintupi. Shorty Lunggata told DAA Officer Richard Preese two or three years later that they could not move far away because they had a lot of relations married to people at Papunya. Also they didn't want to remove themselves from the services of the hospital and the sisters. Finally, they didn't trust the store service. They were afraid that the store truck would not get out to them. Preese said that the people were always worried about it and pushing them to come out more often. He said that there were two sorts of outstations amongst the Pintupi: there were the Western Pintupi who were actually withdrawing from Papunya to the extent that they got the absolute minimum of services, an occasional store run and an occasional visit from the nursing sisters. The others were at Lampara and Five Mile Bores. These were really satellite communities of Papunya. They had simply withdrawn from the social pressures at Papunya but still relied on the settlement for everything to a much greater extent (1980 interview transcript).

It is interesting to note that one of the anxieties expressed to the Hansens by the Pintupi was that too many photographs had been taken of them by white people. They said that those photos had taken away something of their life spirit. As many of the photos were kept in the settlement office, they feared that if they went too far away their spirits would be so weakened that they would no longer be able to survive in the bush. I have known Pitjantjatjarra and Yankuntjatjarra men on odd occasions to blame photographs or films taken of people for their subsequent sickness. That notion is now fast fading but is still a fear of many older people.

Nosepeg Tjupurrula had long claimed to be leader, 'Boss' of all the Pintupi. When the Pintupi chose Shorty Bruno as their general leader, Nosepeg established a community of his own at Kungkayunti (Browns' Bore) in August 1974. It numbered one hundred and sixteen people (Morice 1978, 55). It seemed a viable community and continued for a number of years, though with one or two changes of leadership. In 1984 there was still a small community at Kungkayunti running a modest cattle project under the leadership of Joe Malda. Other groups have split off and moved to other outstations. Many of the Pintupi have moved to Kintore near the West Australian border.

Aranta/Luritja people had heard of the development of outstations at Hermannsburg and were saying, 'We should have outstations too'. As in most of the over-large Aboriginal communities set up by European authorities, Papunya Council was having difficulty in handling its finances. In the common pattern of the time the elected council was dominated by the traditional land owning group for the settlement area who were Aranta people and by a clever relative newcomer and his group, who were Warlpiri speakers. Most of the benefits of jobs and vehicles went to members of those two groups and other people were neglected.

In March 1976 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs called a meeting of departments and organisations working with Aboriginal people to discuss the difficulties at Papunya. They proposed to call a community meeting and tell the council in front of everyone that they were not doing their job properly in the handling of money and in looking after all the people in Papunya. They would then inform the council that its funds were cut and it was being disbanded. Then they intended to ask the meeting how they wanted to run the community and its finances.

As Director of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, I attended that meeting and cautioned against shaming the council before all the community as the problems lay mostly in the structures which we had imposed on the community and in their lack of compatibility with the traditional structures which still operate. I questioned how they would ensure that every clan was represented at a community meeting or how they would make sure that the message spread right through the thousand strong community. Since traditional structures and communication mechanisms couldn't cater for the artificial lumping of different tribes together to Papunya, I suggested that the Department would have to tell the same story in every camp on the settlement. The story should also be presented in an Aboriginal language or languages if possible.

For my sins I was given the task of preparing the story and seeing that it was told in every camp. I told DAA officers that I would present a story which would suggest the possible alternatives of outstations and of jobs being undertaken on a clan and possibly a contract basis. I wanted to know if I would be supported in this and also what support the Department was prepared to give the people if they wished to follow up those choices. I was not prepared to do the job without a clear statement of the Department's position on these matters. They gave the necessary assurances and we headed for Papunya.

To help the people to better understand the concepts we were presenting I had drawn some posters in which I made use of some of the people's own symbols used in painting and story telling. The men used them to draw their maps and stories on boards and in sand paintings. Pitjantjatjarra women and girls have a traditional story telling game called milpatjunany. They tap the ground with a stick or, in these days with a piece of wire looped around the neck and carried for the purpose. That says in effect: pay attention, I'm about to tell a story. I had watched

women attending hospital playing the game in our back yard in Alice Springs. I had watched mothers using it to teach their children and toddlers playing the game and chattering in nonsense syllables. I have watched all of them use the symbol 'c' for a seated person, '(' for a windbreak or shelter, 'x' for a fire and '=' or '-' for tracks. Stories are both old and new: myths, hunting stories and camp happenings. Those symbols seem to evoke a deeper response from the people to the stories.

Snowy Ti:ti (Teedee) was at the first camp at which I spoke. He is a Luritja man whom I knew well. He responded with great enthusiasm and accompanied us to all the other camps to make sure the story was understood. In telling the story I spoke in Pitjantjatjarra. Luritja is a kindred dialect and as it had become the common language on Papunya, I was able to communicate effectively in every camp, notwithstanding the three languages plus dialects spoken there. The posters helped ensure that everyone understood the story (appendix 3).

The first poster described how in traditional times each clan group had its own country and its own waters. Because of clashes with police and pastoralists or government policy and action, or drought and the attraction of white man's food, they came in to the various settlements. There, they were congregated in an artificial way with other tribes and crowded around the settlements in fringe camps. The government set up advisory councils of their officers and a few Aboriginal men. The whites dominated the discussion with 'hard English'. They talked about complex and bewildering matters, generally irrelevant from the people's viewpoint. As a result the Aboriginal men were either silent or they agreed with everything the officers suggested. The people agreed vigorously with that scenario when I presented it.

The next diagram showed the elected councils imposed in the self-determination era. People were told they were to run their own communities. The diagram showed how that foreign system resulted in the election of people from the most powerful or politically skilful groups. It was seen that most clans had no representation at all. I asked who will speak for this group? Or that group? Or this one? Who will tell the government what they are worried about, or what they want? Who will explain to them what the government is thinking or planning or doing? In every camp the answer was Wiya, Natjing. No, Nothing. The reason for the response is the fact that each clan or extended family group has 'given' relationships of mutual concern, expectations and obligations. Outside of that 'family' there seems to have been no traditional requirement to be responsible in any way for other groups. As a result there is little communication between unrelated groups or between governments and communities through their councils.

The next picture showed people carrying out the various jobs of work on a settlement, such as road and airstrip maintenance, garbage collection, firewood distribution and cattle work. It was said that people started out in those jobs as expected of them for the benefit of all. Later they began to work 'forgetfully, 'watarrku waakarrinyi. Then they slackened off because it wasn't in their traditional system to have to worry about strangers, so they just looked after their own people and began to neglect the others. In almost very camp there was a chorus of 'ala palatja – told you so, or there you are, see'. People said 'it's the same here, they don't care about us. That council's not looking after us'.

The story then suggested that some of the work broke down because a white supervisor would put an Aboriginal man in charge of a work team. The supervisor would usually be totally unaware of relationships in the group, or of how authority works in Aboriginal society. A man from one

clan would be put in authority over one from an unrelated group. He would say as expected of him, 'you do so and so, and you, Charlie, go and do such and such'. The other person might say, 'you got nothing to do'. This English phrase means, 'it's none of your business', or 'who gave you authority over me?' The conflict might escalate into threats and people would walk off the job because they are unhappy. At this point there was generally much laughter. People would say, 'that's a true story. That's what's happening here'.

The next picture in the series showed a council made up of bosses from each clan group. It was said that those people became fed up with the lack of representation. Each group insisted that only their leader could speak for them and negotiate with the Government on their behalf. Then one leader after another said, 'our country is at … We want to go out to our country and look after it. We want to look after our own selves in a quiet place'. The Government officer in the story then said (based on the assurance I had received from DAA earlier), 'if that is what you want for your people then the Government is happy. It will help everyone by widening the place [spreading out the population]. The Government will help you by giving you a fair share of the money coming into the settlement. I won't be a lot, because there is not a lot of money to go around but it will be a fair share, so that you can look after yourselves'. (There were clear signals from the Federal Government at this time that Aboriginal money was going to be cut back.)

Other leaders in the story said, 'We want to stay here and do work'. One said, 'we know housing work, we want to do that'. Another said, 'my family want to do the road work'. Each time the government's response was, 'that is good. You will get a fair share of the money coming in to do that job on contract. It won't be a lot, and you must do the job for the benefit of everyone. If you don't, then the money will be taken from you and given to a family who will do the job property'. The last picture portrays that process.

After that message had been delivered to every camp in Papunya, a community meeting was called. Mick Ivory, Assistant Director of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Southern Region, reinforced the message. He told people that the government was happy if clans or extended family groups wanted to go out to outstations and look after themselves. He assured people that they would not be abandoned and that they would be given a fair share of the money coming in to Papunya to enable them to look after themselves. And likewise for those who chose to stay in the settlement and work.

At this meeting, spokesmen for the two groups who had dominated the council made impassioned pleas for the people to stay at Papunya. The senior landowner said, 'your country is too far away in the desert. Your children will get sick and die out there. If you leave this place then whitefella's will come in to steal it. Stay here, one family and we'll look after you'. The Warlpiri man followed, a clever politician, 'do you think if you go to your country the government will look after you and your children? Does the whitefella keep his promises? No! What has he ever done for you? F… all! The whitefella's a liar. You can't trust him. You'll get sick and die out there. Your children will starve. Stay here and we'll look after you'.

Many of the people were unimpressed. Within a few short weeks several groups had moved out and established outstations. Preese said that the exercise had been a strong catalyst in this movement. He said that people were anxious about what the Government would say or do if they went out to outstations. The fact that we had actually gone to everybody and that the Assistant Director stood up and supported our story and assured people that they were happy at

the prospect and that the Government would help them, had been a great reassurance. It was all they had been waiting for (interview transcript). Now they did what they had been talking about for years.

The movement out of Papunya at that time was helped by the support given by Preese and Bill Hearne of DAA. They worked hard to establish services to the outstations at the beginning of winter 1976. They equipped bores or established pumps on soaks, so that water could be pumped up into a tank for reticulation. The development of gardens by many communities would not have been possible otherwise. DAA withdrew its staff soon after because of the self-determination policy, and the outstations began to heavily depend on the newly formed Lyappa Congress as the funded organisation. The Director was an employee of the Congress, not of the outstations. There was opposition from the Aranta land-owning group who had primary authority because the settlement was built on their traditional land. The outstations got little support. Then the outstations employed an adviser, Andrew Jenkins who stimulated the development of gardens and the outstations went ahead (interview transcript).

Considerable opposition came also from Papunya store managers (Europeans) who couldn't appreciate the difficulties people had in coming into Papunya to buy their food. The store manager at the time of this development was quite opposed to assisting the outstations too much. He thought the people should all come into Papunya for stores, so it was difficult to establish a satisfactory and reliable store run. Had the store been more supportive, Preese believes that decentralisation out to Pintupi country like Kintore and Sandy Blight Junction would have occurred a lot earlier (interview transcript, 1980).

Also about the same time as these happenings there was a growing ferment at Areyonga settlement, about 240 km west of Alice Springs. Areyonga people were Pitjantjatjarra people living in Aranta country, attracted by the Lutheran mission. They stayed largely because children were born there. Areyonga settlement has dwindled in numbers as many of the people moved to Docker River settlement which was established in their general country. From Docker River the people, like tribal people all over the country, began to talk about their particular places and their sacred land, then to move out in 1976 and establish small homeland communities. By 1982 there were fourteen homeland communities, some over 100 km away from the Docker River settlement (Nathan and Leichleitner, 1983, 112).

Areyonga dwindled from about three hundred to less than a hundred people. There had been one outstation established from Areyonga by 1980. It was more of a move by an enterprising young man who wanted to do something for himself, away from the pressures of the settlement. Ron Driffin wanted to catch and sell wild horses. He established his outstation at Tent Hill in another valley about 100 km around by road from Areyonga, nor-nor-west. Bob Capp told me of Ron's attempts to make a go of it. 'About 15 people live there, and two salaries go into the community from Areyonga. It is not a financial success but it is a personal success. Ron has stuck to it for three years despite the bureaucracy nearly destroying it and has got a lot of personal satisfaction and confidence form it. The bureaucracy held up his brand for over six months, so he could not operate. It was lost in head office, Darwin. A contractor did a very shoddy job of equipping a bore but because DAA had lost the contract papers the community could get no redress' (interview transcript).

In 1979-80 a large scale movement began among the Pintupi. They had not stopped talking to sympathetic people about their 'real' country, and how they wanted to get back to it and look after their sacred places. An ex-Papunya school teacher named Paul Parker returned from working as a community adviser with the community at Wingellina. He encouraged some Pintupi to return to the Kintore Range, about 300 km west of Papunya and about 5 km from the West Australian border. Parker went with them and acted as community adviser and helped them to cope with the logistics. Many of the Pintupi had consistently expressed the desire to go back to their own country, far out west. Parker enabled that group to do so. He has since left, but at the end of 1982 there were some three hundred people living there with minimal facilities and services. Communities such as the one at Yayayi moved to Kintore as soon as it became possible and some Pintupi from Balgo mission in Western Australia also. Kintore is a very large homeland community, perhaps ten times larger than traditional groupings. As such it will have many pressures and problems, but the people will be better able to handle these their own way.

By 1984 Kintore had begun to develop into a resource community which enables smaller groups eventually to settle in their own homelands. One community of thirty people is developing facilities at Kiwirrkurra, about 200 km further west, in Western Australia. Others are planning to move to Jupiter Well, some 400 km west of Kintore. It was from Jupiter Well that the Pintupi were brought in to Papunya by the Northern Territory Department of Social Welfare in 1964. The wheel has turned full circle.

My last visit to the Pintupi living in outstations near Papunya was in 1974 when I visited Yayayi. The community was at the time affected by alcohol taken in by a white mechanic. Six men were sitting in their camps looking very sick and sorry, with ugly looking spear wounds through their thigh muscles. The Pintupi man, who instigated the trouble through jealously over his wife, had six wounds through his thighs. They were a stoical lot, but it was a most unhappy camp. I next met that man on an overnight visit to Kintore community in May 1983 with barrister Phillip Toyne, who has worked for many years to help tribal Aboriginal people, especially in relation to Pitjantjatjarra land rights. I found a very different atmosphere from my last visit to the Pintupi, and a very different man from my friend with the six spear wounds. He told me he was now a Christian, having experienced a dramatic conversion through a dream while lying unconscious from drink over two days at Rabbit Flat. His relations had thought him dead. He said he was now working to make Kintore a good community and to keep it free from grog. Other men told me the same. They said that if anyone brought grog out to Kintore they ran the risk of a spear through the thigh and having their vehicle burnt. A harsh answer to a harsh and devastating problem where remoteness makes timely police help in such matters almost impossible.

The men had gathered together with others who had travelled far, some from Balgo mission, to discuss oil exploration into Pintupi country on the Western Australia side. They were keen to reach a satisfactory agreement with the company in order to safeguard their sacred areas without having to divulge their secrets, since they could not stop oil exploration. Toyne was there as an experienced consultant to help the Pintupi to understand the issues and to advise in the negotiations. Return to their homelands seems to have brought a revival of pride and dignity to the Pintupi associated with Aboriginal Law and supported by the Christian faith.

Kintore was a settled community in May 1983 despite its size and despite the consistent refusal of the Northern Territory Department of Community Development to recognise those three

hundred Pintupi as a community and to fund them for town management functions as was its charter. It insisted that Kintore was an outstation and therefore the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In other places, such as Aputula and Areyonga, it was funding communities one third the size of Kintore. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs had reluctantly given minimal funding to Kintore for power and water. The Director at that time told me that they were trying to force Community Development to take up its responsibilities. For a long time that large community suffered an inadequate water supply and struggled with inadequate shelter and services but they showed all the signs of being a settled and healthy community.

I have known and visited the Pintupi several times between 1965 and 1983. At Kintore they are totally different from the distressed and suffering people I saw in and around Papunya. Ken Hansen who visits regularly in his work as Bible translator-linguist for the Finke River Mission, bore out my impression that the Pintupi were in the most healthy state they had been in since my first meeting with them. Truly theirs was a movement waiting to happen.

At Yuendumu government settlement, approximately 100 km north of Papunya and 270 km north-west of Alice Springs, the movement was slower to start. It may be that Yuendumu with its very large Warlpiri population was sufficiently monolingual to avoid some of the pressures which Papunya faced, although it too had approximately 1,000 residents. The homelands movement started at Yuendumu settlement in a real way in 1977 with the movement of about fifty people to White Creek or Nyirrpi.

Dr Dayalan Devanesen, an Indian Doctor, first began to work with the people at Yuendumu in 1974 as District Medical Officer. He had oversight of the health of the community and delivery of medical services. His interest was in community based medicine. He soon related closely with the Warlpiri people and began to learn of their cultural beliefs about sickness and its treatment. He sought to improve Aboriginal health care services through a two way process, encouraging Aboriginal people to become actively involved through both traditional and modern systems.

Devanesen began to work with the traditional doctors. A mutual respect developed and they learnt from one another. Dr D D as he became known encouraged the people to show him the various plants and substances which they used as medicines, and he had these analysed. A pride developed in their own knowledge and some of the more effective medicines were again used by some. This led to him becoming involved in the planning of Aboriginal Health Worker training and he took charge of an Aboriginal Health Worker Training Centre in Alice Springs in 1976. He continued to maintain a close contact with the people at Yuendumu as District Medical Officer until 1983 when he left for further study and was then moved to Darwin.

He was keenly interested in the development of the homeland centres out from Yuendumu and visited them when he could. This material on the movement there is from an interview with Dr D D. The movement to Nyirrpi in 1977 also involved some Pintupi people who knew it would be too difficult at the time to get back to their homelands in the Lake Mackay area. Nyirrpi was about 150 km closer to their mother country so the pattern continued of people going to outstations nearer to their home country. Following that move, five more outstations developed – all more than 80 km from the settlement, the furthest being about 250 km by road at Mt Nicker, Kunatjarri. These communities persisted despite the fact that no services were provided and most of the people had to drive into Yuendumu regularly for their supplies and their pension cheques.

The constant movement back and forth has meant that the people have been unable to get on with the development of their outstations in the way they would like. Dr D D described a visit to Ngana, an outstation 96 km from Yuendumu run by a man named Teddy Egan. He said, 'It was one of the happiest places I have seen in recent times. About thirty people were there and several children. Just to make it happier they had two camels, three goats, six ducks and eight chickens. They weren't there really for the eggs; they were there just as pets and they woke everyone up in the morning. It was a really happy community. Ted is planning to break in the camels and sell them. However, his big problem is that there is no water. The big claypan has dried up and he has to drive into the settlement each day to fill forty-four gallon drums with water. You can imagine the degree of disruption if someone has to drive 96 km into town every day for water'.

To add to the difficulties at the time the roads were of poor quality and in 1980 they had no radios, though DAA had provided the funds for them. They had asked for their own frequency but Telecom officers had refused this and told them they must use the Pitjantjatjarra frequency. Telecom allocates radio frequencies very sparingly as a matter of policy, and there certainly was a resistance to give separate frequencies to different areas and large language groups, despite the difficulties experienced due to crowding on that frequency. The communities now have their radios with the same frequency as the Pitjantjatjarra.

By 1980 the outstation communities had formed their own outstation council under Mosquito Tjungarrayi as chairman, to act as a lobbying group for support services. Once again people had been stimulated by events. What they had been talking about for so long according to Dick Kimber, they now put into effect with very little encouragement and in the face of many difficulties. The desire had long been there, but the internal pressures were perhaps not as acute as at Papunya. But it could still be called truly 'a movement waiting to happen'.

Chapter 4

FEARS AND LONGINGS

The motivation for the movement to homeland centres and outstations.

The historic petition of the Yirrkala people written in the Gumatj language on bark, and presented to the Federal Government on 28 August 1963, expressed deep concern about their sacred areas and their fear of extinction. They were moved to petition the government by their shock at seeing the damage caused to their sacred country by the massive earthmoving works carried out by Nabalco in mining bauxite.

The humble petition of the undersigned Aboriginal people of Yirrkala, being members of the Balamumu, Narrkala, Gapiny, and Milwurrwurr people and Djapu, Dhalanayu, Wangurri, Warramirri, Maymil and Rirritjiiny tirbes and respectfully showeth:-

1. That nearly 500 people of the above tribes are residents of the land excised from the Aboriginal Reserve in Arnhem Land.

2. That the procedures of the excision of this land and the fate of the people on it were never explained to them beforehand, and were kept secret from them.

3. That, when Welfare Officers and government officials came to inform them of decisions taken without them and against them, they did not undertake to convey to the government in Canberra the views and feelings of the Yirrkala Aboriginal people.

4. That the land in question has been hunting and food-gathering land for the Yirrkala tribes from time immemorial, we were all born here.

5. That places sacred to the Yirrkala people, as well as vital to their livelihood are in the excised land, especially Melville Bay.

6. That the people of this area fear that their needs and interests will be completely ignored as they have been ignored in the past, and they fear that the fate which has overtaken the Larrakeah tribe will overtake them.

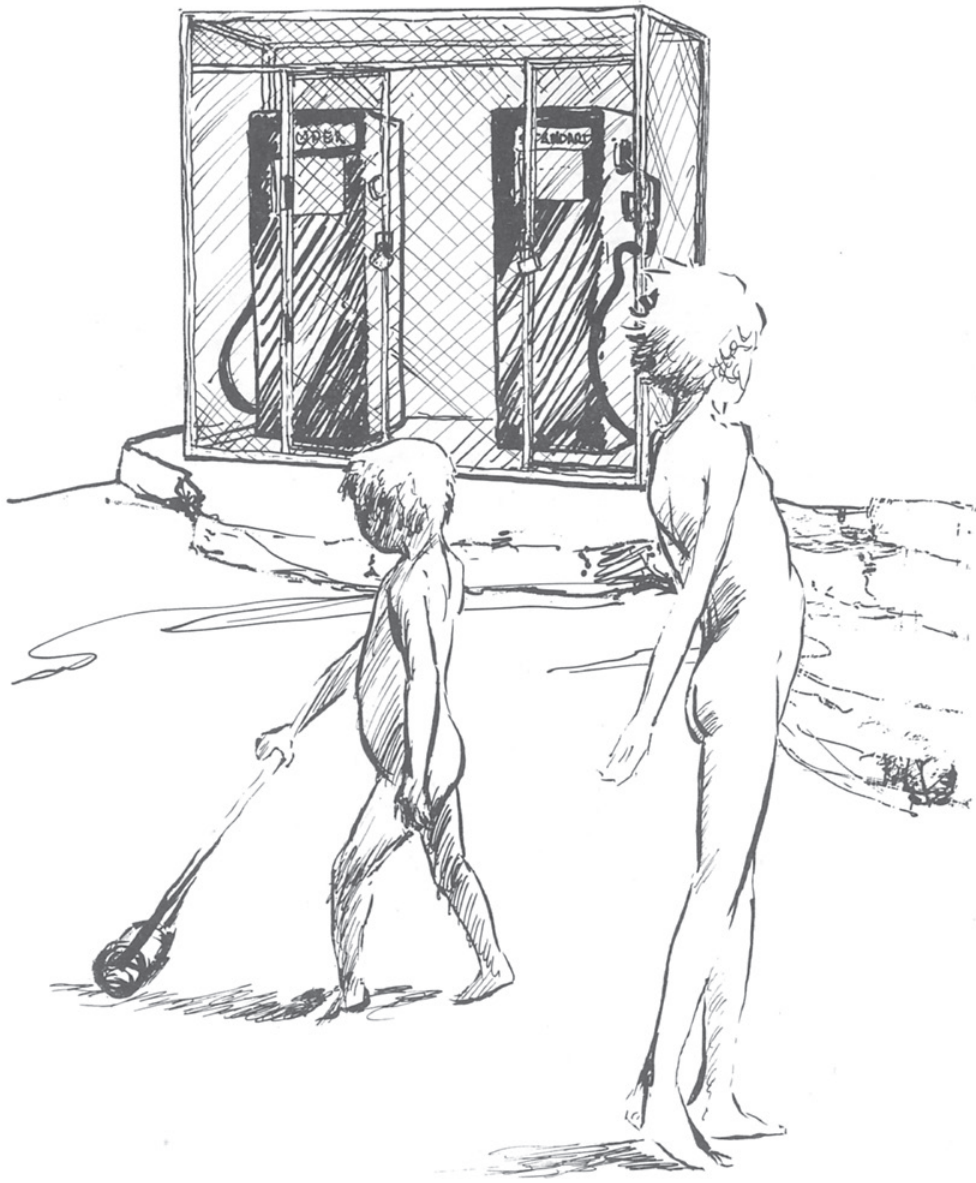
7. And they humbly pray that the Honourable the House of Representatives will appoint a Committee, accompanied by competent interpreters, to hear the views of the Yirrkala people before permitting the excision of this land.

   They humbly pray that no arrangements be entered into with any company which will destroy the livelihood and independence of the Yirrkala people.

   And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray God help you and us (CPP 1962, 952).

The Federal Government had in fact revealed its attitude to the Nabalco project by setting up the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund in 1960 in anticipation. It planned to pay into it the royalties from mining on Aboriginal reserves (Peterson 1982, 444). The Government's mind was made up. The Council for Aboriginal Affairs, believing that the people were not against mining but wanted to control its effects, advised the Government to try to negotiate a settlement in agreement with

Mowanjum boy.



Petrol in a cage,
Amata

Unsuccessful attempt
to stop petrol sniffing.

the Aborigines on terms and conditions. According to Coombs, Prime Minister Gorton 'insisted that the issue be determined by the courts'. 'If', he [Gorton] declared, 'the law was against the commonwealth, then the commonwealth would change the law. A handful of people could not be permitted to obstruct development' (Coombs 1978, 165-166). A familiar story.

The Yirrkala Aborigines had lost before they started. In the historic judgement handed down by Mr Justice Blackburn on 27April, 1971, the Yirrkala people lost their case on an interpretation of Western Law, and so lost their land. An area of 140 square miles had been excised on 13 March, 1963 for mining. The people had already expressed a fear, in clause six of their petition, that their strong clans would die out as a result of the annexation of that part of their sacred and hunting lands and its subsequent despoliation.

I'm sure they felt that was only the beginning. The fear remains in their hearts today. The Nabalco Company agreed not to come within two miles of the mission lease. That agreement has been broken. Already the mining lease has been extended to the boundary, and beyond. The people fear that it will intrude further and that they cannot trust the Government to protect them. It has instilled into the people a sense of helplessness. They feel that it is no use fighting such intrusions; mining companies and governments are too powerful. They don't even want to talk about such things (personal comment from ex-Methodist mission staff and current Yirrkala community staff).

The Yirrkala people also petitioned against the licensing of the Walkabout Hotel in the mining town of Nhulunbuy, and urged that it be given a club licence in order to protect their people while allowing the white population to drink alcohol. They did not want a licensed hotel in their country. They lost that battle too, after three court hearings and the temporary removal by the Social Welfare Branch of an officer who was supporting the people in the hearings. The problems of hopelessness and alcoholism which have deeply troubled the Yirrkala people since have certainly been aggravated, if not caused, by the overwhelming pressures and anxieties those defeats have created in the people's minds.

A Regional Women's Conference held at Yirrkala in May 1986, was told strongly by Yirrkala women several times that problems of alcoholism, family and marital breakdown, petrol sniffing, gambling at cards, delinquency amongst their children, and all the evils besetting them today had come through the mining. They said that they did not exist before the coming of Nabalco. People throughout Arnhem Land read the message of the Yirrkala experience and feared for their land. The same fears were held by many tribal people living on reserve land and settlements. Gowan Armstrong, a United Church minister at Maningrida for twelve years, wrote of the people there fearing

> that Europeans will come and take the country from them. In their view the Dreaming gave the land to the descendants of each land-owning unit 'forever and ever'… Only recently have they discovered that the government claims it as Crown land and that the government holds the reins of power. And that realization is not easy for them to accept'…(1971, 57)
>
> And so it is all over the country.

Aranta tribal people in Central Australia told Paul Albrecht that they 'owned' the land, even if white pastoralists did graze cattle on some parts of it (pers. comm.). They were incredulous when

they learnt that the government had control of it and it was possible for them to give a lease, or even a title, to a white person under some circumstances, and for them to lose ownership and control forever. Men from other language groups in the Centre were equally incredulous when such facts were discussed with them. Suddenly all their security was gone. As Mr Ted Milliken, one time Assistant Director of Social Welfar, expressed it: 'An Aboriginal is part of a life-entity system such that to destroy a part might easily mean the paralysis of the whole' … (1971, 46. See also Davis in 'Dhukarr', 1983, 17).

All over the country Aboriginal tribal people lived with the fear that white people, or mining companies, would steal their land from them, or despoil it and make them ill, or cause their death. John Rudder, who was an adult educator on Galiwin'ku [Elcho Island] for a number of years, says that there 'has … developed a realization that the land … is being threatened and is in need of protection in a variety of ways … The threat of mining is the greatest of all threats to the land for it causes physical alteration to the land itself' (1978). The 'increasing activity of mining interests in the Arnhem Land Reserve' is proposed by Gray as one of the major motives causing people there to move into outstations. The people realized that they could neither influence decisions about mining nor exercise any control. But they were worried by the increasing numbers of white people intruding into their sacred land. Their solution was to occupy the country in an attempt to protect it from such intrusions (1977, 116, also Meehan and Jones, 1978).

Arnhem Land people have expressed fear of mining in many situations over the years from the time the Yirrkala people spelt out their fears about Gove and the bauxite mining.

Various Aboriginal people told the United Church Commission of Enquiry, Arnhem Land in 1974.

> I am fearing about the mining. I see about Caledon Bay area, they might find minerals there … Maybe this stone which is sacred could be mineral to the white man. He might come and see this stone and take it away … While we are back here shivering with our fears … If a notice is put up, the white people are very curious and want to know what is in there that is sacred. They will want to see and touch and scratch names on it … the trouble with the government is that they have the power to take lands – for a long time, ever since they landed here, they have done because they say the government has all the powers. [A fear not without reason and historical foundation]. (Free to Decide, 1974, 41-42)

A gathering of traditional Aboriginal custodians from places affected by the proposed East Arnhem highway which the Northern Territory government is determined to build through the Aboriginal [ex-Reserve] land, expressed strong views about roads, mining and all such intrusions. They met at Gapuwiyak [Lake Evella] and had white experts whom they had engaged tape the speeches in their languages, and these were later translated. Ken Gunbuku said:

> No tree is going to be chopped down, and there is going to be no big road, no rock is going to be blasted off and our homeland is not going to become miserable. This is in our eye and in our heart and our life. We need this, our land … But balandha's [white man's] law, he changes everything. The government every year changes whatever. Yolngu [Aboriginal] law is not going to change (Davis, 1983 Appendix 2, 2-3).

One after another those men of authority echoed Gunbuku's words and added to them. They expressed fear, not only of losing their land or seeing it destroyed, but also of government duplicity. And they expressed their vehement opposition to public roads and mining on their land:

> Every year you [white fellows] change your rom [law] … Our old people … were not like that. They did not change like that. They did not change our rom like you. We want only our country, and we (you) are not going to cut it down … You come here without manners [insensitively] into our country … Whether you come after this year, and another year, and yet another, and another year, and yet another year … and we still say No, No, No, No, No! and this until I die (Davis, 1983, Appendix 2,4, 6). Another said, 'This is our life … you government and mining companies, you are just playing games with us, sweet talking to us, telling us something good that will make us happy. But that's not so! ... And we stand firm, and you have no right to come here and make roads and mine – no! This is our land and we love this land. We need it. We stand firmly here (Davis, 1983, Appendix 2, 9).

One man expressed the fear that many have in standing up to the government;

> We will keep rejecting any such request … They are going to come to after this land, one plot after the other, until they are going to come around with their guns and kill us. You have to take it by force, because we are not going to consent to that. You are not going to get fat on that money – we get money only by working, and pensioner's money we only get … (Davis, 1983, Appendix 2, 10).

Other speakers also talked of white men shooting them, or having to shoot them to get their land.

Such a method is not too distant in the memories of the people; but there was no mistaking the strong feeling against the whole idea of giving up any of their land:

> Listen carefully. We refuse to give you this land to whoever – tourists, to miners or whatever kind of company … It's our ancestors' land. If you want to steal land, go somewhere else! (??) How could we give you this land and stay miserable? ... what we say is No! No! No! No! ... We don't want to sell our country … because we are Aboriginals … we need our country. Another pointed out that 'This is not just wasteland: The madayiu [stories-word-life force] lies here! ... You don't know the rom [Law] … That's another way of life there! We don't want your money and your lifestyle … They are not going to destroy our rom and country. We say: No! (Davis, 1983, Appendix 2, 12-13).

Aboriginal people were told that the policy of self-determination meant that they could make the decisions for their communities. They do, and government and other vested interests come back again and again trying to wear the people down because they will not accept any answer which does not fit with their plans. People get frustrated and weary, and say to us often, 'Why won't the white man listen to us? He asks us, and we tell him, then he keeps coming back again and again as though he doesn't hear our word. Doesn't he believe our word?'

It seems that self-determination, or the later 'self-management' of the Fraser government means freedom to make only those decisions which fit in with government policy. Anything else brings criticism from governments and others, a barrage or pressure to make the people change their minds. Like the persistent campaign of the Northern Territory government to open up that once unwanted Arnhem Land Reserve, now Aboriginal freehold, to unlimited mining and tourism. And we wonder that culture crumbles, and that drunkenness and petrol-sniffing and delinquency are rife in some communities.

Applications for exploration leases made by mining companies completely blanket Arnhem Land (Appendix 3). The only part not sought after as yet is a tiny area of mud flats in the centre. Is it any wonder that the people fear being overwhelmed and their way of life destroyed? Is it any wonder that the majority are either resistant to, or very doubtful about, making deals with mining companies? Through careful consultation with traditional owners and interpreting with and for mining companies by the Land Councils, some agreements have been entered into. In the circumstances such a go-between body is essential to provide the safeguard for tribally oriented people which the Woodward Commission and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act envisaged.

An article from the Sunday Australian caused great upset when it was read at a meeting of the Pitjantjatjarra Council held at Piplayatjarra, 17-18 July, 1978. This article stated that, 'in WA Mining companies would find it easier to gain access to Aboriginal Reserves as the right to grant permits was being transferred from the Aboriginal Land Trusts to the Minister for Community Welfare'. The Premier, Sir Charles Court, had made a public announcement of his intention to do so. A young tribal man who was secretary to the Pitjantjatjarra Council, Arthur Richards, wrote in response to the Premier saying, 'We are very worried about that. If mining companies and other people can come on to our land without our permission we are afraid they will spoil our sacred sites, destroy our communities and cause trouble to our people. It would be a tragedy for us'.

The people called a meeting of Law men at Papulangkutja [Blackstone] on 27 July, 1978. About seventy men attended from homeland communities and Warburton. It was a meeting charged with anger and anxiety. Fred Forbes echoed the feelings of the men in his eloquent way. Speaking in his own language he said, 'Who is Mr Court? Did his mother and his grandmother live in this land? Did his father and grandfather care for the Law in this land? Did he lie here as a baby and grow up here as the grass grows? I grew up in this land and I know it doesn't belong to white fellows. This land belongs to true men [men of the Law]. Mr Court is just a child' [that is, he has not been through the Law and can not be considered a true man. Had he shown respect for the people's Law they would not make a statement like that]. Forbes explained, 'The men who come from Canberra usually come humbly and are willing to listen to us, but the people in Perth are bad'. Nugget Dawson ran the red earth through his fingers and said, 'The Stories, the Truth and the Law are in the earth and the heavens – these white men know nothing of this. The land is not the same age as Mr Court and wasn't born when he was born. This land was here from the beginning of time, and we Aboriginal men are its custodians'.

Several men pointed in different directions and spoke of the 'Law' which resided in the land in the various sacred areas to which they pointed. They said that White men are greedy for minerals and would come and dig up those places, and if they damaged those places then the people would be destroyed too. Two of the young men voiced their fear. Ivan Baker who was then Director of

Pitjantjatjarra Health Service said, 'If they mine those sacred sites what will happen then? People will die.' Arthur Richards said, 'This is all sad news…If mining companies come it will be sad for everyone. Mining will finish us' (from my personal notes taken at the meeting).

From three states men have told me of their deep fear of sickness and death if certain sacred areas are violated in any way. Young men in the Centre have told me, Tjilpi (grey head) we are not talking just about Aboriginal people. White people will get sick too. That fine old man from Croker Island, the late Dick Malwagu, who grieved at the Government's lack of truth said, 'Jim, I'm not just worried about Aboriginal people. I'm worried for those white people too. They are living too close to that place'. [He was referring to the Green Ant Dreaming which lies close to Jabiru]. 'Something will happen to them.' His fear stemmed from his very long tradition and its sacred stories and was genuine, as was his concern.

Dick once took me to his sacred place where the ancestor spirit came who made the people. He told me the story of that place and then talked of his concern for the future. What would Arnhem Land be like in fifty or seventy years time? What would they hand on to their children? He said, 'This is my worry and I gotta let it out and you can see it, how we been fighting, and battling and cheating one another … British came over you know, take that thing away from our hand, you know, land and things like that. Since that we didn't have nothing, and we still don't have nothing. We don't have land, we're not owning something'. At the time the Northern Territory government was holding up the handing over of freehold title to the Arnhem Land Reserve to try to force the Aboriginal people and Federal government to agree to public roads through Arnhem Land. Dick went on, 'When British came over to start fighting and stealing land, you know? Fighting might be, I dunno, I hear a lot of stories. Some of them people might be got shot, and poisoning people, that sort of thing. I still call that stealing 'nother man's good thing … I just can't follow this one because we've got nothing, we're not owning anything'.

Dick went on to say that the government was talking about giving some land back 'and that's a good thing. Then they say, "you might give some area [back] just like road to Forestry, Murgenella, through Oenpelli, Jim Jim … like public road" things like that, those things. We gonna lose it bit by bit … I'm really worryin' about future time. What's gonna happen? We're gonna lose it, because we're losin' some of the line' [Sacred places and ceremonial] (interview transcript).

Bunbatju from Galiwin'ku expressed that same fear which is felt by all the tribal people, and has to do with survival. 'If you destroy a sacred place where the spirit is strong, maybe we'll get sick or harmed in some way. It's a power, like light' (My Mother the Land, 1980, 14). To Aboriginal people the land has vital life-giving significance. They have a special relationship with the land, and that relationship must be maintained and cared for. To destroy or despoil it is to destroy the people. The number of damaged people drinking their lives away on the fringes of white society, without any strong sense of identity and without hope, is disturbing testimony to the destruction wrought by annexation and despoliation of the people's land.

At the meeting at Lake Evella (Gapuwiyak) in January 1983 yet another traditional custodian of the land spoke of their anxiety:

> We are worried: we <u>need</u> our <u>land</u>. We want it to stay spotless. We don't want to see a tree cut down, … our sacred places … I only tell you that our <u>wangarrs</u> [ancestor spirits] are disturbed (by) whatever <u>dangerous</u> (event) and

> then we get sick … When they are going to mine it, then we get sick – all of us. (? Finished)' [Others also spoke of their fear of sickness.] (Davis, 1983, Appendix 2, 5 of second section)

In the homeland communities of Central Australia the people spoke time and time again of the fears of losing the land, and of sickness and destruction. The Mintabie (Mintupai) Opal field 20km south of Indulkana saw a new influx of miners about 1970, and a very important sacred site was destroyed.

About mid-1978, the Indulka council wrote to the Premier, Don Dunstan expressing concern about the increase in mining activity at the Mintupai and miners intruding into the reserve in search of opal. They also expressed concern about a non-licenced liquor outlet there which was supplying some of their people and causing much trouble in their community. No action was ever taken about it. They told the Premier that they realised that they probably couldn't stop the mining as it had been going on for years, but they wanted to stop further intrusions and the endangering of sacred places, and any further loss of their land. The Pitjantjatjarra council supported their action and also made representations to the Government about their lands bill.

Over the years, Mintupai was on the people's minds and they often spoke of their anxiety about it. In December 1979 at Indulkana, Mr Graeme Gunn, a pastoralist and member of the new Tonkin government met with the Pitjantjatjarra Council about the Liberal Government's plans for the Pitjantjatjarra Lands Bill, which the previous Labor government had planned with the people but had not passed. Old Pompey spoke again of the Mintipai as an 'important sacred place, but the government has given it to miners who are greedy for opal. Those men by digging are destroying our Law … Stories go across the country and into the rocks. … We should have a paper so we can control it'.

Bernard Tjalkuriny spoke of the wanting to look after the place where 'the bodies of our fathers and grandfathers lie'. He said, 'I want to look after ……. properly. It's an …… place. Fire will break out if that place is disturbed … we want to care for the whole country [there]. The rocks are holy … and it has been entrusted to us' (from notes taken at the meeting). A group of young men told me of their deep belief that violation of that site would cause fire to sweep life from the whole face of Australia. So, obviously, our assimilationist education has not wiped out traditions and beliefs which sustained people over forty thousand years.

Several of the men told Mr Gunn and Government officers that they wanted freehold title so that they could look after their sacred land and control what went on in it. [In 1981 the South Australian Government gave ownership to the Pitjantjatjarra people through their land-holding trust, 'Anangu Pitjantjatjarra ku'.] One Government officer present at the meeting, Mr Ivor Schmidt, commented to myself and others, "This meeting has been valuable. We used to be told in Adelaide that these weren't the wishes of the Pitjantjatjarra people, and that they were being manipulated by white advisers; but now we've heard it from the people themselves'.

Other people in the Centre spoke of the strangers roaming around the country. They would see the strange vehicle tracks. At Yaluyalu there was the very sacred site on a hill, drilled through by the Mines Department. At Makiri a government survey team smashed some sacred rocks that were standing there, and removed some sacred objects in 1965. Those acts of desecration were undoubtedly done in ignorance, but the effect on the people is devastating.

People told me of other instances of sacred stones being broken. Old Jacky Tjupuuru and I passed a place on the Stuart Highway where road builders had set up large boulders as a kind of 'stonehenge' with writing painted on them. He either feared or knew that they were sacred stones, which were now despoiled. He asked, 'Why do whitefellows do that? Do they want to destroy us'? Many others have asked similar questions in hurt bewilderment. Those traumatic happenings and the consequent fears they engendered caused people to think seriously about going out into their sacred country to protect it from theft and despoliation by the White man. Many did so. Barney Wangin spelled out their anxiety, 'We were thinking like this: "Whitefellows will search and search and search and get minerals and hunt us away from this place of ours and finish it – our father's place"'. Nganyintja [They] 'acted thoughtlessly, as though it was a building, and drilled a bore and were getting stone. Because of this people went to look after the land'.

Rama Samson was speaking for the very important area around Putaputa when he said: 'Whitefellows want to finish up all the Aboriginal places. We want to stay here now because there are many sacred places in the area … White men might get in and get some sacred stones. Aboriginal men might sell gemstones to white people'. He thought of them safeguarding the land on both counts. Kutatji and Peter Wara showed me a standing stone that had been broken off about 400mm from the top. They said, 'It's because of that we want to live here and look after our places. White men look around and see sacred stones and if no one is living there they want to chop them and take them away or something' (interview transcripts).

John Hunter, a caring man with some twenty years of experience in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, was for some years the superintendent of Maningrida in Arnhem Land. He told me that one of the major causes of the movement out of Maningrida to the homeland areas was a spate of activity and exploration by mining and forestry people. People became alarmed that they would lose their land, and that their sacred places would be damaged, so they moved out and settled in their country to protect it (interview transcript).

Another cause of deep anxiety about their land was the constantly repeated belief that 'the white man's law is a lie'. 'The white man is a liar, you can't trust him'. And though some of this is built upon misunderstandings and the complete 'otherness' of the two cultures, there is ample evidence in the dealings of governments with the Indigenous people to constantly reinforce that belief. In excisions from reserves at the behest of vested interests; in the threat to change laws or Acts and backdate them to achieve government ends; in the actual doing of that, and in the kind of heavy browbeating of communities by government officers which denies the promise of self-determination and consultation; in all of these instances the people have experienced in the government's duplicity.

Another fear of the Aboriginal tribal people is that their children are becoming alienated from them, and are not learning important things about their own culture. As the late Douglas Daniels expressed it to the Missions/Administration Conference in Darwin, 1967 – 'Make no mistake, our children are not obeying your law either. They have fallen between the two and they are lost. You white people took responsibility away from us, now our young people listen to no-one. We want authority given to us to handle our own young people because we understand them' (from my notes taken at the end of conference).

Since I arrived in the Northern Territory in 1965 the people have repeatedly expressed their concern about their children 'getting away from us'. Several people shared that concern in evidence given in

the local languages to the United Church Commission of Enquiry, Arnhem Land, 1974. 'This is the way I feel … especially [about] the students who go to Kormilda and Dhupuma; ['transitional ' colleges] they should be coming back to their community. They learn and escape from their parents and their community'. 'This community has sent their children away to learn things for their community. As soon as the child learns he escapes away from his people' (Free to Decide, 1974, 10, 17). Whitebury wrote of 'the deliberate breaking of the authority of the older people over their children by the so called Education system'… (1975). Many Aboriginal people have also echoed those sentiments.

Not all of the anxiety was about children going away to school. Many spoke of the bad effects of settlement life on their children. Nganyintja blamed many of the films the children were seeing. 'We all had trouble [at Amata] from drinking and thieving. From what cause? From all the different movies they were seeing. Another man showed the films [a white man at the time]. Some films showed good things and some showed bad things. From seeing those [films], people fought and killed [this could mean that they inflicted serious injuries, as well as causing deaths] and stole, and some sniffed petrol and some took to drinking wine.

In a study of juvenile delinquency, people in three communities spoke to me of the damage done to their children by watching films (Downing 1968). This is not an unrealistic fear. To Aboriginal tribal children, what they see on films is real and true. Many studies have been undertaken to show that certain kinds of films can have a bad effect on children in our own society, yet our children belong to the society which makes the films and they are aware of their society's values, at least to some extent. Aboriginal children have no such knowledge, and therefore cannot make judgements about what the film is telling them.

Other people expressed their anxiety about the effect that settlement life generally was having upon the children. Their children were growing up with little knowledge of their culture. Andy Sundown, a man whose initiative and drive has helped several outstations to become established said, 'In the big settlements our children are forgetting'. A large group of men told the Regional Director of DAA (southern) that their real concern to go to homelands had to do with their Law and their children. They said their children were learning bad things in the settlements, and were not learning their fathers' ways and about their own sacred land.

Several experienced people working over the years with Aboriginal people have written of this anxiety about loss of authority and children becoming disobedient. Anthropologist Mark de Graaf speaks of alcohol related problems and the lack of control over young Aboriginal people as being significant among the reasons why people wished to move out into homelands. He mentions the increasing level of vandalism and petrol sniffing and a gradual departure from the traditional forms of social control and conflict resolution (1976).

Wallace, in his paper 'Pitjantjatjarra Decentralisation in the North-West South Australia: Spiritual and Psychological Motivation', said:

> The tragedy of cultural destruction is nowhere more evident than in the lives of the children. This alone is a major factor in the motivation of parents to leave the settlement for their totemic country, or for that matter for any country far away from settlement strains and stresses … Juvenile delinquency is rife, as is petrol sniffing, the local form of drug taking. The youngest

> addict I have seen was 5 years old, and there are already cases of irreparable brain damage (Wallace, 1974,9).

Many of us have watched with anguish over the years as people whom we knew to be intelligent and good people increasingly dulled their senses and, in many cases, wiped out their lives with excessive alcohol drinking. As one fine Pintupi man at Papunya told Ken Hansen, 'What have I to look forward to? What is there for me in the future? I don't like this, but grog is only thing for me'. The movement out to Kintore by the Pintupi has replaced that hopelessness with hope for many people. And we have watched the children sniffing petrol. Like the drinkers, they were often the most intelligent and therefore most frustrated. I have seen three fine young fellows die from what seemed to be the direct result of petrol sniffing.

The gathering of people into settlements imposed on them a whole set of new and foreign values, and expectations, and a complex of pressures the like of which they had never seen or experienced before. It has resulted in catastrophic change in many situations. When small family groups are persuaded to come to a large settlement with people of other languages, and exposed to a social system in the process of disruption, several things can happen. There is "culture shock" because old familiar ways of doing things, of stimulus-response patterns no longer apply. The European culture as presented through staff members is surprisingly different and complex, and must seem aggressive and disturbing. There is seemingly no familiar way here; and physical survival demands the rapid learning of a whole new pattern of survival techniques, as well as key words of a completely different language, rooted in different cultural concepts. Cultural and Spiritual survival becomes an even more desperate struggle.

> 'Culture shock' even applies to some extent, to the impact of part-Europeanised groups upon the newcomers: groups which owe no particular allegiance to them, and whose young men show many of the signs of disruption of their culture (Downing, 1969, 87).

Whittenbury, from an experienced medico's point of view, summarises the people's condition as follows:

> … the Aboriginal people in Central Australia are at present living in a state in which the only powerful forces acting on them are causing a change which is harmful in their health, their self respect and to their future. These changes as seen by me derive from the basic loss of authority and the lack of information in Aboriginal society. The secondary effects … are seen as increasing alcoholism, petrol sniffing among children, increasing violence, increasing venereal disease, increasing neglect of children, increasing bewilderment of older people and helplessness to alter the situation leading to their eventually joining in the alcohol etc, increasing crime rates … [He gives reasons such as -] 'dispossession of land, the gathering together of large disparate groups of people into government settlements – nowadays laughingly [laughably?] called 'Communities'… [and] the forcible replacement of traditional Law by a legal system of which the people were and still are completely ignorant … (1976).

Many came into settlements because their lands had been 'stolen' and they had nowhere else to go. Others came because here was a new and easy source of food. 'However, along with the white man's food came most everything else of significance in the western culture and almost unawares the Pitjantjatjarra (read Aboriginal people) found themselves caught in a society with an increasingly distorted culture' (Eckert 1980). From the moment the first Aboriginal accepted the first drink of tea from a white man his culture was under threat. On settlements Aboriginal people were subject to white man's law, and as they were still bound by their own traditional Law, this led to intense conflict, and to the undermining of Aboriginal authority by the white law. They were subject to a white authority in the everyday running of our lives. They had to please that authority if they wanted to share in the food, jobs and wages and other material benefits of the white man's society.

To survive in the new economy and to get the desired food the people had to undertake a new kind of work, different from the often hard and trying work of hunting and gathering, in order to earn the required money. The new work had implicit demands which belonged to European system. You had to arrive at a certain time, work certain hours, and have your times recorded. It didn't allow for other things such as ceremony to take their traditional place of primary importance. It led to the ridiculous situation on many settlements of having men sitting around in the office for hours in order to make up the required hours of 'work' time because the particular job could in no way be expanded to fill in more than three or four hours a day. That was in order to teach the men 'work habits'. In the Aboriginal system, when your needs were met you could relax for a while, and go and do whatever other things you wished to do. Whatever new regime was teaching people it wasn't work habits. In the words of one Alice Springs government official, 'We have taught them unemployment, but not employment' (Papunya Report, 1977, 44).

The work of hunting and gathering, as anyone who has accompanied Aboriginal people will realize, is extremely skilled. Everyone in tribal society had a contribution to make to the survival of the whole. We have already spoken of the impact of settlement life on a woman with skills learned from infancy from her tribal mothers and grandmothers, to equip her for fulfilling her role in providing and caring for others, who finds those roles taken from her overnight. She is suddenly a dependent nobody, having lost her purpose and dignity. For men it was much the same, except that work could be found for a few more of them. In some cases futile work, such as raking the red dust of Papunya settlement everyday so that it looked 'nice and neat', only to have a thousand footprints obliterate that work every meal time.

Aboriginal people became dependent on a work-for-money-for-food system. It allowed those who were lazy, or who had become damaged and got into the alcohol economy, to exploit kinship obligations belonging to the Law and, by making their kinfolk feel guilty, get money for drinking without fulfilling the mutual obligations on which that Law is based. People found it hard to make the adjustments required to meet the reality of the new situation.

The level of stress of the people rose. If the expectations and demands of their job became too much for them, they would escape the conflict by leaving their job. That was a frequent occurrence, both because people were not adequately trained for the responsibilities expected of them, and because the training never took account of the conflicting demands which their own system would impose on them. So, for example, a person would be made 'responsible' for work in a store. A tribal grandfather or grandmother, or any person with a right to demand generosity and help form that person, would come along hungry and demand food, or even money. The store person would

know the expectations of the non-Aboriginal economy, that you had no right to give out food or money, but they would be torn by the demands and pressures that came from the Law. Should they deny their identity as an Aboriginal person and be seen by some as a hard person with no love for relations, and as the one who didn't honour the Law, or should they retain their identity and be criticised and punished by white authorities as irresponsible and dishonest?

Those pressures always crack people in the end. Some end up in verbal and even physical arguments, while others may drive furiously and dangerously around the settlement, acting out their distress. Others might damage property, all too often Aboriginal rather than white. The unbearable distress and hostility becomes turned inwards, rather than outwards onto the symbols of the white authority which by its arbitrary actions has brought them to this crisis. The lucky ones get out before the pressure builds up to that pitch.

Eckert comments on this stress:

> The more involved Pitjantjatjarra people become in the western work system and the more they came up against the accompanying work ethic the higher the level of individual stress rose as people tried to exist in this new situation with their traditional mazeways [mental images of their society and its values] still very prominent … Many would quit their job at the point where the stress rose too high for them personally. [He goes on to talk of the results]. Traditional ways of acting to reduce stress became more and more inadequate … symptoms of anxiety over the loss of a meaningful way of life became evident. [And here Eckert cites drunkenness and petrol sniffing] (1980).`

The people have been trying to communicate and convey the anxiety and pain they suffer from these unbearable tensions. Here are some of their comments:

> Government people force people to take over jobs and smile on them. When Aboriginal people get fired from their jobs, Balanda (white people) stand back and laugh at them, people from government or people from mission side maybe. We now have two ways of looking at life, Balanda and Aboriginal, and often Aboriginals get blamed in thoughts and do not know where to go (Free to Decide, 1974, 33).

> There are some people who have some sort of education but deep within a person's heart he still feels and belongs to this culture and therefore I would not like to see an Aboriginal pretending to be a balanda because one day he will find everything fade. This has happened to part-Aboriginal people –they just become lost. If people try to live like balanda they will be 'broken'. They should come back and get straightened out (Free to Decide, 1974, 60).

Others spoke of the confusion of voices and authorities.

> On the mission there was only one voice the Aboriginal heard and they were able to work; after some years here we have heard two voices – one from the government … Now for the Aboriginal people it is all mixed up … At

> the moment we have two powers, or two forces, one the church which has murdered the Aboriginal from the beginning and the government coming in so fast it makes it difficult for the Aboriginal people, and also separates the Aboriginal people (Free to Decide 1974, 8).

Aboriginal people often spoke of the white domination on settlements, and of the fighting and stresses. There was underlying resentment that effective decision making was done by white people, usually with little or no effective consultation, and that the only powerful authority seemed to rest with white people. The conflict between what the white settlement staff have often said and what they actually did was constant. It is typified in the fact that over the years settlement staff have often said to the Aboriginal residents "This is your settlement" (so be proud of it, keep it clean etc). At the same time Aboriginal children on occasion were denied access to the European residential and central settlement areas "after hours" (Papunya Report 1977, 36).

In some settlements this applied to adults as well. This is just one example of the many restrictions placed upon Aboriginal settlement residents in the past. A schoolteacher of many years experience and good standing at Yuendumu settlement told me that when he first arrived some staff told him, 'If you want to get on with us, don't get too friendly with the blacks', and that when Aboriginal people walked through the streets of the 'white area' those same staff would look through their windows and make disparaging remarks, resenting the fact the people were doing so 'after hours' because they had 'no right' to do so.

Hope, Superintendent at Amata said, 'There was a curfew [at Amata]. Aborigines would come from camp to work in the settlement, but children, and other adults were discouraged from coming into the settled area at the week-end unless for a very good reason, such as coming to the hospital. Regarded as even more serious was the encroachment of "wiltjas" [shelters] inside the fence of the settlement area. It was noted by my superiors that "if you gave Aborigines an inch they would take a mile" and, "if it wasn't nipped in the bud … they'd be pulling down iron to make shelters, there'd be kids and dogs, and before you knew where you were the place would be untidy. Moreover … kids would … smash up the facilities" (interview transcript).

Hope commented with commendable honesty,' In 1968 Amata was very ordered little settlement, a kind of microcosm of Adelaide. I had the streets lined with stones all painted white. It created a very pretty impression of an orderly little place' (Interview transcript). Hope was not the only superintendent to favour white stones all around the place. They also used to delight higher authorities in the Northern Territory.

Superintendents of settlements were certainly left in no doubt as to what policy and attitudes they were required to adopt. Hope was one of a few Superintendents who got close enough to the people to find out what their real concerns were, and to see that the policy he was expected to fulfil was an 'absurdity'. At Hermannsburg Mission 'getting away from the station meant getting away from a situation that was white dominated …'

Tregenza said that the motive of younger men in moving out from Amata was 'too many bosses' and 'we are not the bosses'. He stated that white staff were often in conflict [with each other] and their conflict involved Aborigines working with or associated with them (interview transcript). Many people with good and long relationships with Aboriginal people have said: 'The real problem

Art and architecture.
Clinic at Pipalyatjarra

Young man
at Walinya
[Cave Hill].

in these places is not an Aboriginal problem, it's a white problem'. Time and time again staff bring their own conflicts into the situation and enlist Aboriginal people into supporting them in their arguments with other white people or at least put pressure on them to do so. Aboriginal people have asked many times, 'Why do white people fight all the time? We want them to sit down and work happily together. It upsets us. It's not our fight' … Jack Mirritji wrote '… Yesterday, [at Maningrida] Monanga [white people] fight, joined themselves like enemies. And some dark people (yull) from camp (adawa) can't understand properly' (Maningrida Mirage, vol 23, 42, 6 September 1974).

Haynes, who was a staff member at Maningrida, wrote of the situation there,

> [the Gunividji] express what they want through a few European people … the Council to them is nothing … The Council has … not … met officially for nearly 18 months.
>
> To me this is a disturbing and unhealthy situation, ""because the Government is funding not the Aboriginal people directly as it hoped to do, but Europeans who are divided anyway'. (Paper, Notes on top of the European presence at Maningrida for seminar at the DAA, Canberra, 4 November 1977).

One of the further pressures which results from crowding different language and clan groups into settlements, where before they would have met only for ceremonies and in situations in which they were in control, involves the authority of traditional owners. The people on whose land the settlement is situated [traditionally] have pre-eminent authority. On an odd occasion a strong group might challenge or ignore that authority and the traditional owners have their authority destroyed. Often that will result in them taking refuge in drunkenness. Sometimes it results in the land-owning group seeking the backing of the Europeans to regain some kind of power, as in the case of the Gunavidji at Maningrida. Mostly that authority is recognised. People may chafe under it because it weakens their authority over their own group also, but they acknowledge it.

Albrecht spoke of Hermannsburg people regaining their authority when they went out into their clan outstations, though these were often on someone else's land. Almost always authority over their own clan was immediately re-established, and also over the members of other groups who were visiting. They could thus control drinking and, if they wished, keep alcohol out of their community altogether; except where a person was astute enough to challenge them. Probably only a drunk would think to challenge that authority in a single clan community. Albrecht cites the case of one who did. The clan leader said, 'We don't have grog here, you'll have to go'. The drunk asked, 'Whose land are we standing on?' It happened to belong to someone else; end of conversation; end of authority (pers. comm.).

At Amata there was conflict between people from east of Amata, from places like Ernabella, Fregon and Indulkana, and those who came from country out to the west of Amata, from places like Kanpi, Pipalyatjarra and Wingellina. The western people were the newcomers. The westerners were stronger in traditional associations and also seemed to show more initiative in getting jobs. The eastern people seemed to feel that the westerners were getting all the help, though they were the 'foreigners', and that help should be going to Amata people. So strong was the feeling that young people massed with spears and, only the calmness of the old men who stood between them and talked it out and defused the situation, prevented a very bloody confrontation (Tregenza, interview transcript).

Bill Gray, a DAA officer who has been in that work for some twenty years, commented on the two differing authorities, White and Aboriginal, and expressed the opinion that until the different groups are able to return to their own traditional country they will be unable to develop to their full potential because of the restrictions which those two authorities place upon them (1977, 116 also Rudder 1978, 10-11).

People from different areas have spoken often about their distress at the conflicts and drunkenness and fighting that goes on in some of the big settlements. It is a matter of constant anxiety and grief to people that those various pressures have resulted in so many people leaving to go and sit around the towns and drink themselves to death. Some people name strife on the settlements as one of their reasons for moving out. Nganyintja told how, 'Some people from Amata would go for grog and later would come back and would frighten us driving the truck in the camp [dangerously] and, grabbing up the children, we would run and hide. And because of that we were unhappy and would be thinking to go back to our own country and look after it …. now we are very sad because in every place people are dying from drinking and drinking wine, cutting, hitting and killing … and we thought, "Yes, we must go quickly lest our sons die. We will go and live apart and do satisfying work and look after the place." Tommy Wangi went to Kanpi, and one of the reasons he gave strongly was that Amata was – 'a lousy place. I was working as a policeman [appointed by the Amata Council] and I was supposed to be teaching the children; but I said, "Eh, they're teaching me [with petrol sniffing etc]. I'll leave this place because it's going bad. It'll soon be a whitefellow place …" There's too much drinking wine and sniffing petrol. I'm finished with Amata' (interview transcripts).

That distress was evident in all the places where Aboriginal people had congregated in numbers under stressful conditions. Dick Tjabanangka Riley, one of the group who walked off Kurundi Station and were for a while in Tennant Creek before settling at Ngurrantji said: 'My family are happy to sit down here for a while and get on with our business. We are away from the fights and drunks at Tennant Creek; we can grow our own vegetables and live by ourselves' (Bell 1978, 50). People fear being swamped by white people, with whose command of English and of the European system and its laws they can't compete.

I attended a conference of Aboriginal people from communities in Eastern Arnhem Land associated with the Uniting Church. It was held at Gapuwiyak [Lake Evella] in 1981. The agenda was decided by the people. The meeting was run by them in their own languages and with a bit of humour they gave church and government and white representatives a taste of their own medicine by largely ignoring one person's plaintive pleas to tell them what was being said. The people said strongly that they did not want mining in their land because they had seen what would happen. Towns would be built. They would attract large numbers of white people to live in their country and they would bring grog. Some of them would chase after their [Aboriginal] women, and the presence of such towns would destroy them.

The traditional custodians gathered at Gapuwiyak on another occasion to express their views about the proposed public road through Arnhem Land and spoke of not wanting their country 'chopped up, half – half, chopping up our rivers and break our madayins' (sacred places and stories) (Davis, Dhukarr, 1983, Appendix 2, 4). The people generally want their country left as it is, and maybe someday future generations of white people will thank them for it.

Maningrida people took over the forestry operations from the Forestry department in 1974, not because they wanted to do forestry, but because of the friction caused by the large numbers of Europeans coming in and out and wandering about and over whom they had no control. At one stage the numbers of white people on the settlement rose to 320 (Haynes, 1977). Those working there would naturally invite their friends and relatives for holidays, sometimes without the courtesy of asking the council, so there were strangers all over the place. Haynes wrote,

> Most of the European people at Maningrida are so concerned with European sovereignty, sovereignty over their privacy, over their ideas, over their aspirations, over their language that Aboriginal people can play little part in their lives (1977).

Haynes was concerned that the voice of tribal people was not being heard as a result of that European dominance. It is not simply a case of Aboriginal people being unable to play any real part in the lives of the Europeans at Maningrida, as Haynes stated, it is that their inability to exercise any control of the white people working and living in their settlement necessarily means frustration and loss of control in their own lives. Instead of the community being able to live the life they want and to control people who are essentially visitors in their country, mostly short-term, the visitors control and dominate their lives. The local people feel crushed.

David Weibenanga wrote in the Maningrida Mirage, 'Mr Woodward told us, "This is your country do what you want to do", but told Forestry in Darwin, "You boss the land for the Aboriginals for 99 years." Mr Woodward said one talk for Aboriginal and one talk for Forestry. This we do not like at all. We like people to be straight. Though this sounds to me as though it might be a considerable misunderstanding, it was only the trigger for long-standing friction to blow up. All permits for European Forestry staff and dependents were suspended, and reasonable time allowed for them to leave. It was a case of alien pressure becoming unbearable (Maningrida Mirage. Vol 3, Issue 41, 30 August 1974).

The build up to this end point can be seen in earlier issues of the Mirage. Complaints abound about permits, about Balanda coming in without permission, some of them government officers, and photographing people and camps without asking permission, going into restricted areas to fish, driving through their residential area at excessive speeds, [with specific mention of a convoy of Forestry vehicles], and refusing to do the courtesy of requesting permits, though the law required it.

In a later issue of the paper was a report of a meeting with then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh. The Council expressed concern about the plans they had been shown for Maningrida;

> The Town Plan and present developments show that this will be another Balanda town. If [it does] the Gunavidji [whose land the town is on] will have nowhere to go. Other tribes living here have the promise of their land, the Gunavidjis have nothing … The number of Balanda here should be reduced' (Maningrida Mirage Vol 3, Issue 34, 28 June 1974).

Jack Mirritji, in a later article, spoke with appreciation of some of the white people who had worked there and had related well and taught people things. But he indicated clearly that these had finally been swamped by people of another type;

> Now they come full and fast. They stay and not for Blacks but for themself. Some Balanda worry for the natives and know a little bit of their Law. Other ones don't care and don't worry about it. [He expresses tellingly the stress and confusion that results] … some talk good, some talk bad. They make me happy. They make me sad. Sometimes they make me upset and they make me interested. And they are reading me too. What will happen today and tomorrow? I can't understand every times. I read plenty books, magazines, Mirage, Bible, newspaper, listen wireless, lookim picture, comic … I drinkim grog to try to cover my head. Stop thinking stupid idea. But I bloody can't stop. I can't. I think too much. What about you other people?' "You think too? This is your country. You explain them THAT THIS PLACE HIM GROW TOO QUICKLY … What children are learning bit there at school? And how they thinking? Are that new schoolteacher know that native story? And they teaching right for young kids? To think about new Maningrida problem? ... [Once] they used to be happy at school. After the school they come along at Town Hall for the music and play songs. But now they play cards. Some eat clay. No hunting for the Kangaroos. Some sleep all day and all night. No walkabout. What this means? (Maningrida Mirage, Vol 3, Issue 42, 6 September 1974).

There is an eloquent description of a society in rapid breakdown and of a man who thinks deeply about his people, but who can't bear the pain of what he thinks and who had to blot himself out with grog. Is it any wonder that Forestry were evicted from Maningrida? Any wonder that similar things are happening today and that people are moving to outstations and homeland centres in order to survive?

In May 1984 the people suspended permits on Groote Eylandt. I can say from experience and with confidence that Aboriginal people don't like taking such actions, but they do so when pressure has become unbearable. A similar situation exists there as at Maningrida. A great number of white people are living there. It is said that some schoolteachers don't see why they should have to consider the people of this area and ask permission for relatives to come and visit. Yet, if they lived in some mining town, they would have to do so. In the early days of the Ranger Mine you needed permission to enter Jabiru. There were guards at the airstrip and you needed a permit to enter the town. One sign of the distress at Groote is painfully obvious – the highest prison population per capita in Australia.

There were plenty of fears and pressures to make people want to move out of the settlements, and these undoubtedly had a strong effect, but these were rarely the major reasons given by the people for doing so. What then were the positive reasons for moving out, the longings of the people?

The first was love for the land and desire to be living in it and caring for it in the proper way.

A remarkable little booklet entitled 'My Mother the Land' was produced in 1980 by the Literature Production Centre at Galiwin'ku. It was edited by a teacher, Ian R Yule. It consists of interviews with sixteen leaders of families, clans and ceremonies, who were living on Galiwin'ku. They express what their land really means to them. Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra is an ordained minister of the

Uniting Church in Australia, Moderator of its Northern Synod for 1986 and 1987, a leader of his Golumala clan and its ceremonies. He expressed his relationship with the land in these words;

> The land is my mother. Like a human mother the land gives us our protection, enjoyment, and provides for our needs – economic, social and religious. We have a human relationship with the land: Mother-daughter-son. When the land is taken from us or destroyed we feel hurt because we belong to the land and we are part of it.

Others too expressed in various ways their special relationship with the land which requires them to look after it: 'To survive they [their children] have to know about the land. The land contains our information about our traditional way of life. It's written there. It's like a library for our people and children. So we must preserve it.' The speaker was then deputy principal of the large Galiwin'ku school, a man in his thirties named Rrurrambu Dhurrkayi, and a keen Christian preacher. He is now Director of the Aboriginal Resource Development Service of the Uniting Church.

To visit a sacred place with a group of men and to see men cry from the emotion of seeing their special place, perhaps after a very long period, is a moving reminder of the spiritual value of the land. And this for the Aboriginal person is a reality. Every person receives his or her identity within the totemic system: their authority, position, social prestige and relationships from the area in which they were born or conceived (Strehlow, 1964, 127), and from other traditional attachments to the land of parents and grandparents. This 'belonging' permeates the whole of life. 'There is no sharp demarcation between secular and sacred life' (Worms quoting Berndt). Worms goes on to say, '[Aboriginal religion] penetrates all facets of life and has little to fear from distinctions which are both abstract and disunitive and which we, in our philosophical education, often make (Worms 1963, 231). As Rudder expressed it, 'love for the land is not only an emotional expression but more, as the individual and his soul are indivisibly linked in a physical and spiritual unity' (1978, 3). While love for the land and care of it did not necessarily mean a constant occupation of all of it, it was brought home sharply to the people that to care for the land properly under the conditions created by us Europeans did require the land be occupied as much as possible.

A constant refrain throughout the study was 'We want to look after our father's and grandfather's country'. 'We want to live Aboriginal way.' The two key motives, though the motives were many, seemed to be care of sacred country, and a satisfactory lifestyle that belonged to Aboriginal culture. 'This is our land. It's not for Whitefellows. It has to be looked after another way'. Hunt, that vigorous old tribal man, enunciated one of the main motives for people moving back to the homelands. 'It has to be looked after another way'. That is in a special way, a way known only to the Aboriginal people to whom the ancestor spirits entrusted the care of the sacred country. In South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory people have spoken of the need to look after the land of their fathers and grandfathers in the proper way. They speak of losing or forgetting their totemic stories in the big settlement and having nothing to pass on to their children.

Andy Sundown, whose homeland community at Waltjitjata was in a very sacred area, said, 'We want to look after our sacred land and our tools [sacred objects] lest we forget it and lose it all'. Barney Wangin seemed critical of their fathers, and to want to redeem the situation. 'We truly thought to look after our father's sacred places, north south east and west also, and we will stay here and fight for it and never let it go again. We thought "Our fathers left this Law and threw

it away and lost their tools. We should look after them, then when we die our sons will get them and care for them" … We want to live, not whitefellows' way, but our grandfather's Law, and work our own way'.

Some people are motivated by both concern for the Law and for independence. The people who walked off Kurundi Station appreciated this. Myrtle Napanangka Kennedy said,

> All my life I worked in someone else's house, washing, ironing and cleaning … My old blind mother needed me to help her get around and I was tired of doing other people's work. I wanted to sit down quietly for a while. I wanted to be able to dance for my dreamings'. And Murphy Tjapanangka expressed his longings: 'All my life I've worked for other people, and now I want this piece of land to live on and break horses for ourselves.' As Bell wrote: '… all these groups desired opportunities to live on their own land and make their own decisions' (1978, 51, 52).

Most of us [Europeans] can go home and sleep at night and be satisfied that we did our job, with little appreciation of the drastic effects of our policies and our mistakes on the lives and health of Aboriginal people. Wallace writes;

> The trauma of failure after failure due to European short-sightedness or neglect in not explaining consequences, does not affect the White man who goes away saying that he did his best, but has a profound effect on the Aborigines who have to stay and contend with compounding strain and tension (1977, 128).

Wallace speaks also of the self-blame of the Indigenous men who have lost their authority and dignity as a result of [European] policies, but who nonetheless believe that because they have neglected their country they are responsible for many of the changes they see destroying their culture. And the people have gone back to care for their sacred country so that by the right spiritual processes they will reverse the destruction that has come upon them (1977, 129-130).

Our Children are learning bad things, and they are not learning about their father's ways and about their land.

That was probably the next motive in importance in the move out to homelands. The Aboriginal people have been concerned for years about what they could see happening to their children, but which they felt powerless to stop. After all, they believed the white government's promises in the beginning. Disillusionment was inevitable. Nganyintja and her husband, Charlie Ilyatjarri, were concerned not only for their own children and relations, but also for the children of others who were petrol sniffing and in trouble before the courts. Nganyintja said, 'We were feeling sad because when the children were taken away by policeman they came back and got in trouble again … and we were thinking "We shouldn't send them to Adelaide, we should look after them ourselves … We must take them out bush and look after them out there … When they make trouble I can look after them, and when they are hungry I can give them good meat and make them strong". Maybe the mother doesn't see that the child is hungry because her husband has left her and gone far away, maybe she stays hungry. We were all thinking to make this a happy place, to care for it joyfully and make many sad people happy … and we will teach the children for the sake of life' [quality of life, Aboriginal life] (interview transcript).

She and Charlie have persisted with this in the face of many difficulties, including the criticism of some parents who were unwilling to face up to their children's needs. Now, I am told [in 1984], they have their happy place and are caring for their children. A factor in this is the Christian commitment of Nganyintja and others, and this cannot be divorced from the movement, or from the concerns of some people to care about others. Along with concern for the children there is concern for white people, that they should have a chance to learn something of the culture and experience something of Aboriginal skills and pleasure in living in harmony with their land. Nganyintja and Charlie have happily shared their culture and lifestyle with groups of white people who lived with them for a week or so at a time.

Nelson Tjapanangka expressed the feeling of many of the people when he said of the work they were planning at Ngurrantji;

> We are not asking for a handout of rations. We want to get a horse plant going with some help, like maybe a bank loan. The horses are good and we know how to work with them. Our children will really have something to be proud of (Bell, 1978, 53 underlining mine).

Many of the people also spoke of their desire to teach their children culture and make them proud of their Aboriginal identity, and to regain authority over their children so that they could be guided and prevented from doing bad things or from losing their culture, throwing it away for the glitter of the white man's 'thing' culture.

I believe there is possibly one other motive which may apply in a few cases where the people want bores put down, at least in Central Australia. And that is to make it possible and safe to travel to some remote sacred areas for the sake of ceremonies which must properly be done in those specific places, and which are essential to the spiritual and social health of the people. If that is so, and it would be a rare place that was not lived in at least for some periods of time, it would seem a small and cheap trade off for the health of people whose condition is poor as a direct result from our policies. What the Aboriginal people are showing us is their strategy for survival as a socially healthy and viable people.

Chapter 5

A Release of Creative Energy

Pastor Paul Albrecht and I stood in the midst of the large camp on McDonald Downs Station, about 300 km north-east of Alice Springs. It was early evening and there was a bustle about the camp as the one hundred and fifty people and their visiting relations settled down to their evening meal and discussion. Paul said, 'Listen!' I did and heard a happy murmur of conversation shot through with laughter as people enjoyed the telling of some funny incident. It was a peaceful happy sound despite the large size of the community. That community was respected by the station owners, Chalmers, and followed their own Law without interference. Albrecht said, 'I have been coming here and camping regularly for nine years and that is the sound I have heard every time I have camped here. It's so peaceful and such a contrast to the argument and fighting you hear in all the settlements'. That is the kind of atmosphere that is found and commented upon in almost all of the outstation and homeland communities.

The kind of positive results that can be observed in the outstation communities are:

(a) a return to Aboriginal decision making and control and to a more Aboriginal and unified lifestyle,

(b) a strengthening of family and family authority,

(c) a recovery of an individual and a group identity as 'Aborigines', and a corresponding growth in confidence,

(d) a recovery of useful roles and involvement in the work of the community,

(e) an observable improvement in social and general health,

(f) in some cases more interest in education, but a desire to control the kind of education which their children receive and to make sure that they are thoroughly educated in their own culture, and

(g) a somewhat incidental but nonetheless significant effect of the movement out is the easing of pressures in the larger settlements.

The above list incorporates some of the major goals that settlement and mission authorities were trying to achieve but without success because of their ignoring what Albrecht calls 'Aboriginal reality'. More often than not mission and settlement authorities attempted to achieve those goals by ignoring Aboriginal Law, social structure, problem solving processes, values and by the imposition of a totally foreign system. Some government officers were not particularly happy with the outcomes noted above (especially points a, f and g) because of their belief that services concentrated in one central spot (selected by the government) could lead to enhanced efficiency and economy of operation. I think both of those assumptions can be seriously challenged; and in terms of stated policy goals can be shown to be markedly ineffective.

Let us look now at those results of the homelands movement.

A return to Aboriginal decision making and control and to a more Aboriginal and unified life-style

In most of these communities in Central Australia people show far more interest in the everyday affairs of the community than do people in the larger places. All tend to take part in meetings about

community affairs and all know what is going on. There is much less interference by government authorities because the works going on in the homelands are generally very modest and are controlled by the people. They have time to think things through and to come to decisions. Unlike the larger settlements there are few power struggles and people are not saddled with decisions and major works decided for them by others, generally without their knowledge. Tregenza commented that the people in the homelands have no-one else to blame if things go wrong. They have to bear the implications of their decisions and actions, or those of their sons and daughters and that is a healthy process. It means that authority is being put back where it belongs (interview transcript; also Rudder, 1978, 12).

As many white authorities have found to their frustration, at home around the campfire is where many real decisions are made and where the proper authorities can force council members to reverse a previous approval given for some government action or other. In homeland communities the older people and the appropriate people are making the decisions, as they did traditionally before our intrusion. The result is less unrest and fewer demands for reversals of decisions made without such consultation. As Mike Last said of the Ernabella people, 'They make a decision to go and shift their whole group into a homeland area. They make the decision because they are obviously aware of the fact that they were able to work a government system like that many years ago, and in fact it did work' (interview transcript).

Tregenza also attests to this renewed capacity for decision making and responsibility. One humorous sidelight to this at Wingellina was the process where the total community discussed issues then decided who was the appropriate person to sign any resultant letter on their behalf. They generally chose the person most related to the particular issue. That was too much for the white bureaucratic system and the complaints flowed frequently from DAA Kalgoorlie about a different chairman signing every letter (interview transcript).

In Arnhem Land the people had the experience of rediscovering the ease with which a clan group can control its affairs in a homeland community as against the authority conflicts and strife people experienced in the government settlement and mission communities. 'Here we see that those recognised as rightly holding authority are acting in that capacity. This brings security to the senior generation who realise that they are no longer seen as irrelevant by their group, and to the junior members of the group who are thankful for the leadership of those they can trust, and who are also thankful to be relieved of having to carry responsibility which they know is not rightfully theirs' (Rudder, 1978, 11).

At Kupangur homeland community, out from Maningrida, the people apparently found the release from settlement pressures, the return of social control and the desired lifestyle which they had long discussed at Maningrida. Coombs wrote after his visit there:

> The group is strongly motivated and displays energy and enthusiasm. Although a relaxed and leisurely atmosphere pervades the camp it is significant that almost everybody is actively and purposefully occupied.
>
> These people give the impression of great awareness of the choices inherent in their preference for life in their own area rather than at Maningrida. Their groping for Aboriginal-style services rather than those involving the presence and influence of white authorities suggests that they realise how easy it is for the

> quality of the life they have chosen to be impaired – even by components which in themselves seem beneficial (1978, 144).

One of the reasons for the sudden release of decision making capacity is the fact that the groups, usually a unified clan or extended family group, are generally small enough for involvement by all present. The issues about which they have to make decisions are also within their capacity and do not involve making decisions for people of other groups, which people have no right to do within the Aboriginal system. When dealing with Aboriginal issues free from white interference and where the damage from white contact has not gone too far, people can still exercise that traditional capacity to make all the necessary decisions for the ongoing life of their communities.

The *Maningrida Mirage* carries an item highlighting the contrast between the people's interest in matters which belong to their own culture or ways of thinking, and those which belong to the non-Aboriginal system. Dan Gillespie, (Outstation Resources Centre Adviser) wrote:

> Saturday I was in the camp [at Maningrida] … and noticed a meeting going on at one man's camp. There were more than thirty men at that meeting. They were talking about a big problem that had come up. There were old men and young men. Men were standing and having their talk and others would listen. The men who were at that meeting were there to talk things out by Aboriginal thinking and ideas to keep the trouble down. Nobody had gone around picking them up in a truck or reminding them to be there. On Friday I was talking to the President … He was saying he didn't know if there would be a Council meeting that day because two Councillors were playing cards and he couldn't find any others (Vol 3, Issue 20, 1974).

That contrast between the motivation and the seriousness which the Aboriginal men brought to bear on their own problems within their culture and the lack of motivation and interest in the white-style community council is startling, telling and common.

John Hunter, with long experience behind him as Superintendent of Maningrida, was later asked back to do a survey of the outstations. The *Maningrida Mirage*, Vol 3, Issue 30, 31 June 1974 and the following issue carry notes on that trip from his personal journal. The overall impression given is of a happy people who were glad to sit and discuss with him their plans. The kinds of topics the people discussed in the different places ranged from getting a high powered rifle (two places) with which to cull buffalo for subsistence purposes to the purchase of tractors and trailers, the harvesting and marketing of fish to improve their income, water reticulation from the creek to the camp to enable a garden to be established. Hunter mentioned also a co-operative venture between three groups to help each other to get their various outstations established. They had 'companied' for the purpose and intended to build a track to the three places for which they had already formed a road party and were intending to move out to the places before asking for assistance.

It was the same in Central Australia. People met whenever necessary to discuss what they wanted for their communities and how and where and what organisations they needed to achieve their modest goals. At a Pitjantjatjarra Council meeting at Mimili Station in October 1978 the main request was for water. Kanpi, Putaputa No 2, Tjunti, Kunytjanu, Irrunytju, Makiri, Anumara Pit and Kata Ala people were all asking for a water supply or equipment relating to this. Makiri was also asking for a truck and people staying at Pipalyatjarra were saying that Piplayatjarra was too big

and some people wanted to move out to their own places.

In South Australia and West Australia particularly the Pitjantjatjarra Council provided a broader venue for the co-operative airing and solving of problems. They agreed to pool roadmaking and other equipment and Ernabella helped communities in the West with practical courses in gardening and agriculture and in setting up arid zone subsistence type gardens.

Rodney Morice, a psychiatrist, made a study of the Pintupi-Luritja group who moved out from Papunya in 1974 and established the community at Kungkayunti (Browns Bore). He spoke of the people's use of traditional authority and traditional methods to bring a speedy settlement of disputes and to discipline transgressors. Of one incident he wrote:

> Had this particular fight occurred at Papunya it would most likely have spread to involve a much greater number of people, as extended family and classificatory obligations became involved … Almost certainly the resident police would have been called, and the effects of alcohol and strong emotions would possibly have resulted in many arrests and charges. As it was … the fight lasted a few hours and resolution was achieved by a traditional form of social control. The men had reclaimed some of their former roles and identify (1978, 57).

Where homeland centres are composed of a number of different clan groups waiting to move out to their own country the exercise of authority is still difficult and some of the problems and power struggles of the larger settlements are still in evidence. The white element is much smaller however and government intervention much less. The authority of the landowning group is therefore not clouded over or hindered by other factors such as the manipulation of white staff to seize power or to enhance the power of a person who would not otherwise have power in that situation.

Robbie Collins was with the Marntamaru (Jamieson) group for four years and the population fluctuated from the normal 100 people to as many as 450 on occasion. The latter was either because of extra pressure at Warburton Mission or ceremony attracting large groups of people to the area. Robbie commented at a meeting about outstations held in the DAA office in Alice Springs in 1979, that the people had learned little from their years in Warburton in terms of work habits, responsibility or confidence in decision-making. They are learning those things at Marntamaru from the experience of both being allowed to and having to do so. Having to handle their Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) money had led to a lot of community involvement in choosing suitable work that the community wanted done. It was developing responsibility and had taught the people to depend upon each other.

Coombs commented on the decisiveness of the outstation people's housekeeping:

> The tidiness, the air of purpose, contrast sharply with the lethargy which characterises most reserve settlements. Within small communities Aborigines will have, without encroaching on their autonomy and self-determination, the opportunity to adapt their social machinery to new and more complex tasks (1978, 148).

The other factor that goes along with the renewed capacity for decision making and social control is an ability to return to the more traditional practice of Aboriginal culture in a fashion that enhances the people's well-being. This does not mean an unthinking 'return to tribalism', a term often used

by white people to imply a return to paganism and cruel practices. The outstation and homeland communities are not purely traditional communities. They are an amalgam, 'an attempt to evolve a life-style which combines what they wish to retain of the Aboriginal way with those goods and services of the white man which they desire …' (Coombs, 1978, 145).

The people themselves talked a lot about doing Aboriginal work, by which they appeared to mean ceremony, teaching their young people, fencing, gardens and any work associated with the building up of their homeland communities; but done with Aboriginal priorities and at their own pace and in ways that fit in which a total lifestyle. The marks of that lifestyle were expressed by the Pintupi to the Hansens. 'This is our country and we like living like this … the children are proper Pintupi now', they said when children had shown skill in helping the mothers collect honey ants, yams and other bush foods. There were many comments also about the relative peacefulness of the outstations. 'We don't fight here, no trouble … Papunya too much grog and fighting all the time'.

Rama at Putaputa expressed the dual nature of the lifestyle after much comment about caring for sacred land and protecting it from greedy whitefellows. He said, 'We don't want our places just for holiday. We want to have work, to do work and have money in our pockets and have holidays, week-ends, same as whitefellows and go hunting on weekends'. The sort of work Rama talked about was the building of houses which he had learned at Aputula (Finke) where the community had operated the Aputula Construction Company for some years. Rama had worked for them for some time as his wife came from Finke and he had learned to construct houses, also one room shelters, toilet and ablution blocks and septic tanks. He could see a need and possibility for that sort of work throughout the outstations.

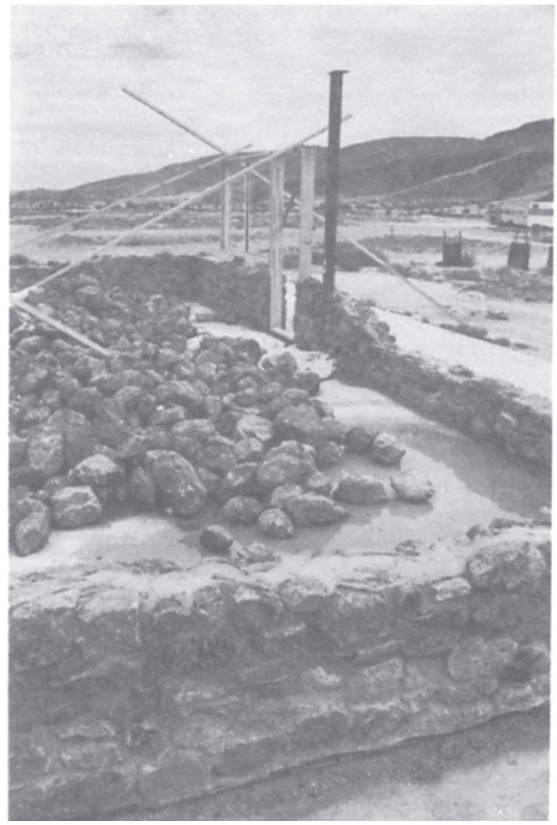
Barney Wangin said at Apartjara, 'We want to live, not whitefellow way but by our grandfather's Law and work our own way'. A younger man who worked in the store at Pipalyatjarra, Lindsay Wamantjaku, said 'We want to live happily in our own land'. Nganyintja, a resourceful woman, talked of teaching petrol-sniffing children and other damaged people to appreciate again their father's country and way of life, and also work of various kinds. She talked of 'improving our fathers' country' by establishing permanent water supplies, shelters, gardens and craft work for young people. Though many of those tasks were European style work, she talked constantly about "Aboriginal work' and 'Aboriginal way', and obviously saw this as a total lifestyle which would build up the people in health and confidence and make them happy. '

Gatjil Djerrkura is a very able Arnhem Land man who did two years Task Force Training in community work in Adelaide and has held several responsible positions in the European setting. These have included roles as Superintendent of the Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services of the Uniting Church with about forty staff under him, and Advisor to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and Area Officer for the east Arnhem District office of DAA. Djerrkura summarised some of these motives and also the results of the movement, in a comment to the Outstation Resources meeting at Maningrida in 1981: 'The homeland movement for us is a going home to strengthen our ties and authority and to build up our communities; traditional land is not a joke, it is very serious to us' (from my notes taken at the conference).

A strengthening of family and family authority

As we have seen, the settlement experience had a devastating effect upon families, particularly the mass feeding operations. It ranks with western and assimilationist education as one of the most

Secure from the storm. Stone house at Piplayatjarra.



Another stone house in the making, Piplayatjarra.

A different architecture. A bush 'house' at Walinya.

A gardener's pride. Showing off grapes, Walinya.

destructive forces acting upon Aboriginal institutionalised people. The movement to homelands has helped to reverse that damage. Again and again people have commented that particular boys were absolute delinquents in a settlement , disrupting the place and with respect for no-one. The same boys, in the homeland community, are quiet and obedient. Often they are amongst the most intelligent of the children. One such lad I saw at Papulangkutja, were his father, Fred Forbes, had put him in charge of his old red truck. He drove carefully, did as he was told and looked after the truck. He seemed proud to have that responsibility. The old truck was kept running for years in that harsh terrain that tended to rattle and chew trucks to pieces within a very short time.

Another illustration comes from Hermannsburg and involves not children but older men. Some of the men in their twenties and early thirties had grasped power in terms of the white man's structures which their fathers, in some cases the real authorities, could not handle. They tended to 'put down' their fathers and usurp their authority, if only incidentally. Sometimes they would put down their fathers publicly because they were tending to follow the white man's way. One very bright man, Nahassan, was head of the council which ran the school. He was very able and it was there that he wielded his authority and from there he got his power. Another, Helmut Paraoultja, was chairman of the Hermannsburg Council. With the collapse of the European structures those families moved to outstations and seemingly without question the two fathers resumed their proper authority. After a period of time Nahassan wanted to do things for himself, so he formed his own outstation in another place, but he did not challenge his father's authority.

The old people at Hermannsburg told John Fitzner that they were going out to get a quiet life, and that they wanted to 're-establish a kind of stronger family identity, which was being lost to some extent in here [the mission] … they were also losing control of their children in here, whereas out in the camp there they could teach their children and bring them up in the way they wanted to – a very strong reason for going. And the people say now that they have a better life … a good quiet life' (interview transcript).

Nganyintja had spoken more than once of the loss of control of children in Amata. In the homeland community they knew where their children were, and there were not the same nasty temptations as there were in the settlements. As one time President of the Amata Housing Association and the first woman to move into a house, she expressed it thus, 'Houses cut you off from your kids. You can't see them or hear them and you don't know what they are doing'. She also said how it cut you off from your relations, and stopped you from feeling the wind on your body. There were also the conflicts of relatives crowding in, or living there while she was away, and neglecting or damaging the house. It was too much hassle. She first moved out of the house into a wiltja (bush shelter) in the camp then spoke of moving out to her father's country to try to get her children back to learning and knowing the rich things of their own culture and country [which she later did] (Wallace 1977, 127).

She could look back on much of that traditional lifestyle with appreciation and especially understand the richness of that which was being lost. She had a desire to share those things with white people, genuinely wanting them to understand. As she made clear to many white people learning Pitjantjatjarra at the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs, she was not a European and did not want to copy them. She was an Aboriginal person with many fine European friends whom she valued but she was nonetheless an Aboriginal person proud of her rich heritage. She is one of the many people seeking to save that heritage and pass it on along with new knowledge learned from white friends.

As Bill Edwards points out, not all of the older children are prepared to go out to the outstations. They were mostly born in the settlements and have become used to the lifestyle there and the availability of a well-stocked canteen, regular film shows, the presence of others around their own age and to the relative excitement of the settlements. On the other hand the larger outstation communities in West Australia, Wingellina, Papulangkutja, Marntamaru, Warakurna and Pipalyatjarra, even the smaller community of Kata Ala, have consistently had a surprising number of young adults and children living there. In some cases it is relatively young married people with families who are expressing the desire to move out from the settlements. This does not seem to be the pattern in other places where it is older people inhabiting the outstations.

Morice noted the fact that at Kungkayunti the adolescents did not seem happy. They were separated from their peer groups. Also 'there were few eligible girls at Kungkayunti, and one of the reasons given for the young men's departure was that they were looking for wives. The older people expected most of them to return when this was achieved' (1978, 59). Other Pintupi outstation communities faced this same reluctance on the part of older adolescents, especially boys, to stay in the communities. 'The boys gave as their reasons that they liked to move around and see things and have more experiences. Also that there is not enough whitefellow tucker. They like their cool drinks and chips and when European food runs out they don't like going back to eating berries and other bush foods. The older people are happy with bush food. The young fellows also like to see the pictures regularly' (interview transcript, Hansens). The Hansens also say that seeking for wives is a factor in this. In fact, this seems to be the main reason why young men all over the place are living in communities that are not their own.

The Pintupi people push for early initiation, say 13 or 14 years of age. This is several years earlier than the general Pitjantjatjarra practice although, if a young fellow is causing trouble, the Pitjantjatjarra people will sometimes ask the court to leave him with them and they will 'put him through' the Law, and say that he then will be responsible and behave. That is generally true, though there are exceptions. The Pintupi favour the earlier initiation for much the same reason. At Papunya there is too much opportunity for getting into trouble, and this is one of their solutions to the problem of irresponsible adolescents. After initiation they have a lot more responsibility and will generally stay around more. Later when they marry they generally settle down with relatives in the outstations without complaint' (interview transcript).

Leslie Hansen makes the interesting comparison between the young people who grew up on Papunya and who, through school and other processes, were thoroughly 'westernised', and those now growing up in the outstations. 'The young people who want to go to Papunya are generally those who grew up there and these are the ones involved in car-stealing and other acts of delinquency in relation to white society. Outstation life has changed the outlook of some of these'.

Family life was much more settled in the Pintupi outstations when the Hansens were there and the women used to comment, 'it is much better here. We can care for the young girls better. We can live properly'. Now of course the family life is even more settled and their problems have dwindled since most of the Pintupi have gathered at Kintore with their children and young people and, despite the size of the community, have a more peaceful life. Or a Christian life, as many of them describes it. Once again it is an amalgam of things which they are building on to their culture because they want them and can now control them.

A recovery of an individual and a group identity, and a growth in confidence

Not all were so fortunate. The late Albert Barunga of Mowanjum near Derby, was a fine old man, a deeply concerned man and a damaged man through the hurt he felt for his people. He could see his people being destroyed by white manipulation and by alcohol. He could see and feel the destructive loss of identity. These words were wrung out of his suffering:

> … but no-one bothers to ask us about our land. Instead it's like a war. He's getting a hiding the Aboriginal is, and that's why Aborigines suffer so much. He's getting a terrible hiding and sometimes he feels it would be better if you'd beat him with a whip, you'd finish him off. If only the white man would ask first … The Aboriginal is deeply hurt but can do nothing. It is like cutting him with a knife, little by little. And that's how the Aboriginal feels. If only the white man would ask first … But instead he moves in on our land and just does what he likes, spoiling everything of importance to the Aborigines (1973).

Like that other deeply concerned and forward-looking man, the late Dick Malwagu of Croker Island, he could see little to hope for. Dick said, 'no good with our government fighting us, because we still got nothing. Some mining people and other people coming through like nobody's business and all this here big push, still big push. So it's getting smaller and smaller and people coming out, like mining and people making station … and other projects. It's [the land] getting smaller and smaller' (interview transcript). Both men died of heart attacks (a stress disease) while still not old by our standards. They could see the loss of something precious and the relentless pressure of those vested interests which wanted their land.

Both men wanted to see an honest trusting relationship between the two races. Albert said:

> Aborigines never put you to one side, they never say I've worked with that White man but now I've finished with him and he's finished with me, and I'm nobody to him. That's all wrong to Aborigines, as when a White man suddenly turns up at a sacred place and to go mining around the land. He says 'walk!' because he's got a paper from the government (1972)

Malwagu said: 'You know, we can't throw away white people to one side. If only they could be honest to us, and true to us. Some of them … are really true – they dinkum. They help Aboriginal people just like you and I. Our dark people, some of them aren't honest. We have all sorts of tricks, just like white people … You know yourself, I know myself is good and bad, this earth … And we can use some of the white people [the 'dinkum' ones]. And we want white people to guide us and show us the way … I'm not blaming anybody. I'm blaming the lawmaker, this Canberra government. [The Federal government that threatened a retrospective change in the legislation to stop Malwagu and three others from making them argue out in court the legality of the signing of the Ranger agreement] (interview transcript). Though that case was dropped because the men felt defeated by the power of governments to do what they liked, as it seemed to them, the government did amend the law in 1980. Amendment No 72, 1980, p5, states:

> Consent of the Land council to reflect views of traditional Aboriginal owners.
>
> 9. Section 48 of the Principal Act is amended by adding at the end thereof the following sub-section:

(2) Where a Land Council, in giving a consent referred to in sub-section 1 fails to comply with that sub-section, that failure does not invalidate the giving of that consent.

Section 48 deals with the obligation to consult all traditional Aboriginal owners whose land may be affected by any development. Given the powers of the Minister it is clear that this amendment weakens one of the main safeguards set out by Justice Blackburn. In September 1987 the Northern Land Council has taken the question of the legality of the signing of the Ranger agreement to the High Court on the grounds that the government at the time forced the traditional owners into signing against their will.

Barunga and Malwagu saw clearly the steady eroding of their land, ceremony and customs, that sum total of things that told them who they were and spelt out the meaning of life. They probably wouldn't have used the term 'loss of identity', but I believe they sensed what was happening to their people. Both men tried at times to fight against that erosion and to stand up to the destructive power of the white man. Both were battered and had their times in the swamp of despair. Both withdrew wounded. What those men didn't live to see were the signs that for many people the movement to outstations and homeland centres has helped them to recover their sense of identify as Aboriginal people set in a wider society.

The Pintupi, who twice went on their hunger strike and talked of dying out, regained some of their dignity and group cohesion, even in the outstations close to Papunya, but on the road to their country. The Hansens said that at Yaiyai '… it became obvious to the people that they couldn't control work or vehicles or anything of that nature because of the many [extended] family groups that were there. But they generally felt happy about the place and it was obvious that they were very happy being out there. Psychologically they were much more free, able to do a bit of hunting and food gathering. The whole morale of the group lifted tremendously. After that time there was no more talk of the Pintupi dying out or anything like that … Ceremonial life becomes more appreciated as men and women get older. It broke down considerably, and there are not as many ceremonies as when we first went to Papunya in 1965. But many young people find their roots in the more traditional life as represented by the outstations. However, you can't generalise' (interview transcript).

Now that the Pintupi have gone out to Kintore those benefits seem to have multiplied in spite of the large multi-clan nature of the community. The community comprises about 350 people. In spite of that it has a settled peaceful air about it. They no longer have to contend with other language groups and young men who pay no heed to their Law. They have developed confidence and seem to be able to handle trouble effectively in traditional ways. Bob Durnan, an employee of the Alice Springs Aboriginal town camp organisation, Tangentyere, made a two day assessment visit to Kintore for the Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group. He circulated a five page report to the various Aboriginal organisations, and spoke of a recovery of group identify. 'The Pintupi clans who have shifted west (some to New Bore, some to Ilpili and most to Kintore Range itself), have rapidly consolidated their position and produced an impressive community spirit – they are obviously more healthy and happy, and very clear about their situation and their aims, and have a clear perception of need '(quoted in Nathan and Leichleitner, 1983, 160).

There also seems to have developed a strong Christian influence at Kintore. Ken Hansen comes out at their request to do linguistic work and Bible translation and teaching. But the people themselves

organise Christian singing and prayer meetings in someone's camp on many nights, with the ubiquitous electric guitars. This Christian influence cannot be discounted as a settling influence (except maybe the amplifier levels) since several of the people told me about it while I was visiting and a couple of those men seemed to be very involved in the running of the community. They were involved in discussions with men from Balgo Mission and the other elders who had gathered to discuss their sacred country and the protection of sacred places in connection with oil exploration going on in the area.

Before being placed or attracted into institutions Aboriginal people had to work through everything on their own account, according to their traditions. They had family or clan leadership and authority though, within a certain framework, Aboriginal individuals were pretty autonomous. When it came to the Law and ceremony they were not. Younger Aboriginal men at Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) told us recently that ceremonial authority was the only kind of authority really working today, and that councils and all the introduced authorities are failing. From what we can gather, and from what we see of the way groups deal with conflicts, if left alone to do so, they had some effective methods, though more subtle than ours and far more patient. Mike Last says of the Ernabella people, 'Now they are saying "we want to go back to the country of our fathers". I feel that these comments are something people have worked through to get to that point'. He goes on to say of outstations, 'The big advantage is that people get back to first principles and start working through the decisions they want to reach' (interview transcript).

Within the Pitjantjatjarra country there seemed to be an increase in ceremonial life as the people began living near and caring for their sacred places. It made it easier for people to visit those special places, both because of a reliable water supply, and because there was someone there to help organise. Last commented on the importance for people when they reached that far distant important place that they felt there was someone there – relations and shelter. Tregenza claimed that the resultant increase in ceremonial life has reinforced Pitjantjatjara values and life-style (interview transcript).

Hermannsburg, where outstations have persisted, has seen as a result a renewed interest in their country, though not all the groups could go on to their own country. Fitzner stated that he was not aware of any increase in ceremonial activity, but there was a lot of looking after in the strict sense of visiting sacred sites and maintaining whatever was there. It was a re-establishment of interest in the [people's own] country and some of its taboos'. There was also a 'noticeable improvement in the morale of the people. The [movement to outstations] has produced a greater confidence generally' (interview transcript).

Jack Doolan, one time patrol officer and Member of the Legislative Assembly NT, describes changes in the people relating to Victoria River Downs and Humbert River. In late 1971 he saw them on Victoria River Downs Station and 'they were a most apathetic and dejected group'. Then they walked off the Vestey owned station with the Gurindji people in 9172. 'They were quite elated over the direct action which they had taken. Between then and October 1973 the mood of elation had left them and they were once again beginning to look and act in a dejected way'. They did not belong to the land at Wattie Creek and felt their positions as outsiders. Then following talks between DAA officers, the Hooker Pastoral Company and themselves, they were offered a lease of two hundred and thirty square kilometres in their own country at Yarralin. Eighty four people were taken there from Dagaragu (Wattie Creek), and began work on their facilities. 'Now that they are back again and full of hope for the future, they are again a happy people, making all sorts of plans

for the cattle station which they hope one day soon to be operating by themselves' (Doolan, 1977, 112).

Gerritsen speaks of a resurgence of traditional ceremony at Lajamanu (Hooker Creek) and throughout the central desert country in the late 1960s. He suggests that this was forecast by the strike of Aboriginal stockmen at Wave Hill in 1966, and that this is part of what he calls the 'zealot' tradition. In other words the zealots are those who fight against the occupying power, or at least have that element in their make up. The opposite are the Herodians, the 'if you can't like 'em, join 'em' group. The zealot group may also see the possibility of sharing the power of the occupying authority. These two attitudes can co-exist in the one person and cause considerable conflict (1981, 9; also Gerritsen 1982a and 1982b). His explanation for the resurgence may well be correct. The following account of the reaction of people at Maningrida seems to bear this out:

> In 1964 there was only one of the big secret-sacred rituals which took place in the bush and continued for three months or so. At that time the people were preoccupied with questions of citizenship and there was much talk of 'taking the new ways in the left hand and holding on to the old customs with the right hand'. From mid-1978 there was a period of what was probably an unprecedented degree of ritual activity … the number of novices in each ritual increased from the usual three or four to upward of twenty (Armstrong, 1971, 54).

Gowan Armstrong went on to explain to the ANZAAS Conference, at which this paper was presented in 1969, that disillusionment with the government had set in. The honeymoon was over and the promises had not been fulfilled and the white man was a liar. So the people were re-asserting their own identify and going back to the things they could trust. He pointed out also that 'rituals cultivate a sense of group security and unity as well as pride and enjoyment in a distinctive Aboriginal heritage' (1971, 54).

In speaking of the early outstations of Papunya, Morice comments:

> The value of the neo-traditional lifestyle they offer to the Aborigines who established and live in them cannot be adequately assessed by a White Australia. But a major factor would seem to be a recovery of group and individual identity and a heightening of self-esteem (1978, 60).

Don Eastwell worked as a psychiatrist for a few years for the Northern Territory Medical Services and had a lot to do with the treatment of emotionally disturbed Aboriginal people. He studied the problem of petrol inhalation in Yirrkala and Galiwin'ku on the Arnhem Land coast. As part of that study he came into contact with the outstations. He wrote:

> There are meaningful roles for all in the community, in marked contrast to the anomie [lawlessness] in the towns. Rites and ceremonies are easier to organise in the bush … [and] ceremonies re-enact matters of substance and reinforce group identity. Aborigines regard them as essential to the passing down of essential rules of conduct (1979, 223-4)

One of the factors unknown to Eastwell was that of the Aboriginal Christian revival in Arnhem Land. He commented in relation to ceremonies being easier to organise in the bush, 'only a minority of Arnhem Land inhabitants embrace Christianity'. He would be surprised at the greatly

increased number of those who do so today and not on mission terms but through a movement led by their own people. Rev Djiniyini Gondarra is one of the leaders of that Christian movement which, while it was stimulated by white people, was rapidly taken over by Aboriginal people. It has the blessing of senior Law-men in Easter Arnhem Land, who recently presented their views strongly to Djiniyini that, though some of them did not attend church they believed in God and Gondarra's positon as Moderator of the Uniting Church holds great importance and significance to them. It has become a practice for those same Law-men to invite their own Aboriginal Christian ministers to come to major ceremonies with a Christian group and to conduct Christian worship at the ceremonial ground. To be sure the two religious philosophies challenge each other at certain points but, in Eastern Arnhem Land, they also support each other and have a relationship of mutual respect.

Djiniyini did five years training in New Guinea, two years at Malmaluan Training Centre studying Christian Education and three years at Raronga Theological College and was for seven years Pastor at Galiwin'ku. He lectured during 1983 and 1984 at Nungalinya College in Darwin which trains Aboriginal people in theology and community development, and Europeans in cross-cultural understanding. In 1985 he was elected Moderator of the Uniting church Northern Synod and became Secretary of the Northern Territory branch of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. The Congress was formed by Aboriginal and Islander people asserting their newly felt spiritual maturity within the Christian Church. They demanded that all Aboriginal funds and work in the Uniting church be handed over to their decision making control as their people were suffering and dying all over the country and they understood their own people and wanted to direct the ministry to them. After thorough dialogue, the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia handed over that control to Congress in 1985. Gondarra's father was one of the greatly respected leaders of certain ceremony and also within the mission framework at Galiwin'ku. He knew his end was near so in 1983 he took his son out to his outstation for about three months and taught him the things of Aboriginal law and of his particular ceremonies, which he had not yet learned. In effect he placed his mantle upon Djiniyini's shoulders though he was not the oldest son. So Djiniyini is a responsible Law-man within his own culture and a responsible Minister within the Christian faith.

When you meet so many people whose authority was wiped out by disillusionment and constant drunkenness, who were a burden to their communities, and who now are hope-filled leaders in both Aboriginal culture and the Christian way, it is impossible to negate the settling effect of the Christian movement, which today is undergoing a resurgence under Aboriginal leadership. Let me share a couple of the many examples. I knew a very intelligent man in a large homeland community for more than fifteen years as an argumentative drunk, who constantly disrupted that community. Though his aging father had authority, that man was unable to exercise leadership or authority because of the inner turmoil of his own life. For some four years he has been sober and in his right mind. He became engaged in Bible translation. When you see that man chosen by his people as spokesman for their land rights in a meeting with politicians in Peth, both because he is able and does have authority, and possibly because as a Christian he has become responsible, you can't negate the effects of that movement.

When another ex-fighting drunk in Arnhem Land tells you that after he was converted dramatically several years ago, the Holy Spirit told him that he didn't know who he was because he had not gone

through his Aboriginal Law and that now that he was a Christian he should go through his own Law and discover his true identify as an Aboriginal, which he did, you can't negate the movement.

Aboriginal Law and culture has for some years now been under concerted attack by the Australian Mining Industry Council, supported ably by the Australian League of Rights and by white-led or white-influenced conservative Christian organisations, supposedly Aboriginal, and other vested interests whose Christian ethics can be seriously questioned. However, the Christian revival which came out of Arnhem Land is an Aboriginal led movement whose people have discovered for themselves through the Bible and, they would say, the Holy Spirit that God does not despise their culture. They believe that God gave them their culture and that he wants them to find their full identity as Aboriginal Christians with a theology which grows out of that culture. As Rev Djiniyini Gondarra expressed it:

> When the Lord calls Aboriginal men and women out of this world to do this work, he does not take away their culture or language and their true identity as Aboriginal people … My own dear people, let us not become handicapped by the strange tradition, culture, structure and theology of our White brothers and sisters, but let us with faith exercise our identify as people of God, who has given us true names, languages and cultures (1983).

At Yirrkala the people have rediscovered a sense of their true identity as Aboriginal people, together and as persons, through the homeland centres movement. Jonetani Rika is a Fijian who has worked with the people there for some twenty years. For the last few years he has helped the people run their Outstations Resource Centre. He speaks the language fluently and has deep relationships with the people. He has also gained the respect of government departmental officers and has helped the people to make sure that those officers really listen to what they are saying. He says that the development taking place, and the new sense of identity and confidence of the people, is the result in large part of their spiritual development. By this he means the renewed interest in ceremony which has gone side by side with the influence of the Christian faith.

To support and foster this spiritual growth a very traditional man who is Chairman of the Aboriginal Culture Foundation, Gawirrin Gumana, has been appointed by the people as outstation's pastor to give spiritual leadership to the homelands communities. Jonetani believes that the Aboriginal people's concept of God is very different from that of the Europeans. The European tends to do all his planning and action then to think about God when things begin to go wrong. The Aboriginal people feel God to be as near as breathing. He permeates the whole of life and they see him in all that they are and all that they do and seek his guidance and strength in their development (personal comment).

The Christian faith has also had a positive effect generally throughout the Pitjantjatjarra homelands where many of the groups have their prayer together and very naturally worship and seek the presence of God. One of the things which struck me early in my association with the people when I began to be invited to ceremony was that the key men in some initiation ceremonies were also the key men in the Christian meetings which were held at other times. I felt this to be a healthy aspect of their life at the time. I believe it has grown to be even more so.

Warburton Mission was declared by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in 1979 or 1980 to be a disaster area. It was set up by the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) in 1934 and was taken over by

the West Australian Department of Native Welfare in 1973. It seems to have had a history of several unsuitable staff. I am unable to comment generally on the mission era through lack of knowledge, except for a couple of practices which I believe to have been damaging to the culture and the people. One was the policy of removing children from their parent's care and the placing of them in dormitories and the other was the suppression of the language amongst the children for many years. Eventually an enlightened UAM linguist, Wilf Douglas, persuaded the mission to allow him to teach vernacular literacy and they later employed a number of linguists. However, there were some Native Welfare staff during the period 1973 to 1979 who either made unilateral decisions or browbeat the people into making the decisions which the staff person wanted. In recent years most if not all the linguists have been expelled by the UAM or have resigned over that body's rigid attitude on a doctrinal question.

At a special meeting held at Jamieson to discuss with the people there DAA support for a Pitjantjatjarra Council the people said, 'It's no good waiting for the Warburton people to come. They can't make up their minds. They are frightened to make decisions'. The outcome of the long history of interference resulting in that indecision was an atmosphere of hopelessness and hostility at Warburton. Heavy drinking and petrol sniffing were rife. There were many deaths over the years caused by alcohol. On many occasions young people drove in dangerous fury around and around the mission to dramatise their frustration and anger. On more than one occasion those cars overturned killing someone.

A young DAA officer, Chris Marshall, whose wife had worked at Warburton previously, volunteered to help the community. He refused the requirement that he stay only six months. He insisted it would take two years at least to really help the people. At the end of six months the bureaucracy caught up with him and his boss began to put pressure on him to come out and be useful elsewhere. It became so bad that as a Christian man he seriously considered whether he should resign from the public service, giving up all his accrued service and benefits and stay on working directly for the Warburton Council. The Uniting Church was already impressed with the work he was doing and went to the Minister. He was allowed to say. He concentrated on helping the community go get the services running smoothly, on getting to know the people, and on encouraging them to believe in their own capabilities and worth. The community became more settled than it had been but grog and fights were still a big problem.

In October 1982 the little struggling Christian fellowship at Warburton invited a team to visit from Galiwin'ku and run some Christian meetings. A team of four went and thirty adults made decisions to follow the Christian way and were baptised. Towards Christmas they asked for a follow-up teaching team. Djiniyini Gondarra and his wife Gelung and two others went. People were in from the outstations for Christmas. Four hundred people made decisions to follow the Christian way. According to observers with long association with Warburton, this transformed the community. I know personally some of the people who were drunks or problem people who were changed by that experience. Amee Glass who was a linguist there for twelve years and still works with the people from her base in Alice Springs said that, as in all such campaigns, some people have fallen back into old patterns but Warburton and the large homeland communities are still very much more settled than before. If the people at Warburton and its related outstations can stay free from some of the very conservative white Christians who have influenced them in the recent past and some of whom today are trumpeting anti-communism, anti-land rights and anti-Aboriginal culture, they will probably remain settled. Through their homelands movement and through a revival in both

their ceremonial life and their Christian faith the people of that area gained a renewed sense of identify as a people and as persons of worth. As Last says of outstations, they 'give the people the opportunity to sort themselves out and get a bit of direction being able to maintain the direction themselves. It also allows them to … identify with the land and to look after other factors … people can socially look after their group a lot more' (interview transcript).

The other improvement noticed by many observers is a growth in confidence and, rather than a drawing away from white people, a greater assuredness in their dealings with them. Fitzner comments on the improvement in the morale of the Hermannsburg people, and says that the process of building up an identity didn't make them withdraw from contact with the outside world but in fact made them more confident in their contacts with government agencies or whatever (interview transcript; also Tregenza). On their own home base people are able to control their relationships with white people.

In the homelands there are not the power struggles and myriad authorities and demands that there are in the large settlements. Of course there are sometimes power struggles in the larger outstations, but people seem to be able to resolve their problems more effectively than in the settlements. This builds up a sense of achievement and develops greater confidence in the people in their ability to handle their own affairs and in controlling community-white relationships. The pressures of the larger settlements, aggravated by the political pressure to spend money and to be seen to be resolving the problems of Aboriginal employment, housing and other needs, make the growth of such confidence and control in the people extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is only where people have broken away from those pressures and have the greater control which smaller communities allow, and especially where they have the authority which comes from being on their land, that those qualities and abilities develop.

A recovery of useful roles and involvement in the work of the community

An incredulous young DAA officer burst into the Regional Office in Alice Springs about mid-1976. 'I've just been out to Papunya', he said, 'and I went out to old Timmy's camp at Five Mile Bore. It was late in the afternoon and the sun was going down. There was old Timmy who I thought would be dead [he had suffered a stroke and was left with a kind of palsy] standing there and giving orders to the young blokes. They were clearing a big area for a garden by hand. There was … and … [naming young men about 23 years of age]. I know those blokes. They haven't done a day's work since they left school. It was six in the afternoon and they were still slogging away like Trojans. And old Timmy was ordering them about like a sergeant major. I don't believe it' (personal comment).

That old man had been waiting for a few years for some assurance that there would be support for his outstation. After our exercise in March 1976 (see chapter 3) he seemed to get a new burst of enthusiasm and established his garden. I visited the camp shortly after the exercise. That trembling old Man had begun clearing the growth from a large area he had marked out for his garden. He was pitching in with a shovel and showing the young men how to do it. Old Timmy did establish his garden and his outstation. The old man died in 1981. Despite his stroke and the trembles resulting from it he was a tireless worker. I don't know how long he was ill before his death but the group would miss his leadership. A small group of Luritja people were camped there in early 1982, about thirty people. The bore outlet had been broken for two years and the people were carting water from Papunya. They said there were many more Luritja people who would move out when the bore was fixed (Nathan and Leichleitner 1983, 12-129). The garden could not be kept up and no longer existed.

The story of the old man's enthusiasm, the exercise of his authority and the spate of work that followed typifies what has happened in most outstations and homeland communities. Old people regain authority and people have meaningful roles again. There is an air of purposefulness about the people. They show initiative and tackle tasks with an energy and an enthusiasm which was lacking in most settlements though a rare personality amongst the staff could inspire it on occasion; but the other pressures and the general malaise would usually kill it in the end.

Even the Pintupi at Yaiyai showed those reactions to being on their own. The community was too big, about 250 people at first, but people were encouraged. In July 1973 I visited Yaiyai in company with Barry Whittenbury, the District Medical Officer. We were taken by linguist Ken Hansen to Shorty Bruno, the recognised leader of the Pintupi community. He showed us where to camp by the Hansen's caravan in the centre of the camp area. We stayed for two nights and spoke with many of the men in the camp, using the Pitjantjatjarra dialect which the Pintupi know. Several times men asked us what we thought of the place. They told us they were 'pukupla', a word meaning something more than happy: it implies a sense of well-being. We saw much evidence of a happy, purposeful atmosphere. Men were working on jobs such as digging drains and a garden, carting rubbish and getting firewood. Many times after expressing their pleasure at being there, they told us they intended to stay and make it their home.

Fitzner reported that some of the early groups to move out from Hermannsburg organised their own resources and did so without any government help and established their outstations. 'The moving out produced a spate of activity: in fact it was as though they had gone through a period of inactivity and had stored up energy. A kind of creative energy was released by going out to these groups. They were very active in establishing the camp, cutting down posts in the bush, building yards and paddocks and shelters and so on' (interview transcript).

In both the work they undertook and their comments about the future, the people are naturally attracted to the things they can do and restricted by the limitations of their experience. At Hermannsburg, in some outstations fences were going up so the people could run cattle. Because a white man who had worked on cattle stations was living amongst them, the people at Katjikatjitjarra, a small outstation close to Ernabella, had a small herd of cattle. Last commented, 'It is interesting to see how people have turned to all the activity they can do. They build a fence or they make a garden. [It's] all … easy to do. Seeds are easy to get. Trees are easy to get. Stock – livestock – it's harder to get direct access to that – you've got to rely on somebody else a bit more to get that. I think outstations are one way in which people can maintain their own personal or community government type direction. Their division of labour they can sort out' (interview transcript). It is interesting to note the people's preference in those cases for activities which they can carry through themselves without having to rely on someone else – by implication, a white person.

Throughout my visits to outstations and especially during the course of this study, people took me and showed me their flourishing gardens with great pride. Old Kutatji at Kuntjanu had his sons come out and help him to build an airstrip, put up a shed for a store, and fence and plant a garden. In March 1978 Ushmar Scales was employed under the NEAT Scheme to establish the Pitjantjatjarra Homelands Gardens, Orchards and Re-afforestation Program. He had not had experience with gardening in arid zones. The second report (September 1978 to February 1979) reveals lots of trial and error, lots of problems, but also a lot of promise. Scales worked from Putaputa near Mt Davies. Tony Davis, who had worked on bores and tanks at Utopia Station, was

employed about August 1978 to look after water needs in the Pitjantjatjarra Homelands area. He had formed a water works gang with two Aboriginal men, Kirk Forbes and Charlie Munmum.

The Gardens report mentions the professional work of this team as the cause of a leap ahead in the program. Windmills, tanks, pipes and taps were installed in several places. The gardeners had to contend with severe frosts in winter and soaring and sustained high temperatures in the summer. Grasshoppers ate the corn. Field mice ate all the pumpkin seed at Putapua. Crows pecked holes in the water melons. Ants carried away the carrot seed. Camels completely destroyed a garden fence at Kuntjanu. Hose joints kept exploding in the heat at Pipalyatjarra. Add kids and dogs and you have significant difficulties. However, they overcame all these in time.

Drip irrigation systems were installed eventually in all the gardens. These made sense, not only because of the climate but because the vagaries of the Aboriginal life militated against constant care of gardens. A death can still empty some camps. Ceremony can summon people away. Drip irrigation enables others easily to care for people's gardens while they are absent. In 1979-80 I was shown flourishing gardens in most of the places I visited. Grape vines, citrus trees, shade trees, pumpkins, water and rock melons, tomatoes, carrots all looking very healthy. Just the physical work of establishing those gardens is considerable. Some of them covered a large area.

At Kalka (just over the range from Pipalyatjarra) a large garden was established. Donald Peterman showed great enthusiasm for gardening and has planted many gums and other trees around the area and looks after them. Old Tjapalyi looked after the large vegetable garden and was proud of his work. The most staggering evidence of work put in by the people however is at Waltjitjata, a very important place ritually about 50 km north-east of Piplayatjarra. Andy Sundown and his brother Tommy Yaltjangki had a vision of an oasis in the desert. They built several substantial shelters and a shower with a 44 gallon drum hot water system. For Christmas of 1979 they built a large bush shade because they anticipated several related groups would come and spend Christmas with them. The shade was so that everyone could have Christmas dinner together out of the sun. They even borrowed the idea of a Christmas tree from western culture. Much of the time of this community had been spent helping others to get established.

The crowning glory of Waltjitjata was its gardens and trees. Andy told me how they wanted to have a pleasant green shady place for the future. To make that possible, and as they had no vehicle, they walked two or three miles away on many occasions, dug up River Red Gums and Desert Currajongs and carried them to camp on their backs. When I saw them they were in rows through the garden area, around the camps, and six or eight fee high. They also had private gardens and re-afforestation areas around people's camps and had long rows of what the Gardens report calls 'sundax' planted as windbreaks. In addition to all this there were grape vines, citrus trees, melons and vegetables growing.

Andy's son Kingsley was there, strong and working hard and, I'm told, was a good hunter and supplier of kangaroo and wallaby meat. That is another measure of Andy's persistence. A couple of years earlier Kingsley received bad head injuries in a car accident. He had brain damage and could not talk and it was expected that he would not walk again. The prognosis was very bad. His father and mother spent hours with him at the hospital visiting every day and constantly talking to him and asking him questions and encouraging him along, encouraging him all the time. He began to make vocal noises as he tried to relearn how to talk. They got him out of his hospital bed and

half carried him along, encouraging him all the while. To everyone's amazement that loving and persistent stimulus helped him to a complete recovery.

At Kanpi, Andy Tjilari showed us with pride the work he had done in setting up a large garden. There were rows of well-established grape vines, citrus trees and so on. Andy told us how he had cleared all the grass and low growth from around the whole area the year or two before. The scorching winds withered the plants, and they have learned to leave the top growth where it is to protect the plants from the hot winds. Andy was one of the people who told us of all that he learned about different kinds of work at Fregon. His wife had stayed all those years with him in his country, so 'ngaparrtji' he was spending a few years in her father's country and helping to build up their homeland community and its facilities at Kanpi. Kanpi is a very important ritual area with many sacred places and tracks relating to Wanampi (giant water snake) and other important dreaming stories.

Gardens appear to be put in as a sign of permanence. Coombs seems to suggest another reason:

> Knowing that white authority regards productive activity as the prime purpose of landholding, there has been an increased tendency to emphasis the Aboriginal presence by activity of the kind urged upon them by white administrators, or at least to put up fences, yards, etc, which they hope white men will identify with effective land use (1978, 145).

In the Centre I doubt that this is the motive. The few fences I have seen in homeland communities have generally been around the garden for good reason, or around airstrips and occasionally around a store or to lock up equipment on bigger places. The only places where I have seen yards built have been on Aboriginal cattle stations or where the people plan to have cattle or to break in horses or, as in the case of Ngana 96 km from Yuendumu, camels. There seems to be thought and reason behind those activities. This is in contrast to the tremendous spate of seemingly pointless fence building and white painted stone borders of some settlements in the past era.

The idea of gardens was something introduced by white staff and taught to people as at Ernabella which had an extensive garden run by Ginger and his family. Agriculturally trained people on the staff taught practical courses in growing vegetables and fruit and special techniques developed for arid zone horticulture. Teaching was also done in homeland communities as well as courses at Ernabella. Much of that knowledge remains and people have taken it to homelands. There they appear to have discovered the satisfaction to be found in gardening. In some cases people have found they can make money selling grapes, melons and other fruits of their labour to people travelling between communities and sometimes by seeking a market in Amata or other larger communities.

The best sign that gardens are not established just to please whitefellows, however, is the commitment to gardening by many people. At Jamieson, Paddy Lane was without a vehicle but in the heat of summer he walked 4 km every day out to his garden to keep his trees and grape vines, melons and vegetables alive. When trouble erupted through an Aboriginal man brining a white man into the Waltjitjata area searching for minerals, Andy Sundown had his leg broken. This meant a stay in Alice Springs. Because of the trouble he stayed away for several months and the outstation remained empty. Other related people used to travel out there regularly to see that the trees and vines were kept watered. Andy is now living elsewhere because of continued conflict, and another group of related people have moved in. They are now caring for and reaping the benefit of the

citrus trees and grape vines and the now mature shade trees. Likewise when something kept Kutatji away from Kuntjanu for a long period, relations travelled out regularly from Pipalyatjarra about two hours each way to keep the garden alive. It has to have more meaning to the people than just pleasing whitefellows. The record speaks for itself.

Cane and Stanley comment on the gardens at Ernabella which 'were genuinely desired and cared for by the Aboriginal people'. They were large, 50 m x 100 m and fenced and laid with drip irrigation. All but the newest camps around Ernabella also had well-tended gardens and a variety of fruit and vegetables were grown. They confirm that in many other areas gardens have been a failure and suggest that the reason for the success here is long association with white people through the mission [from 1936] and 10 years of expert agricultural and horticultural advice from resident agronomist Mike Last. The people had learnt the work necessary to maintain gardens and the skills required. The most frequently grown crops they recorded were grapes, mulberries, oranges and figs (1985, 148).

The same story is told of commitment and persistence often in the face of great difficulty to build up something for themselves and their children in the many outstations and homeland communities out from Yirrkala and Maningrida and along the Arnhem Land coast. In June 1984 there were 800 people living in homeland communities out from Maningrida. During the wet season the number dropped to 300 because of supply problems. One of the air charter companies had the Civil Aviation Department close the strips at the three largest outstations, presumably for safety reasons. Normally, only 40 per cent of the people return to the settlement during the Wet. Some groups are cut off for three months at a time in that season and live entirely on bush tucker and sea foods. The young men from one of those communities walk about 30 km into Maningrida to get cartridges and tobacco then walk back home (personal comment).

At Hermannsburg, of the twenty clan groups who moved to outstations eighteen were still living there in 1984, nearly ten years later, and show no signs of wanting to go back to Hermannsburg to live. The return of the other two to Hermannsburg was caused by deaths (personal comment, Finke River Mission staff). Since the handover of their individual leases in June 1982 some of the ex-Hermannsburg groups have worked to establish small cattle herds.

In place after place the story is told of people working to build something for themselves, often without wages. Observers have been startled at what people have achieved and how hard they have worked in many outstations compared with the pace of work and lack of commitment on the settlements. Coombs wrote of the move of the Bardi people back to One Arm Point:

> They worked without wages digging wells, making roads, clearing the airstrip, erecting buildings and generally establishing the community. The group survived during this period largely on social service payments, seafood (which is abundant) and the assistance of sympathetic persons and organisations (1978, 141).

When the Victoria River Downs and Humbert River people were taken from Wattie Creek to their own country at Yarralin, 'gangs of men were sent out to cut coolabah for posts, others began digging a deep pit toilet, some commenced repairing the old homestead – all of this being organised amongst themselves' (Doolan, 1977, 111).

The Hon William Wentworth, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time, was extremely impressed with the Wattie Creek people who had gone on strike from Vestey's Wave Hill station over wages

and conditions. The Minister felt that, of all the people he had visited, they had shown the most initiative and had done a great deal for themselves. The people were by then asking for a lease of 600-700 square miles so that they could run a horse plant and do contract mustering on surrounding stations. Lord Vestey had agreed to an excision but felt it was the Government's job to take action on the issue. Wentworth was talking of only a few square miles for a living area. His Liberal-Country Party would not countenance excising any area of land for an Aboriginal group. They feared it would 'scare the pants off' their Country Party supporters, so he was unable to reward the people for their initiative in however small a way. The people felt he had broken a promise (Coombs 1978, 158-159, 163-164 and personal comment). The Government, because of its opposition to an excision, determined to build up the small community at Wave Hill and to make the strikers live there under the guidance of the DAA officer and the police. What Coombs described as 'a slow and very expensive exercise producing houses quite unsuitable for the area' took place. It was clear from the start that the people didn't want to live there. They had settled at Wattie Creek, fenced an area, built some rough dwellings, acquired some livestock and began to establish a garden (1978, 164).

Turkey Creek in the East Kimberley is a community beset by the power struggles and politicking caused by forcing four language groups to live together. Alan Tegg who had worked with the community for three years prior to 1983 says that this conflict was one of the most debilitating things on the reserve. That and their dependence upon the Ashton mining people was completely preventing the Aboriginal people from initiating any positive grass roots action in Turkey Creek. The effective grass roots action is seen in the outstation movement.

I believe there are now six outstations out from the Turkey Creek community. Tegg mentioned three which had shown a lot of commitment. One, Glen Hill, developed a lot of amenities because it was funded by Ashton Joint Venture. Chinaman's Garden went for three years with no vehicle, no shelter, proper water and no resources. There are about twenty people there. Their leader lost control of the situation in Turkey Creek. He tried to stop drink coming into the camp and was taking a lot of physical punishment from drunks. At Chinaman's Creek he is the boss. If he says 'no grog comes in here' then no grog comes in. He is on some Crown Land. The third successful outstation is Frog Hollow. This is on traditional land just south of Turkey Creek. The people secured a vehicle and a radio for themselves and have built some rudimentary shelters. They have created a garden and done a lot of work for themselves of which they are very proud (personal comment).

The same story is told in Arnhem Land. Rudder mentions the building of airstrips using hand tools in some remote communities. 'In other areas miles of road have had to be made again with hand tools' (1978, 13). The 1976-77 Report of the Maningrida Outstation Resources Centre tells of the two outstations where the people had cleared 700 metres of an airstrip with hand tools. At Dipiringur on the mainland opposite Milingimbi I visited the people in 1981. They were in the process of building their airstrip and had cleared bush over a similar area with a small tractor and hand tools.

Gray summed it up by saying:

> Already there have been literally miles of road and thousands of feet of new runways established in many areas of Arnhem Land through the expenditure of voluntary effort. The amount of work carried out by Aborigines in outlying areas has amazed many people who have had years of experience supervising Aboriginal workers on mission and government settlements. The work output far exceeds

> that which was expected of the same people when they were living on those larger settlements (1977, 118).

An observable improvement in social and general health

There has been an observable improvement in the health of the people as a result of the move into outstations and homelands. Some of the reasons we have already touched upon in this chapter. Another is a considerable improvement in diet due to the use of more traditional foods aided by a somewhat slow intellectual revolution with in the Health Department moving towards more preventative and community-based health care. Coombs wrote:

> Before 1973 health policy was concerned primarily with the establishment of professional therapeutic services and well equipped hospitals concentrating on the treatment of disease. Evidence now suggests that poor Aboriginal health measured by infant mortality, malnutrition and widespread morbidity in children and adults is primarily a reflection of the adverse conditions in which the Aborigines lie on the fringes of white communities and in settlements and the failure to develop a pattern of life suitable for communities more sedentary than those of their past (1978, 235).

The preoccupation with clinical medicine and treatment of disease meant that the factors causing ill health were ignored. Drs Whittenbury and Kirke and others tried for some years to point out to a rather ossified bureaucracy that to remove people from an unhealthy environment, especially young children with their repeated infections, and treat them in sterile conditions then send them home to the same unhealthy environment, was perpetuating the problem. It was not getting down to causes. Despite all the Department's talk about preventative medicine it was not being practised. There was a preference for mass inoculation against certain diseases while ignoring the wider needs of community medicine.

Whittenbury and later Devenesen, tried to point out to the health authorities the need to study Aboriginal beliefs about sickness and treatment and health. They could see clearly that because Aboriginal concepts and their world view were totally different from those of the European culture, there was little communication and a great deal of misunderstanding and lack of co-operation.

What that preoccupation with clinical medicine led to was repeatedly to plan without consultation and to build very inappropriate facilities which only increased the Aboriginal people's sense of having no control and added to their stresses. For example, at Warburton Mission the West Australian Health Department built a hospital with twenty-one work areas, beautifully equipped at a cost of $1.5 million taken from Federal Aboriginal funds in the late 1960s. The people didn't want it and the nursing sisters couldn't use it. They regularly used only three of the working areas. They allowed the people to use others for showing films, community meetings and other activities. They allowed visitors like me to sleep in one of the wards. It has been claimed that the project was justified because it was built to serve the larger Warburton community before the outstation movement took many people out of that community. However the hospital still had to serve the same number of persons as they related to the Warburton centre for their services.

For a variety of reasons, including inadequate staff to run a hospital of the size of the Warburton hospital, people were very rarely admitted. On some occasions very sick people from the homeland communities were told to stay in camp somewhere until the plane could come and evacuate them.

There were Aboriginal people with the status and authority to live in the hospital at night and allow sick people to be cared for there, but the communication between the Department and the people was poor, and the sisters did not feel free to do this. This made the people angry and, because the Health Department and Frontier Services who provided the sisters had no inclination really to consult with the people at the time, they felt helpless and ignored and their anger built up. It was vented on the obvious symbols of the Department, the buildings and to a lesser degree the sisters. The Northern Territory Health Department repeated the formula at great cost at Papunya and at Docker River where the hospital was built across a dreaming track. It was a constant focus for anger and was vandalised many times.

Some of the thinking of those doctors who kept pointing out the ineffectiveness of our western therapeutic health services to meet Aboriginal health needs and the need for more community based medicine that related to Aboriginal culture began to sneak under the Department's guard. More people began asking the hard questions. That, along with Aboriginal requests for control of their health services, led to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs agreement to fund some Aboriginal health services directly, giving some Aboriginal groups control of those services and the doctors and sisters working for them. The Department's thinking changed.

In Central Australia the Pitjantjatjarra Council has its own Aboriginal-controlled health service. People in the outstations were dissatisfied with the service given to them by the South Australian and West Australian Health Departments. The Departments found it hard to find staff who would stay in the area and service them. The borders were a constant problem which the Aboriginal people of course did not recognise, though the Commonwealth Aerial Medical Service did help out with visits to nearer communities in both those states. The people however had no control over staff, some of whom were very good and understanding and worked hard to serve the people, but could not cover the vast area adequately. Occasionally staff were insensitive and interfering. As even the good staff could not get out to the homelands often enough to care for people effectively, the people asked for more control and better services and eventually for their own health services.

The Pitjantjatjarra Health Service got under way in 1978 based at Kalka homeland centre. They employed their own doctors and sisters. Part of their job was the training of Aboriginal health workers and working with and through them in the various communities. This part of the service, in my opinion, has been the lest successfully fulfilled. The service had its teething problems but the people feel it belongs to them and that they have control of what happens. It works as part of the total Aboriginal scene in which the Aboriginal traditional doctors still play an important part. It is not repeatedly coming into conflict with Aboriginal beliefs and life style. For those reasons the service has helped to improve the level of health in the homeland communities.

In August 1984 a meeting was held in a Western Desert community to finalise talks and to split the funds and services of the Pitjantjatjarra Health Service into two distinct sections. The western section would become the Ngaanyatjarra Health Service. The reason for this development lay in the scattered nature of the communities. The one doctor had to drive 1500 km per week over dirt roads and tracks to attend his or her patients. The Council believed the service to be under-funded and under-staffed, with one doctor, two sisters and a few health workers. The Ngaanyatjarra service would look after the communities in West Australia. It was hoped that the rationalisation of the services would point out the needs of the area and attract further government support. That service is now in operation.

The eastern sector of the Pitjantjatjarra homelands also has its own Nganampa Health Service. Nganampa means ours – Our Health service. The service has a regional office in Alice Springs with a regional co-ordinator and an accountant. There are four regions with staff based at the larger communities: Amata, Ernabella-Kenmore Park, Fregon and Mimili-Indulkana. Each region has an Aboriginal director and a health educator-administrator, one doctor and two sisters and three or four Aboriginal health workers. There is a position for a regional health worker educator and plans for a regional dentist. Given the general state of Aboriginal health as revealed in the reports by the Department of Health and the trachoma team of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, those communities will not be over-serviced for some considerable time.

Many long-term skilled observers testify to improved health arising from the movement to outstations and homelands. Sister Doris Kubisch who worked for years at Hermannsburg hospital went to work at Papunya for a couple of years. In the meantime the Hermannsburg people moved out into their outstations. She was invited back to relieve for a while. She said, 'in the past at Hermannsburg, even with two sisters, I was absolutely run off my feet and called out at night constantly by people who demanded aggressively that I look after them. Often it would be a woman saying her child was sick, but it would be the mother really wanting attention because of the tensions in her life there. This time I relieved on my own and had little to do. I was only called out a couple of times at night by very apologetic people, but each time someone was really sick. The people have changed' (personal comment).

Health has to do with much more than treatment of sickness. Kubisch was just voicing what many observers of the homelands movement say, that those communities are much improved in health, particularly in psychological and social health. The people of Hermannsburg are mostly living in outstation communities close to Hermannsburg. They all had transport and the furthest would have been not more than an hour's drive away. If people were genuinely sick they could easily go for help. Compared with the old days when everyone lived at the mission and two sisters were not enough to cope with all the calls without becoming exhausted, those outstation people were not sick. People were suffering far fewer stress symptoms and stress sicknesses and were looking after themselves far more effectively. Pastor John Fitzner confirmed this, saying 'better health certainly has been a result [of the move]. Whether the people are aware of that and see it as a consequence I'm not sure. It is observable but the sisters also say that their work has lessened considerably' (interview transcript).

Dr Bill Ritchie was based in the Centre working with Aboriginal tribal people for the Northern Territory Medical Service and, later, for two years he worked with Arnhem Land people as Aerial Medical Service Doctor. After two years there he wrote in support of moves to oppose the Northern Territory Government's restrictive wildlife legislation which would have hindered the Aboriginal people hunting for food:

> From subjective observations, the nutritional status of Aborigines, especially the children, is superior to those permanently living in settlements and missions. The overall prevalence of under-nutrition and severe anaemia appears to be lower in these outstation populations, and there are, I consider, two major reasons for this.
>
> Tension, anxiety and aggression, seen only too frequently in the cross-cultural situation of the settlement, are minimised by other sporadic contact with Europeans. This improvement in psycho-social health is easily recognised by the interested observer.

> An improved and balanced diet has resulted from familiarity and knowledge of traditional food items (as opposed to European foods obtained here from the settlement store). The major sources of protein and iron, to combat the scourges of under nutrition and severe anaemia (resultant from hookworm infection) are meat and fish (Maningrida Outstation Resource Centre Report 1976-77, 9)

The Anbarra outstations in this area had the high quality of their diet recorded in detail. The general description is that 'throughout this period they hunted and gathered food from their territory – from the sea, the rivers, the creeks and the land. They procured shellfish, fish, wallabies, goannas, salt water and fresh water turtles, birds as well as many vegetable foods and a wide range of fruits. They supplemented this diet with European foods which they purchased from the Progress Association store at Maningrida' (Betty Meehan and Rhys Jones 1978, 10 – 11). Meehan, from her detailed studies of food intake and values told a parliamentary committee that 'foods culled from the estuary [of the Blythe River] and the open sea made a substantial contribution to the diet, [and in fact provided] an average of 68 per centre of the (total) protein and 32 per cent of the energy … When measured only against meat consumption it provided 85 per cent of the protein and 80 per cent of the energy derived from all meats' (May 1977). Hunting and gathering also gave the people healthy exercise.

After visiting two outstations in the Maningrida area a senior health inspector of the Department of Health told a health conference at Maningrida that the people in these outstations were living in a healthier environment than the people in Maningrida. He pointed to the absence of rubbish around the camps, food being kept up high out of reach of dogs and the generally more active life in the outstations. He told some of the residents at these two places that they would be unwise, from a public health point of view, to change their simple lifestyle (Maningrida Outstation Resource Centre Report, 1976-77, 9).

Even in semi-arid Central Australia where rivers may flow for only two or three days a year, and where game is much sparser, both the diet and the health of the people improved. Ken Hansen saw a great improvement in the health of the Pintupi as a result of living in the outstation at Yaiyai. He said that one of the main reasons was their better diet. They relied much more on bush foods and kangaroo and wallaby and other traditional and leaner meats. Also '[Aboriginal] doctor men still operate as they did in Papunya; but a lot more people got to the hospital in those days. Now if people feel better after seeing the Aboriginal doctor they will not go to the hospital'. [An indication of a far less stressful existence]. 'The opportunity of life under less constraint from the European system is very obvious to us, and health has improved, especially psychological health. You don't hear as much negative feelings expressed against the whitefellows. There is everything to be said for outstations. They are one of the most encouraging moves that we have seen in our years at Papunya' (interview transcript).

Aboriginal doctor men (ngangkarri) still have great status and respect in their society today. After all, they understand the traditional concepts of the causes of sickness. Therefore those men are very important in the scheme of things, and people still have great faith in their powers to heal. Some health department personnel worked very actively against them, particularly one sister with many years experience on Aboriginal settlements. She tried to stamp them out. The people still went to their own doctors first to receive a cure and then to the sisters to get medicine or a needle to relieve the symptons. As Morice said:

> Spirit loss, spirit possession and sorcery are not only the main Pintupi and Loritja attributes of illness, physical and mental, but also are frequently invoked to explain social deviancy. The traditional doctor thus functions as an agent of social control as well as a healer.
>
> [Morice also commented on the way in which white authorities, such as the superintendent and the policemen, undermined their role in social control]. The attempt by the Australian Health Department in the early 1970s to incorporate traditional doctors into the white health care system was far from successful, in that mostly they were used by settlement sisters to whom they were responsible, as cleaners and general odd-job men (1975, 59).

A rigid system, without properly oriented staff, could not handle them or use their authority.

A co-operative relationship developed between the Alice Springs Hospital and Aboriginal doctors, due particularly to the work of Doctors Whittenbury and Kirke. From about 1970 onwards I was contacted several times by hospital sisters to see if I knew of an Aboriginal doctor man visiting one of the camps around town. They would explain that a patient was in a great state of anxiety and wished to see a traditional doctor. If I could locate such a person I would take him to the hospital where he would carry out his particular medicine in the ward. On one such occasion I was told that the patient had bad rheumatic fever which had affected the heart and he would be unable to leave hospital to go home for some months. The sister asked that I interpret to the man the seriousness of his condition and that they could not let him return home for a long time even though he was very anxious to go. I did so, then arranged to bring the traditional doctor to see him. The patient was Luritja and the doctor man was Warlpiri, a different language group. (The status and authority of the traditional doctors crosses many boundaries in Aboriginal tradition, including language boundaries. Particular men and women doctors can acquire a reputation for skill in certain classes if illness, such as women's complaints or children's illnesses or even outstanding general skills. Their fame can spread far and wide.)

I sat in on the operation of the Warlpiri doctor on his Luritja patient. Two or three days later the hospital allowed him to go home. They were completely mystified at the change in his condition. Spiritual healing is a reality which Aboriginal people often see. It is no surprise than that in the Christian revival which has swept through tribal country in recent years, that the new converts accept readily the power of God's Holy Spirit to heal and that they do experience many healings of illness.

Psychiatrist, Dr John Cawte wrote, 'Anthropologists … suggest that this [homelands movement] will improve the health situation by reducing the pool of pollution and mental health by reducing social disintegration and its psychological concomitants of dependency and delinquency' (1973, 223). Doctor friends of mine in Alice Springs with years of experience in the Aboriginal health field used to speak of a pool of infection in large settlements which kept reinfecting people and causing epidemics. Even the measures we instituted in those settlements to improve the health of the people often worked against their health. Overflowing effluent from the septic system of the Papunya Hospital was a recurring health menace for years. Especially as in that scorching climate in summer, children would play in the resultant pools.

The demand that the mothers feed their young children in the crowded noisy mass feeding situation

was also counter-productive. Young Aboriginal aides were enlisted to assist in these projects without effectively helping them to understand the basics. It was bad enough to watch mothers under stress try to force food into crying children. It was far more horrifying to sit with a nursing sister friend chatting with other sisters and to see an Aboriginal girl aide carrying out the 'beaut new idea' for stopping cross infection. My friend explained that, until recently, people used the same spoon to give a vitamin supplement to all the children which of course spread infection. Now they used an eyedropper and the children filed past like little birds with their beaks open while the aide squirted a dropper full of vitamins into each mouth. 'Marvellous!' While the sisters chatted I watched horrified while the aide carefully laid the dropper along each tongue. Outstations had to improve health over the settlements.

More interest in education, a desire to have control over what their children are taught and to see that they are educated in their own culture

In some places outstations have seen a new commitment to education on the part of the people. In other places it seems at present to have a very low priority. The larger homeland communities in West Australia have carried over a desire for school from their mission days. The Education Department had a teacher living in a caravan at Marntamaru in the 1970s and servicing the other three major communities in the area. Most of the teaching was done by young Aboriginal adults who had worked in the Warburton Mission school, or who had shown particular aptitude. The parents seemed concerned that their children get a proper education, which seemed to mean a European type school. The parents at Pipalyatjarra agitated for a school and the South Australian Education Department sent Paul Eckert there as the first teacher. He spent two years setting up a school. Paul wrote that what the people wanted generally was that their children be taught 'the three r's' and English (1980).

In the larger settlements the people also talked about wanting school for their children. At Ernabella, where there was a tradition of fitting in with and understanding the culture, the attendance seemed always to be good. At Amata where there were more conflicts in the situation, attendance seemed to fluctuate a great deal, depending on the relationships of teachers and especially the headmasters with the community adults. Some were very good and attendances seemed to keep up. At other times they were right down.

Noel and Phyl Wallace often talked with Nganyintja about education and she would say, 'Uwa! (yes) I really want my children to go to school and learn'. She herself was at one time a very good teacher though without a lot of formal training. The Wallaces would indicate Nyanyintja's children up on the hillside playing with other children when they should have been in school. She would say, 'Uwa! Ngaltutjarra!' (Yes! Poor things!). They are happy up there' (personal comment).

At Areyonga Settlement, 240 km west of Alice Springs, the same attitude prevailed. The headmaster, Bob Capp, who had a great many years experience in Aboriginal communities wrote:

> Education was not important. Parents always correctly answered the catechetical 'What should all children do?' yet nobody consistently pushed their kids to attend school regularly or work hard, nor seemed to care what they were taught (1981, 44). [He described their situation as] four pretty good teachers in a school with a potential enrolment of sixty or so with a usual attendance of between ten and twenty – and not always the same ones! No amount of education or training was going to alter their situation.

> [Nor was there much incentive because] for a good many Aboriginal communities the 'benefits' of education are of value to a handful of their members who will exercise their skills in the few local positions available. Few of the educated will leave home to work for the simple reason there isn't any – for Aborigines anyway … (1981, 42).

I have quoted Capp at length because I believe he has given us a very accurate picture of the situation on most settlements.

In a very interesting and encouraging experiment the Areyonga teachers made pre-school into a play group. It was quite separate from the school and operated at the old clinic where some of the mothers gathered to wash clothes, sew, fabric paint and gossip. The reason given for this was that, with the drunkenness in the community resulting from the settlement pressures, the children suffered from emotional insecurity anyway. Instead of forcing them to a pre-school run by non-family, non-Aboriginal people and aggravating their insecurity they were put in their mother's care in a relaxed atmosphere. That freed a teacher for somewhere else.

Five local people with some school experience were allocated primary classes. Capp's wife Jan helped the three female Aboriginal teachers to program and assisted them and he did the same with the two men. Classes were from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm each day, with the afternoons given to teacher training and preparation. As a result school was more relaxed, attendances improved and achievement levels in all classes rose significantly – to the relief of the experimenting teachers. The local teachers got far more satisfaction and grew in skill. They ran assemblies and organised sporting and other school trips without outside assistance. The two white teachers didn't even attend them. 'School, when [they] left, was a happy Aboriginal-run socialisation agency'. Part of their goal was to help the parents to become more independent as a community. The hardest and most depressing part of the operation was trying to discourage the public service from continuing arrangements for contractors to do work on the settlement [the 'Aboriginal Industry']. Capp went on, 'most of these projects were for work they should have left for the community to do when they felt the need (1981, 46-48).

The experience at Areyonga corresponds to what happened at Hermannsburg and has much to teach about our approach to Aboriginal education in outstations and settlements. At Hermannsburg, the outstation groups immediately chose one or more of their number of run a little school. There. They ran school for only about three hours a day. The teachers taught the three r's, and the people taught their culture and values in their usual cultural ways outside that time. At the time the Department of Education baulked at paying for the service as it wasn't 'school' – they weren't there all day. And how did the Department judge that the children were getting a 'proper' education?

Considering that, at the mission itself, the school attendance had dropped to a maximum of 40 per cent of the children and not always the same ones, no matter what the school tried, and measuring that against the 95 per cent attendance in the little outstation schools, the outstation children had to be getting more education by anyone's mathematics. The Hermannsburg headmaster told a teachers' orientation course in Alice Springs, in which I was taking part, that the white teachers were getting more professional satisfaction out of servicing those Aboriginal teachers and training them and the children were learning more in a month there than in six months in Hermannsburg. The school had been going then for about two years. In 1984 the schools were still going well though with more involvement by white teachers and, according to tests carried out on the basic

skills by the Department of Education in 1981, the children were ahead of children in many other Aboriginal schools (personal comment. Stoll, Finke River Mission).

The Aboriginal people have had mixed feelings about schools. On the one hand they feel their own difficulties with English, and with understanding the white man's system, and they feel that if their children learn 'English and number and books [book-keeping] they will be able to come back and help us'. On the other hand they see and complain that 'our children are getting away from us'. (That is, they are being educated away from their parents and their parents' values.) Some of the parents recognise that their children are learning much more than English and number and books and in fact are learning foreign values from the non-Aboriginal system.

In the way in which non-Aboriginal authoririte have largely ignored the adults in all their educational efforts and pinned their hopes in the education of the children they have, as Mead points out, reversed the traditional roles in Aboriginal society and made the children the teachers of the parents. This creates unbearable tension and conflict (1955, 254). It leads to situations like the one in which a large Arnhem Land community told Uniting Church personnel in 1983: 'We want a Christian school. Our children come out of this school with no respect for our Law, for their elders or for anyone. The parents learned better English and number and discipline than children learn today'. The reason for this is that education is the institution largely responsible for the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. European cultures have generally added another function, that of enabling social mobility. 'Equality of opportunity' is the phrase used, and it means giving to all individuals an equal chance to move into the ranks of the middle class. In other words, the education given to Aboriginal tribal and semi-tribal children is assimilationist. Both of those aims are culturally conditioned and are, in practice, mono-cultural. Despite lip-service there is no effective consultation between Departments of Education and the Aboriginal people. Their concerns for their children, what they are being taught [the content], and how they are being taught doesn't get into curricula or the nature of teaching practice in Aboriginal schools (Snowden 1982b).

Some teachers, because of lack of training and orientation and a measure of ethnocentricity, feel it is their mission in life to liberate Aboriginal children from their culture. Those teachers usually don't stay around long enough to pick up the wounded casualties resulting from their work. The result of all these things is that in many tribal communities, where the culture is living and largely intact, children are taught – along with the three r's – the values and attitudes of the dominant foreign culture. Wallace observed:

> Now, the persons of knowledge and importance are school teachers who teach things [the children's] parents know little or nothing about. Not only are the children not learning about their traditional culture and religion; they no longer see their parents as persons of dignity and education. When they leave school they are not equipped to enter the white man's world nor are they equipped to remain meaningfully within their own … (1977, 129)

Is it any wonder the children on settlements and missions have become confused or that they show increasing signs of stress as evidenced in the escalating petrol sniffing, vandalism, breaking into buildings and stealing and eventual drunkenness. Everywhere tribal people have long been concerned about what is happening to their children, especially when they have been sent away

for education. More and more people are asking for post-primary training to be in their own areas where they can look after their children.

At a meeting of the Pitjantjatjarra Council held at Warburton in June 1977 such concerns were expressed. Terry Robinson of Warburton was asking for schooling of children in the outstations to which they have moved. Ivan Baker of Kalka in South Australia was concerned that girls sent to Yirara College in Alice Springs became homesick and some returned pregnant. They felt that the authorities were not looking after them properly. They decided to write to the South Australian and West Australian Departments of Education and ask for more facilities within their area (council minutes; underlining mine).

There is a general feeling amongst Aboriginal people, particularly in the Northern Territory, that the Department of Education is not listening to them or caring enough about their children. The sudden closure of Dhupuma College out from Nhulunbuy at the end of second term in 1981 stunned the East Arnhem people and fed this assumption. The Department had carried out a survey amongst communities' served by Dhupuma and had found a positive reaction on the part of parents and a desire for the college to continue. In spite of this the decision was made to close the college. Notwithstanding financial constraints, communication with the parents of the children is essential, especially when dealing with a decision that has considerable potential to do social and cultural damage. Increasingly parents want to have a say in what their children are taught and what is done with them. In homelands people are asking more and more for a school run by one of their own people but supported by white teachers. At very least they want to have some control over the teachers who are sent into their areas to teach their children.

There have been some encouraging signs however in the Department's servicing of outstation schools. Certainly in Arnhem Land some of the officers involved have shown a lot of sensitivity. Appreciation of this has been expressed at outstation resources conferences and in the pages of the *Maningrida Mirage*. The 'support being given by the Education Department is both encouraging and sensitive to the people's desires'. The relevant article described how the teachers from Maningrida School were going out for two weeks on a roster system to help a particular outstation school to become established. The following School Outstation Policy drawn up by the head teacher was printed:

1. Outstation schools will only be established at the direct request of the outstation leader (traditional land owner);
2. The request must be made to the Principal of the school;
3. Upon such request the Principal will visit the area and discuss various aspects of the request, especially that of a suitable Aboriginal person to train;
4. The initial visit will be followed by a second visit within three weeks. (Sometimes a third visit is necessary);
5. Following the second visit the situation will be discussed with the Deputy and the staff of Maningrida and the school will be established as soon as possible;
6. Staffing will vary and will be decided dependent on the situation of the hub school;

7. There are some physical considerations, these being: living quarters and the utensils of the teacher, suitable structures for the school, basic texts and stationery;

8. Where possible, the school will be bi-lingual;

9. In all cases, the newly established school will come under the direct control of the parent school at Maningrida.

10. The transport situation is such that at the moment, it depends entirely on the co-operation of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Treasury has recently approved the supply of vehicles to the Department of Education, but these will not be in Maningrida during 1974-75.

(Brian Deslandes)

One of the incidental benefits of the homelands movement is that it has eased pressure in the larger communities.

At Papunya people talked about widening (lipirringanyi) their place. By that they meant spreading out and utilising more country. This eases pressure on game aground the larger places and it makes it more possible for people to upgrade their diet with game and bush foods. By reducing the number of clans in the settlements and missions it also makes it more possible for the people left there to make some adaptions and, with some real commitment by governments to self-determination and some more realistic on-site training, to become what Capp calls 'a confident, politically independent and hopefully resource developing community …' (1981, 48). The people will be better able to exercise their traditional checks and balances and social controls. Then their children will have adequate adult models such as those they are now beginning to experience in many of the homeland communities.

The development of satellite and homeland communities out from Ernabella 'will just about put the cap on Ernabella and stop it from growing any bigger'. Alan Steele, ex-trades teacher and community adviser, saw this as a good idea. He said, 'If people in those communities are satisfied with a life-style which doesn't depend on having 240 volt power and common effluent drains and so on, I think it is going to reduce the pressure on them and also on those people who do want to be near the school and live in the central town' (interview transcript).

The people who have lived amongst the tribal people for years and have seen the pressures from without and the power struggles within, and have seen people crushed under the burden of it all and breaking out in drunkenness and acting out behaviour, are unanimous in their opinions that the movement to outstations and homelands is the best thing that has happened to the Aboriginal people. Gray wrote that 'decentralisation constitutes one of the most positive steps taken by 'tribal' Aborigines to regain their independence and, most importantly, to re-establish their relationships with the land' (1977, 15).

From a different viewpoint, those medicos who have had most to do with the people also see it as a healthy move in every way. Devenesen saw the movement as having very positive results at Yuendumu and as something that government departments should support and be clear on what their policy is towards them (interview transcript). Dr John Hargraves, famous for his work with

lepers in the Northern Territory, has spoken of the healthy independence of some of the homeland communities in Arnhem Land which he has known for a long time (personal comment).

Morice saw the Kungkayunti people move from:

> A position of 'learned helplessness' induced by the unrelatedness between aspiration, response and outcome, so much a way of life for minority groups and the colonised … [they] have demonstrated to themselves, to other Aborigines, and to white Australians that they can pose their own problems and work effectively toward their solution. It is incumbent upon governments, and the Australian community at large, to encourage and facilitate this process (1978, 60).

Historically, the purpose of all those Aboriginal policies, the protection, the paternalism, the good will, the social engineering, was to try to make the Aboriginal people into good citizens. This meant 'like the dominant, non-aboriginal population' and it was approached in ways that have not worked anywhere they have been tried. Ask Eskimos, American and Canadian Indians, the Lapps, and any minority group one might like to mention. Be it in India, the Philippines, Brazil, Russia or any other country, the literature would indicate that the picture would be much the same. Social engineering and remote planning does not achieve the desired results. But harnessing the initiative of the Aboriginal people themselves in this movement may go far towards achieving much of the best of what was being attempted, but on the people's own terms. As Rudder said:

> The long-term consequences of the initiative being shown in the homeland developments, can only be the development of more independent and responsible citizens, at a faster rate than was every possible in the dependent situations on the centralised communities (1978, 15).

Chapter 6
Not Control but Self-Reliance

The captive years – the settlement era – left Aboriginal people feeling helpless and unsure of themselves, asking 'who am I'? Those years spawned apathy and non-involvement, drunkenness and self-destructive violence. The larger settlements were not, are not and never can be viable economic communities in terms of productive economic work and work satisfaction. On the other hand outstations are criticised as economically non-viable, as apartheid, holiday camps, duplicating settlements, more costly, a vehicle for the dominant men to gain control of more of the 'goodies' and to enhance their power; as denying children education and as a non-Aboriginal lifestyle. Those criticism can be answered, I believe, and outstations or homeland communities can be shown to have a very positive function and future, if the initiative and desires of the people are responded to in a truly listening and sensitive manner. It will require, however, a departure from the usual administrative procedures and expectations and a commitment to the healthy notions of self-determination and self-reliance.

When I was giving evidence before the Gibb Committee inquiring into the needs of Aboriginal communities on cattle stations in 1971, H C Coombs, a member of the Committee said, 'But I'm concerned that those isolated small communities will not be economically viable'. I asked, 'Are settlements economically viable?' 'Hell no!' was the answer and he agreed that they tended also to be destructive of Aboriginal identity and culture and social life.

This study has shown just how destructive and unviable large settlements have been. Many large economic projects have been tried in those places: poultry, piggeries, market gardens, a fishing fleet at Maningrida, a sophisticated fishing boat and expanded business at Galiwin'ku, a tourist operation at Jay Creek and Standley Chasm, and a cattle project at Haasts Bluff. These and others have all failed for a variety of reasons, sometimes because of inadequately trained and poorly equipped managers. But mostly they have failed because of remote planning on the basis of social engineering, the lack of any real understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture and ways of doing things, and a lack of any real and effective consultation with the people themselves. Cane and Stanley stress in their report on land use that 'unless a project is motivated and directed by Aboriginal initiatives it is unlikely to succeed, particularly if subsequently left to Aborigines to run' (1985, 127).

Most large Aboriginal settlements have long since reached saturation point as far as jobs for Aborigines are concerned. To be sure we have the Northern Territory government's five year plan (which fizzled out after about two years) to provide bitumen roads and footpaths, bitumen airstrips (all probably built to defence standards like the Galiwin'ku airstrip, which was built using Aboriginal funds and inspected by defence personnel on completion, according to some staff), large improved barge landings, power houses, new stores, sewerage works, improved water and electrical reticulation and so on. Few communities actually want all of these. Many of those works have just 'happened' in the eyes of most community members. The Aboriginal industry – that is the government officers, contractors, suppliers and all the myriad white people who depend upon or benefit considerably from Aboriginal funding –is not motivated to employ Aboriginal people or

to cut down on contractors or business profits. So those plans serve the white contractors and bring a lot of money into Northern Territory government coffers.

To be fair the Department of Transport and Works offers some contracts to the Aboriginal communities. But most of these works don't really serve the Aboriginal people. As Gerritsen points out many of those contracts are carried out by sub-contractors who work for the Aboriginal community, such as housing, managers or essential services supervisors. Gerritsen called them 'wayfaring men'. They get most of the profits and the Aboriginal people learn little that will help them to do those jobs or look after those services in the future (1982b, 20). Five-year plan contracts and also educational services bring large number of white people into the settlements to live for a time. They are under the authority of an outside body so the people have no control over them. Generally they add to the pressures and stresses from which the community already suffers.

So where do Aboriginal tribal people find economic viability? In the general white society? Are we as a nation able to guarantee jobs to our thousands of white school leavers and the thousands of others who are unemployed? We have created a crisis for our own young people in that we have an education system and a society which still teaches that to be a fulfilled and contributing member of society you have to be employed. Now we can't supply the jobs. We have educated people to believe that they are now of little worth, sporadic job-creation schemes notwithstanding.

Where do Aboriginal people, especially tribal people find employment? Certainly not in mainstream society. Suppose white people wanted tribal people as neighbours and that they could all function and survive in our society – both doubtful propositions – they would be mostly in the class of unskilled labourers. These are the people who find it most difficult to find employment. In times of job shortage they are the people who would receive much of the backlash of bitterness and resentment if they were seen to be competing for scarce employment. Experience shows that they would mostly be unemployed and many would be confined to town camps.

In contrast to this economically non-viable scene with its many imposed pressures, we have the outstation and homeland centre communities. They also have difficulty in being economically viable, but they can provide initial employment in the establishment years and in many places people can still supplement their diet with game and bush vegetables and fruits. It is also possible to make use of CDEP money or even of bulk unemployment payments if a community so wishes. The money going into a community for its support should be handled by that community according to its own structure and economy. To tie it to complex rules and bureaucratic financial control is to keep those communities under government management and in a dependent no-growth role. So it is true that outstations are not economically viable but the alternatives are non-viable and destructive. The results of outstation development can clearly be seen to be in the main positive and renewing.

In chapter five I have reviewed the considerable evidence which points to the positive and beneficial effects of the outstation-homelands movement over and against the larger settlements. We have there seen evidence of far greater motivation for people to do things for themselves, in some cases putting an astonishing amount of unpaid time and effort into their own projects. People have pulled their lifestyle together in most cases, taking much more responsibility for decision making and exercising greater control of their own affairs than was possible in the larger places. This has had important effects in the area of family strength and authority and in an enhanced sense of identity. As could be expected to arise out of this, there is evidence of a new confidence in dealing with the

dominant white culture through its government officers and other agents and a corresponding and observable improvement in health, in particular social health. Aboriginal people are becoming more aware of education and wanting to have more say in what and how their children are taught.

Whether those benefits will be encouraged and multiplied remains to be seen. Time and again difficulties arise within communities and between the communities and the funding and controlling authorities. It is one of the problems of administrations that they generally lack the flexibility to meet the needs of people of another culture with very different response patterns and values. It seems inherent in administrations that they find it almost impossible to believe that their organisations or its methods of operation are a source of problems. They tend to blame all the problems that arise on the client or client community. If not, then they shift the blame to an outside source such as white advisors, southern stirrers, or whatever direction signifies 'them'). Every so often a news item or feature article in the media reinforces this general attitude. As a result of such attitudes the genuine grievances of communities have been often easily or conveniently disregarded.

This tendency not to accept that administrative structures or procedures contribute to the problems faced, or the fact that service delivery is a two-sided relationship is highlighted by the kind of difficulties that repeatedly crop up in communities. There is the misuse and misappropriation of funds by both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal people on occasion as a result of both ignorance of both money handling and bookkeeping methodology. There are also instances of dishonesty. Administrations tend inherently to be afraid of concepts such as self-determination and self-management. As Loveday points out in his introduction to *Service Delivery to Remote Communities*, for those concepts to be effective in practice there must be the freedom to make mistakes. He writes:

> Given the highly bureaucratic norms concerning administrative responsibility in Australia, many of them enshrined in complicated legislation concerning accountability for and management of money, there is bound to be a great deal of anxiety about self-management and the 'mistakes' it entails (1982, x).

Loveday goes on to say that what the administration sees as mistakes may not be so, but may well be successful attempts by Aborigines who have been given a measure of autonomy using that newly given opportunity to control and manipulate their own situation.

The form of representative government in communities is completely foreign to Aboriginal structures and authority and constantly causes problems and conflicts in the management of communities. The reaction of successive administrations has been not to study the local situation and see what forces and clan structures and politics are operating and to help people to work through those matters, but to place more pressures upon people to perform in terms of the foreign structures or have the department concerned sack their council. The few times that the situation has reached that stage, the administration has appointed a manager and perhaps a works officer from outside to run the community, generally with disastrous results.

Other recurring problems arise over the control of staff. A few representatives of the administration have interfered at times in the appointment of staff, causing people to employ unsuitable staff who have been recommended or taken to the community by the departmental representative who then asks the community to make a decision. In some cases no thorough checking of the person's background and suitability has taken place which has resulted in communities being troubled by unsuitable staff living in their midst and manipulating people for political or financial gain, or

engaging in behaviour which offends the people. Such staff generally do not last longer than a year or so, but their potential for robbery or for the disruption and demotivation of the people is high. On other occasions administrators have browbeaten communities to dismiss staff. Sometimes this is done for good motives, to get rid of someone seen as unsuitable. Other times it is because of a personal conflict with that staff member who may well be helping the community to stand up to aggressive tactics. Rarely is the community helped to work through the problem and make its own decisions free from pressure.

Financial control means power, and few communities if any have very much say in the control of their funds in actual fact (Cane and Stanley, 1985, 28). Funding is a powerful weapon to make communities bend to the will of the administration. Moreover, the sources of funding in their multitude and complexity overlap, and ensure that Aboriginal people cannot understand or effectively handle the seeking of funds and their use. The kinds of procedures and controls introduced by the administration year by year become ever more labyrinthine so that control is removed even from those communities who have their own people handling their bookkeeping, wages and payment of bills. More and more the people are being removed further form the goal of possibility of self-determination or self-management.

Cane and Stanley talk of:

> … 'donors rights', that is, the right of a donor to determine the size of the gift, who receives it, under what conditions and how it can be used. The donors in this case are, of course, the general European Australian community and DAA in particular. There needs to be a change in philosophy to include the rights of Aborigines to receive funds at a certain level and to be able to do with them what they wish (1985, 29-30).

Peterson also described most Aboriginal communities as being dependent. He wrote:

> Nowhere is there a high level of sustained economic production for exchange and everywhere the communities survive on government disbursements, even in the case of those receiving royalties (1982b, 56).

He describes dependent as a 'person [or community] living at another's cost and therefore being subordinate or potentially subordinate to the control of that other, to some degree.

Control of land arises as an issue from time to time with landowners becoming more aware that they should receive some compensation in the form of rental for the use of their land. On the other hand some government departments insist on having land excised and under their control for the facility which they wish to establish on Aboriginal land, generally in order to service the community. It is another whittling away of community control and authority. The mechanisms for servicing outstations also become a bone of contention from time to time with Federal DAA funding some services and the Northern Territory Department of Community Development funding other services. This has not always been a harmonious or helpful relationship. Sometimes there have been political struggles between community councils and outstation resource centres with administrations supporting one body or the other in having the control.

Aboriginal administrative structures: regional and representative

The continual assertion of Aboriginal identify and the problems of administration that arise

repeatedly point to an urgent need to help Aboriginal people to work out necessary administrative structures which are regional and representative and are based upon the people's own structures and authority systems. Until this happens the Aboriginal communities will never be self-dtermining or in any way independent but will continue to live in subservient dependence upon white society and outsiders.

There is repeated conflict between White staff members or between some white staff and government officers or other visiting personnel. This arises from differences in philosophy. Haynes comments on this:

> The division is, incidentally, over the philosophy of development: some consider the Aboriginal people should be assisted in the ways that Aboriginal people want, and others say that Aboriginal people should be assisted into the European culture (paper, *Notes on the European presence at Maningrida*, delivered at a seminar at the DAA, Canberra, 4 November 1977).

That conflict becomes intense where one staff member believes that Aborigines should be managed and told what to do and made to do it while another staff member believes it is important to encourage Aboriginal people to follow through their responsibilities and not to step in and take over when it appears that someone is going to fail in their responsibility. The latter feel that the person and the community should feel the pinch of that accepted but failed responsibility, and that only in that way will people grow. This means that sometimes staff in a community also feel the pinch and most are not prepared to have the inconvenience of such an approach. So there arise inter-staff conflicts with Aborigines wooed and drawn into it to back up either view or to bring pressure on some staff member to leave or be dismissed. Such conflicts are usually destructive.

In Aboriginal settlement communities accountants and town clerks have tended to be the bosses (also Turnbull 1981, G Snowdon 1982b, Clarke 1978). There has been much conflict between those persons and community development workers-community advisors arising from their different philosophies. The community development workers were meant to help Aboriginal people to gain confidence in dealing with White society, to stand on their own feet and to run their own communities responsibly. There was not a hope of people being able to do that. At every turn this clashed with town clerks who had to make the works programs and administrative machinery of the settlement function to the satisfaction of the government departments. It clashed with accountants who had to administer finances within the most complex rules to satisfy government regulations and to preserve their professional integrity.

Town clerks generally had no time to wait for community understanding and consensus, no time to help councils to work through power conflicts (supposing they had those skills) or to understand what the rules were by which they had to operate and what their job was. It was a task requiring the highest community development skills. That wasn't within their training and some town clerks had none, nor was it within their thinking. The Northern Territory Department of Community Development which recruited town clerks in the late seventies and early eighties made it quite clear to such staff that their job was to satisfy the Department's rules and requirements. Top officers have stated on occasion, 'we're not interested in community development. Our job is to make community government work'. And of course it hasn't. I understand that the Department realised that its philosophy was not working and in 1986 started to look carefully at the structure and dynamics of Aboriginal society to see how it could adopt its functions to support the people in

their own ways of handling their affairs. If such an attitude continued to grow and find support we could see a real breakthrough in effective relationships between a government department and Aboriginal communities. Since then however, the functions of the Department have been split up between the Departments of Health and Local Government. Provided those Departments can find the right kind of staff and maintain flexibility we could see a growth of real self-determination. But that requires a new approach in philosophy and in the political thinking of the Northern Territory Government.

One of the lessons to emerge clearly from the problems and struggles of elected councils on large communities and from the relative success of outstation and homeland communities in their operation is the importance and tenacity of Aboriginal ways of doing things. The clan system particularly in relation to each clan's land base seems to show the effective unit of authority. Or it may be as even the younger men at Galiwin'ku told us; the ringitj (groupings of three or so clans linked by a major ceremony) is the only authority that is working today in our society'. Clan struggles for power or even to survive in a foreign system of authority are what seem to have contributed to the almost total failure of councils. I don't say representative councils can't work but they can't be imposed as a foreign system. They must evolve from the people's own wrestling with issues and recognition of their own needs.

Turnbull speaks of self-correcting, self-managing systems in which all the people concerned have a say, and in which internal checks and balances control imbalances of power and exploitation (1980, 71, and 1981). He suggests that our modern society has much to learn from Aboriginal systems in an age of much centralisation of power and of the debt trap threatening the third world (and also threatening to topple our western sophisticated financial structures). Turnbull makes a strong case for handing over administration of Aboriginal matters to Aboriginal people (but not as on settlements – with inadequate training and preparation and with government retaining the power) (1980, 73-74; G Snowdon, 1982b, 94; Hamilton, 1974; Nathan and Dick Leichleitner Japanangka, 1983, 192).

Greg Snowdon puts forward the Pitjantjatjarra Council in South Australia as a model of councils which could be enabled to handle administration and the interface with government and wider society. He is speaking for all Aboriginal administration in the North-West Reserve and throughout Australia (1982b, 94). In the light of the almost total failure of our administration of Aboriginal communities in the past (Hamilton, 1974; Snowdon, 1982b; Turnbull, 1980, 71-72) we need to help Aboriginal people to give some thought to this and other possible models in order for them to evolve the kinds of support structures and organisations which will support their own systems and enable them to relate effectively with non-Aboriginal society. In that way the people themselves could begin to minimise the damage and have more control over what they take from that society, the nature of their relationship and the rules governing that relationship.

Any structures which Aboriginal people are helped to develop whether for outstations and homelands only or for the wider Aboriginal society must reflect regional realities. In the tribal situation they must take account of language groupings, of ceremonial groupings and of clan structures. The people themselves must be the final arbiters of what will work. Such processes will not be easy and will take time. They will also require careful thinking and talking through with the people themselves, with the help of skilled interpreters and of people with a thorough knowledge of the people's structures and skilled in cross-cultural communication. I believe this process to be

essential if we are to have two way understanding and if we are not to set people up for failure once again.

Control of finances

While Aboriginal people have no control over the finances of their communities and operations, and how their finances are spent they have no self-determination. They are still dependent. And without self-management they will remain apathetic about their involvement in productive activities towards economic independence (Turnbull 1980, 72). In fact that apathy spreads to everything to do with the running of their Communities.

Clarke quotes an accountant serving Aboriginal communities whose comments bear this out:

> I find tremendous conflict between what the government says its policy is and the way finance is applied to achieve this policy. The policy aims at self-management. Self-management is defined this way: this goal incorporates three basic elements: independence/self-reliance, responsibility, and the acquisition of managerial skills, all of which are readily applicable to any individual, family or local community group situation. Fine sentiments but not applicable under present funding arrangements.
>
> Independence/self-reliance: the present system seems to have been designed to stifle any independence and to crush any self-reliance.
>
> Responsibility: who is kidding whom? The present system holds white people responsible and shelters Aboriginal people from any real responsibility. As whites are basically responsible for the funding decisions anyway, this is probably appropriate!
>
> The acquisition of managerial skills: the present system tests the patience and ingenuity of professional accountants. How then can we expect Aboriginal people to cope, and through coping gain the skills involved (Clarke 1978).

Since that was written there have been some attempts to simplify the town management part of the bookkeeping system but over all Aboriginal funding has become increasingly complex and is still a great barrier to self-determination and self-management. As Hamilton wrote:

> The only way Aborigines are going to have self-determination is if they have control over that segment of the finances that directly pertains to their interests – employing their own nursing staff, teachers, agricultural officers, lawyers, etc with the right to hire and fire at the local level. It is no longer up to us to allocate financial priorities but it is for them to decide on their most urgent needs and different communities will have different priorities (1974, 22; Nathan and Dick Leichleitner Japanangka 1983, 191-192).

Over the years there have been many complaints by concerned White people and by Aboriginal people where they have understood what was happening about misuse of inappropriate use of

funds allocated to Aboriginal Affairs, many of them true. The record of gross cash deficiencies in Aboriginal stores and supermarkets both under some Social Welfare staff in earlier days and under some community employed managers in the self-determination era would reveal that, both cupidity and stupidity being the causes. The white elephant monuments to the bright ideas and pet projects of some Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs officers also reveal both inappropriate use and on occasion misuse of funds. In recent years some Aborigines too have begun to profit from this misuse of funds once the exclusive province of White people.

Another complaint often heard is that the bulk of funds allocated to Aboriginal Affairs goes to support the White superstructure. It goes in wages, works and contracts: wages of White departmental officers and White settlement staff, works which often the people knew little about and did not want and contracts operated by White firms, the Aboriginal Industry. Turnbull comments, 'few if any people in government, let alone anybody outside, have any idea of the extent of the total spending, direct and indirect, by government departments on individual Aboriginal communities'(1980, 72). It is impossible under the present system to get clear figures because of the splitting of those funds between departments and functions. It is not possible to say clearly how much went on wages to the various White people. In the past the guesstimates have claimed that 60 per cent of the allocation goes to the White sector and only 40 per cent in any way to the direct benefit of the Aboriginal people. As Hamilton comments, 'if so much money is tied up in the administration of that money that little of it gets to where it should be then the obvious answer is to get rid of the administration and give the money direct' (1974, 23).

Some concern has been expressed by Coombs about the problem:

> … of reconciling self-determination for the Aborigines with help to enable them to obtain access to essential stores and services without imposing on them excessive economic dependence … the objective must be to make the economic condition of Aborigines reflect their own aspirations, efforts and capacities (1978, 148-149(.

Others have spoken of the danger of robbing people of their initiative and point to the way payment of unemployment benefits to communities has in most cases resulted in production of artefacts dropping off considerably and people becoming unwilling to take part in work on community services and projects. Aboriginal people themselves have expressed concern about this.

In their report *Review of Outstations in the Northern Region of the Northern Territory 1980*, Ibbetson and Hemple pointed to:

> The constant escalation of living costs which have created an increasing degree of hardship to groups that were initially quite independent of extra assistance. These groups are now finding themselves in the position of not being able to provide for basis necessities (1980, 26).

If that is so for the coastal people of the North with its considerable food resources how much more so for the Central Australian people with their country's sparser resources and where food costs in outstations can be double those of towns. Peterson in his analysis of the economic situation of Aborigines in the Yuendumu community points to a considerable slowing down in the rate of

increase in incomes, increased costs in growing consumerism and improvement in the range and delivery of services, and the introduction of the user pays principle. These changes he forecast would lead to greater economic dependence and to a radical change in individual economic status, a consumer-based dependency and a sense of relative deprivation (1982. 56).

The Ibbetson-Hemple review talked of the need for an income maintenance type scheme where officers of the Department tried to assess the minimum needs of individual communities to bring their income up to a determined level, but to avoid injecting too large amounts of money into outstation communities to avoid 'possible disruption of a way of life … ' (1980. 27). It seems to me that this is still managing people's affairs too much. The simpler method would be to pay to each clan or extended family group, their Unemployment Benefit (UB) entitlement as Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) money, and the report does recommend group payment as being desirable. This scheme was developed to avoid large-scale payment of UB, but until 1984 the Government's attitude to the scheme has been tentative and vacillating.

The CDEP Scheme was to assess selected communities for their UB entitlement and to pay this in bulk to the community for work-related projects. After a time it was realised that you can't create work without materials and tools so a 15 per cent additional component was added for such purchases. If the recommendations were accepted to fund homeland communities in this way and to leave the disposal of that income entirely to each clan grouping or homeland community such a scheme would require the minimum of administration. I have stressed payment on a clan or extended family basis because of the exploitation which can occur in multi-clan communities where one or two strong clans or persons dominate and there is no traditional requirement for them to look after unrelated groups. This seems to be the way in which the people are asking us to deal with them. The movement out in extended family groups wherever possible seems to support this. Where communities are in receipt of unemployment benefits and the community makes a decision to have bulk payment that should be accepted. It is not for Social Security officers and others to go out again and remind individuals that they have a right to individual payment if they wish as by doing they undermine community authority.

If CDEP or other group payment is made I believe we should allow the clan or group receiving it to work out their own way of redistributing it (see also Cane and Stanley, 1985, 30). An example of how local control can work responsibly was told to me by Rob Davidson, a one time officer of the Western Australian Community Welfare Department who worked closely with the Noonkanbah community. Pension payments were paid in bulk to the community. They carefully provided for food and blankets until the next payment and gave them to each of three distinct groups to control and distribute amongst their families. What was left over they used for community work. On that basis wages were correspondingly low. If people complained they had the choice of seeking higher wages elsewhere. The few who did so were said to have returned to the community for the other [psychological and social] benefits which they gained from the system at Noonkanbah. Strelley community has long managed bulk payments on a similar basis. It was their only way of getting community money in Western Australia (personal comment).

The Ibbetson-Hemple report commented that outstation people don't have the same family costs as people in larger places and in town where they must pay something for services and rent and transport (1980, 26). We have already mentioned the higher costs of food though this is often supplemented by hunting and gathering where this is possible. Increasingly people are expected to

pay rental and service costs. People do have other costs and need that margin above subsistence to do things which the communities see as important. For example, when people have to travel from homelands to other places for funerals and ceremonies both very important to their culture and to their psychological health, they are up for considerable transport costs. If they wish to visit parents or children in another place the same applies.

Aboriginal groups have on some occasions been handicapped or left without power because they have lacked the money or resources to fight issues of vital importance to them and their land. They may need to travel to the capital city to plead with politicians or take what action is necessary to stop some damaging political move, or to counter some threat to their sacred land. They have run headlong into government departments when they have tried to use some travel allocation for such a purpose. On occasion they have been threatened with having their funding stopped. People need that margin of freedom to be able to do the things important to them.

Communities need a reliable income if they are to function in a self-determining way and if they are to be enabled to choose their own priorities and goals and work for them. Since all our social planning has been unable to come up with economic viability for settlements let alone outstations, then we are looking at some form of income maintenance. Gray stated of outstation and homeland communities in Arnhem Land that they all 'require some kind of cash inflow in order to maintain themselves at a subsistence level' (1977, 118). Others suggest that communities be funded on a block grant type of system and allowed to determine their own priorities (Turnbull 1980, 71; Hamilton 1974, 22-3; Clarke 1978).

Hamilton points out the way our control of funding has interfered with the self-determination and education processes:

> Deciding to give them a million for housing means that those people who do not desire housing of a complex European type will be denied something else they may desire much more … If they make a botch of it even for years at a time then perhaps they'll learn from the experience. If we make a botch of it then they won't learn anything and it's clear from recent history that we don't learn much either (1974, 23).

Our botches have been very costly. Giving people that opportunity to grow is going to cost us far less.

Many communities have expressed a concern about sit-down money (unemployment benefits) and have asked for CDEP. People would need to have the implications of such a funding method carefully explained. Its intent is to provide the wage base for a community by which its members can buy food and other things that families need. It would be the responsibility of the community to see that this was covered for its families. However, as CDEP is in lieu of UB to which people are entitled and since the government cannot dictate what the UB recipient's money is used for so they should have no management rights over a community's CDEP.

The government has been very fortunate that many Aboriginal communities have not sought unemployment benefits or the figure of unemployed would rise dramatically. Many communities not receiving UB were also not receiving CDEP. Commonwealth Social Security was being relieved of a bigger cash burden. What is being paid in CDEP is the UB equivalent paid over to the

Department of Aboriginal Affairs. That money should be available to communities to use as they decide after careful communication of the pros and cons. If a community decides to pay men to hunt food for the clan and women to gather that is recognising the dignity and importance of that work. Just as we pay a whole chain of people to produce food for our society. And since we pay farmers not to produce on occasion let us not be too cocky about the wisdom of our ways of handling things. If a community wishes to use some of it for self-help projects for the benefit of the community, projects requiring some materials and tools then that additional money provided for those purposes under CDEP could be placed in their account for the specific purposes chosen by the community. They could then draw upon it when they were ready to proceed with that project.

One of the problems which irks community bookkeepers and community development workers most is the Treasury requirement that money allocated for projects must be spent by June 30 each year. It takes no account of people's lack of information in many cases and Aboriginal processes of reaching understanding and consensus on issues. If for some reason key people are away, the community will be unable to decide an issue regardless of any government time restraints. Communities are not informed until August or later what funds they are going to get. I have known communities to take well over a year to really come to grips with housing and what it was they wanted. By then of course the money had either gone back to Treasury or it had been reallocated to some other community by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

When communities are suffering the conflicts and struggles induced by the settlements, then people are unable to think through other issues, often unable to call meetings until those internal conflicts are resolved. There is no way that such Treasury regulations can support Aboriginal self-determination. Treasury regulations have probably been one of the greatest blocks to this. Gray points to the 'basic conflict which is evident between the ideal of "quick and positive response" and the reality of Treasury regulations and audit requirements …' and poses the danger of a loss of confidence in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1977, 119). I think his warning may have come too late – it is true to say however that the people in the Warburton area and many Northern Territory Aborigines also have consistently said that they would prefer DAA and the Federal Government to handle their affairs.

Capp suggests a general solution to this problem. Assurance should be given by the various government instrumentalities that public works funds will be made available solely to the communities with no strings attached about the order of priorities. It should just be made known to people that money is available to them for those particular jobs. When pressure of hunger or need for finance becomes great enough the communities would take on some of those jobs. Others would simply get on with the work. He is concerned that where individual UB is paid there will be no incentive as has proved the case in some communities and suggests that those not using the available fund should not qualify for unemployment benefit (interview transcript).

Some means should be found to enable community funds to carry over at least into the following year. There could be a ceiling of say, three years after which such funds must be re-allocated or returned to Treasury (also Cane and Stanley, 1985, 30). It cannot be beyond the power of a government to keep track of money on a three year basis or even a five year basis. I am sure that if the government was able to remove entirely the need to spend all funds by June 30 each year, it would save millions of dollars because the made flurry of foolish spending by most departments so as to justify next year's budget would be unnecessary. It would also seem sensible to allow

communities holding funds for specific purposes to acquire interest from that money to be used for community purposes.

One of the points which need to be made is that it can already be shown that cost-effectiveness of services can improve greatly though localised and regionalised control by Aboriginal people. Refer back to the costly interference in the upgrading of the electricity generating system at Marntamaru, when DAA handed over control to the State electricity Commission (chapter 2). Greg Snowdon tells a similar story. The Western Australian Public Works Department quoted $1,000 per 100 metres to reticulate 2 inch polypipe for water. At Kalka it took three days to dig trenches, lay the pipe and fill the trenches for 800 metres of piping using local labour, at a cost of around $1,000. For the Public Works Department to provide the same service it would have cost $18,000 (1982B, 91).

Control of Staff

Which brings us to the second need. Unless Aboriginal communities have control of all staff working in their communities they do not have self-determination and they can be brow-beaten and manipulated by staff who owe their allegiance to outside bodies. Some staff of government departments living in communities can and have on occasion interfered with decisions of councils, refused to accept the community's rules, insisted on having alcohol in a dry community, and in many ways have offended a community. Under local government they could conceivably vote as a bloc to take control of councils administering their own Aboriginal communities in which the staff are transients, though some of the rigid requirements of the Local Government act have been relaxed and some safeguards introduced for Aboriginal communities to use. Their effectiveness depends a lot upon department officers consulting the communities explaining these properly and leaving the communities free from pressure to work out their own wishes and structures. White people living in Aboriginal communities could and sometimes to have their own agenda and may have no sensitivity to the people's culture. Even a minority could take over discussion in English and confuse a people who still have difficulty understanding of our foreign structures, processes and laws.

Greg Snowdon tells of conflicts between the Pipalyatjarra community and the South Australian Department of Education. The community did not want young single men teachers. They tried to stand against the Department and refused to accept the two who were sent. I happened in on discussion of this with the community. I believe they already saw that one at least would have difficulty in settling into their cultural situation. The Department insisted that the people trust their judgement and expertise as to the suitability of the teachers for the community. After two months of no school the people caved in. 'In the end the community was proved right in its doubts as both teachers had an extremely hard time in many ways, one because of the isolation and lack of social life, and both because of their lack of experience and lack of advice from local experienced educators' (1982b, 87-88). As community adviser Snowdon had helped the people to wrestle with the bureaucracy over such issues.

Over a period of twenty two years in the Northern Territory and relating to communities in South Australia and Western Australia, I have seen many examples of such attitudes on the part of government departments. At Galiwin'ku in recent years the teachers, both White and Aboriginal, and the Aboriginal community council petitioned against a new head-teacher who was being sent there because they feared that the person would not be sensitive to their culture and to the bi-lingual

work that was being done there. The end result was that the Department said, 'you accept this person or have no school'. Once again people caved in under threats and pressure. A staff member from head office told me of comments there that it was time the people had that cultural nonsense knocked out of them (personal comment). The next two years were most unhappy for the school and the community and the head. The head teacher tried but found it hard to understand and meet the people's needs on cultural matters. There was considerable disaffection and unhappiness amongst the staff, which some staff members conveyed to me at a Christian seminar, expressing some guilt about their own reactions and wanting to work through the and some concern for the principal as a person. After two years the Department peremptorily moved the head elsewhere as though it was all that person's fault.

Such stories could be repeated for other government departments also. In the past if departments received complaints from a community and a demand to remove a staff person the tendency was to ask immediately, 'who is behind this? Who's manipulating the people out there?' If there was any enquiry it was as likely to be with a suspicious and sometimes argumentative attitude that told the people clearly that they were not going to be heard. As a rule they would back down and give the answer which they knew was expected and try again.

The sacking of staff and council at Maningrida in 1978 is another example of heavy-handed over-ruling of the people, this time in forcing the dismissal of staff whom the people did want. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Viner, on the advice of Darwin officers, told the Council that he wanted them to sack two staff members who were causing trouble. Apparently they were considered to be thwarting the Minister's support of the outstation movement and trying to interfere with the movement. The Council, which was having the usual trouble of foreign-structure councils, was apparently unable to take action. They also reacted angrily to the Minister's threat to cut off their funds if they did not do so. They were sick of every kind of interference. Finally the Minister cut off the funds and withdrew the permits of all five White staff and wives. The reason for the sacking of the other three was that the two staff opposing policy were strong country-Liberal Party supporters. According to a DAA staff member who was involved at the time, two CLP politicians told the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs that the NT Government wanted some balance in the matter so the other three male staff, who were not CLP supporters were sacked also (personal comment).

DAA staff were sent to fill in those positions in the interim. The people were most unhappy at this action and urged the Minister to reinstate three particular staff whom they wanted. The two whom the Minister wanted to dismiss at first were not among these three. The three men and their wives successfully sued the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and had the withdrawal of permits nullified as natural justice had not been accorded to the plaintiffs and they were awarded costs. In the Reasons for Judgement 17 April 1978, Justice Forster said:

> [the council chairman] was presented by the defendants [DAA officers] with no choice as to whether or not council would dismiss the plaintiffs and that the dismissal notices and the revocation of authority were all part of a plan formed and orchestrated by the defendants to effect the removal of the plaintiffs from Maningrida. The notices of dismissal and of revocation were both prepared in the office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Darwin … It is not proved that [the chairman] understood the notices and it is not proved, as it hardly could be, that he was acting as a free agent when he signed the notices.

The defendants gave as the reason for revoking the permits that the three had been dismissed and that they therefore had no reason to remain on the settlement. It was known to the two DAA officers before they revoked the permits that the Maningrida Progress Association had offered jobs to the three to counteract their dismissal and the wife of one was employed by the Education Department as a school teacher and had not been dismissed. Two of the three couples eventually returned to Maningrida. But what trouble and turmoil were inflicted on the people in the interim. Unless the people themselves have the final control over staff who live and-or work in their community then they have no real self-management power.

Control of what happens on their land

It is also essential that the people have control of what happends on their land because of the way in which those things can affect Aboriginal communities. In particular they need control of any mining on their land or they have no control of the destructive effects that can occur, and of which we have already spoken.

Hamilton wrote of the:

> Conflict of interests which would emerge, especially where the 'liberalized' policy on Aborigines would come into opposition with the aims of other Labor Government policies. [At the time of writing her paper a Labor Government was in power.] the vast mineral discoveries in Western Arnhem Land are a concrete example – the need for mineral resources signals the destruction of the countryside and severe disruption of life for Aborigines throughout the area, yet without doubt in the long term minerals will be more nationally important than Aborigines (1975, 17).

The strong vested interests of those who have used the term apartheid in relation to outstation and homeland communities are patently obvious with the Australian Mining Industry Council and the Australian League of Rights leading the field. Sufficient to point to the efforts of the people themselves to move out, voting with their feet, as against the South African situation which has put apartheid on the map, where the government forces people to live in remote areas which many of them have not seen before, and where they have no wish to go and which results in massive family disruption and breakdown. As Pitjantjatjarra people said when the Mining Industry Council's apartheid criticism was explained to them 'we know why they are saying that. They want this land empty so that can go where they like and dig where they life. They are just thinking about money'. One solution to the increasing encroachment of mining interests in the Arnhem Land Reserve was 'to occupy that country in an attempt to control the eroding alien influences' (Gray 1977, 116). As the map of lease areas, granted and sought in Arnhem Land shows, the people are fighting a desperate battle (Appendix 3).

As the people have said in so many ways, in so many consultations and meetings, both church and government, and in pouring out their anxiety to those whom they trust:

> We don't want the mining … that word is come from our heart and we need that … we need ever our land, our Law, everything. We are not going to grant you rights for drilling or whatever … or to bring in bulldozers. You got no permit from Yolŋus … What we want is what was here when our old

> ones left us – this is our homes – the water, the madeyin, the jungles, the grass plains, the little rain forest patches, that's our country, because we are the landowners'. '… When they are going to mine it, then we get sick – all of us' (Ken Gunbuku, Bill Manydjarri and Ritharrngu/Wagilak in Davis 1983, Appendix 2).

It is that very damage that Aboriginal people all over the country have been expressing their anxiety about for many years. Some irresponsible and unethical actions by mining companies have convinced Aboriginal people that they cannot trust them or indeed white governments. Take the example of the Swiss giant Nabalco in its relations with the people of Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs commented on the serious lack of consultation with the Aboriginal people by Nabalco and by the Government both up to 1963 and to 1974 (1974, 34). Also, 'during exploration and construction phases a number of sacred sites were desecrated' (Cousins and Niewenhuysen, 1984, 58).

In 1972 Nabalco sought control of 5,000 square miles of the Gove Peninsula Aboriginal Reserve to establish a wood chip industry. The land they seek covers the traditional homelands of the Yirrkala tribe … (*Sunday Australia*, 23 January 1972). The company already had 400 square miles around the Yirrkala Mission for its then $300 million bauxite operations. Nabalco issued an ultimatum to the Federal Government, they would not go ahead with the project if the Yirrkala people were given ownership of the land. 'Nabalco's ultimatum was a major argument used by the Minister for the Interior, Mr Hunt, in persuading Cabinet to reject the principle of Aboriginal land rights', according to the *Sunday Australian* article. So a foreign owned multi-national company influenced the Australian Government against land rights and caused it to defer any transfer of title to Aboriginal Reserves.

Nabalco has been found not to honour two other undertakings, one was to halt mining activities at a point two miles outside the boundaries of Yirrkala Mission (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1974, 26). Already they have gone beyond the Mission boundary. The other was to train and employ Aboriginal people. Their efforts have been token at best. 'In 1982 there were no Aboriginals directly employed by the company … nor were there any Aboriginal trainees. Indeed, there have been no Aboriginal employees with the company since 1972' (Cousins and Niewenhuysen, 1974, 60). How could the Arnhem Land Aborigines be expected to trust mining companies after those experiences?

The present government should seek to halt any further damage to the fabric of Aboriginal society by insisting that negotiations be through land councils and the people's lawyers. The mining companies engage top lawyers to uphold their interests and to advise them in negotiations. Mining law is complex. To seek as the Mining Industry Council is doing, and as CRA for one appeared to practice in gaining Aboriginal approval for its Ashton Joint Venture in the Kimberley, that the companies negotiate direct with landowners and without the people's lawyers or advisers or land councils present, is the equivalent of putting a baby in a cage with a hungry tiger. The policy of divide and conquer works but it is causing bitter conflicts between groups of Aborigines and is one more process that will destroy culture and people.

Dr Whittenbury wrote:

> … many decisions in European society are never undertaken without the use of a lawyer. Few Europeans probably even buy a house without legal advice. In Aboriginal settlements the only legal advice would be that from the Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, usually seen as another mob of troublemakers. Provided that lawyers working in the service are aware of the problems, I do not think that any decision of great importance should be made by Aboriginals without legal representation. (1975).

That sort of protection should be insisted upon by the government or at the very least no negotiations should be allowed to by-pass land councils. Then it is for the councils to provide the lawyers. To say that this will hold up mining companies to the extent that they will pull out of the country is ludicrous. If there are rich deposits to be had they seem to be able to put up with a lot of difficulties and overcome lots of obstacles to secure them. It also ignores the Canadian experience where, it is said, mining companies accept that they will be involved in negotiations with Canadian Indians for up to eight years. Also on the issue of royalty payments the companies are claiming that these will force them out of business. In Canada the minimum royalty for mining on Indian land is 5 per cent and most of the projects provide additional financial benefits on top of the royalties.

In the United States some of the same companies who operate in Australia pay royalties of between 5 per cent and 15 per cent to the American Indians. An agreement was reached in 1977 or 1978 between one company and the Navajo Indians to pay 16 per cent royalties or a 49 per cent equity share in a uranium venture that had not yet been proved. The reality is accepted and the companies are still there. 'In virtually all cases, mining companies have found that they can pay royalties at these levels and still conduct profitable operations' (Zorn, *Northern Territory Newsletter*, 1978). Since some of the same companies operate in both the United States and Canada as in Australia, does it mean that their management I Australia is incompetent or simply that they are distorting the facts and crying panic to stampede the Australian Government and people? The mining industry's claims also ignore the Pitjantjatjarra experience where companies can't get exploration permits for Pitjantjatjarra country until they have negotiated with and secured the permission of the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjarraku, their land trust. Several companies have negotiated to their mutual satisfaction.

Mining companies are hard-headed and realistic and once such laws or requirements are a reality they accept them and get on with their business. So it is up to the government in power, at present the Labor Government, the initiative of whose party resulted in the Woodward Commission and the drafting of the Land Rights Bill, NT, to see that protection is given to the people in such matters. The Liberal Country Party Government of course passed Land Rights Act, NT so those two parties should not disagree with this principle. However, it seems that both have been stampeded by the multi-million dollar propaganda of the mining Industry and once again the fears and wishes of Aboriginal people will be over-ridden.

Resource Centres

Existing resource centres have been one of the main factors enabling people to stay in their homeland centres. They provide a useful function for the settlements and the resources which have been gathered there for the past policy of assimilation. The Maningrida Resource Centre developed out of the service to homeland communities which John Hunter was able to scavenge and cajole the funds and materials to support. At the time the movement was officially discouraged. It was totally

against the spirit of the assimilation policy. John Hunter, whom many both inside and outside the DAA laud as one of the best Superintendents and a very positive influence on Aboriginal people and government staff alike, was removed by the Department to a back desk because his forward looking policies were an embarrassment to the old guard (personal comment form other staff).

The Resource Centre eventually became established and incorporated and received some funding for its operations. It has provided valuable servicing to the homelands communities in the form of mobile store fortnightly, [except during the Wet season] communications, buying and selling art and craft production, workshop services, Aboriginal staff training, provision of general community services and administration of Outstation Resource Employment funds.

Staff of the ORC have been particularly hard-working and supportive. The one thing lacking in the work of the Centre according to the DAA report was a community development approach and dialogue. The report saw this as a result of disruption and conflict in the recent history of Maningrida and in the Department's inability to provide practical on the spot support (1980, 7). The function of the Centre seems limited entirely to effective servicing and there is a lack of information and dialogue to help people to understand their situation better and to develop realistic goals and expectations. This is probably true of most Resource Centres. There was also considerable encouragement of people in the Maningrida outstations to register for unemployment benefit, as they were entitled to it. There appeared to be no discussion of alternatives and art and craft production did seem to be affected in some places. That was the way staff understood the situation and the people's rights. However, there were some negative effects as one of our own experienced community development workers in the area confirmed.

The DAA report spoke of progressive development of outstations in East Arnhem Land:

> Due to a large extent to the tremendous amount of work and the dedication of Mr Jonetani Rika, a Fijian who was recruited by the Uniting Church for work at Yirrkala. He uses a community development approach where community discussion and decision making are the basis of all action by the group with self-help and self-management being the major factors … [this] has made a definite impact on the direction of the outstations thinking in regard to their expectations and rate of development (1980, 5).

Some resource centres may need to develop in remote areas far out from main settlements in order to service the outstations and homelands properly. Pipalyatjarra developed quickly into a mini-settlement as more and more people moved out there to get closer to their own country. In June 1984 there were 274 people living there. As the Pitjantjatjarra Council developed and people and DAA began discussing the possibility of the council taking over more administrative and service functions for the area the white staff who were being attracted there were having discussions with the people about the effect of growing numbers of White people living in the community. The numbers were never large but it was decided that only the community advisor and the teacher should live at Pipalyatjarra and that the others should live 15 km away on the other side of the mountain.

Eventually this became the resource centre for the homelands community at Kalka. The Pitjantjatjarra Health Service is located there. There were 33 Aboriginal people living at Kalka as at June 1984.

The following White people were also living there: a doctor, a sister, a gardens advisor and wife – she worked with the women – the health educator positon was vacant, a homelands and health service administrator and a bore mechanic. An essential services advisor and trainer who spent a few years at Kalka is now stationed At Alice Springs with the Pitjantjatjarra Council. The Council centre at Alice Springs also acts as an overall resou4rce agency. Alec Henry, the administrator, used to service all the homeland communities, shuttling regularly between Amata and Pipalyatjarra. He later went east as far as Nyapari, about 50 km west of Amata, and Amata now acts as a resource centre for the communities around the area. In 1987 he works from Ernabella, which also acts as a resource and training centre for communities associated with it.

In helping people set up resource centres it is essential that they be helped to work out a system where the final authority rests with the outstation and homelands people themselves. Because of the power struggles which have gone on in the settlements, which the alien structures have either fostered or aggravated, it seems wise to have the running of the resource centres and handling of their funds entirely in the hands of the outstation people'; in fact in the hands of the clans or appropriately related groups, unless the people carefully work out otherwise. What structures and controls they institute is finally up to them. Where we are involved in helping that process we should be very sensitive to the people's own structures and thinking and methods, and help them consciously to design something which is theirs in essence and which will allow their own checks and balances to operate.

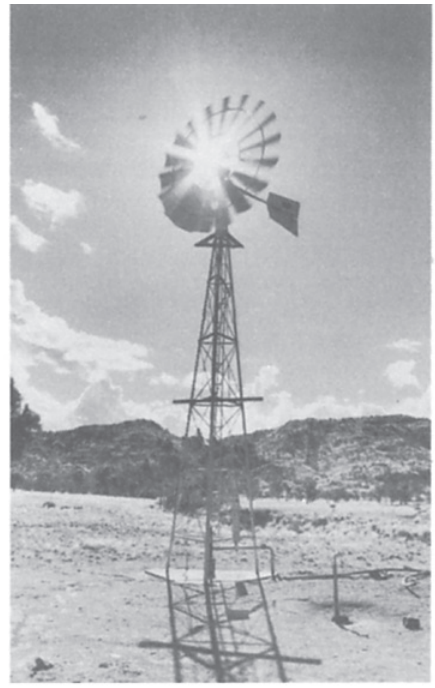
The task of the resource centres basically is to service the related small communities. It would be a boon to the communities if the staff of such outstations had some knowledge of community development principles, and also time to sit with people and help them to gain a realistic view of their situation, an appreciation of their own power and resources, and development of a capacity or organise the achievement of their own chosen goals.

The essential services required for an outstation

Water

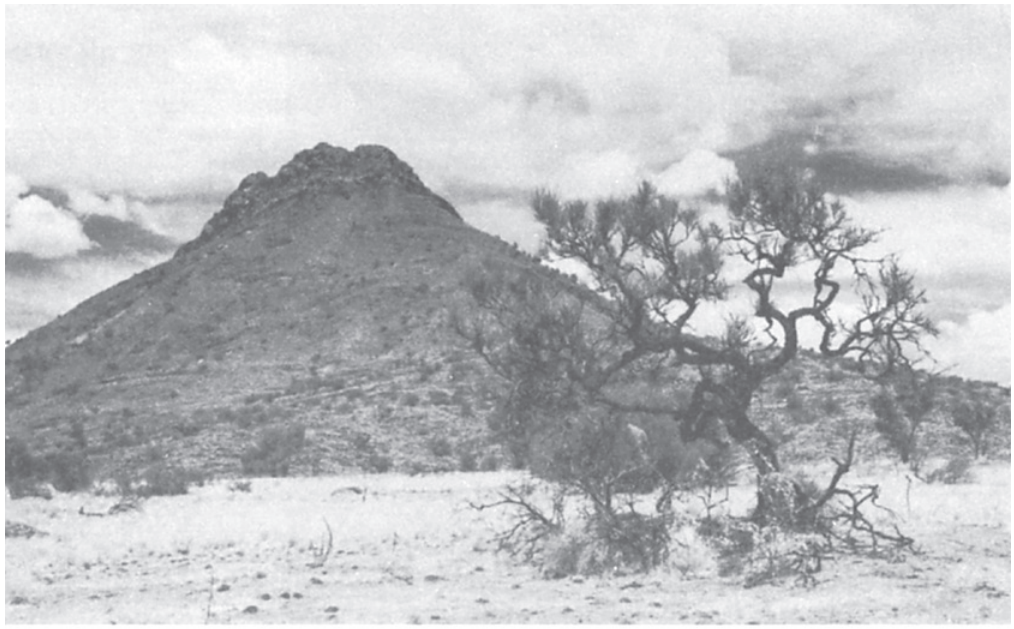
Many outstations have suffered incredible delays in securing a supply of good water. Reasons have been numerous from conflicts between DAA and the Northern Territory Department of Community Development over who has the responsibility, to budget delays, items being arbitrarily removed from budgets, inability to handle the complex processes on the people's part, lack of money and unavailability of boring plants. Dr Bruce Walker, Director of the Centre for Appropriate technology in Alice Springs quotes a study by Darrow, Keller and Pam (1981). They state, 'improved water supply and sanitation systems … have been considerably more important than curative medicine in contributing to good health, long life expectancy and low infant mortality'. Walker continues with a caution that to be effective there needs to be education in the use and misuse of water 91982a, 33). There is also a need for all planning and installation to be done with the community (1982a, 37-38).

Here we could help people to help themselves. Nathan and Dick L Japanangka suggested that people on outstations or planning to establish them in Central Australia are thinking more and more of getting their own boring plants and training programs in their use (1983, 192). If that is so, and because the provision of a suitable water supply is crucial to the establishment of outstations, it seems that money needs setting aside for such a purpose or for the hiring of boring contractors when communities need them.



Unforgiving country; water is life. Outstation bore and windmill.

'My Giddy Aunt, you can't read a thing in there'. Spiral, odorless, fly-free pit toilets at Pipalyatjarra.



The 'old man' with his headband. A 'dreaming' hill near Angatja.

Communication. Portgable radio unites Pitjantjatjarra.
Ilyatjarri using portable tranceiver, Angatja.

There has been considerable progress in development of effective hand pumps, which may even meet the needs of some small communities and would be a good interim provision for groups waiting on the establishment of more adequate provisions. The Appropriate Technology Centre fo the Alice Springs Community College developed a very simple and effective hand pump. Walker reported that after the pump's workings were explained in terms of an extension of the Coke tin on a string, which makeshift system some people were already using in their determination to move out of Papunya, the pump was readily accepted. Pintupi people established an outstation at Yiyilingi west of Papunya, within five days of the installation of a hand pump there. The other advantage of this more appropriate technology is that the people proved that they had the confidence and ability to pull a bore and repair and maintain the pumps themselves, because of the prior discussion and explanation of the pump's workings (Walker 1982a, 38).

Appropriate technology

In the provision of facilities in homelands all the possibilities of appropriate technology should be explored so that people are not saddled with complex equipment requiring White people to service and maintain, and with high recurring costs. The comment of a community development officer is an appropriate reminder here. 'Outstation communities succeed … as Aboriginal communities because they are devoid of the mechanic or the diesel-fitter who has to be there to maintain the expensive generator and whose wife wants a nurse and whose child wants a teacher' (Bryan and Reid, 1982, 31).

The Alice Springs Centre has led the way in helping people to accept some of the benefits of appropriate technology and not to spurn them as second rate. They have achieved this by involving Aboriginal people in employment at the Centre and manufacture of the various units and by bringing Aboriginal people in from different communities to see the products they make and officer, to train them where required in the installation or erection of these in their own communities and to help them to carry this out at home, and also bring groups in to further discuss and develop special facilities relating to their particular needs. A hand lever-operated washing machine of great efficiency has become a popular item of equipment in many communities around the Centre. So also has a pit toilet come laundry unit built on a concrete slab with very simple drain design which is easy to maintain and keep clear. A pit toilet of special design to keep down flies and cut out odour is highly successful and also becoming popular. The success of the AT Centre lies however in its communication and information giving and training.

Last comments from his Ernabella experience, 'I think there's a certain lifestyle that we need to be talking about … you don't see people using electric irons, electric toasters, frypans an awful lot. [In the large settlements] refrigeration doesn't seem to get much of a look in, so there's a lot of 240 volts that we just don't use. Hand tools certainly came before power tools … people need to be looking very closely at those sort of heritages, high technology – they have to earn their existence' (interview transcript).

Lighting, cooking, heating and refrigeration

The small community at Katjikatjitjarra near Ernabella effectively uses wind generators for lighting and refrigeration and solar panels for their hot water. Some people are happy with such services in outstations, while others want generators for videos and other purposes. The range of possibilities need to be shown to people so that they are aware of and familiar with alternatives and think through the ongoing cost and White involvement which may be required tor escalating energy

requirements. Firewood becomes a scarce commodity in Central Australia in the vicinity of a homeland community of thirty or more people. This is a harder thing for which to find a substitute. Steele says that the people at Ernabella are beginning to look at gas as an alternative, but gas can be costly. Perhaps small communities will one day benefit from the natural gas resources found in and near the regions. Perhaps methane gas units are a possibility for small communities.

Shelter

Here I would draw attention again to Hamilton's caution about centralised plans and decisions and funding of the order, 'we will properly house all Aboriginal families within ten years'. These have resulted in the browbeating of Aboriginal people to accept Western-style suburban housing which is often totally unsuitable in order to spend money before June 30, and have made considerable profits for some White-owned companies.

The process which took place at Aputula (Finke) in the Northern Territory is an example of how people can be involved positively in their own housing. A local architect, Andrew McPhee, helped by the housing manager, John McNeil and Church worker Margaret Bain, sat with the people several times while they talked out what housing was about and what they wanted. They drew their ideas in the red dust. The people settled for a simple two room house with wide verandas and a breezeway, and with low wing walls going out each side from an end wall then turning at right angles to form a windbreak and shelter outside, one for eating and sitting during the day and one for sleeping at night. When asked why they could not use the one windbreak for both eating and sleeping they looked surprised at out ignorance and said, 'ants'. The people chose not to have a kitchen or bathroom. They said 'we have no knowledge of living in houses. We don't know what it is like. We want to try ourselves out first until we know what we want'. An important elder from Papunya strongly criticised the house as a 'rubbish house' at a large meeting of Aboriginal delegates and government officers at which I was present. 'That's the sort of house White follows tell Aboriginal people they should have', he said. The Aputula men defended the house. 'that is our plan', they said, 'we wanted to try ourselves out, because we don't know what it means to live in a house'. The old man apologised.

Later the Aputula people formed a housing company and had a modular house with a space frame roof developed by their architect. The roof was very strong and could be supported at the four corners on columns. That allowed any modular design or alternation to be carried out underneath without affecting the roof. Before all this took place the pople were living in tin humpies and shelters in the sand hills around the town. Eventually every family was housed in town in houses which they themselves built to a variety of their own designs. They were also selling houses and building them in other communities. A few years later the government forced them to go on to UB by withdrawing funds for housing. Margaret Bain, John McNeil and I helped the people to understand the implications of this and the possible courses of action. They were angry and chose to attack the government publicly accusing the government of wanting to kill them by taking away the work, of which they were proud, and removing the example to their children and destroying that which made the children proud of their parents. They still had to accept sit down money.

Only half the men were willing to accept UB. They chose another of their options suggested by McNeil. They would paint and maintain the houses during this period using the UB and whatever other wages they could manage and those who wished to alter their houses now that they had had experience of living in them could do so. One put in extra bedrooms for his family. Another

added a walk-in pantry and other modifications. It was a period of steady work and eventually the government provided more funds and things were back to normal. That is the kind of community development approach we should be seeking. It would be tragic if centralised planning and political grandstanding caused the injection of large scale funding and killed such initiative.

By contrast with Aputula, Greg Snowdon comments on his experience of how the provision of housing to Aboriginal communities has operated in the North West Reserve, South Australia:

> The housing question is yet another that exemplifies this piecemeal bureaucratic approach and the seemingly inevitable disasters which accompany it. For years housing has been dealt with on a community to community basis and in terms of what stage of European style housing is accepted aesthetically and available financially to the people in these communities. Now, in community after community one sees the same depressing progression from one room tin sheds to transportable units to pre-fabricated one or two bedroom houses to three or four bedroom houses. The same spectacle of derelict shacks and windowless, battered transportable s and houses confronts observers to all the large communities (1972b, 92).

Now this is not true of all large communities but is widespread enough to be a depressing cause for some hard re-thinking. It is interesting to note the contrast between this picture and that at Finke and also many of the Arnhem Land missions, where people were involved in the planning [at Finke] and the building of their own houses. In those places houses are relatively well kept and generally a source of price. Snowdon also commented:

> Some places have passed through these stages to designing and constructing houses that take account of the needs of the people for ventilation, elevation and separation, of the geographical and climatic conditions of the country and of the cultural demands of the people. In many communities similar designs are reached but only after the same long and frustrating process 91982b, 92).

It is obvious from all this that the only successful housing program is one which fully informs people of options and possibilities and gives them all the time and help they need to work through to designs which meet their needs as they come to see them. Let's not flood them with architects as we did in the 1970s most of whom were naturally motivated to produce something of their own, whether it be a slightly different conventional house or a startlingly different breakthrough in the Aboriginal housing scene. Few had the skills to sit with people and find out what their needs were and to help them to consciously examine those needs in the light of what was possible towards meeting them.

Turnbull's suggestion concerning a possible method of funding people in outstations for housing is worthy of attention. Innovative and startling it is but I believe it has the seeds of motivation and success in it as well as economy of administration. He wrote:

> That the cash equivalent value of a conventional house be granted to Aboriginal families which move to outstations, provided that: (a) such cash

> is invested in an approved family endowment fund from which only the investment income can be spent on a discretionary basis; (b) the capital value may be applied to purchase a house at any place; (c) the capital value is forfeited if any adult member of the family occupies or obtains government subsidised housing anywhere in Australia (1980, 77).

Transport

Vehicles sometimes become the focus of a power struggle or a source of conflict – as Gerritsen claims (1982a, 62) and Edwards also suggests (interview transcript). While it is true that power struggles have often involved vehicles it is equally true that any group living in a homeland situation has a need for reliable transport. Richard Preese mentioned those problems and felt that the best solution was to make the resource centre provide the mobility for the community (interview transcript). It is very doubtful whether a resource centre could cater for people's transport needs, though they could and some do provide a regular store truck or store plane service. Apart from emergencies and a vehicle is not always going to be at the community when these occur some communities have a need to pick up supplies from a town, barge landing or airport.

In the case of large outstations and communities there will probably always be problems over vehicles. In the smaller clan groups there should not be that trouble. Several vehicles in Pitjantjatjarra homeland communities seemed to be well looked after. And of course we have vehicle pools for departmental administrative purposes. Occasionally a government officer has written one off through bad driving or alcohol. One non-Aboriginal officer (not DAA) has lost two vehicles through driving into flooded creeks in Arnhem Land in seeming acts of bravado. So let's not demand perfection from Aboriginal people in vehicle care. However, whatever administrators expect should be carefully communicated to each group who get a vehicle. It should be expected to last a reasonable set time, allowing for the very harsh conditions and their effects on vehicles. If it does not last the set time no intermediate replacement should be given. Vehicle maintenance and running costs should be the community's responsibility. The provision of CDEP money would make more money available to cover such costs.

Store service

Supplementary and regular food supplies is a widely recognised need. Some resource centres have a regular store run, generally on a strictly cash basis. Any other basis seems not to work, unless it is the Noonkanbah pattern where the community buys in a large load of stores from bulk social security money then allocates supplies for that period to each group. How they manage their supplies for that period is up to them. This has the advantage of not requiring mark-ups and profits and someone to handle the money.

Last suggests that a large semi-trailer van could travel through Pitjantjatjarra country with stores on a cash basis and serve all the communities. At present some of the homeland groups drive to Amata or to Pipalyatjarra to pick up from the stores there. If that was the kind of service people wanted it could overcome the problem of tick or book-up which generally gets out of hand and it would overcome the problem of a storekeeper, often a women, being placed under intense pressure to give to certain relations of her obvious resources. Some kind of store service is essential however in enabling the people to stay in their outstations in the harsher climates.

It should be said that with a strong person and the right kind of support a few communities have been able to come to terms with running a store. Such a community is Aputual (Finke) in the Centre. With the relocation of the railway Finke has become an Aboriginal town of 100-150 residents. They have long since run their own store with minimal input and some training from community development workers employed by the Uniting Church Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS). An Aputula woman with a young family has developed considerable skill in running the store and in handling the local staff. The community seems finally to have worked through the culture clash and kinship problems that trouble other stores in communities. The store in 1987 was putting aside $5,000 a month to attract ADC money to put up a new store building.

Education

The damage done by the assimilationist education which we have imposed on Aboriginal communities in the past has been well covered as has the fallacy that you can change society positively through its children. On the latter it is enough simply to ask who are the decision makers and moulders of opinion and values in our society? What are their ages? Is education of our children designed to enable them to usurp that role or to cause then to accept and conform to the rules and values of our society?

> Aborigines in many parts of Australia have been the school used as a means to belittle and destroy their culture, to isolate their children from their families and communities. The damage which has been done by such schools in producing an alien and rootless generation can, I believe scarcely be exaggerated (Coombs 1978, 130).

Margaret Mead spoke of the unbearable tension that we set up when we give children a whole base of new knowledge that is not known to their parents but with which their society must learn to cope and turn the children into the teachers. She wrote that we had come to 'recognise <u>society</u> as the unit to be education' (1965, 269-270 underlining mine). It is now time for us to show that recognition, and to work out cross-cultural methods of imparting knowledge and skills which will strengthen and support traditional authorities and decision makers in their role. I believe that this will not only strengthen their society and help to keep it healthy, but will give those leaders tools with which to operate harmoniously with our wider Australian society. It will help Aboriginal adults to a realisation of what it is that they do want their society and their children to learn and will help to stimulate motivation to seek that learning and growth.

Many people have spoken and written of the need to take education to the adult community and to educate society rather than children. Bruce Sommer who was Senior Education Adviser on Linguistics to the Northern Territory Bi-lingual program wrote, 'one obvious change which would greatly affect Aborigines' perception of education and ensure their co-operation as well as constructive criticism, would be to bring education services first to the adult community' (1982a, 48). Duke and Sommerlad in their study of the needs of people in Northern Australia for post-compulsory education, recommended that 'agencies providing post-compulsory (as well as earlier) education for Aborigines in remote townships, resource centres and out-stations should treat the community rather than the individual as the client' (1976, 199-120).

Some teachers and community advisers with experience in Aboriginal communities have also stressed the need to deal with the whole community and in particular to equip the adults before

children. The aim is to reduce dependence on White society, to strengthen rather than undermine Aboriginal authority and to restore the role of educating children in the general sense back to those to whom it belongs. They will almost certainly seek some help from us to meet those requirements.

When the Pintupi first moved out to Waruwiya west of Papunya, they chose a man of some authority and ability to be the teaching assistant. Mr Ginger Tjakamarra was 'of great value in his ability to control children, liaising with community leaders and in advising the teacher on appropriate protocol and other cultural matters involved in dealing with the Waruwiya people. Heffernan was an enthusiastic and innovative teacher from Papunya who went out to Waruwiya with the people. He made the community the client and positive results followed. 'If a child was present at the outstation then she was hunted along to school by the adults'. [This is in marked contrast to the practice of Pintupi parents when in Papunya where they seemed to display a marked apathy to the schooling of their children] '… the leaders specified what they wanted taught by the school. (English, reading in Pintupi and English and some knowledge of money). They provided some of the … materials and all of the labour to construct a windbreak for winter and a bough shelter for summer. Men came initially to observe and help with the result that some expressed interest in learning the skills of literacy themselves' (Heffernan, 1977). Other benefits compared with the settlement school were: less interruption to classes, more flexibility to adapt to cultural needs, better discipline and high and growing motivation. Two of Heffernan's recommendations were that an independent Pintupi education council be established and that adult literacy classes be considered part of the normal teaching day (Heffernan, 1977).

Others with long experience of working in larger communities stress the need for education to be with the adult members of the community. Robbie Collins worked at Warrabri Settlement near Tennant Creek as a Works and Projects Manager. Then he spent four years as Community Services Officer to the remote homeland community at Marntamaru (Western Australia). At a meeting on outstations called by H C Coombs at the Alice Springs DAA office he said that school teachers were getting frustrated and leaving and that it was important to educate adults and that the education be relevant. He put forward the community needs in education as: a) use of radio; b) community management; c) maintenance; d) social development. (From my personal notes taken at the meeting.)

Bill Edwards said that the people in outstations 'need more support in education, so that when they are in a role, say running the store, or as health workers, they are really getting support to enable them to fill that role' (interview transcript). He is supported by Last who said '… one of the real factors that has to come more into play is … the training of older people, where they are wanting training so that they have some bearing on the younger people' (interview transcript).

Over the years we have seen a succession of frustrated Technical and Further Education (TAFE) people trying to fulfil the unrealistic demands of an Education Department that seems culturally unaware. It has demanded curricula, details of formal course, hours and numbers of students. Dr Mitsuru Shimpo carried out a major study of *The Social Process of Aboriginal Education in the Northern Territory* at the invitation of the Northern Territory Education Department. He wrote:

> However, the authority figures, those who exercise influence in the family, are not receiving sufficient educational programmes … I want to emphasise that I am not only critical of the amount of resources committed to adult education but of the overall orientation towards how it should be done' (1978, 145).

> There is no clearly defined goal for Aboriginal education, hence there is no clearly defined goal for adult education (1978, 148).

Because of the social turmoil in most Aboriginal communities people have not been motivated towards adult education courses where they have been offered. Not well prepared or oriented and not feeling encouraged field educators have found it hard generally to relate to communities in ways that could help them to understand the communities' feelings and the nature of the pressures affecting them. Out of that could come the real concerns of the people and areas in which they want help. Because of department warnings about being political many have been afraid often to tackle issues like government and elections and the democratic processes or even understanding constitutions and what the people's powers are under those rules. It does not matter whether their fear was real or mistaken, the result was the same. Much of the time they have been under the local primary head teacher's authority.

Community education which is what we are really talking about, is a different kettle of fish from primary education. Head teachers don't always understand this and often look for formal courses. The adult educator fails to get job satisfaction except in a rare circumstance. Even if on occasion he or she was only the coordinator of training opportunities linking people with the expert resources they need for specific training that role would be valuable. (See also Greg Snowdon's comments on the inability of the South Australian Department of Further Education to meet the training needs of homelands communities 1982, 88-89). At Yirrkala Jonetani Rika and the homelands people have gained the agreement of departmental authorities that no development of any kind will take place without training people effectively to do that work. This will offer opportunities to departments and adult educators alike.

One example of the co-ordaining role from the work of the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs (IAD) is the following: Rob Davidson worked as a staff member responsible for community development education. A community would want works carried out. At Docker River it was the erection of an ablution block for which they had waited a long time. At Jamieson it was a community office and meeting shed. At Papulangkutja it was a workshop. At Imanpa it was the conversion and fitting out of a large industrial caravan as an office and store and so on. I each case he talked with the people about them making it possible to get the facility completed. In the process they would learn some skills and earn some wages. He helped them to make sure that all the materials needed would be on hand and to arrange the funding either through the local CDEP money or through the National Employment and Training Scheme (NEAT). Then he would arrange for a community college trades teacher to spend a fortnight in the community and train people while getting the facility built.

In the actual process Rob would attend and make sure that the trades teacher didn't have to handle the hundred and one things which could go wrong on such a job. He would help the lecturers to relate to and understand the community and he would help them work through any misunderstandings which might arise. Especially he would explain the cultural reasons for any behaviour or reactions on the part of the people which the trades teacher could not understand. Almost always there would be an English teaching component related to the work that the people were engaged on. He would do that teaching or arrange for another teacher. Those projects were a great success. The people were proud of what they achieved in every case. They were taught skills

and allowed to carry them out so they felt that they had really built the facility; but they would not have worked like that without a person with cross-cultural understanding acting as a liaison person and facilitator. That scheme fell through when the Education Department stopped those instructors from being involved.

People have been asking consistently for years for on-site training and education. For some time they have bene asking to be taught the skills of community management so that they can cope with the affairs of their communities without having to depend upon white people. Over the years the IAD has run community management courses, both in Alice Springs and in the communities. In the larger settlements we found that when the people get into difficulties with handling staff or with mishandling of funds, resulting in their funds being stopped they begin to realise something of the help they really need. ARDS has run a few exercise in communities in understanding constitutions, councils and contracts as a result of such pressures and the ensuing requests.

Health Services

Already there are Aboriginal funded and Aboriginal controlled health services. The Pitjantjatjarra Health Service is funded direct by DAA and until the formation of the Ngaanyatjarra health service looked after outstation communities over a vast area between Amata and Warburton a distance by road of about 600 km. Even in this kind of situation medical staff can find it hard to accept direction from the Aboriginal Director or the communities. As Snowdon has observed, 'the "monopoly of knowledge" of the medical profession and their determination in maintaining it prevents them from going beyond the purely medical and "curative" mentality to one of health policy and "preventive" medicine' (1972b, 89). How much more difficult it is for State run health services based over 1600 km away and linked into a hospital and clinical based medicine, to be flexible enough to meet Aboriginal communities' needs. There is little likelihood of the concept of community based health care getting through, or of health workers being trained in preventive health care and believing it to be important. Yet doctor friends in Alice Springs have ben saying for years that clinical medicine is not going to solve Aboriginal health problems (personal comment). Unless people in both the medical and nursing professions, which provide the model, treat a community health approach as important then Aborigines are not going to do so and they are going to remain sick.

Communications

This refers mostly to radio or telephone contact between communities and also between communities and outside bodies such as the Department of Health in the event of an emergency. All homeland and outstation communities need effective communications, both with one another and with their resource bodies. This is another White facility which enables people to be Aboriginal more effectively. Pitjantjatjarra radio is going all day. It enables relationships to be maintained, funerals and ceremonies to be easily arranged and helps in the servicing of the community. In other words it helps people to stay in their outstations. And it enables settlement and outstation communities to support and help one another.

Bryan and Reid were writing about a four volume report by Telecom on the provision of telecommunications to remote areas. They said that the report found that Aborigines were interested most in reliable radio and telephone services as against their unreliable HF radio and to a lesser extent in television and radio broadcast services. In the last two they were concerned about local control and local content. Given the people's deep concern about the effects of films on their children it seems desirable to help the people to have that control for their communities. Bryan and

Reid commented on the need to be aware that:

> … technological innovation is a two-edged blade: it has the potential to facilitate change and development but it also has the potential to precipitate changes that are neither wanted nor anticipated. For this reason planning must be seen as a process which monitors the impact of innovations and takes into account evaluative findings. This means that it must be possible to establish the basis for future communication systems without making the installation of these mandatory (or inevitable). This is crucial in the case of homeland centres (1982a, 31).

The warning about the two-edged blade is appropriate to all the technology that we may seek to introduce into Aboriginal communities or those tribal communities may want.

Structures for communication and consultation

Important to both effective communication and to consultation is effective cross-cultural imparting of knowledge and community options, and an understanding of the implications of any action decided upon. This requires a good knowledge of the community culture and ways of thinking and decision making. It also requires skills in conveying foreign concepts in cultural parallels or in relationship to know concepts.

For example, Richard Trudgen, a Uniting Church community development worker based at Ramingining for several years, sought to understand the economic structures of the people's own culture. He did so because of repeated discoveries that the people had no real understanding of European economy, of how the store ran or who the goods belonged to, of money and where funds come from, and the rules by which these things operate. Their concepts were close to cargo-cult thinking. They believed that the government and the church had great power and unlimited access to Western material goods and money. Both young and old held those concepts. They could not believe that the situation had changed and that they now had power.

Trudgen sat with older men and questioned them and learned of their barter economy in desired goods and services. He learned key words relating to the agreement one man or group may make with another. It may be to give certain goods in exchange for a special ceremony to be performed for a family member. A token is sent to show that it is a serious offer. If the agreement is finalised the token is accepted and this amounts to a contract. There were penalties or action s which could be taken if either party did not fulfil their obligations. Trudgen found that if he used those key words and concepts the older authority men could understand at once the nature of a contract. It had been impossible to get the idea across before. He sought the help of the Uniting Church linguist from Galwin'ku, Di Buchanan, to check out those concepts and words with a key informant.

Deeper study of the traditional economy and its concepts should make it possible to impart an understanding of our economic system. In their own terms they would then be able to understand mutual accountability and other concepts which go with the system. If that could be done then the understanding would be with those who should hold it, the decision makers of the clans and wider ceremonial groupings, the traditional holders of authority. We certainly have not got far with our Western approach to teaching and imparting such information.

Consultation is a vital element in communication. As Bryan and Reid point out:

> The history of Aboriginal Affairs is littered with the costly debris of projects devised in all good will by Europeans for Aboriginal communities to alleviate various social 'problems'. To Aborigines these failures reflect only one reality – the projects were not devised, approved, initiated or requested by them. They are the artefacts of European perceptions of the 'Aboriginal problem' and its 'solutions' (1982a, 29).

Now that we know all this having learned the hard way, we have the opportunity of redeeming the situation. The outstation movement gives that opportunity.

Interpreting and translation services

English is, and is taught as, a foreign language in tribal areas in the Northern Territory and South Australia. It should be so wherever Aboriginal languages are still used. Even where English is spoken well by young people, it is still undergirded by foreign concepts and values. In October 1982 in the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church, we had young men expressing anger to us because of the hard English spoken by many people as an everyday matter, and the fact that they were not given the time or the help to understand issues properly. The Synod did set aside some time and designed the 1983 Synod so that Aboriginal people could make a more substantial contribution. That was not followed through well enough and one of the same young men expressed the same frustration to the 1986 Synod. Effective interpreters, both linguistic and cultural, are a necessary part of any structures to enable communication and proper consultation.

The Federal Government funded the establishment of an Interpreter Training Course at the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs but failed to fund interpreters at the time, so that the IAD could hold some staff members available. It has since provided more funds but it has failed to direct that departments use such services in heir dealings with tribal people. I am appalled at the misunderstandings that have occurred when department officers and others have assumed that understanding has ben established simply because the Aboriginal person has been able to say yes in the right places, or has said 'yes' when asked if they understood. That question almost invariably invokes a yes answer. The reason may be embarrassment or because it is usually asked in a way that indicates that people should understand – so they do!

Our Uniting church Linguist at Galiwin'ku and other workers, speak of the constant confusion and misunderstanding because White people from church and government insist they can make themselves understood by Aborigines without interpreters or advice. For some it is because of a fear that it would belittle the people if they simplified their English. But older people often people in authority, are left confused constantly about what is happening or what they are agreeing to because of the way we use English. That goes for many of the younger people too. Of course there are many young people in the north now whose English is very good but we are still dealing in different and often completely opposed world views and values, reasoning and consultative processes.

Bryan and Reid's comment gives some support to the need and value of effective consultation and whatever structures and aids are necessary to enable this to take place:

> Given the importance of those two closely related principles – <u>group consensus</u> and <u>group commitment</u> – it is clear that any innovation … risks failure if it is not firmly grounded in ongoing consultation … and the

> acceptance that decisions may take days, weeks or months to be reached if the rights of large numbers of people to participate are honoured (Bryan and Reid 1982, 30).

This is a principle that has not been honoured though there are a few signs that some people in government departments are beginning to realise that to ignore it and to deny people the time to work through to consensus means failure.

A system of checks and balances is essential to ensure that communities have been given adequate information and time to come to their own decisions. If a community has not reached a decision on an issue then that issue should not proceed. This would preclude the old problem of a building project proceeding relentlessly four years or more after its first mention to the people. Because of council and communication problems most of the people would know nothing about it or they would not want it. Sometimes it would be built in quite the wrong place, such as across a dreaming track like the costly Docker River hospital. Almost inevitably the belated building program would raise people's anxieties. They would be asking, 'why are all these people running around here? What are they doing? What is this for? Who gave permission for this?' Because it was on the books and the money had finally been allocated and the contracts let, the project would proceed under its own momentum.

We in our system have not developed effective means of consultation with the authorities and thinkers in Aboriginal society. We have not given enough background and information or enough time for the people to develop their own thinking about the things happening to them and to make adaptations in their own philosophy and beliefs so that change can take place more under their control and with less destructive outputs. Last spoke of this time and information factor:

> '… to arrive at a conclusion Aboriginal people need lots of background. The background has been pretty bare. Some of the reasons we have not put in the necessary information is because … what we tend to be talking about with people are our own implication and the various associated things we've arrived at. But … we don't sit down and tell the people … how it took us three years to arrive at the particular decision, or five minutes, or whatever it was' (interview transcript).

When we fail to help people to understand the processes our thinking and decision making has gone through we leave them with insufficient information. We contribute to the mystery: 'the White man only tells us half' or 'the White man won't tell us his secret' complex. As Last put it, '… if you given them a little bit of background they make surface type decisions. If you give them a hell of a lot of background then they can start giving you decisions that they have had to work to … pre-1935 [prior to Ernabella Mission] people worked through everything they were involved in'. It is important in our relationships with Aboriginal people that we given them time and that relationships are relaxed enough so that people can discuss such issues and ask questions, and we can learn something about each other's thinking and processes. Then we will develop effective community development tools and derive mutual benefit from our relationships.

The need for coordination

A constant source of two-way irritation and complaint has been the number of departments and personnel going into Aboriginal communities in the one day or the one week. The outstation movement will cut down a lot on this because without the big Whitefellow projects there will not be a lot of need for departmental staff to visit. Departments sometimes fail to notify communities in plenty of time and some will turn up without permits. Some resent having to get permission. Others complain that they do not have their requests answered.

The damaged community at Turkey Creek in Western Australia is a prime example of the kinds of pressures which have been constant over the years for people in Aboriginal settlement communities. Over 34 working days between 6 February and 22 March 1984 the people were called together for meetings on no fewer than 42 occasions, give of which involved travel by representatives to Kununurra and Wyndham. Those meetings involved eight government departments, one mining company, seven other organisations, one solicitor, three media visits and two meetings of the Seaman Land Inquiry. The people with no effective overall authority and representative structures were expected to discuss a bewildering and often disturbing array of issues. It would be par for the course for them to be expected to make far-reaching decisions about some of those issues with inadequate information and no time for proper consideration and for their decision making processes to work (from an unpublished paper by Alan Tegg, Community services Officer).

There seems to be a need which the DAA filled to some extent in earlier years for the coordination and handling of visits by the various departments. Yirrkala does not have the problem because Jonetani Rika has helped the departments to listen to the people and DAA fills that role in Eastern Arnhem Land. Aboriginal people are confused by the multiplicity of departments and all the variety of issues which those departments expect them to deal with. It is simpler with one reference body and there is a need to develop procedures by which that coordination happens.

All planning for Aboriginal communities need to be done by the communities themselves.

I think we have seen clearly the failure of social engineering and remote planning without the benefit of local knowledge. The homelands movement is a rejection of that process. One of the things people have been saying clearly by that move is that they want an end to manipulation and direction by others. They want to determine what happens in their communities, what their children learn and what kind of lifestyle and future they want. To make those kinds of decisions effectively however, people need adequate information and knowledge in a form which they can understand.

Whittenbury was speaking of settlement councils but his concerns relate to the situation of all Aboriginal tribal people. He asks:

> … can people without a necessary body of knowledge make a meaningful decision anyway? … In my opinion it is wrong and probably immoral to ask questions of people who do not have this background knowledge. By answering 'yes' to those questions as they invariable do [though that is changing] the Aboriginal people produce two main effects –

(a) They increase the intense pressures already at work on them, further forcing them into situations they do not understand, and are helpless to remedy, and;

(b) Unfortunately, they allow an 'out' to the people who have forced them to make the decision. Administrations and others up and down the line local-Canberra can say 'well, we asked them if they wanted it – they said yes – it has turned into a disaster, it is their fault', So goes another few hundred thousand dollars down the drain, but more importantly so do the people become further discouraged, bewildered and the target for ill-informed Europeans (1975).

He has put it in a nutshell. That is exactly the reason why the people in outstation and homeland communities want control of their finances, their decision making and their lives. Rudder summarised it thus: 'Options sometimes need to be clearly understood, consequences discussed but the initiative for decisions and actions must be in Aboriginal hands' (1978, 16). Upon us who have the knowledge of our culture and its laws and workings, and its technical goods and processes, evolves the responsibility for conveying clearly the necessary information, and that involves listening and understanding, patience and skill. As Rudder says, 'if the people are truly to be set free, no support worker can afford any longer to take the easy way out by making decisions for them. Freedom is dependent upon making decisions and being responsible for the consequences ' (1978, 15-16).

There is great need for the funding of suitable training and orientation opportunities for all staff who may be working for or engaged to work for Aboriginal communities, with emphasis upon community development principles and methods – helping people towards self-determination and whatever measure of self-sufficiency is possible and upon a sensitive understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture, structures and economy.

Cross-cultural training

Many conferences on working with Aboriginal communities have stressed and most involved departments have acknowledged the need for thorough cross-cultural orientation of staff. But no department seems to have come up with a consistent and effective scheme. Some of the best staff in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in my estimation and I have observed them and worked with many since 1965, are those who went through the old training course of one to one and a half years at the School of Pacific Administration, Mosman. But those courses ceased in 1974 and nothing seems to have replaced them.

Staff attitudes and personality, the kind of staff involved in cross-cultural and community development work, are crucial to its success or failure. In a meeting with Prime Minister Whitlam and various Ministers, John Hunter, then Mainingrida Superintended spoke of the problems of staffing. The people had been complaining about the great number of balanda and how the work was being taken out of the hands of the Aboriginal people. Hunter said:

> We can't do without a plumber but it depends on that plumber, it depends on what sort of a guy he is. If he's the right sort of guy and he can draw people to him, then ultimately you'll have a situation where you've got a lot of Aboriginal plumbers. But if he's an ocker Australian he's going to have

> the traditional Australian attitudes to Aboriginals, which means that they're way down there somewhere, and he's just not going to relate to them at all (*Maningrida Mirage*, Vol 3, Issue 34, 28 June 1974).

A person's skills and training are not as important as his or her attitudes and personality. Margaret Mead touched on this when she wrote:

> Workers have found that programs have a far greater chance of successful acceptance if they are personally introduced by people who show real concern. The expert may be held in high esteem but the change will be accepted because of him and not for its inherent merit: it will derive its validity through him, and the motivation for carrying it out will be rooted in loyalty to him (1965, 261).

An example of the important of personality and approach is contained in the following story. A European ganger on Amoonguna Settlement near Alice Springs was persuaded by a nursing sister with many years of settlement experience to discuss his Aboriginal gang and their individual performances. He spoke with approval of each of his men, whom he named. The superintendent, who was present, expressed his disgust at the hopelessness of some of those mentioned. When we were alone, the sister said 'I deliberately encouraged him to talk on like that. I wanted you to hear it. I have been here for many years and some of those men named seemed hopeless drunks and troublemakers. Other staff cannot get any work out of them. They work well for that young man and they do it without supervision'.

Later I spoke with the ganger about his work. He told me that he always discussed a job with his men and asked how they would go about it. When that was decided he left them to it and went on with something else. If on his return a mistake had been made or a shoddy job done, this would be discussed and the reasons for it. When the men had made their suggestions they would be left to put it right. That young man was doing an unskilled job. He had had no real training. He almost certainly knew nothing of the principles of community development but he followed them unconsciously. He obviously had a natural ability to get the best out of Aboriginal people. He was interested in people and wanted them to get satisfaction out of their work through involvement in the planning of it. He treated them as people whose opinions mattered and he accepted their opinions. They responded as people do to such encouragement.

It is not easy to find and choose suitable staff for cross-cultural work but it is extremely important. As Hamilton wrote: 'No matter how highly principled or carefully worded a policy may be its success or otherwise is totally in the hands of those administering it, especially those at the local level' (1974). The next in important is the preparation of that person through orientation and community development training. The latter will not make a person of unsuitable personality and temperament into a good cross-cultural worker, though it may make their mistakes a little less gross. It can however make a suitable person into an even more effective worker.

Language Learning

In relationships with tribal people language is an important factor. Relationships are immediately enhanced if the staff person makes an effort to learn the local language. An introduction to language learning and pronunciation of Aboriginal words and sounds is valuable but of considerable value is

the learning of everyday language and its use by the worker. When leaving Redfern, Sydney to take up an appointment with the United Church in Alice Springs, I was told by part-Aboriginal friends, 'learn one of our languages straight away. Even if you only learn a few phrases it will mark you as different from most other Europeans and you'll get on better with our people'. Goodenough noted: 'Learning another language is, of course, a strenuous effort, but there is a reward in it beyond the better grasp of reality it gives. There are subtle ways in which rapport improves simply because the agent makes the effort to learn his client's language, quite apart from the proficiency he attains' (1963, 391).

> Aboriginal people are, generally speaking, delighted when a European learns an Aboriginal language, and when it is obvious that he can converse with other Aborigines, even then they themselves do not understand that particular language. Douglas Daniels, who [was] a village council member of several years standing at Roper River and a departmental head on the staff of the Mission [pastoral officer], commented, 'the people are happy when someone tries to learn the language – something of theirs. Even if they only learn a little bit they get on better …'. A linguist, Joy Harris (1968), makes this same point: 'Adult education in the vernacular gives "hear" to a people by resurrecting their pride in their culture and individuality and improves the home environment where children gain their respect for education (Downing 1971, 66).

Today when the movement to homelands has caused a revival of pride in culture, language becomes even more important. Learning another's language enhances relationships and good communication depends on good relationships.

Effective cross-cultural and on-site vocational training methods

These are important, both to help communities to understand and become confident in handling interface negotiations, in dealing with government officers, handling contracts and contractors, hiring and controlling staff and hiring expertise; and to help groups and individuals to gain skills in handling their communities. Aboriginal people are crying out for practical demonstration and doing type courses in their communities. There are lots of complaints about courses in the large towns. It is an environment in which many people don't feel comfortable and where others are subject to very strong temptations. Such things work against satisfactory training.

There will be an increasing need for specialised courses which need to be run away from the communities and in special educational institutions, but the crying need is for the on-site training, and there has been very little of such training and very little commitment to the idea.

The other kinds of educational help people are seeking in their communities are the kinds of exercises that help them think through the complexities of cross-cultural situations, and which help them to understand things like constitutions and contracts and the business of running a community.

The areas covered in this chapter lend themselves to recommendations to governments and administrators about possible future directions and methods. Such recommendations have been

made in another form and presented to the House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs when they were examining the outstation movement in 1986. They have been printed in Hansard (1986, Vol 6, Wednesday 17 September).

It is obvious from the evidence so far presented that one of the greatest hindrances to Aboriginal self-determination or self-management and effective control of their communities lies in the nature of political processes and administrative structures. Politicians are concerned amongst other things about staying in office and sometimes that becomes the primary motive for decision. Mining and other vested interest lobbies are powerful and well funded. They can and do stampede governments. Aboriginal voting power is minimal, so their cause can be sacrificed if it appears politically necessary.

Politicians and administrators must commit themselves to the cause of Aboriginal self-determination and to policies which will help to make this a reality. People need the security of a relatively long-term policy and to be removed from the anxiety of trying to deal with policies which change with bewildering rapidity, or with staff whom they help to orientate to their culture who are then shifted, making the education process necessary all over again. If we fail to introduce such stability allied with flexibility into the political and administrative system the people will slide further into dependency with its resulting apathy, bitterness, alcoholism and self-consuming violence.

Chapter 7
Quo Vadis

Outstations are here to stay; at least for a long time to come. Large or small, quiet or bubbling; permanently occupied or intermittently occupied as people visit around from their home base; occupied occasionally as important staging places on some ceremonial track to a remote sacred area, and occupied on week-ends as people escape the pressures of nearby larger settlements, outstations are here to stay as a valid and valuable part of Indigenous cultural life. In harsh semi-desert areas with limited food supplies or on tropical coastlands with their teeming sea life and plentiful bush foods: in all their variety outstations are a fact of life. The evidence in the previous chapters has revealed a long-term and persistent movement by people towards or emphatically back to or their homelands. This movement has shown a dogged determination by many Aboriginal groups to hang on, and in many cases to enjoy the more peaceful life of the outstations with minimal services, uncluttered by the outside pressures and internal conflicts of the larger settlements.

The larger settlements to which the outstations relate are also here to stay, in most cases with a new and continually developing role as resource centres for the outstation communities. As mentioned in the introduction, these outstations are homelands to one group or another, and therefore are important to them. They are also important as supply depots and bases for outstation resource organizations within Aboriginal lands, or within an area populated by Aborigines.

The persistence of communities staying in their outstations and homelands is a widespread pattern. Twenty clans moved out of Hermannsburg in 1974, for example. In June 1982 they received leases for their outstation land. In 1984 eighteen clans were still living there and, according to Gary Stoll who worked in Hermannsburg for about twenty years, 'are doing well. One or two clans move back [to the larger settlements] because of deaths' (pers Comm). As outstations have developed, Yirrkala's population has dropped by half. Jonetani Rika, community development worker with the outstation resource centre, reported in 1985 that there were eleven permanent homeland communities which had been occupied for up to seven years and four smaller places closer to Yirrkala. 'Two of those will become settled, but the other two are affected by tribal matters at present' (pers Comm). Eight hundred people are living in twenty outstations around Maningrida. Some come in to the settlement during the Wet because of the difficulties in getting supplies, but during most Wet seasons about five hundred people stay out. A couple of these communities are cut off altogether [often by flood waters] and the people live off the land and the sea.

In Central Australia, around Hermannsburg, around Ernabella, particularly west of Amata, and well into WA across to Warburton there has been a considerable permanency of residence in outstations. An exception is Docker River, where consistency of residence and great enthusiasm was recorded by Nathan and Leichleitner (1983, 135) in the early years of the movement from 1976. Cane and Stanley recorded that in 1984 none of the thirteen camps which they visited were occupied, nor did they appear to have been occupied for some time. The only reason they could offer which might have some credence as a possible explanation, was that the movement had been 'killed off' by too much over-servicing by non-Indigenous staff, causing the people to feel that they had simply moved from one non-Indigenous-controlled situation into another (1985, 112-114).

Most Pitjantjatjarra outstations have remained occupied. At June 1984 there were fourteen out of eighteen outstations in the general Pitjantjatjarra area which had been consistently occupied for up to ten years, and there were good reasons for the others to be empty at the time. At the time Pipalyatjarra and Kalka had 274 and 33 people respectively living in those communities. In 1987 approximately 100 people were living in each place. For Kalka that was a large increase. The decrease in numbers at Pipalayatjarra can probably be explained by the fact that many of the people had been waiting at Pipalyatjarra until they could get the help or the resources to move into their own homelands in the surrounding country. In addition to these, six 'satellite' outstations around Ernabella accounted for 182 people, ranging in numbers from 6 to 94 people, while over 200 people are living in outstations from Amata, approximately 130 adults and the rest children.

West of Amata remote outstations are seeing a resurgence of interest in that younger men with families are committing themselves to living there. Ivan and Douglas Baker and their families have settled at Kanpi and are developing gardens. They are said to be doing well selling to people travelling back and forth. Ivan was for several years Director of the Pitjantjatjarra-Ngaanyatjarra Health Service and Douglas too is an able man with some authority and leadership. Robert Stevens who was for several years Secretary of the Pitjantjatjarra Council and later Director of Nganampa Health Service, has taken his family to nearby Nyaparri.

Across the border in Western Australia, in June 1984, there were fifteen occupied outstations, some of them fairly new. The older ones have been permanently occupied now from 1974 to 1987. By early 1987 the population of Warburton settlement was said to have decreased to about 300, presumably because of other outstations which have been established around the country, or the move to the larger homeland communities by people waiting to move into their own homeland areas. Irrunytju, Papulangkutja, Warakuma, and Marntamaru had all increased their populations considerably, in two cases, they almost doubled (see Appendix 1). Those four communities along with Pipalyatjarra and Kalka have been very consistent in their occupancy, and remarkable in the number of young people prepared to live there and raise families. In 1980 Irrunytju had a population of 75 adults and 56 children under 15 years of age, while Papulangkutja had 54 adults and 69 children under 15 years. This pattern seems to have been sustained. Cane and Stanley, in their study of land use in Aboriginal Outstations in Central Australia wrote, 'The outstation movement seemed to be a success in the sense that, with the exception of Docker River outstations, the great majority of outstations appeared to be in use' (1985, 214).

Tony Davies has worked for the Pitjantjatjarra Council and the Ngaatjatjara people for a number of years, putting in bores and establishing water services. He reports that the Ngaatjatjarra people in particular have become discerning in their approach to such services and, where there is no desire for a large group to settle in a strategic place, they are more than ready to have hand pumps installed and not to seek windmills, tanks and the more costly services. Warakurra are reported to have ordered several hand pumps (pers Comm).

In some cases outstations are strategically placed in important sacred areas to enable people to stay and care for them, or to travel to other remote sacred areas to carry out important ceremonies with reasonable safety and less dependence upon good rains, living within commuting distance of the related settlement, such as the satellite communities around Ernabella. A few others seem designed as escape camps to enable people to get away from the pressures and frustrations of the settlements at week-ends, the so called 'holiday camps'. Gerritsen in his 'Thoughts on Camelot'

wrote; 'homelands can be little more than week-end holiday camps…'. Gerritsen told me that he believed that, even if used in that way, they have value [for people] in escaping settlement pressures (pers.comm). He went on to say in his paper, 'Some [homeland centres] are most worthwhile from the viewpoint both of equity and of allowing Aborigines to re-establish their self-confidence in order to deal more adequately with "whitefella" society' (1981a, 14). Edwards also commented on this aspect. He said a number of outstations can serve a good purpose as an 'escape valve', where people can go and 'be in touch with their father's country and their traditional life when the pressures of the settlements get too much, a kind of "holiday camp", to which 'the children may be willing to go for a short period'. He says that this should be one of the options for the people which could serve a good purpose (interview transcript).

Gerritsen was wrongly interpreted by some politicians and some officers of government departments as saying that outstations generally were little more than 'holiday camps.' These were the critics who are opposed to outstations and used the 'holiday camps' criticism in a negative way. The occasional departmental officer, driven by frustration, used the concept to blame the clients for the difficulties they were having in understanding and servicing the movement. This negative use of the term 'holiday camps' has also given ammunition to the critics with a vested interest in opposing the outstation movement. Spokesmen for the mining industry and others have seized on the term and used it to try to undermine support for the movement.

Outstations are not holiday camps as non-Indigenous critical thinking may characterise them – that is, as primarily sites of light-hearted, non-essential recreation. They have far more importance than that to the Indigenous people. They are mostly designed to occupy 'country' [reconnect spiritually], link and care for important story lines and sacred places, and to make it easier for the travel and access necessary to carry out important ceremonies. Bell notes the same in the planning of the Warlpiri people (1982a, 86). As the people themselves have said, outstations have to do with their Law and proper care and education of their children as Aborigines. The persistence of the people speaks for itself and makes any generalised 'holiday camp' criticism quite untenable. In light of what the movement can be seen to have done for people's social health and outlook, the odd, largely untenanted facility is a very tiny price to pay for the outcome.

Gerritsen wrote three papers based on some research into outstations in which he put forward the theory that the political power struggles of Aboriginal society were the main motive for the movement (1981, 1982a, 1982b). He seemed to rate Toyotas as high in the power stakes.

> The emphasis on Toyotas and the great deal of time spent on the settlement suggests that replicating settlement may be the <u>ultimate</u> objective of the outstation movement. [He also states that] The outstation movement largely coincided with the governmental provision of vehicles because to obtain a vehicle was an important part of the motives for establishing an outstation' (1982a, 62 underlining mine).

It does not seem valid to suggest that Toyotas and time spent on settlements are a sign that the ultimate aim of the outstation movement is the replicating of settlements. With some people there will be a lot of visiting of relations on settlements. With others there may be a continuing involvement in the power struggles of the settlement. A few may want settlement type facilities, but that did not seem to be a consistent sign in Pitjantjatjarra and Ngaanytjarra country around Central Australia. People's demands and preoccupations have been modest. Great interest has been shown in the Centre for Appropriate Technology of the Alice Springs Community College.

Their manual washing machines, specially designed pit toilets, simple ablution facilities, and highly efficient water heaters made from reject gas cylinders seem to be in considerable demand around the Centre.

The odd group did appear to have the acquisition of a vehicle in mind as their highest motive. But that was not generally so. Cane and Stanley in speaking of the Luritja homelands around Papunya and Haasts Bluff said, in commenting on the European view that 'Toyota dreaming' is the reason for the movement to outstations, '…we believe this view is overly cynical as we have no evidence, and were given no evidence, of any outstation in the Luritja Homelands which has been set up specifically to obtain a cheap ABTA Toyota' (1985, 60).

Of course vehicles are important to people in isolated situations. Of course they are desirable and are sometimes ostentatiously driven around the settlement as a sign of the group or person's status as much as they are in non-Indigenous society. But that does not explain the Hermannsburg move to outstations, which had nothing to do with vehicles, or the move out from Warburton, or the earliest move by the Pintupi, in which there was no provision of vehicles and little encouragement; or the movement to outstations in Pitjantjatjarra country in SA. Cane and Stanley report that the outstations around Ernabella had no vehicles provided by government funds and they all relied on private vehicles. Some other communities further west and north secured vehicles because their outstations were across the border in the NT, and had access to Aboriginal Benefit Trust Account funds (1985, 140). What the moves generally coincided with was the Federal government's recognition and support of the movement which was reassurance that the people were waiting for. Vehicles eventually became a part of the provision of support for some, but were a not a major factor in motivation of the movement.

Bell pointed out that the new material goods gained from White society were incorporated in Aboriginal structures and value systems, and thereby brought under more traditional control (1982a, 87). In that way the traditional checks and balances have more chance to operate. Material goods are incorporated in that manner in order to enable people to be more Aboriginal. A similar concept is expressed by Margaret Bain, science graduate-anthropologist-missionary, in a paper entitled 'Being and Doing'. Bain described the basic philosophy of our two cultures and their practical workings in those terms. Aborigines were a 'being' people living in a reciprocal relationship with their land and people. We westerners are a 'doing' people, with emphasis on production, work, cash economy and contracts. She voices the problem that Aboriginal people don't want to change their basic philosophy, which she describes as,

> How to retain the old framework of 'being' as long as it is needed … What can be done to alter the detail of the outworking of the society, the tools at their disposal, skills and, for example, possession of vehicles. These can be used to express what the Aboriginal is, namely, one who is (1971).

That can of course mean incorporation into traditional politics and power struggles, but if not interfered with by the non-Indigenous society they can be handled and controlled with minimal damage to the traditional culture and people. They are simply *goodies*, the trappings, and only incidental to any power struggles. This leads into the next argument concerning outstations.

Outstations have been criticised both because they are seen as a return to a traditional way of life that is pagan and immoral, a 'turning back the clock' and, on the other hand because they are not a

true Aboriginal lifestyle. Those critics who talk about an 'immoral' culture can have no knowledge of it. Its Laws are highly moral within their own framework. They are simply different from ours. There are elements within the culture which some non-Indigenous people find disturbing, but there are elements of our culture which Aboriginal people find disturbing also. They don't presume to tell us what we must change our culture drastically and become just like them, and we'd soon tell them where to go if they did. We need to move beyond our own ethnocentricity and allow people to experiment with and learn from their own new lifestyle.

Some of those who criticise the fact that the outstation movement isn't a return to traditional life, or that it hasn't a truly Aboriginal lifestyle, do so out of romantic notions of what they think Aboriginal lifestyle or tradition ought to be. Gerritsen comments that the fact of vehicle acquisition and usage in the power struggles of Aboriginal politics, and the various demands for services, belie 'simplistic' notions about Aboriginal lifestyles' (1982a 64). But, as already indicated, the manner of these demands and usages can in fact demonstrate that the goods and services are being used and brought under control by traditional means, which for many years were either not possible, or not functional under non-Indigenous domination.

Aboriginal outstations and homelands are not a return to the bush to 'recreate a perfect traditional past … but to experiment with a new lifestyle. It is a lifestyle with a largely traditional structure into which some elements of European culture have been incorporated where they are seen to be useful and desirable' (Meehan and Jones 1978, 10-11; also Eckert 1980, 7; Coombs, 1978, 144-145, John Hunter, Maningrida Mirage, Vol 3, Issue 30, June 31, 1974). Many of the Indigenous people see this clearly. They have indicated that they want some Western-style services and employment, but under their control and within a lifestyle which is based on their own Law and is strengthening their own culture. This has demanded a new role from the larger settlements, and has seen the development of Outstation Resource Centres specifically designed to service outstations, and mostly under Aboriginal control. These are modern developments created to enable people to pursue the new lifestyle, and are different from traditional life, though in most places they are still largely directed and controlled by traditional structures and values.

It seems to me that what Aboriginal people are doing for themselves in the movement to outstations is asserting who they are, and using the vehicles and goods and cash of our system in order to continue to be Aboriginal. This is what the people seem to be saying consistently: 'We are Aboriginal, we want to live Aboriginal way, by Aboriginal Law, and we want you to help us to understand how to get the things from the White side that will help us do that'.

Gerritsen says that the usual interpretations of motives for the movement's development are inadequate, and must take into account the totality of the politics of Aboriginal villages, but he himself seems to reduce the movement simply to a struggle for power and resources on the part of 'dominant men' alone. Most of the outstations are led, he asserts, by 'prominent men', who are seeking status and power by those means. The picture seems purely a conflict situation in which dominant men and their families and followers get a grossly unfair proportion of the money and resources going into communities. While that does happen in some communities, and while politics does play a part, it does not altogether explain the movement. It is only one factor. Gerritsen dismisses some critics as the 'Gee Whiz' romantic school. I believe they are well aware of the many other factors which inform the desire for outstations.

'Who needs a hoist'? Necessity the mother of invention at Kalka

Learn early or go nowhere. Youthful hopes, Alpara

'Hey tourist, look over there'! Fun with a camera, Wingellina.

Order ou of chaos. valeris Foster controls the store, Wingellina.

Bagshaw also points to the fact of power politics operating in an outstation community, and shows that the store in an outstation can be seen as a source of power. Stores have problems when run along European economic lines, and the person who is the one to suffer as a result of these problems is the one who runs the store. The storekeeper or group controlling the store has control of the distribution of resources. Bagshaw describes a struggle for power through control of the store at Jimarda outstation, out from Maningrida in Arnhem Land. The Madai group, who lost control of that resource, when a woman from the Gulala group (the 'Johnny-come-latelys') became storekeeper, used criticism and rumour to undermine her prestige and position. Bagshaw is critical of the Maningrida Progess Association for not realising the situation and supporting her in carrying out a non-traditional role, 'running a balanda style business within the restrictive and often hostile framework of a predominantly kin-based economy' (1982a, 55). This kind of political power struggle is much more likely when you have rival groups living in the one community, such as Jimarda. This illustration does not necessarily have any bearing on whether groups are primarily motivated to set up outstations in the first place as a means of gaining political power or ascendency.

Gerritsen is right in stressing the importance of power politics and the need for us to be as aware as we can be of the dynamics, but not I believe in presenting it as the major factor, as he appears to do. Bell points out that his main sample population based on Ngukkur (Roper River area) has been considerably interfered with by non-Indigenous people, so that much land-based power [and also much of their language] has been lost (1982a, 86) Of course Gerritsen also did some research with people in the Hooker Creek area (Lajamanu). The interference to which Bell points aggravates and displaces power struggles on to other things such as the dominant culture's goodies and money based power. These aspects make it much harder for local people to control and work through their difficulties by more traditional methods.

One of Gerritsen's examples may well show in fact, that some of the traditional powers and methods are beginning to control the Western-influenced dominant men. He writes about Huddlestones, a dominant group, who sought to gain control of a very picturesque sacred area called 'Ruined City', in order to establish a potentially lucrative tourist business. It also happens to be near a sacred site of 'immense importance', the origin of many dreaming paths, and as such is vital to a number of totemic groups. Dominant men 'of other groups found out about the proposal and their opposition proved decisive in stopping it' (1982a, 68). I had already heard of that proposal and of the deep concern of some of the people, whose culture would have been undoubtedly damaged by such a project. I strongly suspect that it was the power of Aboriginal Law which caused the Huddlestones to back off.

Bell wrote, 'To make any real sense of the fluctuations of leadership in a community, the political action of the region must be viewed through time'. She goes on to suggest that the outstations development at Ngukurr may in fact be a reassertion of land-based relationships which helps those 'prominent men' to regain their strength, and to challenge dominant men who have gained power through 'white feller business of the mission'. Because of their new independence and the nature of their power, 'the so called prominent men … may ultimately tip political leadership scales in the delicate system of checks and balance's (Bell 1982a, 87). And that is precisely what those struggles are if left alone: a delicate system of checks and balances, and sometimes not so delicate. I see outstations and homeland centres as offering the opportunity for a more equitable sharing of resources (and Gerritsen agrees with that, 1981), The outstation movement helps enable those

checks and balances to operate more effectively by putting the struggle back into the arena of traditional authorities and processes.

After saying that, however, it should also be said that Aboriginal politics is alive and well and has always had a strong bearing on the dynamics of what happens whenever Aboriginal people get together, especially in a multi-clan or multi-tribe situations. It has without a doubt figured largely in Aboriginal-Mission relationships, and some astute men gained power through their relationship with early missionaries and those who followed. Gerritsen is right in pointing this out. Aboriginal politics does play a part in all the dynamics of Aboriginal society, and especially in the disturbing *Aboriginal-White Interface* and in handling both the pressures and opportunities of white intrusion. It is a real and important factor and all part of the techniques of survival. It is no less ruthless and unconcerned at the subsequent plight of those belonging to groups other than your own who are overrun in the process of political power plays, than is the case in the political power plays of White Society.

I agree with Gerritsen as to the danger to which those who work closely with Aboriginal people are subject: that of romanticising Aboriginal society, both traditional and present day. Though it is very difficult to separate the elements motivating people in the movement to the homelands, I disagree with Gerritsen in what I interpret as his tendency to see the political power struggles as the major motive. It does not seem to be so in the Pitjantjatjarra and Pintupi movements, of which I know more, though of course it is present. It could well be so in groups which Gerritsen studied. He is alerting us to an often ignored important factor. In the Pitjantjatjarra-Ngaatjatjarra-Yankuntjatjarra-Pintupi groups however, there seems much more of a real concern about the protection of sacred land and proper performance of related ceremonies. Of course there were some political plays, but these are not people whose languages have been largely lost or are becoming lost, and who have had their land based power and much of their traditions interfered with as Bell suggests is the case with Ngukurr people. Rather they are a people with a strong land base now confirmed and permanent, whose traditions and ceremonial life are still strong.

These observations are borne out in many of the comments from interview transcripts in the text, made by people who have spent years living amongst and working with Aboriginal communities: people like Edwards, Last, Hansens, Capp, Greg, Snowdon; also people such as Coombs, who spent a lot of time with Aboriginal people around Australia and who saw and studied the outstation movement from its very beginnings in Central Australia at Putaputa. These people were not unaware of the politics of Aboriginal society, and they had the kind of long-term relationships of mutual respect, and some a considerable knowledge of people's ceremonial life, that enables the exchange of people's deepest thoughts. They, better than most, would have some understanding of the different elements that motivated people and those that were of most importance to them. As shown throughout the text, they bear out the assumption that in Central Australia, and in Arnhem Land, the primary motive seems to be to relate to and care properly for one's land, to care for children and teach them about the things of culture that they are in danger of losing, and to have control of your life. The mix of motives may be different in different places, but in the areas studied here, both in Central Australia and in Eastern Arnhem Land there seems to be a consistency in the priorities.

Some administrators and others feel that the outstations will perpetuate inequities, in that children 'will not be getting an education'. Gerritsen quotes Brian Desilandes, headmaster at Maningrida,

as writing 'only about 25 per cent of outstations receive an education service', and goes on to say that, 'This may perpetuate second-rate access to resources of the outstations leader's followers and may exacerbate further inequities' (1982a, 64). It is not clear whether this means the outstations of Maningrida or all outstations in the Northern Territory. It also begs the question 'What do people perceive as education?' Are they in fact not getting an 'education' in 75 per cent of assimilationist education? What was one of the prominent reasons given by people for moving out? 'We are losing our children'. 'Our children are getting away from us,' 'We want to teach our children about their father's land and about our culture. They are learning a lot of bad things in the settlements.'

History is dotted with examples of people who got their opportunity for formal education later in life, when it meant something to them. For example, Eric Wilmot who became Aboriginal Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, then later Deputy Secretary of DAA, Canberra and later Professor of Education at James Cook University, Townsville. Eric was a semi-literate stockman at nineteen years of age. An accident then put him in hospital for a long period, where he was able to complete his secondary education. When we consider the number of people involved in community development, linguistics, and experienced teachers of Aboriginal children, who believe that our assimilationist style of education of children has been one of the most destructive forces in Aboriginal tribal society (see Snowdon W, 1982b, 160), does it matter if the people put western-style or assimilationist education low on their list of priorities while they sort themselves out?

If in the interim they are building up things of far more value – such as children who know their culture and have a strong sense of identity; children who don't sniff petrol or act out their disturbance in delinquent behaviour – does it matter? If they are building communities that are not totally dependent on non-Indigenes to do the planning for them, and to make their decisions; if they are building up people who are not apathetic and uncertain, and filled with self-destructive rage, but growing in self-respect and confidence, are their children really going to miss out? The Hermannsburg experience would indicate otherwise.

There has been an observable and dramatic change in the bearing of some people since they have moved to their own land and begun running their own affairs. The people who walked off Kurundi Station and established themselves at Ngurrantji, south-east of Tennant Creek, have developed a confidence to handle their own business and to do business with the various government authorities which has greatly impressed those authorities (Bell 1982, 87). Hardy describes the growth of confidence and ability to cope with non-Indigenous authorities in the Gurindji people at Wattie Creek, who walked off Vestey's Wave Hill Station (1968, 230-232).

The children of such people are developing a new found pride and confidence. The parents have resumed their rightful position as the leaders and operators in their own communities and are no longer forced to depend on the 'foreign' knowledge of their children. The children **are** being educated. They are not going to miss out in the long run. They are likely to be children with a good self-image and a more confident bearing. And those parents are going to work out what they and their children want to learn from outsiders, and education will become more relevant. And our education authorities will be given the opportunity of doing some inspired thinking and coming up with new and exciting ways of supporting the education of whole communities.

In all our thinking about education, however, let us heed the words of Lee J. Cronbach, an educationalist concerned with educational policies for 'disadvantaged groups' in the United States:

> Today's discontent is a clamorous crisis that distracts us from a quieter, more ominous crisis – the bankruptcy of long range social planning. Lacking visions of what society might become, we are training people for a status quo that is already vanishing. The schools are committed to training people for production, responsibility, creation and leadership. The intervention programs seek to offer that way of life to all. But the fact is that automation, centralization, complexity and abundance has already created a society where most people work less and less … the time has come for far less concern with the total man years of education produced by our system, and for intensive and sober concern with the capital question – 'Intelligence for what?' (Quoted by Hamilton 1972, 47).

And I would echo Hamilton's paraphrase- 'Social change for what?'

It seems that the Aboriginal people's major motive is to be in their country. Whatever helps them to do that will be pursued. Autonomy in their own community and in their own country seems to be the goal of most groups. 'But what will it cost?' has, of course, been the cry of politicians, administrators and others, in relation to the outstation/homeland movement. At present that is hard to assess, as the Government Departments involved do not set out the various service and other costs in their budgets to show outstation costs as a separate item. However, there are some indications that support for the movement could be far less costly than the previous upkeep of the settlement system. It also must be weighed up against the astronomical costs of social services and the cost of keeping people in institutions such as hospitals and gaols.

There seems to be a growing realization of the crippling costs and problems of settlement type facilities. Alan Steele of Ernabella commented that 'people are getting fairly excited about using 12 volt generators for putting lighting into houses, 12 volt fridges, and other ideas like gas burners for cooking; but the main request has been for lighting. At first people want a generator like other places, but pretty soon come to realize that it's an expensive item and will need a lot of fairly expensive maintenance on that sort of thing.' People have seen the 12 volt-20amp wind generator at Katjikatjitjarra, and the solar hot water panels. Others 'can see the advantages' and are now wanting those kinds of facilities (interview transcript).

It has been shown, I believe, the settlement institutions and their policies have caused large-scale human and cultural breakdown. Alcoholism is estimated to cost our general Australian society a staggering sum annually. The more Aboriginal alcoholics we help to create through pressure and hopelessness, the more we add to that cost. Gaols are costly institutions. It costs a significant sum to keep a person there. So are hospitals, the most costly element in our health care system. The Chief Minister of the NT at the time, Ian Tuxworth, said publicly in an ABC News interview that more than 50 per cent of hospital beds in the NT are taken up with alcohol-related problems.

Chairman of the NSW Drug and Alcohol Authority Brian Stewart, said that alcohol-related problems sapped almost a third of the public hospital system's annual budget of $600 million. This figure did not include the cost of alcohol-related road accidents (NT News 125 January 1985). Of the road accident cost the Federal Transport Minister, Mr Peter Morris, released the fact that serious road injuries and fatalities cost the Australian taxpayer a staggering $2,100 million in 1984 (NT News, 12 January 1985). And so it goes on, with absenteeism from work with its subsequent staggering cost to Australians, and many other cost burdens due to alcohol. It is impossible however

to measure the cost of damaged and shattered lives, but social work experience shows that these are self-perpetuating in disrupted family systems. If outstation living improves health, and the quality of family life, through an enhanced sense of identity and self-image, then it is going to considerably reduce alcoholism and gaol and hospital intakes from amongst Aboriginal people. I believe we have shown the kind of positive results that already point to the potential of the movement to do this. This will considerably and increasingly reduce those 'treatment costs'.

There are strong indications that the support of outstations and homeland centres will considerably reduce direct costs also. When settlements become resource centres to service those communities, the need for an army of staff, such as was required by the old assimilation policy is reduced. The cost of 'white elephants' is drastically reduced, as it is no longer necessary or possible for non-Indigenous staff to dream up all sorts of costly 'developmental projects'. The need for continual expansion of settlement facilities is removed. So far the physical development taking place on outstations has been very modest. However, the danger of over-development or over-servicing is always present, especially where politics are involved. In the Northern Territory, where the size of an electorate can be as few as 2,000 people, politics are almost always involved.

Alan Steele suggests that there is a saving in costs using the already existing resources of settlements to service the outstations, rather than having to duplicate facilities. Shann Turnbull, a professional financial adviser, weighs in with some far more solid evidence to support the cost savings. His firm Management and Investment Services (MAI Ltd.). was engaged by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to examine and report on the economics of Aboriginal settlements, the likely effects of mining royalties in the Northern Territory, and the best ways of helping Aboriginal people to cope with the changes taking place as a result. Turnbull comments:

> …it will be noted that a number of Balanda [White] houses in each community [settlement] lies between 35 per cent and 50 per cent of all houses. The value, size and standard of Balanda houses generally exceeds those of Aboriginal houses … The direct wage cost of Balanda in settlements also makes a significant contribution to the dependence of settlements – Table 24 indicates that a typically one Balanda is employed for every three Yolngu [Aboriginal]. These costs and those quoted above and the consequential ones … indicate the presence of Balanda is the prime cause of economic dependency in settlements. [He goes on to say that] the economic arithmetic of outstations indicates quite dramatic savings over the cost of settlements (1980, 107).

Turnbull sets the equivalent total cost of five to eight outstations to be 1 per cent of the cost of a settlement. That figure seems startling and to some very doubtful. But even allowing the expert to be very much out in his calculations and pushing that 1 per cent up to even 30 per cent, and it still leaves us with very solid food for thought.

What is the future for the outstation-homeland communities?

Where do we go from here? We, meaning non-Indigenous society, don't go anywhere in this matter. If we read the lessons of the movement to outstations and homelands, we will give people support without strings. Then they will decide where they go and its cost to them. There is no doubt about the evidence of large scale community and family breakdown, much of it caused by our policies and our remote base social engineering.

The tribal Aboriginal people have called a halt to the pressures and breakdowns by taking action themselves and moving into outstations and homelands, having been encouraged by the Whitlam Government's support for the movement. That support continued under the Fraser and Hawke Governments. Many politicians on both sides of the house have sat uneasily with such support. Some have been misled by the Mining Industry Council's misrepresentation of outstations in their report of 1978-79, and again in 1984 with the views expressed publicly and forcibly by their spokesmen, Hugh Morgan. I hope that the evidence gathered in this book dispels some of their doubts and leads to a really enlightened support of people who have set out to do something for themselves; a support that gives not just words about their self-determination and self-management, but illuminates the sensitive policies that give people the freedom to achieve these goals.

What have we seen about the results of the outstation movement? We have seen people who are rediscovering and re-enforcing their true identity as members of the Aboriginal culture. We have seen a restoration of authority to those whom it belongs, and a growth in confidence in dealing with the dominant society on a more equal basis. No longer are non-Indigenous people the decision makers for the Indigenous peoples. As Tregenza points out, 'The people have new problems to cope with such as mining. Now they have to face these issues the proper authorities will handle them far better. As young people support old people and feed information and help so that they truly understand, so the decisions will more accurately reflect the true wishes of the community' (interview transcript).

There is as Rudder points out,

> A return of control over teenagers and children … those recognized as rightly holding authority are acting in that capacity. This brings security to the senior generation who realise they are no longer seen as irrelevant by their group, and to the junior members who are thankful for the leadership of those they can trust, and who are thankful to be relieved of having to carry responsibility which they know is not rightfully theirs' (Rudder, 1978, 11).

We have seen a great 'release of creative energy', to quote Fitzner of Hermansburg and a flurry of activity everywhere. People appear to be motivated and have lost their apathy. There is strong evidence that they are healthier in every way. They have generally sought education in the three r's for their children, and the children attended classes in some of those communities in far greater numbers than attended in settlement schools.

As we have seen, talk about the 'economic viability' of outstations in the light of the situation on settlements and in our own society with its large number of unemployed, is totally irrelevant. It may be that mining royalties will give independence to a few. At the moment they only touch a few and, given the way they are currently administered and handled, they have not provided much independence. But it will happen to some. Others will be able only to supplement incomes by making artefacts. Others may do so through fishing, but there are considerable limitations to what can be done, especially in Central Australia. So we must give support, hopefully in some of the ways mentioned, so that our support is no longer like a millstone around people's necks, but such that it gives freedom and responsibility and opportunity and the full measure of independence from government 'management'.

'One thing that is very important is that government departments make up their minds about outstations, and development policies, and about how they are going to do so … Education Department, Health Department, and certainly the Community Development Department need to have very clear statements as to how they see themselves supporting outstations. This will mean that don't have to put up with a lot of negotiations to gain support. Most of the government departments seem to have accepted the fact that outstations have happened, but are not very clear about how much they are going to support them … In the long run, if outstations are supported in a wise manner, I don't mean following up with schools and hospitals and things like that but in simple ways that help Aboriginal people to remain on outstations so they can develop them in their own way, it will be a great help'. (Devarnesen interview transcript).

Rudder points out one of the implications of the outstation movement:

> A new style of work is being required, staff have to be trained to take up a consultative role rather than an initiating and determining one. A clear understanding must be spelled out of the difference between initiating discussion and initiating action. Years of dependence have made it normal for many Aboriginal people to expect their decisions to be made for them and easily slip into this position (1978, 15).

I think that danger is lessening because of the very nature of outstation communities.

Will outstations last? Mark deGraaf thinks they are a passing phase (1976). Some other experienced observers think some will survive as continuing communities, and others may provide a kind of service that strengthens ceremonial life, and therefore social life (Edwards, Tregenza, interview transcripts), and some will continue to have difficulties because of the people involved and because of political and ecological problems. The many people with long and close experience of Aboriginal tribal communities interviewed in this study, and some anthropologists and medical doctors quoted, saw the movement as a positive and beneficial happening which should be supported at all costs. As we have shown, the 'all costs' will most likely be a great deal less costly than our past 'pressure cooker' policies.

As Gatjil Djerrkura of Yirrkala has said often: 'There is no Aboriginal problem, there are only human problems'. Rudder follows this up: 'What the government's approval has been heard to say is, "We respect you as humans, making a genuine attempt to solve your own problems"' (1979, 16). Have they heard all right? What is the people's futures in these communities? They have expressed only limited ideas about this, based on their own limited experience of what is available to them; but most outstations dwellers are in no doubt that life is better out there. They are not going to give up easily their self-gained relative independence, or lose their dignity again through pressures which they could not control. They are saying loud and clear, 'We want to control what is happening to us. We want to build a better life for ourselves.'

Most of the communities which the people went out and established have been occupied now for between six to sixteen years to 1987. A few might be used as staging places for reasons important to the people. They may want to move back again into larger settlements in years to come, but I cannot see that happening for a long time. Those who are there are feeling and appreciating the new quality of life and the benefits which we can so readily see. For the destruction it has halted, and for the new dignity and assurance the move has given them, and for the improvement in

social and psychic health alone, the people's initiative is more than worthy of our support. In the past, experience has made the people believe that 'the White man is a liar'. Can we now respond with compassion and honesty and grasp and honour this opportunity to build a new relationship with Aboriginal tribal society, and indeed all Aboriginal society, a relationship not of one way dependence, but of mutual respect and strengthening? Why? Because it makes good economic sense, as well as deriving from our highest motives and ethics.

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APPENDIX 1.

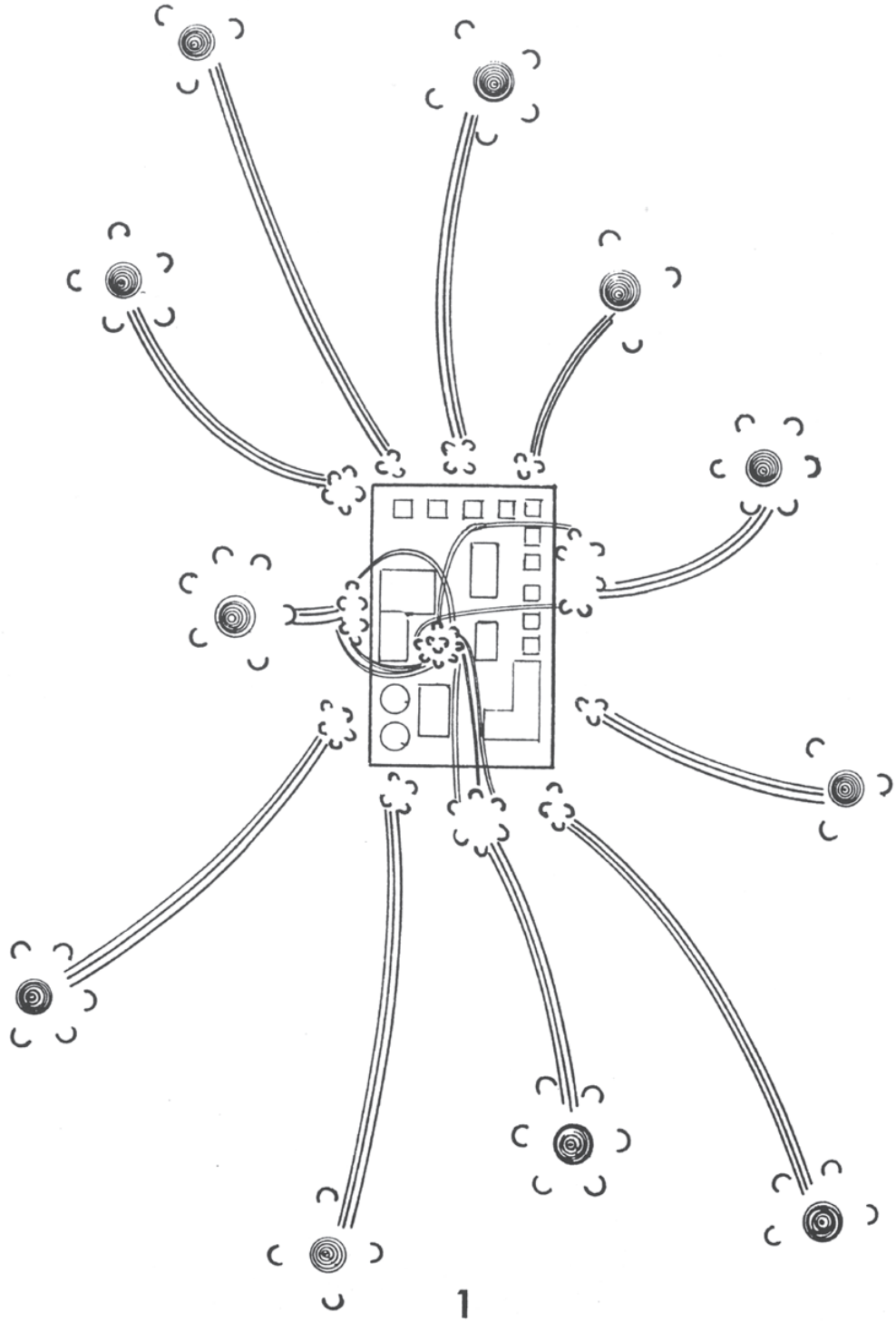
SOME POPULATION FIGURES
(Central Australia)

[* denotes long-term larger settlement].

Place.	*1980.*	*1983.*	*End of 1986.*
Amata.		342*	
Aniyanya.	27		
Angatja.	12	44	30
Alpara.		26	10
Anumara Piti.		16	
Aparatjarra	15	17	
Docker River.		441*	
Emabella		372*	
Fregon.		367*	
Ilitjata		5+	
Ilturr.		4	30
Imanpa (Mt Ebeneezer).		180	approx- 160
Inarrki.	16	25	[water problems] nil
Indulkana.		300*	
Irrunytju (Wingellina).	131	133	211
ltjinpirri.		13	
Kalka.	15	20	100
Kanpi.	8	13	35
Kata Ala (Murray Bore).	40	21	10
Katjikatjitjarra		15	
Kenmore Park.	11	80	[+ outstations] 80
Kunamata.	11	12	[water problems] nil
Kunatjarra.		18	

Place.	*1980.*	*1983.*	*End of 1986.*
Kunytjanu.	6	9	6
Kurrkuntutu.		24	
Marntamaru [Jamieson}.	138	68	250
Mimili.		145	
Ngarutjarra.		28	
Nyaparri.	10	16	20
Papulangkutja [Blackstone].	150	126	91
Pipalyatjarra [Mt Davies].		274	90
Putaputa.	13	11	2
Ulkiya.		21	5
Uluru [Ayers Rock].		97	150
Walinya [Cave Hill]	21	25	35
Warakuma [Giles].		127	170
Warburton.		453	
Walytjitjata.	15	25	30

Note. The above figures were obtained from outstation and homeland advisers working in the areas covered, and from Pitjantjara and Ngaatjatjarra councils. Some figures are accurate, while others are close approximations. They are quite accurate enough to show occupation and trends. Blanks are where I did not have information on the numbers.



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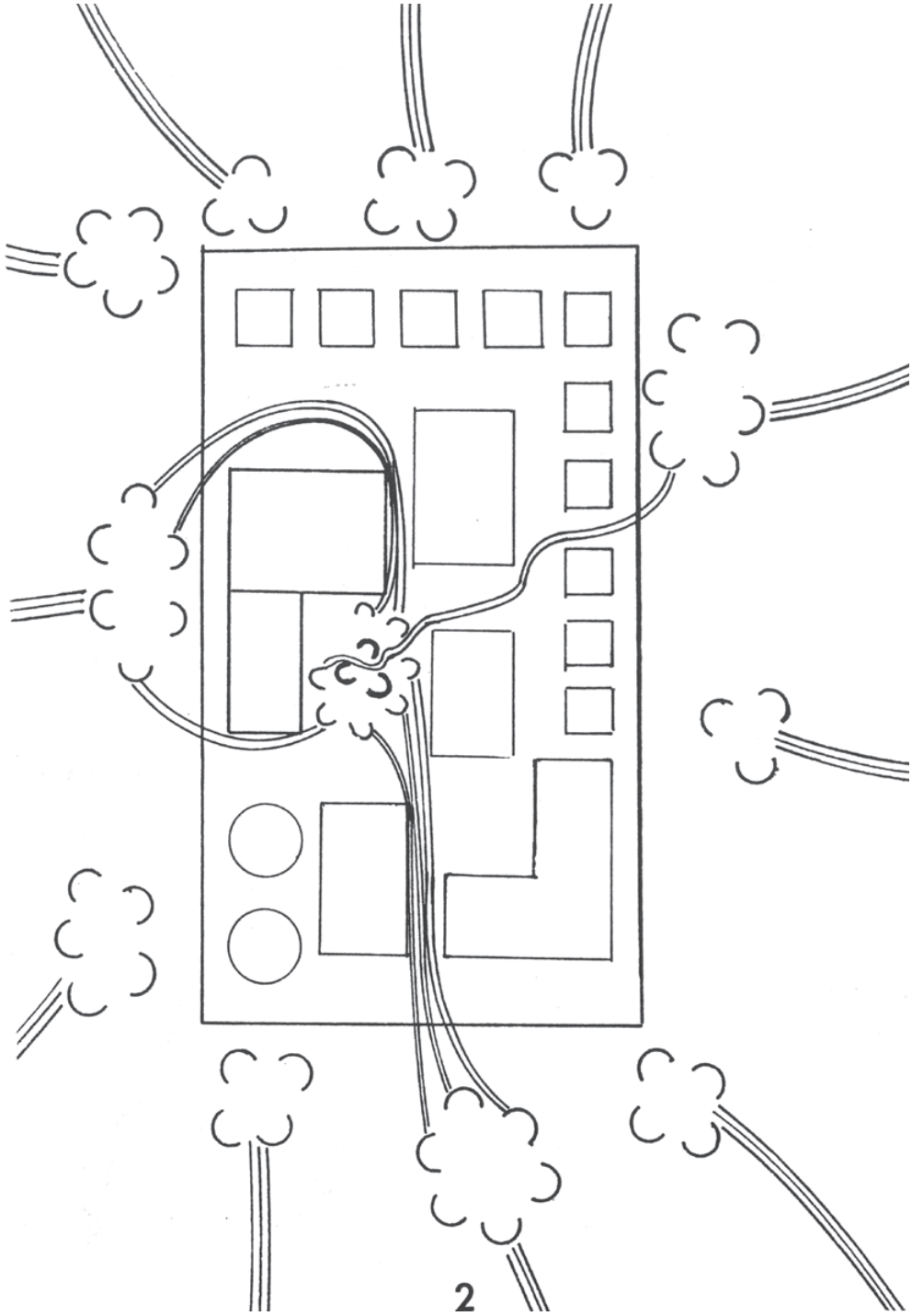

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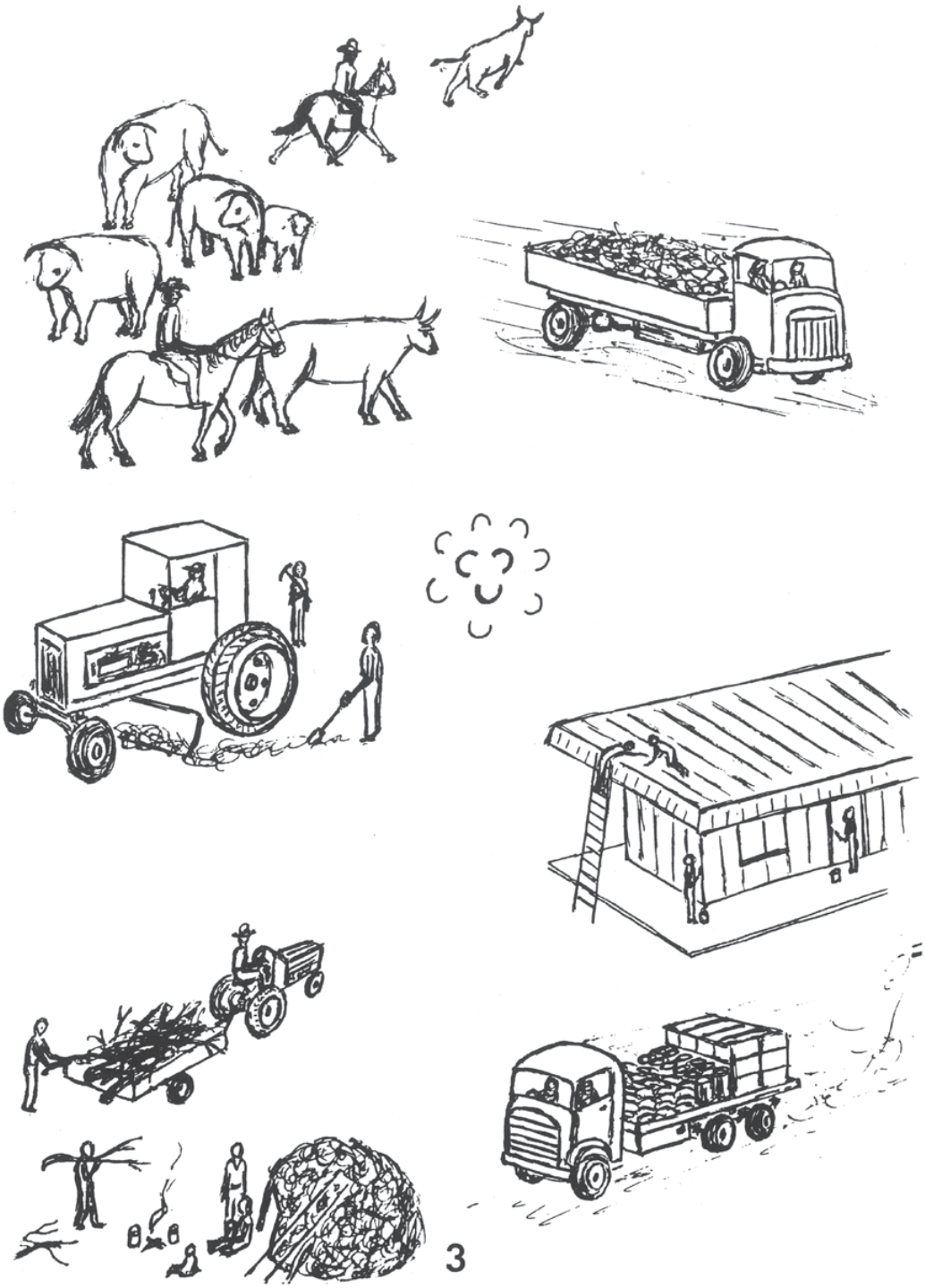
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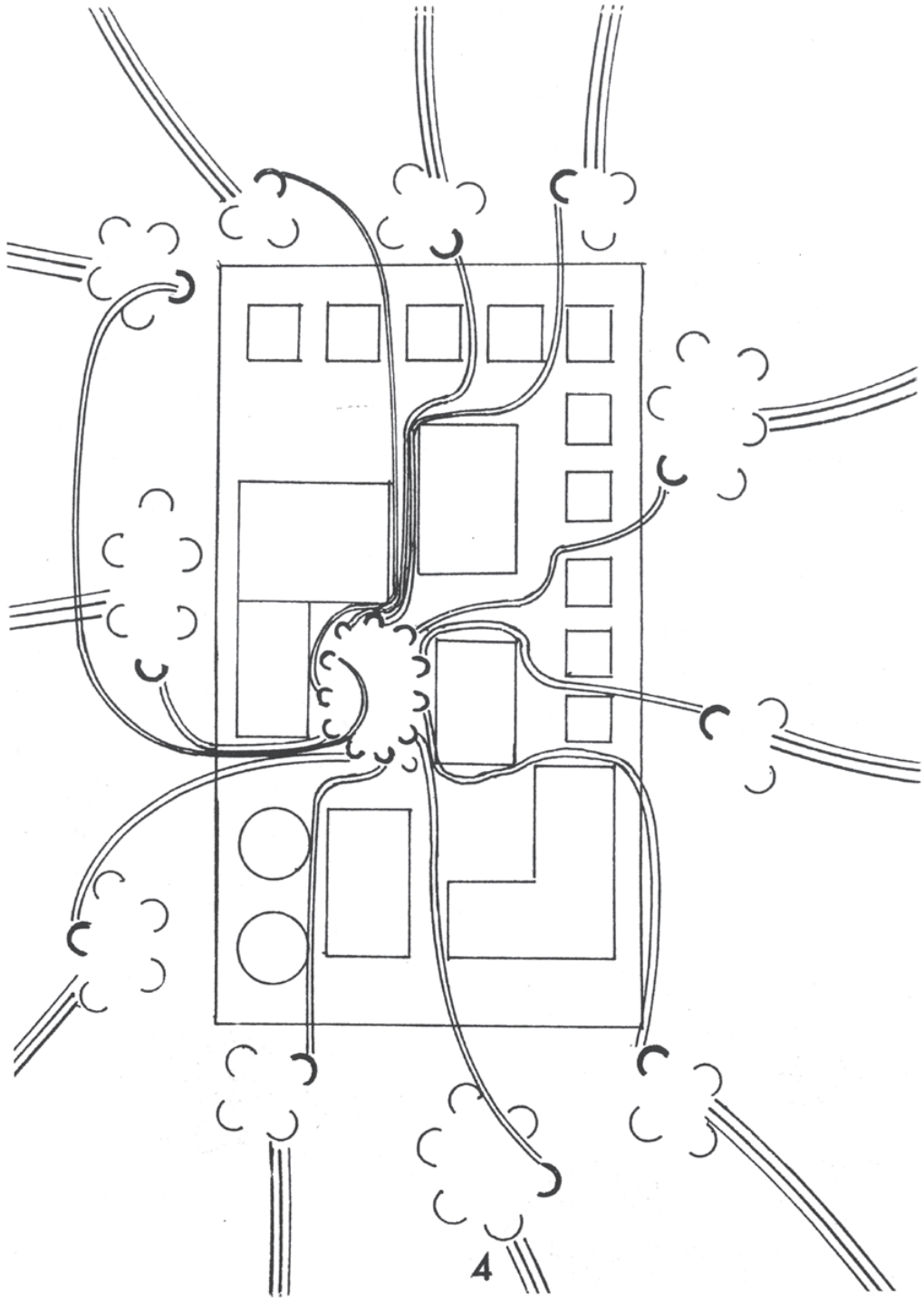
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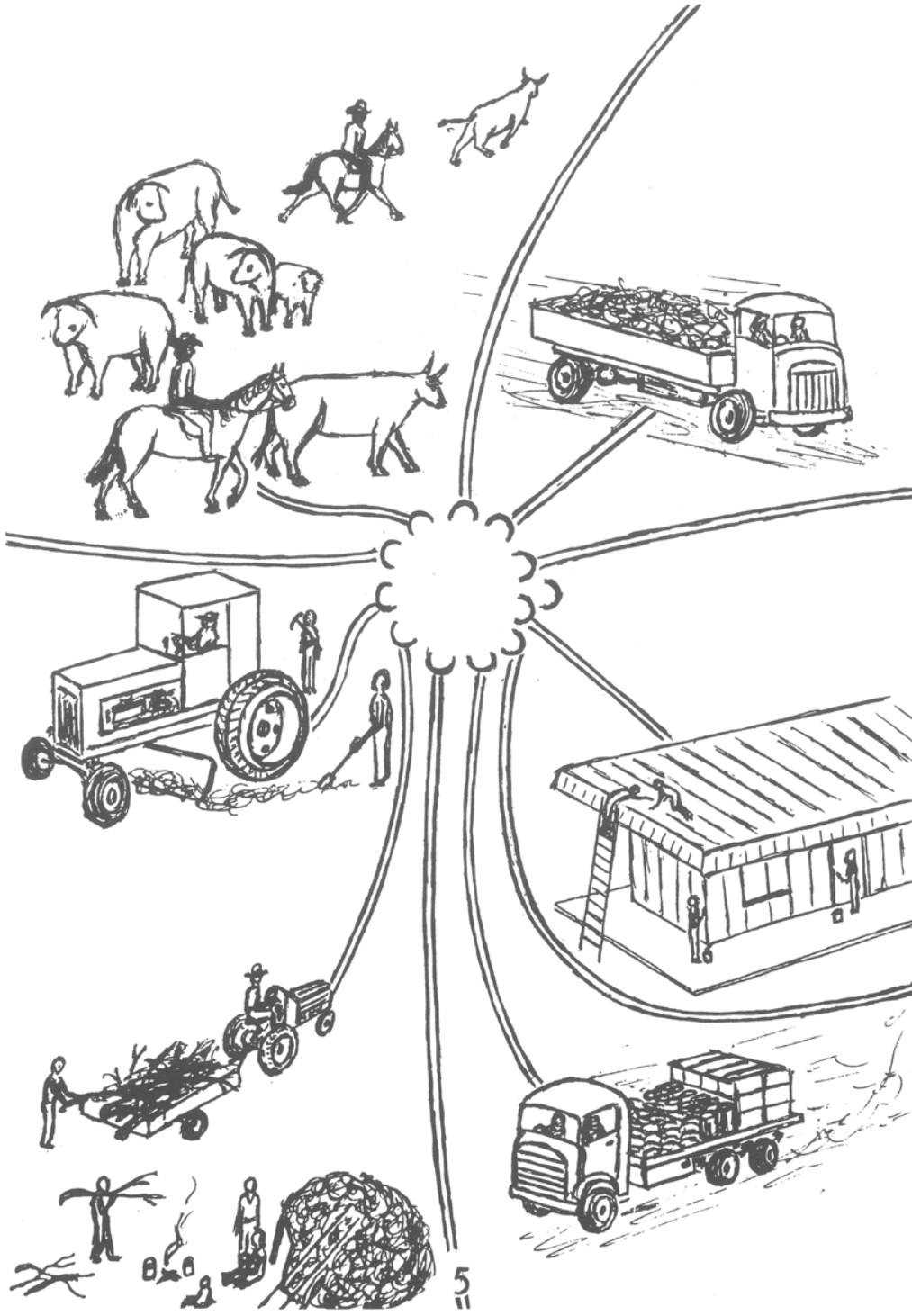

Mining Exploration Licences
Area now covered by mining exploration licence applications.
ARNHEM LAND, N.T.
August 1982

Desert nymph. Whither the future?