



A CASE TO ANSWER

While white Australia celebrates two hundred years of colonial settlement amidst self-congratulatory sounds of champagne corks and balloon popping, there seems to be an undertone of hysteria which seems to be saying, 'Look at ME, World'. 'We really *are* happy buffoons a la Crocodile Mick Dundee.' 'We *are* friendly Australians that even your mum would be pleased to meet'. 'We *are* achievers so pat our backs!' But above the crescendo can be heard the awesome rattle of convict chains, the echo of a society built upon crime, blood, inhumanity, murder, land theft and a callous, criminal lack of compassion and integrity that places the murders, the theft of land, the crime against humanity not in the distant past, but as recent as yesterday.

Today and tonight as I type these words the sound

of human abuse and the white Australians' contemporary lack of humanity, guts and integrity whimpers hauntingly through my windows, surging above the crackle of my campfire, as Black children die from deprivation of clean drinking water, shelter, medical facilities.

The 'celebration' is seen in many quarters, especially overseas, as an ego philandering debauch. A drum booming hollowly, an invitation for the unseen guests to enter and be merry in the house of a host of dubious company. There are reasons, good sound earthy reasons why the bicentennial celebrations have not drawn the crowds, the international visitors, who were expected by governments and tourist bodies to overflow the facilities and swell the depleted coffers of this miserable society.

Perhaps the most important reason affecting international visitors is that the world is no longer the victim of misinformation and political ignorance, as it was fifteen years ago. The evidence of Australia's inhumanity, racism, genocide, its corporate greed, its record of arrogance and criminal business involvement in drugs, sex, confidence exploitation has seeped, like a malodorous vapour, into the knowledge of the citizens of the world. That knowledge of the REAL Australia has placed Australians in a category of racist abusers of humanity to the same level as white South Africa. Indeed, Pic Botha, the white South African Foreign Minister said, and rightly so, that, despite the position of South Africa, Aboriginal people were forced to live under worse conditions, suffer a higher rate of deaths and murder in custody than Black South Africans; have less political representation, etc. Certainly, the material, everyday living conditions of Aboriginals are on a par with Black South Africans. Aboriginal families live and die without clean drinking water facilities, often being forced to carry water, for drinking purposes, twenty or more kilometres. In cases, in the Northern Territory, although camped upon tribal territory which whites took as 'pastoral lease', and the camp only one kilometre from a running stream, the white pastoralist won't let our people drink the water because, he says, "they will frighten the cattle away or upset them". Kids die from lack of adequate clean water.

Even in New South Wales, Aboriginal people live in old car bodies, under scraps of tin, without water coming from a tap, without electricity, without a rain-proof roof over their heads. In New South Wales Aboriginal children are refused medical attention after 'hospital hours'. Their condition is viewed dispassionately and shrugged off as 'neglect' and 'won't help themselves' and 'bludgers' and 'they WANT to live the way they do'. So much is the stereotype entrenched in New South Wales, that the public accepted without protest, and even supported, one of the first actions of the recently elected Liberal Premier, Nick Greiner, who moved to repeal the more humane and positive acts the former Labor Government had instigated in its Land Rights Legislation for that State. Once again white Australians and their 'statesmen' opted for retrogressive tyranny in preference to moving forward to vision and integrity.

As recently as May, 1988, the 7.30 Report on A.B.C National Broadcast television showed the

deplorable conditions of a group of Aboriginal people living near the tourist town of Coffs Harbour, on the North Coast of New South Wales. Their shelter was made out of scraps of tin, gleaned from the town rubbish tips, and old hessian bags. There was was no roadway, no water supply or electricity, no hope for a better future without the direct intervention of the local Aboriginal Land Council. Yet the Premier, Nick Greiner, has moved to destroy the basis of the Land Council that would have ultimately encompassed the group in humanitarian aid projects.

On the 29 July 1987, the Sydney Morning Herald carried a news item with the heading, '*Deprived town where taps won't even give water*'. The article stated how Victor Dennison, an Aboriginal street cleaner, pays \$800 a year in rates to the Moree Plains Shire Council, a white Council. A substantial part of the payment is for the privilege of having two taps standing outside his house but not connected to the water main. In fact, the water mains were installed with substantial assistance from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Budget Allocations. Most of the Aboriginal families cannot afford the \$600 connection fee to the mains. The majority of the families live below the poverty level on social service yet are expected to pay for a service that is normally available throughout any residential area in the white community.

On nearby Toomelah Reserve (a refugee camp), the families have to make do with water that runs for only fifteen minutes each morning and evening. The local health worker, Pam Duncan, told the Human Rights Commission that it was not unusual for the 400 residents of the Toomelah Reserve to go without water for a week. The article details the cases of gastro- enteritis, skin and other infections.

On the 13 September 1987, the Sydney Morning Herald reported, through its journalist David Mc Night: "When the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody examines New South Wales' record, it will find a situation similar to the aftermath of a war." Dr Sutton, the Director of the Bureau of Crime Statistics, released preliminary figures from a study on crime and justice in north western NSW. He said, just as Germany was devastated in 1945, similarly Aboriginal society has undergone the 'wholesale destruction of the entire social fabric'... "The difference was that in Germany there was an attempt to rectify the situation. Here, there was

no attempt." He went on to say, "There was war between whites and blacks in this country and the whites won. And I suppose the blacks, you know, just have to accept they lost. But, on the other hand, the aftermath of war rarely lasts for two hundred years and that is what occurred in this case". Dr Sutton also commented on attitudes, saying that "whites in country towns sometimes blamed Aborigines for not taking up the few opportunities which existed ... but in most cases the Aborigines simply did not have the personal resources to take them up because of the destruction of the social fabric." The statistics showed, "a portrait of a culture harassed and beaten down for decades."

Indictment indeed for a nation founded upon lies, deception, fraud and racial murder, especially when someone of the stature of the Victorian Returned Servicemen's League chief, Mr Bruce Ruxton, recently stated, during a tour of South Africa that: Australia's Aboriginal policy was as racist as Pretoria's apartheid regime. He advised Australia to look at their own Government's policies towards Aborigines before protesting about South Africa's apartheid regime. He said, "I would suggest that some of the homes in the black settlements in South Africa are far better than yours, (in Sydney). I would suggest that the Australian Aboriginal lives in far worse squalor than the south african black does". (Canberra Times 16.9.87).

Justice Einfeld, of the Human Rights Commission, broke down and wept when he saw the inhumane conditions, the abuses against human right and dignity as witnessed in Toomelah, New South Wales.... The judge exclaimed, "It is beyond belief ... I have been to Soweto in South Africa, to German concentration camps, but this is my own country".

Despite our two hundred years of effort to force a sense of justice within white Australia and despite our attempts to find a catalyst to engender a national spirit of integrity, humanity, decency in white Australia generally, our two hundred year war continues - denial of our basic human and indigenous rights continues. How DO we attempt to broaden the dialogue? Especially when that old foe, ignorance, bigotry, racism is so widely entrenched in the white psyche within the community, as well as at the government level?

Australia has signed major covenants on human and political rights internationally. Perhaps a greater moral force will develop the poor white creatures who alienate our great land?

Hope springs eternal, for in more recent times the white community seemed to be saying: "but we don't know what Aborigines want". So we set out to tell them. Land Rights. What is Land Rights? Land Rights equals integrity. Land Rights equals justice. Land Rights equals laying the cornerstone for justice and future human development in this land. A development that will ultimately reach out and encompass many parts of the world within *our* humanity, our abhorrence of wars, maiming, torture and racism; our abhorrence of human degradation, abuse of nature and the land. Still, they do not hear. To the contrary, many say: 'Aborigines get too much'. There is much ado about 'tax-payer' money and this from a society that has murdered us, the rightful owners, placed us in exile and then used the mineral and natural resources of our estates to grow and wax fat like maggots upon the carcass of the stolen inheritance, an inheritance which is and remains rightfully Aboriginal inheritance.

Land Rights equals the return of a viable land base to us; an economic base; reparation on a scale that will allow us to begin the healing of the wounds of two hundred years; compensation to enable us to pipe clean drinking water, to establish medical clinics, to erect adequate shelter, and preserve and practice our culture. Surely, justice is never too high an ideal that it be unattainable for societies like white Australia and white South Africa? Is our last alternative to be that of our brother indigenous people, the Kanaks? Surely all decent and worthwhile nations will move to stop the ultimate genocide that is planned for them by the colonising French. Indeed the same genocide is planned for us, the Aborigines in this land, by white Australia, who daily does what it can to deprive us of human right, including the right to our land and our culture and to enjoy even so much as one good full week of experiencing what it must be like to be healthy, to *feel* healthy and good and unoppressed.

The Sovereign Position and 'Draft Treaty', which follow, are not the ultimate document of the Aboriginal claim, but guides which set out a proto-type documentation in the processes required to obtain some guarantee of integrity and fair dealing. The historical quotes, evidence and legal argument are positive proof of Australia's crimes against humanity and that its claim to 'Australian sovereignty' is a fraudulent claim, illegal and completely untenable in International Law.

K.G. 5 May 1988

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"Aboriginal sovereignty: justice, the law and land", Kevin Gilbert
Canberra 1988.

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