THE LAND RIGHTS OF AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

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A paper prepared for the Australian Council of Churches
with resolutions of its Annual Meeting, 1965.

FOREWORD

The 1964 Annual Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches asked the National Missionary Council of Australia to submit a report on this subject to the next Annual Meeting. It has not been possible for the NMCA to prepare and adopt a full report covering all the Federal and State legislation because virtually no written work exists on this subject. It, therefore, authorised its General Secretary to write a paper which would set out some of the main aspects of the question and to submit it as a personal contribution. It is a preliminary treatment of the subject which he hopes to pursue further at a later stage. He is indebted to Dr. Colin Tatz and Mr. Ian Spalding for advice and information.

I. INTRODUCTION

One sign of the rising concern, in the Australian community, for the Aborigines is the fact that a few people are asking questions about their land rights. This has rarely happened before. One result of the neglect of this subject is that the present situation can be briefly, and fairly accurately, described by three negatives: the Aborigines have no land, no title to land, and no secure tenure of land. There are only two small qualifications to the truth of this statement. They are that Aborigines have some limited rights to hunt over and gather other natural foods from land leased by the Crown to pastoralists and miners, and in the Northern Territory they can now lease up to 160 acres. These minor rights relating to the use of land, do not alter the basic fact that they have no fundamental rights in regard to land.

It cannot be said too strongly that they are a people who have been entirely dispossessed of all their lands. In this regard there is no similarity between their situation and that of the Maoris or the Indians of North America, or almost any other conquered native race. Most peoples who have suffered conquest, whether at the hands of expanding Europeans or Asians (e.g. the Indian invasion of Indonesia, the Ainu race in Japan), have been dispossessed of part of their land; but, at the worst, have been left to possess (not merely occupy) remoter areas. In the case of the Aborigines, the land was taken from them completely. This was done by both private and public action. That is, they were dispossessed in practice by advancing settlers and they were dispossessed in law by the proclamation of all land as belonging to the Crown. Therefore, there rests a double responsibility on Australians — for the private and commercial actions of citizens and for the public acts of governments.

One of the most illuminating incidents occurred in Victoria in 1835. John Batman, on 6th June, 1835, signed a treaty with eight

Aboriginal chiefs for the purchase of 100,000 acres of land, in the vicinity of Port Phillip Bay, called by him Indented Head, and by the Aborigines, Geelong. The treaty was carefully drawn and was interpreted "fully and properly" to the chiefs. It was signed, witnessed and delivered. The tract of land was delineated and marked out by the Aborigines, according to the custom of their tribe, "by certain marks made upon the trees." A price or deposit was paid and a "yearly rent or tribute" was agreed upon. The nature and amount of these payments appear ridiculous to us now, but at least, they represent an attempt to provide something in exchange for the right to "occupy and possess the said tract of land, and place thereon sheep and cattle". Here was a piece of negotiation in place of the more usual dispossession. (For the text of the treaty see "On Aboriginal Affairs", No. 12, July-August 1964).

However, on 26th August, 1835, Governor Bourke repudiated this treaty declaring that only the Crown could make treaties, or contract for the possession of land. This was, no doubt, necessary policy in order to prevent uncontrolled exploitation of the situation. It would have become wise policy, if the Crown itself had entered into treaties with the Aborigines. But that does not appear to have been done. So by the simple device of taking possession in the name of the King of Great Britain, the Aborigines were dispossessed. This was in sharp contrast with British practice in North America and New Zealand, where the Crown made treaties with the Indian "nations" and the Maori tribes. Its importance lay, of course, not in the loss to the Aborigines of so many dozen blankets and tomahawks, or so many tons of flour per annum, but of any legal instrument on which a later claim for adequate compensation could be based.

On a deeper level, it meant an over-riding of the people themselves. More than that, it involved an assumption that the Aborigines had no rights at all, either of property or of consent. And yet only 67 years earlier, the instructions issued to Lt. James Cook by the Admiralty included the words: "You are also **with the Consent of the Natives** to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the name of the King of Great Britain". (Quoted in "On Aboriginal Affairs", No. 12, July-August 1964 from "Captain James Cook in the Pacific", selected extracts from his journals 1768-1779, edited by A. Grenfell Price). Under the influence of men like Sir George Grey in the 1830's and 40's, British policy was based on regard for the welfare of the Maoris and Aborigines. Unfortunately, in Australia, the local pressures and greed for land proved too strong for enlightened imperial policy. The strongest battle occurred in Western Australia where the Imperial Government refused to grant responsible government until protection was assured for the Aborigines. On January 3, 1888, Sir H. T. Holland wrote to Governor Broome that "protection should be assured to the natives by the establishment of an Aboriginal Protection Board on the

lines laid down by the Governor" (Battye, J. S., "Western Australia: a History from Discovery to Inauguration"). So, in spite of strong local resistance to the idea, the Enabling Act of 1890 provided for the payment of £5,000 p.a. to an Aboriginal Protection Board for amelioration of conditions of the Aborigines, the amount to become 1% of the gross revenue when such revenue advanced beyond £500,000 sterling. In 1891, the Board was set up and given £5,000. But in 1894, the W.A. Parliament abolished the Board. The revenue by this time had reached £500,000 and the 1% clause became operative. Much was made of it being undesirable to hand over large sums to a Board not under the direction of a Minister. However, the provision had been insisted on, in view of the poor record in Western Australia in relation to the Aborigines. The Crown, therefore, vetoed the action. But, when in 1897, a new Act was passed, the Crown capitulated and the royal assent was given. So an official attempt to maintain adequate care for the Aborigines was soon got rid of by Sir John Forrest, even although it was a condition of responsible government. He and his colleagues put strict limits on responsibility as it applied to "natives". Some protection, at a minimum price, was unavoidable. There was no recognition of any responsibility in regard to their land rights.

The best that can be said of any of the Australian colonies is that at least there was no pious pretence. It was open-handed plunder based on superior force over the Aborigines and unconcern for the principles and qualms of the Imperial Government.

II. LEGAL ENTITLEMENT TO LAND

This simple, or direct, approach to the solution of a problem found fullest expression in the total destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines. It has been used in the rest of Australia in relation to land rights by taking the uncomplicated view that the Aborigines had, and have, no legal entitlement to the land.

The early settlers observed that the Aborigines had no fenced or cultivated land. To an Englishman these were the only outward signs, other than a legal document, which indicated ownership. They did not know, or pause to find out, that in fact the land was divided between tribes and was under continuous utilization for hunting and other food-gathering. We now know that Aboriginal clans have territorial rights which, as Dr. Donald Thomson has said, "are zealously guarded" and are vested in the clans ("Walkabout", August 1946). But to the English settlers of the 19th Century, no fences and no game-keepers spelt no ownership. Possession was easy and became ten-tenths of the law. After that there were only the choices of destroying, of ignoring, or of providing a minimum handout of land or provisions. In some cases, serious attention was given to their need of land. For example,

between 1848 and 1850 there was an exchange of correspondence between Earl Grey, the Secretary of State, and Sir C. A. Fitz Roy, the Governor of New South Wales, with a view to providing suitable reserves before all land was settled, and of securing the right of wandering in quest of food on land leased by the Crown to settlers. Earl Grey proposed small reserves on which there should be schools and training in agriculture so that the Aborigines could cultivate the land "for their advantage", producing food for sale as well as for themselves. The Surveyor-General was asked to recommend from time to time places "along the coast or rivers where Aborigines fished or camped . . . so that the expediency of reserving them might be decided" by the Executive Council. (Great Britain and Imperial Colonial Office Papers relative to Crown Lands in the Australian Colonies — July 1847 to August 1850). There was, however, no suggestion of any legal entitlement to land on the part of the Aborigines, nor of any legal compensation for dispossession. What was proposed was a practical compensation which sprang from humanitarian considerations.

The South Australian Company made provision for a small contribution from settlers towards a fund to benefit the Aborigines. However, this was rarely collected and we chiefly know of it because of a letter from an honest Quaker remitting his contribution. It is mentioned here as probably being the only legal, or quasi-legal, recognition of Aboriginal land rights in Australian history.

In short, since 1788 there has never been, and there is not now, any legal entitlement of Aborigines to land. However, there is the chance of this becoming a public issue, for on May 23, 1963, the matter was raised in the Federal Parliament by Mr. K. Beazley. Mr. Beazley moved "that in the opinion of this House —

(1) An Aboriginal title to the land of Aboriginal reserves should be created in the Northern Territory.

(2) A form of selection by Aborigines of trustees to conduct affairs arising from this title should be devised, and

(3) Meanwhile, the safeguarding of Aboriginal rights should be ensured by discussion with spokesmen for the Aborigines of the Gove Peninsula area."

In moving this motion, he said "the plain fact is that no Australian Parliament has ever faced the question of whether there is any Aboriginal entitlement to land anywhere in the Commonwealth". Parliament faced it that evening, but did nothing about it.

Possibly the only occasion the matter was hinted at in a colonial or State parliament was in 1890 in the Queensland Legislative Council,

when at the end of a long debate on the Aboriginal Protection Act, a member asked whether it was proposed to grant to Aborigines the right to lease Crown land. The Minister replied by suggesting that the matter be not raised at that stage, and the debate ended.

The Aboriginal Reserves in the Northern Territory and in the States are Crown lands reserved for the use (and protection) of Aborigines. In no sense do they belong to the Aborigines. They are reserved by proclamation. They can be resumed in whole or in part by proclamation. That is, they can be revoked at will by the governments concerned. This has happened on numbers of occasions in the past. And since there are six governments involved there can be six degrees of conviction about the "inviolability" of the reserves and six variations in the method of revoking or altering the reserves, and six different points at which pressure can be exerted by those interested in obtaining pastoral or mining rights in the reserves; which means that those concerned by the preservation of Aboriginal rights in the reserves have to be vigilant, not once nor doubly, but in six directions. Similarly, not one but six sets of acts relating to land and six relating to mining have to be amended if better laws are to be obtained. And they all have to be watched in case inroads are made into what meagre rights exist.

Until recently, Australia has been relatively unworried about world opinion. The Aborigines didn't really matter and that was that. Now, however, other people are our judges in these matters. The Commonwealth Government has been somewhat sensitive to this and has become something of a pace-setter; and certainly the States are influenced by the standards and achievements of the Department of Territories. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Australia has not yet ratified Convention 107 of the International Labour Organisation. Articles 11-14 of Part 2 deal with aboriginal land questions and state that the right of ownership shall be recognised. Admittedly, there are difficulties in the Commonwealth ratifying the Convention because five State governments are also involved. But it is surprising that in the years since the I.L.O. adopted the Convention in June 1957, the Government appears to have done nothing about it. Nor has there been any major discussion of its application to Australian policies and practices in relation to the Aborigines. Is it because it advocates land titles and a policy of integrating tribal or semi-tribal people as a people rather than absorbing them as individuals?

III. CHANGES IN THE RESERVES

It is impossible in this paper to give a comprehensive list of the alterations to all the reserves in the last twenty years. It is, perhaps, sufficient to point out the following:

The Central Reserve

In spite of wide protests, the weapons testing range was placed across the reserve in the late 1940's. More recently the Giles meteorological station and its access roads have been placed in the reserve. Both of these represent considerable inroads and interference with what had been popularly regarded as a major, inviolable reserve.

The Arnhem Land Reserve

This was proclaimed a reserve as recently as 1931 and was regarded at the time as officially inviolable. However, in 1952 the Commonwealth Government made sure that the control of minerals was in the hands of the Crown. In 1953, the Minister for Territories, the Hon. Paul Hasluck, said: "If any part has ceased to be necessary for the use and benefit of the natives, it may be severed from the reserve, and if mining takes place on the severed portion royalties will be paid into a special fund to be applied to the welfare of the natives. The method of revocation has been made subject to strict safeguards involving successively a report by the Director of Native Welfare, a recommendation by the Administrator approved by the Minister, and notification to the Commonwealth Parliament."

In 1963, 140 square miles were exised from Gove Peninsula for bauxite exploitation. This is not a large proportion of the reserve which runs to more than 35,000 square miles, but its excision was significant as making clear that this could happen and that it could be done without consultation with the Aborigines who actually live in that area of the reserve. On the other hand, it must be noted that their natural right to land was recognised in principle by the Government for the first time when it provided for a payment of double royalties from the mining company into a fund for the Aborigines.

In 1963 also, 162 square miles was added to Wagait Reserve. The Northern Territory Report for 1962-63 states: "The net result of these activities was to increase the area of Aboriginal reserves by approximately 20 square miles over the area that existed at 30th June, 1962" (p.44). Dr. Colin Tatz has commented: "The simple point to bear in mind as regards he arithmeticians in the Department of Territories is that the Wagait Reserve is uninhabited. To use a slang expression, 'Big Deal'!"

Cape York

The position in Queensland in the Cape York Peninsula has been described by Dr. Colin Tatz as follows:

"(a) Mona Mona (Seventh Day Adventist) Mission closed down late in 1962. Thus 4,318 acres no longer available to Aborigines.

"(b) Weipa Mission and Mapoon Mission: The granting of a mining lease to Comalco in 1957 meant excision of some 2,500 square miles of reserves, including the Weipa and Mapoon sites. Some 575 acres — increased to 2,500 on protest — were later restored. Original Mapoon (as at 30.6.59) equals 1,353,600 acres; Weipa (as at 30.6.59) equals 876,800 acres.

"It is interesting to note that the official reports of the Native Affairs Department, Queensland, make no mention of these excisions, except in the case of Mona Mona in the 1963 report."

The Population and Size of Reserves in the Northern Territory as at 30.6.63.

Reserve	Population	Area in Square Miles
Amoonguna	512	2
Arnhem Land	3,231	35,680
Groote Eylandt	637	830
Daly River	452	5,450
Bathurst Island	869	786
Melville Island	343	2,100
Hooker Creek	277	845
Beswick	279	1,315
Bagot	313	1
Jay Creek	117	116
Warrabri	518	170
Yuendumu	649	850
R.1028	984	44,800
Larrakeyah	0	14
Woolwonga	0	162
Wagait	0	550
	9,181	93,671

It should be noted that the last three reserves named are uninhabited and are uninhabitable. They, therefore, distort the picture to the extent of 726 square miles.

IV. RIGHTS IN REGARD TO LEASED LAND

Although Aborigines have no title to land and no permanently secure tenure of the reserves, they do have some minor rights in regard to leased Crown lands. The most important of these is the right to lease 160 acres in the Northern Territory. The Crown Land Ordinance 1931-1959 provides in Part VII, Section 112 that "the Governor-General may grant to any aboriginal native, or the descendant of any aboriginal native a lease of any Crown lands, not exceeding one hundred

and sixty acres in area, for any term of years upon such terms and conditions as he thinks fit". This is a clear legal right to lease land, and the Northern Territory is to be commended for its inclusion.

However, its presence in the Ordinance raises certain questions. Does this mean that the rest of the Ordinance does not apply to Aborigines in the sense in which it applies to other Australians? For example, Section 34 states that a lease "may be granted to **any person** of the age of eighteen years or over". Section 68 provides for the allotment by the Administrator of any town land, offered but not sold at a public auction, to **any person who applies** for it at the rental fixed. Does the granting of full citizenship to Aborigines in the Northern Territory in 1964 mean that they do come within the meaning of "any person", in spite of the special provision of Section 112? Why is there a limit of 160 acres in Section 112, when the limit on the size of pastoral leases is 5,000 square miles (Section 38A) and on mixed farming and grazing leases varies from 12,800 to 38,400 acres, and on cultivation farms ranges from 1,280 to 2,560 acres (Section 61)? Does the difference in size, and the fact that the lease is to be granted by the Governor-General, instead of the Minister or the Administrator as in other parts of the Ordinance, mean that Section 112 is simply special provision for special cases, and that Aborigines generally come within the meaning of 'any person' in the rest of the Ordinance?

In addition to the provision under Section 112, the Ordinance safeguards the food-gathering rights of Aborigines on lands leased by the Crown. This was provided for in Section 24(e) which was amended in 1964 (No. 38 of 1964, Section 4). Section 24 defines the reservations of rights in regard to leases, e.g. the reservation of mineral rights to the Crown. The amended paragraph (e) reads:

> "a reservation in favour of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Northern Territory shall be read as a reservation permitting aborigines -
>
> (i) to enter and be on the leased land;
>
> (ii) to use the natural waters and springs on the leased land;
>
> (iii) to kill upon the leased land and use for food birds and animals **ferae naturae".**

It should be noted that the amendment is not merely a simpler form of words. It omits any reference to the descendants of all the Aboriginal inhabitants who are specifically mentioned in the original. It also omits reference to the right "to make and erect thereon such wurlies and other dwellings as those aboriginal inhabitants are, from time to time, accustomed to make and erect". The latter appears to be

a significant reduction of right in favour of pastoralists. Or is it an example of pressure towards assimilation?

The water and food rights are secondary rights in comparison to the primary rights of title and tenure, but they are, nevertheless, important for those Aborigines who are still nomadic. The problem relating to them is not so much one of legal safeguard as of policing the law. The leases to which they refer are usually in remote areas and it is difficult to ensure that pastoralists, miners and others respect the rights of the Aborigines under such laws as the Crown Land Ordinance or State Land, Mining and Fauna Conservation Acts. Even our recent history has many instances of the denial of these rights. On the other hand, some greater effort appears to be being made to police them, especially in the Northern Territory. What is not provided for, of course, is the deprivation which takes place when cattle or sheep are placed on the land. In dry country, the stock belonging to one pastoralist, which after all are his means of bread and butter, can quickly deprive several dozen or a hundred Aborigines of theirs. The hungrier the pastoralist and the more he overstocks, the quicker the land becomes barren of those wild root plants which provide some of the sustenance of Aborigines, as well as of its natural bird and animal life. It should be noted that Section 24 makes no mention of wild plant life, in either its original or amended forms. This suggests that it is the pastoralist rather than the Aborigine who is being "protected" in this case.

V. TWO IMPORTANT FAILURES

Two of the most advanced and important practical approaches to leasehold for Aborigines were made by the Australian Board of Missions in 1959. At that time, the Anglican Church was in charge of Yarrabah Mission Station in Queensland. Consideration was given to the future of the land and the people there, and a proposal was carefully prepared that parts of the Yarrabah Reserve be leased to the Aborigines under the provisions of the Land Acts of Queensland. However, the Government was unsympathetic. A second plan, also put forward in 1959, was to form a company to be called the Carpentaria Aboriginal Pastoral Company Limited which would apply to the Queensland Government for lease of land being used as Mission Reserves at the Mitchell, Edward and Lockhart Rivers. Aborigines would have participated in the ownership and control of the company. This proposal was favourably regarded by the Lands Department but the Department of Native Affairs ruled it out.

VI. TWO MATTERS OF HONOUR

Even a brief survey of the land question in Australia makes it clear that there is such a question and that it involves our national

honour. Until recently, the question about Aboriginal right to land was rarely thought of and even more rarely asked. Now, it is being asked quite clearly and firmly why the Aborigines should not have title to land and why they should not be compensated for the loss of their lands. It is a matter of honour as to whether Australian Governments and people are willing to accept, as a national responsibility, the double reaction of granting title and providing compensation.

1. Title

Land is a basic factor of all human life. It is basic, not in the sense of private ownership of a parcel of it, but in the sense that each individual belongs to a people who belong to a defined area of land which legally and permanently belongs to them. It is in this general sense which applies to all human beings as human beings that it is, first of all, important to the Aborigines that there is land which is theirs, by right, as a people.

Secondly, land which has been occupied for generations has important psychological, social and cultural associations for individuals and the race. These are not dispensable extras of life itself. So to be deprived of land is to be deprived also of these things connected with the land which give meaning, stability, security and motive force to individual and group existence. The truth of this is demonstrated in the life of every exile and of every refugee of whatever race, including a good number of naturalised Australians. It is also true for the natural-born Australian, even though he is unaware of it. It is not, and cannot be, less true of Australian Aborigines whose relationship to the land has always been direct and immediate, unfiltered by urban existence.

This natural relationship of all men to the land is intensified for the Aborigines by the closely-woven inter-relation between the land and their religious beliefs and practices.

Land is also basic in the economic sense. It is by exploitation of land that men live and acquire wealth. Dispossessed of land, the Aborigine is dispossessed also of the means of economic progress through farming, mining or industrial development.

It is, then, not good enough to say "Let them be assimilated and get security, inspiration and profit from the land in the way other Australians do". The fact is that they are different historically and racially and different in their relationship to this physical continent by virtue of their inheritance, culture and religion. Their relationship to the land needs to have some secure and permanent legal basis. This should include secure, permanent title to certain lands.

It is not suggested that all individual Aborigines have title to a piece of land; but that the people as a people have a corporate title.

In practice this would mean that Aborigines would, as tribes, clans or local councils, have entitlement to, and permanent rights of occupancy of, certain lands with which they have an historic or spiritual connection. In general these would be the existing reserves; but there would need to be a careful examination of the reserves and of other Crown lands to ensure that justice was being done. For example, R.1028 (see the table above) makes up nearly half (44,800 out of 93,671 square miles) of the area of reserves in the Northern Territory; but its population is only 984 out of a total of 9,181 in the Territory. If this land is valuable and desirable to the Aborigines, it should be considered as land to which title might be granted. If, on the other hand, it is not, then its size would distort the picture. In other words, while some desert land may be important to some desert peoples, there would have to be care that entitlement was not given to useless land that neither we nor the Aborigines want or can use.

Another factor to be considered is that land may be important to Aborigines even although they do not appear to be residing on it or making much use of it. Drs. R. M. and C. H. Berndt have made the point that when Aborigines are absent, residing at a mission station, they do not surrender their hereditary rights over their own country but continue to exercise these through hunting, food-collecting and holding ceremonies at sacred sites. ("Summary Report, the University of Western Australia Anthropological Survey of the Eastern Goldfields, Warburton Range and Jigalong Regions, January 26th-March 2nd, 1957", p.6).

The question of the best use of the land needs thorough study, not simply from the point of view of the national economy or international need of food or minerals, but also from the point of view that the Aborigines have few material assets other than their land (even if, in law, they have no title to this asset).

It may be necessary initially, after the granting of title to land, to make provision for public or governmental trusteeship until such time as Aboriginal tribal or local councils are ready to take full legal and administrative responsibility. Any such unpreparedness should not be used as an excuse for delay, especially as trusteeship is a normal procedure, e.g. the Northern Territory Crown Lands Ordinance provides for it in relation to public parks, although not in relation to Aboriginal reserves.

In any Act granting title to land, there should be a clause which prevents the alienation of that land to non-Aborigines.

2. Compensation

In the U.S.A., it has been possible for American Indians to take legal action to obtain financial compensation for the loss of land. This

is not possible in Australia, because the Crown claimed all land by proclamation and did not make any treaties with Aboriginal tribes. There does not appear to be any known contract, undertaking or incident which could serve as the basis for a claim for compensation in a court of law. There is no point then in considering the establishment of a land claims commission or a land court.

The problem was created by the Crown originally. It is, therefore, for the Crown to take steps to put the matter right. This involves, first of all, an attitude that is new to Australia but accepted in the United States — an attitude of corporate responsibility as a people for injustice done to a minority. In the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the United States Congress approved "an annual authorization of 2,000,000 dollars for the purchase of lands, such purchases to be held under trust and exempt from taxation"; and it gave "authority for a revolving credit fund of 10,000,000 dollars from which loans might be made to tribes". This was later enlarged to 12,000,000 dollars. By 1941, 4,000,000 acres had been added to the Indian land base (Harold E. Fey and D'Arcy McNickle, "Indians and Other Americans", pp. 96, 100). Here was a public recognition and acceptance of responsibility for the loss of land and of obligation to restore land. Australia has yet to give a similar sign of a mature approach to a moral problem. We have dodged the issue by providing "protection" and "welfare" and talking of "assimilation". But good deeds and good words can never be a substitute for acres and funds.

It should not be overlooked that the provisions of the Indian Organization Act are quite separate from the millions of dollars awarded to particular tribes in courts of law.

The National Missionary Council of Australia has appealed for the setting up of a National Aborigines Capital Fund. This would be provided by annual contributions from Federal and State Governments. It would be administered by a Grants Commission, similar to the Universities' Commission, which would be empowered to make grants to recognised groups of Aborigines and to individuals. The grants would be for the purchase of land, the development of land settlement schemes, the establishment of industries, and the training of Aborigines for rural and industrial work, and in local self-government. The working out and implementation of such a scheme is urgently necessary in order to bring new hope and dignity to a people whom we have stripped not only of their land but also of those fundamental qualities which give meaning and character to human life.

If the Australian people and governments were to take seriously these two matters of title to land and land compensation and were to act constructively and generously in relation to them, here could be a radical transformation in the relation between the two races and a

birth of self-confidence among the Aborigines themselves. But to do that, and so open a door into the future, we must abandon forever the dream and myth of a continent peopled by one homogeneous people bound together by one colour of skin and a single way of life. We must reject the image of ourselves as uncomplicated, honest people who can solve all problems by a simple, direct approach. We shall have to face the fact that there can be no escape in the modern world from the complexities of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds and ways of life. Even in our geographic isolation we have no right to seek escape from the fact and the responsibilities of a pluralist society. We cannot prevent the day coming when Aborigines will join with Asians and Africans in demanding that we face the realities of life and the obligation of being a responsible society. It will be as well that we act constructively now.

RESOLUTIONS OF ACC ANNUAL MEETING 1965

1. That the Federal Government be asked as a matter of urgency to ratify Convention 107 of the International Labour Organisation.

2. That steps be taken by the ACC to encourage public discussion of Aboriginal entitlement to land compensation.

3. That the Division of Mission be asked to keep the matter of land rights under review and to study the matter further.

4. That there be referred to the Division of Mission the question of a national consultation on Aboriginal land rights.

5. That a copy of the resolutions that we have passed be sent to the State Premiers and Opposition Leaders and the Minister in Charge of Aboriginal Affairs in each State, with a copy of the Rev. F. Engel's paper.

February, 1965