6 Indigenous Issues
The Intentional Underdevelopment of Aboriginal Communities.

This chapter will examine the reasons why Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are the most economically disadvantaged people in 21st-century Australia. It is present-day structures and actions which inhibit Indigenous people's economic success rather than some aspect of Indigenous culture or psychological make-up. It is further contended that those obstacles and earlier equivalent impediments have been put in place by mainstream Australia. Before such propositions can be assessed, the history of race relations during the last four centuries needs to be briefly canvassed.

The history

Until about the time of the Second World War the prevailing orthodoxy was that the 'natives' were primitives incapable of reaching a similar level of civilisation to whites. Aborigines needed to be 'protected', they could be useful as unpaid labour but were probably destined to die out in the face of a superior culture determined to develop Australia (Reynolds 1989 Chs. 1-4). During the 1920s and 30s the allegedly 'liberal' response to the perceived decline of the Indigenous population in many parts of the continent was to 'smooth the dying pillow'. The Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Dr C. Cook, at the initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities in 1937 declared "If we leave them alone they will die and we shall have no problem" (cited in Bennett 1957, p.13). That is, the eventual extinction of Indigenous Australians was believed inevitable and, as it was unavoidable, the humane response was to make their 'passing' as comfortable as possible. It seems to have escaped the notice of such 'liberals' that a policy which accepted the disappearance of an entire race as a result of their dispossession by an allegedly 'superior' culture is genocide. There were Europeans who took a determined stand alongside Indigenous people and who attempted to ensure Indigenes had shelter and adequate nutrition. Sometimes this was done because the Aborigines were needed as labour, sometimes out of a sense of justice, out of a desire to expand Christendom or for other reasons (Reynolds 1990).

Even well into the 1950s there were many Australians who believed that Aborigines would 'disappear'. The widespread acceptance of Aboriginal people's eventual demise led Dr. Charles Duguid to warn in an address to the Anti-slavery Society in June 1954: "It can be said quite fairly that if Aboriginal people die out now, it is because we are willing that they should" (cited in Bennett 1957, p.10).

Professor Elkin, was for many years in the middle of the last century, accepted as a foremost authority on Australian Aborigines. He set out a number of stages through which he considered Aborigines would progress before they became assimilated. The most detailed elaboration appears in an article "Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia" (1951) and a simplified version appears in his book *The Australian Aborigine* (1961). The simplified version retains the core argument of the more detailed account. Elkin suggests that five stages of development would be experienced; they were - Clash, Pauperism, Intelligent Parasitism, Protection and Assimilation (pp.321-338).
Clash and its associated pacification by force share with the other stages of 'development' the fact that they are frequently referred to as part of the cultural and historical explanations of the Aboriginal failure to 'develop'. Elkin does not take a cultural perspective very much into account, until he comes to examine protection. If there is any 'cultural explanation' to be found in the clash stage it must be in the explanation of the European exploitation rather than in the Aboriginal reaction. There is little purpose in searching for cultural reasons as to why people who had their land invaded fought back. Likewise, the cultural explanation does not add to the understandings of why a people who had their total resources stolen became paupers. It was political and economic factors which sent whites to Australia, and particularly economic factors which caused whites to invade the Aborigines' land.

The cultural explanations of Aboriginal pauperism usually commence from the point where the Aborigines are defined as a dispirited, displaced collection of individuals or groups. It is contended that because of the traumatic experience they have undergone, as a result of the clash phase, they no longer have sufficient social resources to capitalise on the opportunities which do occur. The real facts are that, throughout the history of Aboriginal contact with whites, the Aborigine has never been left with nor provided with the necessary prerequisites with which to build a sound economic base. Even the locations on which they have been placed or have been allowed to remain have usually been chosen because that country was not wanted, at the time, by whites.

An attempt by Aborigines to hold on to land in the early stages was not seen as a *self-help endeavour* but as proof that they stood in the way of progress. Whatever attempts were made to help Aborigines escape pauperism, prior to the mid 1970s, were made in the style of the 'welfare approach' by missions and government rather than by encouraging the development of Indigenous control of the local economy (Pearson 1999 [a] & [b].

**Intelligent parasitism**

Elkin is known popularly for his phrase 'intelligent parasitism'. When he applied this phrase to Aborigines he meant it purely as a descriptive term to cover that part of Aboriginal life which involved ingratiating oneself with whites in order to be fed and clothed by them in return for work. In the early stages it meant that Aborigines who did not want to fight any more would make themselves useful in order that the farmer might protect them against other whites. Once the land was taken, Aborigines were left with little to 'contribute' to whites apart from their labour and their wives. In some instances they had information of use to whites.

The introduction of the term 'intelligent parasitism' has had unfortunate consequences because the wider Australian society is one in which the middle classes on the whole believe they must be careful to avoid the threat of being enveloped in a 'welfare state'. The middle classes fail to acknowledge that they are in receipt of numerous welfare benefits. For this reason the mainstream have come to accept the term 'parasite' when applied to Aborigines, but the 'intelligence' of the approach is denied. If one of these terms has more relevance than the other it is the 'intelligence' of the activity. It is not credible that a group of people who considered the Aborigine as a 'rural pest' (Rowley 1972[a] ) one year attempted to shoot them out, is going to turn around the next year and put up with them 'hanging around the station growing fat on white
men's work'. At the Arbitration Commission in the Northern Territory hearing in 1967 which has since become known as the *Aboriginal Wage Case*,

Professor Elkin's 'intelligent parasitism' was used so continually ...by pastoralist, Union, Commonwealth and the Commission itself ...to draw such different conclusions that I am inclined to think Professor Elkin will never want to want to hear it again (Stevens 1967, p. 21, quoting Professor Stanner emphasis in original).

**Protection and assimilation**

Protection and Assimilation are both stages which tell us more about the cultural attitudes of Europeans than of Indigenous Australians. Both were policies drawn up by whites - at no time were Aborigines consulted. To claim that Aborigines' failure to develop despite the best intentions of the protectors or the assimilationists is due to cultural factors, is gross ethnocentrism. People who have little power to put their point of view frequently engage in non-compliance as one method of resisting change.

The Queensland Protection Act of 1897 and its revisions in 1939, 1965 and 1971 provided limited protection for the lives of Aborigines, but the Act continued even into the 1970s to be repressive of civil liberties, paternalistic and badly designed to encourage initiative. The implementation of the Act by the Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs was consistently criticised by a wide range of informed opinion. Irrespective of any cultural problems that Aborigines might encounter in 'developing', they had imposed upon them legislation and administrative procedures which even the then *Courier Mail* editor considered likely to interfere with development (editorial, 16th February 1971).

Assimilation was defined at the 1961 meeting of Federal and State Ministers in charge of Aboriginal affairs:

The policy of assimilation means in the view of all Australian governments that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hope and loyalties as other Australians. (cited in Pittock 1969, pp.12-13).

In 1965 the definition was changed in response to pressure:

...so that now the policy officially *seeks* (rather than means) that all persons of Aboriginal descent *will choose* to attain (*rather than are expected eventually to attain*) a *similar* (rather than the same) manner and *standard* of living. The words 'observing the same customs', are omitted, and so too is reference to their 'being influenced by the same beliefs'." (Pittock 1969, p. 13) (italics in original).

The system of ‘protection’ afforded Indigenes did not assist them to take control of their communities in a way which would have allowed Indigenous autonomy. Aboriginal people’s initiatives to fit into white capitalist systems have been undermined by many of the very people who were supposed to ‘protect’ them. There has been a deliberate policy to leave underdeveloped Aboriginal land until white capitalist interests were ready to acquire it. There are
clear connections between these past events and Mabo, Wik, and the Howard ten point plan (Kerruish & Purdy 1998).

In order to dispel any suggestion that the present analysis is only possible because of recent publications, many texts from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s which provide a similar analysis to the one made here are cited. That is, the defence cannot be mounted that white Australia did not have the opportunity to come to a just accommodation with Indigenous Australians because the continued exploitation of Aboriginal Australians was unknown. One example of this approach is the extract from the Dougie Young (1995) song quoted below which was widely available when it was recorded by Gary Shearston in 1965 on a CBS label.

**Hegemonic themes**

- The first theme in white Australia is that Aborigines can live on the land as long as it is not required by white interests.
- The second theme is that if the land is required by white interests Aborigines are expected to vacate it.
- The third theme is that if Aborigines put up a fight to retain the land then the choice is between extinguishing the Aborigines or more recently extinguishing their property rights. These themes still have application at the start of the 21st century. This chapter looks at their impact on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These hegemonic themes have, from the beginning of the colonial experience, helped ensure the underdevelopment of areas which Aboriginal people are deemed to control. Aboriginal communities are, as a result underdeveloped and marginalised (Davies & Young 1996, Jackson 1996, Lane & Chase 1996, Bennett 1957). Indigenous people are, as a part of this process, assigned low status roles thus weakening their capacity to garner mainstream support. But Indigenous people in Australia have tenaciously clung to those parts of the continent from which they have not been forcibly alienated and have waged a relentless resistance to the colonial process. In the words of Aboriginal song writer Dougie Young (1995):
  
  Now they laugh in my face.
  They say I'm a disgrace.
  They say I've got no sense.
  The whiteman took this country from me.
  He's been fighting for it ever since.

Henry Reynolds (1998, 1999) describes how the failure of the bulk of the white population to acknowledge what was and is occurring to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders allows inhumane practices to continue. The mechanism of denial which is exemplified in John Howard's refusal to apologise to the Stolen Generations or more generally white Australia's refusal to acknowledge what it has done to Indigenous people, allows governments, corporations and non-Indigenous individuals to escape provision of adequate reparation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and thereby provide a sound basis for a just reconciliation.

The Prime Minister’s 10 point plan and the one point plan of Queensland's National Party Premier Borbidge to extinguish native title on pastoral leases, which followed the High Court’s
Wik Judgement, only make political sense if Indigenous Australians are conceived of as separate from and of lesser importance than other Australians (Reynolds 1996, Tomlinson 1996).

Governments, during the 1950s and 1960s, maintained Aborigines as *natives* by institutionalising them on segregated reserves ‘for their protection’ (Elkin 1961, Turnbull, 1974 *contra* Kelly 1966, Walker 1971, Black Resource Centre Collective 1976, Coombs 1994, *Frontier* 1997, Kidd 1997). Aboriginal people who resided off reserves and who were not assimilated into white society, were relegated to fringes of country towns (Rowley 1972[a], Malezer 1979, Bropho 1980, Edmunds 1989, Day 1994) and ghettos like Redfern and South Brisbane (Rowley 1972[b], Tomlinson 1974[a], Buchanan 1974). They were assigned a welfare/charity role which encouraged their being pitied as ‘victims of their own inadequacies’. In rural areas the women continued to be exploited sexually and the men utilised as seasonal workers. In both city and rural areas they were marginalised. Indigenous issues were perceived by the general public to be of little political importance until the period leading up to the 1967 referendum. Professor Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lectures described the failure of white Australians to seriously consider the situation confronting Indigenous Australians as 'The Great Australian Silence'. This is the recent historical background which generates current perceptions of Indigenous Australians.

**Misperceptions**

When Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are conceived of as an entity - white Australia uses the term ‘Aboriginal race’, or the pejorative epithets 'abos, boongs, gins or jackies'. None of the diversity which exists, within and between, Indigenous Australians is appreciated. There is little recognition of the major cultural differences between groups such as:

- the Yolngu of north eastern Arnhemland,
- the Pintubi of Northern Territory / Western Australian border,
- the Nyungar of the south west of Western Australia,
- the Kooris of New South Wales and Victoria,
- the Nunga of South Australia, or
- the Murris of southern Queensland.

Each of these regional groupings contain diverse clans and language groups. Certainly many of the original owners of this country see some political advantage in maintaining a common identity as Indigenous Australians but the development of such a pan-Aboriginal identity has been a long time in the making. Similar formulations of wider regional identities, even continental identities, have been a driving force in the anti-colonial developments in Africa (Cabral 1973, Fanon 1967) and Asia. Prior to the invasion there was no social or political need for a pan-Aboriginal identity.

Non-racist white Australia recognises, that 'seen one blackfellow seen the lot' mentality is an inadequate description of Indigenous diversity. It is common to encounter people who talk about ‘traditional Aborigines who maintain their culture (who live somewhere in the great outback) and urban blacks who are just drunks and no hopers’. One they might see from the tram the other they know they’ll never meet until they retire and go on the big round Australia trip. This assessment of Indigenous Australians is a late 20th century distortion of the earlier distinction made between Rousseauan noble savages and those who have failed the test of social
Darwinism. Since the early 1970s mainstream society also recognises the victims / trouble maker divide as existing within the Aboriginal community.

**Health**

The health of Indigenous Australians should shame any citizen (National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Health Clearing House 1999, Bennett 1957, Kalokerinos 1974, Moodie 1973, The Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists 1980). The life expectancy of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders is about 15 - 20 years lower than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory: “In most States and Territories, their babies are about 2 - 3 times more likely to be of low birth weight and about 2 - 4 times more likely to die at birth than are babies born to non-Indigenous mothers” (McLennan & Madden 1997 p. 1).

Between 1988 and 1994 the gap between Aboriginal and total Australian mortality rates widened, especially for women. ….About 30 percent of maternal deaths occur in Aboriginal women and Torres Strait Island women who constitute only about 3 percent of confinements" (National Health and Medical Research Council 1996 p.3). During the early 1990s, on Cape York women were dying at a younger age than was the case in 1979 (Fischer 1993). Governments claim to be promoting dramatic solutions, yet Access Economics has shown health expenditure on each Indigenous person is lower than that provided for the non-Indigenous population, and the level of underspending on Indigenous health has stayed remarkably constant over the last 20 years (Kilham 1995, Deeble et al. 1998).

After viewing a number of Aboriginal settlements in the 1930s world-renowned Australian ophthalmologist, Professor Dame Ida Mann, when asked what drugs she would prescribe for outback Aborigines with so much trachoma remarked: ‘Drugs? I’d prescribe water. If governments were to put the water on, nobody would have trachoma’ (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989 p. vii).

In 1979 the first recommendation of the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Health was that “the highest priority be given and immediate action taken to provide clean and adequate water supplies to all Aboriginal communities.” (p. xv). In 1996 an ABS survey estimated that 7% of rural Indigenous households did not have running water (McLennan & Madden 1997 p.13, National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Health Clearing House 1999). There are still at least 100 Aboriginal communities in remote Australia which do not have access to clean drinking water.

It has not been a recent discovery that Indigenous Australians die younger and are more frequently sick than non-Indigenous Australians essentially because in many places they do not have access to clean running water, decent nutrition (Bennett 1957) and adequate housing with safe sanitation systems. None of these essentials is beyond the capacity of Australian governments to provide. The failure to provide this basic infrastructure, unconscionable as it is, can only be explained within a paradigm of institutional racism. White Australia:

- stole the land,
- introduced stock which depleted traditional nutritional sources (Heppell & Wigley 1981 p. 5, Penny & Moriarty 1976, Frith 1976, Bennett 1957 Chapt. 3),
- destroyed traditional sanitation practices and
• failed to put in place alternative health mechanisms (Rowse 1995).

In 1971 the cost of the housing backlog in Aboriginal Australia was estimated by Francis Lovejoy to be $3,000 million. In 1972 the Whitlam Government was regarded as overly generous when it announced it would spend $30 million each year for ten years to solve ‘the Aboriginal housing problem’ (Heppell 1979). This amount would, on its own, hardly keep pace with the increased housing demand from population increase. In 1999 one third of housing, managed by the 707 Indigenous housing organisations, was reported to be in need of major repair or replacement (ABS 2000). Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have the lowest socioeconomic status of all segments of the Australian community (McLennan & Madden 1997).

In December 1997 the Howard Government promised several billions dollars in loan guarantees to assist the International Monetary Fund prop up the economies of Indonesia, Thailand and Korea. On the 21st of January 1998, the day following the Government announcing it had put aside an additional $300 million to provide insurance assistance to Australian exporters trading with Korea the Federal Health Minister, Michael Wooldridge, was presented with a report commissioned by the Australian Medical Association and the Australian Pharmaceutical Manufactures Association. This report detailed the reasons behind the appalling Aboriginal morbidity and mortality figures in rural Australia. The report argued that limited access to and the high cost of fresh fruit and vegetables was a prime cause of Indigenous health difficulties in remote Aboriginal communities. Faced with this report Wooldridge (who was, at the time, visiting rural areas of the Northern Territory) responded, by saying "It is difficult for a Commonwealth Government to do much about fruit and vegetables in local stores" (ABC TV News 21st January 1998).

Incarceration

The first detailed academic documentation of police harassment of Aborigines was carried out by Eggleston (1976). Young men are many times more likely to be in remand centres than are their white counterparts. Aboriginal people are 27 times more likely to be in police custody and 11 times more likely to be in prison than other Australians (White & Perrone 1997 pp. 157-8, Wilson 1982). In 1974 the Queensland branch of Amnesty International produced a monograph entitled Institutionalisation: A way of Life in Aboriginal Australia (Tomlinson 1974[b]). Two decades later, on the 17th October 1996, Amnesty International’s London Office published a condemnation of Australia’s treatment and inordinate incarceration rates for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Just how determined white Australia is to maintain the subordination of Aborigines is revealed by the twelve volume Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody published in 1991: it recommended many ways of keeping Aborigines out of custody in order to decrease the number of Black deaths in custody. A follow up report (Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 1996) established that Aborigines were being incarcerated at a greater rate than in the period 1980 -1989 and more Aborigines are dying in custody as a result. “Although Aborigines represent only 1.4 percent of the adult population, they accounted for more than 25 percent of all deaths in police and prison custody during the year to June 1996” (Amnesty International 1997).
Police killings of Aborigines in Australia have a long lineage. Officially sanctioned police punitive raids did not end with the 60 to 100 Aborigines slaughtered in the Coniston massacre in 1928 (Young 1981) but continued in the North of South Australia at least until the early 1940s (Rowley 1972 [a] p. 204). Police and settlers continued to kill and maim small groups of Aborigines in remote Australia until at least the early 1980s (NT News 21/7/80 p.1). In cities, with the notable exception of incidents like the slaughter of David Gundy, the police content themselves with severe bashings of Indigenous Australians (ABC TV 1996). The police play an important political role in relation to Indigenous Australians; they are the front line of social control, they are the group which selects individuals to be criminalised (Tomlinson 1994), they in large part determine who will be “jailed and killed” (Walker 1971, p.34), they are an essential element in political marginalisation of Indigenes.

In recent times many Australian state and territory governments have adopted 'law and order' policies which have impacted disproportionately upon Indigenous communities. Mandatory sentencing is just the latest in a long line of such legislative provisions. The failure to implement many of the Royal Commission into Black deaths in custody recommendations which aim to decrease the number of Indigenous people in custody, for example by not decriminalising drunkenness, has led to increases in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in jail. Coupled with this have been policies such as 'truth in sentencing' and the imposition of mandatory jail sentences for minor offences such as petty theft (Land Rights News, Feb 1998 p.13, Bessant 2000 [b], Cunneen 2001). All of these policies have led to a dramatic increase in the number of Indigenous people in custody.

In early 2000 a death in custody in Darwin of a young Indigenous minor offender, whilst serving a mandatory sentence, lead to an international debate and minor changes were forced on the Territory Government (Land Rights News 2000 [a] March, pp.16-17). The United Nations Committees on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and Human Rights made adverse finding against Australia over mandatory sentencing, the Howard Government's response to the Stolen Generation and the ten point plan.

Fringe camps, missions, reserves and settlements

The system of having a protector of Aborigines whether in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales or in more sparsely populated regions such as Western Australia never led to the consistent protection of Indigenous people or their interests. From its beginnings in the 19th century the protection system may have tempered some of the more extreme acts of violence but too often it led to dispersal and dispossession of the original inhabitants (Cannon 1990). Throughout much of rural and remote Australia the protector of Aborigines was the local police officer. So, even for those not confined to the government or church controlled reserves, the State was omnipresent. The local protector controlled much of the lives of those Indigenes not exempted from the status of ward. In May 1957 the following notice appeared in the Government Gazette:

I, James Clarence Archer, The Administrator of the Northern Territory, in pursuance of the powers conferred on me by the Welfare Ordinance 1953-55, do by this notice declare to be wards the persons named in this Schedule to this declaration, being persons who, by
reason of their manner of living, their inability without assistance adequately to manage
their affairs, their standard of social habit and behaviour and their associations, stand in
need of such special care or assistance as is provided for by the said Ordinance.
After this preamble there followed a list of 12,000 names of Aboriginal people. Only one fifth of
the people of partial Aboriginal descent were exempted from the Ordinance.

Similar arrangements existed over the entire northern half of the continent at this time.
Aboriginal workers who were paid had, by law, to pay into bank accounts held by their
protectors a fixed percentage of their wages. In Queensland money held in these accounts was
transferred to a special Aboriginal welfare account, when this account was eventually wound up
in the 1980s there was a $30 million shortfall which the Goss Labor Queensland Government
held to be non recoverable, none of the 'protectors' have been charged.

There is the problem of money and when you look at it more clearly it is a matter of
human rights. The Queensland Act is supposed to protect black people. In fact it is to
control them, to make them as white as possible, as quickly as possible, in line with their
policy of assimilation. (Walker 1971, p.33).

This ‘leakage of funds from Aborigines bank accounts’ was part and parcel of their
administration from the earliest days (Kidd 1997 pp. 85-86,132-133, 148, 177-178, 266.
this system was supposed to be used for the benefit of Indigenous people. In the early 1960s
following a series of dysentery epidemics on the reserves of western Cape York the government
said it had insufficient funds to upgrade the health clinics on the reserves but did see its way
clear to borrow from the Aboriginal Benefit Fund account an amount of $100,000 which it lent
to the Redcliffe Hospital Board to help build this city hospital (Kidd, 1997, Consultancy Bureau
1991, Tomlinson 1963). The absence of upgraded health facilities at places like Weipa and
Mapoon was one of the issues which the Queensland Government used as part of the effort
during the period 1959 -1962 to force Mapoon people from their land and thus to facilitate
Comalco’s bauxite mining (Roberts with assistance of Russell & Parsons 1974). The
Government claimed the absence of decent health facilities meant the Mapoon people were
endangering their children’s health (Kidd 1997 pp. 214-227).

Land Rights & Miners

Goot and Rowse remind us that at the 1983 election the Federal Labor Party set out five
principles which were to underpin its national land rights policy: these principles included
inalienable freehold title, mining vetos or else the power to set conditions, fair royalties,
compensation and sacred site protection (1994 p. 1). After 13 years of Labor Administration little
progress was made towards implementing such promises. After two terms of Liberal/National
Administration the idea that such principles might underpin the Government's approach to land
rights policy was a receding pipe dream. The Howard Government in May 2000 rejected the
Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's recommendations as the basis for reconciliation between
Indigenous and non- Indigenous Australians.

In the wake of the High Court's Wik Judgement the language of confrontation again assumed
centre stage. Pastoralists and miners claimed that the granting of native title would bring
economic development in Australia to a halt. On the 23rd. of December 1997, Ian Henderson an
economic correspondent for The Australian wrote:
   Mineral exploration spending is expected to hit a record $500 million in the second half
   of 1997, blunting claims that uncertainty about native title is wrecking mining industry
   plans." (p. 4).
This figure was drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) compilation of mining
companies expectations. But, as Henderson points out:
   As actual spending on exploration usually far outstrips industry expectations, miners
   appear likely to set a further record, spending $650 million to $700 million on
   exploration in the second half of 1997(p. 4).
He supported his assertion by noting the previous day
   … the ABS reported that mineral exploration in the March, June and September quarters
   of 1997 - after the Wik decision - had exceeded spending in the corresponding quarters of
   1996 - before Wik (p. 4).

The absence of an honest assessment of what is actually happening by spokespeople for the
mining industry is not accidental. The continuation of the language of confrontation is designed
to weaken the bargaining power of the Indigenous owners of this land in order that what ever
'contribution' miners are forced to make to Indigenous communities, in return for not obstructing
mining, is a lesser amount than would have been the case had the negotiations taken place on an
equal footing where Indigenous people were conceived of as partners in a project.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander struggle for their land has been waged relentlessly for
centuries. The Yir Yorant were recorded to have driven off a Dutch expedition from the Western
shores of Cape York in 1606 (Roberts 1981, Sharpe 1952). The High Court’s Wik decision was
brought by Aboriginal people whose traditional land lies not far from the country then occupied
by the Yir Yorant. The Indigenous peoples moral claim for reparation was strengthened by the
High Court's Wik decision. The Wik people’s claim in the High Court was upheld because the
Queensland Government was seen to have failed to exercise its fiduciary duty in relation to
people it was ‘protecting’.

An insight into the way 'protection' was interpreted by the Queensland Government is provided
by the way it treated the people of Mapoon in the late 1950s and 60s (Roberts, Russell & Parsons
1974). In 1963 the people of Mapoon were taken by boat from their land by armed police who
burnt their houses. They were deposited at Bamaga on the very tip of Cape York or at the Wiepa
Mission. Weipa people, a short distance to the South of Mapoon, had their reserve decreased to
124 hectares (Suchet 1996, p.204). What had been Aboriginal reserve lands amounting to nearly
6,000 square kilometres was, in 1957, converted into a mining lease for the transnational alumina
company Comalco. That is “93 per cent of land which had been officially reserved since the
19th century for the Aborigines of Mapoon, Aurukun and Weipa” (Kidd 1997 p. 204) was
alienated. This theft of Indigenous land was debated in the Queensland Parliament. Suchet
(1996) notes in relation to the resulting Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Act
1957: "Nowhere does this Act protects the rights of Aboriginal people” (p.204). Some members
on both sides of the Parliament took advantage of a preferential Comalco share offer (Roberts
Extinguishment of native title rights may seem to be an insignificant price to pay for ‘progress’ but the loss of land is as deadly to some Indigenous people as any settler’s bullet (Wilson 1982, Suchet 1996, p.204). Whilst the current Indigenous struggle for land is being waged using economic, political and legal weapons rather than spears; the ongoing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander struggle for land is as determined now as at any time in the last 400 years. Just one example from Cape York provides an insight into the distance Indigenous peoples have come and the length of the road ahead. At Napranum, the Aboriginal name for the old Weipa Mission, determined attempts are being made to reassert the Indigenous voice back into issues affecting the community. The outstation movement is alive and well, cultural activities are restoring Indigenous pride, efforts are being made to modify Comalco's actions so as to mitigate damaging side effects of mining and modify regeneration efforts so as to increase the availability of 'bush tucker' (Suchet 1996 pp. 207-212). At the start of the 21st century many obstacles remain in the way of Indigenous people's attempts to access 'bush tucker'. Until very recently the traditional owners of Weipa and Mapoon still needed Comalco's approval before they can collect their traditional food from land which was part of the Comalco lease (Suchet 1996 p.212). In March 2001 Comalco signed a consent agreement with 11 traditional owner groups of Western Cape York recognising their native title in return for the recognition of Comalco’s right to mine. Some of the land which Comalco either doesn’t want or from which it has already extracted the bauxite was handed back to Indigenous control (Koori Mail 21st March p.1).

Three hundred kilometres to the west of the Wik people’s country a transnational conglomerate’s subsidiary (Century Zinc) in 1997 beat into submission the Waanyi people. Murrandoo Yanner, Coordinator of the Carpentaria Land Council, was convicted twice for unlawful assembly within an eighteen month period. He has faced continual harassment by mining company officials, police and other state government officers. In March 1998 the Supreme Court of Queensland determined that Yanner did not have the right to take crocodile on his clan country. The Supreme Court action was initiated on appeal by the anti-Aboriginal Borbidge Government after a magistrate in1997 had dismissed charges against Yanner for taking the crocodiles (ABCTV 7.30 Report 9/3/98). The Government purports to have taken the action in order to protect wildlife. The effect of the action, which Yanner successfully appealed to the High Court, was to limit the right of Indigenous people to hunt and gather traditional food. Had the Queensland Government's case succeeded then this would have significantly restricted Aboriginal Australians (living in remote parts of this country) access to a major source of nutrition. Numerous studies have shown that communities which utilise traditional food to supplement their diet have better health profiles than those which do not (Health Advancement Standing Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council 1997).

Yanner was prevented (by Senator Herron [Liberal], Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) from taking up a position as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner 'because of past convictions'. When Yanner appealed this decision in 2000 to the Federal Court the Queensland Labor Party Mines Minister McGrady wrote to the Judge hearing the case in an attempt to influence the outcome. McGrady is known locally as Minister for Mount Isa Mines.
The Century Zinc company has begun work on the mine, one of the largest zinc reserves in the world, despite the fears of conservationists and Indigenous people about ecological damage to Dugong feeding and breeding areas in the Gulf of Carpentaria. That is the Queensland Government is determined to prevent Aboriginal people taking 'protected species' even by traditional means from their traditional land but is prepared to allow a trans-national subsidiary to endanger the breeding and feeding areas of Dugong by letting the Century Zinc dredge channels to assist barges to carry zinc ore to ships waiting off shore.

After the traditional owners agreed to the mine going ahead, the Queensland Government announced that, as the Aborigines had agreed to allow Century Zinc to mine their land, they could be provided with the kind of social infrastructure which white Australia takes for granted. The total project is estimated to be worth $9 billion. The mining company offered $60 million as compensation. Of this $30 million is to be controlled by the Queensland Government to develop social infrastructure like schools, community centres, health centres and roads (Yanner 1996). The very essentials which white Australia takes for granted.

Failure to provide the development infrastructure which would promote health, well being and education has been part and parcel of the Queensland governments’ approach to Aboriginal areas in the north of the State for the last 40 years (Kidd 1997, Roberts, Russell & Parsons 1974, Tomlinson 1963, Bennett 1957). In recent times a new health clinic has been erected at Napranum but seriously ill people still need to travel the 14 kilometres to the hospital in the 'white' town ship of Weipa.

Still in the Gulf country, but over the Northern Territory Border, in 1993 Mount Isa Mines (MIM) was granted a lease to mine McArthur River lead/zinc deposits, another huge ore body. The Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments had fast tracked the development. The Commonwealth guaranteed to support the Northern Territory legislation. Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh (1995) wrote about the offer, designed to weaken local Aboriginal resistance to the mine going ahead:

Under the agreement the Commonwealth undertook to purchase on behalf of the (local Aboriginal) Association the Bauhinia Downs pastoral station and, through the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET), to provide an employment package designed to benefit residents of the McArthur River district

…MIM's non-participation means that all the costs involved fall on the Commonwealth, not on the company as the developer of the resource.

…the agreement itself does nothing to ensure that the company (MIM) will endeavour to make employment and training opportunities available to local Aboriginal people.

….initiatives similar to those taken by the Commonwealth might have occurred under general policy initiatives in the absence of resource development (p.10).

The decision to proceed to mine an area controlled by Aboriginal people has many consequences and it may be that assessing the effects of a development, as O'Faircheallaigh (1996) asserts, are far more complicated than looking just at the impacts of mining. Because issues such as what other benefits accrued to locals, the manner in which negotiations were carried out, protection of sacred sites, respect for Indigenous culture and interpersonal relations all play a part. But it is equally true as he acknowledges: the economic status of Indigenous people is generally very low,
most communities have only one resource extraction project on their land and if they fail to succeed in maximising returns from this resource they will remain poor (O'Fairchaellaigh 1996 p.198). It also needs to be acknowledged that Indigenous communities are often highly pressured by governments which don't understand their interests or needs. Governments are essentially responding to much wider constituencies. Indigenous communities are also frequently subjected to intense pressure by corporations whose prime interest is maximising returns to their shareholders. Governments and corporations often combine to force Indigenous communities to accept development on their land (irrespective of Indigenous communities best interests) because it is far easier for government and industry to understand and accept each others needs than it is for either of them to understand Indigenous perspectives or accept that Indigenous perspectives have any utility (Bradbury 1997).

The assistance which governments provide to mining companies to proceed with mineral extraction (even in areas where the mine will damage conservation values or may undermine the ecology of an area) stands in sharp contrast to the way it treats some of the most impoverished Indigenous people in the remotest parts of this country. The Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations in 1999/2000 invigorated a program to liquidate many small Aboriginal Corporations for failing to lodge returns. In order to be granted land the members of these Indigenous communities were require to register as a corporation. Many of the office bearers, of corporations in the process of being liquidated, are aged traditional owners who don't read English, live in remote areas of the country and are bureaucratically unsophisticated. Once their house and land are sold as a result of actions taken in 'law' courts in far off capital cities the owners wont be able to collect bush tucker because they'll be evicted from their traditional lands (Land Rights News 2000, March p.5, Downing 2000, 12th April, p. 13)

Employment, infrastructure and development

In 1963 I visited Yarrabah, near Cairns, shortly after the Church of England handed control of this mission to the Queensland Government. Housing, whilst basic, was nearly sufficient to house all the people living there. The Aborigines had run a saw mill and built most of the houses. But the mill closed and by the time I returned 15 years later there was a shortage of houses and the houses which were being built were fabricated largely by mainstream contractors. What had been an isolated settlement was being encroached upon by a growing urban sprawl. This erosion of Indigenes’ capacity to develop their own territory has been repeated in many parts of this country during the last 100 years. Sometimes it takes the form of protectors stealing money from the personal accounts of Indigenes (Kidd 1997). In the Northern Territory in the 1970s and 1980s it often took the form of the manager of the community store defrauding the entire community by overcharging or just absconding with the funds. Sometimes Indigenes were displaced from employment, and therefore income, by an influx of European employees. At Maningrida in the mid 1970s this led to major Aboriginal unrest which resulted in the Indigenous community reclaiming their jobs and community control (Gillespie, Cooke & Bond 1977).

There have always been some European Australians driven by a sense of justice, religious beliefs, a desire to have a healthy workforce, paternalism, the need for or love of a sexual partner or for other reasons who have worked with Indigenous Australians in an effort to assist them to
remain on and/or develop land (Bennett 1957, Reynolds 1998). Some have formed partnerships
with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in fishing, pastoral and more recently mining
ventures. Some of the early mission efforts resulted in incorporation of Aboriginal people into
the vital life of the communities on which they lived.

One of the remarkable features of Aboriginal affairs in Australia is that the pictorial records of
places as far a field as Hermannsburg (NT), Maclean (NSW), and Lake Tyres (Vic) at the turn of
the 20th century show Aboriginal people well dressed and playing an important part in the life of
many Aborigines in these places had become impoverished. Perhaps the most credible
explanation of why many Indigenous communities ‘lost heart’ is portrayed by the documentary
Lousy little sixpence (1997). In this documentary the point is made that the New South Wales
Aboriginal Welfare Board in the early part of the 20th century removed the right of Aborigines to
own and use land on reserves (Goodall 1996, Ch. 11). At Cumeroogunga Reserve Aborigines
had been granted land, cleared and ploughed it, only to have the Aboriginal Welfare Board sell it
to white farmers (Lousy little sixpence 1997). Events of this nature occurred all over Australia

Under the auspices of government and mission control of Aboriginal reserves there was
insufficient investment in technological or development infrastructure to ensure these areas
would become productive. Aborigines were shifted off their land to allow pastoralists to have it.
People from many clans were herded together to suit white Australia’s convenience. They were
not adequately assisted to develop the land on which they were placed. The areas which white
Australia wanted and on which Indigenous people lived were frequently sold or leased to white
farmers. This happened at Mona Mona mission in the 1960s. The official story was that the land
of the old mission was going to be flooded by a dam which still has not been built. The residents
of Mona Mona were packed off to Seventh Day Adventist Church owned houses on the fringes
of Kuranda (Kidd 1997, p. 212).

The administrative skills of most of the people who were sent to manage reserves were not high.
Aboriginal initiative was stifled. These reserves were welfarised, many were run like British
Poor Law work houses. The food, housing and health provision were inadequate. Disputation
was treated as if it was rebellion. Inordinately repressive powers were given to superintendents
to jail people, remove people from a reserve and divide families. Anger, frustration,
imimidation, depression, alcoholism, and disputation became an everyday feature as the
documentary Mr Neal is entitled to be an agitator (Ronin Films1991) revealed. The mechanisms
of control on Aboriginal reserves shared many common features with the repression carried out
in other outposts of Empire by the colonial authorities.

The controlling mentality of typical externally imposed colonial structures is firstly the
promotion of the interests of the 'metropolitan' country, secondly ensuring the interests of the
expatriate workers and entrepreneurs prevail over the interests of local entrepreneurs and those
of the 'natives'. Australians who have not had the experience of living in the more northern or
remote parts of this continent during the 1950s, 60s and 70s may not conceive of white / black
relations in this continent as resembling a colonial interface. But the language which
governments of the day employed to describe their administration of Indigenous matters is not
dissimilar from that of the British Raj. Until 1966 the Queensland Government used the title of the Department of Native Affairs (FSAIA 1994, p.10). During the 1950s, at the Federal level, the official policy was one of assimilation until 1963 when it became integration and then in 1974 during the Whitlam Government became self-determination.

More than any other feature, widespread unemployment and failure to pay award wages to Indigenous workers guaranteed their communities remained impoverished and underdeveloped. When Indigenous workers got seasonal jobs away from the reserve they had to pay a fixed percentage of their money into the bank accounts held by the protector. Those who worked on the reserve were generally paid a ‘training allowance’, if they were paid anything other than rations. In 1967, I calculated that many workers and their dependants on training allowances, in the Top End of the Northern Territory were receiving less each week on training allowance that would an equivalent sized Darwin family living on welfare assistance. Many of these ‘trainee’ workers were the sole bread winner in their families. Eventually training allowances were replaced by the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), a 'Work for the Dole' scheme which, until the Howard Government, only applied to Indigenes.

Each community was paid on an estimate of how many participants would be attracted to the CDEP in their area. Some communities found that there were more people wanting to work than there were places: as a result it was not uncommon for CDEP workers to receive less than they would have had they been in receipt of unemployment benefit. On other communities people got slightly more than unemployment benefits. Either way when coupled with widespread unemployment it meant that for many communities over 90 per cent of the people, who received any income, survived on social security levels of income. This guaranteed that the possibility of developing economically viable communities was extremely limited. It almost ensures underdevelopment because the communities do not generate sufficient economic activity which could in turn lead to the creation of award rate jobs. If award rates jobs had been created on communities rather than training wage / CDEP wages then through the multiplier effect enhanced economic activity would have been more likely to have occurred.

In December 1997 the Human Rights and equal Opportunity Commission conducted a study of the CDEP specifically investigating human rights difficulties (Antonios 1997). Though the Commissioner found some benefits flowed to some participants compared with social security recipients and that the CDEP did not breach the Race Discrimination Act she was concerned that there was:

- no legislative basis for the scheme,
- no adequate appeal against decisions of bureaucrats,
- no certainty that people moving between social security payments and the CDEP would not have exceedingly long waiting periods imposed (a finding which supported the Commonwealth Ombudsman in the One size does not fit all report of August 1997),
- no guarantee of a minimum income to participants, and in fact many people had very low or no income,
- no opportunity for people to relinquish their Disability Support Pension and transfer to the CDEP
- no consistency in the way the various departments such as Tax, Social Security, and Employment treated income received from the CDEP, and as a consequence,
no clear government policy as to whether this was employment, a training allowance scheme, an employment program or a welfare program. (Antonios 1997)

Perhaps an extract from the resolutions of the initial conference of Commonwealth and state Aboriginal authorities held in 1937 might provide an insight into the failure of governments to ensure Indigenous Australians were enabled to gain employment in jobs which paid similar award rates to other Australians. The resolution read:

That this Conference affirms the principle that the general policy in respect of full-blood natives should be-
(a) To educate to white standard children of the detribalised living near centres of white population, and subsequently to place them in employment in lucrative occupations, which will not bring them into economic or social conflict with the white community [Italics not in original]( cited in Bennett 1957 pp.11-12).

Perhaps the only thing holding back present day administrators from succeeding in finding employment for all Aboriginal people is that they are still searching for those elusive jobs with lucrative remuneration for which Indigenous Australians would be in demand and which will not inspire envy from other Australians.

The overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people have been:
• consistently denied the opportunity to own land,
• denied access to award wage labour,
• refused, until the 1960s, similar social security entitlements to other Australians,
• denied similar social security entitlements to other Australians until 1976 (Antonios 1997, p.6) if they lived on missions or government settlements, and
• until the late 1970s, denied control of Indigenous communities.

The political struggle.

The Indigenous struggle for land, life and liberty has been long and bloody (Murray 1962, Reynolds 1972, Roberts 1981, Rowley 1972[b], Evans, Saunders & Cronin 1975, Robinson & York 1977). Many white Australians believe the Indigenous land rights struggle began with the Tent Embassy outside the Federal Parliament in 1972 or the Gurindji struggle at Wattie Creek in 1966 (Hardy 1968). This ignores:
• the 1960s Pitjantjatjara endeavours to retain land in South Australia.
• the Yirrakala petition presented to Federal Parliament by Aborigines on the Gove Peninsular in 1963,
• the on going struggle of the Mapoon people since 1957,
• the resistance of Don McLeod’s Mob - the Nomad Mining Company - in Western Australia in the Pilbura 1946 (Rowley 1972[c]),
• the Lake Tyres and Framlingham contests in Victoria in the 1950s (Andrews 1962),
• Ferguson, Cooper and Patten’s efforts to obtain a better deal in NSW in the 1930’s (Horner 1994),
• the battles waged by the Indigenous Tasmanians ( Reynolds 1996, Turnbull 1974), and
• hundreds of similar contests for rights or land in other parts of Australia.
In fact white Australia’s perception of their ‘history’ ignores the reality of the Indigenous struggle.
In The Other Side of the Frontier Henry Reynolds (1981) set out another way of viewing the interchange between invader and indigene. Very conveniently the invaders make a distinction between the clash / invasion / dispossession phase and subsequent Indigenous unrest designed to keep some control of Aboriginal interests. The Indigenous reality is that the land rights struggle has been an integral and unceasing part of Aboriginal existence for the last 400 years (Roberts 1981). It is a political struggle which at times has had a military component. Sometimes it involved attacks on the instruments of the / or the invaders themselves. Unfortunately it sometimes takes form in a sense of loss which can lead to acts of self abuse or self destruction. Garrarrwuy Yunupingu in an address to the National Press Club in Canberra in February 1997 summed up the desperation which many Indigenous people feel when he said:

Same thing you mining companies. You dig my country and you make your money and you go laughing all the way to the Swiss bank, but you leave me a hole and the pollution. No thanks, but you take all the goodness out of my land and you leave me nothing. But I’m not disappointed. I might be a bit angry with you, the way you treated me and being unfair. But I’m still sitting there nursing the hole and the pollution you left me behind. I will not go away from that hole and that pollution because it is my right to die in that land. (p.21).

Indigenous people realise they were not all dispossessed by our forebears at some convenient time in the past, say 1770 or 1788. They are aware that many Indigenous groups are today being dispossessed by mining companies, governments and pastoralists - Century Zinc mine got its go ahead to mine in 1997. The traditional owners of Jabiluka are opposed to mining but as this book is being written the Federal Government is preparing to give the go ahead to open this uranium mine in Kakadu. In August 1997 Aborigines reached an agreement with miners to open up 44,000 square kilometres of their land in the north of South Australia for mineral exploration (PM 1997 18th August). Howard’s ten point plan, designed to weaken Indigenous rights on pastoral leases, is a 1997/8 phenomenon. The 1967 Referendum gave the Commonwealth the power to make laws in relation to Indigenous Australians. Howard's ten point plan to revise the Mabo / Wik Native Title legislation returns to the states power to make decisions about native title land questions.

City Aboriginal people are often portrayed in the popular media as drunken no-hopers and their country cousins are presented as living in humpies surrounded by children with snotty noses and flies in their eyes. These stereotypical images have not changed much since the days when whites were preparing to ‘smooth the dying pillow’. However in recent years two other images compete for time in the media one is of an articulate, determined but reasonable leadership the other is of angry Indigenous protesters clashing with police.

Since the 1960s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have succeeded in raising public consciousness about their struggle more successfully than at any previous time. As a result there have been some significant changes in the way governments have responded to Indigenous people and the original owners of this country have won some substantial victories. Prior to the late 1960s very few people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent were paid social security and it was the late 1970s early 1980s before Aboriginal people in many parts of remote Australia got anything like equivalent access to social security entitlements as other Australians
(Social Security 1982). The 1967 referendum at which 92% of Australians decided to allow the
Commonwealth to make laws in relation to Aborigines (Middleton 1977) was seen at the time as
being as important a watershed as was the High Court’s Mabo decision in 1992 (Attwood 1996).

For some Aborigines state legislation has been at least as important as actions taken on the
national stage. As Charles Rowley put it:

the epoch-making Lands Trust Act of 1966 aroused considerable resistance in the
Legislative Council, which succeeded in removing the provisions for mineral rights,
although these would not have been revolutionary in South Australia, where proprietors
of land grants made before 1880 have retained mineral rights alienated from the original
grants (1972[c] p. 280).

The Commonwealth’s Northern Territory Land Rights Act drafted by the Whitlam Government
in 1975 amended and then passed by the Fraser Government in 1976 provided Aboriginal people
who had maintained close links with their traditional lands the opportunity to reclaim unalienated
crown land in the Northern Territory. The South Australian legislation and the NT Land Rights
Act have been the vehicle by which Aborigines in these two regions have recovered ownership
of considerable areas of land and have consequently been able to start to develop a secure
economic future (Crough 1993).

Greg Crough (1993) building on earlier work of Kelly (1966) and Stevens (1974) shows that
even where Aboriginal business enterprises prosper in capitalist terms they are rendered invisible
to an invader blinded by the need to see the failure of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The
North Australian Research Unit revealed that “there is an ‘Aboriginal economy’ which
contributed at least $428 million to the economy of the Top End of the Northern Territory in
1994-95 (this is 2.65 times the amount expended by the Northern Territory Government on
Aboriginal people).” (Land Rights News 1997, p. 6). Despite many examples of Indigenous
business enterprises gaining financial success -usually in association with their regaining of some
or all of their tribal land, there are a disproportionate number of Indigenous Australians who are
living in poverty.

The experience in the rural and remote parts of the Northern Territory evokes one possible
explanation for the widespread poverty of Indigenous people over the length and breadth of this
country. Perhaps Indigenous poverty has been exacerbated by the continuing failure of
governments, developers, and many other Australian institutions to come to a determination of
Indigenous peoples’ rights over land which both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people would
consider just.

In Broome and Darwin it is assumed that Aboriginal people's relationships to country are
mere encumbrances on development, or that their silence on land use matters indicates
concordance with the views of the dominant public. The prevailing attitude among state
and development interests is that the urban landscape must be cleared of such
encumbrances (Jackson 1996 p.96, Day 1994).

The Minister responsible for Aboriginal welfare in the Northern Territory told the Federal
Parliament in 1952:

If any part of a native reserve has ceased to be necessary for the use and benefit of the
natives, it may be severed from the reserve and, if mining should take place on the
severed portion royalties will be paid into a special fund to be applied to the welfare of the natives... (cited in Bennett 1957 p. 30).

Not much has changed 40 years later at the Lockhart River Aboriginal Reserve. Lane and Chase (1996) describe the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) lodged, in the Queensland Mining Warden's Court, by the company wanting to mine 200 million tonnes of the high grade silica in Shelburne Bay: "...the EIS denied the Wuthathi people any current interest in the area on the basis that a lack of physical presence in the area constituted a dereliction of interest" (p.175). Many Wuthathi people lived less than 80 kilometres from the site and regularly accessed the area to gather 'bush tucker'.

The Stolen Generations

In much the same way as white Australia took Indigenous land for farming, pasture, forestry or mining; and took Indigenous women for sex; and took Indigenous men for their labour (Stevens 1974): white Australia attempted to complete the process of dispossession by taking Indigenous children from their communities (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families 1997, Forde 1999). The taking of Indigenous children has not stopped but now instead of the 'protector' just riding up to the 'blacks camp' and loading the children into cars and driving off with them excuses are needed. The two main ways of removing Indigenous children from their community currently employed are criminalising them or having human service workers claiming it is in the best interests of the children to be removed (Cunneen 1997, 2001, Cunneen & Libesman 2000, Tomlinson 1994).

Prime Minister Howard consistently refuses to apologise on behalf of the Government for the actions of all Australian Governments during the period of the stolen children’s generations because his present Government, he said, was not responsible. Against the recommendations of the Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997 Appendix 9) the Howard Government has steadfastly opposed the paying of compensation to the children or their families. The Government has again done this on the grounds that this Government was not responsible for the taking of the children. Adam Jamrozik (1997) commented that the "Howard Government was not responsible for the Second World War either but it continues to pay War Pensions".

It is a pity that the Prime Minister had not read and understood the article by Hal Wootten written in response to white backlash in the wake of the High Court’s Mabo decision:

We hear a lot about guilt these days, but only from people who are denying their guilt. Some say they should not be called upon to do justice to Aborigines because they are not personally responsible for what happened to them. They work themselves into positive paroxysms of guiltlessness. In what other sphere of public affairs do we regard guilt as the only reason for action? Should Granville Sharp and Wilberforce have ignored slavery because they had not caused it? (1993 p. 2)

The real policy question which must drive any substantial reconciliation process is justice in the present rather than guilt in relation to past activities. This prescription is not an endorsement of Pauline Hanson’s call for all Australians to be treated equally. Rather it is a demand that Australians are treated equitably. There are great disparities in wealth, income, health, housing,
incarceration rates, and age of death between Indigenous and white Australians. To treat both Indigenes and invaders equally would not be justice. Justice is more than the imposition of the welfare mentality of Prime Minister Howard's 'practical reconciliation', designed to make minor improvements to health and education. Justice would require reparation for past wrongs coupled with a sincere commitment to partnership in the future.

The hegemonic themes underlying Indigenous / non-Indigenous relations for the last 200 years still apply at the start of the 21st century

During the 1990s many Australians have developed an understanding of what it is that governments, pastoralists and miners have done to the original owners of this land. This came about partly as a result of the Inquiries into Black Deaths in Custody and the Stolen Generations but also because during the 1980s and 90s an emerging articulate Indigenous leadership has been able to command the attention of the press and through that the public's interest. There is a growing sense of the injustice done in the past. There is also an emerging understanding of the link between past wrongs and the present:

• social,
• economic,
• health,
• educational, and
• employment

situation confronting Indigenous communities. A significant proportion of Australians living in cities are coming to question the basis on which rich white Australia has inflicted 'development', read dispossession, upon Indigenous Australians. Over 700,000 Australians, including 2,000 in Alice Springs, marched for reconciliation in 2000.

Australians are increasingly questioning the hegemonic themes which have structured Indigenous / non Indigenous relations since the invasion:

• Indigenous people can hold land provided it is not required by white interests,
• if the land is required then Aborigines are expected to vacate it, and
• if they fail to leave the land then either they or more recently their interest in the land will be extinguished.

These themes which underpin black / white relations are becoming more widely challenged by both Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. The reason these themes of development have been so resistant to change is that Indigenous Australians despite their being recognised by 92 percent of voters as entitled to 'citizenship rights' in the 1967 Referendum have not been ceded full economic rights. This is because they have not really been accepted fully as citizens in their own land (Reynolds 1996, Tomlinson 1996). When they are used as labour they are often treated not as Australian workers but as they are 'guest workers' in much the same way as Turks in Germany. In a month or so when the work is over they are shunted back to their camps on the fringes of country towns.

There have been few examples in this country of joint partnerships with the Indigenous population. Australia has rarely seen the development of a major resource where a corporation agrees to the Indigenous community having 50 per cent equity in the project simply because they
have provided the land on which the activity takes place. There has been a failure to acknowledge that the only contributions many Indigenous communities can make is the labour of their people and the provision of the land on which the development takes place. In Australia, in the past, both the Indigenous labour and the land have been intentionally devalued. Companies have not worked to add value to the available labour through effective training nor have they added value to the land through adhering to strict environmental practices and processing of the materials on site. As neither workers nor the land is accorded an appropriate value companies retain greater profit. Because the Indigenous population is not defined as part of the *Australian* situation they are not included in the distribution. Such racism is reinforced for as long as people can get away with it because it funnels the surplus profit extracted from a development to fewer people (shareholders).

**Where to now?**

The ideologies which drove colonial Australia, whether as protector or exterminator, were directly linked to the extraction or exploitation of a resource. They took:

- the land,
- the women,
- the labour, and
- the children.

On the way they assaulted:

- the environment,
- Indigenous culture,
- the adults and
- the children.

At various times the actions taken by white Australia were explained in terms of:

- the necessities of war,
- pest removal,
- self defence,
- separation,
- ‘protection’ of the natives, and
- then assimilation.

All of these explanations amount to the removal of the indigene from the presence of whites. Even assimilation amounts to removal of the indigene and his or her replacement by an Australian with a Black skin. It is as if Australia never signed the United Nations Treaty on Genocide in 1947.

The reality of race relations for many in this country has not fundamentally changed since the invasion. The race war which commenced in 1788 continues. Aboriginal academic Lillian Holt (1997) described the present Australian Government's administration of Aboriginal affairs as 'designer label dereliction'. The pastoralists’ spokespersons in the aftermath of the High Court’s Wik decision demanded extermination of the remaining property rights of Indigenous Australians on pastoral leases. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are not truly regarded as citizens in their own country (Reynolds 1996, Tomlinson 1996, 1997). Aborigines still are only allowed to 'own' land until white Australian companies or their transnational friends have found a use for it.
As a result of the work of many community organisations, Indigenous organisations, Indigenous leaders, progressive journalists, some academics and the many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians of good will attitudes are slowly changing. For the foreseeable future many Indigenous people will continue to have their land taken on non-Indigenous corporations terms, their young will be incarcerated in non-Indigenous prisons and children's institutions (Cunneen & Libesman 2000, Cunneen 2001), their employment prospects will be circumscribed by government and corporation's indifference and they will experience substantial income insecurity. Like poor non-Indigenous people they will have to rely on an outmoded welfare income support system. Those who live in remote areas will experience the lack of service provision in the bush. Indigenous people who have disabilities will confront an ableist Australia which is indifferent to the specific needs of Indigenous people who experience disability (Smeaton 1998). The question of disability and income support will be canvassed in the next chapter.

It is clear from the analysis presented in this chapter that Indigenous people's economic base was removed, the areas on which they were confined were underdeveloped, their entry into mainstream employment was often blocked by government regulation, intention or indifference. They have not had the opportunity to obtain housing, health, social security, welfare and educational services in a manner commensurate with white, and in particular city, Australians. The reason why Indigenous people have not succeeded economically at anything like equivalent rates to non- Indigenous Australians has more to do with the structural impediments which the non-Indigenous community has placed in their way than to any cultural or psychological feature of Indigenous society and individuals.

**Future income support**

The institutional racism which structures Australian society will affect any proposed change to income support arrangements which remove ‘mutual obligation’ requirements. The history of attempts to introduce generalised income support guarantees in the United States have run into intense opposition when American Blacks have been seen to be beneficiaries of such changes (see Chapter 9). The widespread uncritical acclaim which Noel Pearson’s (1999[a], 1999[b]) speeches and papers received when he attacked the welfare system for providing ‘passive assistance’ underlines the massive resistance in Australia against allowing Aboriginal people to obtain income support without being required to ‘give something back’. Two years on his tired reiteration of such ideas is still applauded. Those (Ridgeway 2001, Hart 1999, Tomlinson 1999) who dared criticise Pearson’s attacks on the welfare state have been generally ignored.

If a generalised income guarantee was provided to all United States citizens then the cost of providing that guarantee to Black and Native Americans would be considerable because of the substantial percentage of the population they comprise.

Indigenous Australians are 3 percent of the total population. They are 1.4 percent of the adult population. The cost of providing a Basic Income to all Indigenous Australian could not therefore sensibly be opposed on economic grounds. This is so because successive Australian governments have failed to find ways to incorporate about 80 percent of Indigenous Australians
into the market economy – preferring to relegate them to CDEP ‘work for the dole’ jobs and welfare benefits – taxpayers are already picking up the bulk of the bill.

What ever other reasons white Australians might raise for opposing the provision of a Basic Income for all permanent residents they can’t use the argument that the economic cost of including Indigenous people in such an income guarantee would be prohibitive.

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