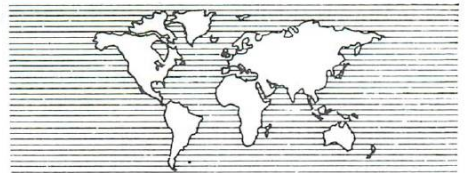


Australian Information Service

Brisbane's new stadium awaits the Commonwealth Games

NEW WORLD NEWS

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SPECIAL AUSTRALIAN ISSUE NO STEREOTYPE TO GREET THE GAMES

The tall, lithe, sun-tanned, lean-jawed Aussie is not much in evidence these days. In fact Australians no longer fit into a stereotype. Theirs is said to be the world's most multiracial society after Israel—a voluntary development since the scrapping of the notorious 'White Australia' policy.

The idea of Australia being a 'lucky country' doesn't generate much cheering in this continental island. As in many countries, world recession bites hard and bitterly.

And the friendly, happy-go-lucky image of the average Aussie is at risk, as we may discover when the Commonwealth Games begin in Brisbane on September 30th. Promoted as the 'Friendly Games', they have been the subject of bitter exchanges over Aboriginal land rights.

This issue of NWN features Australians with a different image of Australia and their place in the world.

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All Australians: Laotian refugee, Greek migrant, Aborigine and settler farmer

Weeks

WHAT WILL THE COMMON-WEALTH FIND IN BRISBANE?

IMAGINE, if you can, that an Aboriginal activist, a prosperous owner of a 100,000 acre sheep property, and a hollow-stomached Vietnamese just off a refugee boat all arrived at the Pearly Gates together. St Peter most likely would not be interested in whether they had been in Australia 40,000 years, four generations or four weeks. What he would want to know is what they did with it while they were there.

In the past weeks, two Aboriginal delegations have visited African nations inviting their condemnation of Queensland, the host state of the Commonwealth Games, for its policies towards Aborigines. Yet the Africans and the rest of the Commonwealth, should they come in judgement, will judge the whole of Australia, not one state. Possibly, like St Peter, they will want to know what we've done with what we've got.

No doubt St Peter, observing Australia, would spot many sincere, dedicated people at work. But he would also note a lurch towards the materialism of an acquisitive society.

'Fair go, mate. That's not the whole picture.'

No, it's not. No nation has taken a greater number of Indochinese refugees per head of population. We have returned an area of land larger than East and West Germany and Benelux to Aboriginal ownership and we service the world's industries with our resources. That's all true. But what about our industrial standoffs, political crossfire, black/white contentions, shattered marriages?

The guilty, of course, are always other people. Proving how right we are has become a national pastime. Or proving how wrong the other lot are.

Self-righteousness, in most cases, indicates a cover-up. It aborts all hope of progress in human relations. It is the mother of prejudice.

The other side of the coin from self-righteousness is bitterness. There can be no real brotherhood in bitterness, though many who oppose injustice claim the bond of brotherhood. When bitterness makes love with injustice it produces the bastard of bloodmindedness.

And so division is a sign of the times—individual and group self-interest appear to be our accepted philosophy: *my rights, my feelings, my welfare*. We talk of human rights, but unless we see where we are going wrong, personally and as a society, there can be no real progress. We need a fundamental redefinition of moral values as the basis for the redirection of our society.

We could well take a look at absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love and try them on for size. These are not old, 'Victorian' values. Compared with today's mixed-up morality, they could hardly be more radical.

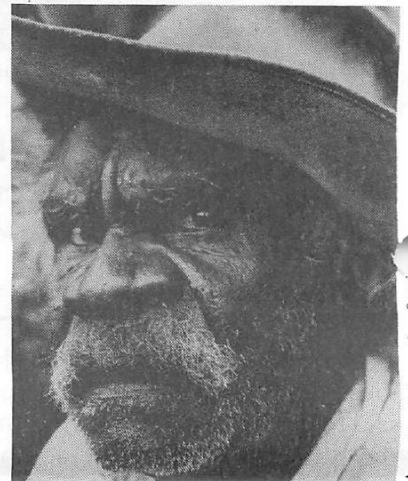
Take Aboriginal Land Rights. If we white Australians had the honesty to admit that our ancestors took the continent uninvited and that many injustices continue today, then perhaps we could get beyond fixed positions and resolve the failures in both communities. With an unselfish com-

mitment by all Australians to finding what is right, and the love to reach across the colour-line—in both directions—to others' feelings, fresh answers would emerge. It would break through the bitterness/self-righteousness syndrome.

Land Rights raise key issues such as the stewardship of both land and economic wealth and how to achieve justice for all. They bring into focus what ideas motivate us, what values we base our living on, how we make our decisions. They raise questions of ideology and philosophy.

Could we learn something from the ideology of the ancient Aborigines? No one pretends they had a perfect society. But decision-making was not the prerogative of the strongest in the community, nor even of the majority. They sought consensus through patient dialogue.

The ancients had a bigger idea of Land and of Right. They believed that land did not belong to anyone but that we belonged to it, to use it, replenish it, guard it for posterity.



'Could we learn something from the ancient Aborigines?'

Australian Information Servi

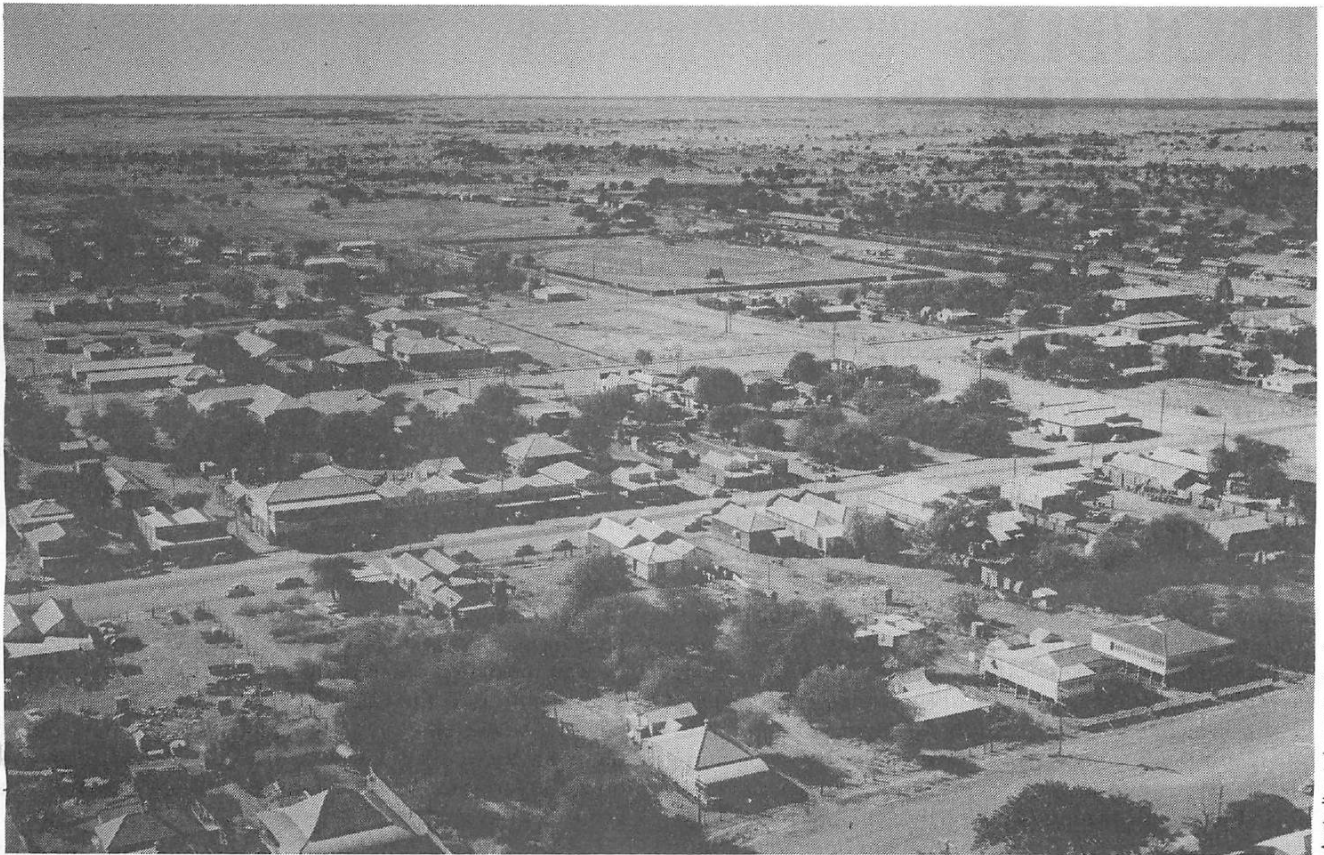
Sadly, the current Land Rights controversy does not seem to provide much evidence of these ancient values. And yet they point towards the forgotten basis of our Christian culture—'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof'.

We could begin again to seek a consensus based on conscience and compassion. A modern Aboriginal leader struck a prophetic note when he said, 'Caring for the person who wants to do us wrong gives that person the chance to change. But if we feed his or her race-hate or indifference to us, then it will only allow him or her to justify their attitude. My bitterness is gradually flowing away.' We could start to regard our resources, wealth, power and prestige not as possessions to be jealously fought over, but as a trust from our Father to lift all humanity forward as He intends.

Australia has other resources, which are in short supply on the world market: reserves of will, independence of spirit and an inherent sense of justice. These lie buried, muddled by our worship of the good life. They need to be mined and refined.

As any tribal Aboriginal could tell you, silence has a lot to do with finding out what it imperative in an unknown situation. Australians who in the silence of their hearts allow their consciences some free speech will be the ones best prepared for the Commonwealth when it comes to Brisbane. And more than that.

So many have prayed so often, 'For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory', but have wanted it all for themselves. As we realistically seek that kingdom, that hate-free, greed-free, fear-free society, dedicated to God's glory and not to TV ratings, then 1982 will be remembered for a gold far more valuable than the gold of Games' medals. ■



Australian Information Service

Queensland town

An international group of eleven has recently been on a two month Moral Re-Armament action in Queensland, New South Wales and Canberra. JACKIE FIRTH reports:

EMPTYING THE TOO-HARD BASKET

MIRAGES DANCED on the horizon as our car ate up the monotonous miles of unwinding Queensland road. As the glaring afternoon sun mellowed into the yellow wash of evening, we arrived in Dalby, a wheat-farming town in south-east Queensland, after a thousand mile drive from Melbourne. The flatness of the tree-speckled vista was hardly broken by the low, weatherboard houses lining the wide streets of the town.

Lindy Drew, a young Queenslander, had invited our international party of 11 to her hometown because she felt the issues we had begun to resolve in our own lives were relevant to others.

We gave a public presentation in a modern, spacious church hall where Lindy Drew spoke to the townspeople. 'We're digging deep into the soil for the treasures held there, but the treasures in people are being left untapped,' she said. 'We are exporting food and minerals, but as Christians are we exporting answers to the deeper needs of people—hate, greed and division in families and churches?'

She went on to say that she was about to become an export herself as she would shortly be working with Moral

Re-Armament in Switzerland and England. 'I don't feel I go as very high grade ore, but I have one credential,' she said. 'I have made my life available for God to mould to His choosing.' Many in the town knew that this had not always been her approach to life. 'You can't argue with a changed life,' commented a church minister.

After a week of country air we were back in the city clatter—in Toowoomba and then in Brisbane. We learnt some revealing facts about prevalent attitudes in Australia.

For instance a trade union official told us of an agreement his union was to enter into with the Government, which would reduce the working week from 40 hours to 38, on the understanding that more jobs would become available. When he put this proposal to his union members he was howled down. 'To hell with more jobs,' was the response. '38 hours a week means more overtime for us.'

A bishop spoke to us of a survey conducted among Christian business and professional people in South Australia. As many as 98 per cent admitted that they found it impossible to practise their Christian principles in their professional life. 'Such people are no good to the Church and no good to God,' was his comment.

Our interviews spanned all walks of life and we gave a number of public presentations. We tried to offer an alternative to materialism and an answer to corruption through describing our own experiences and convictions. A just society, we said, could only be created by honest and unselfish people. Each time we found that humility and honesty about ourselves was appreciated.

One of our group bravely admitted that earlier in the year she had claimed unemployment benefits while she had a job. She wrote to the Department of Social Security apologising for this and is in the process of paying the money back.

SOUTH-EAST TOUR contd p7

TROUBLE-SHOOTER IN PURSUIT OF A STAR

by Michael Brown

A SYDNEY NEWSPAPER called him 'a trouble-shooter fitted with a silencer'.

Allan Griffith is one of those anonymous 'government officials' who deal with high matters of State, quietly shaping policy and negotiating agreements in distant capitals while their political bosses take the wrath and glory of public exposure. As a foreign affairs adviser for 31 years, he has directly or indirectly had the ear of six Australian Prime Ministers, from Menzies to Fraser.

In Zimbabwe, from the early days of Commonwealth involvement through to the pre-independence elections, Griffith was intimately involved in the diplomacy and negotiations which brought the settlement. The national columnist of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, in his weekly feature, reported: 'No sooner had Thatcher's Conservatives won power in 1979 than Griffith was flying to London to assess prospects for reversing British policy on recognition of the Muzorewa regime—a decision that would have inevitably meant a bloody solution by civil war. Four months later Griffith was in Lusaka when Thatcher opened the door for a peace settlement in a speech to Commonwealth leaders. As Thatcher passed Griffith outside the conference room he said: 'First class'. Thatcher turned and said: 'What did you say?' 'First class,' he repeated. The iron lady grabbed both his arms and hugged him.'

Bush butcher's son

'Griffith has yet to receive a Fraser hug,' added the *Herald*. Perhaps no one in Australia deserves it more. For, as special adviser to the PM, he has been silently trouble-shooting or patiently giving substance to policies which range from matters of strategic security and world economic agreements to research on renewable energy sources and a marine park on the Great Barrier Reef. Only days before his interview with *New World News*, Griffith had returned from a whirlwind tour with the Prime Minister through Malaysia, China, the Philippines and the Pacific Forum in New Zealand. Before that, he had had top level talks in Washington, Ottawa, Tokyo and Seoul, and earlier still, a week in Singapore for the ASEAN meeting and a tour of the Middle East with the Foreign Minister.

And in between, Griffith is busy addressing sensitive issues like Aboriginal Land Rights within the country. For his role in complex Federal-State relations, particularly in Aboriginal affairs and in settling Australia's only border dispute with Papua New Guinea, the Premier of Queensland has ironically dubbed him Canberra's 'Ambassador to Queensland'.

Now Allan Griffith is retiring as a public servant, but the Prime Minister wants him to remain available as a consultant in specialised areas. Looking back on it all, Griffith says: 'There is no way you can say you deliberately set out to become involved in the great issues of the time. It somehow happens. You follow a star.'

For Griffith that star first became apparent in the jungles



Allan Griffith

of Borneo and Papua New Guinea during World War II. He had enlisted in the RAAF as a wireless operator, coming from a background of childhood poverty and meagre education. Born in Toogoolawah in the Queensland bush, he was one of seven sons of a butcher who supplied meat for timber-cutters in the upper Brisbane Valley. His education began inauspiciously in a one-teacher school; he dropped out of high school at an early age, milking cows and helping on wheat farms for 16 shillings a week. At one point he ran a grocer's shop.

Casualties in the War were high. 'Most youth in those days joined with no thought of ever returning,' says Griffith. 'Of my five friends, only two survived.' One young man, who was later captured by the Japanese and executed, gave Griffith a book entitled *For Sinners Only* by A J Russell, which described the work of Frank Buchman, initiator of MRA. It pointed him towards the star he was to follow—the thought, which had been given practical emphasis in the twentieth century by Frank Buchman, that God had a plan for every man and that in the inner recesses of one's heart one could find the secrets of life's purpose in moral solutions to one's own problems'.

In the starkness of war, Griffith felt compelled to discover that purpose within himself. As it began to dawn on him that he might survive, he decided 'to acquire a bit more learning'. He managed to get hold of textbooks and, self-instructed, completed his matriculation while the fighting still went on.

With the war over and his returned serviceman's benefit, he enrolled in Australia's first political science course at Melbourne University. 'The fight against fascism and military dictatorships had been very strong in my generation,' he explained. 'Enormous sacrifices had been made to re-establish the concepts of a free society, viable for the twentieth century and beyond. I wanted to get things done. In the ranks, the question of security interested me. In some areas one saw the war being fought the wrong way. I thought the people running the show at the political level were not always fighting the right conceptual battle.'

But Melbourne University presented its own battle. 'It was quite appalling to come out of the world I emerged from and to find student politics dominated by Stalinists.' Linking up with others of Christian and democratic convictions, Griffith and his friends managed to get themselves elected to control of the students' representative council. They re-established student politics on the basis that 'every philosophical view could contend for the mind of the

university' and Griffith became editor of the student newspaper, *Farrago*, which at that point was being printed at the Communist Party press.

Following the success of Communism in China and Korea, and the insurgency wars in Malaya, the intellectual stream of Australia 'seemed to accept the inevitability of Communism in South-east Asia,' remembers Griffith. 'One could write off the defeatism of the intelligentsia. But how to reinforce the political structures with the insight to create policies which could serve the cultures and civilisation of Asia?'

His chance came. Graduating in international relations and law, Griffith's talent was spotted by Australia's elder statesman Sir Frank Eggleston and he found himself on the departmental staff of Sir Robert Menzies. It was a crucial period when South-east Asian countries were undergoing decolonization and new alignments were being formed. Japan's future role in Asia was in question, with feeling still running high against her. Griffith, however, says he had no bitterness against Japan except 'an inherited feeling that Australia would never have a relationship with Japan of any significance'.

RSL resolution

Today Japan is Australia's biggest trading partner. Griffith feels that the efforts of people motivated by Moral Re-Armament to build links with Japan in the immediate post-war period helped to make this new relationship possible. He describes the warm response when two Australian political leaders visited Japan and apologised for their hatred, and how a high-level Japanese delegation, part of an MRA group visiting the Philippines, brought reconciliation at a political level between those two countries. In 1958 a colleague in the Prime Minister's department, who was also Canberra branch secretary of the Returned Servicemen's League, asked Griffith's help in drafting a resolution calling on the RSL to review its policy on Japan and for a future relationship based on peace and hope. The RSL, the guardian of Australia's war legacy, passed the resolution just as Prime Minister Kishi was about to visit Australia for the first time, seeking reconciliation.

While he believes that high-quality self-defence is important, Griffith supports Japan's renunciation of an external military role. 'It frees her to invest her talent and brilliance in what the world needs most in the future, in building an economic and welfare system that works globally for mankind,' he says. On his most recent visit, a few weeks ago, he found the Japanese leadership 'quite inspired by Malcolm Fraser's concern to create a new relationship between developed and developing countries'.

Narrowing options

North-South issues genuinely move Griffith. The 'South', with three-quarters of the world's population but only one-fifth of its income and with 800 million people severely underfed, is central to his thinking. While he notes 'disturbing reluctances on both sides' to settle for global negotiations, he sees some progress in the fact that confrontation has somewhat subsided and that each side recognises that demand will not move the other.

He believes equally passionately that no country can now afford not to care for the world's environment. 'Such an attitude of care should not be based on sentiment but on

an acute and perceptive concern that all of us on the earth may sink together,' he says.

'Frank Buchman emphasised individual responsibility through seeking to discover God's plan for mankind. This philosophy, which might have been contested by the cynics of the Forties and Fifties, can only be acclaimed today as a fundamental prerequisite of our survival in the next century. The options are narrowing between irresponsibility and responsibility.'

So for Griffith it is 'common sense to care'—in a very practical way. 'I do not think you can sustain the spirit of concern for others unless you have standards which make you less concerned about yourself. Every human being, I believe, has the capacity to listen to the inner voice of conscience and integrity on the deepest issues confronting them. When someone does this they can make a creative contribution, wherever they are.'

For Australia, as a resource-rich country in the Commonwealth, this means a special challenge: 'Australia's role in the Commonwealth is to demonstrate that a bridge of care can be built and be effective between a developed and developing countries. The Commonwealth has enabled Australia to build special relationships with India, Africa and the Pacific countries. The small island governments of the Pacific test our quality as neighbours. And our relations with India and Africa test our concern for the world as a whole.'

'What the Commonwealth has done for Australia and many nations has been to challenge them to identify the values by which their societies live,' he says. To stay in a Commonwealth where 82 per cent are black or brown, Australia has had to face up to the issue of race at home.

No illusions

After participating in consultations with Middle East leaders earlier this year, Griffith feels the West should build on the work of President Sadat. The West must appreciate, however, that many Muslim nations, which hold that man is a spiritual being, reject Western civilisation's 'soul-destroying selfishness and extreme permissiveness'. 'The Christian West needs to go into much more self-examination before condemning what are some heavily compounded reactions against Western decadence,' he says.

He sees a parallel reaction within our own societies. With three daughters of his own, he comments: 'The youth of Australia are capable of responding to important ideals. But they are restive and disillusioned because they feel the system is not magnanimous enough to take account of the human crisis which they instinctively feel is upon them. It is important for youth to feel there is a compassionate leadership. Unfortunately too many decisions are presented just in terms of hard-nosed economic argument.'

Of his own life and involvement in human crises, Griffith says 'the Christian faith gives you a sane reference in a tumultuous world'.

Though there are many Prime Ministers with many advisers, and many who achieve extraordinary things without his 'star' to follow, Allan Griffith—grocer, wireless operator, student leader, public servant, government envoy—has no illusions about what has led him. 'I can only say that there was nothing in my bush education that prepared me for rising to become an adviser to a Prime Minister. I did not just fall into it. There is much in life that unfolds; every day bringing fresh revelations. And through it all, I have had a sense of God's leading.'

One fifth of Australia's present population was born overseas, more than half of them in non-English speaking countries. There are migrants from 103 countries. Ethnic Radio broadcasts programmes in 40 languages and Multicultural TV, established two years ago, screens the best films and documentaries from around the globe as well as an award-winning world news service.

With such a diverse community, Australia is developing a dynamic social, political and cultural identity. MOHAN BHAGWANDAS writes:

WHAT MAKES ME AN AUSTRALIAN

I BECAME AN AUSTRALIAN citizen 10 years ago. Sri Lankan by birth, I also feel Australian at heart. This does not mean I feel European and white. Nor is it symbolised by my Australian passport.

I feel an Australian because I made a decision in my heart that this country would be my home; that I would accept what was good and bad in the present and in the past; that I would identify with everyone, not just my own community; that I would live on the basis of appreciation not comparison and that I would contribute something of my culture as well as absorb new ways.

Over the years, quite naturally, a love has grown in my heart for Australia. I identify with the harsh open spaces just as I do with the lush green rice fields in Sri Lanka. As I walk down the streets of Melbourne I feel a sense of belonging to a city. Australia has won me and this, to me, is a greater gift than material wealth.

Australia's future will depend on sound economic policies—and on sound relationships. We are fortunate that economic stability, due to plentiful resources and minerals, has left the Australian community free from stresses and strains between its different national groups. All have contributed to building Australia.

Stronger bonds

As we face increasing unemployment and an economic downturn these relationships will be tested. It is important that we migrants do not stick to our own communities where we feel secure. We often have to take the first step in building friendships with those who have lived here for many generations. When I have done this I have always found a wholehearted response. I have learnt how many Australians suffered during the depression and war years, just as, through those of us who have recently arrived, other Australians have come to understand what it means to live through violence, war and tyranny. As we find out more about each other we can build stronger bonds which will establish a stable community.

As Australia approaches 1988, her bicentenary, the relationship between the whites and the Aborigines who were here long before they arrived is vital. It is easy to stand on the sidelines and say it is not my affair. I have found however that as an Asian I needed to shed the distorted images I had acquired of the Aboriginal people, their culture and history. As I got to know Aborigines a new



Weeks

Mohan Bhagwandas

world was opened to me. I found it was important not to judge or take sides but to work to build bridges between black and white as well as between migrant and first Australian.

Over the last 10 years my faith and trust in God have deepened as a result of the care of many Australians. My wife and I look forward with our two children to building that caring and unselfish Australia, bringing together the best we all have to offer to each other and the world. ■

Lao reconciliation

PRINCE KHAMHING, half-brother of the Laotian King, former Chargé d'Affaires of Laos in Australia and former Ambassador to Thailand and Japan, invited an international MRA group to his residence in Sydney last June.

The film *Smile of the Apsara*, which documents the visit of the MRA play *Song of Asia* to Laos in 1974, was screened in the presence of H E Outhong Souvannavong, former President of the King's Council and now leader of the United Lao Liberation Front, former ambassador Tianethone Chantharasy, the Prince's family and others.

Prince Khamhing and H E Outhong Souvannavong were moved by the message of reconciliation and forgiveness in the film.

The Laotians and the Hmongs (a minority in Laos) who were present witnessed the expression of forgiveness between leaders of the two communities for the deep-rooted hatred and mistrust in the Hmong people's hearts towards the Laotians.

One of the hosts wrote later, 'The two communities inspired by this spirit of frankness and forgiveness have been strengthening their friendship ever since through active participation and co-operation in their social and cultural activities.'

A Hmong tribal, Chu Chang, returned to Sydney after taking the Studies in Effective Living Course at the MRA centre in Melbourne and visited 28 families—Laotian, Vietnamese and others—to tell them about his new-found convictions. Chu Chang sought to make friends with the Vietnamese whose country he had held responsible for the killings of his people in their tribal homeland. ■

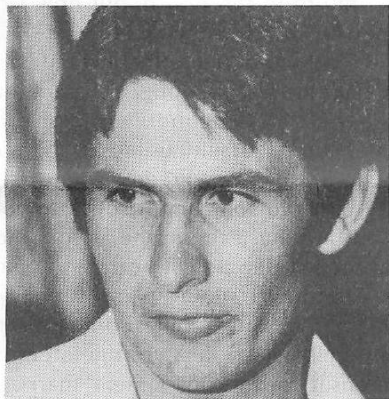
SOUTH-EAST TOUR contd from p3

Part of our public programme was a reading of a new play, *A Night at the Club*. It describes a man's struggle against corruption in a mining company, weaving the story through the lives of his family, an Aboriginal leader and a Vietnamese refugee.

At an Aboriginal reserve 160 miles north of Brisbane we spoke to an audience which included several members of the reserve's council. Chris Chandler from a beef cattle farm in Victoria described how at university he had been deeply concerned about the division between black and white in Australia and had founded an Aboriginal Support group. However until recently, he said, the division between him and his father had been left in the 'too-hard basket'.

'When I was 14 I decided that I wasn't interested in my parents' religion and that I was going to do my own thing,' he went on. 'I never asked for their advice on anything and if they offered it, I asked them to keep it to themselves. I never trusted Dad with anything about myself and I treated home like a hotel—a place to go when I was tired, broke and had clothes to be washed. I went home last February and told Dad everything about my past that he didn't know and apologised for the way I had treated home.'

'I believe we have two choices,' he continued. 'We can do our own thing and pretend that what we do doesn't affect others; or we can listen to our consciences and open our hearts to the struggles and problems of others.'



Chris Chandler

Weeks

Chandler was also disarmingly honest about his motives with the Aboriginal Support group. 'There is a certain amount of glory attached to being an activist,' he explained. 'I was often more concerned that leading Aboriginals would remember me than about anything I could do for them.' He apologised for the arrogant attitude which, although he had never visited the state before, he had held towards Queenslanders.

We gave our programme at a barbeque in a country town in New South Wales where we spent several days. Over 100 Aboriginals came, including two families whose presence was described by townfolk as a 'miracle' because they did not see eye-to-eye. Several rows of cross-legged, grinning children chattered and giggled as we strained our voices to be heard over the rain battering on the tin roof of the community hall and the wind whisking dead leaves in through the open doorways.

As a tribal person from Nagaland, in North-east India, an area convulsed for decades in a violent political struggle, Vichalie Chasie spoke of what he saw as the destiny of minority peoples. 'Those who have suffered most, often have most to offer,' he said. 'We must create unity and look beyond what we see as our rights.'

'I believe the tribals can be the conscience of the world,'

he continued. 'With our community spirit and values we can bring affluent and materialist societies back to sanity. We must think of what we have to contribute rather than dwelling on wrongs done to us.'

As we left the town clouds of rich brown dust rose behind us from the dirt road, but by evening we were in the sedate and elegant avenues of Canberra. Not that there was anything particularly sedate about the boys' school where several of our group spent four days on the invitation of the Headmaster. They gave a total of 14 presentations to over 600 boys, two cultural programmes and spoke at the weekly staff meeting.

The response was summed up by the School Captain. 'Normally when groups like yours come they are met with complete cynicism by seniors,' he said. 'Somehow you have managed to break through and get your message across.' ■

Secrets of the desert

by Naomi Echlin

THE HEART OF AUSTRALIA is desert. It has always been feared and respected. Brave men, explorers and pioneers, have sought to conquer it, to find routes across it in search of water and potential pastures. Many have died in the attempt. The Aboriginals alone know all its secrets.

Brother Carlo Carretto, a present-day Desert Father, recently said in Melbourne:

'The desert is not just the absence of people. It is the evidence of God's presence.'

'Desert in the Biblical sense is God's invitation to find space where God can talk to man.'

'You can have the presence of God in the true desert and also in the city. You have to create your own desert in the city.'

'In the desert one is aware of the presence of God, through faith, hope and love.'

'The further one goes in the spiritual life the more he is alone.'

'The one point where you get close to Christ is through suffering, which you have to discover for yourself. Then the Spirit comes and helps you get closer to Christ.'

Sadly, it is fatally easy for the well-intentioned to miss out altogether on this spiritual desert. It can vanish in a sandstorm of busyness. We can all rebel. The lonely turn their hi-fi higher, or retire inwardly upon themselves. The busy get increasingly frustrated. Either can forget that the desert is the one place we should all be journeying towards throughout our life's span—the ultimate meeting place face-to-face with God. It is just as much a challenge for the physically alone and the lonely to accept Brother Carretto's desert as it is for the active to have to create it amongst a crowd.

It is only because we of the West are such ingrained activists and materialists that we deem it an outrage to be alone, 'out of the swim', not 'doing'. It may well be in the desert that we Australians will become aware of our national conscience and destiny, and that God will reveal His task for each of us in helping to redress the wrongs of a war-weary, hungry world. ■

INDIA

WHEN RICH AND POOR CAN BE COMRADES

by Suresh Khatri

'ARE YOU ARRANGING for police protection for your conference?' asked Dr Mirajgaonkar, Principal of the Regional Institute of Technology (RIT) in Jamshedpur, when he was approached about the MRA conference on 'Creative change for total development' held in his institute in June. 'Your "trouble-makers" will be our policemen,' replied the convenor of the conference, P N Pandey, Divisional Manager of the Jamshedpur engineering company TELCO.

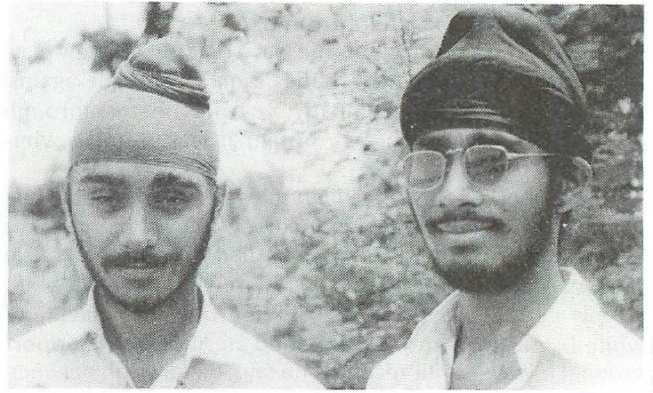
Students and professors from RIT took part in the conference, which was organised by people from Jamshedpur industries and colleges. To the surprise of local people, the students did not disrupt the conference and there have been signs of change at RIT, which has a recent history of examination walk-outs and postponements. Students who were six months behind in their syllabus have persuaded the Principal and teachers to cancel their 45-day Durga Puja holidays so that they can attend classes. Second year students who have been clamouring for some months for re-examination in some subjects were surprised when the Principal announced that the exams would be held forthwith. And on a campus where inter-caste clashes have been so serious that each hostel is sealed off into two sections, students of different castes are now working together to deal with student grievances.

Dowry system

At the conference, the professor of Mechanical Engineering, Dr Mishra, apologised to his students for humiliating them. 'We teachers often don't explain subjects properly and then we ridicule our students when they are not able to answer properly.' Students and staff from other Jamshedpur colleges and schools spoke of their resolutions to give up corruption and favouritism.

Jamshedpur lies at the heart of the coal, steel and energy industries of South Bihar. Sarosh Ghandy, General Manager of TELCO, was the chief guest at the inaugural session. Many from TELCO and other companies took part in the conference. 'I used to think that bosses were exploiters only,' said a trade union secretary from a giant factory which has been hard hit by the recession and competition. 'I have taken decisions which were not morally right out of fear of my opponents. Other decisions have been wrong because they were solely to keep the union leadership in my hands. Now I want to see things on the basis of what is just and right.'

Many spoke of reconciliation in their families since they



Pritpal Singh and Hardeep Singh, students at the Jamshedpur Co-operative College, two of the conference organisers

had begun to obey the inner voice of conscience, in one case ending a 14-year rift between brothers-in-law. M M Dubey, a manager from TELCO, described new relationships with his wife and son and the family's decision to give their servant a better wage, with paid leave.

'Whenever I used to have a difference with my wife, in anger and bitterness we would not talk to each other for days,' said D B Barucha, from TELCO's Inspection Department. 'This used to pain the children. Now when differences arise we are able to talk things through and find unanimity. Before I have regarded my wife as part of the furniture in the house, but now I realise that she too is a person with her own feelings.'

'I used to demand that my eldest son take my permission before he did anything. He is a quiet type and I have always wanted him to be more expressive, but the inner voice told me, "You yourself hesitate to speak out to your bosses with whom you have worked for 20 years. What wonder that your 19-year-old son cannot speak to you?"'

'I find that even in the factory more work gets done if I approach people with care and peace.'

The dowry system places a heavy burden on people in Bihar. Working families sometimes provide up to Rs 45,000 as well as scooters, refrigerators, furniture and kitchen utensils for their daughters' marriages. Three RIT students told the conference that they had decided not to take dowry. An assistant manager in TELCO with three sons said that he would forego the income their marriages could bring him.

Jamshedpur lies in Adivasi (tribal) territory. Industry has bulldozed many Adivasi out of their traditional setting and they are now stirring to action. At the conference some from industry decided to visit Adivasi villages regularly to learn of their aspirations.

'We know that some people wash down the places where we sit once we leave their homes,' said S K Mahato, a young Adivasi graduate. 'This sort of treatment had filled me with hate. There was another person on whom I had decided to take revenge for letting me down.' Apologising for these feelings, he said, 'I have always thought that those richer than me are my enemies, but this conference has shown me that the rich can be my comrades too.'

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