

TRACKS

NELEN YUBU NEWSHEET

November 1978

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This first real edition of Tracks (after the pilot edition) is a bit larger than it had meant to be. Provided its size is not daunting, the mistake (if it is one) is in the right direction. It's much better to have too much than to be starved. One can always leave off, but one can't create what isn't there.

Roughly I would plan five issues a year, i.e. one every two months. That may need to be modified immediately in view of the fact that I shall be away from the Territory from mid December until the end of April: I teach at YU during first term.
Happy Christmas all! Martin Wilson MSC, Director, Nelen Yubu Institute.

CORRESPONDENCE

The editor would like to acknowledge the reception of letters from the following (most of them containing contributions towards the costs of printing and posting):-

Sr M. Teresita (St Joseph's Generalate, Mount St); Sr Stella Bryant (St John of God Convent, Broome, and for various WA convents); Sr Frances Crowe OSF (Tennant Creek, and for Fitzroy Crossing); Pat Austin MSC (Nhulunbuy); Sr Robyn Reynolds FDNAC (Santa Teresa); Jerome Crowe CP (Yarra Theological Union); Ferdy Parer OFM (St Anne's Mission, Palm Is.); Cyril Hally SSC (National Missionary Council, Double Bay); Sr Margaret Danckert FMM (South Townsville); Joe Kearney SAC (Kew); Dan O'Donovan OCR (Lombadina Mission).

Most letters contained a few words of encouragement, like:-

Congratulations...; It's good to see a start; It is very heartening to see that someone is doing Mission work from a scientific approach; I like the style of it. Keep it up!

One of the foregoing lessened the effect of his enthusiasm by also writing: *Sorry I'm not enclosing a big fat cheque... The sorrow is shared. But thanks to those who have helped in a practical way. I shall send this copy of the newsheet to the same group as received a copy of the pilot edition (plus to new addresses that have come in since). But after this, I do not think I will bother those outside of the north who have shown no interest in receiving copies.*

At the same time, I would not like the people in the north to think that a bit of help from them in the matter of printing and posting costs would not be appreciated. The most charitable work in the world still generally costs something! Fortunately, having been admitted by Australia Post into Category A of registered publications, postage costs will be less than half what they would have been at the rate of charging for normal articles.

A number of letters contained longer quotable statements or even sections that the authors offered for publication. (This is a good way to broadcast a thought without going to the trouble of writing it up into "article" form -- at the same time I hope not too many have the idea that anything they might write would not be classy enough for presentation in Tracks: it is precisely a forum for missionaries!) If people write to me as Editor of Tracks or Director of the Nelen Yubu Institute, I presume that they will not mind me including snippets from their letters in this correspondence column. Naturally, I shall endeavour to exercise normal discretion...

Fr Cyril Hally SSC: National Missionary Council, Resource Centre:-

.../The Resource Centre/ will be transferred provisionally to Turrumurra so I can live under one roof. It has reached the stage of development which would justify some regular publication.

We have changed the name of the Missiology Programme to Pacific Mission Institute, partly because it is more than a programme and partly to avoid the use of the word "missiology".

Fr Ferdy Parer OFM (St Anne's Mission, Palm Island):-

Some random thoughts for what they are worth:

1. When I arrived on P.I. almost five years ago P.I. Catholic men said, "We understood the Latin Mass, but we don't understand the English Mass." Since then we have used each Sunday, at two of my Masses, the 60 cents E.J. Dwyer Sunday Mass Book with a copy for each Mass comer. The use of this visual means of following the Mass has been acceptable. I no longer hear people say, "We understood the Latin Mass but we don't understand the English Mass."

2. To identify parish goals and then later to identify possible/probable way of achieving them, we use sheets of butchers paper 2 metres by 1 metre stuck on the wall. When someone states a goal, it is written for all to see, without discussion. Encouragement is given to get as many goals as possible.

At the next session we discuss to decide which goal can be achieved with the least possible effort. Steps towards achieving this goal are written for all to see on another sheet of butchers paper, in another colour.

This method is attracting interest and enthusiasm.

3. Today I received a letter from a religious who has had some years working amongst Australian Aborigines and is at present staying with American Red Indians. The letter reads: "The Indian people here use A.A. very effectively and speak highly of it" and "This listening session I'm attending on Indian Culture, Philosophy and Psychology is a very good session and one gets profound insights. A similar session would do so much for the dignity and self esteem of Aborigines."

(In answer to your request for some bibliographical information: the details are: SPOLSKY, Bernard (ed.): The Language Education of Minority Children. Rowley (Mass.): Newbury House; 1972.)

Fr Dan O'Donovan OCR (Lombadina Mission):-

...In general, I found the "Daly River Leadership Training Centre" paper most stimulating and constructive (apart from the reservation mentioned in that letter.) /Reference to a letter to Fr John Leary of the Training Centre to the effect that "if we want to be evangelically heard by Aborigines in the first place...we have to study more closely...our own communications process."/ Particularly enlightening was the delegates' own emphases on the significance of the extended family, and what is called in the report "the 'spirit' aspect of the Tiwi". Both these leads could be most productive, and would probably apply equally in WA. (Cf. pp.12 ff. of this issue)

/Sr/ Brid also brought me a copy of the Australian bishops' statement on Aborigines (for Social Justice Sunday '73). The last page of this (p.22) contains a beautifully clear and simple statement of belief by Deacon Boniface. It impresses me deeply. One (to me) discordant note is struck, however, which linked up in my mind with an identical statement in the "Daly River Leadership Training Centre" paper. If I draw your attention to it, it/more by way of interrogation (what do you think?) is

Boniface says: "We have Dreamtime figures who formed the world, who gave us law and ceremony and life creatures, from where our spirits come.

"We find it easy to see in Christ THE great Dreamtime figure, who, more than all others, gave us Law and Ceremony and life centres, and marked out the way we must follow to reach our true country..."

On the concluding page of his paper, Fr Leary says:- "Christ's appreciation of nature...etc....a dreamtime figure if you like who established Law and Ceremony and Life-centres..."

To me it seems that, however strong the temptation, we must at all costs avoid presenting Christ as a Dreamtime figure. It will lead to much confusion. Because, once we do that, we come face to face with Kath Walker's legitimate challenge, with no easy reply:

"We are happiest
Among our own people. We would like to see
Our own customs kept, our old
Dances and songs, crafts and corroborees.
Why change our sacred myths for your sacred myths?"

(From her poem, "Integration - Yes!" My underlining.)

I think here, from the viewpoint of theology, we hit up against perhaps the most formidable difficulty facing every missionary among the Aborigines: that of presenting the historical Christ intelligibly, appreciably, to a not-very-'history'-conscious people.

Which, I think, again, throws us back on our own communications processes, and the need for reforming our mission language; exploring, for instance, such nonverbal areas as symbol, suggestion, silence itself, much more carefully than we have done. That is why I am inclined to look to the extensive common ground of comparative religion, and to propose research there, paying special attention to the more developed religious language forms of the main eastern currents. I'm sure you will agree that the Aborigines' general outlook is "oriental" rather than "western", however unsatisfactory these two epithets may be.

(As my opinion was asked for, I would say that I too would be open to the same line of criticism about the use of dreamtime mythology, as will be clear from *New, Old and Timeless*: pointers towards an Aboriginal theology, which will be the published form of four seminar papers I gave at Alice Springs in May this year. -- Secondly, as a social anthropologist, I would not feel too happy with the dichotomy, 'western'/'oriental', in this context...)

* * * *

In the pilot edition the remarks I reported regarding the social consequences of bilingual educational programmes sparked off some adverse reaction. I have been promised a paper on the subject from Santa Teresa, but it doesn't look like being ready in time for this issue. As a substitute I convey some information I received from there in a letter. This introduces the first straightout contribution, viz some comments from Denis Kelly.

Sr Robyn Reynolds FDNSC (Santa Teresa):-

...I don't know your personal views regarding bilingual programs but in the Newsheet you wrote, "it was maintained" that factual results of these programs have been the suppression rather than the maintenance of the local language. This is rather too broad a generalization, don't you agree? -- For those of us familiar with the research and various reports on projects in this area could give an equal number of examples to show "the factual result" -- certainly in parts of Mexico and Canada -- has been a positive re-awakening of cultural identity and worth through vernacular literacy programs -- whether or not the actual language has died out in the process.

...The remarks you quoted made by Santa Teresa parents were perfectly correct. It just wasn't just the way you presented them. They were made in response to a suggestion or offer given by the Dept. of Education to begin a Bi-lingual Program as was described to them (i.e. literacy -- oral then written -- in the mother tongue as soon as the child begins school with English being taught as a second language). It's a pity you weren't able to mention the other comment that was made which was "It (i.e. Arunda Literacy) is good for the older ones."

In response to very strong and direct requests from the Arunta people here earlier this year we began formally last term a Bi-lingual Program 'from the other end'. Adult groups. Aboriginal teachers and Health workers, and then beginning this term lessons with the Secondary Students. Margaret Heffernan (an Aboriginal woman from here) has had 3 yrs Linguistic training at Batchelor and is the sole teacher for these groups. It has been very exciting too this term. As well as requests from other young Aboriginal workers to attend the Literacy classes, some parents and those a little older have also asked to learn. As in other important areas it appears that the children will have to wait a while before they are ready for this... Kalle mwerre?...

* * * * *

Again, many thanks for your letters, your support and your criticism. It is only by this sort of feed-back that we will be able to find out if what we think we are doing is anything like what we actually do, and if any of it is worth doing in any case.

I take this occasion to wish you all a Happy Christmas!

Martin Wilson MSC

BILINGUAL EDUCATION DOES NOT

NECESSARILY LEAD TO CULTURAL DISINTEGRATION

DENIS KELLY

Bilingual Coordinator, St Therese's School
Nguiu, Bathurst Island. NT

The following comments are offered on Martin Wilson's comments on bilingual education in the Nelen Yubu newsheet of September 14, 1978

Regrettably it does seem to be the case that often bilingual education has been and is devoted to promoting the dominant national language. In the case of the United States it is a matter of national policy that bilingual programmes do this.

In the case of the N.T. the same 'model' for a bilingual programme (the 'transition' model, referring to transition to the dominant language) looms large in the official rationale for bilingual education in the N.T. See, for example, the document *Bilingual Education in Schools in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory*. There are, however, moves for change in this emphasis in official policy.

Another model for bilingual programmes is the 'maintenance' model, which sees the bilingual education programme as a means of preserving a particular language and culture. It has to be admitted that schools in Australia and, more particularly, schools in which most of the students are original Australians are very forceful agents of the dominant culture. A bilingual education programme is justified in schools in which most of the students are original Australians only if that school is also an institution whereby the first language and first culture of the local original Australians is encouraged to grow rather than disappear.

Let me be more specific. The question that we need to ask on Bathurst Island is: Is it possible for a school on Bathurst Island to be a genuine Tiwi institution? I suggest that the answer is yes, and this notwithstanding the fact that the school as it is and likely to become is not and will not be identical with a 'traditional Tiwi school' and notwithstanding the fact that the curriculum will not be exactly the same as the 'traditional Tiwi curriculum'. Nonetheless, the school can encourage traditional learning styles and, if the community so wishes, a traditional curriculum.

Consider, for example, two of the basic skills of literacy: reading and writing. These cannot be said to be traditional skills, not even when they are applied to traditional oral material. But if non-Tiwi policy-makers insist that they are essential skills for the Tiwi in the second language (English), then they cannot then turn around and say, "But don't apply these skills to Tiwi."

Under what conditions can a school on Bathurst Island be a genuine Tiwi institution, a 'modern' Tiwi institution although not entirely a traditional one? I am assuming that today one of the main purposes of a school is to promote literacy. If in a Tiwi school Tiwi teachers teach reading and writing and other subjects in Tiwi, Tiwi writers prepare literature and texts in Tiwi, and the Tiwi community has a substantial role in making school policy, by way of a school council, then we can say that the school is a genuine Tiwi institution. This, in fact, happens at Nguuu.

One of the Tiwi writers, Donald Kantilla, has written this (which is an English translation of what he wrote):

We should work at writing books because all of us should read those books. The children will read those books. When they read those books they will say, "This is our language".

Those who in the future read what we write in books now will say, "This is what our forefathers used to talk, those who lived long ago." And for that reason we will leave the stories behind.

So we should work at making books written in our language so that the children can read them in the future. It's good that we write in our language. That which we work at, writing our own books which are in the language, is good. We should not work at theirs, the white man's language. We should work at writing our language.

Of course, no-one can by sound argument successfully gainsay the right of a people to their language and culture. There is, however, a real problem in getting educational resources allocated for education in a particular language if such allocation has not already been made, and if the group of speakers of that

language is small. Suppose the speakers of one of the languages not chosen for 'literate treatment' at Port Keats asked for 'literate treatment' of their language, and suppose there were at most a couple of hundred of them. There is no good reason to refuse their request, but I would not fancy their chances.

The greatness of a people is no more determined by their number than the greatness of a man is determined by his height (Victor Hugo)

* * * * *

MY TRIP TO YIRRKALA

FRANCES MARRAR (Bathurst Island)

Frances was one of the Tiwi delegates to an Aboriginal Women's Conference held at Yirrkala during August this year. She wrote the following brief report for Tracks.

When I first went to Yirrkala I didn't like it. After a day I started to like it because it was a nice place and also because some of the people spoke to us and said hullo.

There were about 50 women at the Women's Conference. It was exciting to meet them all and they seemed very friendly.

When we first arrived we had a barbeque and that's where we all met each other and we spoke about what we were going to do the next day. After the barbeque we had a film. We enjoyed the film.

The next day we had breakfast and helped each other clean the kitchen and then we cleaned our room. After that we had worship we said a little prayer and sang songs. Some of the women sang and prayed in their language. After that we all discuss problems that we all have in every Settlement and Mission. Some of the problems were about young girls having babies and sometimes not knowing how to look after them. We talked in some groups and then reported to the rest of the women to see if they agreed with us. Another problem was that when old people get pension money the young people take it from them. This is not honest. After the discussing we walked around the beach and said hullo to the people and then we had our supper and enjoyed our meals. After that we had dancing and a film. The dancing was from Yirrkala boys and girls. We all really enjoyed it.

Here is a list of some of the problem areas we discussed:-

- 1) Alcohol
- 2) Unmarried Mothers
- 3) Pension money
- 4) Mothers who don't get enough money when they have lots of children
- 5) Schools who have Bilingual Education and others that don't. And of some parents if they want the children go to Bilingual School.

Well, I enjoy my week up there very much.

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DEACON BONIFACE PERDJERT

The following is the record of an interview with Deacon Boniface Perdjert about his diaconal ministry. The interview was conducted at Darwin, 26 September 1978 by M.J. Wilson MSC, director of the Nelen Yubu Missiological Institute, on behalf of the International Centre for Diaconate (Freiburg, West Germany).

Interviewer: Would you please tell us something about your social background?

Boniface: My people belong to the Murinbata language group. Our country is about 240 km. in a straight line south-west from Darwin, the main city in the Northern Territory of Australia. There are a number of other language groups round about. In 1935 the Catholic Church founded a mission in Murinbata country. The mission is called Port Keats. However, the real name of the present site is Idiyl. Neighbouring peoples gathered at the mission, so that these days Port Keats is a small town with about 1000 inhabitants. Over the last few years members of other language groups have been talking about going back to their own country, and last year several "homeland movements" started up. The Church wants to help the people in what they want to do. For myself, I am a Murinbata man and belong to Port Keats (Idiyl), but as a deacon I shall travel around to help the people re-establish themselves in their home lands. Just about everyone at Port Keats is a baptised Catholic now.

Interviewer: And your own family?

Boniface: I was born in 1936, the year after the mission started. At that time neither my father nor my mother were baptised. My father died in 1960. My mother, Pelimbi, was baptised in 1961 and received the baptismal name of Agatha. She now lives at Port Keats as a widow.

Interviewer: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Boniface: Yes, I have two brothers, both married, and two sisters, one of whom is married. They all live at Port Keats. I am the eldest in the family.

Interviewer: And your wife and children?

Boniface: My wife is Bridget Ngapur. She belongs to a different language group, the Murindjabin people. Like me, she was baptised as a baby. We have three daughters, Florence Minggi (16), Margaret Rose Ngorloikoi (13), and Mary Concepta Demngurrtak (10).

Interviewer: Would you tell us something about your own history?

Boniface: As I said, I was born in 1936. I started school at Port Keats mission when I was about 7 years old, and worked my way through to the top class, sixth class. Since leaving school I have been working as a teacher at Port Keats. I spent one year at Kormilda College¹: this qualified me to work as a teaching assistant. The rest of my training I got on the job. I have now been teaching for 22 years. At Port Keats school I teach mainly mathematics, English, Aboriginal language (Murinbata), and religion. I was married in 1959 and was ordained deacon at Port Keats in 1974.²

Interviewer: How did the idea of being a married deacon come to you?

Boniface: I was a member of the catechists class being conducted by Fr Docherty, the founder of the Port Keats mission. I got the idea of doing something for the Church. My first idea was to become an MSC brother. Fr Docherty approved. However, I did not go on with the idea, and I got married in 1959. Then, later on, the thought of becoming a married deacon came to me. Fr John Leary, who was parish priest at Port Keats then, encouraged me in my idea. I asked my wife about it, and she was happy with it -- as she still is. I also asked some of the old men in my tribe. I would not have become a deacon against their will, but fortunately they said it was a very good idea.

Interviewer: What special preparation did you have?

Boniface: My parish priest, Fr Leary, guided me. Also, I went to Sydney, to St Paul's Seminary for three months.³ There I attended theology

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1. Kormilda College: a special Aboriginal college in Darwin.
 2. The ceremony occurred at the time of the 25 years jubilee of the episcopal ordination of the Ordinary of Darwin, Bishop J.P.O'Loughlin MSC. Quite a few bishops were present. The ceremony was performed in the open air at Port Keats and a colour film record was made by Karl Stellmach: a sequence is included in a film produced by him for the diocese of Darwin, *They Walked in Darkness*.
 3. St Paul's National Seminary is specifically for late vocations, i.e. the minimum age is 25. It is at Kensington, in Sydney, NSW.

classes, and was given special instruction by Fr Peter Hoy. I stayed at St Paul's from March till May, 1974. In May I returned to Port Keats, and I was ordained deacon on 19 July.

Interviewer: Would you tell us something about your work as a deacon?

Boniface: I would like to say, first of all, that I am very happy with my ministry as a married deacon. My work, basically, is what any deacon does, except that being an Aboriginal person within a mission situation gives a special quality to my ministry. I assist the priest at Mass, I take Communion to the sick, I minister at marriages, I perform baptisms, I bury the dead...as any deacon would do. But being myself Murinbata, I give the sermon at Mass in the Murinbata language -- the priest's sermon, in English, follows mine. Because of my relationship to them, many people prefer that I be the minister at their marriages and baptisms.

Interviewer: Besides the special value that being an Aboriginal gives to your ministry with Aboriginal people, are there any other special ministerial functions that you perform?

Boniface: Two come immediately to mind: one that a non-Aboriginal person could do as well as an Aboriginal one, all other things being equal, and one that really needs an Aboriginal minister. -- The first is my work in catechetics. Each week I take a class of catechists: some 24 persons, young and old, male and female. For about an hour I take them through a catechetical lesson, then that same evening they go off to their own language groups in their various camps and there small teams of them give the catechetical lesson in the language of their group.

Interviewer: And the second, that really needs an Aboriginal minister?

Boniface: This is a special paraliturgy held each Thursday evening. It is built around the "scripture rosary". What makes it special are the surrounding ceremonies. Briefly, the people process from one of the three main camps, reciting the rosary in English and singing Aboriginal songs. These songs are specially composed for Church use, but they use the basic tunes of one of the three traditional corroboree ceremonial groups, *wanga*, *lirga* or *djanba*. In front of the church one dancing group performs. They process into the church with an entrance song. Then I, the deacon

(and maybe the priest too) go to the front. The special singers come to the front, to the microphones. I give a talk in Murinbata language. There follows a reading of an apposite passage from the gospel (St Mark's has been translated into Murinbata) coupled with the recitation of a decade of the rosary. I expose the Blessed Sacrament, and one group sings -- week by week the various groups take it in turns to sing or dance. Exposition finishes with Benediction. They process out, singing, and a final dance is performed in front of the church.

-- I am very happy with my life and work as a married deacon, though it is not always quite so easy. But now is not the time to talk about these problems...

NT CLERGY

- * Please note that the Clergy Conference is due 5 & 6 December, usual time, at St Johns College.
- * The mission clergy should come prepared to present the local situation regarding Aboriginal liturgy.
- * Agenda suggestions could be sent to me, or one could come to the meeting with them prepared.
- * There is a possibility that a Fr Tom Crane, lecturer in scripture at Manly and passing through on his way to Manila, will be addressing us on some Scriptural theme, 5-6pm on Wednesday 6 December.

MJW, convenor

DALY RIVER LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRE

COURSE REPORTS

(Since its inception last year, there have now been three main training courses, besides a pilot course and some supplementary work amongst some Daly River Mission people. Because the Leadership Training Centre's programme constitutes the spear-head of the Church's evangelical thrust here in the north, it is worthwhile that knowledge about the courses be spread as widely as possible. Also, we want to make sure that they are on record.)

The first two courses were with a Tiwi group (with some follow-up work back on Bathurst Island), the third with a Murindjabin group from the Nadiri homeland settlement on the north side of the mouth of the Moyle River.)

TIWI COURSE I

19 September - 14 October, 1977

It must be noted that the opinions and conclusions expressed in this summary come from a single group of 13 Tiwi people. It is up to them to sound out their views, not impose them, among their own people in the hope that eventually, after much interchange, a thinking and acting community will develop.

COMPOSITION OF GROUP

The group was made up of six men and seven women. As regards ages, three of the men and two of the women were in the 20 to 25 year bracket; the remainder were middle-aged. Within the group there were represented the four main skin groups of the Tiwi tribe.

INTRODUCTION

Fr J. Leary gave a brief account of his five months survey around Australia on alcoholism among Aborigines. There was no need for exaggeration. Almost universally the scene was one of disaster. In many places Aboriginal people were lost, without pride, culture, language.

Tribal people in the North had the chance to learn from what had happened to their fellows further south. Could they see the beginnings of dissolution in their own society? Could they identify these beginnings? Had they advanced even beyond the beginning stage? What were the causes, perhaps coming a) from themselves? b) the dominant society around them? c) the meeting of the two societies? What were the remedies?

It was imperative that Aborigines as individuals and as communities begin to *think*, to *evaluate*.

AIM OF THE COURSE

The aim of this particular course would therefore be:-

- a) To examine their own traditional Tiwi society in order to see what they thought made them Tiwi people. What were their roots? If the tree was not to die, the roots must be nourished and strengthened.

- b) To examine the new society in which they were now living. How were they coping with it? What was their participation in it? Were they absorbing it or was it absorbing them? How much participation did they really want at this stage?

METHOD OF COURSE

It was stressed from the beginning that what was to follow would not take place in a classroom context of teacher and pupils. It would be based vitally on them as a group and the interaction of the individuals within the group. It must be sincerely theirs, with no attempt at 'accommodation', but an expression of how they saw themselves as Tiwi Aborigines in 1977 -- what were their worries, their fears, their ambitions, their hopes, their determinations.

An initial instruction was given on the concept of group dynamics and group leadership. Several times during the course this instruction was recalled and enlarged upon. Each member of the group should, through taking his or her turn, gradually learn how to run a group. It would be the task of each when they returned home to organise similar discussion groups and so eventually get the whole community *thinking, acting, reflecting*. Liberty does begin in the mentality of the oppressed.

After some discussion the Tiwi people decided to break up into two groups: one for the women and one for the men. Sr Mary sat in with the women, and Fr Leary sat in with the men. They also decided that after each group had thoroughly gone through a subject they would come together as one group and reveal and discuss their findings. Finally, each would concretise his or her findings in a workbook either in writing or symbols or both -- whichever method would give them better recall when they were using their books in group work back home. All discussions within the groups were in the Tiwi language.

OUTCOME OF DISCUSSIONS

Concern for the Young -- Potential Nobodies

There was deep concern (unanimous) that a considerable number of young people and some not so young were losing a proper grip on their Tiwi language. They were also losing interest in many Tiwi customs and traditions. When things that older people considered valuable in Tiwi tradition were being discussed, the young often had an ear glued to a tape-recorder. They were pretending they were 'white fellers'. There was a great danger that these young people would end up nobodies, people mixed up and caught between two worlds, neither in one nor the other.

The causes of this situation:-

- a) The many powerful influences coming from the outside society with diminishing efforts to counterbalance them.
- b) An education system that was lopsided, that paid little attention to Aboriginal traditional background.

Strengthen the Roots

The group realised on a very practical level that the outside influences were there to stay. Many of them were attractive and the people wanted them. Their concern centred around the neglect of the things that made them what they were, that gave them identity, confidence and security. They felt that these latter must be strengthened so that they as a people could sustain the former. It was a question of them assimilating rather than being assimilated. Consequently, much more attention must be paid to the roots.

The Extended Family (part of the root system)

Much stress and importance were attached to the 'big family'. It was considered of great importance in the social, educational and disciplinary spheres. Unfortunately the big family was being overlooked in many instances, e.g. town-planning, consultation, education. The Tiwi people see in the extended family:

- a) the basis of their social system;
- b) the group where widespread interaction should be found in the forms of discussion, consultation, and celebration;
- c) the group in which traditional education and discipline take place;
- d) the group which should be closely involved in modern education, living and discipline.

Each member of the group nominated the members of their big family. A surprising feature was the numbers in each family and especially the numbers of children -- some as many as 60.

They looked on the big family as one of the roots that should be nourished and strengthened. It should also play a greater part in modern living. Outsiders who had dealings with Tiwi people should recognise this.

The Extended Family and Modern Living

a) *Housing:* In the allocation of houses care should be taken that houses belonging to members of the extended family should be kept together. The concept of the long street often prevented this. Square or circular clusters would be more in keeping. Unfortunately at the moment at Bathurst Island families have been separated because of the system of balloting for the allocation of houses. Perhaps the best remedy at this stage would be to wait until the housing programme had been completed and then reallocate the houses on a family basis.

b) *Discipline:* At the present time because of the separation of the family often when a relative was needed quickly to handle a dispute he could not be on hand. Also traditional interaction, discussions and consultations did not take place because of the distance factor.

There were definite advantages of being on the spot not only for matters of discipline but as an encouragement for frequent discussions of problems both of the day to day nature and those of a more serious nature. It facilitated supervision. It strengthened social ties. Traditionally this was the way they lived and they could see no cogent reasons for abandoning the system, rather they had every reason for encouraging it. It was noted that this was the way they spontaneously lived when they went bush on holidays.

They were strong on the need for separate schools for older girls and boys.

c) *Education:* They saw in the extended family situation a natural and effective means of promoting particularly their own language and culture. The older people, especially the grandparents, were the traditional teachers from babyhood onwards. The extended family should intensify this role. These older people should be encouraged to participate much more in the school system where they would take the children of their own 'family' aside for a stated time each day for instruction, using their methods, in language and culture. Instructions would continue less formally when they returned to the family circle. Very often young Aboriginal teachers were lacking in language and culture. Certainly little attention was paid to either in their training. So the older people would be of help to them also. The young teachers should endeavour to boost the authority and importance of the older people among their pupils so that the older people would not only be listened to with respect, but followed.

The extended family should also act as a support to their children within the school context:

- a) in regard to problems of discipline, vocational guidance, counselling.
- b) In the latter years of school, certainly the last year, after consultation between the family and teachers, children should spend at least two days of the week at the occupation for which they are judged to be more suited. This would give them a chance to see whether they are really suited for this particular work, and if not, change to something else. It would also allow for the detection of any particular weakness of the child, e.g. maths. Back in the class room particular attention should be paid to improving matters in this regard. The family as far as possible should be involved in this process, so that they can give encouragement and support to the child.

Teachers of course will have to devise ways of specialising on individuals in their final years. Likewise the school will have to be geared to such, along with the close involvement of the family.

Family Involvement

When the group spoke of the family participating in education and other matters it certainly envisaged as widespread a participation as possible on the concern and interest level. However, on the practical level it did not envisage taking in the whole group. Such would be too impractical. During the course each participant looked at his own particular family to see where the different 'strengths' might be among individuals. For example, some spoke the Tiwi language better and were more eager to pass it on; some were more versed in culture; some in ceremony, especially the Kulama with its procedures and songs; some had a better way with discipline -- one perhaps a more persuasive and gentle approach, another with a tougher, stand-no-nonsense approach. They quoted cases where grownup sons and daughters were at loggerheads with their parents. All attempts at correction on the parents' part only made matters worse. Here is where a suitable uncle or auntie or one of the grandparents might step in and save the day.

So the group advocated very strongly that the traditional extended family structure should be encouraged in every possible way. They were determined to make this one of their vital discussions in their group work back home. If their people were to retain the important and strengthening things in their culture, it would be done through the traditional knowledge and solidarity of the extended family. Throughout the entire length of the course the importance of the family and its activation and adaptation through various facets of life both traditional and modern were constantly stressed.

1. They listed the various work divisions at Bathurst Island under the headings:
 - a) Council, b) Mission, c) Housing Association, d) Ullintjinni Association, e) Private enterprise, f) Works Department.
2. Examined the areas of Tiwi responsibility in all these works with a view to seeing:-
 - a) In what works did the Tiwi have power of decision and complete responsibility.
 - b) Were there any works where Tiwi could have complete responsibility but do not have it? If so, what were the reasons for this? Were the reasons coming from the Tiwi themselves or from outsiders?

- c) What were the works that Tiwi should have complete responsibility for in the future, both near and distant? How were they going to put themselves in a position where they could properly carry out such responsibility?
- d) Were there any works for which the Tiwi had taken complete responsibility but failed? What were the reasons for the failure -- from them? from others?

They considered the obligations of the older people and the areas where they were failing the young:-

- a) bad example
- b) abuses of excessive alcohol and cards
- c) neglect of supervision
- d) supporting relations at the expense of truth and justice.

Beliefs

The 'spirit' aspect of the Tiwi was much to the fore in many of the discussions and illustrations. They made it very clear that this was the 'tap root' of the system. Their various beliefs and customs in relation to the spirit world often came to the fore and were shown to be as real and as much a part of their world as trees and stones.

Ceremony

Their two main ceremonies, Kulama and Pukamani, were discussed at length, the first celebrating life and the second celebrating death. In their discussions on the Kulama the constructive social and inspirational aspects of the ceremony were given prominence. The Kulama singer, after quiet pondering and having been 'inspired' at the proper time within the ceremony, could sing on any aspect of living both traditional and modern. So there were songs about such things as hunting, children, motor cars, television, cards, grog, notable events -- Cyclone Tracey was a popular subject. The singer could take in the good along with the damaging aspects of his subject. Another could sing his approval or disapproval. Wives in the background would participate and show their approval by repeating remarks made by their husbands. Maybe the Tiwi had the secret of group dynamics long before we thought of it!

What I would call the 'grievance session' occurred on the second day. Once inspired, in the context and protection of the Kulama, a man could sing of anything that might be 'bugging' him. In song he might accuse a particular person of poisoning or killing his brother. The person accused or a relation could answer the accusation. Another might sing of his desire to marry some woman, rightly or wrongly. Perhaps the answer would come back from her brother that she thought more of someone else, or that she is not in line or had been promised to someone else and would have nothing to do with him. Here again it seemed to me embedded in a traditional and religious background as a sound form of group therapy.

An important part of the ceremony came at the end. It was called the *aopa*. It was the time when all the things considered important to the whole group were announced. As many as possible therefore were expected to attend. The concluding hours of the Kulama were taken up with songs about the family.

The groups considered the twin ceremonies of Kulama and Pukamani as part of the basic root system of Tiwi culture. One of the harmful effects of the diminishing knowledge of proper language was the inability to understand the Kulama songs and also naturally the inability to participate. Hence another reason for the insistence on the importance of finding ways and means of teaching and maintaining the standard of language.

OBSERVATIONS

The group settled in immediately to the new surroundings of Daly River. Throughout the course they were relaxed and participated freely and with enthusiasm in all discussions. Once the aims of the course were stated, the group took over and gave shape and direction. It was evident that they were dealing with things they felt to be very close and vital to themselves.

However, the group action was not the type of dynamic expected. Because of the mixture of young and old it was thought, especially when discussions centered on traditional culture and its relationship to modern thought and living, there would be more cross-fire, more affirmation and denial, more truth arrived at through heat generated within the group. Perhaps this will happen when the members return home and attempt to form their own groups. Perhaps other Tiwi will not see as much relevance in the conclusions arrived at by the group. It is hoped that they will stand up and say so. How much modification Tiwi culture has undergone and its true relevance to Tiwi in the modern world will be discovered principally by the Tiwi themselves set thinking. It is hoped that the group will initiate and stimulate the thinking process. Many more subjects remain to be discussed, also an evaluation of the group's efforts and achievements at home has to be made. It is envisaged that the group will need to return at least for two more sessions at suitably spaced intervals. In the meantime groups from other places have to be fitted in.

Sr Mary McGowan FDNSC
Fr John Leary MSC

TIWI COURSE II

11 April - 10 May, 1978

PARTICIPANTS: Charles and Sarah Puruntatameri, Stanley and Edith Munkara, Charles Tipungwuti, Martin and Dorothy Tipungwuti, Dorothea Munkara, Gerardine, Gerarda Tipuloura, Neville Wommatakimmi, Sr Jean Marie, Sr M. Basil, Sr Mary McGowan, Fr John Leary, Fr John Fallon.

REPORT

This was the second visit of the same Bathurst Island group to Daly River. The first course in August last year spent considerable time discussing problems confronting the Tiwi people, what they thought might be the cause of these problems, what might be the remedies for these causes.

After the first course it was later felt that there might be some danger in looking too long and too seriously at *problems*, without first developing a mental and spiritual outlook that would give strength and confidence in approaching these problems, no matter how serious they might appear.

It was therefore decided to spend the time of the second course principally on the *spiritual* level. In particular, the group would endeavour to discover how they individually and as a group might see God and especially how they might pray. Traditionally Aborigines have lived very close to nature. Physically and spritually it was a basic part of them. Consider the significance they attached to their land and country, the importance of nature's perennial cycle of growth,

the ceremonies with all their rituals that centered round nature's fertility. The monotonous and continuous sound of the didgeridoo and the sticks in some way seemed to reflect the uninterrupted and inevitable cycle of nature. The habit of the Aborigine to sit with these simple instruments for long hours with his repetitious, unending songs, all tended to unite him with nature. It was therefore thought that a person so close to nature might, even unknowingly, be close to God or at least in and through nature find God as its originator and vital sustainer, that his prayer might be more an awareness rather than a formulation of thoughts and words, more mystical and contemplative rather than practical and vocal.

In view of all this over half the time of the course was spent on Genesis and creation. They also considered their own Tiwi creation legends, aware of the fact that the import of Genesis was that all things ultimately came from God, that all God made was good, that he gave living things the power and the command to be fruitful and multiply, that man had his special place in creation with the additional command from God to be 'master of creation'. We used slides and film strips illustrating creation. They were shown slowly and several times in a thoughtful and prayerful spirit. Members of the group commented spontaneously. Different 'nature' psalms were read and film strips shown illustrating these psalms. Readings at Mass each evening centered round what had been done during the day, often with slides or film strips.

After morning chores we immediately broke up into three groups and found a quiet spot on the river bank. Each person endeavoured first to establish 'quietness' within and then allow develop an awareness of God's closeness within them and around, a listening prayer, allowing the Spirit to make up for any inability and speak for them. If the Spirit spoke in and for them it would certainly be an authentic Aboriginal prayer. (Each one heard in his own tongue.) It was thought that at from this basic level all spiritual development and strength should emanate. From this would later come authentic self-examination, aspiration, motivation, Christian leadership, ministries, 'theology', liturgy. Later each person endeavoured to express his or her experiences in word or song or drawing. The group eventually composed a creation story which they later told in action, song and dance. The individual drawings were interesting. It was quite noticeable that with some after several days the concept of 'God out there somewhere' started to become 'God in me and around me'. One of the men had a circle with a black centre. He said that the black centre was him with his eyes closed and the circle was God and creation all around him. Some drawings combined things of nature with items of Tiwi culture and ceremony -- explaining that it all came from God.

Later they looked at various parts of the Gospels: a) to see Jesus praying in the quiet countryside; b) to see how Jesus looked on nature and its relationship to God -- the beauty of the lilies of the field and His care for the birds and animals -- so much more care for you. The resultant at-homeness of Jesus with nature, the lack of anxiety and over-care for the morrow because all of nature was an expression and reminder of the Father's love and care. The use he made of nature in his teaching and the sacraments. c) To see his constant awareness of the Father and all he told us about the Father -- his very fatherhood, his love for each, his concern, his forgiveness, his closeness to each. They thought and prayed all about this on the river bank and endeavoured to illustrate and then explain their experiences.

Through all of this it was a matter of God's love and closeness to each. It was up to each one to become aware of this closeness in themselves, in others and in nature, so that this closeness would become so real that it would be part and parcel of their lives.

The question of evil was introduced with the story of the fall and consequent discussions. Their own stories about the coming of evil were also told and often illustrated through drawings, e.g. Purakapali. The idea of a tree which¹ harboured an evil spirit was among both the Bathurst Island and Port Keats people. They discussed what they thought made up sin: Was it a question of simply being found out or not found out? Was it an abuse of something? Was it more a community thing than a personal thing? They gave examples of what they thought was evil or wrong. They told of various tribal punishments for various 'sins', e.g. incest etc. They considered sin in the light of a free act turning from God, of man freely upsetting God's plan of things. It was difficult to detect what was, deep down, their original concept of sin.

The story of Moses was told in word and through film strips, once again slowly and prayerfully and repeated so that they could comment. They spent considerable time on the story of Moses, his call to be a leader, his feelings and expressions of inadequacy, the difficulties he experienced from others and from his own people when trying to help them; the gradual realisation that God would work through his weakness. When he felt powerless and looked to God was the time when he was strongest because God then worked through him (St Paul -- power made perfect in infirmity. "Without me you can do nothing.") They saw in the story of Moses the absolute need for prayer in their lives, a close contact with God. They were quick to see the difficulties Moses had in trying to lead his people out of slavery¹ through a desert into a promised land (so much like their own work) and how Moses had to go with his troubles to God who came to their aid. One of the group put it this way: "People complained about Moses who was helping them. God calls us to do special work for him and in the same way people will complain and we wish we didn't have this job. God says, 'Trust me, I'll do it for you.' We can't do it ourselves. When we start to talk we shake a bit, just like Moses. We are conscious of people looking at us. But we trust God. Sometimes we find it hard to talk to people. We feel like hiding. We are weak but God comes in then."

The group found itself much taken up with the story of Moses and spent much time formulating it in their own style and language. Eventually the story was told in action, song and dance, first among themselves and then several times before the local Daly River audience. Gerarda did the commentary in English. It was interesting to note that each time they performed, things were changed here and there. One interesting part was the spontaneous way in which the Tiwi who took the part of Moses spoke to God and managed to make it more and more Tiwi with each performance. Also in the last performance after Moses had dramatically died looking towards the Promised Land, he slowly and painfully rose to his feet and did a vigorous dance of victory.

From the Moses story and discussions they drew out some qualities they thought they must have as leaders:

- a) A leader is not a 'big head'.
- b) He is the same as the others, as weak as they are.
- c) As a leader he will have plenty of troubles. People will complain, show no response, won't believe, won't be interested.
- d) A leader must try and work out problems as they appear, continually praying, being with God.
- e) He is not a 'big mouth', as if he were the only one who knows something. He must share with others. He must listen to what others have to say, encourage

1. Two of the Sisters on the course are Aboriginal FDNCS Sisters from Port Keats: Sr Jean-Marie is stationed at Bathurst Is. and Sr Basil at Daly River. - Ed.

them to think and, where possible, follow their suggestions.

- f) The group must stick together. They must keep united, support one another, pray for one another.

The story of *Ruth* was told in similar fashion on film strip. They considered how a lot of old people were neglected and there was need for others to take a special interest in them and care for them. They spoke of trying to organise young people to take the old people out bush sometimes and get them 'bush tucker'. They had in fact already begun to do this by building a hut at Tantipi and sometimes taking old people there.

On the last day the group discussed *some outstanding problems* among the Tiwi people:

- 1) One had tried to speak to people in the Club against drinking too much. He was met with "Who do you think you are!" Maybe it would be best to start with relations. Some of these would listen.
- 2) Too frequently young people were cohabiting. They often do this because they want the person they like and not the one meant for them tribally.
- 3) The need for someone to look at movie films before they were shown, because they were having a lot of films, too many in fact, and a lot of them were very bad.
- 4) There was a lot of gambling and heavy drinking at home. Men were going off to Darwin to drink too much.
- 5) All the business going on at the Boys School when there was night recreation there. Young children were taking notes to older children and they were meeting in the dark. Children said they were going to recreation but went somewhere else. Small children were often wandering around on their own. However, at the back of it all they felt the most serious aspect of it was that the children were being coaxed away from them and their influence. Even though the father was drunk and the mother was gambling, that was no reason for getting the children away for so long and so often. The parents would never learn to be responsible by doing that.

EVALUATION

Naturally it is difficult to establish how the individuals gained from this experience. A lot of follow-up and personal interest and support is required from the Centre staff and those back home. However we feel sure a good beginning has been made. The group gave themselves enthusiastically to their work. It is difficult for the 'facilitators' of the course to know how to elicit and not impose, to stir people to think and not simply repeat, to be deep and not shallow, to be themselves and not someone else.

Sr Mary McGowan FDNCS
Fr John Leary MSC

NADIRI COURSE

18 September - 8 October, 1978

PARTICIPANTS: *Roy and Arpet Mullumbuk, Johnny and Veronica Dumoo, Cletus and Bernice Dumoo, Charlie and Mary Brinken, Bob Pupuli, Edward Nemarluk.*

INTRODUCTION

This was the first time the Murintjabin*people from Nadiri had attended the leadership course as a group.

At the commencement of the course the group were given some background of the survey done by Fr Leary in Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. This survey studied the alcoholic problem and how it resulted in a breakdown in the cultural life of the Aborigine. He told them that many Aboriginal groups were a people with no land, no language, no culture, and had now, in a sense, stopped thinking.

The group were asked to consider:- *What their country meant to them, and how important was it for their children?*

The group then drew stories about their country -- their myths (dreaming stories) and sacred sites. It was seen that each picture conveyed a wealth of information as each person explained the significance of his or her drawing. It was also clear that the group showed a great appreciation for each dream site and accompanying traditional story. The *warakantha* (little people) were held in awe. These little people or spirits live in the surrounding country. They are not considered dangerous to the people belonging in that area, as they call out to the *warakantha* and reassure them when visitors are brought in. It is said that they are often to be seen at night, carrying their torches, but never in daylight. Cletus Dumoo, a young teacher, translated and recorded the stories in English.

NUGUMANJ

There emerged from amongst the dream-time figures one who appeared to be different from the others. The difference lay in the fact that he was responsible for everything -- including all the dream-sites. He was the boss or big person. Anything good which happened was attributed to Nugumanj. Before going out to hunt, the people would ask him to provide the food. When a baby was born, it was said to have come from Nugumanj. All groups called him by this name. The story of Nugumanj was passed on through generations. When Fr Docherty, who began the mission at Port Keats in 1935, spoke about God, the old people said he must be referring to Nugumanj.

The older men were then asked had they ever drawn Nugumanj, and the following notes are of some features of those drawings:- Hunting scenes in which there is an awareness or gratitude of Nugumanj's presence in providing the food. He is depicted as a sky-being in the cloud, moon, elements.

The most impressive drawing appeared to be a drawing of Nugumanj in abstract -- a dramatic, vivid shape in the centre of the drawing. When asked for the reason of such a drawing, the answer was, because he was "special".

DISCUSSIONS ON DAILY LIVING

The group was asked what were the important things they wished their children to learn in regard to:-

- a) *hunting*: spearing with fish wire, right type of fish; different kinds of yams, through finding correct vines. They stressed care of environment -- no waste and no useless digging.
- b) *language*: The people were concerned that the children had not really learnt to speak Murintjabin correctly, because Murinbata (Murrinpatha) is being taught in the school, and the children revert to that language. They would try to overcome this problem by continually speaking Murintjabin to the children despite the fact that they replied in Murinbata. They were also anxious about the amount

* For various reasons, there is much variety in spelling. Thus Tryon (1974): Marityabin; he lists 7 alternatives. This Ms. uses another: Murrinjabbin. The . also spells Nugumanj as "Norgumine" (to be pronounced English-fashion).

Cf. pp.23-27 of this issue.

of swearing learnt by the children in that language. To overcome this, they would concentrate on the Murintjabin language, where the swear words are hidden and the children unable to learn them.

c) *family life*: The group discussed important modes of behaviour in the family which the children must be taught, e.g. the young boy's behaviour towards his Promise /girl marked out for him as his later wife/; brother and sister behaviour etc. -- Many customs have broken down, but the old people are not happy about it and wish to change it. They feel they will have more control now to do this in their own group.

d) *culture*: The group felt that the younger boys were not listening to their elders and they considered that in some way they must overcome it. They thought to encourage their dance often. Also that the old men teach them their songs (of animals etc.), because once they are dead everything would be lost. They felt that it was important to pass on their leadership qualities to the young. The real leader was defined as a good person who really cares for the group.

PROBLEMS

The group was asked if they could see any problems ahead of them, i.e. in the next few months, which they would have to work out and look ahead to solve.

After lengthy discussions they felt that visitors could be a hassle if entering the area *ad lib*. Also the club, i.e. amount of drink allowed in and issued each day. There could also be problems with health. Correct hygiene was needed -- also nurses to advise mothers on different issues. They named quite a number of young girls who had trained as nurses, who could help in this field. This led to further discussion on the training of people for different jobs, in order to be able to manage the place themselves.

It was necessary to have some young people receive further education in order to be able to understand and cope with the complicated laws and ways of European society in 1978. These people would be future advisors to the old men, as Terence is now.

In the final session, one of the young men, with the help of the old men, composed a song of praise and joy about their country. They became very enthusiastic, and kept insisting how much could be taught to young people through songs like this.

Perhaps looking back on the course one would not say that great things were accomplished, nor major decisions reached.

However, one could not but be impressed with the air of quiet confidence and enthusiasm, which increased as the course progressed.

And this could be put down to the fact that they realised with pride the wonderful things they had in their culture, and they felt (very rightly) that they were bringing forth ideas and grappling with problems on their own.

Sr Mary McGowan FDNsc

NUGUMANJ; FATHER IN HEAVEN

EVANGELICAL DIALOGUE

In an article, "Aboriginal Religion", published in *Compass* (1978/12: 2:8-13, and Ch.3 of the forthcoming *New, Old and Timeless*) I wrote briefly about a method of approach to Aboriginal religion through evangelical dialogue. Thinking somewhat prematurely at the time (1977) that the title "Nelen Yubu" would cover both the missiological centre and the Daly River Leadership Training Centre, I called it the "Nelen Yubu approach" for short. I described it thus:

It consists in engaging in dialogue with Aboriginal people on basic religious issues. It is a dialogue where Aboriginal people will be speaking out of their own inherited religious mentality, speaking from and in terms of the categories of religious thought native to themselves. Hopefully it is not yet too late for them to do so. The topics would be basic human religious values as found in the evangelical message. Such dialogue would not result, except incidentally, in reports of traditional Aboriginal belief and practice, especially of belief and practice that are no longer extant. On the contrary, it would manifest categories and processes of Aboriginal religious thought that are operative at the present moment, most of it presumably as the conserved and presently, dynamic portion of their traditional religious heritage. The more of their past that is remembered, the richer the dialogue should be. I would expect that the details of many particular rites and myths will have dropped out of memory (as they have been doing from time immemorial, cf. Stanner, On Aboriginal Religion, 1966:139-148) and their reconstruction would have little more than an antiquarian interest. By contrast, the categories of religious thought and behaviour have an enduring permanence and operativeness in the subconscious mind and especially in that shared psychological substratum we indicate when we speak of the collective unconscious.

NADIRI COURSE

A recent course held at the Daly River Leadership Training Centre (DRLTC for short) was for a group of Murintjabin people from the Nadiri homeland settlement on the north side of the mouth of the Moyle River in the middle of the Daly River Aboriginal Reserve. It was apparently a fruitful experience for them (cf. report in this issue, pp.20-22), and it also provided an excellent example of what I had termed the "Nelen Yubu approach" at work.

In delving into their religious conceptions the old people present started to speak of a being about whom open talk had ceased in mission times, but whom they had remained conscious of. Some of the younger people present at the course knew next to nothing about him. The being is a male sky-dwelling being called *Nugumanj*. (The /j/ after the /n/ indicates that the /nj/ is pronounced like /ni/ in the English *onion*. /y/ can perform the same function after /n/.)

STANNER: *Nogämain*

When researching the material for his *On Aboriginal Religion* (OAR for short) in the early '60s among the neighbouring Port Keats tribe, the Murinbata, Stanner came across belief in the same being which he spells as "Nogämain". For Stanner belief in Nogämain constituted something of a puzzle on several counts:

- 1) Knowing of no ritual connected with Nogämain, Stanner thought him comparatively unimportant, but was surprised to be told that the old people used to petition Nogämain for food.
- 2) This constituted for Stanner the solitary instance of prayer to a "pure spirit" for a material benefit.
- 3) Stanner could not determine Nogämain's relationship with a certain pair of other "pure spirits" (OAR p.162-163).

Stanner's whole text is worth quoting. Earlier (p.161) he had explained his terminology:-

- 1) Among the different classes of beings recognised by the Murinbata were the *kadu ngjapan*, the "spirit/ghost persons" like the culture heroes Kunmanggur, Mutjingga, Kukpi. They were true human beings, "persons with fathers", though they possessed supernatural powers. Stanner terms them "clan spirits".
- 2) And there were the *kadu bangambitj*, "persons without fathers", who were existing by their own power. They had no body (*ngen*) like ordinary men and animals, but did have a man-like appearance; though normally invisible, they could be seen by spirit-seers. Stanner terms them "pure spirits".

Stanner describes Nogämain thus (OAR p.162):-

The most eminent of the pure spirits was known as Nogämain, a sky-dweller, who lived (according to some) *mange nukunu* -- "of his own free will" or "in his own fashion" -- and alone; except for a dog, with "no father, no mother, no brother, no child"; but (according to others) with a wife and son, the son being symbolized by a hunting spear (*tjänba*). It was supposed to be Nogämain's influence, through his son, if a hunter killed a kangaroo or wallaby with one throw of a spear. Some people identified Nogämain with the man in the moon, and one of the smaller marks on the moon was often pointed out to me as the dog. Others were not so sure and, when asked about the spirit's abode, made a generous gesture towards the whole sky and said a single word -- *kangal*, "on high". Now and then I heard thunder and lightning attributed to "the people of Nogämain." It was generally agreed that he was one of the spirits responsible for sending spirit-children: I heard the statement *wakal bata Nogämain mandadai* many times -- "Nogämain sends down good children." But since I had heard the same of both Kunmanggur and Kukpi, and could find no myth about him or any evidence that he had a connection with the religious ritual, I thought him comparatively unimportant. I was therefore much surprised to be told by one of the oldest Murinbata men that as a child he remembered hearing *ngalandar ngalandar* (the oldest men) calling out to Nogämain at night when they lay in camp short of food or "hungry in the tooth" (i.e. craving) for the special foods that the spirit was supposed to be skilful in finding. My informant told me that the men would begin with a cry *Kar!*, follow it with a long trill *xxxxx!*, and then use the imperative *Ku wada tjingabup!* or *tjitai dungapak!*: "flesh-for-eating+?waiting,?wanting+you leave (it) for me"; "honey+you put it up (in tree) for me." The petitioner would repeat the invocation at intervals throughout the night, using the same form each time, varying it only for the food of choice.

ELIADE

In his book *Australian Religions* Mircea Eliade discusses two examples of sky gods in Australia: Djamar of the Bard in the Kimberleys (described by Fr E.A. Worms SAC) and Nogämain amongst the Murinbata. He repeats the substance of Stanner's presentation in OAR (Eliade 1973:38-39). He concludes with a number of observations which can be summarised thus:-

- 1) Nogämain is a clear example of a normal process with sky beings, celestial gods and the like: they tend to fade away, to become *dei otiosi*. Thus only the old men remember hearing a prayer to him while they were children...
- 2) The discrepancies in the descriptions given to Stanner are "an indication of his progressive religious irrelevance."
- 3) He conserves a bit of actuality: for example, he cares for men. He is not as irrelevant as the sky beings of the Aranda as described by T.G.H. Strehlow, but he is not involved in any important ceremony, as for example Djamar is in initiation.

From what the Murintjabin people said during their course there is reason for believing that Stanner has underestimated (or would give a different estimate today of) the actuality and importance of Nugumanj. Likewise, of course, Eliade, who depends on Stanner for his material. One can also wonder how much of the discrepancy in descriptions given to Stanner is explainable in terms of the variety of linguistic groups, and so of religious traditions, represented amongst Stanner's informants, rather than being a simple case of confusion within one collapsing tradition.

MURINTJABIN: NUGUMANJ

The older Murintjabin on the course first of all drew and painted their conceptions of Nugumanj (as of other mythological beliefs). Then they described what they had painted. The description was mainly given in Murintjabin language, with a young Murintjabin teacher translating into English for the benefit of those who did not know the language.

The older Murintjabin think of Nugumanj as:-

- 1) a being that lives on high (*kangal*). At the same time, he is close to human beings, knows them and their doings, and commonly people themselves have a highly personal awareness of him in turn.
- 2) He is "like a man". The Murinbata may think of him as married and/or with a dog, but the Murintjabin do not. -- At the same time in the drawing he was not given human shape: he was depicted with an amorphous, Wandjina-like appearance. Men and women down below were drawn distinctly as such.
- 3) His function is to promote universal good. "All the good things that happen on earth, these Nugumanj does for people."

In particular he is responsible especially for:-

- a) spirit-children (*ngarit-ngarit*) who enter their mother to be born as human beings. Good children especially are sent by Nugumanj.
- b) He controlled the work of the dream-time culture heroes like Kunmanggur, Udapun and "the other Big Men". "They too had the same stories about Nugumanj: they looked to him the same as we do." If they send *ngarit-ngarit*, it is ultimately as responsible to Nugumanj.
- c) rain and rain-clouds. "Those black ones, smooth on top, Nugumanj made them."
- d) food that is found by hunting or gathering. "If we go out and see a wallaby or a crab or something, we would say, 'Nugumanj is good!'"
- e) conservation of good things (a sanctioning agent in a practical morality). Children would be instructed not to waste food, because if Nugumanj sees food left around wastefully, he may not provide food next time the people go out hunting.
Likewise, if a man's wife had run away, the husband would call her new lover to hand her back: "Nugumanj knows what you are doing, and if she doesn't come back, Nugumanj won't give me another wife.!"
- f) the noise made by thunder and the similar roar made as a funnel of bark is being fired, like a chimney, to prepare it for painting.
- g) the lightning that strikes at some object like a tree: that was Nugumanj's weapon for stopping a spirit that might have been in the tree and was going to hurt a man.

With such a generalised function for good, it is not surprising that respect for him is not tied up with any one particular ritual or ceremony. However, it appears he was the object of cultic activity both of a general kind and in some specific cases:

a) General

- i) *prayer*: when people felt the need for a special kind of food, whether on the land, in the sea, in the trees or underground, they would ask Nugumanj for it.
- ii) *thankful acknowledgement (= prayer of praise)*: If they were successful in their search for food, they would say, "Nugumanj is good!" or "That's from Nugumanj!"

b) More specific

- i) In the camp at night people would dance "happy-making dances" so that Nugumanj would look down and see that his people were happy.
- ii) Nugumanj had some relationship with the moon. When there was a circle round the moon, people would say, "Nugumanj is at home." Also, there was a special dance within a circle of fire when "Nugumanj was in front of the moon like a red cloud (just like when you cover a torch with your fingers and it looks red through them)..." We could not work out if this was in reference to an eclipse or not.

STATUS OF BELIEF IN NUGUMANJ

Open talk about Nugumanj and the happy-making dancing for him to see ceased during the time of the mission at Port Keats. The old people remembered, but the young people do not know. For one young teacher on the course this was one of the exciting things about it, the chance to pick up again some of the ancient wisdom.

Two things are especially worthy of note. They both have to do with the closeness of belief in Nugumanj to the Christian dogma of God's all-provident Fatherhood, viz.

1) In the early days of the mission the old people were asking one another after instruction on the nature of God, "Maybe Father is talking about Nugumanj?"

2) The older people on the course maintained that they had described a traditional belief, and their conception of Nugumanj was not influenced by mission teaching about God.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

1) This belief in Nugumanj is another illustration of a very important psychological fact noted by Stanner (*OAR* p.117, n.14), which I have elaborated on a little in Ch.3 of *New, Old and Timeless*, viz. that the Aborigines have been conscious of the closeness to Christianity of some of their important traditional beliefs and practices. As they put it to Stanner, "We blackfellows just missed!"

On this theme evangelical dialogue could be very rich.

2) It is very likely that with belief in Nugumanj we are in contact with a very old form of traditional religion -- the purified residue of centuries of religious experience. By contrast, many of the rituals could be comparatively recent and "foreign" in origin. (Cf. Stanner's attempted reconstruction of the recent history of religious and ritual change amongst the Murinbata, *OAR* 1966:137-171, vi "Cosmos and Society Made Correlative".)

In other words, the insight into Aboriginal religiosity provided by belief in Nugumanj might be much more genuine than that provided by the more dramatic and vivid ceremonies like Sunday Business (Punj). The added bonus to the Christian missionary is that belief in Nugumanj is so admirable from the point of view of

Christian revelation, whereas Sunday Business, as actually practised, has some decidedly unpleasant characteristics (cf. Stanner OAR 1966:149, 151).

3) Investigation into belief in Nugumanj gives one the opportunity to correct a false impression that one could get from reading K. Maddock, *The Australian Aborigines* 1974:112. Most descriptions of Aboriginal belief in an All-Father figure may have been done in reference to the south-east of Australia, whereas in the north anthropologists have written rather about an All-Mother figure. However, the two beliefs can co-exist or (with more accuracy probably) can exist at the same time amongst the same people on different strata of belief and ritual. There is no clear geographical dichotomy.*

Martin J. Wilson MSC

* While I was actually typing this out some of the children from the house opposite (Topsy's mob) were in here and saw what I was typing. A few of them started to say a few words about "Nugumung" as the being who takes the place of an earthly father who has died. So it looks as though the belief is still more widespread than had been suspected; that in this area at least the young also know about it; and there has been added another important function which underlines with great vividness the fatherhood of Nugumanj (or Nugumung or Nogämain). (An anthropologist who wants to "write things up" has to get out of the "field": if he stays there he keeps on getting new ideas which show that what he would have written is always defective, if not quite wrong...)

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER CONFERENCE

Michelle Tipiloura, Hospital Secretary on Bathurst Island, sent along this report of a conference held recently in Darwin.

The conference was interesting because people from different states came up with their different ideas and we have to learn and see what they are doing in their own hospital and how they cope with aboriginal people in their hospital. Some of the people talked about that they have lost all their language, cultures and don't even know what their great grandparents did in early days.

Some subjects that were talked about were better than others but most of all we enjoyed the talk that some of the Health Workers gave. We thought that the conference was good because we communicated to other Health Workers and got to know the work that they do. Sometimes we got sleepy and bored from long sessions because it was the first time that we entered into a National Aboriginal Health Worker Conference.

The part we all liked best was when Charlie Gunabarra and Alexander Thompson spoke about their subject which was Venereal Disease. These two men were very good in talking about V.D. Charlie showed us the slides and gave a talk on every slide and answered questions. Alexander was good too. He was very good in answering back all the questions the visitors asked him. Mr Harold Hunt from NSW gave a speech about these two men and how good they were.

We also enjoyed talking about bush food, the problems of alcohol and the work Health Workers do back in their own community.

We agreed that we should do more to run the Health Service. To be trusted in our work, to help old people, to help people who need help. We must drive out to see sick people at home and bring them to hospital if they want to be cared for at the hospital.

SOME OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:-

Sores: e.g. scabies. We tell the patients to shower, explain why we use Benzyl Benzoate, tell the family to scrub their houses, spray powder on blankets and boil clothes.

Chest infection: Advice to the patient to give up smoking for a while. Chest infection really occurs amongst this community.

Sea wasps: Keep children away from the sea because of the sea wasps in the wet season. Most children really like swimming: that's why we give advice to mothers and children.

Young mothers: We give advice on right foods suitable for the baby. We have weekly checks on all babies.

Night work: Two THWs stop at the hospital at night. If anybody comes at night with a big cut on his head, it is our responsibility to treat it. We sometimes give antibiotics when needed and treatment is seven days. Some sicknesses are treated with bush foods.

Tiwi Health Workers

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT SEMINAR

Baulkham Hills (NSW), 22-26 May, 1978

St. Joseph's Generalate (Mount St) sent Nelen Yubu a copy of their report on a week's seminar they conducted in May for their Sisters involved in the Aboriginal apostolate. I have extracted some notes of general interest.

PARTICIPANTS

Not all the RSJ involved in the Aboriginal apostolate were able to be present. Besides members of the Generalate and two Provincials, 24 Sisters took part: 11 from WA, 1 from SA, 7 from NSW, 5 from Qld.

AIM

The purpose of the meeting was expressed thus:-

- * to produce a statement /after sharing of experiences and reflection/ prior to formulating a Josephite policy;
- * to arrive at a unified approach to this Apostolate;
- * to renew our sense of purpose.

By the fourth day "As had been felt earlier, it was now realized that it would not be possible, at this stage, to formulate a Josephite policy for involvement in the Aboriginal Apostolate. Emerging from these discussions was an expression of buoyant hope to replace our fears and anxieties..."

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the seminar was summed up thus:-

"It had become obvious during the week that this whole Aboriginal Apostolate was of tremendous importance -- not only to the Sisters engaged directly in it -- but to the wider Josephite Congregation. Father Hally invited us to reflect deeply and prayerfully into the relationship of present-day involvement with the original Charism of our Order. Mother Mary's ardent desire to work with the Aborigines in the Northern Territory was never realized, and surely it would not be presumptuous to say that, were she here today with us, she would give her blessing to our efforts, however clumsy they may be.

It had also become obvious that there would be need to set up a National Advisory Council to assist Sister Martin member of the General Council/. Accordingly, Sisters Angela Morrison, Clare Ahern, Mary Quinlan and Elizabeth Keane were elected, and Sister Joan Burke was appointed Secretary. This Committee would act as a voice for those engaged in various aspects of the Apostolate, to feed information to the General Council, to keep the wider Congregation informed, to observe the pattern of and suggest changes in objectives or "real" goals of the Apostolate and to liaise with various resource persons and agencies for the gradual upgrading of training and efficiency of personnel engaged in this field."

(It is worth recalling that Mother Mary's brother, Fr Donald McKillop, SJ, spent 11 years in the Northern Territory, most of them on the Daly. He was superior of the mission 1890-97, when ill-health forced him to return south. The rest of his life was spent in parish work. He died at Adelaide in 1924, aged 72.)

* * * * *

FR RICHARD DOCHERTY MSC AM

INVESTITURE IN ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

A day to be remembered at Daly River was 2 November 1978 when Father Richard Docherty MSC was invested as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. The ceremony of appointment and investiture was performed the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Mr J.A. England, in the name of the Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the community and staff during the preceding days, the mission was even more beautiful than usual and was a fitting setting for the occasion. Three flag poles had been erected on the lawned area between the church, convent and school, and it was here that the ceremony of investiture took place.

The official party arrived by special charter plane at about 10.00am. Fr Leary and the members of Nauiyu Ukume welcomed the Administrator and his wife as well as all the other official guests, among whom were Fr Malcolm Fyfe, Bishop Mason, Commander Earlan (Coonawarra) and his wife, the Administrator's secretary, Miss Adele Freeman, and of course the official photographer. The school children were also at the airstrip to meet the visitors, so it was not long before formality melted away and all were at their ease. Light refreshments at the Nauiyu Club enabled the guests to cool off while awaiting the arrival of more visitors from Darwin, Port Keats, as well as our close neighbours from up and down the river. Frs Flynn, Luby and Howarth came on a second charter with Bro. Gallagher and Sister Laurencia. Unfortunately, some of these had to return to Darwin within a couple of hours and were unable to enjoy all the highlights of the day.

Due to a change in the programme, morning tea was served before the investiture took place, and this was a relaxing time for all. Meanwhile Fr Docherty waited patiently in his special chair under the shade of the mango trees.

The ceremony itself was very simple and quite brief but most impressive. Father's award was given for services to religion and Aboriginal welfare. The Administrator spoke very nicely, saying that he was presenting Father with this medal at the command of the Governor-General. He pinned the medal on Father's shirt and presented him with the official documents and a miniature of the medal to be worn on special occasions. Quite a number of photographs were taken at this time.

This official act over, the visitors were given a guided tour of the mission and were even taken to the Crossing. Meanwhile a superb buffet lunch was being laid out in the children's dining room, prepared by the expert hands of Fernando and Celestine and assisted by Sister Marie Pierre who came over from Port Keats to help out. In spite of the great number of visitors there was plenty of food for all. The formal speeches were made during the meal and Father Wilson proposed three toasts -- to the Queen, to the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and to Fr Richard Docherty.

Reluctantly the guests began to leave, but it was very obvious that everyone had really enjoyed the occasion. For the staff at Daly River it was one of the most enjoyable and happy days that we have had here. Thanks to all who helped to make it so.

Sr Therese-Marie FDNSC

The above, I believe, is an excerpt from the journal of events that the Sisters keep. What a marvellous historical record it looks like making for some future historian!

During the course of the buffet lunch two telegrams were read out; a third, unfortunately, arrived a bit too late to be announced just then. I give the texts in order:-

To: Fr R. Docherty

*Please accept my sincere congratulations on the occasion of your investiture with the Order of Australia. It is indeed a great honour of your devoted service to Australia. Best wishes for the future.
Regards. -- Senator Bernie Kilgariff*

Regret unable to be with you for investiture. Attending parliamentary Standing Committee meeting investigating Aboriginal health. Very best wishes. Regards. -- Sam Calder MHR

*With you in spirit on this happy day. Congratulations.
-- Bill Stanner*

MISSIONARY REVIEW 1978

MSC House, "The Ranch",
Darwin, 9 November 1978,

9.00am onwards

This missionary review or (if that sounds too much like an entertainment) this review of missionary effort in the NT was called by Fr Malcolm Fyfe MSC, Episcopal Vicar for Missions, Director of Catholic Missions (as also of Catholic Education in the diocese of Darwin), and MSC Sectional Superior.

The meeting started with reports from each of the missions, from the Director and from "Headquarters": these will be reproduced immediately below. The ensuing discussions that went on for the rest of the day will be covered by minutes of the meeting.

REPORTS ON LOCAL SITUATIONS 1978

BATHURST ISLAND

In 1978 Bathurst Island consisted of an estimated 1200 Tiwi people and 90 whites. This included 16 Religious from four different religious institutes. While the Religious tended to gather at one of the Religious houses for Mass on a Tuesday morning, I would see a need for us to gather together regularly for a session of reflection or prayer. A Staff Mass is held on the first Thursday of the month and this normally gets a good attendance.

Two avenues that I feel need to be pursued more are firstly work with the group that has twice been to sessions at the Daly River. The second area that would concern me is the area of catechesis of the school children. I would like to suggest there is a need for some form of planning which might cater for all those teachers working with Aboriginal children in the Territory. At present I get the impression the approach is *ad hoc*, and new and young teachers could benefit from some more help and direction in this area. Perhaps somebody should be released to work in this area.

In the liturgy, readings and some responses are in Tiwi, and currently the Our Father has been transferred into Tiwi. The clergy have yet to learn it!

On the level of social development, 1978 has been a milestone for the Tiwi people with land rights and their own Tiwi Land Council. This body will have a major impact upon the future of the Tiwi and the future development of their land. At present a permanent staff has not been appointed.

One of the difficulties I would wish to draw attention to has been much in evidence during 1978. I refer to the role of the Community Adviser. I have found that Darwin based mission staff and other people will at times start promoting projects without the courtesy of informing the Community Adviser. The Community Adviser is obviously not the only source of advice to a community, but I think it generates unnecessary tensions and divisions when the people are aware that different points of view are being privately promoted by different members of Catholic Missions. Tiwi are then put in the position where they have to choose which member of Catholic Missions they will support. The questions should not be clouded by personality considerations.

One final point I would note is a lack of real leadership among the Tiwi people at Ngiuu Bathurst Is.. Snake Bay and Garden Point have more impressive community leaders at this point. Tiwi people are very aware of this.

Fr Tim Brennan MSC

MELVILLE ISLAND

GENERAL

The parish as such was established three years ago, before this time both Garden Point and Snake Bay were serviced from Bathurst Island with Mass as often as could be managed by one of the two priests there. Fr Pat Austin tried to devote more and more time to Melville, but it became obvious that to establish some kind of pattern of operation which people could follow, then there had to be a permanent priest. From the Sisters' point of view (there were then three) a resident priest would obviously be a big help.

PHYSICAL

At the present time building-wise there is a church, convent and presbytery at each place. At Garden Point there is need of a new church at some stage. At Snake Bay the presbytery is rented from DAA, and I have the convent on a loan basis while we still have Sisters going there. I had a bigger place at one time, but the Sisters being taken away (there were four at the beginning of 1977) the three bedroom house was taken away and we ended up with a single bedroom place same as the presbytery.

STAFFING

At the present time myself and Sister Marietta for the 550 Aboriginals at Garden Point and Snake Bay. Sister Anastasia from Bathurst Island and Sister Kathleen from Daly River are to come after Christmas sometime.

PASTORAL

The usual pastoral work is done. Sister Marietta and myself go into the schools in both settlements. First Holy Communion classes -- Catechist classes run by Sister Marietta as we have Religious Instruction five days a week at Garden Point and we both spend 3½ days in each place. We leave 10am Sunday after Mass at Garden Point, and return from Snake Bay on Wednesday morning in time for school at Garden Point.

Drop-in centres at both places for youth and adults.

Emphasis on liturgy -- establishment of Aboriginal participation on special Feastdays during the year. This has been more than encouraging. Christmas and Easter -- Ash Wednesday -- Feast of Gerard Majella -- All Souls (in the cemetery

with dancing and blessing of all the graves) -- Our Lady of Victories. The aim is to bring the liturgy into the normal pattern of life of the people so that the same build-up occurs for Christian celebrations as for the Kulama and Pukamani ceremonies. This is an area of good response.

Response to regular Mass at Snake Bay has been outstanding. Regular attendance about 50 average, while on occasions 100+ have attended. Daily Mass (Monday and Tuesday) averages about 20.

Basic pastoral work need not be mentioned really -- visiting the sick, counselling etc. -- this depends on the need of the moment. Sister Naomi, who was in charge of the hospital until recently, was part of the team, a very necessary part, especially in this area where the priest was away and when Sister's special relationship as a Sister (nun) was able to bring grace to someone.

NEEDS

More members for the team - a brother, Sister-in-Charge for the hospital at Garden Point.

Fr Kevin Howarth

DALY RIVER MISSION

NAUIYU UKUME

The Aboriginal community at the Daly River is now known as "Naiyu Ukume". It is presently in the process of being legally incorporated: the process is due to be completed towards the end of November 1978. The organisation is controlled by an elected committee of six. The current committee consists of four men and two women. Excluding Health and Education, the organisation operates from two systems of grants. For wages and operations it is the TMPU grant system; for capital, it is the Capital Grants system. Under the Wages Grant the community not only decides who shall be employed or dismissed, but at what rate they shall be employed. The organisation also controls discipline within the Aboriginal community.

Through the good offices of Catholic Missions six houses are about to be built. Their design and location have been determined after close consultation with and approval of the group. The group determines who lives in them.

The Social Club continues to function well despite the presence of a hotel a mile away.

FIVE MILE HILL (Peppiwet i)

This project was initiated primarily as a "flood refuge". Though still retaining this purpose, the six residences there are all occupied. On 7 November 1978 Mr Martin Ford will officially hand over the installations at the Five Mile to Naiyu Ukume.

SCHOOL

School children number 65 -- the numbers being considerably reduced since the development of Peppimenarti.

HEALTH

The general health of the people is singularly good. Sister Agatha is in charge of the hospital. Sister Miriam is the district rural nurse. She visits not only the farms up and down the river but the surrounding cattle stations as well.

NELEN YUBU INSTITUTE

Fr Martin Wilson has his own residence from which to operate and no doubt you will be hearing more and more from him in the future.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRE

This year there have been courses for groups from Bathurst Island, Nadiri and Daly River. Reports on these three groups have been written and will be published shortly. (*Actually in this issue, pp.12-22, except for the Daly River group. -- Ed.*) Because of local politics, relationships and activities in general the Daly River group has had a very distracted time. It proved clearly that it is well nigh impossible to do such work on home ground, and hence the importance of a place like the Daly for the other groups.

In between courses the Training Centre has been used on two occasions by Fr Ed. Travers for week-end retreats for his parish council. The Centre, of course, is primarily for Aboriginal leadership training. However, when courses are not in progress, we would like to think that the Centre would be used as a sort of "Spirituality Centre" for small groups from parish and school.

Fr John Leary MSC

PORT KEATS

Port Keats held a lot of promise when it looked as if John Leary might be localized here even if only semi-permanently. However, this soon came to a halt when the club was broken into on Palm Sunday, and several weeks later John was off to Daly River to the Training Centre.

The staff and people had to get used to an outsider, and change had to be worked at slowly. The people responded tremendously to the challenge of having to put up with potential Town Clerks coming and going. For all areas of criticism they had acquitted themselves quite well.

They had \$54,000 withdrawn from their wages vote because of poor management and the lack of adequate information flow. Catholic Missions through Tony Neeson came to lend a hand in the accounting side of the Council.

The Council appeared to be dominated by desires from outside itself to quickly and completely secularize its officers and functions, through Town Clerks and the dynamics of financial control exercised through Governments and Catholic Missions' cooperation in this. We had a reverse of this trend before Bro. Andy Howley was appointed as special advisor to the Council.

An Aboriginal style theocracy is what is aimed at, at this stage. No doubt the inevitable secularization will make in-roads into this in the future. The notion of theocracy seems more akin to the community of the NT and the thrust of evangelisation than the notion of our present Western political ethos.

Further, we witnessed the historical movement of the Murinbata reclaiming their traditional land (where the mission is situated) and the beginning of Kardu Numida as its administrative arm made up of elders. Many reasons were responsible for this decisive step, viz.

- 1) the increasing activity by Maringar people, Maritjabin people, some Murinbata and Murinkair people all making moves to their own country, and talk of their kind of plans for the future.
- 2) The complete breakdown of the white-instituted Council, which crippled many of the potential young leaders by its pressurized mechanics and other-centred dynamics.

There had been a limited handing-over from Catholic Missions, Darwin, to Catholic Missions, Port Keats, through the setting up of Keats Enterprises to run functions which were responsible to Darwin previously.

The aim of this was to give greater local participation in the financial running and administering of the place from the local level, and not merely to be a consultative voice in the dark of the financial world.

Hopefully, to also prepare the way for a more Aboriginal orchestrated operation in the future.

WHERE THINGS ARE AT NOW . . .

The transfer of Mission Establishment to Kardu Numida and the setting up of Bulk Funding look like being effective from 1 January 1979. In the meantime, confusion is stifled by work programming.

We have an area beautification programme under way which will transform the ironstone ridge that people have been living on for years. It will have a nature strip with trees etc. down what was the old airstrip (the main street).

We have to finalise the barge arrangements for next year, which looks like costing us \$7,850 a barge.

We have to negotiate a loan of \$75,000 for the purchase of the Port Keats store from Catholic Missions -- the profits of which over the years have been used by Catholic Missions for support of mission initiatives for Aborigines -- not necessarily at Port Keats.

We have the setting up of the administrative arrangements for the outstations (four main ones at this stage). From Keats we also try to meet the spiritual needs of these places, plus Peppimenarti and Palumpa.

Our mechanic has been utilized by Peppimenarti since they are not too keen on a resident one down there.

The Murin Association is in the process of making up its mind about a new aircraft. Its future direction is a bit cloudy at this stage, because of it being an inter-tribal association and developments this year have shifted its members to outstations while leaving some at Port Keats.

It looks like the Club will be operating before Christmas, and, with the resident Police Station, this should keep Port Keats in the headlines. We have the distinction of being the only Catholic Mission with a police station.

There will be inevitable changes of staff as the year closes off and a new one begins. A difference with new staff will be that they will be employed by Aborigines and have Aboriginal bosses, not coming in as bosses as such.

The new church has not advanced so rapidly this year. It is still not completed. An optimistic view hopes for an opening around 8 December.

With outstation places going ahead, it is hoped the anxieties of the Authorities will not cause a rushing in and smothering of any initiative that the people want to develop, be this in the medical, educational or ecclesiastical fields. The challenge of developing a non-stereotype approach to school and education arises for the school people if they are going to have any serious options to offer the outstation people. The Medical seem content to transfer the pill culture and to leave the difficult ethno-medicine to the dreamtime. One redeeming feature of this will be the work of Aboriginal Health Workers in the outstation areas.

In the future Port Keats will be known as *Yiddiyi* and have two main organisations, Kardu Numida and Murinbata Tribal Development. These will probably have the same executive, although their functions will be quite distinct. The Murin Association may need to restructure itself to cope with a scattered clientele.

The Mission presence will withdraw to schooling and health -- a pastoral presence of sorts will need to be developed to respect the true cultural genius of these people. The major thrust of Catholic Missions looks to be away from buildings and towards people. However, whether this will be true for the Darwin controlled school and medical is unsure.

Pat Dodson MSC

SANTA TERESA

Santa Teresa is a small community with perhaps now as few as 500 people, 31 of whom are non-Aboriginal. It is a fairly active community. Sometimes this gives rise not only to real achievements but also to tension and stress.

In *Education* Aboriginal teachers are gradually assuming more responsibility within the school. On site teacher training is contributing to this, and a bi-lingual program has begun.

There seems to be some headway being made with regard to support of *Health Workers* and their readiness to take on leadership and responsibility in the community. There appears to be more decision making on their part and a belief that the way of doing and being has a prominent part in the Health Service.

The *Employment* level within the community has been reasonable, though at the moment there is notable absenteeism. Excessive drinking does contribute to this. It is almost entirely due to the efforts of the Council President that employment is maintained. The fact that this man is overtaxed seems to contribute to the deterioration of the quality of work.

Pressures are difficult to withstand when it comes to *decision making*. The council meets, often weekly, to discuss developments within the community. Recently, the Social and Sporting Club assumed greater responsibility for its operations. This is proving to be good experience, though not without real difficulties, because people have lacked adequate preparation to assume these supervisory roles. Other workers within the office and canteen have assumed greater responsibilities for the availability of services within their respective

areas. Volunteers readily assist in the canteen during peak periods. The Council has begun to discuss the implications of local government.

There are now two priests at Santa Teresa. The second operates as Chaplain to the community, and this has been of great benefit all round. A lot of insight and sensitivity is still required, so that the essentials of community Christian living can be adapted to the locality.

Staff who come to Santa Teresa -- "guests" within the community -- should expect to learn from the experience as well as to give of their abilities. Thus co-operation is important. Abilities and skills are necessary. But the compatibility of the staff to live closely within a confined community must be faced. This close living has contributed to tension. Thus, a more effective means of screening personnel is necessary. We must remember also, that we are no longer immune from the critical eye of the wider Australian community or from literature about our involvement in Aboriginal community living.

There is a great deal of *untapped potential* within the community. Staff in general need assistance in working with Aboriginal people in a training capacity. Much could be learnt from the successful methods employed by the present Housing Association Supervisor. Aboriginal people with wider community responsibilities also admit to a real need for assistance in their tasks.

The community of Santa Teresa is *financially* sound. It has benefited from the assistance of an accountant who lived at the mission for two years, and left to live in Alice Springs in the middle of 1978.

REQUIREMENTS FOR 1979

- 1) A need for leadership training, so that work loads can be shared.
- 2) A need for compatibility among people and the ability to compromise on approaches regarding how we are living and what we are doing.
- 3) A greater acceptance of the presence of tension or stress within the community due to the effects of excessive alcoholism, other human limitations, including those imposed by organisational redtape.
- 4) To live humanly as Jesus did, adapting to the challenges of our social and physical environment. This may mean a lot of learning for the missionary.

presented by Fr John Kelliher MSC

BRIEF REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS FOR 1978

In this, my first year in the territory, I have seen as my main task to facilitate the work being done by our Missionaries in their pastoral care of the Aborigines. For me it is important to place the Missions in their ecclesiastical context. Of a diocese that is very mixed racially, the Aborigines form a most significant sector and in a formal document signed by the Bishop at the start of the year I was constituted Episcopal Vicar for Missions, i.e. a person who on behalf of the Bishop and the Diocese was charged with the oversight of pastoral care of the Aborigines.

Obviously one person can do little, particularly when his or her influence is widely and thinly spread. In practice the people on the spot are the effective people, and so my aim has been to try to be of some assistance to them by way of

communications of appropriate printed material, personal interest, arbitration where needed, co-ordination and liaison with other persons and entities and the oversight of Mission Headquarters' operations.

As a significant number of our missionaries are MSCs, I have found it a simplifying feature to be the Sectional Superior. And as five of our ten NT Catholic Schools are in the Missions, I have found it useful to be involved in Aboriginal education as Director of the Catholic Education Office.

This year I have made 8 visits to Santa Teresa, 7 to Bathurst Island, 6 to Daly River, 2 to Peppimenarti, 2 to Garden Point and 11 to Port Keats.

These occasions have provided people working in these places with the opportunity to state a personal point of view and sometimes I have been able to diminish some of the practical effects of isolation and life in a small community. I have taken the opportunity to give staff conferences and preach at the Eucharist.

I must comment on the helpfulness and trust of the Bishop who has given me a very free hand and has always been most accessible.

I think MSCs are well aware of our Provincial Dennis Murphy's continued interest in the work of this sector of the Province. I can confirm how ready he is to go out of his way to help us with allocation of personnel even at short notice.

I am most grateful for the friendliness and cooperation of all our Missionaries and especially the Daughters of OLSH who have over 60 Sisters working in the Territory. Increasingly they are being joined by smaller numbers of other Religious Orders whom we welcome in a special way.

Our lay helpers on our mission stations deserve our thanks for their dedication and tolerance. My gratitude to Fr Luby who has been so ready to be of assistance to our Missions; and to Bro. Gallagher and headquarters staff who have been great to work with.

I have appreciated your tolerance of my mistakes and errors during the year and look forward to hearing of ways in which I can be of better use next year.

Malcolm Fyfe MSC

HEADQUARTERS

Headquarters' report was presented by Bro. Ken Gallagher and Terry McCarthy. Unfortunately no written text has been supplied and, as a minutes secretary was appointed only when the discussion sessions started (written reports had been asked for), there is no record of their presentation.

From the rough notes I kept as chairman I would reconstruct the gist of the presentation thus:-)

Bro. Ken Gallagher:-

- HQ performs some Aboriginal training on a small scale.
- the hostel at Geranium St has catered for 3,650 adults in one year.
- HQ aims at handing-over mission functions, but not to white-directed organisations.

- Bro. Gallagher has been re-appointed financial adviser to the Unia Association. The Peppimenarti venture is expanding: there are plans for taking over the hotel lease at the Daly and relocating the establishment some 5 miles up the road. They have bought 40 acres at Humpty Doo, where they plan to build their own town base.
- Palumpa & Nguiu (*comments not noted*)
- a dental service is being established at Santa Teresa and the Daly River.

Terry McCarthy:-

Terry spoke on Catholic Missions (HQ)'s function as a building contractor. This is in response to the request of the mission stations that they look after their own projects, provide as much of their own labour as possible and avoid the expense and other-directedness of professional consultants. Catholic Missions HQ staff perform the function of consultants and contractors in this context of do-it-yourself.

(It is worth noting that here the dilemma lies. The local missions complain of HQ's interference, cf. Reports, especially pp.32 (Bathurst Island), 34, 36 (Port Keats). Yet it is precisely its response to the mission stations' desire for local autonomy that necessitates the constant involvement of HQ staff in local affairs. Someone has to do the organising and they also have to know something -- or rather, quite a lot -- about it!)

He listed projects at Bathurst Island and Port Keats where HQ had acted as contractor.

NOTES FROM THE MINUTES

The meeting began with a concelebrated Mass at 9.00am. There were in attendance 3 or 4 representatives from each mission (though only one from Melville Is.), 4 from Headquarters, 2 residents of the "Ranch", the Director of Catholic Missions, the FDNAC Regional Superior, the Director of the Nelen Yubu Institute (who acted as chairman). The Provincial of the Marist Brothers, Bro. Walter Smith, also attended. In all, some 25 persons.

The various sessions were divided by refreshment and lunch times, and the day ended with a buffet tea (thanks to the hard work of Ah Tsiung).

In the late morning session *clarification* was sought and given about various expressions and ideas in the Reports. In particular:-

a) *The Meaning of "Mission"*

First, HQ staff were anxious to affirm that "Catholic Missions" does not simply mean Headquarters.

It was suggested (in effect) that 'mission' can be seen (i) as a function and (ii) as designating an entity.

As (i), a person can go on apostolic "mission" from any one Church to any other, actual or potential Church (e.g. from Rome to Ireland or vice versa). This is not the sense in which we generally talk about "missions" in NT.

As (ii), a 'mission' indicates a community where the Church is *directly* involved in not only the essential functions of preaching the evangelical message and sanctifying through the pastoral ministry and sacramental liturgy, but also in the human and social developmental activities that are an integral and complementary but still not central part of evangelisation. (Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #25-39, especially 31 and 36.)

This means that the *factual* difference between a "parish" and a "mission", though basically one of degree, can nevertheless involve a striking diversity of activities (methods of evangelisation). In a "mission" the religious authorities are often responsible (either immediately or ultimately and through the mediacy of a council or some similar "secular" agency, which they are supporting and developing) for such basic secular functions as sewerage and garbage collection... The direction of development is to bring the people to a situation of autonomy in regard to secular functions. Evangelisation continues in the secular sphere, even as constituted in its integral autonomy, but through the Christ-orientated service of the laity (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* #70). In a technologically developed community the "parish priest" should always care for all the personal and social circumstances that make up human living, but he no longer has a *direct* care for the shops, street and road construction, water and light reticulation, the building of private homes and all the rest of it.

In the NT at the moment we find ourselves in a midway position: hence the hassles and the compromises...

(I cannot pretend that it was all said precisely like that at the meeting, but that is what was trying to be expressed.)

b) "theocracy" (cf. *Port Keats Report*)

Pat Dodson explained his idea of "theocracy" more or less in these terms:-

In Aboriginal society, unlike Western, the clear division between the secular and the religious does not occur: the two orders of value interpenetrate. Hence it is wrong to work for the establishment of purely secular institutions of social activity and control as distinct from the religious sphere.

However, this does not mean that we should conserve the current model with the priest and other Religious staff at the top of the heap. The "theocracy", i.e. the godly rule, should be exercised through the operation of the Spirit of Christ working in and through the *community* itself and all of its various phases and functions.

It was observed that as each of our missions has its own characteristics of history, culture, development etc., it is unlikely that any *one* model of development would serve all places.

The rest of the report on the Missionary Review is taken from the minutes taken by Sr Ann Moir-Bussy and compiled by her with the help of Fr John Kelliher, with some slight editorial amendments.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

1st Session 2.00pm - 3.45pm

Topics Covered: Definition of term 'mission'
 Discussion of priests as community advisors
 Competency and qualification for above
 Adaptation to changing roles of Religious
 structural change, personal change, and the dilemmas involved

1. 'MISSION'

'Mission' was discussed in terms of evangelisation. The topic led almost immediately into the role and position of community advisor, usually held by the priest. It was said that involvement of the priest should be total...with both spiritual and social development to be taken into account. The Community Advisor was not only the administrative officer but also the community development officer

-- this had obvious church overtones. It was also pointed out that this is one of the clear defects in our system of mission administration, viz. that we do not generally distinguish the two very separate functions of being Community Advisor and Administrative Officer.

A need was seen to make a distinction between 'mission' and 'missionary activity': this latter involves social development. It was commented that we must remember that the missions are in a state of transition/change. The Aboriginal people place a lot of trust in particular persons: if the priest was the person they trusted as Community Advisor, then it was important to leave it that way during this time of change.

A query was made concerning the competency and qualifications of the priest for this role. It was then commented that the Community Advisor did not have to be the person who had the expertise to answer all the questions. He did need to have the willingness and ability to work with those who could answer the questions or do the things he couldn't do. He must promote and assist in the development of effective communications between the agencies and groups who were competent in the various fields, e.g. finance. The limitation of the specialist expert is that often he cannot see the overall, general picture -- which the Community Advisor tries to do. He does not have to make the decisions for the community, but work with them and stimulate them to seek their own answers; helping them to find the needed resources, whether in the community or outside agencies.

It was finally commented that maybe structures are not sufficiently adapted to the task. At the same time, a major factor in the difficulties experienced is undoubtedly personality.

2. *ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC MISSIONS* *As seen by himself:-*

- 1) Personal interest in Mission personnel (at times close to the function traditionally associated with a Religious Superior), involving visitation of local communities; providing at times direct pastoral assistance through sermons, conferences etc.
- 2) Stimulation of ideas; dissemination of relevant printed material.
- 3) A reference person for Church and secular organizations.
- 4) An arbitrator between people with differing viewpoints.
- 5) Assistance in recruitment of Religious and lay helpers for our Missions.
- 6) Oversight of Mission Headquarters' operations.
- 7) General support and oversight of the Missionary thrust of the diocese.

Comments and Suggestions from Others included:-

- the importance of initiative and challenge on his part
- a need for direction and leadership
- that the frequency of his visits draws isolated places into the network and gives a sense of unity with other missions
- the need for "prophetic" role of the leader: someone who looks over the whole operation and has vision of where they're all going, then to speak and challenge as a prophet for the group
- that he have knowledge of interacting tensions for Aboriginal people right across the country
- that he be the person who would provide reflective and constructive opinions on broad issues and policies of organizations connected with Aboriginal work, e.g. NAED, Education Department, and politics.
- the suggestion was voiced that it would be good for him to call meetings of Catholic Missions Standing Committee, as per constitution -- for a broader basis of consultation and for straightening out the lines of accountability.

Father Fyfe then further summarised what he saw as his role of director in the following comments:-

It was a role of ongoing direction, giving missiological guidance and prophetic leadership. He saw it as a role in which one doesn't inflict pressure upon mission communities. Either he decides when to become involved or he is invited to comment and act if necessary. There should normally be an expressed need if his direction were wanted. Alternatively, he would step in if he was convinced that it would be of greater benefit.

Secondly, there is the constraint of personal limitations. He felt he was able on occasions to prevent relatively small issues from becoming major problems, a danger in isolated places.

In relation to HQ, his office was there at present because of a need to know what was going on in an overall aspect of work there.

3. HEADQUARTERS

The meeting then moved into discussion of the diverse nature of the HQ section of Catholic Missions and also the role of the director within this. Comments included the following points:-

- a) Some members of HQ staff spoke of the potentiality of the HQ section of Catholic Missions as building contractors. They were put into this position because of the express wish of some Aboriginal communities to do the building work themselves without the help of contractors from outside.
- b) "Service and Supply Centre" could be an alternative title for HQ.
- c) More autonomy at the local level should be encouraged.
- d) Tolerance and understanding was required both ways in communication.
- e) Appreciation of the service rendered by the HQ section of Catholic Missions was expressed and acknowledged.
- f) Surprise was expressed, not that HQ should provide such technical services, but that it would seem to supply little else. Certainly on entering the big shed at Geranium St one does not have the impression of having come into contact with the centre of missiological and spiritual thrust of the NT Catholic Missions. But maybe this expectation is unreasonable; maybe this should be provided elsewhere, but where?

2nd Afternoon Session 4.00pm - 6.00pm

Points Discussed:-

1. Relationship with other Religious Orders coming into the NT. A need was stated for cohesion and a consensus of approach to the Territory apostolate. It was the role of the director to bring about a cohesive approach.

There would always be tensions at the local level. There is a need to accept others. We must learn to cope with diversity. Other Religious Orders bring their own special charism and contribution.

2. A comment was made on the assessment and review being undertaken by the OLSH Sisters. They have embarked upon a prayerful discernment of their identity and Territorian involvement. In May 1979 a meeting of all the NT OLSH Sisters will be held in Darwin. A renewal seminar will also be given by Fr Wally Black MSC.

3. Function of HQ. Further discussion of the structure and function of HQ continued. There seemed to be some tension in relation to communication with various missions and HQ and acceptance of the role of HQ. There was a call for decentralisation of administration. Mention was made of the possibility of training young

Aboriginal people in jobs at HQ.

An alternative suggestion was that a person from each mission be based at HQ to cope with the specific jobs or needs of each place. It was then suggested that HQ draw up a schema or flow-chart of HQ operations and services in an effort to rationalise its communications with each mission.

The subject was then closed with the recommendation that the Director call a meeting of the HQ group and the mission personnel involved to deal with the personal issues that seemed to surface.

4. NELEN YUBU INSTITUTE

The director, Fr Wilson, requested suggestions regarding seminars, in-service type workshops resulting from local research, orientation courses for new personnel.

In view especially of some statements made earlier in this meeting, he suggested that the topic of *leadership* could be one for local research and later workshop-type discussions in 1979. He is looking for feedback on this.

It was recommended that we look at leadership centres successfully operating in places such as Africa and Papua New Guinea, (i.e. Christian leadership centres).

5. MISSION CONFERENCE 1979

There is a need to find out before the 1979 conference what is the Aboriginal thinking regarding important issues. A suggestion had been made that Aboriginal people have a conference of their own.

Father Fyfe then concluded the day with the following comments:-

There is need to remember that personality is involved in everything that we do. Tolerance is often called for.

Healing is an important part of Christ's work: we share in this healing ability, and exercise it especially in regard to *persons*. Maybe we have more power in this regard than what we use.

Responsibility is part of man's dignity. We must support those who want to take part in the total life of the community. However, while giving credit to the need for social development, there is a danger that we overlook evangelical issues. We can become dissipated and immersed in the former. We need to beware of extremes.

Patience is important. And things must be kept in perspective. The Aboriginal people have to solve their own problems: our task is to assist in creating the set of circumstances within which they can come to grips with their problems..

Thanks...good wishes for next year etc....