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# Aboriginal Education as Internal Colonialism: the schooling of an indigenous minority in Australia [1]

A. R. WELCH

With the attainment of nationhood, in 1901, Australia's colonial history ended, for most if not for all Australians. But for a significant minority of inhabitants, Australia's indigenous population, colonialism remained a political reality, one which has now existed for almost 20 years. It will be argued in this paper that theories of internal colonialism provide an important framework of analysis with which to explain policies and practices in Aboriginal education.

When the British colonised Australia in the late 18th century, part of the non-material baggage which accompanied them was a conventional view of the superiority of the white race. Australian Aborigines were usually seen as the most wretched, primitive and miserable race on earth, with few if any redeeming qualities. An early landholder epitomised such views even before the popularisation of Charles Darwin's ideas gave apparent scientific respectability to nineteenth century racism:

If their intellectual functions, . . . are thus so far above debasement, how is it that the abject animal state in which (the Aborigines) live . . . should place them at the very zero of civilisation, constituting in a measure the connecting link between man and the monkey tribe?—for really some of the old women only seem to require a tail to complete the identity . . . [2]

Missionaries influenced by such prevailing views, as also the common association in the Christian tradition of the colour black with evil, were not immune to racism either, while nineteenth century journals of anthropology gave added legitimacy to doctrines of the supposed racial inferiority of Australian Aborigines. Craniometry, for example, was thought likely to produce useful scientific information on the exact nature and composition of Australian aborigines, in particular the various 'race elements' [3]. Australian 'blacks' were thought at this stage to be principally composed of three main racial elements (the Negritos, Papuans, and Dravidians), one of whom (the Negritos) were described in the following terms:

The Negritos are a diminutive dark race, with crisp woolly hair, Negroid face; they were from 4'7" to 4'10" in height; brachycephalic skull; chest small, legs without calves; feet turned inwards; deeply lined faces; prognathous jaws; nose broad and flat, nostrils dilated; bodies small; slender ape like appearance. The pure race, now very rare, very low intelligence; they are quite distinct from Papuans. They are in New Guinea, and are there called Karons. They are cannibals; they all circumcise. [4]

Indeed, sorcery, cannibalism and infanticide, as well as 'ingratitude' [5] were conventionally

accepted as features of Australian Aboriginal existence, by white anthropologists who deemed Aboriginal peoples not to be within the fold of the 'civilised' races' [6]. At most the brachycephalic races such as Aborigines could "supply the steady workers" [7] under the benevolent rule of their white masters.

Such rules legitimated oppressive nineteenth century colonialist policies and practices with respect to Australian Aborigines. One of the distinguishing features of colonialism is the profoundly held belief in the racial-cultural superiority of the colonising civilisation and people. This belief acts as legitimation for exploitative policies and practices, such as that of exclusionism, dispossession and extermination. As Hartwig has argued:

For the colonist participating in the process of dis-possession, it was psychologically desirable, at the very least, to persuade himself that Aborigines were inferior beings, pests and nuisances who deserved their fate. [8]

And it was those who were most directly in conflict with Aborigines through expropriating their traditional resources of land and food who were firmest in their denial of the worth of Aboriginal cultures:

...it was the squatter and his men, the men on the spot doing the actual dispossessing, and the killing that it entailed, who were most ready to deny Aboriginal humanity. [8]

The colonists' acceptance of the legitimacy of exploitative practices towards Aborigines was sustained by at least four widely held ideologies. The first was expressed in the view that, since Aborigines had no real society, in particular formal institutions of law and government, therefore they had no real title to the land. This was reinforced by the commonly accepted view, most directly associated with John Locke, that only those who actively worked and improved the land could exercise title to it. The Christian God had commanded men to work, and Locke argued that by tilling, sowing and the like, men established an inalienable title to the land. Aboriginal patterns of existence, and resource usage, which stressed more harmonious relations with the natural environment, and comparatively light utilisation of resources such as food and energy, established no recognisable or worthwhile claim to the land, according to this criterion [10].

The second source of legitimation stemmed from the increasing acceptance of evolutionary theory, and the incorporation of ideas of naked struggle and conflict into the realm of human affairs, in the form of what came to be called Social Darwinism:

Although Darwinism was not the primary source of the belligerent ideology and dogmatic racism of the late 19th century it did become a new instrument in the hands of theorists of race and struggle. [11]

Darwin's ideas on natural selection, popularised in terms of the survival of the fittest in society, were not the only examples of evolutionary thought to have currency in the nineteenth century [12]. But it was the congruence of evolutionary theory with the dominant ideology of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism which was so significant. Black-white relations could thus be legitimately seen as a struggle for survival, however unequal, of two warring groups. To the victor went the spoils, and the predictable result of this conflict only served to further confirm beliefs in the evolutionary superiority of white culture-race. The extermination of inferior races was thus both scientifically warranted (to interfere with this process would be to deny the laws of nature) and ethically defensible (intervention would threaten the welfare of future generations). Indeed in an era when science was thought to contain its own beneficent morality, the two were much the same:

The survival of the fittest means that might—wisely used—is right. And thus we

invoke and remorselessly fulfil the inexorable law of natural selection (or of demand and supply), when exterminating the inferior Australian and Maori races, and we appropriate their patrimony as coolly as Ahab did the vineyards of Naboth, though in diametrical opposition to all our favourite theories of right and justice—thus proved to be unnatural and false. The world is better for it; and would be incalculably better still, were we loyally to accept the lesson taught by nature, and consistently to apply the same principle to our conventional practice; by preserving the varieties most perfect in every way, instead of actually promoting the non-survival of the fittest by the protection of the propagation of the imprudent, the diseased, the defective and the criminal. Thus we surely lower the average of, and tend to destroy, the human race, almost as effectually as if we were openly to resort to communism. [13]

The struggle for survival by black and white races, among other warring groups in society, ought not to be impeded by any misplaced sense of ethics, or other trappings of civilisation. Rape, murder and expropriation of aboriginal land was all rendered legitimate by this form of ideology: ‘... killing Aborigines was no crime’ [14].

The third form of ideology which legitimated nineteenth century racism in Australia was Christianity. The arrogant assumption of the (material and) spiritual superiority of white British Christian civilisation allowed little respect for or knowledge of Aboriginal culture to develop: “Mission organisation stressed the abomination of savage society, and spared no thought for investigating its past or recording its present” [15]. Worse, Christian ideology helped create the idea of the savage as ignoble, in defiance of pre-existing Rousseauian notions, and any suggestions of the nobility of a savage race awaiting the imminent redemption of Christian missionaries was dismissed as ‘unchristian’. Christian missionaries could caricature Aborigines as existing in the ‘lowest form of degradation’, lacking in “all more views and impressions... every idea bearing on our origin and destination as rational beings seems to have been erased from their breasts” [16]. Aborigines were equated with the

men of Sodom, sinners exceedingly. And the prevalance of those diseases which ... constitute the established retribution awarded by the Creator as the just punishment of such abominations—... conclusively establish the existence of those crimes of which they are the legitimate fruits. [17]

This latter was indeed a savage irony, since the diseases to which Dredge refers here, such as syphilis, were introduced by whites [18]. Small wonder, then, that Christians could argue that the reason for the tragically high morality rate among Aborigines in the nineteenth century was that “it was the design of Providence that the inferior races should pass away before the superior races” [19]. Small wonder, too, that even comparatively progressive Christians argued that Aborigines had ‘no religious beliefs’ [20], or that many missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “... were genuinely unable to see, let alone credit, ... that Aborigines are a deeply religious people” [21]. Small wonder that polygamy among Aboriginal peoples was castigated as evidence of ‘heathendom’, or ‘concupiscence’ [22] rather than seen as evidence of cultural difference.

Perhaps the final element of ideology in Australian racism has been the most malignant. Concepts of equality were in the air when Australia was colonised by the British, just one year before the outbreak of the French Revolution, and 12 years after the American Revolution. Theoretically, such views could have established a firm foundation for harmonious, mutually respectful race-relations in Australia. In practice the very reverse occurred. Why was this so?

The egalitarian and libertarian ideas of the Enlightenment spread by the American and French Revolutions conflicted, of course, with racism, but they also paradoxically contributed to its development. Faced with the blatant contradiction between the treatment of slaves and colonial peoples and the official rhetoric of freedom and equality, Europeans and North Americans began to dichotomize humanity between men and submen (or the 'civilized' and the 'savages'). The scope of the applicability of the egalitarian ideals was restricted to the people, that is, the whites, and there resulted what I have called *Herrenvolk* democracies—regimes such as those of the United States or South Africa that are democratic for the master race but tyrannical for the subordinate groups. The desire to preserve both the profitable forms of discrimination and exploitation, and the democratic ideology made it necessary to deny humanity to the oppressed groups. [23]

In practice, strong pressure was exerted by colonists in Australia to exclude Aborigines from white society. This pressure grew increasingly strong after about 1850. Prior to this time, policies tended more to inclusion, but with Aborigines denied any significant social status and relegated to the 'lower orders' of a miniature replica of English class society. The second half of the century was a period in which segregation was increasingly a feature. This segregation was based on ideas of racial homogeneity (an attitude which also victimised Indian and Chinese settlers in Australia of the nineteenth century) and the desire to isolate a group defined as uncivilised and racially inferior, and allow them to die out.

These then can be argued to be among the major forms of legitimating ideology which sustained the practices of internal colonialism. The use of the word 'internal' here should not be taken to indicate a wholly new or discrete form of colonialism. On the contrary, colonialism has as its central feature, as Kelly and Altback have argued, the "domination of one 'nation' by another" [24]; perhaps the major distinguishing feature of *internal* colonialism, then, is its context. Internal colonialism involves the subordination and continuing domination of a "previously independent nation within the borders of another nation-state" [25]. Such groups as North American Indians, black South Africans [26], Latin American Indians, and Australian Aborigines all fall readily into this category of nations who have failed to gain political or economic independence from their respective colonial powers. Thus, as Wolpe has argued, the principal feature which distinguishes internal colonialism from 'normal' colonialism is that, with the former, both colonisers and colonised occupy the same territory. In other major respects, the situation of subordinate racial and ethnic groups, "is produced and maintained by the same mechanisms of cultural domination, political oppression, and economic exploitation" [27] which foster the dependency of Third World States.

That a colonialist mentality still survives in Australia, is seen in the response of the conservative Federal coalition government, when Aboriginal groups established a tent Embassy outside Parliament House in 1972 to focus attention on land rights claims:

The Government is not prepared to see a separate race within a race develop in Australia, with an embassy from the Aborigines to the Government of Australia as if they were a foreign power . . . [26]

In such cases, education often serves as an instrument of internal colonialism by socialising the colonised into an acceptance of inferior status, power and wealth: "Differential schooling rationalised the unequal distribution of product . . ." [29].

In the case of Australian Aborigines, and it might be argued North American Indians, economic imperatives legitimated a definition of the oppressed as sub-human, a race of savages, which in turn defined the limits of schooling and the curriculum. In each case, a

definition of schooling was legitimated which stressed rudimentary skills only in keeping with the lowly social class which the colonised were to occupy; and induction into Christianity, "the white man's morality" [30]. In neither case were the colonised consulted as to the content of this curriculum, or whether they wanted schooling at all. In both cases there was little difference between the twin processes of 'civilisation' and 'christianisation': each dictated the death of the culture upon which they were imposed. "... Missionaries used schools as instruments for the inculcation of... civilisation, epitomised as the ideal in the unilinear development of human society" [31]. Christianity often involved an introduction into such institutions and values as diligence, punctiliousness, private property, economic individualism, a subordinate female role, and other *accoutrements* of civilisation. In both cases, English was the dominant medium of instruction, and the disintegration of tribal structure and culture promoted by the removal of children to schools far from their homeland. Much education of both North American Indians and Australian Aborigines has been infected by assimilationist policies; by immersing pupils in white culture it was hoped that Indianness or Aboriginality could be bleached out and that these minorities could simply be transformed into honorary whites, albeit at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Textbooks stressed the views of the coloniser, not the colonised. In Australia and America, Aborigines and Indians were often characterised, or caricatured, as barbaric impediments to the onward and upward march of western, Christian capitalism. It is hardly surprising that alienation was high, and attendance and retention rates low.

The racism of early Australian settlers, missionaries, and anthropologists ignored the vitality and complexity of black educational traditions dating back 30,000 to 40,000 years. These traditions bespoke an alternative cosmology which was progressively disenfranchised as white incursions spread further into black territories, a situation broadly similar to relations between whites and Native Americans at much the same time.

Perhaps one of the principal reasons black educational traditions were not recognised by early white settlers is that, unlike white schooling practices (at least for the minority of early settlers who could read and write themselves), black education was the living culture of Aborigines itself, and functioned without such artefacts as school buildings and school texts. Aboriginal education "was not so much a preparation for life, as an experience of life itself" [32].

Spirituality pervaded the whole of life, and thus traditional Aboriginal education was entirely non-secular. Social life, and educative activities such as hunting and gathering, were all informed by religious beliefs, just as topographical features were all products of spirit ancestors. This spirituality helped impart a unity to Aboriginal traditions of education, without the subject divisions common to white schooling practices. Legends, songs and stories formed the oral traditions which were handed down to each generation, unchanged. Education continued throughout life, as adults continued to learn more details of ceremonies and rituals.

Learning was experimental, and based on imitation and trial and error, while pedagogy was personal, most particularly around important occasions such as initiation into adulthood. Observation, imitation and repetition were important motifs of traditional Aboriginal education [33]. Questioning, by contrast, was neither expected nor encouraged. These patterns and values of traditional Aboriginal education clashed with the values and patterns of white schooling, and in a situation of unequal power, could only diminish effective black participation in white schooling, and white society. Again, the American experience demonstrates some important parallels here.

Parallels between colonising policies and practices in America and Australia have been acknowledged before by those probing Australian racism [34]. Certainly it is not difficult to

chart the applications of colonising policies of exclusion, separation and other aspects of 'civilisation' in the education of Australian Aborigines, although this history is not yet widely known. The evidence exists, but much of it remains unpublished. The larger part of the remainder of this article is devoted to a sketch of important aspects of that history.

Black-white relations in Australia can be broadly divided into several periods, in education as much as in other areas of interaction. These periods tend to reflect the dominant legitimating ideologies of each period:

- (1) initial white ignorance and disdain (accompanied by the establishment of some Church missionary schools);
- (2) 'Legal and spatial separation' [35], which often meant the forcible removal of children from their parents for schooling;
- (3) assimilation, in which it was assumed that the simple opening up of white educational institutions to black access, without changing the dominant value-systems within those institutions, would secure progress towards equality;
- (4) integration, in which token deference to aboriginal culture was paralleled by growing black unrest;
- (5) self-determination, in which funding is still white-controlled.

Early in Australia's colonial history, clear contradictions emerged between different aspects of policy directed at Aboriginal peoples. Education was part of these contradictions. Without rehearsing all the separate histories of the several Australian colonies of the nineteenth century, different examples reveal marked similarities in policies and practices. When Governor Darling was instructed to "promote Religion and Education among the Native Inhabitants" while protecting their persons and the "free enjoyment of their possessions" [36], he was simply being held to a venerated tradition of 'Christianising the heathen', which was little more than philanthropic racism. In education this philanthropy was plainly contradictory, since it never embraced any consultation with Aboriginal groups themselves; while the injunction to protect rights and possessions was being continually violated by expropriation of Aboriginal lands.

In South Australia, early efforts at the "education and civilisation" [37] of Aboriginal peoples amounted to little more than a sustained onslaught on Aboriginal cultures. Such attempts proved to be unsuccessful when directed at adults, and efforts were redirected towards the children, in the hope that through a reformation of the young, the 'civilisation' of Aboriginal peoples could be effected. Plans were formulated to seduce prospective pupils to the school door by offering them food (fresh meat and peas, "that would vie with the food they could get by begging" [38]) or by variously depriving their parents of gifts, or rewarding them with blankets, in order to secure the attendance of children at the schools. The curriculum was in English, and apart from the 4Rs (reading, writing, reckoning and religion) "manual training became more important as the years went by" [39]. Girls learned domestic chores, while boys may have had opportunities to undertake a limited form of apprenticeship. Even this much as greeted with scorn and derision by opponents who mocked "useless attempts to teach a half-dozen children to spell or scratch unintelligible hieroglyphics on slates" [40]. Even the more enlightened assumed that Aborigines could only aspire to the lowest social and economic class location.

The practice of separation of children from their parents was one widely practiced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sometimes, as in New South Wales in the nineteenth century, this was practiced more on those children designated 'half-caste', presumably on the basis that these children could be more easily trained in white ways than 'full-bloods' who, it was often felt, would die out. In Western Australia, Milnes shows that

the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents was practised from very early in the nineteenth century, because of white prejudices regarding the "harmful effects of Aboriginal adults on the educated children" [41]. As late as the 1940s, this practice was still being followed by missionaries in Western Australia who, in their concern to save the souls of the "children of the devil" [42], deliberately separated mission children from their parents' corrupting influences, and the life of the Aboriginal camp.

To match such a tradition of management, one may look to institutions used to confine enemy aliens in wartime. The progress of the Aboriginal from tribesman to inmate has been a special feature of colonial administration and of white settlement in Australia. [43]

The practice of exclusion was further evidence of colonialist schooling of black Australian by whites. As early as 1848 the suggestion of including Aboriginal children in government schools was rejected by the Board of Education in Western Australia, even though this proposal may have been cheaper than the alternative. In New South Wales in the late nineteenth century it was estimated that no more than one Aboriginal child in nine of school age was actually attending the public schools, and this was at least partly due to the practice of exclusion. Milnes has argued in the Western Australia context that, at least in the nineteenth century,

Aboriginal educational policy was informed by the generally exclusionist thought in European minds. From the beginning, Aboriginal institutions were separated . . . (and) Aborigines were to be kept apart and trained separately. [44]

training which fitted them for only the most menial of tasks in white society. Exclusionist practices, which in West Australia could be invoked upon the complaint of a single white parent, continued well into the twentieth century.

Education usually embraced the promotion of white, bourgeois values and institutions, which it was felt would raise Aboriginals from a state of savagery to something almost human. In this process of education it was rarely if ever argued that simple literacy and numeracy were sufficient. On the contrary, an insistent and elaborate hidden curriculum, comprising elements of Christianity and capitalism, formed a major part of educational initiatives for Aborigines. Many early educational efforts were by missionaries, and a conventional curriculum embraced far more than reading, writing and counting, much of which was often based on the Bible anyway. Hymn-singing, prayer recital, and the learning of catechism were common features of the curriculum, and white attitudes towards cleanliness, time and work were also instilled. This pattern, whereby white etiquette can become as important a part of the curriculum as the 3Rs, persists. Christianising, too, is still an important part of educational efforts, despite the long-standing recognition of the damage that is done to Aboriginal cultures in its name: "Success in converting the children to Christianity would undoubtedly spell disaster for the Aboriginal Law, which is based on a radically different view of life" [45]. "And what meaning was attached to Christian mythology by Aboriginal youth?"

. . . what strange things were thus revealed to youngsters reared in the world of the Dreaming. They had memorised the forms of words with intelligence, and learned to identify the place in a book whose content could have little interest or meaning within the indigenous frame of reference. [46]

Opinion was somewhat divided as to the potential which Aborigines demonstrated for schooling, but majority opinion was most doubtful as to what was often termed 'the educability of the native'. Although there were numerous examples which, in the nineteenth



century, amply demonstrated the abilities and aptitudes of aboriginal pupils, the dominant view was most disparaging of attempts to school Aborigines. Although numbers of missionaries and others who worked closely with Aboriginal communities reported being "impressed with their intelligence", and that pupils had "learned to read and find pleasure in it" [47] within a matter of months; or that Aboriginal children could compete favourably with European, when "taken from their parents and brought up with white children" [48], these views were exceptional. White views on the educability of Australian Aborigines meshed neatly with more general racist views: that Aborigines were part of an inferior race who were probably destined to die out, and who would, at most, be only able to fulfil the most menial forms of employment. Even the more enlightened and sympathetic whites could argue the impossibility of doing very much to school Aborigines, or raise their class location:

I would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means inferior as to be unable to rise above the level of a working animal. [49]

The myth of the ineducability of Australian Aborigines has been a most pervasive one which, in defiance of evidence, has continually licenced second rate education or none at all.

If the above sketch accurately reflects the major colonising practices and policies in the development of Aboriginal education in Australia, how much less has the position changed? Not enough, as studies of textbooks used by Australian children reveal. Too often Aborigines are presented therein as an impediment, "as a problem . . . to be explained away" [50], or are ignored. McGuinness is only one to point to the 'book-bias', whereby, for example, histories of the major explorations of the Australian continent often fail to acknowledge the prime importance of Aborigines in these expeditions, Aborigines who possessed essential local knowledge, and who had a long and successful history of survival in difficult terrain. Worse still, however, is the blatant bias of history texts which begin their story with the white colonists, and ignore 40,000 years of previous settlement by Aborigines. It is in this way that prejudice is perpetuated in the young.

History as learned by most Australians is the history of Europeans, and especially of the British, and of their descendants in Australia. It is the history of the dominant races and nations, written by them and for them. As such it does nothing to make us sensitive to the impact of the events in that history on the Aboriginal population. Nor does it lead us to an awareness or interest in the history of the Aboriginal people who have lived here for at least 30,000 years . . . [51]

Conflict between black and encroaching white is often omitted from school history texts. Rarely is the reality of white invasion treated, with its consequent history of murders, pauperisation, expropriation of traditional lands and exploitation of Aboriginal women. If conflict is treated it is often in terms of white retribution for misdeeds by blacks. These 'misdeeds' may well have been defence against territorial incursions, or defence of hunting rights on traditional lands. And again, the close spiritual relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land is usually omitted, or glossed over. Nor is the destruction of Aboriginal society from a viable culture of 300,000 persons prior to white impact, to only around 60,000 in 1921, featured. Even historians of Australian education are no less guilty of the omission of black history. To date, there is still not one text in the history of Australian education which focuses on the education of Australian aborigines. Major texts in the field have ignored the problem altogether, or have at best included a few token pages [52].

The last decade or two has seen some progress. Land Rights legislation has been introduced federally, and in several states, with the notable exception of Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory, who continue to resist such moves strongly.

(More recently, however, uniform Federal Landrights legislation has been withdrawn in the face of strong opposition from individual states and mining interests). In New South Wales, the State Government finally moved to take over mission schools and staff them with trained teachers. Yet many teachers working at schools with high proportions of Aboriginal students are still poorly prepared for the task. Older staff rarely have any training in Aboriginal cultures, or the special needs of Aboriginal pupils. And because such schools are often in depressed inner city areas or remote outback areas, they are often staffed with a preponderance of inexperienced, youthful teachers, who view their appointment as 'serving time', pending a more favourable appointment. Staff turnover has traditionally been high, and schools tend to lack resources.

Lack of resources available for bilingual education programmes [53], and in general for the teaching of Aboriginal languages is a further, pressing problem. It is generally acknowledged that "Aboriginal languages are in an endangered state" [54], and the loss of Aboriginal languages is all the more significant since, in such oral traditions, the language is *the* repository of the culture: myths, law, values and social organisation. Once the language disappears, the culture which it supported also dies, and there is considerable evidence that many Aboriginal languages are either already extinct, or on the verge of extinction. In 1971, it was calculated that some 114 languages were spoken by 10 people or fewer [55], and the rate of extinction is still calculated to be about one distinct language per year. From a position in 1788, when more than two hundred Aboriginal languages were in use, it is now the case that although perhaps 150 languages remain, perhaps fewer than one-third of that number are viable in the longer term, particularly without a massive effort directed at their maintenance.

These reasons go quite some way to explaining why, instead of a pro-rated 1,600 Aboriginal students in the final year of secondary school in 1982, there were, in fact, only 454 [56]. They go some way to explaining why, in 1981, some 12.5% of the Aboriginal population had never attended school, and in the end why, by 1984, only seven Aboriginals had ever graduated in law from an Australian university, and two in medicine [57].

All states and territories, whether of a more conservative persuasion or not, have begun to institute measures to increase Aboriginal participation and retention rates in education. Several colleges have begun to institute special programmes to take account of the special needs of Aboriginal students wishing to become teachers, but numbers of trained Aboriginal teachers are still depressingly low [58]. Miller's eloquent account of the difficulties of progress in the period before much help was formally available, provides testimony to the importance of these newer programmes [59]. Post-graduate courses in Aboriginal education are now becoming more widely available, and schemes to train Aboriginal teacher aides for schools with high Aboriginal enrolments have also been introduced. Some aides have gone on to train as teachers [60]. Aboriginal education groups now exist, at state and federal level, and there is also a greater desire to teach all Australian children of the contributions and complexities of Aboriginal cultures [61].

But there remains a problem of staggeringly large proportions. In 1976, one in four Australian Aborigines was unemployed, approximately six times the national average [62]. And this is compounded by the fact that Aborigines still tend to occupy the lowest paid jobs, occupy sub-standard housing (often with no gas or electricity, bathroom, kitchen or adequate sewage disposal). Infant mortality is many times the white average, comparing more with rates in Third World countries, and life expectancy is a full 20 years below the national average. Alcoholism is a chronic problem, deafness from ear infections widespread. Any educational progress is vitiated by these appalling statistics. Until these fundamental problems are redressed, any talk of equality of educational opportunity is largely chimerical.

Such problems will not be redressed until there is much greater general esteem in the Australian community for Aboriginal Australians, and especially land rights claims. White acceptance of black Australian lifestyle and values is, however, low. Not only is there little acceptance of the fact that 'White Australia has a black history', there is too little understanding and recognition of the damage still being done to Aboriginal Australians, and the consequent feelings of alienation which are engendered. Only now has a Royal Commission been established into the horrifying numbers of black deaths which occur in Australian gaols. And even minor, but significant, attempts to redress the historical imbalance between black and white Australians are being opposed by conservative political interests, farmers and mining interests, who are fearful of possible land rights claims by black Australians. The most recent example is a proposed preamble to the Federal Constitution (which would finally recognise that Australia was occupied by traditional owners [63] when whites finally established colonies in 1788) Aboriginal outcomes in education will remain depressingly low until general attitudes among white Australians become more accepting. In a very real sense, it is white as much as black Australians who need to be educated, a point which is now gradually being addressed in revised curriculum programmes.

During 1988, Australia celebrates its Bicentennial. Aboriginals may well feel they have little to celebrate. Indeed there is a tragic irony in a celebration of 200 years of white rule, when a viable black culture has existed in Australia for 30,000–40,000 years. The Bicentennial can reasonably be seen by black Australians as the legitimation of two centuries of colonial imposition and oppression. For Aboriginals, to celebrate such occasions would be "like dancing on your mother's grave" [64].

The development of schooling for Aborigines in Australia can legitimately be characterised as a tragic testament to educational failure. As in America, much the same question must be posed: "If education was intended to permit native people mobility into the mainstream, we must ask why in over three centuries it has been so remarkably unsuccessful" [65]. And perhaps the answer to the problem of continuing failure must also be similar: "They want the right and the means to do it themselves" [66]. In Australian terms, "It is now long overdue for Kooris to determine their own future as a distinct and separate race in a multicultural Australia" [67].

The theory of internal colonialism, it has been argued, provides a useful framework within which to analyse the situation of Australian Aboriginals [68], including in education. This is particularly so when class is integrated with race in the analysis, and not left to become a residual factor. But internal colonialism has wider applicability than to explanations of the subordination of Australian Aboriginals, through education, and it is to be hoped that more research in the field of comparative education will test further the usefulness of internal colonialism with respect to the education of such groups as Australian Aboriginals, black South Africans [69], North American Indians [70] and Latin American Indians.

#### NOTES

- [1] An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society, Flinders University, Adelaide, December 1985.
- [2] CUNNINGHAM, P. (1827) *Two Years in New South Wales*, 2nd ed revised and enlarged, II, p. 39 (London, Henry Colburn).
- [3] See: Two examples of an improved method of Craniometry, *The Australasian Anthropological Journal*, 2, 12 September 1986, p. 17. See also Craniometry in morbid human beings, criminals and inferior types, *Science of Man*, 2, 1, 21 March 1898, p. 44, where distinctions are made between blacks and whites, *inter alia*.
- [4] The Ethnology of the Australian Blacks, *The Australasian Anthropological Journal*, 2, 12 September 1986, p. 14. See also The different race types found among Australian blacks, *Science of Man*, IV, 5, 22 June 1901, p. 85.

- [5] See respectively 'The ethnology of Australian blacks, *The Australasian Anthropological Journal*, 3, 27 February 1987, p. 7 and on ingratitude 'Aborigine hereditary ingratitude', *Science of Man*, IV, 7, 21 August 1901, p. 115.
- [6] Customs and traditions of the Clarence River Aborigines, *Science of Man*, 2, 1, 21 March 1898, p. 47.
- [7] The political importance of the race question, or problems, *Science of Man*, 5, 2, 21 June 1899, p. 77.
- [8] HARTWIG, M.C. (1972) Aborigines and racism: an historical perspective, in: STEVENS, F.S. (Ed.) *Racism: the Australian experience*, II, p. 12 (Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Co.).
- [9] *Ibid*, p. 12. See also the example given by MILLER, J. (1985) *Koori: a will to win*, pp. 58-9 (Sydney, Angus & Robertson).
- [10] Although conventional nineteenth and even twentieth century beliefs that Aborigines did not manage the land they occupied are false. See WILLIAMS, N. & MUNN, E. (1985) Resource managers: North American and Australian hunter-gathers, *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies*.
- [11] DALEY, C. Charles Darwin and Australia (1938-9) *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 17, p. 172. See also GOODWIN, C.D. (1964) Evolutionary theory in Australian social thought, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25(3), p. 393 *et passim*.
- [12] Wallace and Spencer were also influential.
- [13] RUSDEN, H.K. (1976) Labour and capital, *Melbourne Review*, I, p. 68 cited Goodwin *Evolutionary . . .*, pp. 399-400. See also SCHOETENSACK, O. The importance of Australia for the evolution of man from an inferior type, *Science of Man*, 4, 10, November 1901, pp. 173-6; and continued in IV, 11, 27 December 1901, pp. 187-9; and in IV, 12, 22 January 1902, pp. 205-7; V, 1, 22 February 1902, pp. 11-14; and in V, 2, 22 March 1902, pp. 23-5.
- [14] Hartwig, Aborigines . . . , p. 13.
- [15] MULVANEY, D.J. (1967) The Australian aborigines 1606-1929: opinion and fieldwork, in: J.J. EASTWOOD & F.B. SMITH *Historical Studies: selected articles* (First Series), p. 16 (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press).
- [16] T. DOVE (1982) Moral and social characteristics of the Aborigines of Tasmania . . . , *Tasmania Journal of Natural Science*, I(4), p. 249, in Mulvaney 'The Australian . . .' p. 16.
- [17] DREDGE, J. (1845) *Brief Notices of the Aborigines of New South Wales, including Port Philip in reference to their Past History and Present Condition and the various Schemes hitherto adopted for their benefit with the Results and Expenses of each, together with A Plan for their Moral and Social Improvement*, p. 12 (Geelong, Harrison). Dredge was not only a prominent Wesleyan but also a former Assistant Protector of aborigines.
- [18] See the account of the introduction of syphilis into black society by MILLER, J. *Koori*, pp. 34, 50.
- [19] Hull's testimony to a Select Committee on Aborigines, instituted by the Victorian Legislative Council in 1858-9. Mulvaney, 'The Australian . . .', p. 21.
- [20] See Mulvaney, 'The Australian . . .', p. 27.
- [21] See WELLS, E.A. The missions and race prejudice, Stevens, *Racism*, p. 244.
- [22] *Ibid*, p. 247.
- [23] VAN DEN BERGHE, P.L. (1967) *Race and Racism: a comparative perspective*, pp. 17-18 (New York, Wiley). Carnoy sees the colonisation of American Indians in the same way. CARNOY, M. (1974) *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, p. 271 (New York, Longman).
- [24] KELLY, G. & ALTBACH, P. (1984) Introduction: the four faces of colonialism, in: ALTBACH, P.G. & KELLY, G. *Education and the Colonial Experience*, p. 3 (New Brunswick, Transaction Books).
- [25] *Ibid*, p. 3. And as Carnoy points out, the relationship between the ruling class and the poor, whether black Americans in the South or black Africans, was much the same. See M. CARNOY *Education*, p. 18.
- [26] See, for example, WOLPE, H. The theory of internal colonialism: the South African class, in: OXAAL, I. *et al. Beyond the Sociology of Development: economy and society in Latin America and Africa* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul).
- [27] Wolpe, 'The Theory . . .', p. 229.
- [28] Cited ROBERTS, J. (1981) *From Massacre to Mining: the colonization of Australian Aborigines*, p. 169 (Melbourne, Dove Communications). See STONE, S. (1974) *Aborigines in White Australia*, p. 236 (Melbourne, Heinemann Education), for a fuller rendition of the Senate debate.
- [29] *Ibid*, p. 270.
- [30] *Ibid*, p. 272. See also JENSEN, K. Civilization and assimilation in the colonized schooling of native Americans, P.G. ALTBACH & G.P. KELLY *Education*, pp. 159 *et seq.*
- [31] Jensen 'Civilization . . .', p. 161.
- [32] HART, M. (1974) Traditional Aboriginal education, *Kulila*, p. 8 (Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Co.).
- [33] See, for example, Harris' study of Aborigines of North East Arnhem Land, HARRIS, S. (1984) *Culture and*

- Learning: tradition and education in north east Arnhem Land*, esp. pp. 77–9 (Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Affairs).
- [34] ROWLEY, C.D. (1972) *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p. 3 (London, Penguin). See also HOLM, N. (1981) Federal education policies for American Indians and Australian Aborigines: assimilation and cultural adaptation in historical perspective, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 2(3).
- [35] FITZGERALD, R. (1976) *Poverty and Education in Australia*, p. 183 (Canberra, A.G.P.S.).
- [36] ROWLEY, C.D. *The Destruction . . .*, p. 19.
- [37] HASSELL, K. (1966) *The Relations between the Settlers and Aborigines in South Australia 1836–1860* (Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia), p. 115.
- [38] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- [40] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- [41] MILNES, P. (1985) A history of the education of Aborigines in Western Australia with particular reference to the Goldfields district since 1927, *unpublished Ph.D. thesis, university of New England*, p. 36.
- [42] TONKINSON, R. (1974) *The Jigalong Mob*, p. 33 (California, Cummings).
- [43] ROWLEY, C.D. *The Destruction . . .*, p. 2.
- [44] MILNES, 'A History . . .', p. 76. It has been estimated that only 40 pupils were being educated in public schools in Western Australia, or in the two institutions designed for Aboriginal pupils. Milnes 'A History . . .', pp. 61–2.
- [45] Tonkinson, *The Jigalong . . .*, p. 109.
- [46] Rowley, *The Destruction . . .*, p. 97.
- [47] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- [48] Milnes, *A History . . .*, p. 49.
- [49] LOVE, J.R.B., as cited in BISKUP, P. (1975) *Not Slaves not Citizens: the Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia 1898–1954*, p. 127 (St Lucia, University of Queensland Press).
- [50] COOMBS, H. cited in HOUSTON, J. (1981) 'Racism and ethnocentrism in textbooks, in: J. SHERWOOD *Multicultural Education Issues and Innovations*, p. 85 (Perth, Creative Research).
- [51] Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, *Aborigines: a statement of concern*, 1978, p. 6. A similar point with respect to the book bias in American texts dealing with native Americans has been made by J. CHARLES (1987) For the sake of a fad: the misrepresentation of American Indians and their literature in high school literature anthologies, *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 15(2).
- [52] Even the latest macroscopic work, Alan Barcan's (1986) *A History of Australian Education* (Oxford, Oxford University Press) still portrays this fault. Earlier texts were even more blatant in their omissions.
- [53] This concern has even provoked television treatments, such as the ABD documentary 'If we all die, no-one Speak Language'.
- [54] LO BIANCO, J. (1987) *National Policy on Languages*, p. 10 (Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service).
- [55] Another 45 languages were spoken by between 10 and 100 individuals.
- [56] *Quality of Education in Australia: report of the review committee*, p. 144 (Canberra, A.G.P.S., 1985).
- [57] *Aborigines and Tertiary Education: a framework for the 1985–7 triennium*, p. 51 (National Aboriginal Education Committee, March 1984).
- [58] A total of 72 in 1979. HUGHES, P. (1981) Aboriginal teachers for Aboriginal children, in: MENARY, B. (Ed.) *Aborigines and Schooling*, p. 78. Texts in Humanities (Adelaide, Adelaide C.A.E.). The figure for 1984 is believed to be not more than 300.
- [59] Miller, *Koori*, pp. 203–8.
- [60] But urban Aborigines predominate while traditionally oriented Aborigines "continue to be markedly underrepresented", Scott, C., Negotiation and renaming teacher education programmes for participation by traditionally oriented groups, Conference of the *Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society*, Flinders University, Adelaide, December 1985, p. 1. See also *ibid.* for models of teacher education which are thought to be more appropriate for traditionally oriented groups.
- [61] CHANEY, F. (1982) Teaching about Aborigines and Torres Straight Islanders, in: SHERWOOD, J. (Ed.) *Aboriginal Education Issues and Innovations*, pp. 206 *et. seq.* (Perth Creative Research).
- [62] *Ibid.*, p. 214. But see other even higher estimates, INGRAM, J. Racial and cultural difference and equality of opportunity in a multicultural society, Menary, *Aborigines*, p. 39.
- [63] Traditionally, the opposite view has prevailed: the doctrine of 'Terra Nullius' stated that Australia was unoccupied at the time of colonization in the late eighteenth century.
- [64] Charles Perkins, cited in Miller, *Koori*, p. 225.
- [65] Jensen, *Civilization*, p. 155.

- [66] Ibid, p. 176.
- [67] Miller, *Koori*, p. 225.
- [68] HARTWIG, M. Capitalism and Aborigines: the theory of internal colonialism and its rivals, WHEELWRIGHT, E. & BUCKLEY, K. *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism* (Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Co.).
- [69] See CHRISTIE, P. Apartheid in the countryside: South African farm schools, *Proceedings of the Australia and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society*, Brisbane 1986 where the applicability and limits of internal colonialism for an explanation of education for black South Africans is explored.
- [70] Several features of the American scene present striking parallels with the Australian, and informed the provision of schooling for native Americans. The taking over of Indian lands, the myth of the ineducability of native Americans, the bias in school texts, and the attitudes and practices of a militant Christianity are only some, and can be followed, *seriatim*, in the following texts: CONNELL SZASZ, M. (1979) *Education and the American Indians: the road to self determination since 1928*, 2nd edn, p. 9 (University of New Mexico Press); CONNELL SZASZ, *Education*, p. 9 *et passim*; CHARLES, J. *For the Sake of a Fad* (see n. 51 above); JENSEN, *Civilization*, p. 159.