

SMOKE SIGNALS

► GAMBLING AND DRINKING—WHOSE FAULT?

Articles published earlier in the year in *New Dawn* caused misunderstanding when mention was made of the problems of gambling, drinking, brawling etc. Some people took these as a reflection upon themselves individually or upon Aboriginal people generally. Such references were not intended to be interpreted in this way. Nor are such interpretations true under normal circumstances. No peculiar stigma can be attached to gambling in a society with such a predilection for racing, lottery tickets and poker machines as Australia's. No disadvantaged group can be held directly accountable for indulging in such pursuits when they are a national pastime; when lack of other opportunities render them appealing as a quick and easy way to obtaining the luxuries (or even the necessities) enjoyed by the bulk of the community; and when boredom and discrimination commend them as a rare chance for escape. Similar factors likewise beyond the control of the individual help explain the apparent penchant for alcohol. Fighting or brawling, where it occurs, is usually a product of the combination of alcohol on the one hand and deep-felt frustrations and resentment normally held in check, on the other. Finally, it has often been remarked that an intoxicated, belligerent white is much less likely to attract attention than an Aboriginal in a similar condition.

► FISHING CO-OP FOR THURSDAY ISLAND:

An islander co-operative on Thursday Island has received initial support from the Federal Government for its plans to establish a large-scale fishing enterprise. The funds required for the project will eventually be in the order of \$50,000. The fishing proposal is one of a number of proposals put forward by the co-operative's steering committee. Commonwealth approval for the project followed the results of a feasibility study into the proposals. The approval will allow the co-operative to begin work and to prove its capacity to operate efficiently before further government assistance is provided.

► REMINDER OF AN UNPAID DEBT:

The photo on this page shows Sir Douglas Nicholls participating in a recent re-enactment in Melbourne of John Batman's purchase of the city site in 1835. The idea was to remind the community of what happened when Europeans came to Australia and to urge the case for compensation. Sir Douglas

described the exercise as a way of reminding the white community of the debt it owes to the Aboriginal population. The re-enactment commemorated Batman's purchase of the 600,000 acres for a yearly rent in perpetuity with goods to the value of £200 in 1835—about \$7,000 today.

► MORE PROPERTY PURCHASES IN TERRITORY:

The Commonwealth Government has recently purchased two cattle properties in the Northern Territory for use and development by local Aboriginal communities. In April, the Wailbri people recovered some of their traditional land when they purchased Willowra property. Several members of the tribe had always lived on the property. The Commonwealth Government provided a company representing the people with funds for the purchase. With the assistance of their legal advisers, the advice of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and pastoral consultants, the people negotiated directly for the station on their own behalf. It is intended that this procedure will be a model for future purchases. In May, Kildurk Station, an historic 1,093 square-mile property with which the Durack family had been associated since the 1890's, was purchased on behalf of the people living on and near the property. The station, about 300 miles southwest of Darwin, will be owned and controlled by the people through an incorporated association, the Amangidji Community Incorporated, and an operating company,

Sir Douglas Nicholls at the re-enactment.

(Photo courtesy The Australian)

