

II ANALYSIS.

The Department of Education assumed responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children in 1939. However, due to the shortage of teachers, conditions in Reserve schools did not become remotely comparable with those of the other public schools until the late 1950's. As a result of the deficiencies in educational facilities, along with the poor environment of the children, it has been found from the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation Survey of Aboriginal Children in N.S.W. secondary schools, that only one Aboriginal child proceeds to fifth year, compared with 35-40 students from the same number of European children.¹

The facts revealed by the Survey show how unwarranted is the official complacency expressed by the Aborigines' Welfare Board, in the 1963 Annual Report, which states that,

"Aboriginal students are in a better position than their white counterparts as far as education is concerned."

The following arguments indicate why the Board has no grounds for such complacency:

- (a) The Sixth Grade Bursary Examination is the stipulated test of entrance, even though the student does not have to pass, for qualification for a Board Bursary. This is not really a very satisfactory test of entrance, for the following reasons:
- (b) Under the present system teachers have been uninformed about the Aborigines' Welfare Board Bursary, owing to the fact that they are not made aware, through the Education Gazette, of the special case, viz. that all their aboriginal pupils of the sixth grade should be entered for the Sixth Grade Bursary. This automatically qualifies them, even should they fail the Sixth Grade Bursary, for consideration for the A.W.B. Bursary.
- (c) Because the word "bursary" is associated in the minds of teachers and parents, with fairly high academic attainment, this in itself serves to maintain a low number of Aboriginal applicants for the preliminary examination, and the A.W.B. Bursary, whereas in fact, the Board bases its award on a number of other qualities and qualifications of the scholar, known broadly as "social integration."

1 N.S.W. Teachers' Federation, A Survey of Aboriginal Children in Secondary Schools, p.1.

(ii) All of the primary school teachers denied that there was any discrimination among the pupils at school, except for occasional "cliques", normal in any school. To reiterate, their most emphatic complaints were directed against the home environment which, in most cases, particularly for those living in reserves, is not conducive to homework and study. Those teachers who co-operated stated unanimously that reserves should be abolished and the Aborigines encouraged to settle in the towns where the children could mix socially, and so gain incentive to learn the social as well as the educational goals of the Australian community.

(iii) In those towns where Aborigines were barred from public facilities, the teachers expressed their opposition to the anomaly of admitting children during school hours, but excluding them afterwards. They agreed it is this which leads to discrimination among classmates in secondary schools, and dulls incentive among Aborigines. Fortunately, the bans on Aborigines in the Moree and Kempsey Swimming Pools have been lifted, in a progressive step for which S.A.F.A. believes it can claim some responsibility, owing to the publicity to which these unjust restrictions were exposed.

(iv) Another problem, voiced by the teachers, was lack of employment, which they see as a prime reason for the lack of ambition, in both Aborigines and white Australians.

From these findings and opinions of N.S.W. primary and secondary school teachers in Wellington, Gulargumbone, Walgett, Moree, Bowraville and Kempsey follows a broader analysis of the problems that Aborigines face in the educational process, from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. In addition are some recommendations to counter these problems.