

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY.

Taking into account the above factors some measures are suggested. These should be regarded as ground work for future policy, until Reserves, settlements and their attendant evils are a thing of the past.

(a) Vastly increased expenditure on housing to accommodate those Aborigines who are anxious for a place to live. It appears inevitable that Aborigines will continue to live on Reserves for some time to come, because of the advantages of low rents, and because many could not support themselves in town. While this is the case, there must be better accommodation on the Reserves, to facilitate educational progress.

(b) Facilities should be provided on Reserves, for adult meeting and recreation, which would be a valuable contribution to adult education. Concentration on educating adults in the encouragement of children to stay at school, and in better eating patterns would be invaluable. There is, in some cases, a sad lack of knowledge in the very elementary necessities of nutrition and child care. This must be taught, by people in whom they have confidence, for whom they have respect, as mistrust of white "know-alls" is far more prevalent among Aborigines than is commonly conceded.

A training scheme directed to the education of Aborigines capable of doing such work is vital. Alternatively, trained medical social workers who could first win the confidence of the adults by showing concern for individual health problems, and proceed to general education in the raising of community health standards, could be employed. In fact, clinic sisters in various country towns are already doing this invaluable work, within the entirely inadequate time and facilities available to them.

The close liaison established could then be basis for encouragement of adult Aborigines to learn, as a community, about ways of solving educational and social problems. In this sense the social worker must be able to take on a certain amount of rudimentary educational work, but it is most important that the adults should be approached through the health field first. It is a sad fact that among most adult Aborigines there is an attitude of avoidance of teachers, who are identified with the whole range of public authorities in whom they have little trust.

(c) By fostering a community interest in education, a firm social foundation for its furtherance could be created. This could go along with

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICY.

Taking into account the above factors some measures are suggested. These should be regarded as ground work for future policy, until Reserves, settlements and their attendant evils are a thing of the past.

(a) Vastly increased expenditure on housing to accommodate those Aborigines who are anxious for a place to live. It appears inevitable that Aborigines will continue to live on Reserves for some time to come, because of the advantages of low rents, and because many could not support themselves in town. While this is the case, there must be better accommodation on the Reserves, to facilitate educational progress.

(b) Facilities should be provided on Reserves, for adult meeting and recreation, which would be a valuable contribution to adult education. Concentration on educating adults in the encouragement of children to stay at school, and in better eating patterns would be invaluable. There is, in some cases, a sad lack of knowledge in the very elementary necessities of nutrition and child care. This must be taught, by people in whom they have confidence, for whom they have respect, as mistrust of white "know-alls" is far more prevalent among Aborigines than is commonly conceded.

A training scheme directed to the education of Aborigines capable of doing such work is vital. Alternatively, trained medical social workers who could first win the confidence of the adults by showing concern for individual health problems, and proceed to general education in the raising of community health standards, could be employed. In fact, clinic sisters in various country towns are already doing this invaluable work, within the entirely inadequate time and facilities available to them.

The close liaison established could then be basis for encouragement of adult Aborigines to learn, as a community, about ways of solving educational and social problems. In this sense the social worker must be able to take on a certain amount of rudimentary educational work, but it is most important that the adults should be approached through the health field first. It is a sad fact that among most adult Aborigines there is an attitude of avoidance of teachers, who are identified with the whole range of public authorities in whom they have little trust.

(c) By fostering a community interest in education, a firm social foundation for its furtherance could be created. This could go along with

provision of better reference materials, and library facilities, either at the Reserve school, where there is one, or in the hall provided for adult education.

However, the above is not likely to be the solution to the whole problem of adult education, and hence the education of the child, in the particularly deprived and limited conditions which prevail in shanty communities like Wellington, Walgett, Moree, Gulargumbone and Boggabilla, to quote only a few. More intensive medical assistance, with encouragement in the learning of economics to be practised in medical benefits, insurance and housekeeping could be stressed.

(d) Adult education, being only one facet of their problem, emphasis should be placed on the immediate and simultaneous improvement of housing facilities, both in terms of rooms, space, electricity and a permanent water supply. If commitment to such improvement was evidenced, with adequate provision, instead of cheese-paring temporary measures, the basic facilities for study could be provided.

(e) However, it is realized these suggested provisions will often be inadequately utilized by the Aborigines themselves. From a practical standpoint we recognize that the money should be spent where the community appears to be the most promising. But this should not exclude the very real necessity for heavy commitment to areas where educationally, the situation appears most hopeless. If guidance is offered with tact and sympathy, the rewards often show themselves surprisingly quickly. An example of this is the Nanina Primary School at Wellington, where the teacher has elicited a good response and raised the standard of the School to a very sound social and educational level.

There are further recommendations, relating more specifically to the educational needs of pre-school, primary and high-school children, submitted by the Consultative Committee on Aboriginal Education. S.A.F.A. fully endorses every one of these recommendations, having given them a close scrutiny. Recognizing the proficiency and expert knowledge that have gone into the Consultative Committee's recommendations, we would like it to be taken as read that we would reproduce these recommendations in our report, if there was any reason for so doing. As they are already available to

the members of the Parliamentary Select Committee, we shall not duplicate them.

The opportunity for laying valuable groundwork for the future is in the hands of our Government. If it is not instituted immediately, another generation of Aboriginal children will grow up with little education, and even less opportunity for work, as our Society demands more specialized skills from its members. The gap will widen to disproportionate dimensions. Commitment and heavy expenditure is a vital necessity now, if we are not to reap the bitter fruits of another "lost generation" of Aborigines.