

BURNING MT. KELLY:
ABORIGINES AND THE ADMINISTRATION
OF
SOCIAL WELFARE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		i
Title page		
Table of Contents		i
Brief Summary		ii
Disclaimer		iv
Acknowledgements		v
Introduction		1
Chapter 1	The Policy of "Self-determination" and the Fragmentation of Aboriginal Administration in Central Australia	14
Chapter 2	Racial Tension and the Politics of Detribalization	46
Chapter 3	Fringe-camps and the Development of Aboriginal Administration in Central Australia	88
Chapter 4	Women, Children, and the Significance of the Domestic Group to Urban Aborigines in Central Australia	127
Chapter 5	Men, Work, and the Significance of the Cattle Industry to Urban Fringe-dwellers in Central Australia	156
Chapter 6	Food, Liquor, and Domestic Credit: A Theory of Drinking among Fringe-dwellers in Central Australia	186
Chapter 7	Violence, Debt and the Negotiation of Exchange	211
Chapter 8	Conclusion	256
Appendix I	The Structure and Development of the Central Australian Cattle Industry	286
Appendix II	Work Careers of Mt. Kelly Adults	307
Bibliography		308

BRIEF SUMMARY

This thesis is a general analysis of the structure of social relationships between Aborigines and whites in Central Australia. Of particular importance are the relationships between Aboriginal fringe-dwellers and various social welfare administrators. In Chapter One I argue that most whites who work with Aborigines must act as brokers; that is, if they are to recruit Aboriginal clients or to receive support from the Commonwealth government, they must maintain access to, and legitimate their identities within, both Aboriginal communities and the Commonwealth administration. I also analyze exchanges in sacred material between Aborigines and white brokers and so raise the critical question of how Aborigines must gain access to, but withdraw from, powerful whites if they are to survive. In Chapter Two I analyze how the mobilization of Aboriginal "problems" during periods of "racial tension" legitimates increases in the power and intervention of social welfare agencies in the everyday life of Aborigines. Chapter Three explains how fringe-camps have emerged as responses primarily to the increased power of the social welfare administration and are points of structural flexibility in an otherwise highly determined context. In Chapter Four I analyze how fringe-campers minimize their debt to whites by operating a domestic economy of concrete and limited wants. I note the critical importance of the control of children in this process and relate changes in the marriage and kin-naming systems among Aborigines to how women, in particular, attempt to provision their domestic groups. Chapter Five begins a two-part argument about the position of men in the fringe-camps. The total argument is that men require access both to work and to sources of domestic

credit if they are to survive. In Chapter Five I analyze how men find work and develop careers in the cattle industry. In Chapter Six I analyze the significance of the exchange of liquor for men's attempts to develop funds of long-term credit to meet the inevitable breaks in their sources of income. I extend the argument by noting that liquor's capacity to make subtle distinctions on the theme of personal independence accounts for its wide use in everyday exchanges in the fringe-camps. Chapter Seven concerns the patterns of interpersonal violence in the fringe-camps. I argue that violence emerges from the problem of commensurability; that is, violence emerges when key items in the ongoing exchange relationships among the fringe-campers are rendered incommensurable. I relate this to the fact that relationships between men and women, particularly, are subject to contradictory conditions. On the one hand, men and women have separate sources of income. On the other hand, they each depend upon the other to counteract inadequacies in their respective incomes. Consequently, men and women are independent of each other under some circumstances and critically dependent on each other under other circumstances. This generates an essential indeterminacy in relations between men and women. In my conclusion I analyze how fringe-dwellers responded to the renewed efforts of the social welfare administration to solve their "problems". I note that the new efforts in Aboriginal affairs raised yet again the problem of how the fringe-dwellers were to gain access to, but withdraw from, whites. I conclude by noting that all Aborigines, "tribal" or "non-tribal", urban or rural, must develop means to solve this general problem of relating to outside, white authorities, and the social welfare administrators in particular.

DISCLAIMER

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person which has not been properly acknowledged and cited.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency to analyse the social situation of contemporary Australian Aborigines as if they had fallen from a state of grace; that is, the state of traditional Aboriginal society. The very terms of analysis (detrribalization, dehumanization) conjure images of people lost and disoriented in a secular purgatory. A derivative tendency is to assess living Aborigines according to the extent of their damnation. According to this analysis there are a few, increasingly insignificant, "traditionally-oriented" people who have not yet succumbed to the temptations of culture contact. However, the vast majority of Aborigines have been lured or dragged away from their natural state and prospects are dim for the remaining minority. Eulogies for the lost have been written. Grave exhortations to salvage the remnants of the traditional state have been enunciated. A sense of gloom as if at the end of an era hangs over all this gnashing of intellectual teeth.

At one level this is harmless enough, a latterday hankering after images of the analysts' own lost past. When nostalgia repudiates the authenticity of the experiences of the damned and casts them in the role of deviant, however, sentimentality has overcome analysis and clouds judgement. Evidence that this has happened comes from a recent attempt to portray the damned as if they did indeed have something genuinely worth experiencing. In the introduction to Aborigines and Change; Australia in the 70's, Berndt notes

The hard facts of socialization within the traditional system *per se* are the only processes which are available for knowledge and feeling to be transmitted in that respect. Nevertheless, it is possible to have a particular perspective based on what is assumed to be an Aboriginal way of life — that is, to have an idea or vision of it. Whether we think of this as a "mirage" or not is really beside the point. Certainly it is a mirage in relation to traditional Aboriginal

life as it existed in the past or continues to exist today in some regions. But as a viable view, believed in by those who wish to believe in it, it has a reality of its own (Berndt 1977:5).

Berndt seems to be directing his attention primarily to those Aborigines who, although not socialized in the "traditional system *per se*", nonetheless try to legitimate their identity as Aborigines in terms of their privileged access to Aboriginal culture. Such people are now often found speaking for Aborigines in the context of bureaucratic politics — a context in which few whites recognize the validity of their Aboriginal identity. Berndt appears only just to grant them the right to speak on the basis of their experiences. But, he unequivocally denies the relevance of their experiences to traditional society and sets them apart from that once "living reality". He thereby leaves them "insecure — unsure of themselves as persons and as members of a group (or groups)" (Berndt 1977:7). In line with an age-old tradition, Berndt identifies drinking, prostitution, venereal disease, etc. as the symptoms of this declining "Aboriginality" (Berndt and Berndt 1977: 505). Berndt makes his condemnation of this process explicit by saying that change for its own sake (particularly if encouraged by outside bureaucracies) leads to dehumanization; that is, "a subordination of human values in contrast to purely materialistic and economic ones...manifested in social and political agitation" (Berndt 1977:x).

One must question any analysis which denies that material and economic values are "human" or that people have the right to agitate to secure their well-being. Yet, the fundamental problem with patronising analyses of this type is that they refer all aspects of contemporary Aboriginal society back to images of the archaic past or some latterday remnant of it. There is no attempt to comprehend current issues in terms of the contemporary situation Aborigines face. From this perspective the only meaning of the life of contemporary Aborigines is as an index of the decline

of "those features that were distinctively Aboriginal as contrasted with everything else" (Berndt 1977:xii). By themselves, contemporary Aborigines and their social situation are meaningless and of no real interest. This judgement about the authenticity and intrinsic importance of what Aborigines now experience is invidious ^{Murray Pierce} as a means both of discrediting Aborigines in political conflict and of relegating the understanding of "non-tribal" Aborigines to the intellectual sidelines.

This analytic approach has significantly impaired the understanding of Aboriginal fringe-dwellers. This is perhaps no category of Aborigines who has received the opprobrium of most observers more than the fringe-dwellers. They are usually considered the very embodiment of the processes of detribalization. As threats to the public and bureaucratic order, fringe-dwellers represent what most analysts (anthropological and otherwise) would like to avoid in the development of Aboriginal social life.

Yet, few analysts have tried to describe how fringe-dwellers perceive their social world or to analyse them in terms of their relationship to the wider setting.¹ Stanner mentions that fringe-dwellers resisted being institutionalized (Stanner 1974:46). Yet, neither he nor anybody else has tried to relate the emergence of fringe-camps systematically to the development of Aboriginal administrations. This is important because I will argue below that fringe-camps properly so-called have indeed developed as part of how Aborigines have attempted to control the effects of the increased power and involvement of various social welfare agencies in their everyday life. Indeed, to assert that fringe-dwellers are simply detribalized people is to transform an important political act into a symptom of individual affliction and group decay. This approach treats fringe-dwellers as misshapen objects instead of thinking, responsive human beings. In the

¹The most notable exception is Jeremy Beckett (see Beckett 1964:32-48).

wider context it legitimates ever greater elaboration of the conditions which initially generated the fringe-camps; that is, the impingement of social welfare agencies on everyday Aboriginal social life.

In this thesis I attempt to provide a systematic alternative to the detribalization argument. I first try to understand the role of various social welfare agencies in contemporary Aboriginal affairs. I follow that preliminary analysis with a detailed examination of everyday life in the fringe-camps around Alice Springs. On the one hand, I try to analyse how the development of the bureaucratic order generated the fringe-camps and conditions social life in them. On the other hand, I analyse some critical aspects of life in the fringe-camps (for example, drinking and interpersonal violence) which are important in understanding how Aborigines have adapted to, and attempt to control, the effect of these wider processes on them. My general point is that there is a dynamic interrelationship between what happens in the fringe-camps and the development of the world around them. Fringe-campers are not simply detribalized people. Rather, they document the fact that all Aborigines must attempt to gain access to, but withdraw from, agents of white society. Fringe-campers highlight the particular importance of incorporating the role of social welfare agencies into the analysis of any group of contemporary Australian Aborigines, "tribal" or "non-tribal", rural or urban.

Summary of Thesis

Chapter 1 — The Policy of "Self-determination" and the Fragmentation of Aboriginal Administration in Central Australia

In Chapter 1 I argue that most whites who work with Aborigines in Central Australia must act as brokers. In particular, if they are to recruit Aboriginal clients or to receive support from agencies of the Commonwealth government, they must maintain access to, and legitimate their

identities within, both Aboriginal communities and the Commonwealth administration. I analyse the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' new policy of self-determination from this perspective. The general point is that in conjunction with the significance of, and competition among, brokers, the new policy legitimated and even encouraged the fragmentation of Aboriginal administration in Central Australia. I examine this proposition with a close look at how a new Aboriginal organization, the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS), established itself during my field-work and focus, in particular, upon the significance of transactions in sacred material between CAALAS and its Aboriginal clients in that process. Following Simmel's analysis of secrecy, I suggest that transactions in sacred materials are a means whereby Aborigines gain access to, but withdraw from, powerful whites who can feed them the resources they need to survive. I complete the chapter with an examination of the so-called Outstation Movement, saying that it represents the full development of the fragmentary process I previously outlined.

Chapter 2 -- Racial Tension and the Politics of Detribalization

Chapter 2 is an examination of the significance of crises of "racial tension" in Central Australia. The basic point is that although conceived of as crises between Aborigines and whites, these periods are part of a long tradition in the Northern Territory in which white groups mobilize Aboriginal "problems" as resources in major political conflicts with other local, regional, and national white groups. The racial crisis I observed was critically related to conflicts between local and Commonwealth officials about who should control and be responsible for the Northern Territory's government and administration. The critical issue was the state of public safety. Many local people argued that as a result of misguided Commonwealth

action, the rate of drunkenness and serious crime (particularly among Aborigines) had increased alarmingly. The crisis began when several local leaders petitioned to have control of the policing of drunkenness returned to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. However, these demands as well as the wider demands for greater local autonomy conflicted with the interests of other groups, most notably those associated with the new policy in Aboriginal affairs. I analyse the development of the crisis itself in terms of the competition among these groups. In particular, I analyse how the conflicting groups mobilized certain latent identities conventionally understood in Alice Springs and used them to reflect upon the good faith of their opponents in the negotiations. The final point is that crises of "racial tension" as well as the detribalization argument in general legitimate the increased intervention and power of social welfare agencies in the everyday life of Aborigines. I note, however, that the phenomena which most people understand as indications of the detribalization (for example, fringe-camps, drinking, and interpersonal violence) do occur and are worthy of analysis. Indeed, I devote the rest of my thesis to that task.

Chapter 3 — Fringe-camps and the Development of Aboriginal Administration in Central Australia

Chapter 3 is about the significance of the fringe-camps around Alice Springs. The basic point is that fringe-camps are points of structural flexibility in an otherwise highly determined context, which have emerged primarily as the result of the increased scope and structural involvement of the Commonwealth government's social welfare administration in everyday Aboriginal social life. Being a fringe-camper is sociologically synonymous with maintaining a set of relatively simplex relationships with a diverse range of white agents. Fringe-campers contrast with other Aborigines who commit themselves to one white agent. By living in fringe-camps

Aborigines maintain access to a wide range of opportunities and resources, but minimize their debt to the whites who control them. I complete the chapter by analysing the significance of the white men who live in the fringe-camps.

Chapter 4 - Women, Children, and the Significance of the Domestic Group to Urban Aborigines in Central Australia

This chapter is about the significance of the domestic group and its economy to fringe-campers. Aborigines minimize their debt to whites by constituting a domestic economy: that is what Sahlins analyses as an economy of concrete and limited objectives. In contrast to Sahlins, however, I argue that the fringe-campers' domestic economy has emerged as an attempt to control the impingement of outside forces upon them, not as the expression of an autonomous domestic mode of production. I analyse this process in the context of the Aboriginal administration's attempts to settle Aboriginal families in Alice Springs. As a result of these processes two types of domestic organizations have emerged: a matricentric type and another in which parents live together separate from their children. I note the critical importance of the control of children and relate changes in the marriage and kin-naming systems among Aborigines in Alice Springs to how women in particular attempt to provision their domestic groups. Finally, I note that women are structurally placed so as to lead a more perfect fringe-dwelling life than men.

Chapter 5 - Men, Work, and the Significance of the Cattle Industry to Urban Fringe-dwellers in Central Australia

Chapter 5 is the first of a two-part argument about the position of men in the fringe-camps. My total argument is that men require access both to work and to sources of domestic credit if they are to survive.

Unlike women, they cannot commit themselves to or exploit any single income earning context. On the contrary, men must usually work if they are to receive credit and receive credit if they are to work. In this chapter I analyse how men find work and construct careers in the cattle industry. In Chapter 6 I analyse the question of credit. Because pastoralists usually recruit workers from among Aborigines they know, a man must develop close, interpersonal relationships with pastoralists if he is to find work. Critical to the development of these relationships is how Aborigines document the relevance or irrelevance of their ethnic identity for their identity as a worker. If an Aborigine is to establish a reputation as a good worker, he must suspend the relevance of his ethnic identity for his relationships with pastoralists by showing that he is not "cheeky" or "a lazy blackfellow". Men document this principally by withstanding horsewhipping and other forms of physical abuse. I note, however, that once the relationship between a pastoralist and his worker is established, their interaction is marked by patterns of avoidance. Indeed, I suggest that horsewhipping is related to avoidance in that once a pastoralist recognizes his worker's skill, horsewhipping stops and avoidance begins.

Chapter 6 — Food, Liquor, and Domestic Credit: A Theory of Drinking among Australian Aborigines

Chapter 6 is about the significance of liquor to the patterns of exchange and credit particularly among men and women in the fringe-camps. My major point is that Aborigines try to develop funds of credit to counter the long-term uncertainties in their sources of livelihood by spending current surpluses on liquor for the general communities within which they live. In particular, men use money they earn from pastoral and unskilled work to share liquor and thereby legitimate long-term access to domestic resources that women control. Women manipulate their control of domestic

resources to legitimate claims upon the resources men control. I extend my argument by suggesting that among Alice Springs Aborigines liquor marks an individual's personal productivity and affluence. Indeed, it is liquor's capacity to make subtle distinctions on the theme of personal independence and thereby present social collateral which accounts for its wide use in exchanges.

Chapter 7 - Violence, Debt, and the Negotiation of Exchange

In this chapter I analyse the significance of interpersonal violence among the fringe-dwellers. Of particular importance is the fact that the relative commensurability of exchange items in the fringe-camps is negotiable, subject to situational redefinition, and a major problem in everyday life. Violence erupts in situations in which key exchange items are rendered incommensurable. Because liquor is such an important item in everyday exchanges, violence often erupts during drinking sessions. However, liquor is merely one (albeit highly significant) exchange item and is related to other, broader spheres of exchange. I present figures which suggest that violence occurs primarily among people who share domestic resources, in particular, between men and women. I relate this observation to the fact that relationships between men and women are subject to contradictory conditions. On the one hand, men and women each have access to separate sources of income. On the other hand, they each depend on the other to counteract the inadequacies of the prospective incomes. Consequently, men and women are independent of each other under some circumstances and critically dependent on each other under other circumstances. This general situation generates an essential indeterminacy and makes it difficult for men and women to agree upon the nature of their relationships. Of particular importance is that men and women try to control each other by

manipulating the conditions of exchange. I analyse these processes in three detailed case studies and relate the questions I analysed in earlier chapters (for example, the emergence of matricentric families) to the question of violence. I bring the rest of my analysis together in this context.

Chapter 8 -- Conclusion

In this chapter I analyse how the fringe-campers reacted to the renewed efforts of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to solve their "problems". I note that the DAA's programs raised again the question of how the fringe-dwellers were to gain access to, but withdraw from, whites. Because the DAA required them to participate in its decision-making processes, however, the new situation created special difficulties. I analyse how the leader of Mt. Kelly, the camp in which I worked, responded to this situation by lighting a huge bushfire around one-half of the camp and thereby cleansing his people of the contamination they were experiencing as a result of how the wider world was impinging upon them.

The General Administrative Context

Rowley and Long have written histories of the development of the Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory (Long 1970:198-201; Rowley 1974:222-340, 29-54). Although I reanalyse some of their information in the light of my own problems, I will not repeat what they have said. Nonetheless, there are certain important facts which I should present schematically in order to make my points clear. Of particular importance is the fact that not all social welfare agencies which I discovered working in Central Australia during my fieldwork were of equal antiquity. Indeed, a critical aspect of the general context of my fieldwork was that although a

new administration was coming into being, many agencies from previous administrations were still operating in the field. It was a time of tremendous administrative change and competition among the various agencies for Aboriginal clients was overt. I analyse the consequences of this fact in Chapters 1, 2 and 8. In the chart below I present data about when the various agencies were established in order to give a sense of the development of the overall bureaucratic apparatus. The chart includes only those agencies which were still operating during my fieldwork. I discuss others in the body of my thesis as they are relevant.

Agencies

Hermansburg Mission	1877
Jay Creek Settlement	1936
Ernabella Mission	1936
Santa Teresa Mission	
(a) Soup kitchen in Alice Springs	1935-40
(b) Arltunga	during World War II
(c) Current site	approximately 1945
Haasts Bluff Settlement	
(a) Mission ration depot	1940
(b) Settlement	1941-42
Areyonga	
(a) Mission ration depot	1942
(b) Settlement	1945-50
Warrabiri Settlement	
(a) Phillips Creek site	1945
(b) Current site	1955
Yuendumu Settlement	1946
Hooker Creek Settlement	1948
Amoonguna Settlement	
(a) Bungalow site	1945
(b) Current site	1961
Department of the Northern Territory, Social Development Division	
(a) as the Welfare Branch	1951
(b) Current identity	1973
Docker River Settlement	1965
Institute of Aboriginal Development	
Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service	1973
Central Australian Aborigines Congress	1973
Central Lands Council	1975*

* The CLC held meetings beginning in 1973. It did not have any legal standing, office, or administrative staff until 1975.

Administrations of Aboriginal Affairs

Department of the Northern Territory	
(a) Native Affairs Branch	1939-51
(b) Welfare Branch	1951-73
Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Territory Division	1973-present

Mt. Kelly

I gathered most of my information about fringe-camps in Mt. Kelly, a large and quite long-standing fringe-camp in Alice Springs. Most Mt. Kelly people originated in the cattle regions north of Alice Springs and have come to Alice Springs since World War II. Although many Mt. Kelly people identify themselves as part-Aborigines, most are of Arunta, Anmatjira, and Kaitish origins. The population of the camp varied from as many as 46 people to as few as 15. I will describe the processes which affect the emergent social composition of the camp in detail below. The major factor which determined the camp's population, however, was the demand for labour in the cattle industry. The camp's population was greatest during the summer when no work was available on the cattle stations. It was least during the mustering season.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Age	Female	Male	Total
0-15	7	4	11
15-25	4	6	10
26-35	6	5	11
36-45	-	2	2
46-55	1	3	4
55+	5	3	8
Total	23	23	46

There were 9 named kin groups living in Mt. Kelly when I first arrived. These 9 kin-groups constituted between 14 and 17 domestic groups, each with a separate camp of its own. As I will analyse further below,

social security pensions provided the basic income for all of these kin- groups. Although unemployment for Aborigines in Central Australia is high and there was a slump in the demand for cattle workers, all the Mt. Kelly men worked for at least one week during my fieldwork. Most worked in the cattle industry. A few found jobs in Alice Springs. I summarize the income sources for each domestic group in the chart below. In Appendix II I also provide data about the life careers of each individual in Mt. Kelly.

SOURCES OF INCOME

Domestic group	Pension	Cattle wages	Urban wages
Mayhew	2	1	
Richardson			
1	1		
2	1		
3			1
4		1	
5		1	
6		1	
Sharp			
1	2		
2		1	1
3	1		
Corcoran		2	1
Salterson	1	1	
Jackson	1		
Samuelson	1		
George	1		
Blake	1		

The figures under the column "domestic group" indicate the separate domestic groups of each family. I based these figures on the maximum number of domestic groups I ever witnessed. The figures under the income columns indicate the number of separate sources of income. For example, in the Sharp domestic group 2, there was one man working in the cattle industry and another man working in Alice Springs.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLICY OF "SELF-DETERMINATION" AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF ABORIGINAL ADMINISTRATION IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

In this chapter I argue that most whites who work with Aborigines in Central Australia must act as brokers.¹ In particular, if they are either to recruit Aboriginal clients or to receive support from Commonwealth agencies, they must maintain access to, and legitimate their identities within, both Aboriginal communities and the Commonwealth administration. This point is generally significant for several reasons. First, it emphasises the extent to which Aborigines and white interpretations of Aboriginal social life are resources in administrative politics. Second, it suggests that, irrespective of their ideological positions, white administrators must actively impinge upon Aborigines. Third, Aborigines must develop means to control how white administrators impinge upon them. These conditions indicate generally that the analysis either of Aboriginal administration or of Aboriginal social life is incomplete without reference to the dynamics of relationships between Aborigines and whites.

A key aspect of this chapter is that major changes were occurring in the Aboriginal administrative apparatus at the time of my fieldwork. As a result of the Australian Labor Party's success in the 1972 federal election, a new regime was developing in Central Australia. The Welfare Branch which had administered Aboriginal affairs since 1951 was disbanded in 1973, and its responsibilities redistributed to other Commonwealth agencies. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and its new "self-determination" policy were gradually being installed. Although many white agents who worked under the Welfare Branch maintained their relationships

¹I have adopted Blok's use of the term "broker" for my analysis (Block 1974:7).

with local Aborigines, new agencies were coming into being. Consequently, the conditions which enabled any particular white agency to play the broker's role were unsettled and everyday administration was full of ambiguities. In particular, the increase in white agencies working with Aborigines meant that no one could count upon the full support of his Aboriginal clients. On the contrary, there was tremendous competition among local whites for Aboriginal support and Aborigines themselves were exploring the opportunities the new agencies made available.

These local conditions influenced the practical implementation of the federally constituted self-determination policy. The self-determination policy was supposed to have been a nationally coordinated, comprehensive effort. Yet, because of the patterns of competition and interdependence among local administrators and Aborigines, the self-determination policy ultimately legitimated, and even encouraged, the fragmentation of Aboriginal administration in Central Australia.

The National Policy of Aboriginal Self-determination

The Labor government established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (the DAA) in December 1972. This was in fulfillment of its campaign promise to upgrade the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (then part of the Prime Minister's Department) to ministerial level and to have the Commonwealth government assume full responsibility for the administration of the affairs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as specified by the Constitutional Referendum of 1967 (Department of Aboriginal Affairs 1974:1).

The new administrative system differed from earlier programs in several significant ways. First, the DAA was responsible for planning, implementing, and administering a national program on Aboriginal affairs.

It contrasted with earlier programs which (with the exception of the Northern Territory) had been completely controlled by the individual state governments and were independent of one another. Second, Aboriginal people from all over Australia were formally coopted into the new administrative apparatus. Although Aboriginal activist groups had earlier lobbied for reforms in government administration of Aborigines, none had been formal parts of the policy-making process. The policy of self-determination was supposed to give Aborigines the power to play major roles in all aspects of the government's activities concerned with Aboriginal life. According to its policy, the DAA intended to reject the paternalistic and assimilationist approaches of its predecessors and enable Aborigines to decide for themselves what was best for their lives. Third, the new regime denied the relevance of earlier distinctions between part-Aborigines and Aborigines. For the purposes of its programmes anyone who claimed Aboriginal descent was considered an Aborigine and eligible to participate or receive benefits. In general the DAA represented the Commonwealth's official attempt to approach all aspects of Aboriginal administration in a comprehensive way.

In spite of its intentions to consult Aborigines, the DAA had several general goals adapted from the ALP's official policy on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. It stated them in this way:

- (a) The Australian Government to assume responsibility for all Aborigines and Islanders by establishing the principle of elective consultative procedures.
- (b) The Australian Parliament to legislate against all forms of discrimination, as part of a programme to provide equal rights and opportunities for all persons.
- (c) Aborigines to receive the standard rate of pay for the job and to receive the same industrial protection as other Australians. The Australian Government, within its own area of responsibility to provide career opportunities to the maximum extent. Special provision for employment to be provided in regions where Aborigines reside.

(d) Educational opportunities to be provided in no way inferior to those of the general community, with special programs at all levels where necessary to overcome cultural deprivation and meet special needs. Pre-school education to be provided for every Aboriginal child, including teaching in indigenous languages where desirable. Adult education to be provided as broadly as possible. A program of technical and managerial training to be developed and the co-operation of the trade union movement to be sought in recognising Aboriginal skills.

(e) All Aboriginal families to be properly housed within a period of ten years. In compensation for the loss of traditional lands, funds to be made available to assist Aborigines who wish to purchase their own homes, taking into account personal wishes as to design and location. Trained social workers to be provided in areas where such housing has been undertaken under the jurisdiction of local communities.

(f) Aborigines to have the right to receive social services in the same way as other Australians.

(g) All Aboriginal lands to be vested in a public trust or trusts composed of Aborigines or Islanders as appropriate. Exclusive corporate land rights to be granted to Aboriginal communities which retain a strong tribal structure or demonstrate a potential for corporate action in regard to land at present reserved for the use of Aborigines, or where traditional occupancy according to tribal custom can be established from anthropological or other evidence. No Aboriginal land to be alienated or assigned for any use including mineral development except with the approval of both the Trust and the Parliament. Such trusts or groups shall be entitled to use capital fund investments to establish community or cooperative ventures for the benefit of local inhabitants. All Aborigines jointly to share the benefits from the development of natural resources including minerals, on Aboriginal lands. The sacred sites of the Aborigines to be mapped and protected.

(h) A Parliamentary Committee to continue to study all aspects of Aboriginal policy and to report regularly and constantly.

(i) Every Australian child to be taught the history and culture of Aboriginal and Island Australians as an integral part of the history of Australia.

(j) Labor will maintain a health offensive to eliminate leprosy, yaws, hookworm, tuberculosis and contagious diseases and to reduce infant mortality. Efficient mortality statistics to be maintained to measure the effectiveness of these policies among Aborigines.

The DAA was also committed "...to ensuring that Aborigines are made equal before the law and that the Commonwealth will pay all legal costs for Aborigines in all law courts", a pledge made by Gough Whitlam during the 1972 election campaign (Hay 1976:154).

In order to begin work on its program the DAA took a number of steps very quickly. It established the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee in order to implement its pledge to involve Aborigines in policy planning at the national level. Parliament passed a bill outlawing racial discrimination. The DAA funded special works projects in order to help establish jobs for Aboriginal people and expanded the number of jobs on settlements. It paid all workers in these projects at the appropriate award rate. The DAA also purchased and subsidized cattle stations and agricultural projects in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. It made loans available for Aboriginal people to start private businesses. In the field of education, the DAA supported a number of research projects, special grant schemes, and programs for adult education. The DAA also made broad efforts to improve the amount and quality of adequate housing for Aboriginal people throughout Australia through grants to states, housing associations, and other agencies. Justice A.E. Woodward was commissioned to examine the question of land rights for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory on February 8, 1973. In order to advance its aims in improving Aboriginal health and position before the white Australian law, the DAA also established and subsidized Aboriginal legal aid services and medical centres. Otherwise the DAA initiated and supported a wide range of legislative proposals, commissions of inquiry, research projects, and community organizations throughout the nation in its efforts to meet the goals established by the ALP policy.

It is important to understand that the DAA considered most of its programs served two purposes. They were to relieve or eliminate some

particular need in social welfare (e.g. poor housing) and to encourage the processes of "self-determination". Indeed, in the early period of its history, the DAA was willing to subsidize unprofitable or technically inefficient programmes which nonetheless promised to train Aboriginal people in essential technical and managerial skills or otherwise establish themselves in a lifestyle they preferred. Officially, it valued the mechanisms of "self-determination" more than rational cost accounting or immediate "progress" in solving local welfare problems.

Although the DAA documented its stance on this issue in many areas, the dual purpose of social relief and self-determination emerged most clearly in its health, legal aid and housing programmes. The DAA channelled most of its support for these types of programmes through locally-based "Aboriginal organizations". Aboriginal organizations were local bodies established for the benefit of, and managed by, Aboriginal people.² Most Aboriginal organizations maintained their own management committees and were function-specific. For example, although some health and legal services were jointly associated with one overarching Aboriginal community centre, all Aboriginal legal services were organizationally autonomous and independently funded by the DAA. The management committees were supposed to recruit local Aboriginal leaders, reflect the local community's authority structure, and, therefore, be able to express the needs of the organization's clientele. Moreover, each group was supposed

²Although there were usually no legal restrictions on the membership of Aboriginal organizations, it was generally accepted that the majority of benefactors and decision-makers should be Aborigines. The only exception to this was the law prohibiting anyone not of Aboriginal descent from belonging to an Aboriginal housing association. The actual number of Aborigines on particular management committees varied from majorities of one to informal exclusion of all non-Aborigines. Aboriginal organizations sometimes helped non-Aborigines in particular if they lived with Aborigines. Yet, the idea was to meet the needs of Aborigines and rely on general community agencies to help other people.

to decide upon its leaders according to its own customary procedure. The DAA and its public supporters expressed the view that only by soliciting actively the felt needs of Aboriginal clients in a manner consistent with their own modes of decision-making could the social welfare programmes be successful (Coombs 1972:5). In other words, "self-determination" was considered a necessary condition for the operation of the substantive programmes.

However, in practice, the principle of "self-determination" did not always relate unambiguously to other aspects of organizational life. In particular, there was great uncertainty about the relationship between local autonomy in actual decision-making and the fact that the DAA provided most operating funds. Although a few Aboriginal organizations existed prior to 1972, the DAA nonetheless established and provided the money necessary to run most of them. For example, prior to 1973, the Commonwealth government provided no money for the provision of legal services designed for Aboriginal people. By June 1976, it had invested the following amounts: 1972-73, \$715,000; 1973-74, \$1,190,000; 1974-75, \$2,582,000; 1975-76, \$3,746,000 (DAA 1974:59, 1976:53). This money financed eight legal services operating in all the states and the Northern Territory. In spite of this large investment, the legal services frequently complained that they had insufficient money to meet their clients' demands. Most services felt they needed more staff of all kinds, and more equipment. They argued that because of staff shortages they had to refer many clients to private legal practitioners, a procedure which cost more than augmenting their own staff. Some services, particularly those working among rural Aborigines in the Outback, complained that because they had too little equipment and money, whole sections of their potential clientele were left unaided.

Officially, the DAA placed high priority on the provision of adequate legal services for Aborigines and considered the legal services one of its most successful programmes. However, it also argued that money was limited and that the legal services were only one part of the total DAA programme. They had to consider their particular interests in the context of, and subordinate them to, the well-being of the whole programme. It also insisted that the legal services spend their money wisely and charged some services with being irresponsible.

The pressures from the DAA often meant that individual legal services did not receive the amount of money they considered necessary to expand properly. In response they often argued that, although the DAA provided the funds, it should not question either how much money the legal services demanded or how they used it. Rather, it should simply supply the money required and permit the local services to decide for themselves how to spend it. As self-determining bodies, the legal services should have complete control over such issues. In particular, the DAA should not dictate what types of problems (legal, political, or otherwise) the legal services chose to prosecute. The problem was to decide in practice the scope and meaning of the legal service's local discretion in the management of their own affairs. Throughout, the discussion was developed in terms of the self-determination policy.

The DAA's housing programme encountered some of the same difficulties and posed special problems of its own. Initially, the DAA's housing plans were quite ambitious and placed heavy emphasis on incorporating Aboriginal people in the improvement of their own living standard. In its first report, the DAA said:

A potentially effective method of encouraging Aboriginal decision-making has been through the provision of grants to Aboriginal housing associations, incorporated under appropriate state law, to undertake their own housing

programmes. Such associations enable individual communities with specialist advice and assistance to plan, organize, and administer programmes for building or purchasing houses to meet the needs of the particular community. Each housing association is provided with a grant to cover all aspects of such programmes and is encouraged to ensure that Aboriginal labour and local materials are utilized to the fullest extent in construction activities (DAA 1974:24).

The DAA initially prohibited housing associations from using outside contractors to build their homes. Yet, this sometimes led to extended construction delays and higher costs than originally expected. By 1976 there was considerable criticism of the progress in Aboriginal housing, in particular of the Aboriginal housing associations. It was being said in some quarters that vast amounts of money were being wasted and conditions had not improved. It was certainly the case that by 1976, the DAA had fallen seriously behind in its goal of housing all Aboriginal people properly by 1982.³

The Senate Select Committee on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders reported:

³The DAA hoped to meet the total demand for housing through three types of programmes: low-cost personal loans to individual Aborigines, grants to State Housing Commissions, and grants to Aboriginal Housing Associations. The Commonwealth government introduced the State's Grants scheme in 1968. By June 1976 approximately \$70 million had gone to the State Housing Commissions through this programme. The Aboriginal Loans Commission Act 1974 established the Aboriginal Housing and Personal Loans Fund which was to "provide concessional home finance to Aborigines who, despite good faith and regular employment, are not able to acquire finance through the usual commercial sources" (SSCATSI 1976:178). By August 1976, 119 people had received funds under the scheme. These two plans were primarily designed to help Aborigines living in urban areas. The DAA encouraged the establishment of Aboriginal housing associations in remote rural regions or in other areas where Aboriginal people formed "distinct" communities. By May 1976, 157 housing associations existed throughout Australia, including 45 in the Northern Territory. Over \$46 million had been invested in housing associations by November 1976 leading to the construction or purchase of 750 houses. In 1975-76 housing received over \$43 million or 31.3% of the DAA's total budget. Although this was the greatest amount of money devoted to any single area of the DAA's programme, it was \$82 million short of what the Senate Select Committee on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders recommended was necessary to stay on the ten-year schedule.

Visits to local communities undertaken during four years (1972-76) of inquiry impressed on the Committee time and time again the fact that housing conditions for many Aboriginal families are appalling.

The Committee estimated that a minimum of 4,455 Aboriginal families throughout Australia were living in "humpies, shacks, abandoned car bodies, and other makeshift shelter...." Over 2,000 Aboriginal families lived in otherwise substandard housing in New South Wales alone (SSCATSI 1976:169). On the basis of a DAA survey, the Committee estimated that there was an overall need for 18,754 dwellings in June 1976, which would then have cost approximately \$750 million. Since the DAA had hoped to house every Aboriginal family by 1982 this represented an annual projected figure of 4,055 houses costing \$125 million for each of the following six years (SSCATSI 1976:185-186). This amount represented almost a three-fold increase of the \$43 million the DAA spent on housing in 1976.

By 1976 there was a shift away from the emphasis on local labour and toward procedures which allowed outside contractors and prefabricated housing. It was hoped that the change in emphasis would build houses more quickly and less expensively. There was more to the housing issue, however, than speed or cost-benefit ratios. A major stated purpose of the self-determination policy was to create the conditions for Aborigines to decide how much of their customary culture they wished to maintain and/or how rapidly they wished to adapt to the white Australian lifestyle. Self-determination was supposed to give Aborigines the chance to choose what they wanted from the cultural repertoire and to do so in a way congenial to whatever cultural modes they thought appropriate. Housing related to these cultural questions at both levels.

Under the earlier assimilation policy, whites assumed that Aborigines who adopted conventional white styles of housing and domestic

life were well on the way to becoming assimilated. Indeed, the right for an Aborigine to live in a house was often dependent upon his ability to show that he had adopted a white lifestyle and had shed his Aboriginal culture. Although assimilationist ideas no longer explicitly justified the DAA's housing policy, there was some ambiguity about whether "tribal" Aborigines wanted conventional houses, or, more generally, the material apparatus of white society. Some white administrators asserted, in fact, that if improperly introduced, the material culture of white society could actually contribute to the further deterioration of tribal Aborigines and their culture.

It was widely accepted that earlier government policy had created at least two culturally distinct groups of Aboriginal people. On the one hand, there were "tribal" people who had been institutionalized or spent their lives on missions and settlements. These people were said to follow Aboriginal customary law and to understand little of white Australian culture. At the other end of the spectrum were the completely "detrribalized" or "urban" people who no longer knew or followed traditional norms. Some of these people had "blended in" with the white community and were indistinguishable from it. Others had adopted white norms but retained a sense of their Aboriginal origins. For the most part these people lived in the big cities of the south. A number lived in small country towns. In between these two poles of the cultural continuum were an unlimited number of variations. For convenience, they were often lumped into two groups: people resident on cattle stations and the "fringe-dwellers" on the edges of towns throughout the continent. The cattle station people were often described as "semi-tribal" in that they followed many customary laws but in a context dominated by white influences. The "fringe-dwellers" were described as people who had lost most of their

tribal ways and not yet completely learned white norms. They were caught between the two cultural groups and had no true culture of their own.⁴

DAA policy asserted that all these people had the right to call themselves "Aborigines" and to participate in its programs. It explicitly denied the old criteria of racial origins which had separated the "full-bloods" from the "half-castes" or "part-Aborigines" and had created different life chances for the two groups. Officially, it wanted to give all people who identified themselves as Aborigines an equal chance to benefit from the resources it had available. However, it accepted the proposition that the different cultural backgrounds of particular groups created differences in local desires and basic needs. It took as axiomatic Stanner's view that:

There is no one "aboriginal problem" and much of the talk about the "aborigines" is misleading. We are looking at a spectrum that is almost indefinitely divisible. A problem, such as housing, at one end is not identical with what may seem to be the problem at the other end (Stanner 1969:54).

The policy of self-determination allowed for cultural diversity by letting people use the DAA's programmes in the light of local needs. Although the DAA recognized that most Aborigines lacked basic goods and services, its policy officially accepted that some groups might place more emphasis on the integrity of their cultural life than upon acquiring the material goods of white culture. Indeed, the DAA took as a matter of policy the obligation actively to help "tribal" communities restructure their social lives around traditional concerns if they so wished. The idea was to permit each group to act upon its own priorities (DAA 1974:7).

This approach generated serious administrative problems particularly in the context of "tribal" communities. On the one hand, many

⁴For a critique of this approach, see Chapter 3 below.

Aboriginal people (most notably, the tribal people) lived in squalor and suffered tremendously as a result. One important way of relieving their suffering was to provide adequate housing. On the other hand, the DAA's official consideration for the cultural traditions of Aboriginal people prevented it from developing a single approach to the problem. Indeed, it forced them to adopt a piecemeal, group-by-group approach which was quite expensive and slowed progress. Had the DAA not been publicly accountable for both the delivery of adequate housing and the processes of self-determination, it might have been able to rationalize its approach. But, the self-determination policy generated a politically potent critique which insisted that "imposed solutions" for the social welfare problems of Aborigines would only exacerbate local difficulties.

For example, in an article entitled "Aboriginal 'Dreamings' and Town Plans", the Reverend J. Downing argued that, however imaginative, town plans which did not reflect local Aboriginal peoples' ideas about camp layouts imprisoned their thinking in white structures and weakened "Aboriginal traditions and their sense of community" (Downing 1974: no page reference).

...the layout of Pitjantjara camps was an unconscious reminder to people of their law, and the whole proper order of things. A man got up in the morning, rubbed his eyes and gazed around, and was immediately reminded who he was — for example, a person of the malu or papa dreaming — and of the location of his sacred country, of the nature of his relationships and his proper behavior towards the people immediately around him, and to the other groups scattered around. Camp layout undergirded and strengthened the whole fabric of his society.

We Europeans entered the historical scene, and with varying degrees of ignorance and arrogance proceeded in most situations to shatter this structure.

In it's [sic] place we put barren and unimaginative town plans. The results of this were the loss of the re-enforcement of law, and of social structure, the breaking up of extended family groupings, an increase in social pressures and a consequent worsening of community health (Downing 1974: no page reference).

Downing argued that proper consultation between local groups and architects which elicited the traditional residential patterns "liberated" Aboriginal thinking and strengthened Aboriginal community life. Frequently this was a slow process and could not bend to the demands of impatient bureaucracies.

Although Downing applied his ideas specifically to the question of housing, his argument was relevant to the DAA's total programme. The main thrust of his line was that questions of cultural life, community organization, and techniques for the provision of basic social services were inextricably interdependent. Administrative programmes which did not take cognizance of local cultural and community life risked undermining their own efforts. In this basic respect, he echoed Coombs' earlier statement:

A study of our own efforts and those of welfare programmes abroad like the "War on Poverty" and the programmes for American Indians in the United States shows that apparently well-conceived programmes designed by social scientists and administrators have failed because their clients, the Aborigines, the Indians, or the poor, have been involved only as passive recipients - at most invited to endorse programmes already approved. Our failures will continue until the goals the Aborigines are assisted to achieve are those they freely chose themselves and until they themselves plan and largely administer the means by which they are to be helped (Coombs 1972:5).

The key point to observe, however, is that this ideological line legitimated the role of brokers and created the need for Aboriginal spokesmen in Aboriginal administration. Indeed, it placed a premium on the insight of those local (usually white) men who could communicate with tribal spokesmen and articulate their needs for national administrators. I will examine the full implications of this point below. But, the general point is that because of these conditions the DAA's policy, in conjunction with the significance of brokers in Central Australia, legitimated and even

encouraged the fragmentation of Aboriginal administration. What was intended as a national policy ended up being a multitude of local policies funded by national resources.

Central Australia

The establishment of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1972 signalled the beginning of major changes in the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. In particular, it marked the dismantling of the Welfare Branch and the official repudiation of the assimilation policy (or the integration policy as it was then labelled). These changes had important effects on the structure of the local bureaucratic apparatus responsible for Aborigines, the rhetoric of local debate about Aboriginal affairs, and the transactions between Aborigines and local administrators. In general these changes proliferated the number and types of bureaucratic agencies which included Aborigines among their clients. Moreover, all agencies had to seek ways to coopt Aborigines into their overt, publicly visible decision-making processes.

A key point is that the new regime was established against the background of, and often with the personnel of, the previous administration. When the DAA was established, it wholly incorporated the staff and responsibilities of the Welfare Branch.⁵ Of the initial 957 original staff members of the DAA nationwide, 897 were from the Northern Territory Division. By June 1973 the transfer of staff and administrative responsibility in the areas of health, education, labour, community welfare, funding and Aboriginal research to other Commonwealth agencies had reduced the NT Division's non-industrial staff to 358. Although the DAA expanded

⁵In 1972 the title of the Welfare Branch was officially the Welfare Division of the Northern Territory Administration. In order to be consistent, I will refer to it always as the Welfare Branch, its original title.

its Canberra staff and introduced some new personnel in the Northern Territory, the NT Division still employed just over 40% of the DAA's non-industrial staff and 100% (372) of its industrial staff in June 1976 (DAA 1976:62). Many of these people were carried over from the Welfare Branch.

When I moved into Alice Springs in September 1974, the DAA had established its new administration. It maintained its head office in Darwin and local offices throughout the Northern Territory, including Alice Springs. However, the DAA had inherited these offices and many of their staff from the Welfare Branch. For example, the head of the Alice Springs district office (the office responsible for all of Central Australia) was a former administrator in the Welfare Branch as were many of his subordinate officers. Although the DAA took over the Welfare Branch's administration of the settlements and funding of the missions, most of the actual administrative personnel (lay and clergy alike) remained the same. More generally, many welfare officers who were transferred to new Commonwealth departments nonetheless continued to work with their previous Aboriginal clients. Hence, although the regime and its official ideology were new, many of the social relationships among the administrators and between Aborigines and local whites through which the new policy had to be implemented were carryovers from the old regime. This point is important because it means that the programmes and new agencies the DAA initiated did not enter an administrative vacuum. On the contrary, they emerged in a context in which they had to compete for the attention and support of local Aborigines and whites who were already involved in long-standing, multiplex relationships with one another.

In addition to establishing housing associations, local Aboriginal councils, and other new social welfare programmes, the DAA subsidized several new Aboriginal organizations in Central Australia. In September 1974 the largest of these was the Central Australian Aboriginal

Legal Aid Service (CAALAS).⁶ It employed a staff of five including one senior lawyer, one junior lawyer, an administrative assistant, a secretary, and two field officers. CAALAS was a model Aboriginal organization in that it was formally governed by a council composed entirely of Aborigines recruited from many Aboriginal communities throughout the region. Moreover, the lawyers who worked for CAALAS in September 1974 vigorously supported the self-determination policy, took special care to encourage the Aboriginal councillors to consider all of CAALAS' administrative problems, and honoured their decisions.

CAALAS' staff also tried to work closely with the Aboriginal councillors in the various rural communities they serviced. For example, CAALAS appeared for Aboriginal defendants in the court of summary jurisdiction at Yuendumu, an Aboriginal settlement approximately 180 miles northwest of Alice Springs. Prior to appearing in court the CAALAS lawyers held meetings with the Aboriginal councillors to discuss the cases and decide upon pleas. CAALAS almost always entered the plea the councillors favoured even if the client did not agree. CAALAS also encouraged the councillors to raise other issues such as housing problems, pensions, land rights, or problems with local white administrators.

CAALAS further actively campaigned against local practices it thought discriminated against Aborigines or increased their subordination to whites. For example, it frequently criticized the police for harassing Aborigines in a way they would not treat whites. It pressured local businesses which discriminated against Aborigines. It particularly tried to stop some used car dealers from selling Aborigines defective cars at high prices. CAALAS also criticized politicians or other local whites who

⁶The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), Aboriginal Hostels, and the Central Lands Council all officially existed. All expanded tremendously during my fieldwork. None were well established in 1974.

made public comments or supported policies it considered racist. Otherwise, CAALAS kept its office open and staff available for Aborigines to drop in and seek help as they needed it. In particular, it employed field officers (who were all Aborigines) to attend to any social welfare or individual problem its clients might develop. CAALAS conceived of, and encouraged Aborigines to conceive of, its legal role as simply the foundation for a general advocate's role which could potentially embrace any and all problems Aborigines faced.

CAALAS' views assume a particular sociological significance in the light of the organization's position in the contemporary bureaucratic context. CAALAS was trying to establish itself as a broker in a social field already inhabited by powerful brokers. On the one hand, its capacity to recruit Aborigines as clients determined its capacity to gain the support of the DAA. On the other hand, its capacity to elicit the support of the DAA conditioned its ability to serve its Aboriginal clients and compete successfully for their attention with the other local brokers. From this perspective, CAALAS' services as a legal and welfare organization (as well as its emphasis on self-determination) were basic resources in its attempts to recruit clients, meet whatever needs they expressed, and survive as an organization in a highly competitive environment.

CAALAS faced a particularly difficult situation in Central Australia because it was competing with missions and settlements which maintained long-standing, multiplex relationships with their Aboriginal clients and enjoyed highly respected identities with agencies of the Commonwealth government and the public at large. Under the Welfare Branch, these agencies had divided up the field and substantially minimized the competition among themselves for the support of particular Aboriginal groups. Most had also tried to satisfy all their clients' needs from within their own organizational resources. Hence, although most of the

money originally came from the Commonwealth, there developed extensive duplication of welfare services for Aborigines.

When the DAA initiated its new policies, the field within which whites had to negotiate for Aboriginal support opened up tremendously. New agencies moved into the field and old agencies could no longer take for granted either the division of the field or the support of their Aboriginal clients. It became more difficult for anyone (new or old agencies alike) to play the broker's role, and the competition for clients became overt. Nonetheless, the established agencies enjoyed major advantages. In particular, they serviced settled, resident populations each of which had social welfare problems. In spite of the fact that the DAA established new central welfare agencies to meet specific needs, the duplication of welfare services characteristic of the earlier regime persisted and, indeed, with the tremendous increase in money available proliferated. For example, the DAA funded Aboriginal Hostels to recondition old homes and build new ones to provide temporary and permanent housing for Aborigines in Alice Springs. Yet, it also granted money to two missions and a local church-related organization to build hostels in Alice Springs for their clients. In the wider context of inter-agency competition, therefore, social services were basic means whereby white agencies marshalled their Aboriginal clients and kept them inside the organization.

Handelman has shown how transactions in short-term, case-specific aid such as social work, hostels, legal aid, and health care can generate social relationships between agencies and their clients over an extended period (Handelman 1976:224). His points are even more valid in the context of missions and settlements which service highly encapsulated, resident communities. However much they worked to provide case-specific aid, the new organizations such as CAALAS could not rely on the long-term consequences of many contacts to make inroads into the local population or

establish firm relationships with their clients. Rather, its organizational context demanded that CAALAS engage in particular types of transactions with key identities in the Aboriginal population which by themselves could create commitments. Land rights and the transactions associated with land rights claims were crucial for CAALAS in this respect. Unlike court work, pension claims, or consumer protection work, land rights legitimated CAALAS' ongoing involvement in local Aboriginal communities and quite significantly, generated relationships with Aborigines whose social identities were highly valued in local politics — that is, the so-called "tribal elders".

Although the DAA did not originally appoint CAALAS as the Central Land Council's legal advisors, it became involved in land rights very early in its history. At least one Aboriginal group approached CAALAS to help lodge a claim for its homeland on a cattle station prior to January 1974. By the time I entered the field, Woodward had submitted both of his reports, legislation was being drafted, and local pressure to introduce a land rights bill into Parliament was growing (Woodward 1974:iii).⁷ With the exception of Woodward's reluctance to guarantee Aborigines resident on cattle stations the same land rights as settlement and mission people, CAALAS supported the Woodward Report. Indeed, CAALAS came to the conclusion that land rights was the most important issue to all Aborigines throughout Central Australia and basic to the solution of all other

⁷As noted above, the Labor government's Aboriginal policy included a clause promising to grant land rights to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who retained a "strong tribal structure" or who demonstrated "a potential for corporate action in regard to land at present reserved for the use of Aborigines" (DAA 1974:). On February 8, 1973, Justice A.E. Woodward was commissioned to inquire and report upon how to recognize and grant such land rights in the Northern Territory. He held public and private hearings throughout the Northern Territory and received written submissions from all over Australia. He submitted his first, preliminary report on July 19, 1973, and a second, final report on May 3, 1974. These reports were the basis of discussion about land rights during my fieldwork and eventually of the Aboriginal Land Rights Bill.

problems. Its commitment to land rights was, in many respects, the fullest expression of its demand for major political change in relationships between Aborigines and whites.

The procedure Woodward recommended for the preparation of land claims encourages the development of social relationships between Aborigines and white land claims processors. On the basis of anthropological evidence and local common sense Woodward accepted the idea that Aborigines' access to particular tracts of land was legitimated by their religious relationship to local sacred sites. He also accepted the idea that, as the traditional religious experts, tribal elders knew the myths which described the links to the sacred places, cared for the sacred materials, and ruled local groups. Accordingly, he recommended that recruits for the Land Trusts be drawn from among the tribal elders (Woodward 1974:71). Preparing a land claim, therefore, involved discovering the identity of local tribal elders (the men who really knew), recording the sacred stories, and mapping the information for presentation at the land claim hearings. The cultural significance of sacred material, however, compounded the merely technical aspects of this procedure and transformed it into a very powerful mechanism for generating relationships between Aborigines and white administrators. Indeed, it appears that land rights and this particular means of legitimating land claims are manifestations of a more general, quite long-standing type of transaction between Aborigines and whites.

The sacred material Woodward required for land claims is generally understood to be "secret". According to customary law, women and uninitiated boys are not allowed to hear, see, or in some instances even approach certain kinds of sacred songs, objects, and places. In Central Australia it is widely argued that Aboriginal elders have extended these restrictions to white people, and, in general do not permit whites to see any secret

material. On the other hand, it is also widely known that Aborigines sometimes give particular white men access to sacred material. Aborigines tell "special" whites sacred stories, show them sacred objects, and, in some very special cases, initiate them into tribal manhood. Yet, even as they display this sacred material, Aborigines insist that whites keep the rule of secrecy and tell no one else (particularly other whites) the details of what they observe.

Simmel suggests that the analysis of secrecy is part of the sociology of how encapsulated, and often oppressed, social groups protect themselves from the demands of the wider society. Secrecy defines and guards the boundaries of such groups, in particular of those groups which stress their own self-sufficiency with respect to the outside world (for example, secret societies) (Simmel 1954:345, 362). Simmel's remarks are of general importance. In the course of this thesis I will argue that although Aborigines do not form a secret society in Simmel's sense, they nonetheless withdraw from white society and try to be self-sufficient. However, because whites monopolize all resources necessary to survive in Central Australia, Aborigines must interact with them to some extent. The rule of secrecy is one aspect of how Aborigines relate to, but withdraw from, whites. Those whites who are shown sacred material are thrust into the role of what Simmel calls "the middler". As the term indicates the "middler" occupies a role between the encapsulated group and the outside world. The middler is not often a fully initiated member of the group. Rather, he is usually a type of novice who has the "dual function" of connecting and separating. He mediates the transition from the outside world to the innermost sanctuaries of the group. In Simmel's terms the middler establishes a "graduated secrecy" which "produces an elastic sphere of protection...around its innermost essence" (Simmel 1954:367).

In the light of this argument, the rule of secrecy points to an important conjunction of interests between Aborigines and white agencies such as CAALAS. On the one hand, as brokers whites must insert themselves between Aborigines and the larger bureaucratic edifice if they are to survive. Aborigines, on the other hand, must recruit and control whites who will feed them the resources they need to survive. They must make some whites into middlemen who are part of, but separate from, Aboriginal groups. The exchange of sacred material and the rules of secrecy are well-adapted to generate this kind of relationship and are of major political significance.

The key to the significance of transactions in sacred material and the rules of secrecy is their exclusive nature. In Simmel's terms they are a recruiting device whereby particular members from a category which is otherwise excluded from the inner group are explicitly included within it (Simmel 1954:369). When Aborigines show a white sacred material, they often flatter him saying that he is a special white man who understands Aborigines. As a token of their respect for his special sensitivities, they show him their most sacred lore and, perhaps, initiate him into the esoterica of their most sacred rituals and mythology. They suggest to him that with this transaction they set him apart from other white men and establish a special, often unique relationship between him and the local group. In exchange for this privileged access to Aboriginal experience, the white man must obey the laws of Aboriginal custom. Most particularly, he must honour the customary laws of reciprocity and the authority of the elders. He must keep the laws of secrecy and, in general, not question the basis of the elders' claims. Because Aborigines have suspended the relevance of a favoured white man's ethnic identity by showing him sacred material, he must cease to act as a white man and behave as an Aborigine.

That is to say, the rules Aborigines impose make their demands upon white associates non-negotiable.

The exclusive function of this transaction distinguishes Aborigines as well as whites. When a white man accepts sacred material, he recognizes the unique identity of the gifting group and, most particularly, of its tribal elders. He accepts obligations to a particular group, not to Aborigines in general. This is important for the analysis of secrecy. Aborigines usually preface displays of sacred material with the note that they are the knowledgeable men who control this particular information. Other Aborigines who may claim such knowledge are, on fact, imposters or, at best, inadequately informed, not truly knowledgeable. Indeed, some might be mere "boys" (that is, uninitiated) and, therefore, totally unqualified to speak on the matter. By imposing the rule of secrecy Aborigines prevent their white man (insofar as he obeys "the law") from checking the validity of such claims and thereby discrediting the identity of his giftors. By the same token Aborigines do not hesitate to debunk the claims of rival Aborigines. Indeed, Aborigines often extend access to their sacred material in the context of efforts to ridicule the claims they know other Aborigines have made to whites they are trying to recruit. Taken as a whole, transactions in sacred material and the rule of secrecy are means whereby Aborigines distinguish themselves from rival groups and coopt powerful whites in the service of local interests. As expressions of, and basic resources in the competition among Aborigines for white resources, transactions in sacred material measurably contribute to the further fragmentation of Aboriginal administration and local Aboriginal communities.

In the context of political negotiations among whites, these transactions and rules acquire further significance. In particular, whites use their access to sacred material and the rules of secrecy as

unequivocably authentic, non-negotiable documentation of their relationships with local Aborigines. Indeed, it is often in this form that Aborigines become political resources for whites. The policy of self-determination emphasised this aspect of local white agencies' situation. Yet, the use of sacred material by whites in this way antedated the new policy and highlights a more general problem. The basic premise upon which social welfare agencies operate is intervention. In order to work, they must involve themselves in the everyday life of their clients and must be accepted by the wider society as acting legitimately in that process. When such agencies cross ethnic, cultural, and class boundaries, the legitimacy of their intervention is questionable. If, however, the client population seems to accept or even welcomes intervention, social welfare agencies can present themselves as major forces in orderly social evolution and, perhaps, of intergroup peace. The existence of white agents who have been shown Aboriginal sacred material constitutes evidence that both the individuals themselves and the welfare edifice as a whole have been accepted by Aborigines. Hence, if white brokers can present themselves to the wider white Australian community as "trusted", they document that in their relationships with Aborigines the racial, cultural, and class barriers which divide Central Australia are irrelevant and even overcome.

This analysis suggests that the land rights issue and the policy of self-determination as a whole are radical generalizations of transactions in sacred material and, in Simmel's terms, of the principle of exclusivity. On the one hand, self-determination means that white intervention in contemporary Aboriginal life must occur according to the rules of Aboriginal society. On the other hand, because only a minority of favoured whites know those rules, the policy restricts the number of personnel to, and channels administration through, a few select, locally-

based whites. The point about secrecy in this context is that it makes the rules, as well as the way they are applied, unavailable for public inspection. Hence not only is administration channelled through a restricted number of whites, their decision-making processes are rendered unaccountable and their results non-negotiable. Whites who are outside the privileged circle cannot question the basis of their authority or their decisions. As a device for insulating Aborigines and favoured whites from public accountability, secrecy (particularly if glossed as an intrinsic aspect of traditional Aboriginal society) is quite powerful.

These conditions make transactions in sacred material and the rules of secrecy crucial aspects of the broker's role in Central Australia. In general, whites who can project and authenticate identities as knowledgeable about, and favoured by, Aborigines are focal points in the administration of Aboriginal affairs. Indeed, once an individual or group can say that it has been entrusted with sacred information, other whites and Aborigines try to recruit his attention. On the one hand, national politicians and administrators look to favoured whites to establish contact with local communities. On the other hand, local whites who lack special access to Aborigines depend upon favoured whites for guidance and, more importantly, for legitimacy in the local arena. Finally, because they understand the channelling effect of the broker's role, Aborigines seek out favoured whites who appear to control access to key resources.

These features of the situation establish the conditions for the relative expansion or contraction of secrecy. For example, if a white agent is to establish himself in the region independent of favoured whites or to introduce alternative views about Aboriginal affairs (that is, become a broker), he must recruit Aborigines who will show him sacred material, impose the rule of secrecy, and, in general, make him a middler. Otherwise, he is politically dependent upon other whites and can speak

with no authority in local affairs. By the same token, Aborigines must incorporate potent white brokers if they are to control the forces which impinge upon them in any way. Hence, the institution of secrecy should expand during periods of major administrative change and contract as the points of administrative power become clear. The proliferation of white agencies operating in Aboriginal affairs during my fieldwork generated great uncertainty and overt inter-agency competition over who controlled access to what kinds of resources. The emergence of many new would-be white brokers encouraged Aborigines to extend sacred material to, and make middlemen of, more whites. Because the new regime generated such uncertainty and competition, the value of sacred material and the middleman's role increased to whites. Consequently, transactions in sacred material and secrecy expanded. The history of CAALAS provides evidence for these propositions.

When CAALAS first started work in Central Australia, it discovered that the established white agencies (missions and government bodies alike) legitimated themselves by displaying their access to secret information and the support of tribal elders. Because it was new CAALAS was not so privileged. On the contrary, CAALAS initially worked primarily among urban Aborigines around Alice Springs. Moreover, although it included several tribal councillors on its management committee, its most public spokesmen were also urban Aborigines. The DAA and CAALAS officially denied the relevance of the distinction between tribal (full-blood) and urban, non-tribal (part-Aboriginal) Aborigines for their administration and programs. Yet, most white people (particularly in Alice Springs) denied that urban Aborigines know much about customary Aboriginal culture or retain close ties to sacred religious sites. Consequently, they did not accept urban Aborigines as legitimate spokesmen for tribal Aborigines. Both the DAA and CAALAS had to come to terms politically with this fact in spite of their

ideological commitment to the contrary. In practice, they had to put a premium upon tribal people. Hence, although CAALAS had many clients and was ostensibly an Aboriginal organization, the identities of the Aborigines with whom it initially associated were not strong political resources either in the context of local politics or in its relationships with the DAA. Indeed, some were distinct liabilities. In order to establish itself as a legitimate spokesman for Aboriginal interests, CAALAS had to downplay the significance of its urban, non-tribal constituents and actively recruit the support of "tribal" Aborigines, particularly of elders.

In September 1974 when I began my fieldwork, CAALAS represented Aborigines in the courts of summary jurisdiction in Alice Springs, Yuendumu, and Tennant Creek. Throughout the early months of my fieldwork, the CAALAS lawyers busily travelled in the bush around Alice Springs contacting new Aboriginal communities and encouraging them to send representatives to its management committee meetings. Although they had an ideological commitment to Aboriginal land rights, the CAALAS lawyers only began to emphasise it as the key to their work as they made their increasingly extensive bush trips. Indeed, their overt commitment to land rights grew as Aborigines began to show them the sacred material which validated their local land claims. Aborigines told them sacred stories, showed them *tjuringas*, and swore them to secrecy. CAALAS was to tell the government what it needed to know in order to accept the local peoples' land claims. Otherwise, it was to keep the information secret. By May 1975 Aboriginal groups (in particular, Walbiri groups) began to contact CAALAS directly offering to make known their land claims and pass on the sacred information necessary to legitimate them. By September 1975 groups as far northeast as Boorooloola, northwest as Wattie Creek, and north as Darwin fringe-camps had asked CAALAS to handle their land rights work. Indeed, CAALAS

represented the Gurrindji in their final negotiations with Vestey's and attended the ceremony in which they finally regained their land at Wattie Creek. In other words, the passing of secret information and the lodging of land claims became a formal means for recruiting CAALAS support for local groups. This process was the mechanism for the greatest period of CAALAS expansion and marked the shift from an emphasis on non-tribal to tribal Aborigines.

It is also crucial to understand that as CAALAS expanded and did more work in land rights, the level of the DAA's support for its activities increased. The DAA finally agreed (after several months of delay) to lease an adequate office, house the CAALAS lawyers, purchase new equipment, and expand the CAALAS staff. Most significantly, the DAA decided to transfer official responsibility for the preliminary organization of land rights and the Central Lands Council to CAALAS.⁸ Hence, as CAALAS received sacred information, prepared land claims, and expanded its support among tribal Aborigines, the uncertainty characteristic of its early position in the DAA bureaucracy faded and its overall capacity to play a broker's role became greater.

Of special interest, however, is the fact that as CAALAS expanded, it began to conflict seriously with the established local brokers and the wider interests (white and Aboriginal) they represented. I will consider this question fully in the next chapter and my analysis of the significance of racial tension crises. For the moment, I wish to emphasise that, as CAALAS expanded its base among "tribal elders" and began to legitimate its new ideas about Aboriginal administration in terms of their

⁸The DAA had previously employed two solicitors (one from Adelaide and one from Melbourne) to represent the CLC. Because they came to Central Australia only for CLC meetings, they could not receive the information or process the claims efficiently. In general, they could not be brokers and inhibited the full development of land rights as a political resource.

support, other local brokers began to criticize them. A key element in their critique was that CAALAS did not represent the opinions of "true" tribal elders. Indeed, it was claimed that their major spokesmen earlier in their lives had forsaken the opportunity to become fully knowledgeable, had broken the sacred trust of their kinsmen and tribes, and were disgraced identities. They could no more speak for Aboriginal opinion than the average white man. Because CAALAS based its views of the situation upon their word, CAALAS was itself misguided, misrepresented local opinion, and should have no power in local affairs. The most outspoken critics of CAALAS from this perspective were staff and associates of Hermansburg mission, the longest-standing white broker in Central Australia.

Conclusion

In conclusion I wish to consider a phenomenon which has generated great interest in the circles of Aboriginal administration, the outstation movement. In recent years, Aborigines have been moving away from the central communities of settlements and missions out to areas which they claim are part of their traditional countries. This movement is commonly explained as the resurgence of Aboriginal elders' customary concern to protect their sacred sites, maintain the vitality of their ancient religious customs (particularly with the young), and thereby reassert their traditional authority (Wallace 1977:124-134; Downing, unpublished manuscript, n.d.). Gray has added that Aborigines are also trying to protect their land from mining interests, indicate their "feelings about their own land" for land rights purposes, escape the control of the local land owners or institutionalized communities, and, in general, realize their own ideas about where and how to live (Gray 1977:115-117). In general, these approaches interpret the outstation movement as an indigenous, often tribally-motivated reaction against institutional life and the

detrribalization processes it encouraged. Most whites who offer this analysis suggest further that the decentralization process should be encouraged so as to permit Aborigines to stop the detrribalization process and express fully their efforts to revitalize tribal life. Indeed, support of the outstation movement is taken as a key aspect of the full implementation of the self-determination policy.

Without necessarily denying that some Aborigines worry about the effects of settlement life upon their customary religious beliefs and culture, I suggest that the outstation movement can be more fully understood if set in the context of Aborigines' relationships with white administrators. In particular, the outstation movement is the fullest manifestation of the fragmentary tendencies I have been arguing are critical aspects of contemporary administrative practice and ideology. By moving out onto their "traditional land", Aborigines identify their local groups, assert the uniqueness of their particular interests, and thereby legitimate administrative support of their own needs independent of the competing demands of other Aboriginal groups. The proliferation of local groups and their special interests also encourages, and makes room for, increased action by white brokers. Hence, although white brokers might themselves genuinely share the concern of some tribal elders for traditional custom, by supporting the outstation movement, they legitimate their own continued presence between local groups and the wider administrative world.

In the context of my earlier arguments, the outstation movement only makes sense in the context of Aboriginal dependence upon white resources. At one level, it is certainly a reaction to the conditions of settlement life. Yet, it does not necessarily mark a return to the life Aborigines led prior to the coming of white men. On the contrary, because the outstation movement is a means whereby Aborigines maintain access to,

but withdraw from, white resources, it commits them to the wider administrative apparatus in which they are now encapsulated. Moreover, it fragments Aboriginal communities, binds them to white administrators, and thereby inhibits the development of a sense of common interest among Aborigines at the local level.

CHAPTER 2

RACIAL TENSION AND THE POLITICS OF DETRIBALIZATION

Ever since the Commonwealth government assumed control of the Northern Territory in 1911, various experts have been called in to examine, and propose solutions for, problems in the administration of Aborigines (Spencer 1913:36-52; Bleakley 1929:3-40; Rowley 1974:305-340). A major source of concern during that entire period has been the so-called "break-down" of Aboriginal society in the face of white contact or aggression. When Baldwin Spencer conducted his tour, he found that many Aborigines were being "corrupted" by opium (Spencer 1913:42). Bleakley expressed great concern at the prevalence of "gin sprees" and the general prostitution of Aboriginal women on cattle stations and in the towns (Bleakley 1929:9). Both experts believed that these kinds of problems were expressions of, and measurably contributed to, the disintegration of the fabric of Aboriginal society and culture with white contact. Although the larger ideological pictures of which these particular judgements were part have changed many times over the years, the image of cultural decay and demoralization so characteristic of early opinion has continued down to the present day. Indeed, the spectre of detribalization still haunts much official policy, commonsense thinking, and anthropological discussion about Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

Throughout all these years pronouncements about detribalization have legitimated increases in the power and effectiveness of the Commonwealth's administration of Aborigines. As is well known, the early efforts (in particular, the establishment of large reserves) were designed to protect Aborigines and to keep them away from contact with white society. Little was done for those "detribalized" Aborigines who had already suffered with the coming of whites. Although there was some official

response to the reports of Spencer and Bleakley, these early efforts were relatively meagre. The inauguration of the assimilation policy after World War II, however, marked a profoundly important increase in the role of the administration in Aboriginal life. I will devote considerable attention to this process below. For the moment the point I wish to emphasize is that the assimilation policy was also intended to avoid detribalization. The major effort, however, was to so guide and control the entrance of Aborigines into white society that they did not become disoriented or exceed their ability to adapt. So too the self-determination policy has been presented as a primary means for avoiding the disintegration of the tribal authority structure and the further decay of Aboriginal society. In principle the self-determination policy gave Aborigines the chance to decide for themselves how much of the white cultural repertoire they wanted. Yet, in order to implement this policy, the power of the white administration has been increased again. In other words, the detribalization thesis has in the broadest sense legitimated the long-term, systematic encapsulation of Aborigines in an increasingly powerful social welfare administration. As a result Aborigines are now under greater control of, and more politically and economically dependent upon, whites than ever before. This is so in spite of the fact that all white efforts to administer Aborigines have been justified as efforts to help them solve their "problems".

The link between the detribalization argument and the expansion of the social welfare administration suggests that Aboriginal "problems" are resources in political struggles among whites. Indeed, I analysed part of this process in the preceding chapter. The point is, however, that those "problems" often escape the power of the social welfare administration and emerge outside its domain in the community at large. Under these circumstances, Aboriginal problems become resources for actors outside the

administration and often become the basis of major critiques of the Aboriginal administration itself. In recent years, local people in Central Australia have come to interpret such developments as crises of "racial tension".¹ All the images of detribalization are mobilized, the system is declared to have failed, and demands for major changes in the bureaucratic order are made. Indeed, "racial tension" is often interpreted as one of the most important and unpleasant consequences of detribalization.

In this chapter I want to analyse a period of racial tension I observed in February and March 1975. My major point is that although conceived of as a crisis between Aborigines and whites, this period was in fact emergent from major political conflicts among white groups both within Alice Springs and between Alice Springs and the Commonwealth government. I do not deny that there are major conflicts between Aborigines and whites in Central Australia. The point is, however, that racial tension crises mark the mobilization of Aborigines and their problems as resources in conflicts among groups which are essentially controlled by whites. Nonetheless, because racial tension crises legitimate increases in the power of the social welfare administration to intervene in everyday Aboriginal social life, they are crucially related to how the wider structure of relationships between Aborigines and whites is elaborated and reproduced.

The Context of Racial Tension in Alice Springs

The racial tension crisis I observed in 1975 occurred in the context of major political and administrative changes in Central Australia and the Northern Territory. Although the Commonwealth government has controlled the Northern Territory since 1911, in recent years successive

¹The term "racial tension" is the label most Alice Springs people used to describe these periods. I use it as an actor's label, not as an analytic term.

federal governments have gradually decentralized responsibility for the Territory's government to local politicians and administrators. This process was taken one step further by the Labor government in 1974 when the Legislative Council was upgraded to the Legislative Assembly and made a purely elective body. At the same time, the Labor government (led by Prime Minister Whitlam) was initiating new policies in Aboriginal affairs promised during the 1972 election. As described in the preceding chapter, the government had established the DAA and had officially begun to implement the policy of self-determination. Both of these processes were making new kinds of political and economic resources available to local people throughout the Northern Territory. The implications of these new opportunities, however, for relationships within and between the various levels of government were quite uncertain.

Many local politicians (mainly but not exclusively members of the Country Liberal Party of the Northern Territory) criticized the Labor government for hindering the steady development of local government in the Northern Territory. The CLP's critique was part of their wider assault on Labor's new Federalism policy. The Federalism policy was designed to encourage closer cooperation between state and federal governments on projects of regional or national importance. Although the policy allowed for Commonwealth responsibility for some areas, it officially encouraged regional planning and the development of local projects funded by Commonwealth money. The Country and Liberal Parties criticized this program for being "centralist" and for undermining the rights and powers of the state governments. During the November 1975 election campaign for seats in the first Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, for example, the local CLP argued that the key issue was who controlled local government. The CLP supported "a free and independent Northern Territory" with autonomous powers. Although the CLP made this issue the centre of its campaign

platform, discontent with the ALP's progress on this issue was not restricted to it. On the contrary, important local leaders who did not officially espouse any particular political persuasion were also concerned about the meaning of the Legislative Assembly. The Mayor of Alice Springs, for example, urged people to cast informal votes at the election because the Commonwealth government had not made the powers of the Legislative Assembly clear. He suggested that because their votes and the election itself meant nothing, people should cast votes expressing their concern. They should not elect Members to the Legislative Assembly until they knew what power they could effectively wield.

The administration of Aboriginal affairs was a critical area which documented the Labor government's duplicity in this matter to many people. Whereas decentralization and self-government implied that local people controlled local affairs, Labor's new policies for Aborigines (in particular, the land rights issue) appeared to be a vehicle for Commonwealth control of a major local issue. Local leaders were particularly concerned about comments attributed to Senator J. Cavanaugh, the then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. During the first week of October 1974, Sen. Cavanaugh was quoted as having said that the Commonwealth government would not permit a CLP majority in the Legislative Assembly to block its policies on Aboriginal affairs. He allegedly favoured passing federal legislation to override any Assembly efforts to obstruct the national policies on Aborigines. Many local leaders interpreted Cavanaugh's comments as clear evidence that both the Minister himself and the Labor government were genuinely unwilling to delegate effective power over local issues to Northern Territory leaders.

Local leaders were not only worried about the Commonwealth retaining control of Northern Territory affairs in Canberra. They were equally concerned that the Labor government was implementing policies (particularly

in Aboriginal affairs) which were inimical to the Northern Territory's general welfare. For example, the CLP was worried that the Aboriginal Land Rights Bill would discourage the development of the Northern Territory's mineral wealth. Many pastoralists were also concerned that their interests would be subordinated to those of the Aborigines. More generally, many people felt that the Labor government unnecessarily and illegitimately supported Aborigines at the expense of whites. Hence, many local politicians wanted to change the type of policies the government pursued as well as increase their local power.

In contrast to this body of opinion, there were other people (for example, CAALAS and other local supporters of Labor's policy on Aboriginal affairs) who depended upon Commonwealth control of Aboriginal affairs to insulate themselves and their Aboriginal clients from the power of local officials. They publicly criticized the CLP and argued that the move toward self-government worked against the interests of Aborigines. They were quite worried that a CLP-dominated Legislative Assembly would try to block the full development of the self-determination policy, in particular, the implementation of land rights legislation. As outspoken representatives of Labor's policy, they were also fully aware that their own capacity to survive in the district was threatened by any substantial gain in the power of local whites to dictate Aboriginal policy.

The CLP's overwhelming victory in the November 1974 election contributed to increased conflict among local white leaders and to increased pressure on the Commonwealth. On the one hand, the CLP interpreted its success as a sign that Labor's policies were unpopular in the Northern Territory and mounted an even more sustained critique of them. Indeed, the Northern Territory election was part of the events which eventually led to Labor's national defeat in 1976. On the other hand, local groups such as CAALAS became more dependent upon Commonwealth support and, anticipating Labor's

defeat nationally, demanded the DAA act more swiftly to implement its programmes and secure their local position.

The major antagonists in these broad political processes were also the most visible participants in the racial tension crisis of February 1975. Indeed, the racial crisis was one context within which many of these key political questions were expressed. As a declaration that the local administrative system had broken down, the racial crisis articulated these conflicts about policy and the relative distribution of power between and within the local and national levels of government. But to stress these aspects alone ignores the fact that many people who had no direct political or economic interests in the administration of Aboriginal affairs were also worried. What matters worried them and why?

Drunkenness, Public Safety, and the Problem of Social Order

Very soon after having first arrived in Alice Springs, I became aware that many local people felt that the town was becoming an unsafe place in which to live. People expressed the greatest concern about drunken Aborigines, particularly Aboriginal fringe-dwellers who lived in the Todd River. They were worried that in recent months the level of drunkenness in the fringe-camps had led to a radical and unsatisfactory increase in the level of crime in Alice Springs. People often discussed the problem among themselves exchanging stories about assaults, near-assaults, and otherwise frightening events. The Todd River was itself considered a dangerous place, particularly the area near the Bankside, a local pub heavily frequented by Aborigines. The Bankside was situated at the western end of the causeway which crossed the Todd leading to the suburbs on the east side of Alice Springs. Although most white people feared to pause by the Bankside, the residents of this eastern suburb developed a sense of isolation and special

danger because they had to cross this causeway in order to come and go. I heard one white resident of the eastern suburb tell his wife to floor the accelerator should an Aborigine stand threateningly in front of her car as she tried to come home.

I heard vivid tales of drunken Aborigines appearing out of the Todd and looming before oncoming cars. The most public expression of these fears, however, appeared in the Centralian Advocate, the local Alice Springs newspaper. Between October 10, 1974 and February 6, 1975, the Centralian Advocate printed thirty-one articles related to Aboriginal drunkenness and violence, including eleven court reports, four letters to the editor, six articles reporting local demands for action on the problem, and ten reports of alleged violence by Aborigines against people or property. The court reports and articles about local calls for action were specific accounts of particular people and their activities. The letters to the editor and the articles on the violent incidents, however, were usually highly abstract caricatures and resembled the stories circulating in the private quarters of Alice Springs. A classic example appeared in the edition of December 12, 1974.

Hit with Flagon Claim

A man was allegedly attacked by two Aborigines as he left the Memorial Club last Friday night but he claimed police failed to act when he reported the incident to them.

One of the Aborigines had smashed a flagon on the man's head causing a number of cuts to the head.

The man, who prefers to stay anonymous, said the attack took place at about 7:10 p.m. in the car park opposite the Memorial Club.

He told the Advocate that two Aboriginal men had approached from the direction of the toilets on the hospital lawns.

The man said he paid little attention to them and was opening his car door when one of them suddenly hit him on the head with a flagon.

The flagon smashed and caused several cuts to the man's head.

The man said he had kneed one of the Aborigines in the groin and then "got stuck into the other".

Both of the Aborigines had run off in the direction of the Todd River.

The man said he thought the Aborigines were "probably trying to roll me for a bit of money".

He said he went to the police station to report the incident.

When he told police that the Aborigines had gone into the Todd River he was told "there wasn't much they could do about it".

He said the police said they "wouldn't go down the creek" to look for the Aborigines.

The man later told the Advocate he "was not very pleased" and believed the police should have acted. He said he thought that more innocent people were going to get hurt unless police acted.

A check with police this week revealed that the incident was not recorded at the station, but inquiries are being made into the man's allegations (Centralian Advocate 1974:2).

This account would have been highly significant to anyone familiar with Alice Springs at the time. The first sentence presents the overall importance of the article: a man was attacked by Aborigines but could not enlist the aid of the police. Although the article does not mention it, Senator Lionel Murphy, then the federal Attorney-General, disallowed arrest for mere drunkenness in the Northern Territory in July 1974. This first sentence could be interpreted as an oblique reference to the fact that many people thought Murphy's decision had undermined the power of the police to maintain local law and order. Indeed, many people dated the contemporary decline in public safety from Murphy's act. The "Memorial Club" is an abbreviated reference to the Alice Springs Memorial Club, a predominantly white social club in downtown Alice Springs. Most of the town's social, political, and business elite belonged to the Club and used its services. Of particular importance was the fact that, unlike most other drinking facilities in Alice Springs, the Club had a "family atmosphere". Men often took their wives there for a congenial night on the town, in particular on Friday. It included among its facilities a bowling green which was lighted and fully packed every night during the summer. In general, the Alice Springs Memorial Club represented some of the most civilized aspects of

white Australian culture. Furthermore, the Memorial Club was located between the Todd River and the lawn of the Alice Springs hospital. On any given day of the week, Aborigines could be seen drinking on this lawn. Coming when and where it did, this attack might be interpreted, therefore, as an index of how Alice Springs citizens were defenceless in the face of an ever-present danger to their personal well-being and their whole civilized way of life.

There was perhaps no more vivid symbol of Aboriginal drunkenness than the flagon. The flagon was conventionally associated with invalid port, the drink said to be most popular among Aboriginal drunks.² Flagon bottles constituted most of the litter drunks allegedly scattered around the town and about which local citizens complained so bitterly. Empty flagons were also typically known as hand weapons in drunken brawls.

The significance of the Todd as a dangerous and invulnerable haven for drunks emerges clearly in this account. Most articles of this type simply said that the offending Aborigines "disappeared" into the Todd. Although the Memorial Club was on the western bank of the Todd, the site of this incident was approximately two hundred yards from the river. Hence, the Aborigines merely ran off in the "direction" of the Todd. The Todd's danger is clearly linked to the impotence of the police. Whatever prevented the police from going "down the creek" to look for the culprits, the river was the preserve of Aborigines. Consequently, "innocent people" were vulnerable and forced to resort to violence to protect themselves. Finally, the moral of the story was clear: unless something was done, more innocent people would be hurt, and the violence would spread.

These images of public danger constituted a definition of the situation which was independent of, but relevant to, the political

²See Chapter 6 for a full analysis of drinking in the fringe-camps in Alice Springs.

controversies between local and national leaders. On the one hand, many people irrespective of their political affiliation were concerned about how dangerous life had become in Alice Springs. Indeed, it was quite clear that Aborigines threatened the social order most whites took for granted. This was as true for people who considered themselves "sympathetic" to the Aborigines as for others. Nonetheless, the way most people understood the public safety issue had clear political implications. Of particular importance was the fact that Senator Murphy had disallowed arrest for mere drunkenness. Indeed, the significance of drunkenness provides the key both to the wider understandings and the political importance of the public safety issue.

For many Alice Springs people drunkenness was a general symbol of disorder, particularly with respect to Aborigines who were so often drunk in "public". Yet, the critical point is that drunkenness marked a kind of intermediate state between being orderly and being disorderly. Drunks were not necessarily disorderly. But, they could easily become disorderly and commit serious crimes if not properly contained. It was important, therefore, that drunks be controlled so as not to permit them to become lawless. What forces contained drunks? There was a clear sense in which many Alice Springs people considered private drinking and drunkenness (for example, in the context of one's private social club or home) as contained and relatively harmless. Public drunkenness (for example, in the street, vacant lots, or the river), however, was potentially uncontained and dangerous. Only agents responsible for maintaining public order (that is, the police) could possibly control public drunkenness, and prevent it from leading to further disorder.

From the point of view of many Alice Springs people, Aborigines had no private contexts which could effectively control their drinking. On the contrary, they lived in substandard, "public" places and the social

controls which had earlier contained them had broken down. Indeed, drinking was from this perspective a major index of the breakdown of traditional means of Aboriginal social control. As a result of these facts, Aborigines had to be controlled by outside agents responsible for public order. In the first instance, this meant the police. But (and this is the crucial point for the public and the politicians), the police could not arrest drunks merely for being drunk as a result of Murphy's directive in July 1974. Hence, there were no controls upon public drunkenness and the possibility of public violence was very real. Indeed, the decline in public safety marked that the effects of Murphy's act were already emerging.

This analysis suggests an explanation of the full meaning of the Todd River and the fringe-dwellers. According to most white people, the Todd River was a public place. No one owned it. It was supposedly administered by a state agency. Yet, Aborigines had transformed it into their own private domain. They lived there and they used the Todd as a sanctuary. Moreover, the type of Aborigine who lived there was subject to no controls. Indeed, he was detribalized, and the police could not apprehend him. Hence, the Todd was a source of grave danger from within the boundaries of the Alice Springs community itself. As the most manifest expression of the collapse of the local social order, the Todd River fringe-dwellers embodied the white community's worst fears.

The key to the racial tension crisis I witnessed in February 1975 was that local politicians blamed Commonwealth ministers (in particular, Senator Murphy) for the contemporary problems with drunkenness. Indeed, the drunkenness issue was a classic example of how the Labor government had ignored the wishes and advice of local people and thereby threatened the well-being of Central Australia as a whole. No single issue more dramatically documented the need for a change in government policy and a more rapid move to local control of the Northern Territory's government.

The Period of "Racial Tension"

In the early hours of February 10, 1975, a group of young Aboriginal men allegedly raped a white woman in Alice Springs. According to many Alice Springs citizens, this event culminated the recent period of increasing public violence and indicated that the situation had become critical. Some sections of the community raised a great public outcry. A group of publicans petitioned the Legislative Assembly protesting the damage they had experienced at the hands of drunks. The local newspaper ran front page stories about the alleged rape, violence on a local Aboriginal settlement, and other disruptions to local peace. Its headline read "Plea to act on violence" and "Women afraid to walk in streets". The most significant expression of this response, however, was a petition sent on February 17 to various national politicians (including Senator Cavanaugh) by twelve Alice Springs citizens, namely, the Mayor, the Federal Member of Parliament for the Northern Territory, four Central Australian Members of the Legislative Assembly, two Alice Springs aldermen, and three Aborigines.

The petitioners expressed their concern that the abolition of drunkenness as a crime "without adequate safeguards to the consequences" had contributed significantly to a major increase in disorderly behaviour and crime in Alice Springs. They noted that because most offenders were Aborigines, the current problems encouraged the deterioration of relationships between blacks and whites in town and damaged the reputation of Aborigines throughout the region. They argued that although government had acted in "good faith", it had improperly assessed the "best means of helping Aboriginal people and of avoiding the possibility of social conflict". They made six recommendations:

1. The Legislative Assembly reintroduce drunkenness as an offense until the establishment of detoxification centres.

2. The police firmly enforce the laws on sale of liquor to underage persons, disorderly behaviour, and drinking in a public place.
3. The number of police stationed in Alice Springs be increased.
4. The Legislative Assembly fix minimum penalties for drink-related offenses and, if necessary, introduce amending legislation.
5. Licensees consider the desirability of selling flagons to Aborigines.
6. Provide adequate camping facilities for people currently living in Alice Springs fringe-camps and thereby end "indiscriminate camping" around the town.

The petitioners asked the national leaders to visit Alice Springs to talk with local leaders to see the situation for themselves. They concluded by observing that unless something was done there would soon be a "complete breakdown in race relations in this area to the detriment of everyone concerned" (Milhouse *et al.* 1975:1-2).

The Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service issued a rebuttal to the petition on February 19 and sent copies to the Melbourne Age, the Centralian Advocate, and the local office of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. CAALAS argued that the petition ignored the real causes of interracial violence; that is, the "racist structure of Alice Springs society". CAALAS argued that if tougher laws against drunkenness were adopted and selectively applied against Aborigines, tensions would grow worse. Aborigines were fully aware of discriminatory practices and resented how the people inevitably treated Aboriginal drinkers more harshly than whites. It said:

We are greatly concerned that a 'lynch mob' atmosphere is developing among the white community. In the last month we have been staggered by the number of acts of violence by policemen against Aborigines. Even more staggering is the sense that the European community is shortsightedly supporting such aggression. The violence is spreading to other Europeans. In one such incident last weekend a harmless Aborigine was white-

washed by white louts. Such episodes can only endanger the already fragile fabric of law and order in this town (CAALAS 1975:1).

CAALAS made five recommendations:

1. If drunkenness is again made an offense, whites should be subject to arrest as well as Aborigines.
2. The supporters of stronger action should call for passage of the Racial Discrimination Bill currently before Parliament.
3. Wet canteens should be installed on settlements and controlled by Aboriginal Councils.
4. Land rights claims should be supported.
5. Aboriginal defendents should be tried in the presence of their tribal councils. The Stipendiary Magistrates should respect and follow the Council's opinions (CAALAS 1975:1-2).

In summary, CAALAS observed that such measures would encourage Aborigines to think that "the real causes of their despair" were being considered and would create a setting within which detoxification centres and other programs might succeed (CAALAS 1975:2).

It is important to note that these two statements, although widely interpreted as expressions of antagonistic definitions of the local situation, nonetheless shared the view that relations between Aborigines and whites were deteriorating and required some kind of intervention. The problem was to determine what kinds of action were necessary and who was responsible for it.

The drunkenness petition may be specifically interpreted as an attempt to revoke Murphy's decriminalization of drunkenness and to establish the means to deal with the problems it caused. Insofar as it suggested only a temporary return to the previous approach, however, it might be more generally interpreted as one approach to the underlying problem of social order. In particular, the petition seems to address problems of order in the private and the public domains. On the one hand, the petitioners

wanted to reintroduce drunkenness as an offense and upgrade the means for policing public drunkenness. In short, the petitioners recommended more police and stricter licensing laws. On the other hand, the petitioners also urged action upon the conditions under which Aborigines led their private, domestic lives. In particular, they demanded the Commonwealth provide "adequate camping facilities" and back-up detoxification centres. They anticipated that these programs would prevent drunkenness and its disruptive effects from erupting into the public domain. Indeed, by glossing the stricter public controls as contingent upon creating detoxification centres, they argued that adequate private controls of drunkenness would make the public controls unnecessary.

A key point is that, although the petitioners recognized the effect drunkenness was having upon race relations, they also perceived the "racial" dimension of the conflict as a contingency. The underlying problem in their eyes was the maintenance of social order, not of strife between Aborigines and whites as racial groups. This has crucial implications for the petitioners' ideas about who should have the power and responsibility for correcting the problem. They recommended that the Legislative Assembly enact the laws necessary to deal with the general problem of order and restricted the Commonwealth's intervention to providing camping facilities and detoxification centres for Aboriginal fringe-dwellers. In other words, they granted the Commonwealth a limited warrant to intervene on behalf of one small segment of the Aboriginal population - a segment which posed as many problems for non-drunken Aborigines as for whites. Otherwise, they argued responsibility for the problem should lie in local hands. Insofar as they glossed the issue in terms of social order, they legitimated local control.

CAALAS' basic ideological and political position differed markedly from the petitioners'. Although it too agreed that interracial violence was

imminent, CAALAS disagreed about the nature of the underlying problem and who should have the responsibility for handling it. For CAALAS, the problem was not the maintenance of social order, but the existence of a social order which oppressed Aborigines. From its perspective, violence was a consequence of white bigotry. Indeed, the most important violence was perpetrated against Aborigines by whites. Insofar as this was true, CAALAS argued that local leaders should have little to say about the administration of Aboriginal affairs. They should support, in fact, efforts to return local power to Aborigines and to pass national laws preventing racial discrimination.

These views were consistent with CAALAS' support of the self-determination policy in Aboriginal affairs. Yet, they also intimately related to CAALAS' position in the local arena. In the weeks immediately prior to the racial crisis, CAALAS had been investigating reports on violence between Aborigines and white police in various parts of Central Australia, including Finke, Alice Springs, and Hooker Creek. At Finke police allegedly beat several Aboriginal prisoners after a major misunderstanding. One Aborigine took offense at the local policeman's behaviour and drew his spear. The policeman called for reinforcements from Kulgera and Alice Springs who eventually arrested several local Aborigines. It was charged that they beat their prisoners on the way to the Alice Springs jail. There were reports of similar incidents between white police and a group of Alice Springs Aboriginal teenage men. At Hooker Creek one Aborigine was allegedly beaten so badly he sustained a broken leg. During the week just prior to the rape, CAALAS sent several telegrams to Senator Murphy and Senator Cavanaugh reporting these incidents.

CAALAS relied heavily upon its personal and political links with Commonwealth officials (including Senator Murphy) for support in its local activities. In the opinion of CAALAS only Murphy's tough policy as

Attorney-General controlled the hostility of the local police against Aborigines and protected CAALAS' own activism. The problem was, however, that Senator Murphy was elevated to the Supreme Court on February 13, 1975, ^{? 171 G/H} five days before the petition and right in the middle of CAALAS' investigation of the alleged beatings. Indeed, CAALAS suspected that the petition was directly linked to Murphy's elevation and was an attempt to pressure Kep Enderby, the new Attorney-General. Hence, when the petition was released, CAALAS was investigating major cases involving relationships among Aborigines, the police, and its own organization without the benefit of one of its most critical allies.

CAALAS' definition of the situation in terms of the racist structure of Central Australia legitimated broad Commonwealth intervention in local affairs. In this respect, it was both a counter to the petitioners' efforts and a response to the specific difficulties of its own immediate situation, as well as a reaffirmation of its commitment to the DAA's national policy. With Murphy's elevation, one of CAALAS' chief supporters and a major obstacle to the power of local officials vanished. Consequently, CAALAS had to pressure those other Commonwealth Agencies upon whom it could legitimately call. Without their support its capacity to survive as an organization and continue its work was seriously threatened.

In summary, the disputes about the nature and causes of the racial tension crisis were intimately associated with larger questions about who should be responsible for taking what kinds of actions to relieve it. That is to say, by disputing over what had gone wrong in the administration of Aboriginal affairs, the local people involved in the racial tension crisis were also disputing about who should have the power to correct it. Hence, the capacity to define the local situation was not only an expression of the relative power of particular groups, it was crucial in the means by which groups actually competed for power and for the right to

administer Aboriginal affairs on the basis of their own policies (Cohen and Comaroff 1976:102). The crisis was precipitated initially by local leaders concerned about the decline in public safety. This was an issue which articulated broad concerns in the Alice Springs community as a whole and which exemplified the particular political problems local leaders were having with Commonwealth officials. In short, the petitioners, for example, wanted greater local control of what they defined as local issues. Nonetheless, the implications of this line threatened the positions of other groups in Alice Springs, most notably, the new Aboriginal organizations such as CAALAS. These groups depended upon the Commonwealth's control of Aboriginal affairs to protect themselves from the attacks of local leaders. Hence, they had to resist, and legitimate resisting, any calls for the devolution of Commonwealth responsibility in this area of concern.

Gouldner has suggested that the analysis of conflict in government bureaucracies might profit from the study of how latent identities and roles (in particular, those of "cosmopolitan" and "local") affect the performance and public expectations of manifest roles (Gouldner 1958:467). By manifest identities Gouldner means those identities which actors customarily consider relevant in a particular setting. Latent identities, on the other hand, are those which actors consider irrelevant for the prescribed performance of a role. Gouldner notes that although both sociologists and people in their everyday life often officially deny it, latent roles occasionally intrude upon, and affect, manifest role behaviour. He further implies that there is an important connection between the exercise of power, the allocation of official responsibility, and the determination of the relevance or irrelevance of particular social identities in given situations. In particular, he suggests that although people may publicly legitimate the allocation of power and responsibility in terms of manifest role identities, unprescribed, latent identities may actually

guide their behaviour. Insofar as the concept of latent roles focusses attention upon how unprescribed expectations impinge upon the manifest system, it is important for understanding how people actually interact and ultimately, how they threaten and change the "equilibrium of the manifest role system" (Gouldner 1958:284-286).

Gouldner is concerned to show that latent identities affect manifest role performance and to correlate particular behaviour patterns with particular latent identities. He shows, for example, that patterns of influence and social participation vary significantly among the six latent identities he discovered in "Coop College" — variations which are unaccountable in terms of the manifest role system (Gouldner 1958:463). Gouldner fails to note, however, that in their everyday life actors themselves do not always accept that the manifest role system explains overt behaviour. Indeed, the extent to which actors account for behaviour in terms of the manifest or latent role system is variable, negotiable, and often critical to the development of particular political processes. From this perspective, the question is not whether latent roles actually account for behaviour; but, whether actors interpret behaviour as if it were motivated by manifest or latent identities. This points ultimately to how people legitimate or, alternatively, question the right of others to participate in particular social processes.

I suggest that in Alice Springs a basic criteria for legitimacy is that an actor be interpreted as acting in good faith; that is, everyone recognizes that his problems are authentic and that he is committed to finding a non-sectarian, consensual solution to them. Moreover, I suggest that a basic condition for political negotiations is that all parties to a dispute recognize that they are each acting in good faith. People may attempt to dismiss opponents from negotiations by calling their good faith into question. Alternatively, people might withdraw from negotiations if

they perceive their own good faith as unambiguously questioned or they perceive others as acting in bad faith. In other words, an important ground rule, which conditions the possibility of interaction, is the rule of good faith. The relevance or irrelevance of identities is related to how they affect the question of good faith. Although a group might document its good faith in terms of the manifest role system, for example, other groups might question its good faith by pointing to its apparently latent identities which are inconsistent with the manifest system. If these inconsistencies can be publicly affirmed, they constitute grounds for dismissing the particular group and its problems from legitimate participation in the negotiations at hand. Conversely, people may use latent identities which document their good faith to legitimate such participation.

These observations suggest three propositions about the development of the racial crisis in Alice Springs:

1. Latent identities were implicit in, and helped structure, the early debate.
2. As the conflict developed, the Alice Springs people used their interpretations of these identities to debunk the good faith of their opponents.
3. By debunking their opponents' good faith, they tried to disqualify them from participation in negotiations about, and to dismiss their issues as irrelevant to, the administration of Aboriginal affairs in Central Australia.

The racial crisis in Alice Springs did involve a local version of Gouldner's distinction between "locals" and "cosmopolitans" (Gouldner 1958: 290). Most notably, the petitioners appear to be locals in that they expressed loyalty to the Northern Territory (in particular, the town of Alice Springs), expressed concern about policy only as it affected the town's well-being, and legitimated their proposals in terms of the town's values. CAALAS' spokesmen were cosmopolitans in that they expressed loyalty to a Commonwealth agency, were committed to that agency's national

policy, and legitimated their actions in terms of the values of the national policy. An important point, however, is that the local people themselves had commonsense, named images of this distinction which were related to how they interpreted their relationships with each other and the outside world. On the one hand, the people who focussed on the drunkenness issue (the locals) perceived themselves as "responsible citizens" in contrast to outside "radicals". Groups such as CAALAS (the cosmopolitans), on the other hand, considered themselves as equalitarian progressives and considered many local Alice Springs people "racists".

Two interrelated dimensions constituted the "locals'" categorization of their political universe. First, they distinguished between people who knew about, and expressed sympathy for, their local problems and those who did not. Second, they distinguished between people who worked to ensure the well-being of the whole community (Aboriginal and white) and those who were sectarian. People who knew about the local problems (primarily because they lived in, and were committed to, Alice Springs) and who proposed non-violent solutions which benefitted everybody were "responsible citizens". "Radicals" were misinformed, malicious people who merely wanted to manipulate certain segments of the local population for their own political ends. Because such people were usually outsiders from the urban areas in the southern parts of Australia, they often earned the title "southern stirrers". Behind these distinctions between responsible citizen and stirrer was an image of "normal" relations among the various segments of the Alice Springs community. According to this image, Aborigines and local whites (who understood Aboriginal culture and mentality) lived in harmony if left alone. Racial problems only emerged if outside, knowledgeable agencies interfered with local customs and upset the Aborigines. As the most manifest threat to local law and order, Aboriginal drunkenness was a particularly serious consequence of radical meddling in local affairs.

These points are generally significant to most Alice Springs people. In the first place, Alice Springs has a national reputation as a particularly troublesome place with respect to race-relations. Most local people know and resent the fact that outsiders as a whole perceive local whites as unnecessarily harsh to Aborigines. They particularly resent how the press portrays the living conditions of Aborigines and consistently criticizes local authorities. Moreover, they despise "experts" who fly into Alice Springs for whirlwind visits, fly out again, and denigrate the town on the basis of superficial impressions. In the second place, Alice Springs is heavily populated by public servants — many of whom consider the town a "hardship" post and stay only so long as necessary. According to people like the petitioners, these public servants do not live in Alice Springs by choice or intend to commit their whole lives to the town. Yet, because the town is so heavily dependent upon agencies of the Commonwealth, these public servants are often the very people who make the crucial decisions about its well-being. Although few locals consider these public servants malicious, they do think that they are often misinformed, sometimes unsympathetic, and inadvertently make decisions which hurt the long-time, committed residents. In general, the town's people consider themselves at the mercy of outsiders who intentionally or otherwise are gradually undermining the local way of life, particularly in the area of Aboriginal affairs.

These points help explain how many people interpreted CAALAS. Few people questioned the need for Aborigines to have competent legal representation in court. Insofar as CAALAS restricted its role to legal issues, therefore, most people considered it legitimate. When he first arrived in Alice Springs in September 1974, the senior solicitor of CAALAS during my fieldwork adopted a relatively low public profile. In contrast to his immediate predecessor who had been quite flamboyant and publicly

antagonistic to local views, the new senior solicitor confined his public statements to the courtroom. Indeed, CAALAS and the CAAC agreed that the CAAC should be the overtly "political" agency and release under its name any statements their leaders felt were necessary. Although CAALAS often help draft these statements, the CAAC, not CAALAS, was the object of the adverse public criticism they elicited. The local police considered CAALAS a hostile force. Yet, many local leaders prior to the racial crisis thought the new solicitor was a responsible man who had realigned the organization along appropriate paths. CAALAS' public statements during the racial crisis, however, marked the first steps in what became its increasingly critical public role as a general advocate for Aborigines. As CAALAS began to assume its broader advocate's role in Central Australia, it also began to realize its potential as an "imposed" agency and to threaten the local definition of the situation. Because the DAA began to support CAALAS more firmly, many local people came to consider it the most radical and irresponsible agency in the region. And, like the Todd River, CAALAS posed special dangers because it dwelt within the community.

I have already analysed how CAALAS legitimated broad Commonwealth intervention in local affairs by explaining the racial tension crisis in terms of the racist structure of Central Australian society. The point I want to emphasize here is that this general description offered as well ready labels for particular actors or their proposals. The label "southern stirrer" ascribed hostile motives to outsiders. The label "racist" suggests not only that particular people have a local orientation but that they are motivated by discriminatory attitudes which, in this case, favour whites at the expense of Aborigines. The general point is that the labels "southern stirrer" and "racist" denied the good faith of the groups to whom they were applied. They suggested that in contrast to responsible citizens or equalitarian progressives, neither stirrers nor racists expressed

concern for authentic problems or were committed to finding non-sectarian solutions to those problems.

When the petitioners voiced their concern, they did so in terms of their manifest roles as local leaders. Moreover, they were careful not to question the good faith of the Commonwealth government. Indeed, they granted the Commonwealth's good faith and explained its actions on drunkenness as the result of bad judgement. Nor did CAALAS directly question the petitioners' good faith in its statement. Rather, it pointed out that a few "shortsighted" Europeans were causing trouble in Alice Springs and challenged the petitioners to disassociate themselves from such groups by supporting anti-discrimination legislation. The key to the rest of the racial crisis, however, was that Commonwealth officials (most notably, Senator J. Cavanaugh, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs) and the national media responded to the crisis in a manner which, to the petitioners at least, denied the good faith of the people who were worried about drunkenness and public safety. Because Cavanaugh's first public response to the situation in Alice Springs was to commence an investigation into the bashing claims, he appeared to respond exclusively to CAALAS' statement and to ignore the drunkenness petition completely. Indeed, Cavanaugh seemed to dismiss the petitioners as "racists". These facts suggested to the petitioners that Cavanaugh himself was not acting in good faith. Most of the racial crisis was concerned hereafter with the petitioners' attempts to reassert the salience of the public safety issue and to deny the relevance of the charge of racism.

The publication of the petition, CAALAS' statement, and Cavanaugh's response were crucial in ratifying the existence of a racial tension crisis and in establishing its major issues. In the month which followed, people talked of little else. The local newspaper and radio stations emphasized news items related to the breakdown of public order and highlighted the

comments of local, regional, and national leaders on the crisis as a whole. The daily schedules of many people (in particular, those directly associated with local government and the administration of Aboriginal affairs) were seriously disrupted by special meetings, conferences, and extended discussions about the local situation. Much normal work was suspended as people tried to define the contemporary situation, develop plans to meet it, and enlist local and national support for their particular approaches. In general, the scope of public participation in the racial crisis expanded extensively.

The Member of the Legislative Assembly for Alice Springs, who was one of the original petitioners, responded first to Cavanaugh's early actions. In the news he stated that he was appalled that the issue of police brutality was being used to "smother" the drunkenness issue, and denied that the petition was racist. The petitioners received a further vote of support from the first meeting of what later became the Alice Springs Citizen's Association. Although the meeting's organizers claimed over one hundred people attended, it was not public. Nonetheless, they claimed to have invited all the prominent figures from among the town's responsible citizens, including three of the petitioners. According to my informants, people expressed a wide range of opinions about the causes of the racial tension crisis. The meeting unanimously passed a motion, however, supporting the original petition and suggesting that another petition be circulated which asked the Legislative Assembly to reintroduce the charge of drunkenness. There were no motions calling for investigations into the charge of police brutality.

During the meeting another Member of the Legislative Assembly made an important and very telling suggestion. He suggested that Cavanaugh and other officials visit the town unannounced so that they might see Alice Springs "the way the people know it - not cleaned up as it has been for

such visits in the past" (ASCA Minutes 1975:1, unpublished manuscript). The implication was that certain unnamed groups were being duplicit with respect to the drunkenness issue. Because they opposed the local definition of the problem in terms of drunkenness, they shipped Aboriginal drunks to outlying regions whenever any Canberra officials visited Alice Springs. Consequently, the Canberra officials had an inadequate picture of how serious a problem drunks posed for the local citizens. The unannounced visit was supposed to prevent such tactics. Cavanaugh agreed to come but announced that his date of arrival would be Saturday, March 2, 1975.

The demand for the unannounced visit expressed many peoples' sense that the anti-drunkenness lobby was acting in bad faith. In his speech to a public meeting of the Cross-Culture Group, a local organization of Aborigines and whites dedicated to improving communication and intercultural understanding, the Mayor of Alice Springs expressed how he thought local citizens (in particular, the town council) had tried to act responsibly and in good faith in the past. He noted that the town council was inadequately equipped to understand the underlying problems which had produced bad relations between Aborigines and whites. Rather, the Commonwealth government had assumed responsibility for that kind of problem and had the expertise, the money, and the power to act upon it. Nonetheless, the town council had consistently supported local groups and itself sponsored programmes designed to relieve the situation. For example, the town council had supported Aboriginal Hostel's attempts to change the town plan and establish new housing areas for Aborigines. The town council had conducted its own inquiry into the fringe-dwellers and presented it to Cavanaugh during his last visit to Alice Springs. The town council had also supported the Frontiers Conference, a colloquium on Aboriginal-white relations held in Alice Springs in July 1974. Finally, it had supported the petition calling for the temporary reinstatement of drunkenness as an

offense. The problem was, however, that all of this work had produced no results. The Commonwealth government had not responded appropriately.

The Mayor stressed that in all of its efforts, the town council tried to reflect the whole community's interests and to lessen dissension. The drunkenness issue, however, had proved quite tough and most divisive. The problem was that current legislation allowed people to get so drunk that serious violence was inevitable. The town needed a measure which would encourage drunks to sober up before they became dangerous. Such a measure would be necessary until detoxification centres were established. Hence, the town council had supported the reintroduction of drunkenness as an offense until the reasons for drinking were identified and appropriate steps taken to cure it. Otherwise, the town council had to rely on higher levels of government and could only try to engender a cooperative atmosphere around the town.

Although the pro-petition lobby assumed that Cavanaugh favoured CAALAS, CAALAS itself took no particular comfort in his public statements. CAALAS had been pressing Cavanaugh for several months to increase its budget, rent houses for its lawyers, and increase its general support for CAALAS' programs. Up to the time of the racial crisis, the DAA had been reticent. Indeed, part of the reason CAALAS made its critique of the original petition through the newspapers was that neither Cavanaugh nor his most important administrators had responded to its entreaties vigorously enough in the past. By going to the press, CAALAS hoped to pressure Cavanaugh as well as attack the local politicians.

CAALAS thought that only a Royal Commission into police-Aboriginal relations had any hope of addressing the fundamental problems in the system of justice in the Northern Territory. In particular, CAALAS wanted a thorough examination of police administration and training, relations between Aboriginal and white Australian law, and the role of Aboriginal

self-determination in the prosecution of criminal justice. Cavanaugh's promises of an inquiry into the bashings fell short of a Royal Commission and ignored the wider issues. CAALAS interpreted his public statements, in fact, as an attempt merely to respond to the most spectacular issues and do a "cosmetic job".

CAALAS' own suspicions were confirmed, in its view, when it received a call from the DAA official responsible for all the Aboriginal legal services throughout Australia. He called CAALAS the day after its press release. He noted that CAALAS was not supposed to be involved in politics and suggested it remember who provided its money. Although the DAA had agreed to provide CAALAS with a third lawyer in early February, three days after this DAA official called CAALAS received word that the national budget for Aboriginal legal services had been cut and there was no money for a third lawyer. CAALAS also tried to arrange a private meeting with Cavanaugh during his "inspection tour" of the town. It never succeeded. In short, CAALAS too felt it had no real support at the national level of the DAA. In conjunction with Murphy's elevation, the DAA's cool stance discouraged CAALAS and made it feel highly vulnerable to local attack.

In the week prior to his visit on March 2, Cavanaugh approved funds for a number of social welfare programs designed to help the local situation. In particular, he approved the CAAC's submission for a drunk pick-up service and night shelter. The idea was for Aboriginal field officers to drive around Alice Springs offering drunks a ride home or to a temporary "sobering up" shelter. The CAAC hoped in this way to clear drunks off the streets before they became rowdy, caused damage, or were arrested by the police. He approved funds for Aboriginal hostels to purchase two hundred army tents for temporary rental to fringe-dwellers and four houses in Alice Springs. He also initiated talks with the Department of Health about establishing a detoxification centre in Alice Springs. Although he had decided

most of these things by February 24, his decisions were not widely known. Indeed, Cavanaugh made public comments which far outshadowed the significance of his direct actions.

In interviews with the press Cavanaugh made four comments about the local racial situation. In one interview he compared the troubles in Alice Springs to a similar situation in Redfern, a suburb of Sydney, New South Wales, with a high proportion of Aboriginal residents. He suggested that level-headed consultation between police and Aborigines in Redfern had reduced tensions, lowered the rate of arrest, and almost ended damage in the local hotels. He felt that the same progress could be made in Alice Springs. The day before he was due to arrive in Alice Springs, however, Cavanaugh also said that Alice Springs was on the verge of racial warfare, that blacks and whites walked on opposite footpaths in the town, and that whenever groups of one race found members of another alone, there were bashings. The possible inconsistencies in Cavanaugh's appraisals of the local situation were less important to many local people than what they considered the underlying, discrediting similarities. In particular, they resented his comparison of Alice Springs with Redfern and the remark that the town was on the verge of racial warfare. Although it may well have been true (as the Minister was later to claim) that the local people themselves had painted as gloomy a picture of the situation as Cavanaugh, many people interpreted his remarks as insults to the good name of the town.

By the time Cavanaugh finally arrived in Alice Springs, many local people questioned his value and reliability as a patron for local interests. There were widely repeated rumours that a "clean-up" was in progress. Some people specifically suggested that the DAA, CAALAS, and the CAAC were conducting it. Cavanaugh had disappointed CAALAS and confirmed his earlier reputation with many town leaders as an irresponsible outsider who would do anything to oppose local opinion. In general, many people concluded that Cavanaugh was not acting in good faith. Insofar as the capacity to enlist

the support of powerful national leaders was crucial for roles people played in the local arena, these questions about Cavanaugh's good faith were vital aspects of local struggles for power, not merely epiphenomenal manifestations of them.

Cavanaugh scheduled a meeting for Saturday afternoon, March 2. Originally, he was to have met in a closed session only with the town's leaders. In the event many people "gatecrashed" and the meeting effectively became public. As he stated several times, Cavanaugh hoped to use the meeting to establish a local consultative committee of Aborigines and whites. He expected the committee to function as a forum for the ongoing dialogue he thought would solve local troubles. The meeting focussed neither upon the committee nor its brief. Rather, most people concentrated on Cavanaugh's role as Minister, the relevance of his remarks about the town, and restated most of what they had been saying to each other in the previous weeks about the central issues of the racial crisis. Throughout the meeting, people legitimated their right to speak in terms of their good faith and knowledge about the town and its problems.

The Mayor of Alice Springs opened the meeting. Standing to the Minister's left, he said:

Mr. Minister, Sir, the statement we prepared on February 17 related to the excessive consumption of alcohol. That statement was prepared only after a broad consultation by responsible people, and was designed to draw attention to specific matters which could be readily defined as tension points between black and white. It is not the first time such statements have been expressed and it was made clear that we were speaking of irresponsible minorities. We sought to have enforced existing laws governing the supply of liquor, to reintroduce drunkenness as an offense until such time as proper remedial centres were established. We sought proper camping sites for itinerant Aborigines in particular, a matter first suggested by this community five years ago. We invited those responsible for determining policies to implement it and meet with us....

...It is regrettable, Sir, that in the intervening period you have seen fit to make a series of public statements slandering this whole community, black and white. Your emotive references to the imminent outbreak of racial warfare and statements that black and white people walk on opposite footpaths and that whenever one racial group has another in its midst that other is bashed are untrue and inflammatory. Your comparison between Redfern and Alice Springs demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the real position. For what purpose and upon what advice you've seen fit to malign this community...I do not know. But I tell you those utterances have only served to exacerbate tension. (cries of "Hear, hear" from the audience) I regret I feel constrained to say that the community no longer has faith in you. Unless you withdraw your allegation and apologize to the town, I see no useful purpose in taking further part in this discussion. (further cries of "Hear, hear" and applause from the audience)

After the applause died down, Senator Cavanaugh responded:

Mr. Mayor, I thank you for opening the meeting although I can't say I'm excited about the message you've brought. I am here today at the request of a number of local citizens...If I drew any conclusions on the racial tension in Alice Springs it was from the petition which was sent to myself, the Prime Minister, and a number of other officials in Canberra. And, therefore, I am pleased to hear...there is (no) racial tension. But, don't make me the one who brought this about. Every press statement (I) made was a reply to some local allegation. And...a series of incidents... caused great worry.

Cavanaugh continued that someone in the town shared his views because when he agreed to come during the Parliamentary recess (six weeks hence), they telegraphed saying he did not care about the local troubles and demanded he come earlier. He said further that he had indeed found trouble here and acted to correct it. He had only just approved funds for a night shelter and set machinery in motion to take more action.

Cavanaugh expanded his remarks with a discussion about what he considered the proper general approach to Aborigines and drinking.

While I recognize that drink has caused problems in all Aboriginal communities, ...Aborigines have been given equality with white people, an equality which they will maintain, which they have to maintain under our international obligations. There is no question of taking the right to drink from Aborigines. Society has moved...to a state (which recognizes) that crimes without victims should not be punished (emphasis in original text).

He noted that Senator Murphy had instructed the Northern Territory police not to arrest for drunkenness alone as a result of Cavanaugh's own discussion of the problem at Melbourne University in 1974. Although any citizen could be arrested for other breaches of law, drunkenness was not an offense. Finally, he summarized his decisions about the pick-up service, the detoxification centre, and the property purchases. He closed his remarks by suggesting that a biracial committee be established to examine the situation and advise the DAA. The problems in Alice Springs, he said,

Cannot be solved by finance. They cannot be solved by restrictions on individuals. They cannot be solved by attack on one or another. They are questions which must be solved by greater communication and cooperation between...all those concerned.

The Mayor responded that, although Cavanaugh had addressed the problems which originally provoked the drunkenness petition, he had not apologized to the town. Without an apology, the Mayor saw no point in continuing the discussions. Cavanaugh tried to justify his comments about racial warfare by invoking the opinion of a "visiting anthropologist" from an overseas university who had only just left Alice Springs. Cavanaugh's efforts to explain the basis of his remarks were interrupted several times, however, by shouts that he should examine the situation for himself on unannounced visits and rely upon the advice of local senior officers, not "idiot anthropologists who travel all over the world and know nothing about the place".

The Mayor remained unsatisfied with Cavanaugh's remarks and said:

Senator, I'm afraid to say that your remarks confirm my general impression already expressed. I regretably feel that you lack general understanding of the local situation making broad general statements where we've tried to detail all those issues of real concern, that you've not displayed any real sense of sensibility and objectivity towards this community, black and white, and the whole question of the difficulties facing this town. It seems to me that to make broad sweeping statements about racism and the type of things you're reported to have said in the last few days (are) slanderous of the people of this town. You've not accepted my invitation to withdraw that statement. I invite others who feel as I do to join me, although I appreciate public servants may find themselves in difficulty.

The Mayor then left the meeting. Fourteen people accompanied him, including at least three of the drunkenness petitioners, two Aborigines, a local Luthern pastor, and the president of the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party.

The Mayor walked out because Cavanaugh broke, and refused to reaffirm, the rules of good faith. Like the rules of face, the rule of good faith is normally a condition, not an objective of interaction (Goffman 1967:12). But, under some circumstances, the problematic nature of good faith becomes the object of actors' attention and must itself be negotiated. If efforts to reestablish good faith fail (such as a necessary apology is not forthcoming), interaction fails and negotiations stop. The walk-out culminated a period in which the good faith of the petitioners, CAALAS, and Cavanaugh all came under question. Because Cavanaugh was the man ultimately responsible for taking the actions most local leaders thought necessary, he was crucial in determining how this process developed. Although he certainly took action on the drunkenness issue, he did not pay sufficient deference to the authenticity of the general problem as the town's people perceived it or to the good will of the people themselves. The Mayor made an explicit

recognition of those points (ie. the apology) a necessary condition for further discussion. When he did not receive it, he broke off negotiations.

Although many people in the audience agreed with the Mayor, most stayed at the meeting and continued to talk with Cavanaugh. The meeting eventually lasted for over three hours. In addition to responding to individual speakers, Cavanaugh reiterated his desire to establish a biracial committee to local leaders to discuss the problems and advise the DAA. The meeting was otherwise interesting as a context within which Cavanaugh and the local people debated about the kinds of problems for which the DAA and the Commonwealth more generally had to assume responsibility. In the light of the dispute between the Mayor and Cavanaugh, it is interesting to note that most people who spoke for any length introduced themselves as *bona fide* residents of the community. In particular, they consistently asserted their familiarity with local problems, their interest in the community as a whole, and denied they were racist. The two most important speakers were the chairman of the Alice Springs Tourist Promotions Board (the ASTPB) and a social worker from the Institute of Aboriginal Development.

The ASTPB chairman engaged Cavanaugh in the longest discussion of the afternoon. He was a very prominent local businessman and close friend of many of the petitioners, including the Mayor. He was commonly assumed by many Alice Springs people to be a key man "behind the scenes" in Central Australian politics. He restated the petitioners' case focussing in particular upon the fringe-campers in the Todd River. He presented himself as a representative of those people who (unlike most public servants) genuinely wanted to live in, and were committed to, Alice Springs. On that basis he claimed to make authoritative judgements about its well-being and questioned the insight of outside, government officials who were unfamiliar with Alice Springs.

Senator, I can't withdraw because I wasn't invited. I really gatecrashed here because I thought there were a few things I really should bring up. I (have) lived here for over twenty-eight years, not because I have to but...out of choice. I hope that I leave here by choice and not because I have to. In this (twenty-eight years)...the position of the Aboriginal has deteriorated. The government, not only your government, seemed to think that...money...(was) the answer to everything...But, why is not something being done about the campers in the Todd?...We have a situation in which right in the middle of Alice Springs, there are up to six hundred people camped without any facilities whatsoever -- no toilets, no shelter. At least fifty percent of the people in the Todd are alcoholics. Now, instead of being able to dry out, they can actually drink themselves to death.

He rhetorically conceded Cavanaugh's point that drunkenness was not a crime. He argued, nonetheless, that crime inevitably followed from drunkenness irrespective of the drunk's race.

Okay, drunkenness is not a crime. But, it does lead to other crimes...I don't think it's racial discrimination...That's just a matter of crime in this community...It doesn't matter whether they are black or white or whatever. When they are drunk, they fight. It's no good saying there won't be because there will be fights and rapes.

Finally, he suggested that the fringe-dwellers be moved downstream out of town or out to Amooinguna, the local Aboriginal settlement. He recommended the government fund a free bus to transport the drunks and staff it with a policeman. In this way, he thought people might drink less, mothers could bring up their children "reasonably well", and the drunks could fight out of sight among themselves.

Cavanaugh refused to recognize the premises of this argument. He stated that everyone had to recognize that Aborigines lived in Alice Springs and would continue to do so in ever-increasing numbers. However, because Aborigines had no jobs and little housing, they began far behind the white man who lived here by choice and had jobs. Hence, although the town might

not be racist, there were inequalities which kept Aborigines down. He accepted that the government had not done everything possible to help them. But, it was also true that the local authorities had not always cooperated with Commonwealth efforts. In particular, people had to realize that Aborigines had the right to live wherever they wished and could not be arbitrarily moved. In summary, Cavanaugh no more accepted the ASTPB chairman's views than he had the original petitioners.

Cavanaugh's response to the ASTPB chairman contrasts with his reaction to the speech of the IAD social worker. The IAD social worker was a very prominent spokesman on Aboriginal affairs both locally and nationally. Indeed, he maintained close personal and working relationships with powerful men in the Labor government and the DAA. He often advised and consulted these men about local issues. When he stood up to speak, he rose as a man with a visible and highly respected identity in the context of the Commonwealth's new program for the administration of Aboriginal affairs, and with many opponents in Alice Springs.

The social worker did not overtly play upon his well-established identity. Rather, he too documented his right to speak in terms of his fairmindedness, on the one hand, and his intimate knowledge of Aborigines, on the other. He explained that he had worked with Aborigines for over fourteen years, five and a half years in Redfern and over nine years in Central Australia. He was well known among local Aborigines. Yet, he also knew the problems the town faced. He often had drunken Aborigines in his home and had experienced personally the problems they posed. By the same token, he continued, the town's people had to be fair about the situation. Although the town might perhaps not be "racist", he doubted the "sincerity" of some people. For example, he questioned the sincerity of people who called Aborigines "animals" (a reference to a remark earlier in the meeting), of taxi drivers who ran illegal grog, of publicans who served drunks and

children, of local white people who approved of violence against Aborigines, and of police who abused their powers and applied the law selectively. If the town were to solve its problems, it had to support the police in the fair application of the laws right across the board, and insure strict enforcement of licensing laws.

The social worker observed that people recognized there was a local drinking problem. It was not, however, limited either to Aborigines or Alice Springs. On the contrary, there were many white people throughout Australia who, suffering from the pressures of today's lifestyle, had alcohol problems. Excessive drinking was a major nationwide social problem. Nonetheless, Aborigines had special problems. As a result of white Australian society's refusal to understand Aboriginal culture and to communicate on its terms, the authority structure of Aboriginal society had collapsed. Of particular significance in this respect was the way previous and contemporary government officers had administered Aboriginal affairs. The social worker gave a description of the effects of settlement upon the Pintubi, and of the frustrated efforts of local bodies working in the field. In summary he said,

The problem is not just drunks. It's a society problem of community breakdown and we've contributed to it all of us. So let's sit down together and see what ways we can strengthen and re-enforce laws necessary. And then see, Sir, why there are so many bottlenecks in the public service system....

Cavanaugh responded:

I know the frustrations caused by the public service. I plead guilty; but, I can faithfully report that we are speeding up. We never had a Department of Aboriginal Affairs before 1973 and we've been working under pressure and have been understaffed. You made a most inspiring speech.

The meeting was a context within which local people could publicly pressure Cavanaugh and hold him accountable. In this respect, it was an

important device whereby locals circumvented intermediaries in the bureaucratic hierarchy and tried to force Cavanaugh to accept responsibility for particular issues. A key aspect of his response to the ASTPB chairman was that he refused to accept responsibility for, or even the legitimacy of, any overt action upon the problems caused by drunkenness except as it hurt the drunks themselves. Drunkenness was not a public question, but an illness which had to be treated. This position left several types of local people in an uncertain situation. Indeed, it seemed to some people that Cavanaugh was leaving private citizens with the responsibility of coping with a problem the Commonwealth had itself created. Taxi drivers and publicans felt themselves in such a vulnerable situation. As the objects of the most sustained accusations of racism and exploitation, taxi drivers and publicans were ridden right out of any legitimate participation in the discussion at all. They argued, however, that they were often the people who suffered most from Aboriginal drunkenness. It was the petition from a local group of publicans which first heralded the development of the racial crisis.

After the IAD social worker sat down, a publican rose and defended his colleagues. He noted that eight months earlier he had closed his pub because the situation was "unreal; well, it was worse than it is now". After having closed his pub, however, he received a warning that unless he served "those particular persons", he would face a court. When he asked why, he was told he was a racist. Yet, other people called him and complained of the noise. Cavanaugh said, "You have laws. To refuse to serve someone because of his color is an offense. But, for a pub to refuse him because he's drunk is the law." The publican answered, "That's right, sir, but you hear over the telephone and other ways that you are racist whether you're fair dinkum or not". Cavanaugh observed, "I take it there is unanimity of opinion that there should be proper enforcement of the law". He closed the meeting soon thereafter.

Cavanaugh's comments ignore the possibility that, from the publicans' perspective, the law was unclear and that the conditions for its "enforcement" with respect to Aboriginal drunks in particular, were inadequate. Most especially, the publican was put in a situation where he alone had to judge when his customers were drunk. Given the contemporary legal and political climate, his judgements were subject to scrutiny and great negotiation. "Enforcing the law", therefore, was not an unproblematic or straightforward as Cavanaugh seemed to insist. What the publican demanded was a change in the conditions under which he worked so that his judgements might be more isolated from the wider setting and his decisions less negotiable. The reintroduction of drunkenness as an offense was crucial, in this respect, because it would have made his decisions unimpeachable, enlisted the aid of the police in their enforcement, and isolated him from outside attack.

Yet, the publican's demands were politically unpalatable for Cavanaugh. Consequently, he effectively denied the relevance of, and responsibility for, the publican's problems. Indeed, he largely dismissed him from participation in the discussion at all.

The Consequences of the Racial Tension Crisis

The most important consequence of the racial crisis was that it legitimated upgrading the power of the local office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Prior to the racial crisis the Alice Springs office was subordinate to the head office in Darwin. Although it was still nominally under Darwin's control, Cavanaugh appointed a new, personally influential man as regional director and announced that the local office would eventually become an autonomous regional centre. The new regional director (who had not been associated with the Welfare Branch) was to supervise that process. Although this move meant that the DAA, the self-determination policy, and

the white brokers who supported it officially became more powerful in the region, it nonetheless gave all local whites greater access to decision-making in the administration of Aboriginal affairs. The biracial committee was one official (though short-lived) forum for this access. The point is, however, that because the DAA had to legitimate its long-term presence in Central Australia, it had to take account of all white interests. The biracial human relations committee was but a public representation of a necessary condition of bureaucratic functioning in the local area. The general point, therefore, is that because they declare that the system has broken down, racial tension crises ultimately legitimate the need for bureaucratic intervention in Aboriginal affairs and, thereby, lead to ever-greater increases in the power of whites over Aborigines. In this respect, "racial tension" (whether interpreted as a decline in public safety, as the detribalization of Aborigines, or as a manifestation of a system of racial discrimination) is part of a long tradition in the Northern Territory whereby whites use Aborigines and their alleged "problems" as political resources in their own struggles for local power.

Nevertheless, the phenomena which so many people have interpreted as symptoms of detribalization do occur and are worthy of analysis. Aborigines do live in fringe-camps. There have been major changes in domestic, marital, and kin relationships among Aborigines. Aborigines drink alcoholic beverages and often engage in violent physical interaction. Many of these phenomena threaten the basis of the social order whites want to take for granted. So the problem cannot simply be ignored by renaming it or dismissing unfruitful labels such as detribalization. In the rest of this thesis I hope to explain these phenomena and, moreover, systematically relate them to how Aborigines have become incorporated into white society. I will stress in particular the role of the Commonwealth government and its various Aboriginal administrations in the transformation of Aboriginal

society and the generation of the conditions of contemporary Aboriginal life. In this way I will show how, even as they decried "detrribalization", white administrators have produced and reproduced the conditions which give rise to what they consider its symptoms.

CHAPTER 3

FRINGE-CAMPS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL ADMINISTRATION IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

I

In this chapter I intend to argue that the significance of the Aboriginal fringe-camps around Alice Springs can only be understood in the context of the emergent structure of social relationships between Aborigines and whites in Central Australia. I stress particularly the context and pattern of relationships between Aborigines and agents of the Commonwealth government's administration of Aboriginal affairs. Indeed, I suggest that the fringe-camps properly so-called have emerged only since, and as the direct result of, the increased scope and structural involvement of the Commonwealth government in everyday Aboriginal social life; that is, in the Northern Territory since the end of World War II. This contrasts with most conventional approaches which tend to label any Aboriginal settlement too near the outskirts of an urban area as a fringe-camp and which stress the normative degradation of its Aboriginal and white residents (Reay 1945:296-323; Reay and Sitlington 1948:177-207; Rowley 1973:224-240). Such approaches describe fringe-camps as transitional phenomena and dismiss them as marginal to the social reality and analysis of contemporary Aboriginal life. However, I want to argue that the analysis of fringe-camps is crucial for understanding the political and economic processes which have operated upon Central Australian Aboriginal people in recent years and the responses Aboriginal people have made to them. Although the fringe-campers maintain a distinctive social identity in the range of social situations within contemporary Central Australian Aboriginal society, their identity and social location lays bare the structural predicament of Aborigines generally. What distinguishes fringe-campers from other

Aborigines is the range and comprehensiveness of their relationships with the dominant white powers of Central Australia. Being a fringe-dweller is sociologically synonymous with maintaining a set of relatively simplex relationships with several diverse types of outside, white agents.¹

Fringe-dwellers contrast with other Aborigines who heavily commit themselves to one white agent and derive all their needs from it. However, fringe and non-fringe-dwellers alike share the necessity of having to interact with whites on unequal terms in order to survive at all. Insofar as the fringe-dwellers represent one complex strategy among others for handling the problems generated by these conditions, they both distinguish themselves and document the relevance for the understanding of other Aborigines.

I will detail the implications of these observations below. The point is, however, that this approach emphasises the transactions which fringe-dwellers make among themselves and with outsiders. It thereby makes

¹The terms "simplex" and "multiplex" are the subject of some debate in the transactional literature. In this paper I use these terms in an effort to characterize briefly different degrees of what Handelman (1976:282-283) calls "structural involvement". He avoids the use of "simplex" or "multiplex" and refers instead to "multiple links". I have adopted Handelman's indices of structural involvement. Yet, I require a set of terms which distinguishes between different degrees of structural involvement, which Handelman does not provide. In line with a suggestion of Max Gluckman, Garbett distinguishes between manifold and multiplex relationships. By "manifold" relationships, he means relationships which involve multiple transactional elements. In contrast, "multiplex" relationships involve multiple normative elements (Garbett n.d.). Again, Garbett's terminology does not allow me to compare the relative complexity of relationships which are not single-stranded, but which nonetheless are constituted by different degrees of structural involvement. Kapferer distinguishes between relationships which contain either instrumental or societal components. Kapferer calls relationships which develop on the basis of either one or the other "simplex", and those which contain both "multiplex" (Kapferer 1972:172). In my use of the terms "simplex" and "multiplex" I am trying to indicate different degrees of structural involvement; that is, I use the terms comparatively. I use Handelman's notion of "area" to compare the transactional elements which constitute the emergent relationships between Aborigines and whites. Although most such relationships contain multiple links, some contain fewer transactional elements than others. I use the terms "relatively simplex" and "multiplex" to distinguish between relationships with fewer or more transactional elements.

it possible to analyse the interrelationships among individual careers, daily fringe-camp life, and conditions in the wider context. For example, it suggests that being a fringe-camper is not necessarily a perpetual condition of an individual's normative orientation or cultural development. It suggests, rather, that individuals might move into and out of fringe-camps according to the development of their life-careers. Among other things, the fringe-camps are labour pools and reservoirs of credit for men working in the cattle industry. Men who are committed to cattlework, therefore, find the camps useful at certain points in the seasonal cycle of the pastoral industry. Nonetheless, men who find permanent urban employment do not require the information or resources available in the camps and often move out of them. Access to particular resources is not the only advantage of fringe-camps. Living in the camps also frees individuals of certain obligations. In particular, fringe-dwellers are not indebted to the welfare agencies which control the rural settlements or the urban housing projects. On the contrary, the camps are places in which Aborigines can establish domestic groups and live in the urban area outside of welfare housing. The virtue of a transactional view of fringe-camp life, however, is that it can also comprehend changes in the wider context which might alter the utility of fringe-camps or the capacity of people to live in them. For example, as white bureaucracies change the conditions which control access to urban housing, the fringe population might rise or be cosmetically eliminated.

The general point is that the fringe-camps are significant contexts within which Aborigines actively negotiate with, and attempt to control, the social forces which act upon them. They are by no means simply collecting grounds for so-called "detrribalized" people. Nor are fringe-camps miniature settlements or underdeveloped suburbs. Rather, they have a singular identity emergent from the specific way their residents

manipulate the resources available in the camps. An adequate analysis of the fringe-camps, therefore, must focus on the conditions under which Aborigines live, their strategies for handling those conditions, and the consequences which follow from the interaction of these processes. In other words, the analysis must begin with a serious look at the structure of social relationships in which Aborigines participate and which they help construct.

II

The fringe-camps emerged as part of the process by which whites extended their involvement with and control over Aborigines in Central Australia. Of particular interest in this process was the way the Commonwealth government impinged upon and attempted to manipulate the development of everyday Aboriginal social life. Among others Rowley has made an extensive analysis of Commonwealth policies and operational strategies with respect to Northern Territory Aborigines. He documents in great detail the political controversies which raged over Aboriginal policy as well as the compromises which eventually emerged as official policy (Rowley 1970:222-340, 1972:29-54). However, he has paid little attention to the growth and development of the actual content and pattern of the relationships between Aborigines and whites which emerged as a result of the administrative implementation of these policies. This is important, however, since these relationships were the vehicle for the pragmatic materialization of the policies and constituted the social contexts within which Aborigines encountered the policies. No account of Aboriginal responses to them, therefore, can ignore the social relationships which the policies helped define.

From this perspective, I suggest there was a major transformation in the administration of Aboriginal affairs after World War II. Indeed, although policies have changed quite significantly in the last twenty-five years, it may well be true that the organizational transformation which occurred as a result of the establishment of the Welfare Branch will have longer lasting consequences for Aboriginal-white relationships than the particular policies which various governments articulate from time to time. Although quite fundamental in its consequences, this transformation may be described quite simply. Prior to 1953 the Commonwealth government administered Aboriginal affairs either through agents not under its direct control (e.g. missions and cattle stations) or through agents of its own whose primary functions lay in other fields (e.g. the police and Department of Public Health). After 1953, however, the Commonwealth government established an administrative apparatus which was completely under its control, whose primary responsibility was Aborigines, and which had almost exclusive control over Aborigines. In other words, with the establishment of the Welfare Branch a specialized Aboriginal administration emerged as such.²

This transformation in the administrative apparatus of Aboriginal affairs marked as well a radical increase in the power of the administration over Aborigines. Although the laws were in many respects similar, the

²I realize that the Native Affairs Branch began working earlier than this. It was especially active in establishing the rudiments of what later developed into the complete system of settlements for Aboriginal "wards". However, I stress the role of the Welfare Branch because it had the money, the power, the administrative apparatus, and a fully developed welfare ideology to implement the changes I am outlining and which the Native Affairs Branch only initiated. Although the Native Affairs Branch was a specialized organization, it was not until the Commonwealth established the Welfare Branch in 1953 that an organizational context emerged which could effectively create the conditions for the full development of the new approach. The significance of the Native Affairs Branch is that it marked the gradually emerging new direction in the Commonwealth's activities.

machinery for the implementation of the laws became more efficient and more highly developed. It became able to enforce many of the laws which it had previously depended upon others to implement. These changes were quite fundamental. They meant that whatever policy changes occurred in 1953 and have occurred since, the organizational context within which they are administered is fundamentally different from the era prior to 1953. In comparison with the organizational discontinuity between the pre- and post-1953 periods, the policy changes seem relatively insignificant. By the same token, the Commonwealth's refinement and development of the Aboriginal administration since 1953 marks a basic organizational continuity between the Welfare Branch and its descendants which might otherwise be obscured by the apparently quite radical changes in overt policy. For example, although the laws no longer permit the administration to control the movement of Aborigines through space, the administration's monopoly of most resources which Aborigines need to survive nonetheless maintains its basic power over them. The organizational basis for these processes was established in 1953 and has been developing ever since.³

These changes had quite radical consequences for the structure of relationships between many Aborigines and the administrative apparatus. At the simplest level, the administration was able to establish its control over a greater number and range of Aboriginal people than before 1953. Prior to that time, the administration controlled little outside the urban

³The dismembering of the Welfare Branch has had important effects on the structure of relationships between Aborigines and the Commonwealth government. The point I wish to emphasise, however, is that the Welfare Branch fully encapsulated Aborigines within the wider Commonwealth administrative apparatus. Consequently, although Aborigines look, for example, to the Department of Social Security to provide them with pensions, they now work within a context almost totally dominated by one agency or another of the Commonwealth government. This was not true prior to 1953 and is the direct result of the Welfare Branch's work. It is this process of encapsulation which I wish to stress in this chapter.

areas. Indeed, what activities it organized were mostly concerned with the administration of urban institutions for part-Aboriginal people. In the bush it yielded its responsibility and power to the missions, the police, and the pastoralists. Otherwise it left the Aborigines "uncontacted". It simply did not have the administrative resources to incorporate them into any systematic apparatus.⁴ In contrast to its predecessors the Welfare Branch had quite extensive resources which it used actively to encapsulate whole new Aboriginal populations and to reorganize many of the Aborigines who had previously been living in contact with other white agencies. It further redistributed most of the Aboriginal population in space. The administration accomplished these tasks by developing new residential communities both in the bush and the urban areas and moving Aborigines into them. These processes expressed, and were major instruments in, the administration's increased power over and structural involvement in the everyday affairs of Aborigines.

The Welfare Branch recognized three types of Aboriginal communities: the missions or settlements, the cattle stations, and the urban housing projects. It directly controlled and/or established thirteen settlements and two urban housing projects. It also subsidized thirteen missions throughout the Northern Territory (Long 1970:199-200). Although the Welfare Branch left many cattle station residents where they were and substantially yielded its authority over them to the cattle bosses, it systematically encouraged or compelled large numbers of Aborigines both from the cattle regions and elsewhere to move onto the settlements. It

⁴The Commonwealth did make some early efforts in these directions prior to World War II. It appointed T.G.H. Strehlow as a patrol officer to work among many of the western desert groups which inhabited the southwestern border areas of the Northern Territory. It also established a few ration depots. However, the resettlement process was only developed completely under the aegis of the assimilation policy and the administration of the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration after 1953.

also settled a select number of substantially part-Aborigines in the urban areas — most notably for this discussion in Alice Springs (Long 1970:199-201; Rowley 1972:35-54, 1974:239). Between 1950 and 1965, the total population on missions and settlements in the Northern Territory increased from almost 6,000 Aboriginal people to over 11,000. In Central Australia the numbers increased from under 1,000 in 1950 to over 6,200 in 1971. By 1971, 1,850 Aboriginal people lived in Alice Springs. Most lived in houses built by the Welfare Branch or the Housing Commission. A substantial majority lived in fringe-camps. Another 1,920 Aboriginal people lived on cattle stations in Central Australia in 1971 (Bureau of the Census 1971). Although there was considerable movement back and forth between these communities during my fieldwork, these population centers emerged as a result of the administration's reorganization of the Aboriginal population during the late 1940's and the 1950's.

Although I have so far described these processes in terms of the redistribution of the Aboriginal population in space, it is important to realize that they involved as well significant processes of ethnic, administrative and industrial reorganization. The Welfare Branch legitimated its activities in terms of the assimilation policy. The fundamental principle of that policy was that Aborigines did not understand the norms of white, middle-class Australian culture. The Welfare Branch's major responsibility was in its own eyes, therefore, to teach Aborigines those norms and enable them to participate effectively in the wider society. According to the policy clients varied in the diversity of their cultural background from the most primitive to the nearly assimilated. Consequently, the policy was supposedly geared to the needs of the individual clients and administered according to their capacities. Clients were to move into the wider society as their individual progress permitted them (Tatz 1963:13-20). There was, in other words, a graded hierarchy. The distinction between the

urban and the settlement communities was related to what the Welfare Branch considered to be the broad distinctions within the Aboriginal community on the assimilation scale. The settlements were for those people who were least assimilated and understood almost nothing about white Australian culture. The Welfare Branch offered the urban houses to the people it considered were becoming assimilated.⁵

These broadly cultural criteria were linked to implicit racial distinctions. Rowley notes that although the planners of the assimilation policy explicitly disavowed racial criteria in the public presentation and justification of their schemes, the actual administration of the policy developed as if racial criteria were important. This was primarily the result of the way the category of "ward" was interpreted in administrative and legal practice. A "ward" was someone judged by the administration to be unable for special social reasons to care for himself. As a ward he was subject to the complete authority of the Director of Welfare. The Director controlled the movements, property, choice of residence, and marriage rights of all "wards" and in general was responsible for their "protection" and well-being. Although the Welfare Ordinance of 1953 did not use racial terms to define wards, it excluded all persons with the right to vote from ward status. Consequently, it excluded most part-Aborigines and all whites. Only "full-blood" Aborigines were eligible for ward status. Apparently most were so registered. Since wards were restricted to residence on missions, settlements, and cattle stations, most rural Aborigines were "full-bloods" and most urban Aborigines were part-Aborigines (Long 1967:195; Rowley 1974:239-241).

There were major administrative differences between the three residential communities. The Welfare Branch had the power and legal

⁵The urban houses were, of course, also ranked. See Rowley (1972:40-41).

authority to interfere in the everyday domestic life of urban and settlement Aborigines. In contrast, it substantially yielded its authority over cattle station residents to the pastoralists. It paid the pastoralists subsidies to support their resident Aboriginal populations and relied upon them to enforce its regulations. In this sector, the Welfare Branch operated much as its predecessors had been forced to operate. The significance of this surrender might be gauged by the Welfare Branch's difficulty in sustaining its prosecution of any pastoralists for misuse of its subsidy money. As a result of this the Aborigines living on the cattle stations were effectively administered by their employers. Their cattle bosses both isolated and insulated them from the Welfare Branch. They differed in this respect from their counterparts on the settlements and in Alice Springs. The Welfare Branch intervened in the most intimate and everyday domestic affairs of both urban and settlement people. It operated a communal ration system on most settlements and, thereby, almost completely controlled local access to food. In the urban areas it controlled most housing facilities. It legitimated its attempts to aid and manipulate urban Aboriginal families in their housekeeping efforts by pegging access to houses on displays of proper domestic husbandry. By controlling these basic domestic resources, the Welfare Branch wielded considerable power over most aspects of Aboriginal life on the settlements and in Alice Springs.

These ethnic, residential and administrative conditions also structured Aboriginal access to job opportunities. With the principal exception of part-Aborigines, Aboriginal people had primary access to jobs in the areas in which they resided. Although the settlements were partially justified as "training centres" there was in fact very little work available. With the exception of the cattle projects at Haasts Bluff and Hooker Creek, Tatz (1963:20, 71) and Long (1965:201) report that by 1965 most settlements were still little more than ration depots. There was almost no

demand for Aboriginal labour from the settlements on cattle stations. After 1965, the Commonwealth government intervened and created jobs for Aboriginal people. However, these jobs did not reflect any industrial development or the growth of a self-sustaining employment sector independent of government expenditure. On the contrary, as was documented during the cutbacks in 1976, these jobs remained vulnerable to budget cuts and Commonwealth good graces. The point was, however, that these jobs were primarily available to the Aboriginal people who lived on the settlements.

The urban work force was similarly structured. There was a very close relationship between urban residence and urban work. There was very little work for Aboriginal men in Alice Springs prior to 1960. Most job opportunities were available to Aboriginal women to work as domestics in private homes, laundries and public facilities such as the hospital. The expansion of Commonwealth agencies in Alice Springs during the 1960's created new job opportunities for men and women. Aboriginal men were frequently hired by the Commonwealth railways, the Department of Works, the Department of Lands and Survey, and the Department of the Interior (later Northern Territory). The expansion of government spending stimulated the growth of light industrial and commercial ventures in Alice Springs which also opened new job opportunities for some men. These opportunities fell open primarily to Aboriginal people who were already based in the urban setting; that is, people who were involved in the Welfare Branch's schemes to settle and assimilate Aborigines in Alice Springs. Urban employers favoured those people the government was trying to incorporate into the urban setting (Rowley 1972:40).

As in the urban and settlement settings, there was a close link between the right to work and the right to live on a cattle station. A substantial proportion of the Aboriginal labour needed on the cattle stations out bush was recruited directly from station residents. Yet, it

was frequently the case that the right to live on a station was a function actually of having a job or a relative with a job on the station. The key variable was the state of personal relationships between cattle bosses and their workers. Although it was not necessarily so, it was often true that these links had their origins in regionally-based kinship links both among Aboriginal people and between Aborigines and station owners.

There was one important exception to the rule of local recruitment in the cattle industry: that was the role of part-Aboriginal, often urban-based labourers. Many pastoralists preferred to hire part-Aboriginal men especially as headstockmen, fencers, well-sinkers and drovers. They also hired part-Aboriginal women as domestics. Although some pastoralists hired part-Aborigines from their own camps, this hiring practice often cross-cut the urban-rural distinction in employment patterns and gave part-Aborigines greater job opportunities than other Aborigines normally enjoyed. This was especially true during the period of increased Commonwealth spending and the expansion of job opportunities in Alice Springs.

This raises a more general point. As workers and candidates for assimilation, part-Aborigines were more valuable as clients to white authorities than other Aborigines. Indeed, their ethnic identity was both an expression of their greater social value and a basic resource in establishing their value. As a result of their greater job and administrative opportunities and their greater legal freedom, part-Aborigines enjoyed altogether greater social, economic and administrative flexibility in their transactions with whites than most other Aborigines. Consequently, they maintained a distinct advantage in most areas in the competition for the scarce goods which whites monopolized.

III

The discussion of flexibility in an otherwise highly structured and determined environment returns me to the analysis of the fringe-camps. I suggest that by living in fringe-camps some Aboriginal people minimize the control outside agencies have upon them and maximize their flexibility in taking advantage of what opportunities do become available. My brief analysis of the overall structure of Central Australia provides the basis for a closer look at that proposition.

I might summarize the relationship I described between residential, administrative and industrial organization by saying that each of the three contexts (town, cattle station and settlement) was relatively closed and self-contained. As the case of the part-Aborigines documents, they were never absolutely closed. Moreover, the categories of people who had access to urban work and houses, for example, was never as rigid as official or commonsense models suggested they should have been (see Rowley 1972:39). The point is, however, that by participating in a particular context, Aborigines became heavily indebted to the whites who controlled it. Since whites monopolized all the resources Aborigines needed to survive, this affected part-Aborigines and other Aborigines alike. Yet, and this is the key point, the content and pattern of transactions between particular Aborigines and particular white agents varied according to the extent and significance of Aboriginal indebtedness. These conditions conditioned as well the relative capacity of particular Aborigines to negotiate what under the prevailing regime was considered a "fair exchange" (Handelman 1976:230).⁶

⁶I use the term "fair exchange" to refer to the actor's assessment, not as an absolute or outsider's judgement.



I have already mentioned that in general whites considered part-Aborigines more valuable as workers and clients than other Aborigines. Consequently, they usually had a greater range of opportunities available and were able to gain access to them on better terms than most "full-blood" Aborigines. Yet, a part-Aboriginal ethnic identity was neither a necessary nor sufficient resource for Aborigines to negotiate a conventionally "fair exchange" from a white agency. On the contrary, some "full-blood" Aborigines negotiated deals with their employers which were conventionally considered more appropriate for part-Aboriginal or, in some cases, white workers. Indeed, it is important to note that the process of recruitment into, for example, the cattle industry included techniques which served to establish or suspend the relevance of a man's ethnic identity for his relationship with his employers. The fact that some "full-blood" Aborigines negotiated a better than average deal with their cattle bosses was both evidence for and the result of basic interactional processes whereby pastoralists and their workers determined and often changed the significance of broader contextual conditions for their own ongoing social relationships. However, their activities were themselves but part of a more general process. Precisely because Central Australia is such a highly stratified and heavily determined society, individual Aborigines and whites actively negotiate about the meaning of the broader conditions for their interaction. These processes of negotiation establish emergent conditions which structure the development of interpersonal relationships and which differentiate people according to the extent to which they are subject to the wider context. For the purposes of this paper, four conditions are especially important: the range of peoples' relationships, the multiplexity or structural involvement of the relationships they construct, the resources people realize in their relationships, and the control people enjoy over their own spatial mobility.

By range I mean the diversity of types of contexts to which an Aboriginal has access or is linked. For example, an Aboriginal who lives and works in only one place and who maintains no links with any other context has a narrow range. In contrast, an Aboriginal who has access to several diverse types of contexts has a broad range. The range of an individual's contacts is an index of the opportunities to which he has access. All other things being equal, the broader the range of a man's contacts, the greater the number of opportunities he is liable to have open to him over time. The narrower his range, the fewer the opportunities. This is also a measure of his necessary commitment to any particular context. The broader a man's range, the less he must be committed to any particular context through time. A man who has access to few contexts must necessarily value and commit himself to what is available.

The multiplexity or the structural involvement of an individual's relationship with a context refers to the content or interactional components of the relationship (Kapferer 1972:172; Handelman 1976:233). Handelman suggests two conditions which define the scope of structural involvement: locus and area. By "locus" Handelman means the individual who transacts (in his case) with the welfare department in Israel. An "area" is a component of household living. As examples of area Handelman cites employment, child care, education, and housing. The scope of these two conditions may vary independently of one another. For example, one locus might transact with the welfare department over one or more areas of his household. On the other hand, several loci in the same household might transact over one or more areas. The greater the number of loci and areas involved in the transactions between a given household and the welfare department, the greater its structural involvement, or the more multiplex is its relationship with the department (Handelman 1976:232-233). Handelman is interested in examining the resources a client can bring into

transactions so as to influence the welfare department's commitment to him. For Handelman, increased structural involvement makes it more difficult for the welfare department to terminate its obligations to a client. The more the welfare department has invested in a client, the harder it is for them to withdraw from the relationship. It also follows, however, that the greater the structural involvement the more all-encompassing is the client's indebtedness. Indeed, Handelman notes that a condition of "structural dependency" results when a client must rely on the department for help in all areas of his life. In such circumstances, his structural involvement with the department and his indebtedness is complete. Consequently, the client is "relatively powerless" to influence the flow of transactions in such relationships (Handelman 1976:231).

There are two further conditions which affect the scope of indebtedness: what an Aborigine can offer in return for access to white resources, on the one hand, and his mobility, on the other. Aborigines vary quite considerably in what they can offer in exchange for white goods and services. Some people offer their labour. Others, however, offer only their compliance with white directives. Most relationships involve elements of both. Yet, the degree of intermixture varies and is quite significant in determining the precise nature of any given relationship. Although the value of particular resources is, of course, subject to change and situational redefinition, Aborigines who offer material or otherwise instrumental resources such as labour are in a better position relative to others (Kapferer 1972:162-166).

An individual's mobility (spatial and otherwise) is in some respects a composite consequence of the other three conditions. For high mobility tends to reflect a greater range of alternatives, a lower structural involvement with any particular context, and a greater range and/or quality of resources to offer in exchange. Yet, it is also true that the

power to move spatially is itself a resource which can enable a person to minimize or even escape his indebtedness to another. More generally, the capacity for a person to determine his location in space is an important way to control the social forces which act upon him. This was especially true in Central Australia when the Welfare Branch legally restricted the rights of "wards" to move at their own will.

Although the possible combinations of these four conditions are numerous and quite complex, it is possible to characterize generally the town, cattle station, and settlement contexts and to compare them with the fringe-camps. Of the four contexts, the fringe-camps offer the greatest range of alternative opportunities, and the least structural involvement with any given white agency. In their role as labour pools, they also provide a context within which Aborigines can realize the instrumental resources they produce. It is furthermore the case that the camps enable people to control their own mobility. On the one hand, they offer people opportunities which allow them to move back and forth between different social contexts. On the other hand, the camps are outside the spatial boundaries controlled by any particular white agency, and, thereby, permit the fringe-dwellers to minimize substantially their subordination to the authorities. Although each of the other three contexts offers particular advantages which might exceed what is available in the camps, the camps alone combine access to advantages with a minimum of involvement in the contexts which produce them. That is to say, by surrendering the particular advantages of any specific context, the fringe-dwellers maintain a structural flexibility with respect to the available advantages generally.

The settlement people were the most structurally dependent of any of the four categories. Other than a return to the bush, the settlement people had few if any opportunities for survival outside what the Welfare Branch made available. The significance of this fact was not lost upon the

residents themselves. Meggitt says that the Walbiri only came into intensive contact with whites as a result of the great drought of 1924-29. They told him that, had there been no drought, they would have remained forever in the Western Desert relatively removed from white control (Meggitt 1974:24). As it was they came into three of the largest settlements ever established by the government and became the dominant population therein. As indicated earlier, there was little work for them on the cattle stations. Those who worked on the stations tended to live there and only visit the settlements occasionally. What work they found was government subsidized and part of the settlement apparatus. The settlement residents were totally involved with the settlement authorities. Everyone in the settlements depended entirely on the Welfare Branch for food, housing, health care, education and practically every other conceivable area of household life. Furthermore, they had little if anything to offer the authorities in exchange for access to these resources other than their compliance. The absence of work and the charitable nature of what work was available gave the settlement Aborigines little room to manoeuvre in their transactions with the white authorities. In addition to the fact that settlement Aborigines had few reasons to leave in search of work, they were not legally able to move according to their own wishes. If the authorities so wished they could either confine "wards" to the reserves or move them about from one reserve to another. There are indeed cases in which the Welfare Branch used this power to punish Aborigines who refused to obey its wishes.

In most respects the urban part-Aborigines contrasted sharply with the settlement "wards". They were not limited to what the Welfare Branch dispensed. Although being urban-based and having urban links with welfare officers helped part-Aborigines get jobs, their work was independent of the formal welfare apparatus. Moreover, there were job opportunities in both the rural and urban areas to which as part-Aborigines they

had privileged access. The capacity to offer and withdraw their labour (even if at exploitative rates of exchange) furthermore gave part-Aborigines considerably more leverage with their employers than wards had with the settlement authorities. This could be quite important especially for the most skilled men who maintained working relationships with a number of potential employers. In general, this diversity of opportunity and the absence of legal shackles on their right to move guaranteed most part-Aborigines much greater mobility than settlement wards.

However, the Welfare Branch did exert power over part-Aborigines through its control of urban housing and domestic resources. Indeed, the Welfare Branch largely monopolized these resources in the urban setting. If an Aborigine moved into a Welfare house, he committed himself to a quite extensive relationship with the Welfare Branch. Accepting a house also involved long-term transactions with welfare officers over areas of food, child care, housekeeping, marital relationships and overall social compartment. Hence, although the multiplexity of the relationships between the Welfare Branch and particular domestic groups varied, living in a Welfare house necessarily indebted part-Aborigines and subjected them to the Welfare Branch's control. Nevertheless, it is also true that the Welfare Branch had a long-term interest in ensuring that its female clients, in particular, were "successful"; in short, that they adopted a life-style which could be interpreted as consistent with the goal of assimilation. Since the Welfare Branch could and did use people whom in its judgment "coped" well with their new conditions as evidence for the success of its overall program, Aboriginal compliance in this regard was a quite instrumental and important resource. As noted previously, the high value of part-Aborigines as workers and clients gave them considerably more room to manoeuvre with white agents than their settlement counterparts.

The situation of cattle station residents was quite complex, and included elements of both the urban and the settlement settings. On the one hand, the cattle station Aborigines were highly dependent upon, and structurally involved with, the pastoralists. Outside of work on the stations there were few if any opportunities to earn a living. Although they hunted and gathered to supplement their food supply, they owed their jobs, much of their food, and, in the final analysis, their right to live on the properties to the pastoralists. They were indeed restricted to what the pastoralists chose to dispense. The pastoralists' power was strengthened in this respect by the fact that the Welfare Branch effectively transferred its authority over station people to them. However, it was also true that the pastoralists needed the labour which Aboriginal people could offer in order to operate their properties. They further needed to obtain it at an exploitative rate of exchange. The pastoralists did not and still do not refrain from using physical violence against their Aboriginal workers.⁷ The very absence of alternative possibilities also tied Aborigines to those pastoralists who would hire them. Yet, Aborigines could use their labour and their close knowledge of the pastoralists, particularly of their intimate affairs, to bargain. Unlike the settlement Aborigines they had room to manoeuvre. This did not mean that Aborigines could strike for better wages or conditions. On the contrary, for many years in the past they were not paid cash wages, and still work for less

⁷I collected reports of physical violence between most Mt. Kelly men and their cattle bosses. In consider this problem in detail in Chapter 5. For independent evidence of this fact refer to Stevens (1974). I suggest that physical violence establishes the relevance of a worker's ethnic identity as an Aborigine. Insofar as he tolerates violence from his boss, he documents that he is not subject to the "lazy" and "cheeky" impulses pastoralists often ascribe to Aborigines. Men who work in the Central Australian cattle industry must show that they are reliable in this manner, otherwise they will develop poor reputations and find little work.

than an equivalent value for the labour they exchange. Yet, many were better off than the settlement Aborigines. There was a solid base for the station residents' widely held view that in comparison with their own lives, the settlement Aborigines were lean and hungry (Stevens 1974:167). Indeed, it was quite true that many Aborigines interpreted work in the cattle industry as one major means to escape the control of the Welfare Branch.

I will devote the rest of this chapter to a detailed presentation of the position of the fringe-camps in this analysis. For the moment I want to make four preliminary and general observations which stand as hypotheses to be tested with my detailed data.

(1) Fringe-campers maintain relationships with a great range of contexts outside their own domestic groups. Consequently, the fringe-camps offer a range of opportunities to their residents, particularly in the field of employment.

(2) The relationships between the fringe-campers and outside contexts are relatively simplex. Fringe-campers are less structurally involved with any particular, single white agent than most other Aborigines.

(3) The fringe-camps enable Aborigines to realize resources they can offer in exchange for access to white-controlled contexts.

(4) Fringe-dwellers have a greater capacity to control their own mobility than many other Aborigines.

I suggest these four features engender an overall structural flexibility which is uniquely characteristic of fringe-camp life and constitutes its chief utility. However, it is important to note that a necessary condition, as well as long-term consequence, of living in the fringe-camps and of taking advantage of their flexibility is that fringe-

dwellers restrict their material demands to what is necessary to meet their fundamental subsistence needs. Given the impoverished environment within which they live, Aborigines must establish quite multiplex relationships and incur substantial debts to whites if they are to acquire anything much beyond their basic food requirements. It is obvious that many Aborigines do so. The point is, however, that insofar as they do enter into more multiplex relationships with whites and acquire more in the transaction, they increase their indebtedness and commitment. They also cease (or even fail) to be fringe-dwellers. People become fringe-dwellers as they limit such transactions and keep their debt low.

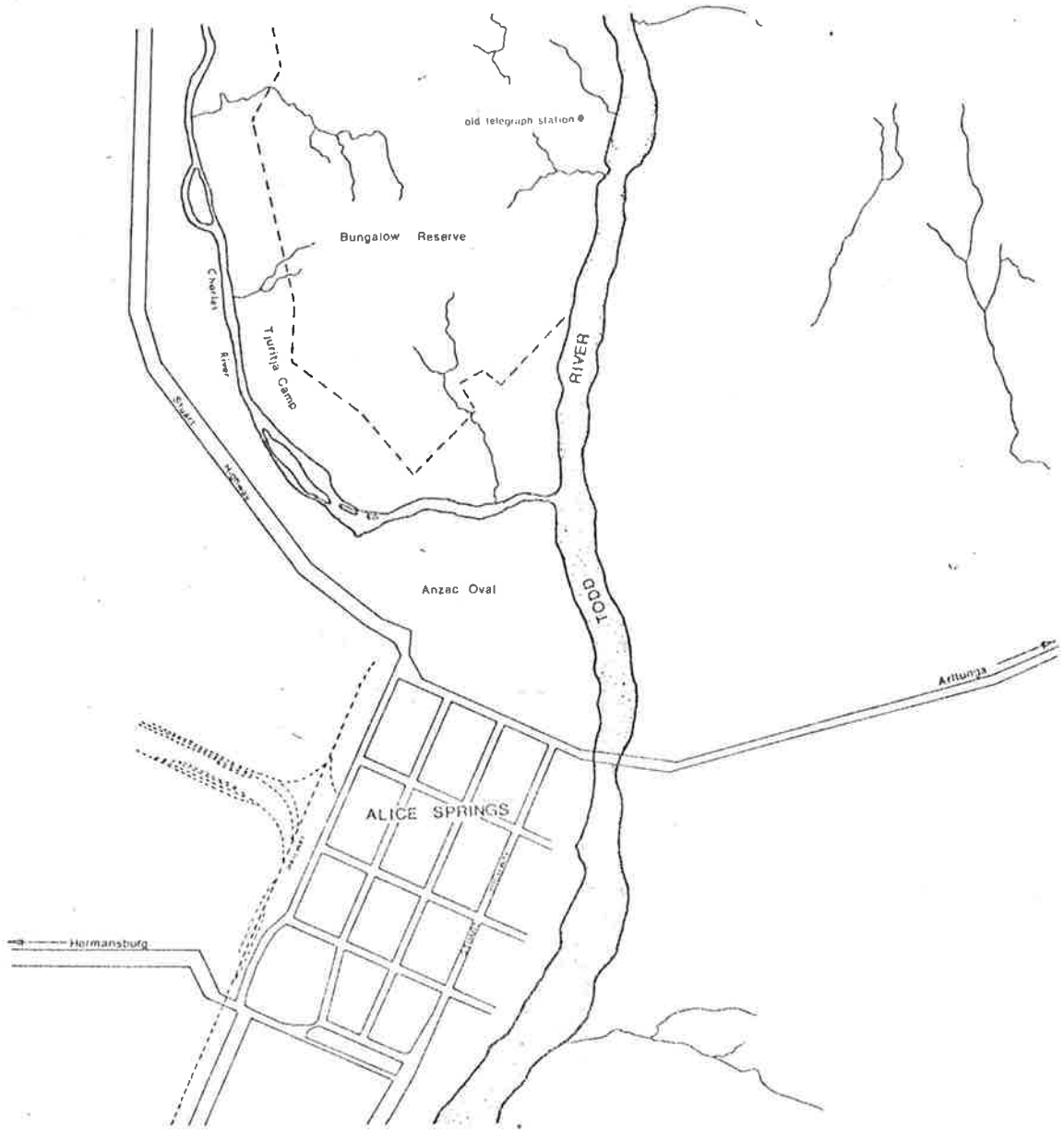
IV

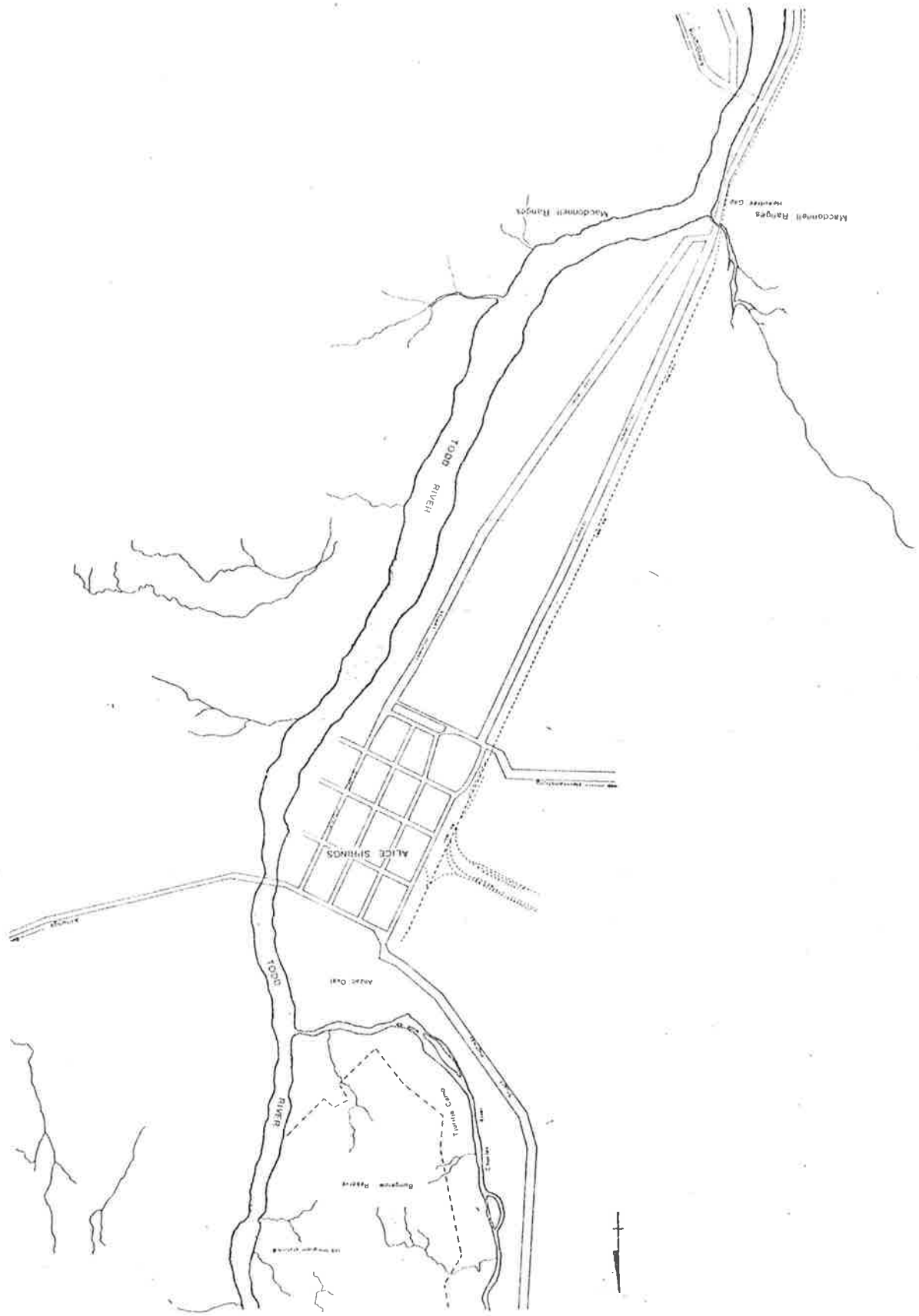
I will present contemporary data about the fringe-camps below. However, I want to begin my analysis with a look at the conditions under which the fringe-camps first emerged in Alice Springs. In the introduction I suggested that fringe-camps properly so-called only emerged during the expansion of the Commonwealth government's involvement in Aboriginal social life under the Welfare Branch. I do not doubt that Aborigines have lived on the outskirts of Alice Springs since the earliest days of white settlement. However, the point might well be made that the earliest white settlements constituted little more than fringe-camps on the outskirts of Aboriginal society. I note this in order to stress the dynamics of the political and economic relationships between blacks and whites in the region. The question of the relative identities of the "settlement" and the "fringe" can only be resolved with reference to the distribution of power between them. Hence, Aboriginal fringe camps can only be said to have emerged as the whites began firmly to establish their political and economic control over Central Australia and Aborigines. I have explained

how the transformation in the administrative apparatus of Aboriginal affairs under the Welfare Branch radically increased the power and control of the Commonwealth government over Aborigines. I suggest that the same transformation established the conditions for the transformation in the significance of the fringe-camps. Indeed, it is precisely the case that the fringe-camps as they now exist only truly emerged during, and as a response to, the increased power of the Welfare Branch.

There was an Aboriginal camp immediately adjacent to the original telegraph station at the Alice Spring on the Todd River. The telegraph workers distributed rations and hired mainly domestic labour from the Aboriginal camp. Although a ration point, this camp appears not to have been administered in any direct way. Yet, the railroad arrived in Alice Springs in 1929. The telegraph station was moved to a site in the town near the railhead. The Aboriginal people, however, were moved to Hermansburg. This followed J.W. Bleakley's report and appears to have been justified by fears for the moral and physical threat the railway workers posed especially to Aboriginal women. Bleakley wanted to avoid what he called "trouble...owing to the approaching Railway Construction Works" (Bleakley 1928:18-19; Rowley 1974:270). The Bungalow, the original institution in Alice Springs for part-Aboriginal children taken from camps in the bush, was also shifted to Jay Creek for the same reason.

After the railway workers had left and the threat apparently dissipated, the Bungalow was installed in the old telegraph facilities and a new Aboriginal camp began to grow in Alice Springs on the site of what is now the Anzac Oval. White people hired Aborigines from this camp as domestics, goatherds, and fowlkeepers. Between 1929 and the outbreak of World War II the site of this camp shifted to a stretch of land between the western boundary of the Bungalow Reserve and the eastern boundary of the Charles River (see map). According to my informants this camp was called





tjuritja, the name which also identified the eastern Arunta people. Although a substantial proportion of its residents were apparently Aboriginal people from the immediate Alice Springs area and regions further east, it was also a gathering place for Aborigines from the north of the town. Indeed, the camp was a kind of boundary between northern and southern groups. For example, the Aboriginal attendants of the camel trains which moved north and south used to change in the *tjuritja* camp. If the trains were coming from the south, southern Aborigines handed over the camels to northern Aborigines in the camp. The same procedure worked in reverse if the camels came from the north.

The interesting thing about this camp was its apparent independence. The presence of Aborigines in the urban areas was regulated by law. And it seems probable that the shifts in the *tjuritja* camp's location reflected the restrictions of the Prohibited Areas Clause and the expansion of the town. Yet, in comparison with the administration of the post-war settlements, life in the camp was relatively unregulated and its residents had relatively simplex relationships with the various white agents in their social environment. Although the old and infirm received rations, many people worked both in Alice Springs and in the bush. Furthermore, there was no bureaucratic apparatus which attempted to regulate the camp or any official who directly administered it. On the contrary, the camp was unserved in this respect. This was so in spite of the fact that the camp had a somewhat unsavoury reputation. However, this whole situation changed with the outbreak of World War II and the bombing of Darwin. The bombing of Darwin legitimated a decision to place the *tjuritja* people under the control of Roman Catholic missionaries and to shift them to Arltunga, an old goldmining town east of Alice Springs.

The Roman Catholic church established a presence among the *tjuritja* people soon after it came to Alice Springs in the mid-1930's. It

built, supplied and administered a soup kitchen on the southern end of the camp. As time passed, the Catholic church developed a commitment to the *tjuritja* people and tried to have its responsibility for them accepted by the authorities in charge of Aboriginal affairs. The move to Arltunga was the final, successful result of its efforts. What is now the Little Flower Mission applied for a mission lease after World War II. The site at Arltunga was inadequately watered and could not sustain the large population quartered there. After some initial opposition the mission was granted a lease and moved to its current site at Santa Teresa, 180 miles southeast of Alice Springs. It was in this manner that the Aboriginal people who first lived on the "fringes" of Alice Springs were removed and subjected to the direct control of the mission authorities.

New fringe-camps began to emerge after the war and the Welfare Branch was established. In the light of the Welfare Branch's total activities, it is significant that the majority of people who eventually became fringe-dwellers came from two sources: the welfare houses in Alice Springs, and the two government settlements (the Bungalow and Ammonguna) in the town's immediate vicinity.

Some of the earliest fringe-dwellers were escapees from the Bungalow. During World War II the part-Aborigines at the Bungalow were evacuated to Balaklava, South Australia, and the army transformed the institution into one of five Aboriginal labour camps which stretched along the Stuart Highway from Alice Springs to Darwin (Long 1967:193; Rowley 1974:332-333). After the war the Commonwealth reassumed civilian control of the Bungalow and made it into a settlement for "full-blood" Aborigines, initially administered by the Native Affairs Branch. Between 1953 and 1961, however, administration passed to the Welfare Branch. The Bungalow embraced an expanse of hills running north along either side of the Todd River. The actual buildings were the original structures used by the

telegraph station and later by the children's institution. They were located next to the Alice Spring, a deep section of the Todd which eventually gave the town its name. The Aborigines were camped in the hills surrounding the Alice Spring.

Some Aborigines, however, refused to live on the settlement and ran deep into the hills outside its boundaries. They supported themselves hunting and gathering. All of the Bungalow's residents were "wards". Consequently, under the provisions of the Welfare Ordinance of 1953, it was not legal for them to live outside the settlement without the administration's permission. It failed to grant them permission originally. On the contrary, it systematically searched for the escapees and returned them to the Bungalow. But in spite of the administration's efforts, people continued to run away and live on its "fringes" hidden in the hills.

In 1961 the Welfare Branch closed the Bungalow and shifted its people to Amoonguna, a new settlement six miles southeast of Alice Spring. This provoked further proliferation of the fringe-camps both in number and in spatial distribution. Some Bungalow residents refused to make the move to Amoonguna. A few people continued to hide in the hills north of Alice Springs. Others established new camps along the base of the ridges south of the town in the vicinity of Amoonguna itself. According to Sister Leslie Grey, a welfare officer who was working in Alice Springs at the time, these fringe-camps tremendously embarrassed the Director of Welfare who again gave orders for the people to be returned to the settlement. Sister Grey said that the camps cast the Welfare Branch in a bad light and opened it to criticism from southern journalists and tourists. Although the welfare officers proceeded cautiously (according to Sister Grey), their efforts were unsuccessful and the fringe-camps continued to appear. This process apparently continued until the Welfare Ordinance was revoked and

the Welfare Branch lost its power to control the movements of wards in space. Many fringe-dwellers settled down and remained in their camps.

The Welfare Branch also contributed to the rise of the fringe-camps in a more direct manner. It evicted from the town houses those part-Aborigines who in its eyes failed to maintain a life-style consistent with the assimilation policy. Although the Welfare Branch justified such action in a variety of ways, it was especially quick to act against people who in its opinion drank too much liquor, failed to pay rent, or otherwise abused the houses. The Welfare Branch "demoted" some people and put them into less well-equipped houses "lower" down the assimilation hierarchy. However, it barred others from access to any type of welfare house at all. Consequently, these people had to establish camps on vacant land on the outskirts of town.

Some fringe-camps emerged in another way which combined elements of the previous two processes I described. Some Aborigines refused ever to move into houses the Welfare Branch offered them. Although they had the right to live in the urban area and had houses available to them, they turned them down. The welfare officers tended to explain such anomalous behaviour in terms of ingrained, culturally-determined preferences for living outside in the open air. The fringe-dwellers, however, saw the situation in a different light. By living in the camps and staying out of the welfare houses, they undermined any basis the Welfare Branch might have had to control them. They maintained control over their own movements and thereby their flexibility with respect to the social environment as a whole. Indeed, I suggest this is the key to the whole development of the fringe-camps in the post-war era. By minimizing their transactions with the Welfare Branch, the fringe-dwellers limited its power over them.

Given the situation I have just outlined, it is evident that the emergence of the contemporary fringe-camps cannot be understood apart from

the development of the Welfare Branch. Although Aborigines have been living on the outskirts of Alice Springs for over eighty years, there is a fundamental difference between the pre-war and the post-war camps. Whether it was as the result of their own efforts to escape the Welfare Branch's power or of the Welfare Branch's use of its power against them, the Aborigines who became fringe-dwellers after 1953 did so as a result of the conditions created by the increased power and structural involvement of the welfare apparatus in their everyday lives. The Welfare Branch established the context within which the camps emerged and to which the fringe-dwellers reacted. Nonetheless, it is also true that the specific points I have made about the relationships between the fringe-dwellers and the Welfare Branch hold generally for the campers' links with the outside, white-dominated world. Fringe-dwellers can no more escape the implications of their general dependence upon whites than they could finally escape from the Welfare Branch. What is significant about the camps is that they create conditions which enable some Aborigines to manipulate the content and pattern of their relationships with whites and, thereby, partially control the effects of their dependence upon them. I want to examine this process further now in the context of the contemporary situation.

V

There were at least fifteen fringe-camps distributed around Alice Springs during my fieldwork. With the notable exception of the camps located on the banks of the Todd River, all were located on the immediate outskirts of town. The total fringe population varied between approximately 200 and 500 people. The smallest camps numbered as few as one domestic group. The largest camps such as Mt. Nancy, the camp in which I worked, housed ten or more domestic groups and populations as large as sixty people.

In addition to these fifteen camps, there were others which tended to appear and disappear through time. Although fringe-dwellers tended to shift the precise location of their camps frequently and many of the camps which I knew had only recently been established, most of the people had first started living in camps during the reign of the Welfare Branch and as a result of the processes I outlined above. The Welfare Branch had been dismembered for almost two years when I entered the field. Yet, many of the political and economic conditions which had originally generated the camps still prevailed. Welfare agencies still controlled the kind of housing most Aborigines could afford. The job market was tighter than normal during my fieldwork. As a point of structural flexibility in an otherwise highly structured and determined context, the camps continued to be highly significant to the contemporary context.

I suggested earlier that fringe-dwellers maintain relationships with agents in a wide range of contexts outside their own domestic groups and that, consequently, they had available a relatively wide range of opportunities open to them. Although I do not have detailed data on all the camps, it was certainly true that they all maintained links into both the urban and the rural contexts. I interpret their location in space as a basic index of their links into the urban context. Although they did not live in conventional houses, they did live inside the city limits of Alice Springs. As I will describe below, this fact was meaningful to the campers themselves and was crucial to their social identity as they interpreted it. However, their close proximity to urban resources was also significant in the more material aspects of their lives. The availability of jobs for unskilled Aborigines was extremely limited during my fieldwork and unemployment in the fringe-camps was highly visible. Nevertheless, fringe-campers had access to urban employment. Practically every adult in Mt. Kelly, for example, had worked in Alice Springs during his career. Some people

(especially women working as domestics) had in fact constructed most of their working careers in Alice Springs. Fringe-campers also had privileged access to certain special work projects funded by the Commonwealth government to alleviate unemployment in the urban setting.

TABLE 1
RURAL LINKS

Camp	Cattle station	Mission	Settlement
A	8		
B	6		2
C	1		
D	2	1	1
E	2	1	
F	2	1	
G		1	
H	2	1	
I		1	
J	1		
K			1
L	3	1	
M	1	1	

These figures represent the number of different places into which each camp is linked; e.g. Camp A is linked into eight cattle stations, Camp D is linked into one mission.

An ultimately more significant benefit from living in the urban context for fringe-dwellers was the privileged access they enjoyed to social security pensions. The basic core of practically every camp in Alice Springs was a group of pensioners. These included old-age, supporting mother, and invalid pensioners. Although there were no geographical restrictions on who was eligible for pensions, the administrative machinery outside the urban area was inadequate to insure that people who were entitled to pensions in the rural areas actually applied for and received them. It depended primarily upon the diligence of local mission, settlement or pastoral authorities. Some were quite active in this respect and made pensions available to the Aborigines with whom they associated. However, large numbers of people did not have proper access to these resources. The

Central Australian Legal Aid Service discovered this fact soon after it began to make extensive bushtrips in 1974. Consequently, it took application forms on its bushtrips and encouraged people to register. It further met stern resistance from the Department of Social Security when it suggested that special social security field officers be appointed to travel the bush to enroll people. In contrast to the rural situation, however, the urban welfare officers actively tried to ensure that those people, particularly women, who were eligible for pensions, received them. Urban residence was therefore a distinct advantage in the competition for social security benefits.

What was especially interesting about pensions was that once obtained they did not require a pensioner to engage more actively with the urban welfare officers. For example, they did not require a pensioner to live in an urban house. Quite to the contrary, a pension enabled a person to move at will. Pensions were a relatively untrammelled form of income which did not require recipients to go into debt to a white agency. They did not require a pensioner to do anything other than appear fortnightly at the post office to receive his cheque. Moreover, pensions were continuous forms of income; they did not vary according to the demands of the labour market, and consequently they were highly suitable as the basis for the construction of the domestic economy of fringe-camp life. Indeed, pensions were the economic centre of the fringe-camps and pensioners occupied crucial positions in the ongoing development of everyday life as sources of credit for those people who were out of work.

Of the fifteen major fringe-camps at least ten regularly supplied labourers to particular cattle stations on a regular basis. I will reserve a complete discussion of recruitment patterns in the cattle industry to a later chapter. For the moment, suffice it to note that Mt. Kelly provided labour to six different cattle stations during my fieldwork. Although some

new links were formed during my stay, most of the jobs came from pastoralists who had known Mt. Kelly men for many years and preferred to hire them instead of anybody else. The pastoralists usually drove into the camp looking for the men they knew. If the men they had originally wanted were unavailable for some reason, they usually hired someone else from the camp. Although Mt. Kelly may have been exemplary in this situation, the fringe-camps as a whole were labour pools for the cattle industry.

The fringe-campers' links into the rural context, however, were not limited to cattlework. On the contrary, most had links into the settlement and missions as well. Many of the people had originally been born in the rural context and had migrated into Alice Springs as adults. For example, most of the Mt. Kelly people originated on cattle stations north of Alice Springs and still had kinsmen living there. A few had kinsmen living at Warrabiri Settlement who regularly visited Mt. Kelly and camped there whenever they came to town. Although it is common to assume that "urban Aborigines" are cut off from their rural origins, this was not so for most fringe-campers. On the contrary, they kept up their kin links in a variety of ways. Perhaps a more important point is that the fringe-campers were usually committed to the white agency which dominated the rural contexts into which they were linked. I have discussed briefly the Mt. Kelly peoples' commitment to the cattle industry. Other campers reflected an equivalent commitment to the missions, for example, from which they had originally come. Indeed, one of the most important ways that rural agencies such as the missions affected the urban setting was through their links into the fringe-camps.

The major point I wish to establish with these data is that the contemporary fringe-campers maintain links into a broad range of contexts in the Central Australian setting. Unlike the people who live in the town houses, on the cattle stations, or on the settlements, they are not

committed to any single context. Rather, they have diversified their commitment. I have presented some data to support my suggestion that this diversification opens up a wider range of opportunities for many of them than would be available if they were to commit themselves to any single other context. Although many of the fringe-campers are "full-blood" Aborigines, they share in the general advantages of the urban part-Aborigines in the competition for jobs and other income possibilities.

It is important to note, however, that the fringe-campers share in the urban employment and income opportunities without having to invest heavily in the general urban setting. In particular, they are outside the immediate administrative control of the welfare authorities because they do not live in urban houses. By the same token they have access to the cattle industry without having to live on the cattle stations. Hence, although fringe-campers have a wide range of links, the links they maintain tend to be relatively simplex. They use different links to satisfy their needs in different areas and tend not to depend upon any single white agent to satisfy all of their needs. Moreover, different people in the camps tend to have links into different contexts. For example, the Mt. Kelly men work in the cattle industry. Although most Mt. Kelly women have worked in the industry in the past, none did during my fieldwork. On the other hand, women tended to monopolize pensions and access to urban-based welfare resources. This means that while the camp as a whole is heavily linked into the wider context, few people as individuals have equivalent access to all contexts. Although Mt. Kelly as a whole is heavily dependent upon the outside world to subsist, no single individual within it is structurally dependent upon any single context. No one is heavily indebted to any single white agent. Consequently, in comparison to other Aborigines, they are relatively independent of the power of all white agents in the region.

Because pastoralists recruit workers from the fringe-camps Aborigines can primarily realize their labour as a major resource in the camps. Yet, given the camps' visibility and access to welfare resources, fringe-dwellers can also realize those features of their social identities which are relevant to the welfare administration. For example, single mothers are eligible for supporting mothers pensions. Indeed, the local welfare workers encourage women with children who associate with men considered irresponsible by the welfare authorities to apply for pensions. In this way, "single" mothers can transform their control of children into a basic resource to legitimate their domestic income.

It is important also to note, however, that the fringe-camps are contexts within which their residents can pool resources for each other. Although the Mt. Kelly people remained comparatively independent of outside, white agencies, it is precisely for that reason that they risked failing to meet their basic subsistence needs. Men were especially vulnerable to irregularities and discontinuities in their source of income. But because the Mt. Kelly people were collectively linked into a wide range of contexts, they were able to bridge the structural gaps between them and the discontinuities in each others' incomes by sharing and developing patterns of interpersonal assistance and credit. The Mt. Kelly people were able to realize resources for each other as well as supply them to outsiders.

The fringe-campers' high rate of spatial mobility was a condition, a consequence, and a basic resource of fringe-camp life. Because the men in particular had to move in order to work, they had to be willing to leave in order to take advantage of the opportunities which the camp made available to them. Indeed, the greater the range of opportunities available to any particular individual, the more mobile he must be. However, this forces an individual to minimize his commitment to any particular context including the fringe-camp itself. If a person commits himself heavily to

any particular context he becomes embroiled in multiplex relationships with agents in it. Such relationships make it more difficult for him to depart in the event that another, perhaps ultimately more favourable opportunity emerges (Kapferer 1972:102-104). In such a case a person with a relatively wide range of resources to exchange would inhibit his own chances for long-term survival. In summary, the fringe-campers' high rate of spatial mobility emerges from their access to a range of alternative outside contexts, a low structural involvement in any particular context, and a great range and quality of resources to offer in exchange for access to those contexts.

Nevertheless, the power to move spatially is itself a resource which people use to minimize or even escape their involvement in any particular context. I have described how many erstwhile settlement Aborigines escaped into the foothills surrounding Alice Springs during the reign of the Welfare Branch. Although the Welfare Branch no longer exists and Aborigines are no longer wards, it is still true that fringe-dwellers tend to leave particular contexts when it is no longer absolutely necessary for them to participate in them. For example, many of the Mt. Kelly men have the right to live permanently on the cattle stations where they work. Yet, when the work is finished, they usually leave the station and return to town. Moreover, they sometimes simply leave in spite of the availability of work for what they call a "holiday". They gloss these visits by saying they got lonely in the bush or wanted to have a drink or two in town. I argue in Chapter 6 in detail that such "holidays" are a display of the individual worker's productivity and close ties to the boss. Yet, it is important to note that such a move minimizes the extent to which the men are indebted to pastoralists and communicates the men's independence to their employers. By leaving during periods of no work, they fail to accumulate debts for which they are not offering work in exchange. By

leaving when there is work, they document the extent to which the pastoralist depends upon them and marks the value of the labour they do offer.

The very location of the fringe-camps in space is itself significant and marks the unwillingness of the fringe-campers to commit themselves to any context in particular. As is well known, the camps are on the "fringes" of the town. It is more accurate to observe, however, that the camps are really quite outside the effective administrative boundaries of any context in the region. The fringe-camps are located outside of either the settlements or the cattle regions. They are almost all located on vacant Crown land inside the Alice Springs town boundary. Although nominally under the control of the Department of the Northern Territory, Lands and Survey Branch, no one actively administers vacant Crown land. The lands and Survey Branch was more effective in preventing Aborigines from acquiring leases to vacant Crown land during my fieldwork than it was denying them its use. No other local or Commonwealth agencies are willing or politically able to control the fringe-camps. Indeed, the Alice Springs Town Council has tried a number of times in recent years to "have something done" about the fringe-camps. They have had limited success.

I have tried to explain the structural processes through which the fringe-camps have come to be located where they are. It is important to realize also that the fringe-campers themselves consider their place in space a vital component of their self-identity. They are not unaware of the political significance of their location. On the contrary, they interpret living outside the boundaries of any white-dominated contexts as a basic mark of their independence of the power of white authorities and white society as a whole. By the same token, because living in the camps gives them privileged access to the resources whites control, they distinguish themselves from other Aborigines who are not so favourably placed. So it is that the essential sociological characteristics of the fringe-camps

— that is, their access to, but independence of, other white-dominated contexts in Central Australia — are basic components in the fringe-campers' view of themselves as identities operating in the total regional field.

VI

In conclusion I would like to consider briefly a fact which has been characteristic of fringe-camps for many years: that is, their ethnic heterogeneity. Given the long history of official attempts to segregate the three ethnic categories in Central Australia, one of the most striking things about the fringe-camps is the mixture of black, "coloured", and white people living in them. I have already presented data about the presence of "full-blood" Aborigines and part-Aborigines in the camps. Of special interest (as well as special worry to welfare officials since the very beginning of white colonization) is the presence of white men in the camps. Indeed, white men are especially significant given the long history of attempts to keep them out of Aboriginal camps (Rowley 1974:236). Moreover, although the restrictive laws were legitimated as necessary to protect Aboriginal women from sexual abuse and exploitation, there has always been and still is what many officials consider a disturbing tendency for Aboriginal people to encourage and protect certain types of white men in the fringe-camps. This has been such a basic part of fringe-camp life that some white men in Alice Springs have lived in the camps for over twenty-five years and raised families. Although some whites as well as some blacks do just casually visit the camps for various reasons, some white men are vital parts of the fringe communities within which they live.

Given what I have said about the opportunities available in the fringe-camps, it should not be too surprising to find white men living in them. Although no white person ever experienced the kinds of legal

disabilities to which Aborigines were long subject, most of the white men who live in the camps were engaged in the same kinds of work as Aborigines. In particular they worked in the cattle industry and held unskilled jobs in the towns. Consequently, the camps offered these kinds of white men the same opportunities they offered Aborigines; that is, information and social connections through which they could get jobs and credit during periods of unemployment. It is equally important to note, however, that white men offered reciprocal benefits to Aborigines. Indeed, because many employers preferred to hire white men, white workers were often a key point around which Aboriginal fringe-dwellers organized their own employment strategies and maintained access to jobs. Moreover, white men have always received cash wages and have never been legally restricted in what their money could buy. Consequently, they could provide Aborigines with cash and valuable items, not the least of which was liquor, Aborigines could not obtain for themselves. In fact, Aborigines often made such exchanges necessary conditions for living in the camps. In general, therefore, white men made good spouses and offered Aborigines opportunities they might not otherwise have had. In other words, the crucial point which explains the real significance of white men to Aborigines and relates them to the broader issues of fringe-camp life is that the presence of white men in the camps suspends the relevance of the Aborigines' ethnic identity for major domains of their lives. Aborigines who could incorporate white men into their everyday kinship and social relationships were thereby able to overcome some of the disabilities they experienced as Aborigines. Not only could they gain access to such items as liquor, they gained access to cash, better job opportunities, and in general established better control over their life chances. This relates directly to the significance of the fringe-camps as a whole. I have argued that fringe-camps are points of structural flexibility in the otherwise highly determined social environment

of Central Australia. I have set them in the context of the largely successful attempts of the Commonwealth government in particular to make the basic spatial, political, industrial and ethnic divisions in the region coincide and be mutually supporting. From this perspective, the fact that Aborigines attract and involve certain kinds of white men into everyday fringe-camp life is an essential element of their overall strategies to minimize the effect and undermine the whole edifice which white authorities have been trying to erect in Central Australia. The very presence of white men in the camps flouts the authorities and makes the overall fringe-camp life that much more viable. White men in the camps do not, therefore, simply exploit black women or take advantage of Aboriginal ideas of reciprocity. Rather, they are crucial to the techniques Aborigines have tried to adopt to survive in the region.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOMESTIC GROUP TO URBAN ABORIGINES IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

The essential point of this chapter is that because control of the domestic group legitimates access to the resources to sustain it, the domestic group has become the key context within which Aborigines (in particular, fringe-dwellers) in Alice Springs negotiate for the basic necessities of life. This situation is the result of how the Commonwealth government of Australia has attempted to support and control urban Aborigines in Central Australia. Because they have privileged access to welfare resources, women have more secure domestic livelihoods than men. Men often depend upon women for their basic requirements. However, the conditions under which women acquire welfare benefits encourages them to minimize their relationships with men. These conditions have encouraged major changes in relationships between spouses and between parents and children. Of particular interest is the fact that new types of marriage, new kin-naming patterns, and new types of domestic organization have emerged as people compete for access to the means to support themselves. Because the extent to which Aborigines must transact with whites depends upon their access to domestic resources, the analysis of domestic politics is essential for full explanations of the social significance of fringe-camps and of the broader issues of black-white relationships.

The Primacy of the Domestic Group

There have been some attempts recently to analyse contemporary Australian Aboriginal social life in terms of the theory of internal colonialism and the articulation of two modes of production (Beckett 1977:

77-80; Hartwig 1977:132-138; Larbalestier 1977:44, 52). Although derived from Marxist analyses of the colonial expansion which subjugated Aborigines, these approaches suffer from a theoretical insensitivity to the dynamics of interaction (both structural and interpersonal) between Aborigines and whites. For example, Beckett, Hartwig, and Larbalestier seem to believe that because some Aborigines still supplement their food supply with hunting and gathering, they maintain their traditional mode of production. They also apparently accept that Aborigines who maintain a normative orientation toward customary kinship and religious values have carried their precapitalist mode of production into the contemporary situation (Beckett 1977:77; Hartwig 1977:132-135; Larbalestier 1977:52). These views are inadequate because they do not analytically link subsistence techniques with kinship and religious ideologies in a comprehensive theory of pre-colonial Aboriginal society. Consequently, they can only take for granted (rather than analytically demonstrate) that some Aborigines still operate in terms of their precapitalist mode of social organization.

Sahlins' analyses of Central and Northern Australian Aboriginal social life in terms of the domestic mode of production is more analytically fruitful in this respect (Sahlins 1974:41-99). Sahlins' theory is particularly important because it defines its own limits; that is, it suggests when it might be possible to observe that the precapitalist mode of production no longer organizes the social life of particular Aboriginal groups. Sahlins' primary point is that domestic relationships are the relations of production; that is, domestic groups control the ends, rate, and extent of economic production. As a result of these facts, the domestic economy contains within it an intrinsic discontinuity. "The economy has its own cutoff principle: it is an economy of concrete and limited objectives" (Sahlins 1974:65). Production stops when individual domestic groups have met their modest material needs.

These points are important because there are features of contemporary fringe-camp life which reflect a similar cutoff principle. If there are two modes of production operating in Central Australia, they might be the capitalist, on the one hand, and the domestic mode of production, on the other. Such an analysis, however, would depend upon the empirical validity of the basic condition in Sahlins' analysis; that is, domestic groups must autonomously control the conditions and development of their own production and consumption, in particular, the means of production. The controlling moment of Aboriginal life must lie within Aboriginal domestic groups.

My general point is that if a specific situation is to be described in terms of the articulation of two modes of production, each mode of production must retain control of its own development within itself. The two modes must be linked but functionally independent. Once the controlling moment of either mode of production passes to the other, the situation is no longer two modes of production. Rather, it is one mode of production. If the two modes of production had previously developed in societies with different cultures, the post-dissolution period might well be marked by cultural heterogeneity. However, such heterogeneity would not indicate the existence or persistence of two modes of production. The focus of the analysis must be on the relationships of political and economic power between groups, not simply upon the presence or absence of particular cultural traits.

Relationships between blacks and whites in Central Australia have changed extensively since the earliest days of white settlement. When whites first moved into the area, many Aboriginal domestic groups retained their political and economic autonomy from any form of white organization. As Elkin has noted, particular domestic groups were able to react to white incursions in different ways (Elkin 1951:164-186). Such a range of

responses was possible precisely because Aborigines were essentially organized in terms of individual, relatively autonomous domestic groups. The actions of one domestic group did not necessarily imply anything about the reactions of others. In the context of a more highly organized state, such a diversity would probably not have been possible. Yet, it is equally important to observe that many whites first entered the region in small, domestic groups. Thus it is possible to characterize the early history of white settlement as a confrontation of two domestic economies -- one based on hunting and gathering and the other based on pastoralism. It is perfectly true, of course, that the early white settlers raised cattle to sell on the market. Yet, it is equally true that they could not always sell their cattle and had, at bad times, to become subsistence cattle-herders. They were able to relate to the conditions of the cattle market in this way primarily because they could operate a domestic economy which sought in the first instance to provision itself.

Under these circumstances it was possible for each domestic economy to retain its fundamental autonomy and, at the same time, establish relationships with the other. Aboriginal domestic groups, in the early days, moved back and forth between the two domestic economies depending upon their own particular circumstances. White domestic groups entertained relationships with Aborigines without necessarily becoming subservient to Aboriginal society. Insofar as these conditions held, there was a period marked by the articulation of two (essentially domestic) modes of production. The difference was that one (the white pastoral economy) was also linked into a wider market economy which sporadically purchased its products.

The full incorporation of the Central Australian pastoral industry into the world market and the encapsulation of Aborigines in a well organized, powerful state bureaucracy fundamentally changed these conditions. Aborigines lost direct access to the means of their material production and

reproduction. The state bureaucracy penetrated Aboriginal society at the level of individual domestic groups through its ration and family stabilization plans. Aborigines thereby also lost control of the processes of their own cultural reproduction. These processes incorporated what had previously been an autonomous, domestic mode of production into the urban-dominated mode of production which was extending its control throughout Central Australia. As these processes developed, the controlling moment of Aboriginal society passed from its individual domestic groups to agents of white society. Central Australia emerged as a culturally heterogeneous region organized by one mode of production.

The key feature of Aboriginal society which has continued from immediate precolonial times to the present is the primary significance of the domestic group and its economy. Many Aborigines still operate an economy of "concrete and limited objectives" (Sahlins 1974:65). But, it is crucial to observe that Aborigines do not control their means of social production. On the contrary, contemporary Aborigines have constituted a domestic economy in an effort to minimize the penetration of outside forces into their lives and limit the effects of having to transact with white authorities on totally unfavourable terms. The contemporary significance of the Aborigines' domestic economy emerges from their current political and economic subordination to whites, not from the survival of their precolonial domestic mode of production.

Aboriginal fringe-dwellers minimize their transactions with whites in two important ways. They underuse the material resources white agents control and make available to them. They also work less than they might. A major consequence of these tactics, however, is that most fringe-dwelling domestic groups can reasonably expect to fail to support themselves occasionally (Sahlins 1974:42-74). Fringe-dwellers limit their demand for material goods to what is necessary to sustain their domestic groups.

Hence, although they are poor, they deliberately exploit fewer opportunities for material gain than white authorities make available to them. Moreover, because they restrict their material demands, they occasionally have a relative surplus of income. For example, the Mt. Kelly people describe their escapes from welfare authorities with tremendous enthusiasm, and boast of houses they have rejected or destroyed. They deny they are poor and take great pride in the amount of money which flows through the camp. Moreover, they are conscious and inveterate spendthrifts. Many Mt. Kelly people spend large amounts of money on terms (particularly liquor) which most white officials consider wasteful. Because these habits have caused many of them to lose welfare houses and develop bad reputations with the welfare officials, their boasts and the actions which enact them are not idle or unconsciously irresponsible. On the contrary, they reflect a general unwillingness of the fringe-campers to curb their own patterns of behaviour to the rules of the welfare authorities. The fringe-dwellers are willing or able to accept what the welfare officials offer only on their own terms.

The Mt. Kelly peoples' ideas about the money available to them are not illfounded illusions. Occasionally, there is an actual surplus in the camp. In particular, the money which the young men earn working on the cattle stations is not necessary for any domestic group, or even for the young men themselves, to survive. As long as they work out bush, the young men survive on the food supplied by their boss. The basic subsistence needs of most domestic groups, on the other hand, are met by social security payments of various kinds. Hence, the way surplus cattle money flows into and out of Mt. Kelly sustains its residents' self-image as an affluent people. It is primarily the surplus cattle money which finances the very large drinking sprees which occasionally punctuate everyday Mt. Kelly life. By curtailing their ongoing domestic requirements to the size of their

pension incomes, the Mt. Kelly people, and fringe-dwellers generally, are able to spend irregular windfalls on items of conspicuous display. They also use some surplus to extend credit to productive workers who are temporarily short of basic resources.

Fringe-dwellers also work less than they might. The situation is, of course, quite complex, given that over 50 percent of the Aboriginal labour force is unemployed in Central Australia. There was also a slump in the cattle market during my fieldwork which further restricted the labour demand for the Mt. Kelly men in particular. Nonetheless, fringe-dwellers withhold their labour from the market for reasons of their own. Because single mothers have access to pensions, they do not have to work. Although most Mt. Kelly women worked for some time during their lives, their work-career supplemented their pension incomes and were often interrupted. Even the Mt. Kelly men take advantage of fewer opportunities for work than are sometimes available to them. Not all able-bodied men work the same amount. Some men have reputations as hard workers. Whenever their bosses drive up, they get up and work for several months at a stretch. Others are willing to work only for a week or two. As they pack their swags, other Mt. Kelly people smile and crack jokes about their chances of working for longer than it takes to sober up. Although some men work sporadically because they leave jobs early, even the "hard workers" take extended breaks or by-pass chances to work. Often, men come in from the bush quite unexpectedly. They say that they got lonely or wanted to do some good drinking for a time. In the same way, men delay their bosses for a week or more while they engage in one last round of heavy drinking. To delay one's boss is a mark of pride and displays the fact that a man's boss prefers him to all others. I will analyse this extensively below. Suffice it to note that it also limits the extent to which men transact even with their major source of income.

Neither men nor women always have jobs when they want them. Although fringe-dwellers may have better access to jobs than other Aborigines, it is hard to deny that Aborigines face a grim employment situation. Yet, fringe-dwellers keep their own schedule and withdraw from work when it suits them. Because of the low pay and even as it exchanges labour for wages, work compromises Aborigines in their relationships with whites. Access to work constitutes a debt to an employer which is basically inextinguishable. Its effects can only be controlled by leaving work. The "walkabout" makes sense in these terms as the correlate of an economy of limited ends and strategy to minimize indebtedness.

Some domestic groups fail to make their own living in the fringe-camps. In Mt. Kelly there were three families whose only income was child endowment during my fieldwork. More generally, most domestic groups can reasonably expect to fail to feed themselves at one time or another. It is common experience that individuals who have more money than they know what to do with at one time will, at other times, be quite broke and unable to work.

These three aspects of the domestic economy establish the significance of pensions and condition relationships between men and women in the fringe-camps. Pensions meet peoples' basic domestic requirements. Moreover, once an individual qualifies for a pension, he never has to work or necessarily interact with white authorities again. Finally, although most families cannot occasionally feed themselves, pensions never fail. They are a continuous source of income and, therefore, are the basis of the domestic economy. The key point for the rest of my analysis, however, is that women have privileged access to continuous pension incomes and, therefore, substantially control the domestic economy. Because men work, they must regularly interact with whites and necessarily fail to provision themselves occasionally. Their sources of income are highly compromising

and discontinuous. But, insofar as women establish control of their own domestic groups (in particular, of their children), they legitimate access to the means to support them, and withdraw into their boundaries. If men are to survive, they must legitimate access to what women control. This relationship between continuous and discontinuous incomes establishes the basic significance of the domestic group to fringe-dwellers and constitutes the conditions under which men and women negotiate about access to the basic resources they all need to survive.

The Domestic Group and the Administration of Urban Aboriginal Affairs

An important theme in Hartwig's and Beckett's discussions is the role of the state in regulating the relationships between the capitalist and precapitalist modes of production (Hartwig 1977:131-139; Beckett 1977:79). It is primarily the significance of the state in this matter which justifies the term "internal colonialism". For it is the action of the state in trying to maintain the precapitalist mode of production in order to reproduce cheaply the physical and basic social bodies of the labour force which is crucial in establishing the conditions for "articulation" instead of "dissolution" (Wolpe 1975:248-249).

My basic point so far has been that precisely the opposite happened in Central Australia. The more effectively the state penetrated Aboriginal society, the more the domestic mode of production dissolved. In this section I want to examine this proposition more thoroughly and look at domestic relations in the context of the administration of urban Aboriginal affairs in Alice Springs since World War II. I wish further to describe the emergence of new forms of marriage and kin-naming and relate them to the significance of the domestic group as I have outlined it.

By 1971, 1,850 Aboriginal people lived in Alice Springs (Bureau of Census 1971). Most lived in houses built and rented by the Northern Territory Administration, Welfare Branch or the Housing Commission. A large minority lived in the fringe-camps. Most Aborigines moved into Alice Springs as part of the process by which the Welfare Branch attempted to resettle and assimilate primarily part-Aborigines in the town. Although there was work for part-Aborigines in the town, the urban Aboriginal community was not based upon patterns of industrial labour. Rather, it emerged as the result of the transactions between the Welfare administration and the Aborigines in the course of the implementation of the assimilation policy.

The Welfare Branch used the assimilation policy to interpret and justify its own activities and those of its clients. The fundamental principle of the policy was that Aboriginal people did not understand the norms and values of white, middle-class Australian culture. The Welfare Branch's major responsibility was to teach Aborigines those norms, and thereby enable them to participate effectively in the wider society. According to the policy, Aborigines varied in the diversity of their cultural background from the most primitive to the nearly assimilated. Consequently, the policy was to be administered according to the individual needs of the clients. Aborigines were to move into the wider society as soon as their particular, individual progress permitted them (Tatz 1963: 13-20).

Tatz observes that the two major aims of the assimilation policy were to teach Aboriginal people the value of steady work and to inculcate in them a sense of financial responsibility (Tatz 1963:20, 71). My own information substantiates this view. In their conversations with me, Mrs. Leslie Gray and Mrs. Helen Thatcher, the two welfare officers who worked with the Alice Springs population throughout the Welfare Branch's

regime, presented these two values as the key components of white, middle-class life. They also expressed the opinion that Aboriginal people had a circular sense of time which prevented them from planning ahead and acting responsibly to insure their long-term prosperity. Consequently, they thought Aboriginal people devalued money and work. They lived only for the moment and satisfied immediate needs. When they accumulated resources they spread them among their kinsmen and saved nothing. The welfare officers explained these traits as survivals of the traditional hunting and gathering economy and of the communal kinship structure. In order to become assimilated, Aboriginal people had to adopt a linear sense of time and begin to plan for the future. Such planning, however, required Aboriginal people to work steadily, manage their finances responsibly and deny their kinsmen.

The Welfare Branch used raciocultural models of social organization to justify the construction of the urban and settlement communities and the recruiting principles by which it populated them. It is essential to observe, however, that a model of conventional, middle-class family life was implicit in and a vital component of the assimilation policy. The object of the Alice Springs housing program, in fact, was to create the conditions necessary for Aboriginal people to establish stable, happy families in the urban setting. Welfare officers considered a "normal" family life necessary for Aboriginal children particularly to advance successfully toward assimilation and for the white community to accept them. Mrs. Gray wrote:

Most whites regard a black or coloured skin as a sign of inferiority. It should be realized that the crossing of the Aboriginal race with ours does not produce a physically decadent human specimen as many suppose. On the contrary, it has been proved that under normal living conditions the offspring display a hybrid vigor which is surprising and interesting. Backwardness is often a symptom of some home conditions;

a diet of excessive carbohydrates, lack of parental guidance, excitement of life in a crowded area, quarrelsome neighbours, too many late nights, drunken parents, irregular meals and bedtimes, lack of books and other recreational facilities. When these conditions are remedied, the results are apparent as has been proved by those who have experienced the changeover (unpublished manuscript 1955:3-4).

Although Mrs. Gray was describing a general picture of what she considered domestic disorder, she based it upon her image of life in what was called Rainbow town. Rainbow town was an area south of Alice Springs in which a number of austere cottages had been built for the resident part-Aboriginal population just after World War II. The name Rainbow town was derived from the multiplicity of types and shades of people who lived there. According to Mrs. Gray, "low class whites", "half-castes", and "full-bloods" all lived there under what she considered "camp conditions". The old cottages had very few facilities. One aim of the new housing program was to remove people from Rainbow town and place them in new houses with more modern conveniences. The Welfare Branch moved people into the new houses as it judged they wanted to adopt the new life style and were able to cope with its greater responsibilities (Rowley 1974:40-41). The important point, however, is the interdependence between proper housing and a healthy domestic environment. A good house was both a consequence of progress toward assimilation and a necessary condition for further progress. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Thatcher were responsible for assisting Aboriginal families in this dual process of domestic development.

The model of conventional, middle-class domestic life had different implications for men and women. It included models of male and female activities based on what the Welfare Branch considered to be male and female roles in the wider society. Men were supposed to work in the competitive world. Women, on the other hand, were supposed to be good mothers and careful housekeepers. Hence, settling families into urban

houses meant training men and women in their respective roles. The Welfare Branch's image of domestic life, however, did not fit with the conditions of everyday life to which they tried to apply it. In particular, most Aboriginal men had to leave Alice Springs and engage in cattle work for long periods in the bush away from their families. Consequently, by administering its policy on the basis of models of conventional male and female roles, the Welfare Branch produced contradictions in the very organization of the domestic group. Of special interest is the fact that Aboriginal parents were often forced to choose between committing themselves to their relationship with each other or to their relationships with their children. Because the Welfare Branch offered special support to mothers who devoted themselves to the care of their children, this dilemma was particularly acute for women. Yet, it is also important to note that, with the exception of the relatively few men who could find work in Alice Springs, this policy also compelled Aboriginal men to choose between being good workers and in-resident fathers. It was often impossible for them to be both. The consequences of these dilemmas emerged as definitive elements in the development of everyday domestic life.

Tatz observes that the Welfare Branch's policy on jobs for men was confused. There was little demand for Aboriginal labour outside the settlements. The welfare officials could not decide furthermore whether or not to invest heavily in creating jobs on the settlements. Tatz suggests this reflects their indecision about whether the settlements were "transitional camps" or "permanent rural communities" (Tatz 1963:60-71). The Welfare Branch initiated the Haasts Bluff cattle project. Yet, Haasts Bluff required only a limited number of select men. Consequently, little was done to provide the job training the assimilation policy required. As a result, the outlying settlements became large-scale ration depots and food was provided free of charge.

In Alice Springs, however, the Welfare Branch pursued its employment policy for men more vigorously. It did little to create new jobs or to train men. Yet, it pressured men to work. If men did not work, the Welfare Branch considered them irresponsible and failed to support them. The Welfare Branch extended this attitude to men living on the Bungalow, a settlement for full-blood Aborigines on the north side of town. Pastoralists and drovers regularly recruited workers from this settlement. In this respect, it was unlike other settlements farther out in the bush. The Welfare Branch seems, therefore, to have defined its residents in a manner similar to the town part-Aboriginal people. They refused to ration men there. On some occasions they forced unemployed men to leave the settlement and banished them from the urban environment.

The Case of the Banished "Bludgers"

In March 1953, the Bungalow was faced with a food shortage for its Aboriginal residents. In a letter dated 26 May 1953, the Acting District Superintendent asked for an increased ration and explained the situation at the settlement. He said:

At present the method of rationing adopted at the Bungalow is as follows:

1. School children numbering approximately 45, are fed directly from the kitchen five days per week.
2. Fresh meat is supplied daily to workers and their families.¹
3. Aged and infirm then receive a ration of meat until stocks are exhausted.

During the past week, 116 adults and 94 children were rationed, for whom, according to the correct ration scale a total of 1,141 lbs. of meat should have been available, whereas in fact only 558 lbs. were distributed as follows:

¹On the basis of other remarks in the records I think these men were settlement employees. Men who worked outside the settlement were supposed to have been rationed by their employers.

65 lbs. per day from the butcher	455 lbs.
137 x 12 oz. tins of corned beef	<u>103 lbs.</u>
	558 lbs.

He observed that the Aborigines at the Bungalow received a "grossly inadequate diet" and recommended it be upgraded. He suggested specifically that the supply of fresh meat from the local butcher be increased to 110 pounds of boneless beef per day and that an extra half bullock per week be brought from Jay Creek Settlement (Bungalow 49/90).

The Acting Director of Native Affairs approved the request for more food. Yet, part of the problem was that the Bungalow lacked a communal dining room. The Aboriginal people collected their rations from a central distributing point and returned to their camps to eat. Consequently, the welfare officers could not control who ate what. The welfare officers thought that this meant "ineligible people" shared the rations. Ineligible people were primarily men who were unemployed, rationed at work, or "holidaying" on the settlement. None of these men were included in the number rationed.

The settlement Superintendent wanted to ration these men. He suggested that unemployed men be offered rations in exchange for work around the settlement. Although it is not clear, there is evidence that he implemented this plan. The Director of Welfare did not respond to his suggestions, however. He only ordered him not to ration men who were fed at work. He further observed that funds were short and returned the request for money to build a dining room.

By January 1954, the Bungalow population had grown and there was again a food shortage. A daily average of 197.5 people received rations on the settlement. Although the approved ration scale required 1,083 pounds of meat to feed that number of people, only 770 pounds were provided. In this instance, the Acting District Superintendent noted that "no alteration

is recommended to the existing set-up" (Bungalow 49/90). Instead, the welfare officials began to move against men they thought should not be sharing the food.

The reports suggest that, by February 1954, all women with children were considered eligible for rations, and that "nursing and lactating females", the wives and children of employed men, and children in general, received rations. A report dated 2 February 1954 also lists 3.2 unemployed men on an average daily basis received rations. Yet, on 17 February 1954, the Acting District Superintendent noted that unemployed men were no longer getting rations unless waiting return to their homes. There was still no communal dining room, however, and so it was difficult to police the decision. Unemployed men continued to cause problems.

On 11 August 1954, a Patrol Officer reported to the Acting District Superintendent that he and the settlement Superintendent had conducted a survey of the unemployed men at the Bungalow. They found fourteen such men, and asked them about their employment plans. Six hoped to get jobs soon. The others had "no employment in mind". He reports, further, that "All the above boys [*sic*] except (two) were told that they would be returned to their country unless they could find employment within a week". He also suggested a follow-up inspection be carried out the next Monday, and "action taken to remove able-bodied natives who have no employment or suitable excuse for their idleness" (Bungalow G.E., 32/127). No further reports on this matter appeared in the files I examined.

In 1957, however, the welfare officials responded in a similar fashion to problems caused by wards who illegally drank alcoholic beverages.² On 8 July 1957, the Bungalow's Superintendent sent a list of "Wards: Drinkers and Disturbers of the Peace" to the Acting District

²It was illegal for wards to drink alcoholic beverages.

Welfare Officer in Alice Springs. The list included the names of twenty-six men. In response, talks were held with the local publicans who agreed to stop furnishing wards with liquor. In addition, a meeting was called at the Bungalow during which the welfare officers warned wards to stop drinking. They said that if any ward was convicted twice in twelve months for drinking liquor, he would be removed from the town area for one year. It was also decided that persistent offenders should be sent immediately to isolated settlements, especially Hooker Creek.

In his report of 24 January 1958, the District Welfare Officer of Alice Springs stated:

It will be noted that the number of wards residing at the Bungalow has been considerably reduced since... the period ending 15 November 1957. This has been mainly due to the efficient manner in which Manager F. has applied himself to the problem of dispersing those people who are unable to justify their presence in the town area. Movements were taking place to settlements and to station properties where they belong.

With respect to employment, the District Welfare Officer reported:

...several wards have flatly refused to accept employment.

To date fifty-some drinkers and what may be called part-time loafers have been removed from the town area.

Of those who have refused work a Recommendation has been forwarded to you requesting a committal order in respect to B...T....The remainder have been warned to either leave the town area of their own volition or by transport provided failing which committal orders would be applied for, for their removal to remote areas [sic].

The reasons the welfare officers have to justify their action against the men are important. They described the men as loafers and disturbers of the peace. In the first case, the men ate food intended for the aged, sick, mothers and children. In the second case, they allegedly broke the law, caused fights, and generally disrupted the peace. From the

welfare officers' point of view, these men had clearly failed to learn the value of work as a worthwhile occupation. Consequently, the solution was to send them to work and banish them from the town.

The Welfare Branch could not banish part-Aboriginal men because they were not wards. Yet, welfare officers adopted the same attitude towards them; that able-bodied men who did not work were irresponsible and did not deserve the privileges of urban life. There was, however, a general shortage of work. Furthermore, there was a particular shortage of urban work, and urban work was a necessary condition for men to assume all the roles projected for them by the Welfare Branch.

Most men worked in the cattle industry where work patterns are necessarily irregular. Pastoral workers alternated long periods out bush with periods of unemployment and no income. Consequently, it was difficult for men to work and run urban-based families in the manner specified by the welfare policy. Moreover, pastoral workers often engaged in hedonistic types of behaviour which welfare officers understood as manifestly deviant and uncondusive to stable family life. Aboriginal men, therefore, were caught in an insoluble dilemma.

The Welfare Branch understood the role of women in a different way. It clearly expected women to be mothers and housekeepers. It supported them in that role in a way it did not support men. For example, women and children received rations but welfare officials did not expect them to work for these rations. It was sufficient that they be mothers and care for their children. The Welfare Branch greatly elaborated this view of women in its work in Alice Springs.

In 1953, the Welfare Branch appointed two women, Mrs. Leslie Gray and Mrs. Helen Thatcher, as welfare officers to work with the Alice Springs population. Their main project was settling part-Aboriginal families in the new houses the Northern Territory Administration was building. Although

they had male clients, they were appointed principally to work with women and children. They visited their clients at home regularly, encouraged women to attend prenatal clinics, to send their children to school regularly, and "to maintain a reasonable standard of living in the home" (Report of Female Welfare Officers...1958). Furthermore, they assisted their clients with rations, accommodation and general counselling in times of need. They encouraged their clients to seek them out when they were in trouble.

The Welfare Branch also justified action toward particular women in terms of its image of the female role. It gave families better houses on the basis of how well they kept the house. This was primarily the woman's responsibility. It also took legal action against women it suspected were neglecting their children. Mrs. Gray told me that the welfare officers each had diaries in which they recorded salient notes on their clients' domestic habits. If a woman began to leave her children unattended, drink heavily, neglect the washing, or otherwise fail in her duties, the welfare officers warned them. After several warnings, the Welfare Branch would ask the police to summons the derelict family to the court. If the magistrate decided the children had been neglected, he committed them to the care of the state and removed them from their parents.

The Welfare Branch intervened in the affairs of some part-Aboriginal families in a more direct manner. The assimilation policy included an assumption that part-Aborigines would not advance rapidly if they associated extensively with other Aborigines. Consequently, part-Aboriginal children who lived in remote areas or homes which were otherwise considered unsuitable were forced to live in institutions in Alice Springs. In one sense the assimilation policy only echoed an idea which had been hallowed in theory and practice for many years in the Northern Territory (Rowley 1974:231). In the context of the resettling of part-Aboriginal

families in Alice Springs, it took on special significance. The removal of part-Aboriginal children who were neglected or lived in remote areas far from educational opportunities directly affected the internal organization of urban Aboriginal households. The point was that most urban-based men had to travel to remote places in order to work. If their wives accompanied them, they had to surrender their children to the care of the Welfare Branch and put them into institutions. Women faced a dilemma in which they effectively had to choose between being wives and being mothers. They could not travel with their husbands and care for their children in the way the Welfare Branch demanded. If women tried to do both, the Welfare Branch took legal action against them and formally committed their children to institutions.

The conditions of life, however, favoured the residential stabilization of women in Alice Springs. There was a substantial demand for Aboriginal women to work as domestics in private homes and laundries. Unlike most men, therefore, women could work and live in the town. After 1961, single women with children became eligible for child endowment and supporting mothers pensions. They could support themselves without having to work or take a husband. The Welfare Branch, moreover, supported working and single mothers. It found women jobs and arranged babysitters. Women in town received their pensions in cash (Tatz 1963:90-91). The Welfare Branch and Housing Commission offered rebates to pensioners. Hence, single mothers could live in town even though their incomes were low. The Welfare Branch extended special assistance to single mothers. As Mrs. Gray informed me, depending on the men with whom they associated, the welfare officers often encouraged women to apply for pensions, live without men, and independently support their families.

The Welfare Branch justified its activities in Alice Springs in terms of fostering stable urban family units. Given this emphasis and the

actual conditions of everyday life in Central Australia, the evidence suggests that women emerged as the focus of the Welfare Branch's special attention and as the key to the long-term success of the assimilation process. The point is that women could more easily take on an ideal welfare identity than men and, thereby, justify continued support (Handelman 1976: 229). By the very nature of their work, men could not be everything the Welfare Branch expected. That and the exuberant types of behaviour pastoral workers often exhibited made most men the very antithesis of the ideal welfare client. Women, on the other hand, had firm job opportunities in Alice Springs. The Welfare Branch elaborated upon that fact and solidified their position in the town. It encouraged women to become the heads of their domestic groups and, thereby, transformed the structure and social significance of Aboriginal domestic groups in the urban context.

Family Form and the Significance of the Domestic Group

As a result of these processes, matricentric or matrifocal families emerged in Alice Springs. Similar developments have also been reported for Aboriginal families in Adelaide, Melbourne and rural towns in New South Wales (Barwick 1974:51-63; Gale 1970:315; Rowley 1970:329-332). Matrifocal families have also been the subject of considerable study in other parts of the world, especially in the Caribbean and the black ghettos of the United States of America (Hannerz 1969:70-104; Smith 1956, 1962; Solien de Gonzalez 1961, 1965, 1969). Matrifocal families are quite common in situations similar to those I have described for Alice Springs; that is, contexts in which women control a basic resource which permits them to care for their children and remain residentially stable while men must move around. Matrifocal families have emerged most commonly in situations where men must migrate seasonally to work but cannot or do not take their families

with them. Hannerz cautions, however, that "structural constraint" explanations of family form are incomplete without consideration of "what people think, feel and say about the relationship between male and female, as it is and as it ought to be" (Hannerz 1969:77). He devotes considerable attention to the ways that mainstream middle-class and ghetto-specific ideas about marriage, sexual morality and male and female roles affect family life in the Washington slum he studied. His description is graphic and portrays the social reality of ghetto marriage vividly. In general, Hannerz presents the most complete discussion of matrifocal families available. But Hannerz and the other writers have ignored the relationship between family form and the significance of the domestic group as a social unit. In spite of his sensitive attention to the details of Soulside residents' views of marriage and the family, Hannerz has not been able to describe the ways in which the people use particular family ideologies to legitimate attempts to control their domestic groups. He takes the domestic group for granted and thereby fails to make clear why family forms are important. Hence, although Hannerz' description is ethnographically detailed, it tends to freeze the situation and ignores the fact that domestic politics is fluid, constantly negotiable, and subject to great change.

In the light of these criticisms I want to discuss the relationship between the significance of the domestic group and the emergence of new types of marriage and kin-naming patterns among contemporary Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. I want to focus in particular upon the link between marital relationships and the control of children. A major consequence of my preceding analysis is that the control of children is the key to the control of the resources necessary to maintain one type of domestic group. I observed that by maintaining control of their children, women are able to gain access to pensions and other welfare support. I

noted, too, that such a strategy often requires them to commit themselves to their children at the expense of their relationships to their spouses. The more general point, however, is that the choice between husbands and children is, in fact, a choice between two ways of provisioning the domestic group and basically between two types of domestic organization. The new types of marriage and kin-naming patterns are related to the emergence of these new possibilities. People use them to describe and legitimate particular domestic arrangements and the control of resources they command. From this perspective, therefore, the new marital and kin ideologies are both expressions of and basic resources in the negotiations which constitute everyday domestic life in Alice Springs.

In a highly stimulating analysis, Sahlins attempts to relate particular types of kinship systems to the ability of particular societies to command surplus production from their constituent domestic groups (Sahlins 1974:123). Specifically, he suggests that kinship systems which encourage an extensive identification of collateral kin with lineal relatives command greater surpluses and generate more intensive economic systems than systems which emphasise lineal descent. The key factor is the relative isolation of the immediate family or domestic group from the rest of the community. The more isolated is the domestic group, the lower the total societal production and the smaller the economic surplus beyond basic domestic needs. Sahlins' point is that lineal descent systems tend to isolate the basic domestic group more than systems which extend domestic ties along collateral lines (Sahlins 1974:123). Although Sahlins does not say so, his analysis suggests that a domestic group which wanted to legitimate isolating itself from the wider community might adopt a kin ideology which stressed lineal filiation or descent. It is therefore significant that Aboriginal families in Alice Springs have begun to change their ways of reckoning filiation and their ideas about marriage. In particular, some

families have begun to trace filial linkages through the matriline and to deny the social significance of marriage. Indeed, some families have adopted a kin-naming system in which male and female children carry their mother's surname and socially repress the significance of fathers in the family system altogether. It is not surprising that such families tend to be matricentric. I suggest that these changes have accompanied and legitimate the emergence of isolated, female-dominated domestic groups as one major social unit of contemporary Aboriginal social life in Alice Springs.

During my fieldwork, Aboriginal people in Alice Springs recognized three types of marriage: "firestick", "kangaroo" and "proper" marriages. A firestick marriage is one contracted and celebrated according to Aboriginal customary practice. A proper marriage is contracted during a civil or religious ceremony recognized by white Australian laws. Kangaroo marriages are simply *de facto* relationships. In Mt. Kelly, for example, thirteen couples lived in some kind of marriage relationship. Of these, twelve were kangaroo-style relationships, and one was a proper marriage. There were also six people in the camp who had earlier maintained marital relationships with other people but who were then living alone. Two of these had lived together in a kangaroo style relationship for over thirty years. Although never celebrated, it was normatively correct according to Aboriginal customary law.

It is important to grasp that the Mt. Kelly people deny that kangaroo style relationships are marriages at all. People living in a kangaroo style relationship, when asked, insist that they are "just living together". It is not always easy to distinguish in fact between casual, short-term liaisons and a kangaroo relationship. The Mt. Kelly people have no hard and fast rules. Rather, they generally recognize that couples who have children and keep a separate camp form some kind of a domestic unit. The key point seems to be a recognized willingness to share domestic

resources of which children and the establishment of a separate camp are conventional markers. The Mt. Kelly people assert vigorously the qualified nature of the mutual commitment between two people involved in a kangaroo relationship. Women are particularly keen to distinguish between what they owe a man in a marriage and their obligations in a kangaroo relationship. In the midst of domestic quarrels, for example, women point out to their spouses that they are not married, only living together. Sometimes women wave the money they receive in child endowment in their spouses' faces and deny they need them. Indeed, women generally seem to prefer kangaroo relationships to proper marriages.

One important dimension of this process is the way women use surnames. It is very uncommon for a woman to adopt her spouse's surname upon establishing a kangaroo relationship. Rather, they most commonly keep their maiden (usually their mother's) surname. Those women who do adopt their spouse's surname tend to reassume their maiden names during arguments and periods of domestic trouble. There was even one case in Mt. Kelly in which the man adopted his spouse's surname. Women frequently pass on their own surname (not their spouse's) to their children. In some Alice Springs families this matrinytic pattern has now extended to the fourth generation below the original ancestor. There were three families in Mt. Kelly in which some members traced their surnames through the matriline back three generations. In these cases the original ancestor was a white man. Sometimes women take their spouse's name and pass it on to their children. In this way they mark their commitment to their spouse and usually surrender access to welfare support.

There is one large family in Alice Springs which illustrates the full range of possibilities in this kin-naming system. Mrs. Percival, the family's elderly mother, had *de facto* marital relationships with four white men during her life. She told me that although her first three

husbands had sometimes been harsh, they had all been good men and taken good care of her. Her fourth husband, however, was an evil and irresponsible man who neglected her and her children. Mrs. Percival had children by all four men. She gave the children of her first three husbands their own father's surname. After her fourth husband left her, however, she resumed her own father's surname, Percival, and passed it on to the children of the last man. She claims that her own father was an excellent man. She refuses to mention her fourth husband's name and recalls him with evident disgust. Her children as a group carry four surnames. Her sons have each made proper marriages and passed their own surnames on to their children. Her one daughter (who was the last man's child) has established only kangaroo relationships and named all her children Percival.

Terry and Isabel Sharp, a Mt. Kelly couple, had a proper marriage. Isabel adopted Terry's surname and passed it on to all her children, including George, her son by another man. Terry was a highly prestigious stockman and worked out bush for almost his entire life. Isabel lived with him throughout his career. They had six children. Because Isabel traveled with Terry, they had to send each child to an institution in Alice Springs when he came of school age. Mrs. Thatcher, the welfare officer in charge of the Sharps, told me that Terry and Isabel agreed to surrender their children, however, only after the Welfare Branch threatened to take legal action against them. It warned them they had to place the children in institutions so they could attend school or face committal proceedings in the Alice Springs Children's Court. The Sharps decided to give up their children "voluntarily".

The point is that Aboriginal people manipulate ideologies of marriage and filiation to describe and legitimate particular domestic situations. In particular, women make statements about their marital relationships by manipulating how they trace their own filial links and

those of their children. In those situations in which women withhold a firm commitment to their marital relationship, they present their domestic groups in terms of an ideology of matrification. In those situations in which they commit themselves to their marital ties, they downplay their matrifilial links and present their domestic identity in terms of their husband's family.

These manipulations and different patterns of domestic commitment have profound implications for the emergent composition and career of particular domestic groups. They mark different ways of provisioning domestic groups and two types of domestic organization. The point is that the Welfare Branch adopted different tactics toward particular domestic groups depending upon how it assessed the fate of the children involved. It supported women who committed themselves to their children and maintained a stable home; i.e. women who did not commit themselves firmly to any marital relationship with a man. This was especially so if the men with whom mothers associated were "low-class" or had jobs which were not conducive to establishing conventional family life. It pressured women to withdraw themselves from such men and maintain their own households. This established a field in which Aboriginal women could manipulate their marital identities with men so as to establish control of their children and thereby legitimate access to Welfare's support. The link to Welfare became the source of such domestic groups' incomes. Through this process, a matricentric form of domestic organization emerged. In contrast, women who invested in their relationships with their husbands committed themselves to their husbands' sources of income and to a different domestic organization. In most cases, the Welfare Branch not only refused to support such women, but took away their children. The domestic group was then split into two sections; the parents traveling from job to job, and the children living in institutions in Alice Springs.

Conclusion

I have attempted to analyse the significance of the domestic group to contemporary Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. I have shown the interrelationship between the ways different people relate to the outside, white-dominated society and their emergent domestic organization. On the one hand, the nature and complexity of different peoples' links to whites has an important effect on the composition and organization of their domestic groups. There are basically two types of domestic organization in Alice Springs: the matricentric type, and another in which parents live together separate from their children. These two types emerge as women in particular commit themselves to two different ways of provisioning their domestic groups. In the matricentric type women establish control of their children, minimize their relationships with men, and support themselves on Welfare benefits. In the other type of domestic organization, women commit themselves to their husband's income, surrender control of their children to local Welfare agencies, and forego Welfare benefits. These different types of domestic organization also establish secondary conditions which affect the way that Aboriginal people must interact with agents of the outside society. Of particular importance is the possibility that women who support themselves on pensions can limit their outside links and engage in few relatively simplex relationships with whites. Women's strength lies in withdrawing into the confines of their domestic group and exploiting it as a basic resource in their attempts to survive. Women are structurally placed, therefore, so as to construct a more perfect fringe-dwelling identity and existence than men.

This analysis makes sense only if it is understood that Aboriginal men and women in Central Australia operate in a field dominated by whites. The contemporary significance of the domestic group, the ways

people manipulate marriage and kin ideologies, and attitudes toward pensions and urban houses, can be explained only in the context of Aboriginal attempts to survive in the face of the white monopoly of all necessary resources. There is no longer any alternative mode of production in which Central Australian Aborigines can escape white power. They must engage in external relationships to utilise and manipulate white-controlled resources.

CHAPTER 5

MEN, WORK, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATTLE INDUSTRY TO URBAN FRINGE-DWELLERS IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

This chapter is the first of a two-part argument about the position of Aboriginal men in the fringe-camps around Alice Springs. My total argument is that men require access both to work and to sources of domestic credit if they are to survive. Unlike women, they cannot easily commit themselves to or exploit one or other type of income-earning context. Indeed, men must usually work if they are to receive credit and receive credit if they are to work. For most Mt. Kelly men, for example, the most promising as well as the preferred source of work is the cattle industry. But, because cattle work is subject to systematic discontinuities, they must often rely on pensioners for credit during key phases in their career if they are to continue to work or survive generally. With respect to my earlier argument about the significance of fringe-camps, if men are to become fringe-campers and take advantage of the opportunities fringe-camps offer, they must enlist the support of fringe-dwelling creditors, most particularly, of fringe-dwelling women.

In this chapter I will analyse how men find work and construct careers in the Central Australian cattle industry. My major point is that if men are to find work in the cattle industry, they must develop close, interpersonal relationships with cattle bosses. This means they must become skilled in cattle work and learn what is expected of a good worker. In the next chapter I will show how having a good cattle boss and sharing what he receives from his boss (particularly in the form of liquor) guarantees a man's credit. An important consequence of my total argument is that men must interact with white authorities more comprehensively than women. Even if they intend to live in fringe-camps and minimize their involvement

with whites as much as possible, men must extensively transact with whites. This means that men must commit themselves to whites in a more radical way than women. Consequently, their perspective on the wider society and on their own identities is different from that of women. In general men have had to make the demands of white society part of their own consciousness in a way many Aboriginal women have been able to avoid. Nothing highlights this more than the fact that women often force men to transact with and present themselves in terms of white agents in order to establish their collateral for the credit women control. In other words, women are able to use men to establish indirect access to white resources without having to surrender their domestic isolation.

Mt. Kelly and the Cattle Industry

Fringe-camps give their residents access to employment opportunities in the rural and the urban areas. Nonetheless, many fringe-dwellers, particularly the Mt. Kelly men, expect to find work primarily in the cattle industry. Indeed, it would be impossible to understand Mt. Kelly without reference to the growth and development of the cattle industry.

Most Mt. Kelly people were born on Bullion and Gumtree, two adjacent cattle stations approximately one hundred and fifty miles north of Alice Springs. Those people who did not originate on those two stations worked primarily on the group of stations northeast of Alice Springs. Although most Mt. Kelly people maintain an identity as part-Aborigines, they are of Anmatjira, Kaiditja, and Arunta origins, the groups of Aboriginal people whose pre-colonial territories lay in the northeast sector of Central Australia. The Mt. Kelly people born on Gumtree and Bullion stations have known each other since childhood and consider each other kinsmen. They all maintain social relationships with the Aboriginal

people who still live on the two stations, visit them frequently, and also consider them kinsmen. The station people also tend to camp in Mt. Nancy whenever they come to Alice Springs. Hence, the Mt. Kelly people originally came from and still maintain their links into the cattle communities to the north (see Appendix II).

All the Mt. Kelly adults have worked in the cattle industry at some point in their lives. This includes the twelve pensioners and twenty-one people who were in the work force during my fieldwork. Of the people in the work force, fifteen (two women and thirteen men) worked in the cattle industry for at least one week during my fieldwork. Although fifteen Mt. Kelly people have held jobs in Alice Springs (including two who worked almost their entire lives in the town) most have constructed their working careers in the cattle industry. Eight of the fifteen men who worked during my fieldwork considered the cattle industry the most promising source of jobs and worked to develop their careers in it.

The facts shown in Appendix II indicate the extent to which the cattle industry affects the rhythms and development of everyday Mt. Kelly life. At the most mundane level, the camp's population varies radically according to the demand for labour in the cattle industry. When there is work, the camp population drops and few people other than the pensioners may be found there. On the other hand, the camp is largest and its population most heterogeneous during slack or holiday times. The camp is largest during the summer Christmas season when there is no work for at least two months and the men all come home for an extended visit. Individual men return to Mt. Kelly for short visits due to illness, when they have lost their jobs, or simply for drinking bouts of various lengths. The ebb and flow of the population marks as well the rise and fall of the flow of money into the camp. There is a basic core of pensioners who usually live in the camp and receive an income continuously. It is the

custom in Central Australia for the men working on the cattle stations to be paid only when they leave work. They do not get paid fortnightly and money is not forwarded home to kinsmen. Consequently, when the men arrive home from the bush, they usually have large sums of money in their pockets. The camp's income is greatest at that moment. The amount of money in the camp drops as the men spend their earnings and return to work. While they are away, only the pensions continue to fund the camp, and its overall income reaches a minimum.

The arrival of men and money also announces a radical change in the overall tone of Mt. Kelly life. Although pensioners throw drinking parties throughout the weekends after their cheques arrive, the truly great drinking sprees occur only when the working men return home from the bush. When the men drive up in the back of their bosses' cars, the people who have stayed at home sing a great cheer. Often they shout the name of the man who is the headstockman, sing his praises, and call him by the name of the station at which he works. The men give their immediate kinsmen and other close friends meat or other gifts from their bosses, go to town to cash their cheques, and return again with several cartons of beer and many flagons. With the liquor they throw open parties for anybody who wants to come and drink including the Mt. Kelly residents and people from other places in Alice Springs. The parties often go on until the early hours of the morning and the men return to the hotels several times for more liquor. Although people insist that others should "sit down the good way" and drink quietly, fights are not uncommon during these great sprees. As the money runs out, the scale and exuberance of the sprees declines, the men limit their drinking to weekend bouts or nighttime sessions in the pubs, and Mt. Kelly life tones down. The departure of the men once again marks a return to pension life and the small parties which punctuate it.

There is a sense too in which these variations in the rhythm of Mt. Kelly life mark the relative prominence of the male and female domains of life. Although there are certainly men who receive pensions, women dominate access to welfare benefits. Although some women work in the cattle industry as domestics or camp cooks, pastoral work is associated with men. The rise in income, camp population, and exuberance of camp life tend, therefore, to be associated with the relative prominence of men and their social identities. By the same token, the decline in camp population, money, and general toning down of camp life marks the fading of the male world and the emerging prominence of women. These trends more generally are associated with the rise and fall of the relative prominence of domestically-generated resources and resources derived from the world of work. Mt. Kelly is interesting and significant because it is a social field within which its residents bring together and interrelate these broader worlds.

Recruitment and Opportunities for Pastoral Work

Employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in Central Australia are extremely limited. Although in recent years the Commonwealth government has increased the number of jobs available for Aborigines in Alice Springs, the settlements, and the missions, over 50 percent of the Aboriginal people in the work force is unemployed (Census 1971). Hence, the value of any job is quite high. The Mt. Kelly men are quite privileged in this respect relative to other Aborigines. On the one hand, they have access to jobs in Alice Springs. For example, during my fieldwork one man found work in a local Aboriginal organization as a field officer. Three other men got jobs on special works projects established to hire unemployed fringe-dwellers. Several Mt. Kelly men have worked for the Commonwealth

railways, the local abattoir, and other agencies which hire unskilled labourers in Alice Springs. Yet, the Mt. Kelly men are particularly fortunate because the camp is a labour pool for the cattle industry. For over twenty years, several pastoralists have recruited their workers from Mt. Kelly. Hence, the Mt. Kelly men were well placed to get what few jobs are available to unskilled Aboriginal workers.

The cattle market was extremely depressed during my fieldwork. The U.S.A. had imposed restrictions on the import of Australian beef and thereby closed the major market for Central Australian cattle. Consequently, pastoralists did not need many men to muster, brand, or drive their cattle. Some pastoralists were even forced to let their equipment deteriorate because they did not have the liquid funds necessary to maintain it. There were whole regions of Central Australia in which only one or two stations were hiring workers. Consequently, although the Mt. Kelly men worked, they worked considerably less than they might have otherwise normally expected. In spite of this contingency the overall employment pattern I witnessed was characteristic of cattle work generally.

Cattlework is subject to systematic discontinuities and breaks in employment opportunities. On the one hand, there is little work available during the summer hot season. In Central Australia, cattle are normally left to wander over the paddocks during the summer. There is usually some work available for headstockmen mending fences, windmills and other equipment. Most men suffer at least a two-month break. On the other hand, few skilled stockmen expect to work for one pastoralist throughout their careers. Pastoralists die, sell their properties, or simply discharge their workers. Stockmen also think it wise that early in his career a man work for several pastoralists in order to sharpen his skills and become widely known. Moreover, stockmen do not consider all pastoralists good employers. On the contrary, they consider some men "bad

bosses" and prefer to work for "good bosses" who "look after them properly". The overall demand for Aboriginal stockmen has also declined in the last twenty years. The end of droving and the construction of fences seriously eroded the opportunities for particularly the least skilled workers. The increased indebtedness and small profit margin of most pastoralists makes it difficult for them to support extra workers.

These structural and historical features of the Central Australian pastoral industry mean that, although the Mt. Kelly men might well occupy a relatively privileged position in the industry, they expect and must anticipate periods of unemployment. Their hedge against the vagaries of pastoral employment is their capacity to find new jobs, on the one hand, and obtain credit during slack periods, on the other. Critical to these procedures, however, is the range and nature of their relationships with pastoralists and fellow Aboriginal people. Men who maintain good relationships with several pastoralists have a greater chance of finding jobs when they need or want them. By the same token, if men are well thought of by their Aboriginal peers, they are more likely to receive credit when they cannot find work and have no money. I will consider the question of credit in the next chapter. For the moment I want to examine the processes by which men develop good relationships with pastoralists and construct careers in the pastoral industry itself.

There are a number of ways pastoralists recruit men for a season's work. The local office of the Commonwealth Employment Service lists cattle jobs. Stock and station agents advertise in the local press and select workers. By far the most common procedure, however, is direct personal recruitment. When pastoralists need workers, they often contact men they have known and found satisfactory in the past. Some recruit their workers directly from the station camp. Others travel into Alice Springs and find men particularly from the fringe-camps. Alternatively, they rely

upon workers or other trusted individuals to recommend men they think are reliable. In other words, recruiting depends upon interpersonal relationships. The most reliable way for an Aboriginal man to get a job, therefore, is to establish close, personal relationships with pastoralists or with other Aboriginal workers who already maintain such links.

The recruiting process in the cattle industry works in the context of and often opposes general structural conditions of Central Australia. In particular, the recruiting process either exploits or suspends the relevance of Aboriginal workers' location in space and their ethnic identities. Many pastoralists recruit their workers from the Aboriginal camps on their own stations. Pastoralists and other commentators sometimes suggest that local recruiting is part of an agreement whereby Aborigines work and give their boss the use of the land in exchange for access to their sacred religious sites. According to this explanation, the basis of the Aborigines' link to the station is their primeval religious relationship to the land. If that were the case, the Mt. Kelly men would never work. They live no less than one hundred miles from any pastoralist who hires them. Although there are no Aborigines living on the stations where they work, pastoralists drive to Mt. Kelly to recruit men, bypassing more conveniently located Aboriginal populations on neighbouring stations, missions, and settlements. Pastoralists avoid keeping Aborigines on their properties (and on one occasion during my fieldwork even ejected a group) by hiring the Mt. Kelly men. Pastoralists do not hire Aborigines merely because they live close at hand. Rather, the right to live on a property as well as the opportunity to get jobs while living away from a property depends entirely upon the relationship between pastoralists and their workers.

The Mt. Kelly men's advantage might also be explained by their part-Aboriginal ethnic identity. Central Australia has a wide reputation

as a region highly stratified by very rigid ethnic boundaries. Aborigines and whites talk in terms of three distinct ethnic categories: white, half-caste or coloured part-Aborigines, and full-blood Aborigines. Alternatively people refer to whitefellows, yellowfellows, and blackfellows (Meggitt 1974:34; Rowley 1974:255-340; Stevens 1974:41). Although these terms have been used throughout Australia, they have developed rather specialized meanings in the context of the Central Australian cattle industry. In addition to the differences in material possessions, political and economic power, and prestige conventionally assigned to these three categories of people, these terms also name the components of a basic model of the local hierarchy of skills, division of labour and responsibility, and relationships between the work roles in the cattle industry. In general, "whites" are the owners, managers, and highly-skilled role-players. They are the "bosses". "Blackfellows" are "the boys" who by virtue of their special skills in tracking and animal work make good cattlemen. It is conventionally thought that part-Aborigines have the physical capabilities of the blacks and some of the white man's intellectual ability. Consequently, they often play roles midway between the two other categories (in particular headstockmen, well-sinkers, drovers) and perform other tasks which require mental and physical dexterity but little planning. In general, pastoralists considered part-Aborigines more intelligent than full-blood Aborigines and prefer to hire them.

Many local people (including the Mt. Kelly men themselves) would therefore argue that pastoralists hire them because they are part-Aborigines. However, much like the emphasis on the station camp, the explanation in terms of the ethnic preferences of the pastoralists is incomplete if not altogether inaccurate. William Samuelson, the man who enjoys the greatest prestige in Mt. Kelly and who is the role model for the camp's young stockmen, is a full-blood Aborigine. He worked for the same

pastoralist for over twenty-five years and, although retired from active stockwork because of a back injury, still receives money and presents from his old employer. He also enjoys a standing right to live on his boss' station at any time. Furthermore, his boss still publicly considers Samuelson his headstockman and hires Mt. Kelly men under Samuelson's control. This is all true in spite of the fact that Samuelson is a full-blood Aborigine. Moreover, Samuelson is not a unique example.

In the light of this kind of evidence, it would perhaps be easiest to disregard ethnic categories and assert that they are nothing but the components of a folk-model which has little relevance to the sociological analysis of Central Australia (Peters 1967:261). Yet, this ignores the fact that whites and Aborigines take account of the implications of the ethnic model in their interaction with each other. Indeed, they must negotiate the situational significance of that model for their relationships. They cannot merely disregard it. As particular blacks and whites fill in the details of their relationships, they actively legitimate or suspend its relevance for any particular transaction or relationship. The same is true for relationships based on spatial contiguity. Away from particular relationships (for example, in the context of legislative debate or interviews with anthropologists) these models may be invoked and unproblematically maintain their validity as typifications of relationships. However, in everyday life their significance must be established by the actors themselves. The problem for analysis is to determine under what conditions and how they are made relevant or irrelevant in particular situations.

The conditions which establish the relevance of the ethnic model in the cattle industry emerge as pastoralists recruit their workers and construct the personal relationships which legitimate recruitment procedures. Specifically, the relevance of a man's ethnic identity is established as he

constructs what the Mt. Kelly men call his "reputation"; that is, his identity as a good or bad worker. Indeed, a man must construct a good reputation precisely because of the otherwise constraining limitations of the ethnic model. Given the prevailing views on the capabilities of the average Aborigine, an Aboriginal man who establishes a good reputation thereby largely suspends the relevance of his ethnic identity for his transactions with pastoralists. This is particularly true for "full-blood" Aborigines. Yet, it is also true for part-Aborigines. It is conventionally assumed that part-Aborigines can develop along one of two ways. The behaviour of a part-Aborigine who fails to perform as expected is explained in terms of "the blackfellow coming out in him". On the other hand, if he performs adequately, he has successfully repressed the "blackfellow" and developed his white blood. In other words, a man's reputation does not necessarily correspond to the general ethnic models. Rather, the significance of a man's reputation is the way in which it distinguishes him from or makes him an exemplar of general categories. It establishes in this way the relevance or irrelevance of those categories for him.

In its narrowest sense a man's reputation documents how skilled in cattlework other people consider him. It is a description and product of the relative success of his training process. There have never been any major training programs for stockmen in Central Australia. Consequently, men have to learn cattlework on the job. A man's first employer is particularly crucial in teaching him and establishing his initial reputation. However, Aboriginal men do not all have equal access to their first jobs. On the contrary, several factors structure the entrance of new workers into the industry.

As I mentioned above, many pastoralists think that part-Aborigines have greater potential as employees than most "full-blood" Aborigines. The Commonwealth government officially supported the pastoralists' view for

many years and systematically tried to prepare part-Aborigines for work on the cattle stations. It never established schools which offered instruction in the techniques of cattlegwork. Rather, it financed institutions designed to teach part-Aboriginal children the rudiments of European culture and thereby prepare them for later vocational training on the job (Rowley 1974:236). The police were responsible for finding part-Aboriginal children in the bush and empowered to remove them from their mothers. Prior to World War II there were two institutions in Central Australia which received the children: Hermansburg Mission and the Bungalow. After World War II and the official inauguration of the assimilation policy, other similar institutions were established. The two most prominent ones in Alice Springs were administered by the Anglican Church and known as St. Mary's and St. John's. The children lived in the institutions and attended school in Alice Springs. The important point about these institutions was that they functioned as recruiting grounds for young stockmen and domestic labourers. Pastoralists who wanted young part-Aboriginal men or women could recruit them directly from these institutions. Through these institutions the Commonwealth acted as an agent between pastoralists and prospective employees and established the initial contacts upon which some pastoralists and their workers built closer, long-term relationships.

However, relatively few Aborigines had the opportunity, involuntary or otherwise, to attend school and acquire special access to potential employers. Most had to rely upon indirect links through kinsmen who already worked for a pastoralist. Indeed, it is in providing ready access to men who already had jobs that spatial proximity has its most important effect upon recruiting in the cattle industry. A man who needs a job can invoke a kin tie to legitimate moving into a station camp where he thinks jobs might be available. Aboriginal women played an important part in this process particularly prior to 1940. In many respects, Aboriginal women

were the points of articulation between the pastoral economy and the domestic economy of the pre-war Aborigines. The shortage of white women in the Outback prior to World War II is well documented (Bleakley 1929:10). Although it was illegal some white men cohabited with Aboriginal women. It was not uncommon for the Aboriginal woman's kinsmen to join her as the pastoralists' main workers. Moreover, the children who were born of such relationships often had priority over other people both as workers and even as heirs to the estate. Although all such children were categorized as part-Aborigines and, therefore, subject to removal, pastoralists (as well as Aboriginal women) sometimes hid them on the station. The police also overlooked the children of those pastoralists they favoured or otherwise had to respect. The situational negotiability of ethnic identities in Central Australia might be gauged by the fact that those part-Aboriginal children who eventually did inherit their father's or grandfather's station now are considered "white".

Station camps were a context in which well established workers could give aspiring workers the chance to learn the business and get to know the pastoralist. The fact that even Mt. Nancy functions as a recruiting ground in this way documents the significance of the social relationships between pastoralists, workers, and potential workers in this process at the expense of merely spatial conditions. There were five men in Mt. Kelly who had direct personal relationships with one or more pastoralists. These pastoralists recruited almost all their workers from Mt. Kelly. Whenever they needed men, they drove into the camp, contacted their main employees, and indicated if they needed extra workers. The Mt. Kelly regulars filled their bosses' needs from young men in the camp or other friends around Alice Springs. Young men who had earlier lived in Mt. Kelly often came back to the camp looking for work. I observed several such men get jobs through their relationships with the Mt. Kelly

men who had regular employers. On one occasion I witnessed a young Mt. Kelly man begin his career in the cattle industry with a job on Jefferson Downs, a station whose headstockman lived in Mt. Kelly and was then cohabiting with the young man's sister.

To be a stockman a young man has to become skilled in the techniques of cattlework. However, his training also includes learning what kind of man pastoralists hire; that is, they must learn the cognitive and affective aspects of the social identity of a good, reputable worker (Berger and Luckman 1972:94). In the context of the Central Australian pastoral industry a man must pay special attention to insuring that he is perceived as having what might be called a proper motivational structure. By motivational structure I do not mean the actual psychological impulses which prompt any particular person to behave. Rather, I mean, following Mills and Schutz, those particular personality traits which other people publicly assert prompt a man to act. In this sense a man's motivational structure is a composite label others ascribe to him, not necessarily a feature of his own personality (Schutz 1976:185-201; Mills 1940:904). The significance of a man's publicly documented motivational structure is related to the overall significance of the motivational structures conventionally ascribed to the three different ethnic categories in Central Australia. It is precisely through these notions that ethnicity is made relevant in everyday life in the cattle industry.

In contrast to whites, Aborigines are typically understood to be cheeky, unable to manage their own work, and unreliable. They tend to "go walkabout" and manifest the rather casual attitudes said to have been characteristic of hunters and gatherers. Although such notions are quite common, Stevens provides data documenting these points for the pastoralists in his sample. Stevens collected this data in an attempt to determine the reasons why pastoralists opposed paying Aborigines the award

wage. He ends up explaining the results of his opinion poll in terms of "genuine problems of communication in the everyday running of cattle stations" (Stevens 1974:66-67). He notes that few pastoralists have ever bothered to learn an Aboriginal language. He suggests that better working conditions and increased acculturation for both groups might undermine these attitudes.

Stevens' data are unsurprising and his analysis misses the point. What provides a clue to the significance of his data, however, is his observation that pastoralists and managers tend to individualize their assessment of certain workers' abilities. Stevens says, "Indeed, there was a surprising departure from the tendency to depersonalize Aboriginal workers in other circumstances. Such comments as 'Johnson would be supreme' or that 'no white man could match X' were fairly common" (Stevens 1974:66). Stevens provides no explanation for this fact. Yet, it is as important as the results of his survey data. Stevens' survey data is nothing other than a profile of the motivation structure which is ascribed to the typical Aboriginal worker. It is a model against which the performance of particular men is measured and their own reputations built. The exceptional "Johnsons" of the industry are significant precisely because they have constructed reputations which suspend the relevance of the model in their own particular cases. Their reputations, in turn, legitimate the particular exceptional nature of their relationships with their employers. Indeed, the pastoralists Stevens interviewed agreed that these exceptional men were worth the award wage.

These responses to Stevens' inquiries neither marked liberal attitudes of some pastoralists nor were special pleading displayed for Stevens' benefit. Rather, the process of creating exceptions to the conventional typifications of Aboriginal motivation is precisely the way the recruiting process works in Central Australia. Those men who work are

all exceptions in one way or another. If a man is not an exception to the type of the "lazy blackfellow", he does not get a job. A crucial part of a man's education in the cattle business, therefore, is learning how to display exceptional motivations.

I was once told a story about a famous white pioneer pastoralist and his part-Aboriginal son. The white father had the habit of tying his son to whiteoak yard posts and horsewhipping him. According to my informant, the father whipped his son in order "to beat the blackfellow out of him". The son was not alone in his experiences. The Mt. Kelly men all told me stories of how their bosses physically and verbally abused them. They described how even "good bosses" assaulted them with stockwhips and subjected them to other kinds of physical punishment. Moreover, the Mt. Kelly men agreed that a limited amount of such treatment was legitimate and an essential part of their "education".

Cameron Sharp, a nineteen-year old Mt. Kelly part-Aboriginal man, told me about the time his first boss whipped him. It was early in the morning and the men were preparing their horses for work. The season was fresh and, as is common in Central Australia, the horses had not been ridden for several months. Consequently, they were "a little bit wild". In addition, Cameron had chosen to ride a young colt which was only newly broken and quite unused to riders. When Cameron mounted him, the colt bolted and began to buck. The boss ordered Cameron to pull the colt up tight. Yet, Cameron too was inexperienced and let the animal run. The boss grabbed a stockwhip and flailed into horse and rider. Cameron said that the boss tried to teach them both how to work properly in this way. Cameron said further that he thought he had learned from the experience.

Another older Mt. Kelly part-Aboriginal man, Don Corcoran, told me about his youth on Ninjambah Station. He was born on the property and worked there for over forty years. When he was a young boy, he was

responsible for the boss' vegetable garden. He was supposed to water it and scare away the crows. Occasionally he stole some watermelons. When the boss discovered his misdeeds he whipped him. Don ran away several times in response. If the boss caught him running off, he shot his rifle at the boy. If Don refused to stop, the boss hopped on his horse, rode after him, and returned him to the station. The boss then whipped him again. Don outlived his boss and remained on the property for several years. Eventually he had a major argument with the new owner, however, and left the station. When I went around to the Alice Springs home of the new owner, the boss refused to speak with me. I told him I wanted to discuss Don. He simply said, "Oh, that cheeky bastard" and refused to spare any more time. Don, on the other hand, once spotted the boss walking down the main street of Alice Springs. He cursed his old boss and said, "I gave that man the best years of my life and now look at me. What have I got for it? Nothing."

Alfred Samuelson was an old white drover and small-time pastoralist who had employed William Samuelson for over twenty-five years. He once told me a story about William which occurred before they began working together. William was working for another white pastoralist on a station north of Alice Springs. One day the boss began to stockwhip William. Apparently William thought the punishment had gone too far, turned, and beat his boss badly. According to Alfred, the only thing which prevented William from killing the boss was a knife at his belly. The interesting thing was that Alfred did not disapprove of William's response. On the contrary, he used the story to disparage the other pastoralist. Alfred praised William and said that he was the only "black-fellow" who had ever gotten up in the morning before Alfred himself. He said that William had never been a "cheeky" worker. Alfred observed that he had never had to stockwhip William and wondered about the other boss'

good sense. He did not doubt the general utility of the whip. He only questioned its use in the case of this particular worker, a man who worked hard and was not cheeky. In his opinion William did not require what was otherwise a regular feature of boss-worker relationships.

Without quantitative evidence of the number of times pastoralists use or threaten to use violence against their workers, it is difficult to know whether Stevens is correct saying there is less violence now than in 1946 when the Berndts studied the Northern Territory cattle industry (Stevens 1974:185). However, common Aboriginal men working in the industry still expect it, understand it as a key element in their relationship with pastoralists, and generally consider it legitimate. Violence is significant because it determines the relevance of an Aboriginal man's ethnic identity to his identity as a worker. When a pastoralist whips an Aborigine, he puts the man in an insoluble dilemma. On the one hand, if the worker refuses to be whipped, he documents that the "blackfellow" is still "in" him. He shows himself to be "cheeky" and unreliable. Consequently, he undermines his relationship with his boss, loses his job, and jeopardizes his wider reputation. If he intends to keep his job, establish good relations with the boss, and construct a reputation as a "good boy", on the other hand, he must submit to the violence. Only by submitting to the violence can a worker document that he has a motivational structure appropriate to the job as stockman and the identity as a boss' boy.

The account of a white father who beat his part-Aboriginal son provides evidence for the argument that pastoralists are operating on what they consider to be the typical motivational structure of Aboriginal men even if they have some of their own "blood". Indeed, the case is particularly enlightening given that the boy was part-Aboriginal and supposedly had the potential to develop in either direction. The boy inherited from his mother the possibility of manifesting "blackfellow" traits. He had

likewise inherited from his father the possibility of repressing those traits and cultivating his white characteristics. According to my informant, the father whipped the boy in order to beat the "blackfellow" out of him. The boy could show he had repressed his black instincts only by responding appropriately to the whippings and otherwise working well.

Don Corcoran's case is equally instructive as an example of a part-Aboriginal man who eventually in spite of repeated whippings and many years could not repress his "blackness". He was a "cheeky" man, according to his ex-boss. After an apparently major crisis they severed their relationship and Don had to leave the station. Don, on the other hand, considered his boss a "bad boss", a man who gave Don nothing in spite of what he considered to be the labour of his entire life. I will return to the notion of "good" and "bad" bosses below. For the moment it is enough to note that Don and his boss together linked "cheekiness" and prevailing notions of a fair exchange between pastoralists and their workers. Don was cheeky and his boss was bad. This was the typical way of describing a relationship which had broken down. It was the exact opposite of how men with stable relationships with their bosses talked.

The result of Don's transactions with his boss was that he lost his job and assumed an identity more appropriate to a "blackfellow". He had no job and no stable relationship with a boss. William Samuelson was an example of a "blackfellow" who by virtue of his relationships with Alfred Samuelson assumed a position and social identity more typical of a part-Aborigine. Indeed, given the way Alfred talked about him, he seems almost to have established the identity of a whiteman. According to Alfred, William woke up in the morning and got working even before Alfred himself, a unique characteristic for a "blackfellow". William was such a fine worker, in fact, that Alfred denied he needed ever to be whipped. White men (at least those men pastoralists considered to be really white)

were never whipped as far as I know. They did not need to have the "black-fellow" beaten out of them. By saying that William did not need the whip, Alfred suspended the relevance of his obvious "black" origins and said that he was something altogether special. This legitimated the transactions and relationship between the two men which were themselves considered something special and highly prestigious in Mt. Nancy.

The Mt. Kelly men accept the legitimacy of the violence and consider it part of their education because they are aware of its significance for their relationships with pastoralists and their long-term career prospects. It is a forced choice in which either course of action is disagreeable but one side less so than the other (Walters 1972:286). Through violence they learn to be "good boys"; that is, to adopt the proper stance toward pastoralists. On one occasion I witnessed the case of a Mt. Kelly man who risked having his reputation redefined as a result of gossip which questioned his demeanor. Barry Corcoran, Don's son, had worked for one pastoralist for over nine years. However, as a result of a major argument they had in the bush during a muster, the boss dismounted Barry approximately ten miles from the station house and forced him to walk in. Barry left working for the boss. This happened before I moved into Mt. Kelly. During my fieldwork, however, Barry informed me that he was worried about what his previous boss thought of him. Barry's fellow workers at the station had informed the boss that they had heard Barry "rubbishing" him in a local Alice Springs pub. Barry was concerned lest the boss get angry and spread the word that Barry was a "cheeky" worker. At the time Barry was having difficulties with his new boss and did not want to jeopardize his career further. The gossip of his ex-workmates risked doing just that.

In his study of the Sicilian *mafiosi* Blok argues that violence emerges as a means of social control in encapsulated regional political orders under conditions in which "the State fail(s) to monopolize

the use of physical force and (has) to yield its sovereignty to local power holders" (Blok 1974:176). Blok's thesis describes more accurately and establishes the conditions for what Rowley and others have labeled the perpetuation of "frontier conditions" in Central Australia (Rowley 1974:148-156). Given Blok's perspective one might observe that the "frontier" does not vanish with the development of a state apparatus which nominally or even through the agents of local police appears actually to have established administrative control of a region. Rather, one must stress the extent to which the state in practice relies upon "local power holders" to carry out its responsibilities. I have described in earlier chapters the extent to which the Commonwealth government both officially and tacitly relegated its power and responsibility for Aborigines to pastoralists. Blok's analysis properly suggests that such a relegation is a necessary condition for the kind of violence I have described as part of relationships between pastoralists and Aboriginal workers.

However, it is important to realize that pastoralists are not strictly speaking brokers as Blok and Adams use the term (Adams 1970: 320-321; Blok 1974:7). Unlike the *mafiosi* pastoralists own the means of production and do not depend upon their control of Aborigines to maintain the state's support for their power in the region. They do not use violence to control a vital resource (Aborigines) at the local level which is necessary for them to keep the support of the power holders in the larger domain in which they are encapsulated. On the contrary, although the Commonwealth government can effectively do little to stop violence between pastoralists and their workers, news of such violence is not well received at the national political level and tends to undermine the pastoralists' overall legitimacy. A more important point, however, is that violence is not a simple means of social control. Rather, violence is a recruiting technique which identifies men and forces them to choose between

having a boss and not having a boss. Men who can not tolerate violence do not get bosses.

I suggest that all the "exceptions" to the general depersonalized rule which Stevens found were men who had proved themselves able and willing to tolerate violence. The point is that violence controls pastoralist-worker interaction and conditions the development of their relationships through its relevance for the complex negotiations which construct and legitimate the social identities of particular pastoralists and their workers. The significance of men's social identities, on the other hand, itself emerged from the political and economic dependence of Aboriginal workers on their pastoral bosses. As a mechanism by which the fate of particular men is determined in an overall highly structured field, the true importance of violence lies not in its general properties as a means of social control but in its specific properties as a means of differentiating men from one another. Indeed, it controls men in this context precisely because it differentiates them. In this respect, violence is as important as the wages and side benefits a boss pays his workers. The capacity to offer violence and wages marks the power and identity of the boss. The willingness to accept violence and wages marks the dependence and identity of the worker. In this way violence not only expresses the boss' power, it constructs and legitimates it.

Debt and Avoidance Patterns between Pastoralists and Workers

Relationships between pastoralists and workers in Central Australia are of the type Radcliffe-Brown analyses in his classic essay "On Joking Relationships"; that is, they involve "both attachment and separation, both social conjunction and social disjunction" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:91). On the one hand, pastoralists need their workers' labour and workers need an income. On the other hand, their relationship is based

on a structural conflict over the proceeds of the total operation, in particular over the results of the workers' labour. Radcliffe-Brown notes that "Social disjunction implies divergence of interests and therefore the possibility of conflict and hostility, while conjunction requires the avoidance of strife". Given this set of conditions, he asks, "How can a relation which combines the two be given a stable, ordered form?" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:92). He answers that such relationships can be maintained either through joking or through avoidance. Insofar as violence is a crucial component in the processes whereby pastoralists and workers develop their relationships, conflict and hostility are not necessarily repressed. It is important to note, however, that violence is limited primarily to the early, formative stages of a developing relationship. Mature relationships between pastoralists and their workers are marked by patterns of avoidance. The shift from violent interaction to avoidance is crucial and marks a major change in a worker's emergent relationship with his boss. It indicates that their relationship has become established and henceforth must be marked by a mutual concern for the maintenance of face in ordinary, everyday social interaction.

Radcliffe-Brown argues that the content of transactions between the parties to a relationship varies according to the degree of respect which must be shown among them (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:96). He suggests that joking, for example, occurs between equals and marks a symmetrical relationship. However, avoidance occurs between unequals and characterizes asymmetrical links. The relationships between pastoralists and their workers (both experienced and inexperienced) are certainly unequal. The shift from violence to avoidance marks, however, a change in the identity of the unequal relationship; that is, there is a change from a relationship between people who owe each other little and remain relatively uncommitted to a relationship between committed, indebted people. As the commitment

and mutual obligations between pastoralists and their workers grows, violence fades and avoidance becomes a more prominent aspect of their interaction. These ideas suggest a way to specify the problem of asymmetry more precisely than does Radcliffe-Brown. Avoidance occurs, on the one hand, when the conflict of interests between the parties to a relationship is great (perhaps even irreconcilable) and, on the other hand, when the debt or dependence of one party upon the other is perpetual or understood as irredeemable. From this perspective avoidance in a general sense socially represses expressions of social disjunction. Its logic, in other words, is the reverse of joking.

In the particular case of the Central Australian cattle industry, respect is maintained and face saved when everyone recognizes the dependence of the workers upon their bosses; but, at the same time, avoids overtly introducing that fact into everyday interaction. The power of the boss remains unstated and expressions of it are socially relegated to the anomalous moments of untrained awkwardness and "out-of-line" behaviour characteristic of the useless and the untrained. Evidence for this proposition comes from the way the Mt. Kelly men conceptualize what they call "good bosses" and "bad bosses". There are two basic components of a "good boss": a good boss "looks after" his workers and he leaves them alone to do their work unsupervised. A "bad boss" is a man who only pays his workers the minimum wage and who directly supervises the entire day's work. The Mt. Kelly men recognize, of course, that the boss has the right to pay men nothing other than the legal minimum and to attend to every detail of the station's operation. However, they prefer to leave bad bosses and find jobs with good bosses. Indeed, they treasure good bosses and endeavor to keep them. Men who manage to acquire good bosses indicate by that fact alone that they are "good boys"; that is, highly skilled workers. On the

other hand, "bad bosses" can usually only attract "bad boys" and bad boys must settle for bad bosses.

Both components of the identity of "good boss" imply interaction patterns of avoidance. In the first place, a good boss does not require his workers to articulate their dependence upon him for their livelihoods. Good bosses pay all their workers more than the basic wage. They also legitimately pay their prized workers even higher wages. A good boss gives his men special things which he anticipates they might need. For example, at the beginning of the mustering season, he might give his headstockman a new pair of boots or a new hat. He also permits his best men to live on the station even during slack periods. Alternatively, he finds them summer work or picks them up at their own homes away from the station when the season starts. A good boss also grants his men beef and extra money to give to their kinsmen. If his men are stranded in town without money, a good boss lends them cash or arranges credit for them at a local stock-and-station agent. In addition to these more or less regular concessions, a good boss helps his workers in emergencies. On one occasion, for example, I witnessed a boss bring his headstockman's wife into town in order to give birth in the Alice Springs hospital. I saw another boss pay his worker's \$300 traffic fine.

A boss does not grant all of these concessions to each of his workers. Nor do they expect him to do so. On the contrary, only the best, most prestigious workers can reasonably expect to have access to all these kinds of resources. I will elaborate the significance of this fact for relationships among workers and their peers in the next chapter. The point to notice now is that ideally a good boss grants these items to his workers without having to be asked or without any dispute. Men act as if what is in fact a privilege is a worker's right by virtue of his close relationship with the boss. Insofar as the boss recognizes his responsibility as boss

and meets his workers' needs as they arise, he upholds this fiction. At the same time, he gives his men what only he has the power to provide them without making the basis for their exchange overt, public, and discrediting. In other words, a good boss avoids making his identity as boss relevant to everyday interaction between him and his workers. A bad boss, on the other hand, awkwardly minimizes his responsibilities and makes his workers publicly recognize their dependence upon him. He expresses his power and insists his workers do likewise.

Good boys also have responsibilities of this type toward their bosses. Most significantly, a good boy never inquires or negotiates with his boss about his pay. Rather, he takes his job, has faith in his boss' good will, and accepts his pay at the end of the job. If the boss consistently disappoints a good man's expectations the worker simply leaves and reidentifies his previous employer as a bad boss. A skilled, well respected worker need not tolerate a bad boss. He can leave and find another job with confidence. Indeed, a worker who leaves a bad boss and finds other work gains added prestige in the eyes of his peers. By the same token, a man who consistently submits to a bad boss and cannot find another loses his peers' respect.

It often happens that the goods a pastoralist presents to his workers are loans. A pastoralist who buys his headstockman a new pair of boots, for example, does not necessarily make his worker a gift. More often, he takes the cost of the boots out of his worker's final pay cheque. Indeed, the mark of a very generous boss is that he puts his best workers heavily into debt for long periods of time. There is, therefore, a close association between indebtedness, respect, and avoidance in the relationships between pastoralists and their workers in Central Australia. I have argued up to this point that the prevailing avoidance patterns socially repress expressions of the boss' power over his men. However, I have said

little about the components of the boss' power over his men. The link between indebtedness and avoidance, however, suggests something about the conditions which maintain the boss' power and long-term relationships between pastoralists and workers. I said that the boss takes the cost of items such as new boots out of his worker's cheque. That suggests, of course, that there is a direct exchange of a worker's labour for the item he receives. From this limited perspective, boots are simply a form of payment in kind. Yet, this is only partially true. The debt a worker incurs includes more than just the cost of the boots. When a pastoralist presents his worker with a pair of boots or grants a cash loan, he thereby guarantees and indicates that he will give his man the work necessary to repay the loan. Insofar as workers stay indebted to their employers, they retain access to work. Work is so scarce for most Aborigines in Central Australia that men compete to go into debt to a boss. The primary debt men owe their bosses for access to a job (as distinct from the secondary debts they owe for particular items) is, therefore, substantially irredeemable, and, I suggest, is the long-term basis for the pastoralist's power over his workers. The avoidance patterns are principally associated with the social repression of the primary debt; that is, by being a good boss a pastoralist socially denies that he has the power to grant primary debts and that his men vitally depend upon him to do so in order to live.

This suggestion raises the question of the second component of the identity of the "good boss" and the avoidance patterns associated with it. In addition to meeting his workers' needs, a good boss avoids his men during the workday. In the morning a good boss informs his headstockman what he wants done. He then goes away to do his own work and leaves the men to implement his instructions without his supervision. If a boss avoids his men during the workday, he thereby communicates his trust in their skill and sense of responsibility. This is important because the

only resource a worker can offer his boss in exchange for what I have called the primary debt is his skill as a worker. Indeed, as I stated previously, a man's skill determines the extent to which he depends upon any particular pastoralist (be he a good or bad boss) for his livelihood. If a man is highly skilled, the force of the primary debt he owes his employer is considerably less. Indeed, some men are so skilled and reliable that pastoralists compete to acquire them. These points relate also to my comments about secondary debts. Only a man who is highly skilled commands many gifts and secondary loans from his employers. From this perspective a pastoralist who properly "looks after" his men and leaves them alone during the workday communicates a message about the extent to which their positions in the social order have been reversed; that is, he communicates the fact that he depends upon their particular labour more than they depend upon the resources he controls. Insofar as a pastoralist avoids his men, he represses the fact that he is the boss.

How does the problem of horsewhipping relate to these points? In terms of the argument I have just presented, horsewhipping stops when a pastoralist recognizes his worker's skill; that is, when he must begin to avoid his worker. For the workers themselves, therefore, the full significance of horsewhipping emerges in terms of its function as a prelude to avoidance. A man is not proud simply that he has been horsewhipped. Rather, the mark of pride is that he has been horsewhipped, but is now avoided. Men do not consider bosses who whip their young workers necessarily bad bosses. A good boss instructs his young men well, including teaching them how to present themselves. Young men experience violence when they transgress the conditions of avoidance. Bosses must teach and young men must learn those conditions. When that occurs, a man's training is over, the violence stops, and avoidance emerges.

Conclusion

In conclusion I want to consider a problem of major importance in boss-worker relationships in Central Australia — the use of kinship terms. Aboriginal workers regularly extend kinship terms to their bosses. For example, they often call their bosses "uncle", "father", or "brother-in-law". They often cast requests to their bosses in the idiom of kinship and talk as if their bosses were part of the customary Aboriginal kinship order. More radically, workers who maintain particularly close relationships with a pastoralist adopt his surname as their own. William Samuelson adopted the name "Samuelson" after he had become Alfred Samuelson's head-stockman and chief worker. William also claims to have adopted earlier the surnames of two other white employers. The men had both died, however. Consequently, as was customary among Aboriginal kinsmen, he refused to mention their names.

It would be incorrect to dismiss these practices as either a survival of the customary Aboriginal social norms or a mere mystification. These practices must be set in the context of the contemporary situation, in particular the context of boss-worker relationships. I suggest that these naming practices are radical extensions of the sociological significance of the avoidance practices I have just analysed. The kinship idiom makes certain responsibilities appear to be non-negotiable. If a worker asks his boss for a favour using the term "brother-in-law", he invokes obligations which are outside the context of their boss-worker relationship and which are mandatory. In other words, the kinship idiom nullifies the social significance of the worker's debt to his employer. Indeed, the kinship idiom makes it appear that the boss has permanent debts and obligations to his worker and, by extension, to his worker's own kinsmen. By the same token, the use of the kinship idiom in interaction is not merely a

rhetorical mystification. Rather, it is an interactional device whereby Aborigines transform needs they experience in the short term into long-term commitments. In this idiom, Aborigines do not recognize that the goods they obtain from their employers derive from a dependent relationship born of basic economic necessity. Rather, the kinship idiom casts such goods in the context of long-term relationships which recognize few debts and legitimate all demands as simply part of what is expected between "relations". The kinship idiom legitimates a kind of endless credit with no interest. In this sense it finishes the job avoidance began; that is, it negates the meaning of primary debts.

Kinship is a total idiom. It suggests an interdependency rooted in the very nature of things and indissolvable. For this reason, it seems a particularly appropriate idiom for the kind of dependency relationships which exist between pastoralists and their workers. Of particular significance is the dual emphasis on violence and "looking after" so characteristic of these relationships. It appears that the kinship idiom encodes the total power of the pastoralist to violate and to sustain his workers. The kinship idiom is a mystification; but, one which vividly marks the components of the relationship as it really stands.

CHAPTER 6

FOOD, LIQUOR, AND DOMESTIC CREDIT:

A THEORY OF DRINKING AMONG FRINGE-DWELLERS IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

In this chapter I argue that the consumption and sharing of liquor in the Aboriginal camps around Alice Springs is related to the patterns of dependence and interdependence (particularly between men and women) I have described in the preceding chapters. The major point of my analysis is that Aboriginal people in Alice Springs try to develop funds of credit to counter the long-term uncertainties in their sources of livelihood by spending current surplus income on liquor for the general communities within which they live. In particular, men use money they earn from pastoral and unskilled urban work to share liquor and thereby legitimate long-term access to domestic resources (viz. pensions) that women substantially control. For their part women manipulate their control of domestic resources to legitimate claims upon the resources men control. I extend my argument by suggesting that among Alice Springs Aborigines liquor marks an individual's personal productivity and affluence. Indeed, it is liquor's capacity to make subtle distinctions on the theme of personal independence and thereby present social collateral which accounts for its wide use in exchange. It is for these reasons that drinking is fundamentally related to the ways in which Aborigines assess their own social situations, rationally adapt to current circumstances, and thereby participate in (if not determine) the construction of their social lives.

A "social problems" approach has previously dominated the analysis of drinking among contemporary Australian Aboriginal people. In particular, the use and alleged abuse of liquor has been viewed as a symptom of the "breakdown of traditional society". According to this view, Aboriginal drinkers selfishly gratify themselves at the expense of meeting their

obligations to their families and the wider community. As a result the physical health of individuals deteriorates and the community as a whole becomes disorganized. The gradual decline in the practice of and respect for the customary religious beliefs is often said to be a particularly significant consequence of drinking. Drinking liquor is seen as part of a general syndrome of problems which hinders the adaptation of Aboriginal people to white society. Excessive drinking is interpreted as a phenomenon of transition — that is, as part of what happens to Aboriginal people as they change their normative orientation from customary tribal values to white Australian values. Different writers describe this process in different terms (e.g. psychiatric, biological, or structural-functional). However, they all agree on the disruptive and maladaptive function of liquor for Aborigines (Albrecht 1974:38-40; Bain 1974:51; Cawte 1972:135-140; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1977:17-31; Millar and Leung 1974:95; Rowley 1973:236; Sackett 1977:94-95; Stanner 1958 quoted in Beckett 1964:37). A similar approach has also largely determined the analysis of drinking among North American Indians (Graves 1967:306; Honigman 1973:253; Levy and Kunitz 1973:219; Robbins 1973:115).

At one extreme this view of drinking is altogether unsociological and based on crude psychoanalytic concepts which depict contemporary Aboriginal society as "sick" and composed of neurotics (Cawte 1972:50-52). From this perspective drinking liquor is culturally meaningless and socially pathological. More sociologically sensitive observers, however, have tried to explain patterns of Aboriginal drinking in terms of their social context and to discover their social significance (Beckett 1964:32-47; Sackett 1977:90-99). However, few analysts have recognized that the consumption and sharing of liquor are in fact processes of social organization with which Aborigines meaningfully construct their social world

(Robbins 1973:99-122). Rather, drinking liquor, especially in what to the analyst appears to be excessive amounts, has been considered a deviant activity. It is precisely for this reason that even sociologically informed interpretations have to date failed to explain Aboriginal drinking activities.

It is undoubtedly true that drinking liquor has untoward effects on some people. However, the understanding of drinking among contemporary Aborigines will not advance until moral judgements about its effects on traditional society and about the irresponsibility of people who drink are suspended. Drinking should be related through a sociological analysis to the processes by which Aborigines make and remake their everyday social world. In particular, the analysis of drinking might begin with the recognition that Aborigines construct their relationships with each other through the sharing of liquor. Indeed, sharing liquor is a fundamental way by which some Aborigines order their contemporary communities.

Credit and the Sharing of Liquor

A number of analysts have noted that liquor is a valued item in the exchange patterns of some Aboriginal communities (Albrecht 1969; Beckett 1965:42; Sackett 1977:92; Waddell 1973:237). Yet, none has made this observation the starting point of his more general analysis. For example, Beckett states that people approved sharing liquor "since it involves merrymaking and excitement" (Beckett 1965:42). Sackett follows a number of other analysts in observing that men who treated their peers generously to liquor could reasonably expect food and more drink in return because "the traditional system of reciprocity still operates" (Sackett 1977:92). For them the relationship of liquor to transactions in other kinds of goods is unproblematic. However, there was more to what they

observed than mere excitement or traditional norms of reciprocity. It is crucial to relate the sharing of liquor to the sharing of other goods, particularly food. Moreover, a thorough analysis must link transactions in food and liquor, for example, to the conditions which determine their availability to various categories of people.

The data which Beckett and Sackett present are quite interesting in this respect because the communities they studied share many characteristics with Mt. Kelly. In particular, the men of all three communities work primarily in the cattle industry and maintain links with other people whose main forms of income are social security pensions of various types. In the preceding chapter I analysed how men establish themselves in the cattle industry, and I noted that even highly skilled men must anticipate breaks in their work periods. The summer stand-down, the death of pastoral bosses, the sale of stations, or other reasons make cattle work irregular and subject to systematic (as well as contingent) discontinuities. On the one hand, men with access to several employers can usually find new jobs when necessary. On the other hand, men must occasionally rely on credit from other people to survive and stay available for future work. Pensioners are key sources of credit to the Mt. Kelly workers. Unlike discontinuous cattle income, pensions are continuous. Pensioners usually have surplus income they can lend to people who are not so fortunate. Indeed, pensioners are sometimes eager to lend money to people who under normal circumstances have access to other resources, such as cattle wages. By granting credit, a pensioner lays claim to his debtor's productivity.

In the context of domestic credit, a man's boss acquires a critical significance. A man's boss guarantees his credit and substantiates his identity as a productive worker. A man with many bosses has access to extensive credit. If a man has no bosses, few people will grant him anything but the most modest credit. Indeed, such men receive charity,

not credit. Given the breaks in cattle work, few men could work in the industry without access to occasional sources of domestic credit. The general point is that few men could survive without access both to work and to credit. Rather, most men require access to both in order to have access to either. Without work and credit, men neither work nor acquire credit.

The concept of credit is not immediately transparent. There are different types of credit. Different types of social entities grant credit. There are two types of credit: realized and potential. Realized credit is the sum total of goods and services an individual has actually received on credit. Potential credit is that volume of goods and services an individual could legitimately acquire on credit if necessary. The exact relationship between an individual's realized and potential credit is variable and subject to negotiation. Characteristically the amount of an individual's potential credit is not explicitly stated. Rather, there are crucial moments when an individual's credit rating is made public. For example, when a man first receives credit, his creditor might make general statements about his worth and the relative size of his potential credit. In the context of a long-standing relationship, there are occasions on which (often mutual) declarations of good will and creditworthiness must be made if potential credit is to be maintained. Such statements tend to be vague. However, when a man's credit is exhausted or nearly exhausted, his creditor might require special documentation of his position and explicitly state the limits of further credit.

Two types of social entities grant credit: specific people and general collectivities. Specific individuals grant both realized and potential credit. However, it may also be true that a man enjoys a reputation for creditworthiness within a greater or lesser range of people. Although an individual's specific creditors belong to the range of people which recognizes his creditworthiness, the important point is that the

greater range may also include people who have not yet but might actually become specific creditors. These potential creditors are important especially in an uncertain context in which the fate of an individual's specific creditors and of his relationship with them fluctuates.

A complex field of uncertainty surrounds potential creditors. A man cannot generally know who (if any) among his potential creditors will be able to grant him credit when necessary. However, more fundamental problems emerge from the fact that the potential credit granted by general collectivities is often quite tacit. That is, no one may ever state the amount of credit an individual might potentially enjoy. Furthermore, no one may explicitly agree to act as a creditor in the future. Indeed, individuals might deny obligations to extend credit when asked. In order to establish a fund of potential credit among a generalized collectivity, therefore, an individual must develop means to articulate what his potential creditors may wish to keep tacit. This is especially true in situations in which credit resources are scarce and the demand high.

I would like to suggest that these ideas about credit provide the basis of a theory about the use of liquor and the relationship of liquor to other items of exchange among contemporary Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. I will develop the full scheme below. However, note that the "binge drinking" or "sprees" for which white bushmen were earlier so famous and which are now the focus of so much attention in some Aboriginal communities are particularly appropriate ways of establishing potential credit among a generalized collectivity. They are public affairs in which varying numbers of people accept a highly valued good from an individual who often makes his "generosity" explicit. Suchsprees are rational adaptations to situations in which individuals may experience quite radical changes of personal fortune in the course of their careers. In such situations, individuals must develop credit, deny short-term benefits for

long-term opportunities, and commit themselves to the well-being of the community in order to secure their own well-being. Aborigines in Alice Springs live in such a situation.

The intersection of the defined characteristics of credit produces a four-cell property space: realized credit from a specific person; realized credit from a generalized collectivity; potential credit from a specific person; and, potential credit from a generalized collectivity. Particular forms and items of exchange fall into each of the four spaces in Mt. Kelly.

(a) *Realized credit from a specific person.* People in Mt. Kelly grant others credit in the form of domestic resources, i.e. as food, small amounts of money, and occasionally liquor from the creditor's personal supply. Such credit is usually repaid in lump sums of money after the debtor returns from a period of employment. Otherwise people who obtain credit may in turn support past creditors with food, money or liquor. The paradigmatic exchange of this kind is between the men who work on the cattle stations and their close kinsmen, especially their parents. Yet, it is important to note that the men cannot rely exclusively upon their kinsmen for credit. Indeed, although most men initially turn to close kinsmen, the majority eventually also must recruit creditors from non-kinsmen, especially affines. The parents of a man's spouse are crucial sources of credit. Otherwise men have to find credit among totally unrelated people both inside and outside Mt. Kelly.

(b) *Realized credit from a general collectivity.* The only credit the general collectivity in Mt. Kelly could grant was the right to live in the camp. Since the ultimate right to live in Mt. Kelly was determined by the heads of the individual camps, even this was highly circumscribed. Yet, particular people were more or less welcome in Mt. Kelly as a whole. Moreover, the kind of credit an individual could ultimately expect to

receive was related to how widely recognized was his right to live in the community. This was especially true for white men given that the community frequently had to protect them from the attacks of welfare officers and other agents of the wider society. In general, the right to live in Mt. Kelly gave some access to the resources available there.

(c) *Potential credit from a specific person.* Individuals maintained their good standing with creditors in a variety of ways. A man was basically creditworthy if he was affluent: that is, if he possessed the capacity to generate wealth (Sahlins 1974:211). Men with a number of good bosses or with a good job in town are locally considered affluent in this sense. So too are pensioners. However, individuals have to work to keep their creditworthiness. They have to pay their debts. They also must present their creditors with small gifts on appropriate occasions. For example, when men return home from the bush, they usually pay their creditors a lump sum of money and give them presents. Bottles of wine, a case of beer, a night on the town, a side of meat from the boss, or perhaps some tailormade cigarettes are common gifts. Individuals present these gifts directly to their creditors. They do not present them as parts of public disbursements (although specific creditors sometimes attend such occasions).

There is also a system of exchange widely dispersed throughout the Aboriginal population of Alice Springs which falls into this category. It so happens that pension day and payday fall on alternate weeks. Pensions arrive at the post office on every other Thursday. Workers are paid on the Friday of the week following pension week. On pension days, many pensioners give closely related workers ten dollars from their pension cheques. Occasionally, they also give them small bottles of port or other gifts. On payday the workers return the ten dollars and also occasionally make small gifts. The exchanges are almost always exactly balanced. I

observed these exchanges break down only when one party could no longer afford to reciprocate or during quarrels. I suggest, therefore, that these exchanges are markers of social relationships and potential credit among individuals.

(d) *Potential credit from a general collectivity.* The sharing of liquor comes into its own during the great sprees of Mt. Kelly life. Although there are small sprees each weekend, the greatest such occasions happen when the young men return from the bush and "south" the entire community to large quantities of beer and invalid port. The distinctive thing about the sprees is that there are few restrictions on who can participate and share in the liquor. Everyone in Mt. Kelly is welcome. Kinsmen and friends who live elsewhere often visit the camp and share the drink on such occasions. Although I never saw anyone denied liquor, it is probably true that strangers or enemies may not join the parties. The major point is that the sprees are unrestricted affairs and open to all comers within the broadest possible range of the Mt. Kelly people's social universe.

Although the sprees are open, their social composition is not undifferentiated. Some people in Mt. Kelly refuse to attend either particular other people's sprees or sprees generally. Three adults (two women and one man) do not drink liquor in Mt. Kelly. Sometimes they wander over to the site of the sprees, imitate humorously the slurred speech of the drinkers, and comment wryly on the total scene. Usually they remain in their own camps and officially ignore the festivities.

There are, however, people who drink liquor but rarely attend sprees. If they do arrive on the scene, they usually bring a bottle of their own. Once I was sitting in the camp of a young man who never attends sprees. His uncle came over and invited him to a drink. The uncle hardly ever works and is usually dependent upon his close kinsmen for everything.

However, on this occasion he had just returned from a two-week stint out bush and was treating all comers to liquor. The nephew refused the invitation and said that he never went to anybody else's camp for a drink. On the other hand, the nephew drinks considerably and regularly supplies especially beer to the other young men of the community. Indeed, the uncle usually depends upon his nephew for liquor. I interpret the nephew's rejection of the invitation as a refusal to become in any way indebted to his uncle. By denying his uncle's liquor, he prevented the older man from repaying past debts and establishing credit for the future. He thereby maintained his uncle's indebtedness and his own control over what he had to grant him in the future. The point is that the nephew does not consider the uncle a potential creditor, nor has he ever depended upon him in the past. Hence, he was able to refuse his uncle's gift. Indeed, since the uncle is generally considered to be "rubbish" and the nephew was trying to establish himself as an independent, self-reliant man, it would have been unseemly for him to have accepted the liquor. By rejecting it, he marked clearly his relationship with his uncle and made a statement about what he considered his own social identity to be.

This analysis holds for the other people who refuse to attend sprees or take their own liquor. They are pensioners who have secure incomes. Moreover, they have constructed what are locally considered highly successful and significant careers. They regularly support other members of the community and enjoy reputations as "good", i.e. generous, people. They are the most prestigious people in Mt. Kelly. They also each maintain quite aggressively independent self-presentations. It is significant that they maintain a set of dyadic, balanced exchange relationships.

The general point is that by staying out of the sprees these people maintain control of the flow of goods and services between themselves and the community. They thereby mark and maintain their independence

of others. They also insure that they maintain control over the claims for credit others might lodge. They can grant and refuse credit as it suits their own interests. The credit they grant is that much more expensive since it does not emerge from a background of debt or obligation. Their reputations for generosity, indeed, depend upon the fact that they grant credit in the face of no obligation or apparent need to do so.

Who then attends the great sprees? There are always a certain number of people who "come for the grog". They are people who it is known either cannot or probably will not ever reciprocate. They are the camp's "rubbishmen" or casual visitors who happen to be around on the big day. An individual's willingness to shout such people rebounds to his own credit and documents his "generosity". It constitutes evidence of his disinterestedness in the transaction. However, the relationship between the host and the majority of his guests is more complex. In many respects the sharing of liquor has all the elements of gifts which "are voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous but which are in fact obligatory and interested" (Mauss 1970:1). Other than the rubbishmen there are essentially two categories of people who attend sprees: a man's fellow workers and people (often women) in his social universe who control domestic resources. The point is that by shouting these people a man constructs potential access to jobs from his fellow workers and potential credit in domestic resources from the rest. It is again important to note that the sprees are not restricted gatherings. Although a man's close kinsmen often attend the sprees, they are not usually alone. Non-kinsmen also attend. Furthermore, the sprees are not domestic gatherings and no food is served. Indeed, for a spree to be most successful a man has to attract both non-kinsmen and people outside his own domestic group. In such a way, he creates an obligation among people who might otherwise owe him nothing. In the last analysis, it is important to note that the people who attend sprees also

have an interest in the host. By coming to the spree they make a claim on further resources the host might offer then and in the future. Debts of liquor and the credit they imply constitute resources for gaining access to the host's productivity and are a means of competing for his attention.

It is important that the sprees are held in public. Given the tacit and therefore uncertain nature of potential credit, a public demonstration of indebtedness is important in actually establishing an enforceable credit obligation. The element of display is crucial in at least two ways. It forces someone who wants access to the liquor and perhaps other resources to come forth and accept it before an audience. Second, the number of people who actually come to a spree and accept liquor is a measure of the host's value to the people in his social universe. Hence, liquor debts are established in settings which visibly mark the relative value of the credit which might be offered in exchange. The broader the range of people a man might call upon for credit, the less dependent he is upon any one source, and, all other things being equal, the less valuable is each one to him. Given this observation, it is therefore all the more significant that some of the most generous people never attend sprees. By staying out of the sprees, they counter the effect of the public display and rely upon private negotiations between themselves and people who want credit.

Yet, at any rate, the cost of credit is quite high and bears a direct relationship to what men spend to repay past debts. In effect, men must spend everything they make beyond what they need to meet their basic needs and repay old debts on liquor for the community as a whole. It is men who successfully appear to exhaust their surplus resources on liquor for the community who develop "generous" reputations. The rate at which men so spend their resources is also important. It indicates the confidence they have in their capacity to return to work and thereby once again

displays their value. In other words, the sharing of liquor on a grand scale portrays a familiar three-party set of transactions. The sharing of liquor does not mark a direct return on past credit. On the contrary, it depends upon the existence of a third agent between a man and his creditors who grants him the means to earn the goods to repay his debts. In the case of the men who work out bush, the third agent is their cattle boss. The cattle boss mediates between a man and his creditors and between original and repaid credit. However, the cattle boss also provides men with more than they need simply to repay past debts and survive in the meantime. Indeed, by working for a cattle boss men produce a yield above and beyond their initial credit and basic needs. It is that yield which men spend on the grand liquor sprees. Quite seriously, the liquor is the *hau* of past credit. By throwing great sprees to all comers, men return the yield of their past credit to the ultimate source of all potential credit and thereby maintain their right to ask for more (Sahlins 1974:165; Mauss 1970:9, 35).

So it is that liquor marks a man's affluence or productivity. The more liquor a man provides, the greater his apparent surplus. His surplus both directly measures his past relationship with his boss and promises further production in the future. Two interesting points follow from this. The longer men are out bush and, therefore, the longer between sprees, the greater their production and creditworthiness. That is, the time a man spends out bush is itself an element in his display of value. However, it is also true that the time a man spends in town when he might otherwise be able to work out bush equally displays his productivity. By displaying his boss' willingness to wait upon him, a man documents vividly his productive capacity and the source of his worth. It is for this reason that men sometimes voluntarily break work and come into town to drink. Unto itself, this produces a characteristic work pattern in which men

alternate between work out bush and drunken binges in town. A drunken binge is a display of productivity, confidence, and collateral.

Liquor and the Theme of Personal Independence

Among the Mt. Kelly people, an individual's productivity measures and establishes the conditions for his independence from others. Since liquor marks an individual's productivity, it takes on its broadest significance as a market of personal independence and thereby becomes somewhat autonomous from the realm of credit and interpersonal assistance. Indeed, I would like to suggest that it is precisely liquor's capacity to make subtle distinctions on the theme of personal independence which accounts for its wide use in the exchanges I have described.

The process of sharing liquor has two properties which promote its use in this way. First, as a fluid substance, liquor can be divided into greater or lesser amounts of no predetermined size. It is also true, however, that liquor comes packaged in established, well-known units. Each unit of whatever size has value.¹ Hence, a man can make very precise and subtle distinctions between people simply by varying the amount of liquor he shares with them. On the one hand, a man can compel others to share his liquor from a communal cup which is passed from mouth to mouth. On the other hand, he can make personal gifts of small bottles or flagons of port and cans or cases of beer. Units of liquor can be matched to fit the occasion and carefully mark the nature of the relationship between the donor and recipient as well as their relative prestige.² For example, it is as significant that a man accepts a mouthful of port from a communal cup as it

¹The significance of this might be gauged by comparing the value of a mouthful of port with a mouthful of food.

²Professor Meggitt says that among the Enga packaged units of liquor (especially cartons of beer) are now units of value in the Te-exchange cycle (personal communication).

is that his host offers it. Second, an individual may not convert liquor he receives in a public distribution into credit of his own with other people. That is, he must consume the liquor on the spot. Unlike the gift of a whole, uncooked pumpkin, for example, an individual may not save liquor and pass it on to someone else at a later date. This limits the range of debt and highlights the significance of the liquor transaction to the relationship between the host and his guest. Again, these properties of sharing liquor display the obligations being created in an unambiguous way.

It is also important to note that the type of liquor an individual drinks is a key component of his social identity and mark of his prestige. The Mt. Kelly people rank the various types of liquor available in Alice Springs. Although there was some dispute, the rank order from most to least prestigious was as follows: spirits (rum was the most common spirit drunk in Mt. Kelly; however, some people preferred more exotic drinks such as ouzo); beer; invalid port or sweet sherry; and methylated spirits. The Mt. Kelly people rank individuals according to the rank of the liquor they drink. Spirit and beer drinkers often regard port as an inferior drink and look down upon port drinkers. Port drinkers tend to rebuff such pretensions especially if they claim to drink beer only when nothing else is available. Beer and port drinkers alike disparage people who drink methylated spirits. Indeed, the Mt. Kelly people categorize and rank whole groups of people according to what they think is the locally prominent drink. For example, the Mt. Kelly people refer to the people who live in the Todd River as "Todd frogs". They regard the "Todd frogs" as inferior people who are "no-hoppers" on their way to death. They also regard the Todd as a dangerous place. If a Mt. Kelly resident moves into the Todd, the other residents express concern for his safety and encourage him to come home. According to the Mt. Kelly people, the distinguishing feature

about the "Todd frogs" is that they drink methylated spirits. The Mt. Kelly people say that such people will "drink anything" and tell stories of "Todd frogs" who were poisoned to death after having drunk from flagons they found lying in the creekbed. The stories allege that hostile whites occasionally put strychnine in half-empty flagons to catch unsuspecting drunks.

A number of points appear evident with respect to this local categorization of liquor. People rank themselves according to the cost of their favourite drink. Those who spend more rank themselves higher than those who spend less. At one level this is a straightforward marker of an individual's affluence. However, this cost scale is also related to an individual's alleged capacity to control his drink. For example, beer drinkers consider those who drink port to be "grog mad"; that is, unable in a complex sense to hold their drink. The point is that port is higher than beer in alcoholic content per dollar spent. It takes less to get drunk. Consequently, beer drinkers allege that people who drink port are only interested in getting drunk as quickly and cheaply as possible. Again, port drinkers denied these allegations. However, they and the beer drinkers considered meth drinkers "grog mad". In other words, the cost and alcoholic content of particular types of liquor is metaphorically linked with an individual's ability to control himself. The putative desire to get drunk quickly (i.e. be under the control of liquor) is related to an individual's power to be independent of other people. The capacity to spend more and control oneself while drinking marks the truly independent man.

The Mt. Kelly people use these meanings of liquor to chart the ups and downs of an individual's career as well as to label him at any particular point in time. For example, the Mt. Kelly men use the type of liquor they drink to mark changes in their personal employment situations.

When I first started fieldwork in Alice Springs, George Sharp had been unemployed for six months and was living on credit from his parents. They shared their liquor with him as well as their food. Since they preferred to drink port, George also drank port. However, George began to work for the Central Australian Aborigines Congress in April 1975. When I moved into Mt. Kelly in May, George remarked that he no longer drank port, only beer and ouzo. According to George the change in his drinking tastes signalled a whole new phase of his life. He declared that he was altogether more responsible for himself than he had been in the previous five years. Drinking beer instead of port marked his intention to continue in his new-found ways. The men who worked out bush frequently made similar statements to me. The cattle market was depressed during my fieldwork and work was short. The young men spent more time than usual in Mt. Kelly living off their creditors. After the men were out of work for some time, they had to depend on others for liquor. They usually had to drink port. However, when they returned to Mt. Kelly flush with their cattle wages they commented that they too had given up port and only drank "this stuff", pointing to the cans of beer they carried about with them.

The logic of this marking system also works in the other direction. People comment upon "downward" changes in a man's drinking tastes. If a man who usually drinks beer begins to be seen drinking port, people know he is running short of money. People know he is broke when he begins to drink port only from other people's flagons. People present their own situations in such terms as well. For example, one night I was walking around Mt. Kelly when I saw a light coming from Ronnie Elliotson's house. Ronnie was living in Mt. Kelly against his own best wishes and on the sufferance of Terry and Isabel Sharp. He had earlier lived with his family in his own caravan on a private site adjacent to Mt. Kelly. However, he had lost his job and fallen behind in his loan repayments. Consequently,

the caravan had been repossessed and he had moved into Mt. Kelly. He was a charity case and dependent upon the Sharps. When I poked my head through the door, I found him sitting disconsolately on his bed. He complained bitterly about Terry and Isabel and bemoaned their abusive ways. He noted that before he had often fed the Sharp children when Terry and Isabel had drunk all the food money away in plonk. All they did now, however, was rubbish him. They would not find him so softhearted in the future. Ronnie remarked, "In those days I had two refrigerators: one half-full of meat, the other full of beer".

Ronnie's link between meat and beer was significant. On several occasions I witnessed people get up from sprees and stagger off toward their own camps. Sometimes an individual would walk a certain distance and vomit into the dirt. The people remaining at the spree often would watch and comment upon the contents of the vomit, especially if only fluid appeared to come out. On such occasions people shook their heads and said that the sick person had stopped eating. He only drank plonk now. The point is that such remarks were only ever made about the most dependent people in Mt. Kelly. The fact that they vomited only fluid meant that no one was feeding them. In other words, they no longer had access to a domestic group which would give them food. Rather, they could get charity solely at the all-comers sprees at which only liquor was served. A person without a family is absolute rubbish. There is only one step lower than this in the minds of the Mt. Kelly people. It is to move into the creek and become a "Todd frog". Although such a move horrified the Mt. Nancy people, a number of men were forced by sheer circumstance to adopt this tactic.

The Mt. Kelly people also associated drinking liquor with the sophistication of urban, white life. The Mt. Kelly people claim to be able to handle liquor unlike the "myall blackfellows" from the bush. The

different types of liquor graded degrees of sophistication. Spirit and beer drinkers consider themselves more sophisticated than port or methylated spirits drinkers. For example, George Sharp preferred to drink ouzo. He was very widely traveled. During his tour of duty with the Australian army, he had fought in Borneo, Malaysia and Vietnam. The Mt. Kelly people considered him very sophisticated. The fact that he drank ouzo (an expensive and very unusual drink) marked his uniqueness. His taste for mushrooms and Chinese food functioned similarly.

More generally, liquor creates the opportunity for displays of connoisseurship. The Mt. Kelly people all have particular likes and dislikes in brands of liquor. Once the railroad from Adelaide was stopped by floods for several weeks. Since the railroad was the major means of freight transport to Alice Springs from the south, after about two weeks the local supply of the most popular brand of invalid port ran dry. Consequently, the Mt. Kelly people had to purchase what they considered off-brands of port. As they drank the different brands they commented extensively on their relative merits and demerits. Some types were too sweet; others too bitter. Everyone was quite overjoyed when the railroad resumed operation and the regular brand became available again. Some people display a preference which is perhaps more telling. They prefer to drink sweet sherry instead of port. They claim that sweet sherry does not destroy the appetite or leave a hangover. A man can drink sweet sherry all night and still eat or go to work the next day. Invalid port, they note, leaves a man so drunk he fails to eat and cannot possibly work. This highlights my earlier points about food, employment and liquor. Note however that connoisseurship constitutes an exercise of skillful judgement in which a concern for the taste of the liquor is asserted at the expense of its effects (i.e. drunkenness). Insofar as others respect a man's tastes, they legitimate his judgement and his right to have a preference. They

authenticate his claim to be interested in liquor for something other than its intoxicating powers. They thereby accept his implicit claims for knowledge and independence.

In general, liquor signifies power and affluence. The person who purchases the bottle and shouts others at a spree is known as "the boss". I have elsewhere analysed the significance of the term "boss" to the Mt. Kelly people. In general, white men are bosses. By claiming to be the boss of the bottle, an individual associates his capacity to buy liquor and his own social identity with the power of whites. Although this interpretation may seem farfetched, its force was made vivid to me one night in Mt. Kelly. I was returning to my caravan when I heard someone singing in Don Corcoran's camp. I walked over and found Don and Larry Rainer drinking invalid port. Don was providing the liquor. Larry rarely works and always depends upon others for his drink. When I walked up, Larry turned to me and said, "When I drink, I'm a whitefellow, not a blackfellow. We (Larry and Don) are two whitefellows."

Larry's comment raises the question of how the Mt. Nancy people interpret being drunk. The Mt. Kelly people interpret getting drunk as a shedding of shame. For example, this affected my interaction with some people. Once I was sitting in George Sharp's grandmother's camp. A number of people were gathered around drinking, including George's wife. We were discussing her home country and the question of her language arose. She was from a cattle station north of Tennant Creek and spoke a language quite alien to the Arunta and Anmatjira spoken in the camp. I asked her if she would teach me a few words. She said yes, but only after she had gotten drunk. She was too shy otherwise, she said. I was quite friendly with one middle-aged woman in Mt. Kelly. She was a paraplegic. I ran most of her errands and bought all her liquor. I tried several times to discuss her life history when she was sober. However, each time she refused sheepishly.

I eventually gave up my efforts and resigned myself to the snippets I had gathered from gossip and odd talk. One day she rolled up in the wheelchair apparently quite drunk. She said that it was okay now, she would give me her life story.

The Mt. Kelly people do not reserve this interpretation of their drunkenness for me alone. A couple of people explicitly told me that they lost shame when they drank. They also commented that they were much more forward with whites when they were drunk. I saw this in action one night. The Country Party of Alice Springs once organized a public rally to petition the Labor government to reinstall subsidies on freight charges on the railroad. The subsidies had been important in giving pastoralists more profit on the cattle they shipped south by rail. I attended this rally with George Sharp. We had been out hunting kangaroos and, as was our custom, had consumed a fair bit of beer during our expedition. We showed up at the rally feeling no pain. About midway through the rally, the (then) Country Party Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, (now) Senator Bernie Kilgariff, got up to speak. He began to abuse the Labor Party and encourage people to send telegrams to Whitlam demanding the subsidy be reinstalled. With this George began to harangue Kilgariff in return. He yelled that Kilgariff should petition Canberra for better housing for Aborigines. He continued to heckle the rally throughout the rest of the evening. He was one of the few Aborigines at the rally and the only one to speak. The next morning he commented to me that he probably would not have said anything had he been sober.

I hesitate to analyse this process in terms of the loss of aggression-control or the absence of norms of drunken comportment (Fink 1960:165; Sackett 1977:93). Nor is drunken behaviour the only way Mt. Kelly people reject white society (Beckett 1965:46). Such theories ignore the fact that the Mt. Kelly people themselves interpret the experience of

drunkenness. The Mt. Kelly people interpret being drunk in much the same way they interpret liquor, i.e. as an experience of personal power. Insofar as the people interpret being drunk as an experience and expression of their personal power, drinking makes action possible. That is, it helps create the conditions for people to enact their images of personal power both among themselves and with others.

Liquor, Children, and Domestic Income

The discussion of food and liquor brings me back to the beginning of my analysis. I noted that men and women use resources from the non-domestic and domestic domains respectively to justify access to, and control of, resources derived from the other. In the light of my analysis of liquor, therefore, it is significant that two related trends have emerged in recent years. Women have begun to drink liquor. Men have begun to assume direct control of domestic resources, especially children. It is difficult to date or measure the strength of these trends. Yet, it is clear that they are developing. Beckett states that Aboriginal women did not drink liquor in his field area (Beckett 1965:44). Although welfare officers have removed children from women they considered hopeless drunks in Alice Springs for the last twenty-five years, the number of women who drink regularly seems to have increased considerably. Women are among the heaviest drinkers in Mt. Kelly. They take particularly active roles and often sponsor the regular, small sprees which occur each pension weekend in Mt. Kelly. From my observations, there is little reason to suspect that the Mt. Kelly women are unique in Alice Springs. It is also true the Mt. Kelly men take an active interest in their spouses' children. I observed one man banish his wife and keep his daughter. It is more common, however, for men to proclaim publicly that they will foster the children their

spouses have borne to other men. Indeed, such a proclamation seems one major sign that a man and woman intend to establish a connubial relationship. I would like to suggest that these trends mark the attempts of men and women to coopt each other's subsistence resources and tactics. By manipulating liquor, women are trying to legitimate access to male resources. For their part, men hope to gain direct access to domestic resources and control their women by caring for the family's children.

Why should these trends have developed? It is significant that opportunities for Aboriginal men and women have declined considerably in Central Australia over the last ten years. Although women still enjoy privileged access to the resources welfare agencies control, the demand for female labour in Alice Springs has dropped since the introduction of cash wages in 1967. It is now very difficult for women to supplement their pension incomes. Moreover, supporting mothers face an inevitable decline in their pension incomes as their children mature. These circumstances have introduced a degree of uncertainty in the long-term position of women which was earlier substantially limited to men. Older women have responded to the new situation by becoming grandmothers. That is, they have tried to assume control of their own daughters' children and thereby extend their rights to welfare support. It is now common to find large households in Alice Springs composed of an older woman, her daughters, and her grandchildren. There is one such domestic group in Mt. Kelly. However, I suggest that these circumstances also explain why women have begun to drink. By shouting other people to drink when their pensions are at a peak, they develop long-term credit to meet the day when their pensions begin to decline. They also legitimate claims upon the resources their men produce in the meantime.

The opportunities for men have also declined. Although there has been a minor expansion of job opportunities for men in Alice Springs in

recent years, there has been a major decline in the demand for labour in the pastoral industry. Consequently, the uncertainty which was previously inherent in pastoral work has been augmented by the general shortage of jobs. Access to secure, alternative sources of domestic income have become even more important for men. Hence, they too have begun to use children as a resource. However, these circumstances have also encouraged men to invest even more resources in liquor. The award wage is significant in this context. Since 1967 Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Northern Territory have qualified for the award wage. Although the wage is still low compared with most forms of urban work, it is substantially higher than what Aboriginal men previously enjoyed. It also includes a substantially greater proportion of cash which, as I mentioned above, is paid in one lump sum at the end of each employment period. I suggested above that men have to spend any surplus income they earn on liquor for the general community in order to maintain their right to credit. If this is so, it is possible to understand that the award wage has actually provided greater surpluses than were previously possible, and thereby more money to spend on liquor. Hence, precisely because men face an increasingly difficult employment situation, they must spend ever more on liquor.

These circumstances explain why there has been a general increase in the level of drinking among Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. Aboriginal people are trying to develop funds of credit against long-term uncertainties by spending current surpluses on liquor. There is keen competition for legitimate access to increasingly scarce sources of domestic income. The rights to control liquor and children are crucial resources in these negotiations. The attempts by men and women to gain control of liquor and children generated many conflicts and much inter-personal violence in Mt. Kelly.

Conclusion

Liquor and the exchange of liquor, therefore, are key elements in the processes by which the Mt. Kelly people construct their social lives. It involves relationships between men and women, parents and children, creditors and debtors, powerful and weak, sophisticates and the naive, the independent and the dependent, domestic and non-domestic groups. Liquor invokes the entire social universe of Mt. Kelly. Indeed, its exchange often mediated between Mt. Kelly's various contrasting elements in crucial ways. Was liquor in Mt. Kelly a total prestation? I think that in spite of its capacity to express the total social identities of the parties to a transaction, liquor was not a total prestation in Mt. Kelly. This was because it linked individuals not groups with relatively ephemeral, not permanent relationships. However, I pose the question in order to suggest ways to analyse drinking in other Aboriginal communities which may perhaps still be organized in terms of corporate kin groups. It may well be, for example, that the massive drinking sprees which periodically occur on settlements in Arnhem Land are latterday potlatches in which various local groups "shout" each other to liquor. It is certainly true that liquor has become an important item of ceremonial exchange elsewhere (for example, in the Te-exchange among the Enga). Perhaps an analysis of drinking on these settlements in terms of exchange might reap dividends.

As for Mt. Kelly, it is clear that liquor is a major form of what Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital". In his words:

Once one realizes that symbolic capital is always *credit*, in the widest sense of the word, i.e. a sort of advance which the group alone can grant those who give it the best material and symbolic *guarantees*, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in economic terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital (Bourdieu 1977:181; original emphasis).

CHAPTER 7

VIOLENCE, DEBT, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF EXCHANGE

In the preceding chapter, I explained how the sharing of liquor was related to patterns of credit and domestic exchange in Mt. Kelly. I did not examine, however, the conditions under which people recognized the commensurability of particular items in exchange. For example, I took as relatively unproblematic that people would exchange liquor for domestic resources. I did observe that people do not always want to recognize a debt and explained the public nature of drinking sprees in that context. In this chapter I want to extend upon the implications of that observation by noting that the relative commensurability of exchange items is negotiable, subject to situational redefinition, and a major problem in the development of everyday life in Mt. Kelly. Of major importance is the point that the patterns of interpersonal violence which regularly punctuates Mt. Kelly life are emergent from the problem of commensurability. Violence erupts in situations in which key exchange items are rendered incommensurable. Because liquor is such an important item in the exchange relationships of the Mt. Kelly people, violence often erupts during drinking sessions. However, liquor is merely one (albeit highly significant) exchange item and is related to other, broader spheres of exchange. The overall significance of violence, therefore, must not be understood as limited to liquor-dominated contexts. Rather, violence must be set in the contest of all exchanges in Mt. Kelly and the social relationships they help create.

I

The analysis of interpersonal violence among Australian Aborigines has developed no further than the analysis of drinking liquor.

Violence is usually linked with drinking as a symptom of cultural breakdown, frustration, and stress, particularly in so-called "detrribalized" communities (Cawte 1972:137-141; Fink 1965:165; Rowley 1973:236). This approach uses elements of frustration-aggression theory and alienation theory (Dollard 1939; Berkowitz 1972:26-50; Fanon 1967:42). The argument asserts that because Aborigines (or colonized peoples in general) cannot express their outrage against the colonial order through revolution, they must discharge frustration among themselves. Rowley notes, for example, that violence among contemporary Aborigines is a manifestation of their disunity and resentment in the face of "overwhelming social forces" (Rowley 1973:236). The main function of violence, according to this analysis, is catharsis and mystification. As Fanon argues:

It is as if plunging into a fraternal bloodbath allowed them (the colonized masses) to ignore the obstacle, and to put off till later the choice, nevertheless inevitable, which opens up the question of armed resistance to colonialism. This collective auto-destruction in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the native's muscular tension is set free (Fanon 1973:42).

Although violence among the Mt. Kelly people is certainly related to the structure of their relationships with white society, the frustration-aggression theory takes no serious notice of that fact. Alienation theory emphasises the structure of domination within which indigenous people must live. Yet, neither approach treats violence as anything more than an expressive explosion and limits its analytic significance to its bio-psychological effects upon aggressors. They completely ignore the interactional significance of violence; that is, how violence affects the social relationships among the aggressor, his victim, and the wider audience. They deny explicitly that violence helps restructure interaction and can be an active component in the ways people define and construct

their social relationships. Violence is a form of deviance which must be cured either through therapy or revolution.

Although it has not yet been applied to Australian Aborigines, there is a large body of literature which explains interpersonal violence in terms of an overarching culture or subculture of violence (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967:95-164; Toch 1972:71). The subculture of violence thesis argues that, in some societies, there are norms which compel men to respond violently in certain circumstances. The strength of this approach is that it notes that interpersonal violence is legitimate in some societies. Insofar as it counters the idea that interpersonal violence must necessarily be deviant, it corrects certain aspects of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Yet, like the frustration-aggression hypothesis, it interprets violence as merely part of a syndrome or cultural complex. Violent behaviour is simply the result of a normative orientation toward violence. As Elok notes, it is therefore tautological and poses no problems for analysis. Rather, it stops inquiry by reifying norms and decontextualizing violent interaction (Blok 1974:176).

Toch's attempt to integrate the subculture of violence thesis with the typologies of violent men and violent contexts does not really overcome this problem. Although Toch stresses how violence emerges in interaction, he assumes that only violence-prone men will react violently. According to Toch, men who lack the predisposition for violence construct their interactional sequences in a more peaceful manner. Toch contrasts his approach with game-theory which begins with the assumption that men act rationally, to maximize their self-interest. He notes that he wants to study the "perceptions and motives and needs of real players in concrete settings. We must study the psychological results of their motives, in the sense of finding out how one person's action affects the other person's feelings and perceptions, and how this second person acts as a result"

(Toch 1972:71). Through his emphasis on violence as a psychological process, Toch makes acts of violence epiphenomenal manifestations of inner urges and reduces such concepts as honour, self-esteem, and identity to internalized norms. His approach complements the normative approach of Wolfgang and Ferracuti by showing how violence is functional for individuals as well as a basic cultural norm. He thereby vitiates what use he makes of interactional analysis and recasts the problem in terms of individual psychosis, not social interaction.

In his study of terror, E.V. Walters summarizes the major deficiencies of these approaches. He notes, "An inclination to identify violence with disorder leads many observers to think of repetitive violence exclusively as a product of disorganization, and they do not stop to inquire if it might be sometimes the principle of a certain kind of order" (Walters 1969:245). Although Walters emphasises the extent to which violence is a legitimate part of the Zulus' political culture under Shaka, unlike Wolfgang, Ferracuti, and Toch, he focuses his analysis on how violence constructs the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. According to Walters, in terroristic regimes violence displays the onnipotence of the ruler and creates fear in subjects who witness it. Insofar as violence breaks the subject's resistance to the tyrant's rule, it actually helps create his power.

Walters also focuses on the relationship between violence and the structure of the broader context within which it occurs. He explains Shaka's terror, for example, as an instrument in his attempt to build a despotic state from a fragmentary society hitherto based on the domestic mode of production. The function of the terror was to undermine the ability of the smaller units in Zulu society to resist the demands of the state. In contrast to Wolfgang, Ferracuti, and Toch, the precise

relationship between violent transactions and the wider context of social control is problematic and defines different types of social systems.

Anton Blok (1974) also examines the relationship between interpersonal violence and systems of social control. In Sicily, violence does not, however, create a tighter integration between the state and local populations. Rather, because violence forces peasants to depend upon local power brokers, it separates them from the state and binds them to its *de facto* representatives. The code of *omerta*, moreover, enjoins local patterns of solidarity and secrecy which preclude peasants from appealing to higher state functionaries and further isolates them from the state.

In spite of these ethnographic differences, Walters and Blok share two basic points in their approach to violence. First, they emphasise the extent to which local people consider violence a legitimate expression and technique of social control. Second, they emphasise the role of fear and the capacity of violence to intimidate people. For both writers, violence is a test of strength which constructs and legitimates systems of social control through its capacity to fragment local organization and minimize resistance. Men hold power if they can engender fear and physically defeat opposition. Hence, although particular leaders may rise and fall, violence reproduces fear and perpetuates the violent political order whenever men use it to resolve conflicts.

Neither Walters nor Blok has a very well-developed theory of emotional behaviour. Consequently, they use the concept "fear" in a very commonsense way. Because fear is a critical aspect in their interactional approach to violence, they fail to provide, therefore, a very concise picture of the means by which violence accomplishes its work. They also fail to specify the conditions under which some men become fearful and others not. Hence, they miss a vital point in their analysis. Insofar as they stress the display element of violence, they emphasise the

communicative aspects of violent interaction. Yet, their inadequate concept of fear prevents them from analysing the interdependence between the emotional, communicative, and exchange dimensions of a violent confrontation.

In a flawed but highly suggestive analysis of feud, Black-Michaud (1975) attempts to integrate the emotional, communicative, and exchange dimensions of violence. Following Gellner's critique of segmentary lineage theory, Black-Michaud suggests that fear of aggression is the "prime mover" in feuding societies. Although he does not make it explicit, Black-Michaud apparently considers fear as the experience of a political order in which total anarchy constantly threatens but is contained by ongoing alliances between local groups. He suggests that the feud is the means by which alliances are made and the tenuous order of these societies emerges (Black-Michaud 1975:87, 120-121). Like Walters and Blok, Black-Michaud observes that violence is at the very centre of the social life of the communities he examined. Without the threat of unlimited violence and the judicious use of regulated violence, feuding societies would not exist in the form observed. Building on Peters' analysis, Black-Michaud also notes that feud not only creates relationships, it communicates or marks their nature. To say that two groups either do or do not feud is "to characterize their relationship to one another" (Black-Michaud 1975:75; Peters 1967:268). Feud is, therefore, a mechanism for developing social relationships and a language for talking about them.

Insofar as they maintain the unity of the constructive and the communicative aspects of feuding, the analyses of Black-Michaud and Peters are productive. When Black-Michaud argues that the feud is the total social system of feuding societies, however, he fragments the phenomenon and his analysis falls apart. He makes a particularly serious error when he tries to adapt Coser to his own purposes and to differentiate "realistic"

from "non-realistic" conflict (Black-Michaud 1975:184-190). His immediate problems are to explain why sedentary societies prosecute more violent and more lethal feuds than pastoral societies, and to relate these processes to the emergence of leadership. Black-Michaud ultimately explains the differences between the two types of societies with reference to their different ecological circumstances. Although pastoral societies experience "total scarcity" more comprehensively than sedentary agricultural societies, land is not scarce and pastoral groups are highly mobile. Consequently, neighbouring pastoral groups can "solve" basic conflicts over scarce resources by moving away from one another. Among sedentary agricultural groups, however, land and water are supremely scarce and groups cannot move. Hence, feuds are more frequent and intense. Black-Michaud does not say, however, that feuds in sedentary societies are directly about material resources. Rather, he asserts that because serious conflicts over material resources in settled communities "lead to the appropriation of the best and the most by the strongest and the complete disintegration of the community as such", sedentary people fight over non-realistic elements, in particular honour (Black-Michaud 1975:193). Fighting over honour acts as a safety-valve which insures that some people but not everybody suffer. Tensions are released but the society remains intact. In spite of the array of sociological references he brings to his problem, therefore, Black-Michaud ends up with a psychological and functional explanation of violence.

Black-Michaud concludes his analysis of the feud by asserting that feud is a ritual of social relations. Yet, his whole approach is undermined by the basic distinction between realistic and non-realistic conflict. He restates that distinction in different terms in his definition of ritual. According to Black-Michaud, ritual is inefficacious, symbolic behaviour which represents but does not act upon the social

reality it mirrors. He finally destroys the unity between the constructive aspects of feud by arguing that the feud only communicates. The constructive elements of feuds lie not in the process of feuding but in the way power-seeking individuals exploit the ambiguities of what ultimately is non-realistic conflict.

Black-Michaud's analysis (his references to Mauss and total prestations notwithstanding) is a brand of what Bourdieu calls "economism". He fails to appreciate that feuds occur in social universes where economic (realistic) resources are interconvertible with symbolic (non-realistic) resources. Indeed, as Bourdieu says, far from being inefficacious or simply expressive, honour is "perhaps *the most valuable form of accumulation*" in feuding societies precisely because it can be so readily converted into absolutely essential resources (Bourdieu 1977:179). The many inconsistencies in Black-Michaud's account emerge most clearly, however, when, at the very end of his analysis, he suggests that honour might be a "medium for 'conversion' between distinct spheres of value culminating in the sphere of prestige out of which no further conversion can be made" (Black-Michaud 1975:239). Had he made this point the beginning of his work instead of a speculative end, he might have made the analysis Bourdieu suggests and been more faithful to the integrity of his subject.

II

Although these various approaches to violence each have limitations, they posit together a number of questions which must be asked about particular incidents of violence. These might be summarized in terms of three general questions.

(1) What is the nature of the contexts within which violence emerges?

(2) What does violence do to the contexts within which it emerges?

(3) What are the consequences of violence for the ongoing relationship between the people concerned and for their relationship to the wider context?

I will develop my major points about violence in Mt. Kelly with reference to three case studies. In general, violence emerges in Mt. Kelly when key items in the exchanges between people become incommensurable or inconvertible. The process of rendering key items incommensurable makes peoples' total role identities relevant to the situation, makes the inconsistencies in those identities apparent, and compromises those identities. As a result of these processes interaction becomes non-negotiable. If there is no way for the people involved to escape the situation, violence erupts. Violence erupts in what Gilson calls "situations of ultimate reference" (Gilson 1976:200). Violence acts upon the situations within which it emerges by suspending the relevance of the definitions which initially constituted them and made them non-negotiable. Violence thereby reestablishes the conditions for negotiable interaction and for the emergence of a new definition of the situation. The effect of violence upon the relationship of the people concerned and upon their relationship to the wider context varies and is part of what must be renegotiated after the violence. The more people depend upon one another prior to the violence, the more they work to deny its significance. Consequently, violence reproduces the conditions for its own reemergence in the context of those relationships which are most intimate, most multiplex, and ultimately constituted by the greatest degree of interdependence.

Domestic Violence in Mt. Kelly

I have already presented some data about the extent to which interpersonal violence is part of everyday Mt. Kelly life. One major conclusion of my analysis of the significance of the domestic group is that interpersonal violence is thematic and crucial in articulating the Mt. Kelly people with the outside world. This is true for interaction between domestic groups and for individual Aboriginal people in their relationships with whites. However, interpersonal violence is equally thematic and crucial for relationships within domestic groups (particularly between men and women). The prevalence of violence in everyday domestic life is one index of the extent to which the contradictions emergent from Mt. Kelly peoples' relationships to the outside world condition relationships within their own social groups.

In order to present basic data for the understanding of my detailed case studies, I wish to present figures on the number of violent incidents which occurred during my fieldwork in Mt. Kelly. The purpose of this data is not to show that the Mt. Kelly people are particularly violent. Rather, it is to document the types of relationships within which violent encounters emerge. Although violence is certainly seen as a legitimate form of interaction on some occasions, the Mt. Kelly people are not simply "violent persons" (Toch 1972:173-225). Rather, violence is a phenomenon related to and emergent from the nature of the Mt. Kelly peoples' social relationships with one another.

These figures document that interpersonal violence does not occur between everyone in Mt. Kelly. It is substantially limited to adults, in particular to adults who share domestic resources. Although some people argue that an occasional good spanking makes children respectful, parents indulge children and rarely use physical violence as a means of child-

VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS

Domestic resources shared	55
Domestic group	40
Non-domestic group	22
Husband-wife	31
Male-female	39
Male-male	12
Female-female	2
Parent-children*	8
Parent-children**	3
Total number	58

* indicates incidents between all parents and children irrespective of age.

** indicates incidents between parents and children under fifteen years of age.

rearing. Children witness many violent incidents between adults in Mt. Kelly. Yet, they do not emulate their parents in play or use much violence among themselves. Interpersonal violence is an adult activity and emerges in an individual's life-career only when he becomes engaged in social relationships as an adult.

Although physical violence is infrequent between parents and children, it is most frequent among adults who share domestic resources, in particular adults who live in the same domestic group. More than half the number of violent incidents occurred between men and women living together as spouses. Those violent incidents between people of the opposite sex which are not listed under the category "domestic group" occurred between men and women who shared resources but lived in separate domestic groups. Although this data show only correlations, violence in Mt. Kelly apparently emerges in the context of social relationships characterized by multiplex exchanges and great interdependency. Violence outside the context of domestic exchanges is rare.

The fact that children are so seldom involved in violence suggests a general explanation of the correlation between violence and the

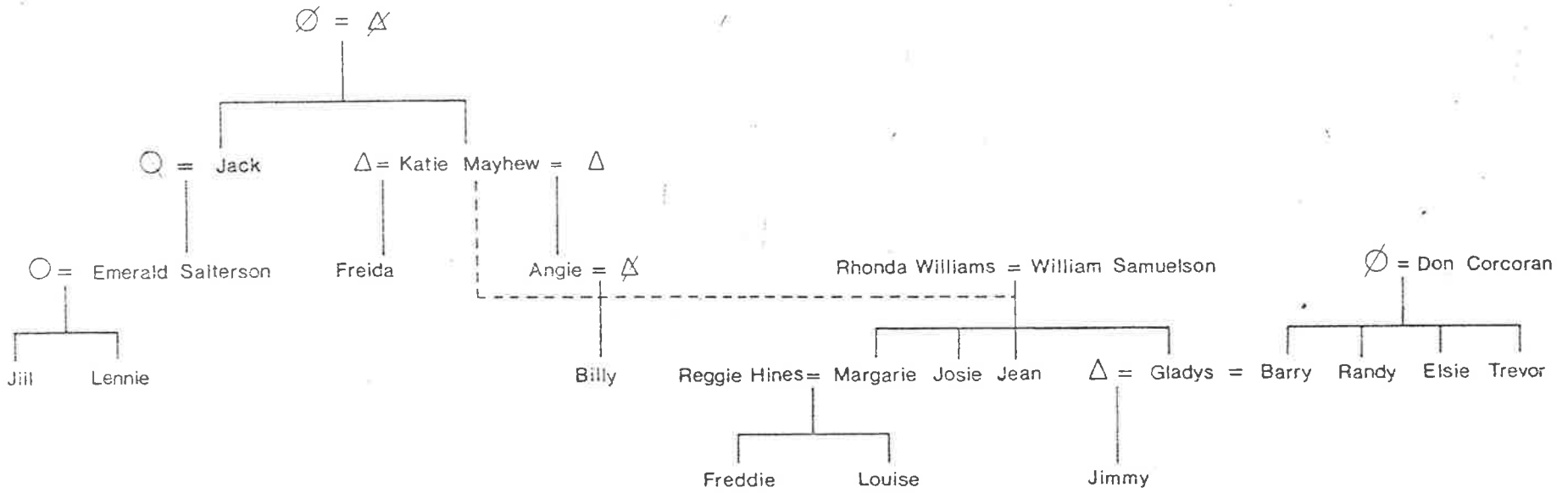
exchange of domestic resources. Gouldner notes that in the everyday world, some people get "something for nothing" in their transactions with others. These include people who by virtue of some special characteristic cannot reasonably be expected to reciprocate or can reciprocate only token gestures. Children and invalids are examples of such people (Gouldner 1973:253-262). Debts incurred by people who cannot reciprocate are rendered irrelevant for their wider relationships. I suggest that violence in Mt. Kelly concerns the social meaning of debt and occurs in contexts where such meanings become problematic. In particular, violence emerges when people become unable or are not permitted to pay their debts. Because they are being cast into the role of getting something for nothing but are nonetheless still subject to the rules of reciprocity, they risk being defined as perpetually dependent, less than fully adult social identities, and totally subject to their debtors' control. Violence constitutes a denial of such a definition of the situation. The fact that violence occurs so often in the context of the most multiplex relationships in Mt. Kelly suggests that the social meaning of debts and exchanges is highly problematic. Indeed, the Mt. Kelly people do not readily recognize the commensurability of different items of exchange. They do not readily permit each other to escape debt, and, therefore, attempt to control one another through the manipulation of the conditions of exchange.

There are two contradictory conditions operating on relationships between men and women in Mt. Kelly. On the one hand, men and women each have access to separate sources of income. Women are linked heavily into the urban welfare apparatus and have access to a variety of pensions and welfare benefits. Men work. In Mt. Kelly, most men have to work in the cattle industry. These two sources of income are distinct and separate men and women. Cattlework is physically distant from the urban area. Moreover, the conditions under which women acquire pensions encourage them to withdraw

into their domestic groups and minimize their social relationships with men. On the other hand, men and women depend on each other to counteract the inadequacies of their respective incomes. As a result of the seasonal nature of cattlework and other factors, men must often rely on women's incomes to survive periods of unemployment. Because most women lose access to pensions when their children mature and the possibilities for domestic work are declining, women also need men. These conditions mean that men and women are independent of each other under some circumstances and critically dependent on each other under other circumstances. This general situation generates an essential indeterminacy and makes it difficult for men and women to agree upon the nature of their relationships. Indeed, under these circumstances long-term relationships between men and women are difficult to sustain.

Case I

In this case I want to consider a relationship which accounts for at least six violent incidents during my fieldwork. It concerns Barry Corcoran and Gladys William, two young Mt. Kelly people who established a "kangaroo-style" relationship for six months during my fieldwork. This case is interesting because it illustrates clearly the dynamics of the relationship between pastoral and welfare incomes, the conditions which generate "matricentric" domestic groups in Mt. Kelly, and the significance of violence in these other processes. My major point is that Barry engaged in violent interaction with Gladys and her kinsmen as he suffered a decline in his relationship with his pastoral boss and thereby lost the good credit-rating he had previously enjoyed in Mt. Kelly. Although Barry considered himself a "quiet man" and did not normally assault people, by the time I left Mt. Kelly he had beaten Gladys, his spouse, several times, quarreled



violently with Katie Mayhew (Gladys' "grandmother") and Angie Mayhew (Gladys' auntie), and held bitter arguments with William Samuelson (Gladys' father). The incidents occurred as these people began to redefine their image of Barry's identity as a productive man and to withdraw their support from him. As Barry lost his boss, his creditable identity, and his access to the resources he needed to survive, he began to interact violently with other people (particularly his spouse).

When I first moved into Mt. Kelly, Barry was working for Clem Virgin, the manager of Jefferson Downs, a cattle station approximately one hundred and fifty miles southeast of Alice Springs. Although Barry had experienced a difficult working career prior to having been hired by Virgin, he initially appeared to have established himself nicely at Jefferson Downs. Barry was Virgin's headstockman and secured jobs for all the other men in Mt. Kelly. They all considered Virgin a "good boss" who paid his men well, fed them properly, and left them alone to do the work as they determined. Moreover, it was clear that Virgin regarded Barry highly and intended to "look after him". For example, Virgin once permitted Barry to save a small colt and take it back to Mt. Kelly. The mare had broken its leg and been shot. Initially, Virgin had also wanted to shoot the colt. However, Barry asked to keep it and Virgin granted his request. Pastoral bosses do not grant favours except to men they particularly prize. Hence, the gift of the colt publicly documented Barry's relationship with the boss.

The cattle market was extremely depressed during my fieldwork and few men worked. Consequently, Barry was fortunate to have a job. However, Barry's close relationship with Virgin was also important because it authenticated his identity as a responsible man, secured his relationship with key people in Mt. Kelly, and, therefore, guaranteed his credit. For example, Barry gave the colt to his brothers and sisters at St. Mary's.

Prior to that time, he had neglected his relationship with them. After he gave them the colt, however, he began to visit them regularly when he was in Alice Springs and to assume the identity of "big brother". This change in his relationship with his siblings marked as well the constitution of his wider social identity. His prestige and credit in Mt. Kelly were quite high. When he returned from the bush, he threw great drinking sprees which were widely appreciated and well attended. Barry and Gladys also established their own household. During this period Katie Mayhew, Gladys' grandmother, and William Samuelson, Gladys' father, were foremost among Barry's supporters and creditors. Indeed, William considered Barry a very valuable man to have attracted as a "son-in-law".

It is impossible fully to understand either Barry's identity or his position in Mt. Kelly without reference to Gladys. Although Barry was certainly a productive man and did not initially need Gladys to sustain him, his capacity to court her successfully and his access to the credit her kinsmen controlled were highly interrelated. In the light of what happened to Barry subsequently, the fact that Gladys' kinsmen approved of her living with Barry was a critical marker in their appreciation of him in general. This is important because Gladys had a number of significant opportunities available to be independent of Barry and his income. For example, when I first moved into Mt. Kelly, Gladys lived with Katie Mayhew. Although William Samuelson was her father, Katie had raised her since she was a very young girl. Katie received an extra supplement on her pension to support Gladys. Gladys enjoyed an unlimited call upon Katie's resources. Furthermore, Gladys had access to Mrs. Douglas, a white lady who lived in a house a few hundred yards southeast of Mt. Kelly. Mrs. Douglas had fostered Gladys and her siblings for a short time and still maintained contact with the young people. They could go to her house at any time, had free access to her food, and occasionally slept with her. Mrs. Douglas

kept a keen interest in Gladys' affairs. As a result of her relationships with these other people, Gladys was able (and, at a certain point, compelled) to consider what Barry offered her in the context of these other, competing opportunities.

The value of her other opportunities was not constant to Gladys. In many respects, they were potential opportunities and became relevant only in the context of her changing relationship with Barry. For example, when Barry and Gladys initially set up house, the couple spent most of their free time sitting in Katie's camp talking, drinking, and occasionally eating. Although Katie was generous with them, Barry was able to support them with his own income. The same was true of their access to Mrs. Douglas. They took advantage of what she offered them, but did not need it to survive. They were secure and self-contained. When Gladys moved in with Barry, she certainly did not surrender access to these other people. Yet, she did share her opportunities with Barry and relied upon his income to support them substantially. She did not realize her opportunities independent of Barry in spite of the fact that she easily could have. The significance of her choice emerges clearly with respect to her baby.

When Gladys and Barry initially established their household, she was pregnant. Although everyone in Mt. Kelly knew that Barry was not the father, he announced on several occasions that he was planning to "grow up" the child as if it were his own. Gladys and her kinsmen did not question Barry's right to make this claim. On the contrary, they considered his remarks appropriate, and further manifestations of his identity as an affluent, responsible man. Moreover, they interpreted his willingness to care for the child as an indication that Gladys herself was in good hands. By recognizing Barry's responsibility for the baby, however, Gladys surrendered access to resources she could have acquired through her own, solitary

control of the child, in particular a supporting mother's pension. In general, therefore, by giving Barry access to her own kinsmen and her baby, Gladys denied herself independent access to the resources she needed to support her domestic group. Insofar as everyone else concurred in Gladys' judgement, they accepted this arrangement, considered it part of Barry's creditable identity, and supported the entire domestic group.

In spite of these facts, however, Gladys maintained some social distance from Barry and did not totally commit herself or her child to the relationship. She marked her reserve principally by keeping her own surname, Williams, and giving it to her child. Barry and Gladys kept a "kangaroo-style" marriage and denied they were married. Yet, Gladys did not initially make a public issue of her surname, or their marital identity. I only learned of her approach during a visit to the hospital when she gave the baby's name to a receptionist. She began to assert her autonomous identity and qualify her marital commitment publicly, however, when Barry began to experience problems with Virgin.

Barry first began to have problems with Virgin after the August 1975 Rodeo. It is customary for stockmen to come into Alice Springs for a short break at rodeo time. Virgin brought the Mt. Kelly men into town for the weekend and, although he was supposed to have returned on Monday, he did not return until mid-September. Because Barry spent most of his money at the rodeo, he and Gladys depended on Donald Corcoran (Barry's father), Katie Mayhew, and William Samuelson to live. After having returned to Jefferson Downs, Virgin brought them back to Mt. Kelly in November when Gladys' baby was due. Barry again expected Virgin to collect him soon after the baby was born. However, he did not come for Barry until May 1976. During that six months, Barry's entire social world collapsed.

When Virgin did not appear, Barry initially began to search for him in Alice Springs. He discovered that his boss had returned to the

station. It was an unusually rainy period in Central Australia at this time and Barry publicly suggested that Virgin was marooned out bush. Virgin would come for him after the road cleared. Yet, Virgin did not come. Indeed, another Mt. Kelly man's boss (who lived farther away from Alice Springs and traveled over worse roads than Virgin) did appear and took his workers out bush. One day Barry's father openly voiced his suspicions. He stated bluntly that Virgin had fired Barry and was never coming back. Barry denied his father's allegation and reasserted that Virgin would arrive any day. Barry's hopes were disappointed, however. He found Virgin in Alice Springs and asked him for a job and a loan of money. Virgin did not guarantee him the job and gave him only four dollars, not even a morning's wages.

In the months which followed Barry and Gladys began to have increasingly bitter and violent public quarrels. Gladys denied she was Barry's wife, stated publicly that she was "only living with him", and reasserted her control over her baby. She also tried to prevent him from going to town to drink with his workmates from Mt. Kelly. Whenever he got in a car to accompany them, she swore at him and screamed for him to stay. Initially Barry acquiesced. Barry presented himself as a "quiet man" who did not hit women and was considerate of Gladys' wishes. As Gladys became more vitriolic in her remarks, he abandoned his pacific stance and struck her. When this happened Gladys screamed hysterically and called for her "uncles" to help her.

Gladys' uncles were Barry's working mates and the very same men with whom he tried to go drinking. Gladys' appeals put them in a difficult situation. However, they never responded or came to Gladys' aid. On the contrary, they criticized Barry for letting Gladys influence him so much and began to say that she dominated him. They interpreted his efforts to please Gladys and failure to beat her as a sign of weakness. In their

view, Barry should go to town whenever he wanted and ignore his woman's wishes completely.

Barry commented to me that Gladys had jeopardized his relationships with his mates. He noted how they never came to see him at his camp anymore. He resented the way that Gladys tried to prevent him from drinking with them, and remarked that he wished he were out bush. If he were out bush working, he would not have these problems.

Barry's problems were not limited to Gladys and his workmates. His conflicts with Gladys gradually engaged him in secondary conflicts with Katie Mayhew and William Samuelson. Although Gladys' uncles refused to come to her aid, Katie and William began to support her against Barry. Katie cut off her credit to Barry and eventually fought violently with him. Barry also had a fight with Angie, Katie's daughter. William Samuelson was less quick to interfere. Originally he had thought quite highly of Barry. As time went on, however, and the fights between Barry and Gladys became more violent, William started to take Gladys' side. He accused Barry of being a "bludger" and supported Gladys' disclaimers about the nature of their relationship. He began to disparage Barry in private conversations and compared him unfavourably with Greg Davidson, a young Mt. Kelly man who was headstockman at Malapunya Station.

During this long process Gladys began to take advantage of her other opportunities. Mrs. Douglas took an active interest in Gladys, the baby, and Barry. She insisted that Gladys wash the baby's dirty nappies in her own private automatic washing machine. She hired Barry to do weeding, raking, and other small odd jobs. She paid Barry for his work and fed the family. Although she tried to help Barry, Mrs. Douglas' primary interest was in Gladys and her baby. Gladys finally moved into Mrs. Douglas' house and left Barry in the camp. Sister Leslie Gray arranged for Gladys to receive a supporting mother's pension and the break with Barry was complete.

Not long after Gladys received her first pension cheque, she, her baby, and Mrs. Douglas flew to New South Wales to live with Mrs. Douglas' mother.

On 8 May 1976 Virgin came back. As a token of his relationship with Barry he gave him a new pair of working boots. He took Barry and several other Mt. Kelly young people out to Jefferson Downs. I visited them before I left Alice Springs in June. Although he was again working, Barry's relationship with his boss was not clear. Barry criticized him extensively, saying he was a bad boss and inept manager. For example, Barry alleged that Virgin had made an error and lost a mob of wild horses the men had spent all day mustering. Virgin once rebuked Barry for having driven some bullocks so hard he crippled one. It was a young beast and too small to kill. Yet, because it could not walk, Virgin had to shoot it. He held Barry responsible because he was the headstockman.

This case critically raises the question of the relationship between "non-economic" (or symbolic) and "economic" capital (Bourdieu 1977:181). On the one hand, a man's symbolic capital is crucial in establishing his access to material resources. For example, Barry's identity as a generous, responsible, productive man was critical in legitimating his access to credit. On the other hand, a man's symbolic capital is valuable only insofar as he can corroborate it with access to material resources. In this case, the value and authenticity of Barry's social identity was intimately tied to how other people assessed his relationship with Virgin and his changes for work. This conditioned Barry's capacity to convert symbolic resources into economic resources. Prior to his problems with Virgin, Barry was able to convert his symbolic capital and social identity into domestic credit. After Virgin apparently withdrew his support, Barry's identity changed and he lost his credit. There were two aspects to the credit Barry lost. Because it appeared he would never work for Virgin again, other people refused to credit him for his possible future

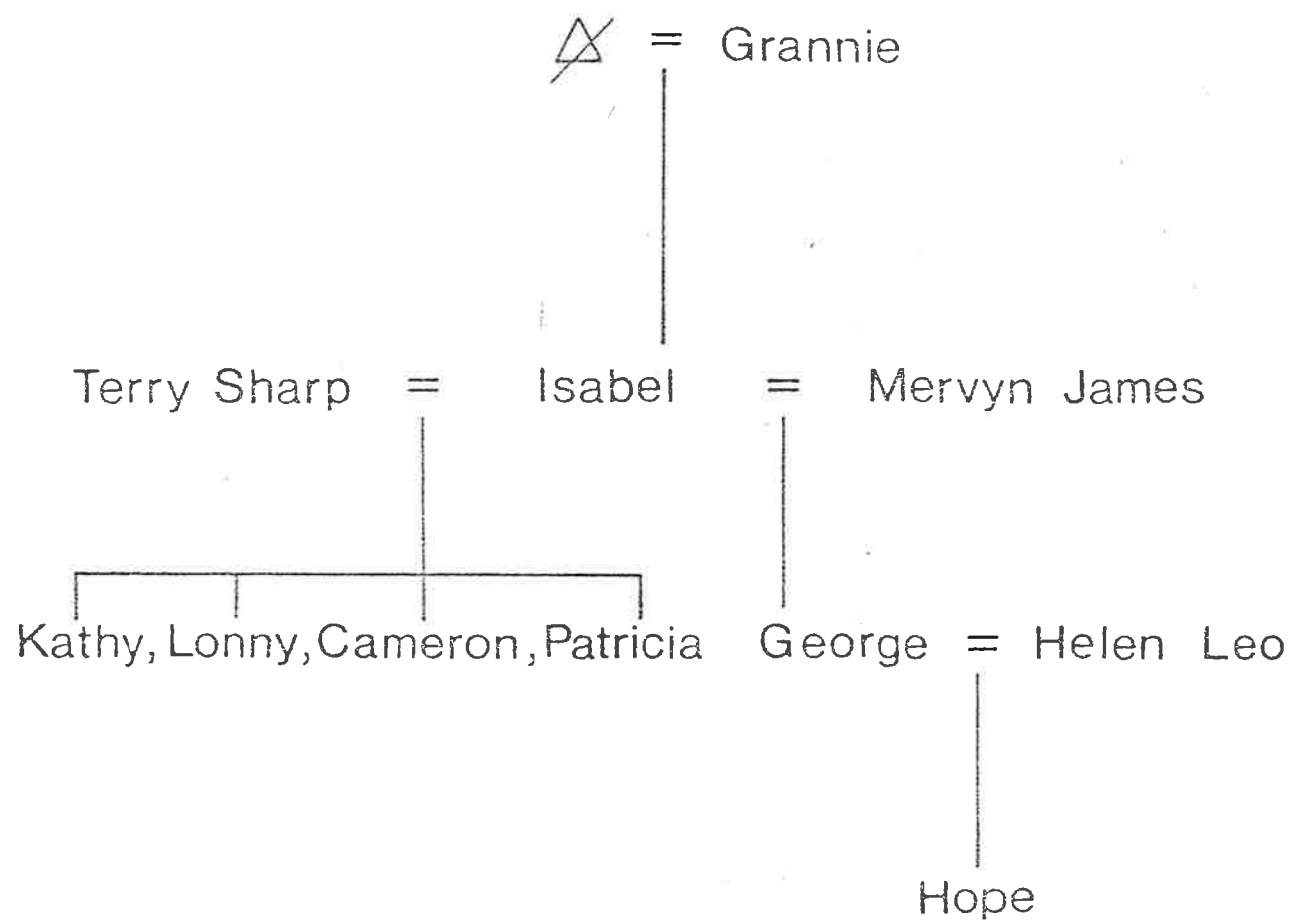
earnings. Barry also lost the credit he had accumulated from his gifts to the community in the past. People denied that his past contributions to their welfare were relevant to his needs when he was out of work. When it was apparent that there was a discontinuity between Barry's past and his present, the Mt. Kelly people redefined his identity and rendered their past debts to him irrelevant for his current exchanges with them. In this way, it became impossible for him to convert symbolic capital into economic resources.

Violence emerged in Barry's interaction with others only as his social identity and credit were being redefined. It was part of a transitional, ambiguous phase in his relationships with other Mt. Kelly people and occurred only as people began to refuse to convert or render his past contributions to them commensurable with current exchanges. Moreover, Barry only fought with those people who were critical to the maintenance of his credit. He fought with Gladys most frequently because their relationship was the focus of the social field his credit needs defined. The violence also developed these processes further and actually contributed to Barry's "bankruptcy". Barry's mates insisted that for him to remain a man in their eyes, he had to beat and control his wife. However, Gladys' kinsmen did not agree. Had Barry maintained access to Virgin, they might have considered it legitimate for him to strike Gladys. Because Barry had apparently lost his boss, however, William and Katie considered the beatings illegitimate and justified their own interference in the affair as necessary to protect her. The violence which was necessary for Barry to keep face with his workmates undermined the support of Gladys' kinsmen. The violence finally stopped because Gladys established her own "matricentric" domestic group and destroyed the social field their relationship initially constituted.

Case II

In this case I want to consider a domestic situation which accounts for at least ten violent incidents during my fieldwork. It concerns the Sharp family. This case contrasts with the preceding case in several important ways. First, the Sharps did not maintain a "matricentric" domestic organization. Rather, they are an example of the second major type of domestic organization current among contemporary Alice Springs Aborigines. Although Terry, the family's father, worked in the cattle industry, Isabel, his wife, accompanied him throughout his career. Consequently, their children each moved into institutions for part-Aboriginal children when they came of school age. Second, violence in this family was most common between the parents and the children. Of the ten violent incidents I recorded, only one occurred between Terry and Isabel. None occurred between the children. Nine occurred between a child and one of the parents. I will examine in detail two violent incidents between Isabel and George, her eldest son. Third, the violence I will analyse occurred during a period of transition in the life of the family as a group and in George's life particularly. Unlike Barry's case, however, George's situation was improving and his identity becoming more secure. Fourth, whereas Barry's creditors severed their links with him by altering their terms of exchange, Terry and Isabel manipulated norms of domestic reciprocity to maintain control over and access to their children. The children had to legitimate ways to limit their parents' demands. The violence occurred at moments when there were major disagreements about the significance of reciprocity and the limits of debt in the family's domestic relationships.

CASE 2



The Sharps' domestic identity. There were two images of the Sharps' domestic identity which were important in the family's development, the Welfare Branch's image and the family's own self-image. At the centre of each image was the question of how adequately the Sharp parents (particularly Isabel) fulfilled their responsibilities toward their children. The Welfare Branch considered them irresponsible parents and insisted they put the children in institutions in Alice Springs. The Sharps maintained an image of themselves as a solidary family throughout their history. Yet, because the parents and children lived apart, they were not certain about the significance of the family's ideology of domestic reciprocity for their interpersonal relationships. The children were particularly uncertain about their relationships with Isabel. These problems emerged in an acute form during my fieldwork. When Terry and Isabel retired from active work and acquired pensions, the family began to reassemble at Mt. Nancy. By this time, however, four of their children worked and received incomes of their own. Because Terry and Isabel tried to legitimate access to their children's resources by invoking the family's norms of domestic reciprocity, the significance of the family's past and its self-identity became the subject of intense discussion. The family objectified and scrutinized the ambiguities in their relationships with one another. The violence among them emerged in the context of this debate.

The key to the family's identity is the conflict between Terry's working career and his children's educational careers. Terry was a highly respected part-Aboriginal stockman and worked in the bush throughout most of his life. The Welfare Branch considered his children part-Aborigines. Consequently, it required them to attend school in Alice Springs. This situation created a major dilemma for the family, particularly for Isabel. Isabel could not accompany Terry in the bush and tend to her children in the manner the Welfare Branch demanded. Because she chose to stay with her

husband, the children went to institutions and lived apart from their parents. The family only came together during school holidays and once for a brief period when Terry worked in town.

The Welfare Branch did not interpret the family in terms of this conflict which it had created or understand its own part in the development of the Sharps' domestic organization. The Welfare Branch interpreted the family's problems in terms of judgements about the moral identities of its members. I discussed the Sharps with Mrs. Thatcher, the welfare officer who was responsible for them throughout this period. She observed that Terry had always been a poor worker and poor provider. She also considered Isabel an unfit mother. According to her, Terry and Isabel drank too much liquor and indulged themselves at the expense of their children. There had always been a problem with the children's schooling. Although the Sharps eventually chose to send their children to institutions in Alice Springs, the Welfare Branch had to threaten to commit the children to the care of the state before they would acquiesce. Had Terry and Isabel not responded to its pressure, the Welfare Branch would have taken formal court action against them. Because he had no liquor, Terry was a good man out in the bush. The children too lived better when their parents were gone. They received educational allowances from the state and Grannie, Isabel's mother, looked after them. Indeed, Grannie was a responsible woman who nurtured her grandchildren tenderly. Unlike Terry and Isabel, she did not indulge herself at the children's expense. On the contrary, she took over responsibilities which should have been Isabel's.

The significance of Mrs. Thatcher's comments is not that she liked or disliked particular members of the family. Rather, her comments constitute the family's welfare identity and legitimated the Welfare Branch's action against it. The contrast between Isabel and Grannie was particularly important. Grannie worked in Alice Springs as a housekeeper

for white families. Although she had a male friend with whom she associated, she lived alone and supported herself. The Sharp children lived with her every weekend. On the other hand, Isabel traveled with Terry and refused to subordinate her relationship with her husband to the care of her children. These facts were the basis of the Welfare Branch's attitude toward the two women. Grannie's situation conformed to the Welfare Branch's family policy whereas Isabel's life did not. According to the Welfare Branch, therefore, Grannie was the responsible female adult and Isabel was a wastrel. Isabel's mistake was not that she drank, but that she committed herself to Terry. Because liquor and drinking were part of the deviant identity the Welfare Branch ascribed to most men, Isabel's identity as a drunk was a metaphorical representation of her total life career and of her rejection of the Welfare Branch's plans for her family. Because Isabel's deviant identity legitimated the Welfare Branch's action against the family, it was crucially instrumental in reorganizing its domestic life, dispersing its members across the face of Central Australia, and, therefore, contributing to the family's own problematic self-identity.

In my analysis of Barry's case, I suggested that the Mt. Kelly people assess the relevance of past transactions in the context of present circumstances. Although some exchanges proceed as if there were no problem converting particular exchange items or making them commensurable, relatively unproblematic transactions mask what is inherently uncertain in all exchanges. Because the Sharps were reconstituting their domestic group during my fieldwork, and had experienced the history I outlined above, they encountered this problem dramatically. Of particular significance was the fact that their four eldest children had already established working careers and had independent access to their means to survive. Whereas Terry and Isabel previously had to subordinate their relationships with their children to the demands of their work, after having retired they had

a major interest in reconstructing links with their children and in legitimating them as socially real and constraining. Although they had no long-term history of domestic exchanges, they nonetheless tried to obligate their children by invoking norms of kinship and domestic reciprocity.

The Sharps often discussed the norms of reciprocity which were supposed to prevail in their family. They described their domestic transactions in terms reminiscent of Sahlins' "generalized reciprocity" (Sahlins 1974). The Sharps did not consider their domestic transactions as reciprocally motivated exchanges. Rather, they were transactions which were "putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given, and if possible and necessary, assistance returned" (Sahlins 1974:193-194). According to the Sharps, their transactions were motivated by the commitment to each member to the family and implied no debt or obligation to repay. As George explained it, "In our family, people don't lend money. They give it." The Sharps stressed that insofar as they were a family, they helped one another when necessary. The "solidary extreme" of generalized reciprocity constituted the family's image of its own moral identity.

Sahlins (like the Sharps) stresses that the norms of generalized reciprocity typically leave debt "out of account" and that "the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite" (Sahlins 1974:194). Nevertheless, I think Sahlins' point can be generalized so that it accounts for the Sharps' situation more accurately. In general, the power of generalized reciprocity stems from the fact that it is based upon permanent, ineradicable debt. Generalized reciprocity obscures the notion of "exchange" and treats all transactions in isolation from one another. Because people gloss transactions as if they were unrelated (that is, as if they were not reciprocally motivated exchanges), no transactional items are interconverted or rendered commensurable. Consequently, no exchanges can ever be said to have

occurred and no debts are ever extinguished. Rather, debts grow with each transaction and constitute permanently binding obligations.

Insofar as the norms of generalized reciprocity specify no limits to the help expected and potentially required, they also make it difficult if not impossible for people to acquit themselves honourably and limit or terminate a relationship. People who under the norms of generalized reciprocity try to construct a "bill" or to "balance their accounts" are considered selfish, unsociable, and perhaps even traitors to the group. From this perspective, the norms of generalized reciprocity contain the seeds of their own contradiction and are "altruistic" *only* if people disattend to the debts accumulated. Such studied disattention occurs only under some circumstances and constitutes a limiting case. Indeed, insofar as people deny that exchanges occur and isolate transactions from one another, the norms of generalized reciprocity can lead to real material imbalances, legitimate what some parties to the interaction consider unfair exchange, and generate exploitative relationships. This is particularly likely to occur in the context of kin relationships in which certain kinds of obligations are conceived as natural and ineradicable in any case.

In the light of this analysis, I suggest that Terry and Isabel tried to reconstruct the family's domestic relationships by manipulating the norms of generalized reciprocity so as to make their children recognize a permanent debt to them. There were several aspects to this process. First, they insisted their children were indebted to them simply because they were their children. Second, they denied that the children's contributions to the family's (particularly Terry's and Isabel's) well-being were commensurable with the items which constructed the kinship debt. Hence, they refused to recognize that the children had discharged any portions of their kin debt and even denied that the children honourably attempted to uphold the family's norms of solidarity and reciprocity. Third, by denying

the significance of their domestic contributions, Terry and Isabel legitimated an unlimited call upon their children's resources.

The Sharp children accepted the basic legitimacy of their parents' demands and the norms of domestic reciprocity. However, as their parents manipulated the terms of their kin debt, the children began to feel that Terry and Isabel made unreasonable, exploitative demands and abused the norms of reciprocity. Within the terms of generalized reciprocity, however, they could not limit their parents' demands. On the contrary, as long as they glossed their relationships in those terms, the children were obligated to honour their kinship obligations. As Terry and Isabel's demands increased, the children began to reinterpret the terms of their domestic relationships. They began to "quantify" their debts to their parents and insist they had discharged them honourably; that is, they began to deny the relevance of the norms of generalized reciprocity for their domestic transactions and assess them in terms of "balanced reciprocity" (Sahlins 1974:194). Only in this way could they limit their obligations and withdraw from their parents' control.

The children's efforts to accomplish this task, however, were seriously undermined by the fact that they periodically depended upon their parents for basic resources or other essential aid. Although Terry and Isabel valued the resources their children controlled, they received pensions and did not necessarily ever depend upon their children. These conditions meant the children were disadvantaged in their negotiations with their parents and regularly found themselves in totally inconsistent, compromising situations. Violence erupted between the parents and children in such situations.

In this case I will examine two violent incidents in detail. Both incidents occurred between Isabel and George, her eldest son. Although several violent incidents occurred among members of the Sharp

family during my fieldwork, the problems between George and Isabel highlight the family's domestic situation vividly. The problems between George and Isabel focused on Hope, George's two-year old daughter. Several months prior to my arrival in Mt. Kelly, George separated from Helen Leon, Hope's mother. Unlike most men in Alice Springs, George kept his daughter and threw his wife out of Mt. Kelly. Because he worked and led an active social life, George asked Isabel to care for Hope and gave her money to support the child. Isabel accepted the money and agreed to mind Hope. Difficulties emerged, however, when George became dissatisfied with his mother's care of the child and began to demand she be more attentive. These processes established a complex domestic field with Hope at its centre and most fundamental resource. Her significance can be gauged by the fact that George struck his mother twice during conflicts over Hope.

At the time of my fieldwork George Sharp was beginning to reestablish himself in a relatively secure position. After having worked irregularly for several years, George obtained a full-time job as a field officer for the Central Australian Aborigines Congress (CAAC). George was also elected the president and public officer of the Mt. Kelly Housing Association. In that capacity, he represented the camp and negotiated with the many outside bureaucrats who took an interest in Mt. Kelly. These two new positions gave George access to important and valuable resources. He earned a good wage and he was influential in the local politics concerned with Aboriginal affairs. These positions also enabled him to verify his long-standing but recently tarnished identity as a highly resourceful, self-sufficient man. George enjoyed great prestige in Mt. Kelly as a result of his success in the Australian army. He spent eight years in the army, fought in Vietnam, earned two medals for outstanding bravery under fire, and retired with the rank of sergeant. After George left the army, however, his career declined. For the next five years, he moved from job

to job and, in his own words, "wasted" his time. In the six months immediately prior to his appointment with the CAAC, he was unemployed and depended upon his parents to survive. He expected his new job to inaugurate an era in his life congruent with what he had experienced in the army. Hope was a significant part of his plans.

George and Helen established a "kangaroo-style" relationship in 1973. They lived together in Mt. Kelly and had one daughter, Hope. George explained that he threw Helen out of the camp because she was a negligent mother and bad wife. She drank too much, did not do her domestic work, and failed to obey his orders. George presented her as the embodiment of the wastefulness he thought characterized his own life during the period of which she had been a part. George was unusual in Alice Springs when he insisted upon keeping Hope. Few men ever kept their children after separating from their spouses. However, George considered caring for Hope a major index of his revitalized social identity. In his capacity as her father and guardian, he documented his sense of responsibility, and further heralded his changed circumstances.

George's new identity was not only significant in Mt. Kelly. The CAAC was attempting to become a vital, legitimate force in local and national Aboriginal affairs. It needed employees who had good public images and who represented Aborigines well as self-determining, responsible people. It pressured its employees (including George) to control their drinking, dress well in public, and look after their families. Bad employees undermined the organization's tenuous legitimacy. The CAAC's pressure sometimes put George in awkward positions. It was difficult for him to stop drinking, for example, and still meet his obligations to the other young men in Mt. Kelly. The important point was, however, that these pressures increased Hope's significance. Insofar as he cared for Hope, he

increased his value to the CAAC and helped secure his position with the organization.

As an expression of George's new self, Hope was crucial in maintaining George's good standing both inside and outside of Mt. Kelly. Nonetheless, George could not actually care for her. He had to depend upon Isabel. Isabel also realized some benefits from this transaction. She received a subsidy on her pension and child endowment for Hope. As these items indicate, the local welfare officers supported her. George too gave her extra money. More important than these particular items, however, was the fact that her care of Hope legitimated a general claim upon George, his current resources, and the resources he potentially controlled. George was becoming an increasingly more valuable man. Isabel's control of Hope was the key to her long-term access to whatever George might produce, including quite substantial benefits from the new welfare programs for Aborigines.

The general point is that Hope was the key to George and Isabel's efforts to control each other. George needed Isabel to help guarantee his emerging identity and new working career. Isabel wanted access to George's productivity. Hope was the fundamental item in this complex set of transactions. When Isabel neglected the child, the meaning of the transactions became unclear and the subject of intense debate between George and his mother. In particular, these problems posed the question of the significance of their norms of domestic reciprocity and of their mutual debts.

Incident A. George first struck his mother approximately seven weeks after he began to work for the CAAC. Within the family, two stories competed as explanations for the incident. Kathy, George's sister, alleged that Isabel got very drunk and almost dropped Hope into the fire. George struck Isabel when he returned home from work and discovered what had

happened. Isabel and Terry, on the other hand, insisted that George struck his mother after having discovered his mother suckling Hope at her breast. The incident occurred very early one morning and I did not witness it. However, the terms of both stories are highly significant and articulate basic themes which had characterized much of the recent family gossip.

From the moment he first returned to work, George began to worry and criticize his mother for her care of Hope. He was particularly alarmed at the fact that Isabel drank heavily and often neglected the child. In the weeks prior to this incident, George had several arguments with his mother and urged her to reduce her drinking. Grannie, Isabel's two youngest daughters, and the family's neighbours also commented that Isabel was "grog mad", "never satisfied" and abused her family's good will. They were particularly critical of how Isabel neglected the children for whom she was responsible. Kathy's explanation of the beating was consistent with this line of criticism and supported George in the quarrel.

Isabel's explanation was consistent with her efforts to refute the family's accusations. Isabel insisted that she had always been a solicitous mother whose care had insured her children's current success. She pointed out that her children now held good jobs because she had sent them to institutions where they received good educations. She echoed George's criticisms of Helen, but insisted that she (not George) had rescued the child. When Hope's mother went drinking and left the child alone crying, it was Isabel who fed and calmed her. Finally, Isabel commented on George's ancestry. She claimed that George was not Terry's son. Rather, he was the son of Mervyn James, a white man of high prestige and authority in Alice Springs. George owed his own, high-quality constitution to her.

When Isabel's kinsmen complained she was never satisfied, they were also criticizing her for constantly demanding more money from them.

Although Terry and Isabel did not often fail to feed their family, they did spend most of their surplus money on invalid port. Moreover, when they exhausted their money, they pressed George, Cameron, Patricia, Grannie, or one of their neighbours for cash to buy more port. If anyone refused, Terry and Isabel often abused them loudly. Although most of the arguments between George and Isabel occurred in this way, he did not object to Isabel's drinking as such. George drank heavily himself, often gave his parents the money they wanted, and frequently shared their parties. George did object to the fact that Isabel seemed not to credit his efforts to satisfy her or to accept any obligations in return for his gifts. Her "greediness" was a mark of her unwillingness to limit her demands upon him and of her apparent attitude that he owed her everything he had. Moreover, when she neglected Hope, she compounded her "greediness" with a failure to honour her responsibilities toward George. She acted independently of George. The attacks on her identity as a responsible guardian of Hope and her own children summarized this critique.

Isabel's comments are equally interesting with respect to the family's norms of domestic reciprocity. In essence she argued that her children were permanently indebted to her. Her children owed her access to the jobs they now enjoyed. Without her care they could not possibly have achieved such creditable positions. Consequently, they owed her access to what they gained from their jobs. Her comments about George's father were particularly uncompromising. In part she was simply praising herself for having been so seductive that she attracted a white man. She was also rooting her demands upon George in his very physical make-up. In Central Australia, most whites consider part-Aborigines inherently superior to full-blood Aborigines, and give them better access to favourable opportunities, including good employment. Isabel was a full-blood Aborigine who, by attracting a white lover, made her son a superior man. George owed her

his superiority and the advantages it gave him. He could no more escape her debt than he could change his ancestry. Isabel rebutted George's critiques of her care of Hope by elaborating on this nurturing theme. Not only was Isabel responsible for having rescued Hope, by claiming George objected to her suckling Hope, and explaining the assault in these terms, she accused him of attacking the very foundation of the child's development; that is, her attachment to a nurturing mother figure.

Incident B. George struck his mother a second time ten days after the preceding incident. The incident again occurred very late at night after George had returned from work. On this occasion, however, I was present.

George woke me and asked me to join him for a beer at his parents' camp. When I arrived, Terry, Isabel, and Hope were lying on a mattress in front of their hut. George was standing in front of them with Percy O'Callaghan, a young man who was then sharing George's hut, and Garry Loveday, an old friend from St. Mary's. We all chatted, sipping on cans of beer. George asked his mother if she knew where were a new pair of shoes Patricia had just bought for Hope. Isabel answered that she did not know. George raised his voice angrily and said, "Patricia just spent fifty dollars buying new clothes for Hope and you (Isabel) have lost them before the week is out". He abused both his parents for being so careless. When he finished yelling, he turned and looked at me. Just at that moment, however, Percy said, "Look, she's (Isabel) teasing Hope". George turned, grabbed Hope and handed her to me. He then quickly kicked his mother twice in the chest. As his parents hurried to get out of his way, George abused them for being such ungrateful, irresponsible parents. He said that when he was in the army, he spent most of his money on them. They had wrecked two vehicles and squandered hundreds of dollars which he had given them. George grabbed the foam mattress they had been sleeping on and took it to

his own hut. He continued to abuse them. While he was gone, I took Hope to Grannie's tent. George walked over to where I was standing. He held the medals he earned fighting in Vietnam in his hands. There were tears in his eyes and his face was contorted. He held out his medals and said, "Four of my best mates died while I was earning these". He then threw the medals into Grannie's fire and returned to his hut.

In this incident George balanced his accounts with his parents and symbolically destroyed his relationship with his mother. The lost shoes were significant because they documented that Isabel's carelessness and irresponsibility were an intrinsic part of her attitude toward George and Hope. The shoes were a gift from Patricia -- a gift which Isabel squandered. Her act represented all aspects of what George considered her carelessness; that is, she accepted gifts from her children, treated them as if they were insignificant, and refused to honour her own domestic obligations in return. When George criticized his parents for having squandered all the money he gave them earlier, he elaborated upon this theme and showed how it had been characteristic of their attitude for many years (McHugh 1968:38). The teasing added an extra dimension to this process. Although there is an institutionalized joking relationship between grandparents and grandchildren among Aborigines in Alice Springs (and I observed George enact it), the fact that Percy used the word "teasing" is important. It was clear from the context and George's reaction in particular that "teasing" is considered a hostile act. Hence, the "teasing" suggested that Isabel was actively and intentionally harming Hope, not merely neglecting her. Like the earlier incident with the fire, it risked injuring Hope. Unlike the fire incident, because she was not drunk, Isabel was actively responsible for her actions.

Isabel's carelessness and alleged hostility were radically inconsistent with the basis upon which he entrusted Hope to Isabel, with how he

interpreted his relationship with his mother, and with his image of himself as Hope's father. It seemed as if by giving Isabel his daughter, George was actively endangering Hope. In spite of his efforts to meet Isabel's needs, to care for his daughter responsibly, and to reestablish himself George seemed to be wasting his time and to have failed to achieve his basic goals. The problem was, moreover, that there did not seem to be anything he could do about it. Not even his own mother would respect his efforts. He was powerless.

The realization and objectification of these themes was disconcerting enough to George, and may have been sufficient to cause him to strike his mother. Yet, it is quite important that these themes emerged in front of a critical audience. George lost face in front of men whose opinions were important to him. Although George would have had a difficult time redefining the significance of his mother's actions under any circumstances, the fact that these events occurred in public made the situation totally non-negotiable. George could neither escape the implications of his relationship with Isabel nor the public context within which they became apparent. George could escape the situation only by redefining it.

I suggest this explains why he struck his mother. By hitting her, he acted directly upon the situation itself and began to restructure the prevailing definition of the overall context. When George kicked his mother, he made a metaphorical representation of his conflict with her. He suspended the immediately preceding definition of the situation by replacing the detailed themes of their conflict with a generalized expression of it. Having then expressed his idea of their relationship, he began to redefine it. His first act after kicking his mother was to remove the foam mattress. He had only just given the mattress to his parents and it represented his efforts to meet their domestic needs and fulfill his obligations. When he took the mattress, he started to tally his accounts

and deny any debt to his parents. The point of his reflection upon the gifts he had made in the past and their carelessness was that he thereby freed himself of their debt. He showed that he had consistently tried to uphold the family's norms of reciprocity and be a good son. Yet, they had just as consistently neglected those norms, failed to authenticate his efforts, and finally, not reciprocated. In essence, George suspended the relevance of the norms of generalized reciprocity for his relationship with his parents, redefined it in terms of balanced reciprocity, and emphatically asserted he was even with them.

By redefining his relationship with his parents in terms of balanced reciprocity, George also denied his kinship identity with them. George kicked his mother in the breast. From where he was standing he could have kicked her practically anywhere. In light of the earlier breast-suckling episode, I suggest that George assaulted Isabel's very identity as mother. The fact that George also destroyed his service medals strengthens this interpretation. As George threw the medals into the fire, he counted the dead who helped him earn them. George thought that he had been best able to fulfill his role as son while in the army. Insofar as the medals symbolized his army experiences, they linked the debt he owed the dead men with the debt he owed his parents. By burning the medals, he declared the men's lives wasted and denied his identity as son. The heart of his conflicts with Isabel lay in his relationship with her as son to mother. By destroying the most fundamental symbols of their mother-son identity, he symbolically destroyed the relationship itself.

Postscript. In the last analysis George could not escape the situation which had bred the violence with his mother. Although Grannie was willing to care for Hope for a short time, she would not assume

long-term responsibility for the child. Hence, after a week George returned Hope to Isabel and gave his parents a gift of sixty dollars. More generally, George could not keep Hope and do without a woman. Approximately a month after the beatings, George took another spouse who agreed to care for Hope. George never again hit his mother. He did hit his new spouse on two occasions and later, after Isabel had died and George moved out of Mt. Kelly, he hit Grannie. Because I did not witness these events I cannot analyse them in detail. Yet, I suggest they too were related to the ambiguities in the relationships George maintained with these women.

I have argued that domestic relationships (particularly between men and women) are fundamentally problematic in Mt. Kelly, and suggested that George's special problems revolved around his care of Hope. I once witnessed an event which epitomises the problems George and other Mt. Kelly men face. One night I walked over to George's hut and stuck my head in through his window. Hope was sitting on the floor bawling loudly. George was sitting across from Glenda, his new spouse, with his head down. After I walked up, he leaned over, picked up Hope, and put her on the bed. As she continued to cry, George said to me, "You know, she rules me. She's my boss instead of me being hers. She's got one up on me. She can bawl and expect me to pick her up and comfort her. I wish she were a boy. Then I could treat her more sternly."

Case III

In the preceding chapters I have argued that Mt. Kelly and the fringe-camps generally are places of relative structural flexibility in an otherwise highly determined context. The processes whereby fringe-campers exchange domestic resources are crucial to establishing and maintaining

that flexibility and the advantages of fringe-camp life. The two previous cases in this chapter document the difficulties fringe-campers (particularly men and women) have in determining the value and significance of domestic exchanges in their everyday life. I have explained how these conflicts are related to the fringe-campers' external relationships and how they emerge in social interaction. The general point is that, although the fringe-camps alter the conditions under which their residents must transact with the external, white-dominated world, they are also settings which condition how the outside world affects relationships among the fringe-campers themselves. Insofar as violence is related to conditions of domestic exchange, it documents the fact that fringe-camps do not isolate their residents but only change their mode of interaction with the world around them.

In my analysis of drinking I argued that the Mt. Kelly people must establish potential credit within the general community as well as obtain actual credit from specific individuals. In the preceding two cases I analysed violence between people who shared domestic resources. Although it was less frequent, violence also occurred between people who did not actually share domestic resources but who competed for access to the resources available in Mt. Kelly. In the competition for the credit of the general community, an individual's chief resource is his social identity as a respectable, productive person. In Case I, I showed how Barry suffered a decline in his relationships with his specific creditors as a result of the redefinition of his overall social identity. Individuals must also guard against being publicly disgraced so as to protect their access to potential credit and the community as a whole. This establishes the conditions for conflicts which are independent of particular domestic exchanges but which are nonetheless intimately associated with the conditions of everyday Mt. Kelly life.

I once observed a violent incident between William Samuelson and Donald Corcoran. The incident occurred at the camp of Henry Jacobs, a close friend and classificatory brother of William Samuelson. Henry, William, William's two nephews from Nirvana Station, and I were sitting around the fire trying to keep warm and quietly talking. Donald was sitting on the ground directly across from William. He was very drunk and appeared to be sleeping. In the midst of our talk, and for no apparent reason, Donald looked up at William and said angrily, "You fucking cunt!" William immediately tried to push the hot fire grill onto Donald's lap but was restrained by his nephews. He thereupon grabbed a table knife, yanked Donald's head back by the hair, and drew the knife slowly across his exposed throat. William then jerked Donald to the ground. Because William did not apply any pressure, Donald's throat was not cut. He nonetheless remained prone for several minutes. Henry, William, and I looked away from the body. After an interval of silence, William assured me that he had only been "teasing".

William and Donald did not exchange domestic resources. Rather, they competed for access sometimes to the same individuals in Mt. Kelly and always for command of the camp's store of honour. Both men independently exchanged liquor, domestic resources, and time with Emerald Salterson, a lady pensioner in Mt. Kelly. For several months while he was unemployed, Donald depended upon Emerald for what he needed to feed himself and his wife. Although he was a pensioner and did not depend upon anybody to live, William spent most of his time at Emerald's drinking port, eating, and offering authoritative opinions about any subject which happened to come up for discussion. The particular nature of the relationship between William and Donald was marked by the fact that they could often be found sitting in opposite sides of Emerald's camp conducting separate conversations with only casual glances and scurilous remarks between them. In general, they avoided one another.

For about six months William and Donald were affines. Barry Corcoran was Donald's son and Gladys Williams was William's daughter. The basis for the conflict between these two men, however, existed long before their children established their marital tie and continued well after they separated. William and Donald represented polar extremes in the possible life-careers and social identities of Central Australian Aborigines. On the one hand, William was a "full-blood" Aborigine who had constructed a career conventionally associated only with part-Aborigines. Although retired, he still had a boss, Alfred Samuelson, who gave him money, food, and the right to live on his cattle station at any time. Donald Corcoran, on the other hand, was a "half-caste" part-Aborigine who was nonetheless gradually assuming the identity of a "blackfellow" in the eyes of other people if not his own. He had lost his cattle boss and suffered a serious decline in his working career after having left pastoral work. Indeed, he was unemployed for approximately six months during my fieldwork in Mt. Kelly. The social identities of both men, therefore, were constituted by inconsistent elements and mutually incompatible. Normally, they avoided each other. Nonetheless, whenever they had to interact directly or even dispute, they focused on their identities. Donald did not recognize the relevance of William's work-career for his overall identity. He considered William a "blackfellow". For his part, William considered Donald a hopeless drunk and "cheeky" man who talked out of turn and acted above himself. It was impossible for these men actively to interact without quarreling over their identities.

Their competition for Emerald's attention created a particular setting and sometimes specific reasons for conflict. But, neither man limited his field of activities to Emerald. On the contrary, they each anticipated exploiting many resources (particularly those controlled by the camp's young men) which only existed potentially and in the form of

generalized claims of kinship, friendship, or indebtedness. The ambiguities in their respective identities and mutual identification were most significant at this level of camp life. Each man had to protect the authenticity of his own identity so as to legitimate claims to these potential resources as they materialized.

The violent incident I have just described occurred in a public context in which their general identities were at stake. Although William shared his liquor with the men gathered around Henry's fire whenever they were all together, none regularly exchanged domestic resources. They were all highly productive men who gave William unsolicited gifts as expressions of their respect for his exceptional character and great prestige. None of these men recognized any particular debt, only a willingness to help each other if necessary. When Donald insulted him, William was compromised in front of the type of men he valued most and access to whose general productivity he cultivated. The composition and general significance of the immediate audience is crucial in understanding why William reacted so violently. It compares strikingly with a similar event earlier that same day but in front of a different audience.

Just before breakfast on the day of the mock knifing, I was sitting in Emerald Salterson's camp. William was next to me preparing his morning shave. Emerald was boiling tea at the fire. Donald sat across from us talking to Reggie Hines and his spouse, Margerie. Donald had only recently stopped drinking from his binge of the previous night. He had taken a shower and was preparing to visit his children at St. Mary's, the children's institution in Alice Springs. Although his children had all grown up at St. Mary's, he was praising them and claiming credit for having made them such fine youngsters. After having finished his self-praise, he turned and asked Reggie why he had not presented the children any gifts. Don claimed to have given Reggie's children several gifts in the past and

accused him of being cheap. Reggie responded by saying that Donald's children did not even live in the camp, that their father did not care for them. He also asked Donald when he had ever made gifts to anybody except himself.

Meanwhile William continued to prepare his shave. As he soaped his face, he quietly mimicked Donald's distorted face and covered his face in mock shame. Emerald and Margerie chuckled at William's mime and rolled their eyes at Donald's extravagance. In the middle of this interchange, Donald became abusive. He told everyone to "shut up" and called them "myall blackfellows". William leaned over to me and asked for a pencil. When I gave it to him, he threw it at Donald and said, "If you are so smart, write your name". Donald stood up and left the camp still abusing everybody. As he left, Margerie commented, "He is a cheeky bastard when he's drunk".

What is interesting about this incident is the extent to which Donald was so thoroughly discredited without any physical violence. Although he certainly insulted everyone present, they simply dismissed his talk as the ravings of a drunken fool. This was typical of how people usually handled him in that he was considered a man of so little worth even his insults lacked import. In this incident he contributed to his own loss of face by invoking two critical aspects of the identity of a respectable man: the maintenance of his dependents and his knowledge of the white man's ways. The Mt. Kelly people compare themselves favourably with "myall blackfellows"; that is, with bush Aborigines who they claim lack the most rudimentary ideas about white civilization and even become ill if they eat white food (particularly sugar). Although there are full-blood Aborigines ("blackfellows") living in Mt. Kelly, none consider themselves "myall". Moreover, they interpret their links with white men (particularly with cattle bosses) as major signs of their sophistication

and knowledge of civilized living. They also think that a sophisticated individual with solid links into white society "looks after" himself and his dependents. He never depends upon the charity of others. Rather, he stands on his credit as a productive man. Because he had lost his cattle boss and never raised his own children, Donald failed to live up to the essential criteria by which the Mt. Kelly people judge others in everyday life. Yet, Donald did not accept their judgements and stood on his identity as a part-Aborigine to elevate himself above his neighbours. They all knew the facts of his life and had no difficulty dismissing his claims. When he rebuked Reggie and called everyone "myall blackfellows" he made the contrasts in their respective identities relevant and invited a response. Insofar as a pencil and writing one's name (a feat Donald could not perform) signified the white man's culture (as well as their own understanding of my particular identity), William could not have discredited Donald's claims more thoroughly. Donald was an obsequious man when sober. He curried favour, called his intended benefactor "boss" and "lovely man". The Mt. Kelly people greeted these displays of affection with as little sympathy as his fits of anger. When Margerie commented that Donald was cheeky when drunk, she denied he had any self at all worth crediting.

Bourdieu notes that an honourable man responds only to the challenge of an equally honourable man (Bourdieu 1977:12). When William and the others gathered at Emerald's camp humourously dismissed Donald's ravings, they were treating Donald with the contempt he warranted as an inferior in honour. Why then did William respond so vigorously later that evening? The composition of the two audiences was, as I suggested earlier, critical. Although everyone in Emerald's camp treated Donald as an inferior, except for William and me, their identities were not in fact as secure as it appeared. Two of the people were women, and Reggie was no more of an independent man than Donald. Indeed, at the time, he and

Margerie were living with Emerald and depending on her gifts to survive. William risked losing no face with these people even though he shared liquor and domestic resources with them regularly. He did risk losing face with the evening audience of male equals. Donald's morning insults were unfocused. They encompassed everyone in Emerald's camp. That night, it was apparent that he intended his insult to apply only to William. Hence, although Donald was drunk, it was difficult to redefine his actions as humorous, irresponsible, or out of his own control. William was more seriously compromised and the situation less negotiable. The evening also followed the morning and perhaps William was willing to tolerate nothing further that day. A full explanation of William's later response, however, must consider his act.

William pretended to cut Donald's throat. He was "teasing". Had he so wished, however, he could have killed Donald without resistance. By only pretending to cut his throat, William responded to the insult but in a manner which emphasised Donald's worthlessness. He showed just how incapable Donald was of offering a genuine challenge. William restored the balance of honour without having to recognize the existence of a significant debt. Finally, Donald now owes William his life, and is, therefore, forever in his debt. Before the mock knifing Donald had a real if nonetheless worthless social self. After the knifing, Donald's body was alive; but, his social self was dead.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to raise the question of how the fringe-campers comprehended and reacted to the changes in Aboriginal administration during my fieldwork. I have made the point throughout this thesis that the fringe-camps enable Aborigines to minimize their debt and involvement with whites and thereby substantially to suspend the general features of Central Australian society they necessarily face as Aborigines. I have stressed in particular how fringe-camps emerged as Aborigines responded to the increased power and involvement of the Commonwealth government in their lives. Throughout its participation in Aboriginal affairs, the Commonwealth government has legitimated its activities by arguing they mitigated the effects of "culture contact" and helped prevent the detribalization of Aborigines. It is therefore significant that fringe-camps are commonly understood by whites as the most manifest examples of the effects of detribalization, on the one hand, and are nonetheless responses to the increased penetration of Aboriginal society by the Commonwealth government, on the other. So it has been that fringe-camps as symptoms of detribalization have legitimated increases in the power of the Commonwealth government over Aborigines -- power which has, in turn, generated more fringe-camps.

These points are important if the reaction of contemporary fringe-dwellers to the new programs initiated most visibly by the DAA are to be understood. For, however many new benefits the DAA offered Aborigines, it also represented and wielded great power over them. Indeed, as Aborigines understood quite clearly, the benefits themselves were means by which the DAA and the white administration generally established their power at the local level. Moreover, the mandate of "self-determination"

as well as the competition among white administrators for black clients encouraged them to seek out Aborigines and actively incorporate them in administrative processes. The DAA's new programmes and active approach, therefore, raised yet again the critical question for Aborigines of how to maintain access to, but withdraw from, white agents. They raised very special problems for fringe-dwellers who make a virtue out of withdrawing from interaction with whites as much as possible and have in the past quite explicitly rejected many social welfare benefits in their efforts to keep their debts to whites low.

Of special interest is the fact that the racial tension crisis legitimated an increase in the power of the local DAA primarily in terms of problems emergent most visibly from the fringe-camps. Both the public safety issue and the alternative images of detribalization pictured the fringe-dwellers as the most manifest threats to local order and most obvious signs of detribalization. Practically everyone in the town agreed that something had to be done to help improve conditions in the fringe-camps if relations between Aborigines and whites in Central Australia were to improve or develop peacefully. Indeed, among Cavanaugh's earliest efforts to improve the situation were the drunk pick-up service and the tent program both of which were aimed primarily at the fringe-campers. As efforts to help prevent detribalization, these moves were in the classic mould of increasing the power and involvement of the administration in Aborigines' everyday life under the gloss of helping them improve their living conditions. Only this time fringe-dwellers were officially supposed to help themselves in this process.

The fringe-campers followed the progress of the racial tension crisis as closely as did most local white people. Indeed, they too were worried about the state of public safety and felt threatened when they went to town. However, they were alarmed at how "myalls" or Aborigines

from the settlements were getting out of control and bashing Aborigines who lived in town. The Mt. Kelly people told me stories of violent incidents in which men from Papunya bashed camp residents and were generally making life difficult. They too worried about the state of public order in the Todd River and, as I pointed out in an earlier chapter, considered it a very dangerous place. The Mt. Kelly people were also vividly aware of how local white people were describing life in the fringe-camps, and denied the relevance of those comments for Mt. Kelly. Indeed, their eagerness to distinguish themselves from the Todd River people, although a long-standing feature of their self-perceptions, may have acquired special salience as a result of local white peoples' tendency to describe all fringe-campers as if they were part of the situation in the river.

In general, many white administrators considered the Mt. Kelly people a "better class" of fringe-dwellers than most. The camp was large, relatively cohesive, and had been in existence for many years. Yet it is nonetheless true that whites still considered them degenerate, alcoholic failures for the most part. Moreover, Mt. Kelly was the subject of particular identification in the racial tension crisis as a fringe-camp which had special problems with its land tenure, its health, its facilities, and its living conditions in general. Mt. Kelly was singled out by some local white administrators as a classic example of how bureaucratic bungling and local powerlessness had measurably contributed to the misery of Aborigines. In spite of their own views of themselves, the Mt. Kelly people were publicly represented as exemplifying all the various kinds of problems which different local whites portrayed as threats to local stability and peaceful relations between Aborigines and whites. Their reactions to the events which flowed from the racial tension crisis therefore have particular significance to the understanding of fringe-campers in

the context of contemporary administrative efforts to solve the problems of Aborigines.

The Bushburning

On May 21 and 22, 1975, George Sharp burnt the bush around the eastern half of Mt. Kelly. George's burning was typical in some respects of autumn housecleaning conducted annually by all Mt. Kelly domestic groups. Each year when the grass gets dry, the Mt. Kelly people burn areas around their own domestic camps in order to clean them and eliminate cover for the many poisonous snakes which inhabit the vicinity. In addition, people rake the burnt areas free of cans and other non-flammable rubbish left disentangled by the fire. They often wash their blankets and, in general, rehabilitate their living environment for the coming year. Because burning the bush is understood as an expression and extension of each domestic group's responsibility for, and control of, its own camp, the Mt. Kelly people usually burn only those areas immediately adjacent to their camps which everyone conventionally recognizes as their land. Indeed, bushburning is the most dramatic expression of the Mt. Kelly peoples' identification of their own personal independence with their occupation of space outside the control of anybody else.

Unquestionably George Sharp burnt the bush for these reasons. He told me that he wanted to clean the region, rake the rubbish, and make the area safe from snakes. It had been a very rainy summer, the grass was quite high, and snakes were crawling through the camp in alarmingly high numbers. In a manner appropriate for, and typical of, the head of his domestic group, George was reordering and making safe the environment in which it lived. Yet, the scope, timing, and particular circumstances of George's bushburning lent additional significance to his action. George

burnt an area many times larger than what was necessary simply to clean his own camp. Indeed, the area he burnt covered one-half of Mt. Kelly's total area and enclosed the camps of seven domestic groups. George also burnt the grass a little bit earlier than normal. The grass was still somewhat green and he had to use kerosene to help ignite it. The key point is that George burnt the bush around Mt. Kelly when the basic assumptions of power, responsibility, and independence which underlie bushburning and the identities of the Mt. Kelly domestic groups as a whole were under assault and subject to grave compromise from outside forces. Indeed, the very capacity for the Mt. Kelly people to maintain their positions and identities as fringe-dwellers was being undermined. As president of the Mt. Kelly Housing Association and chief camp spokesman, George occupied an inter-hierarchical role which made him personally aware of, and subject to, the ambiguities of Mt. Kelly's relationship to the wider setting (Gluckman 1968:69). As a symbolic act of personal responsibility and power, George's bushburning was a response to the dilemmas emergent from this total set of conditions.

The Land

When I first arrived in Mt. Kelly in April 1975, Woodward had submitted both his reports and legislation was being prepared in the federal Parliament to grant Aborigines land rights. The main thrust of the land rights movement was to grant Aborigines on settlements and missions in the Northern Territory ownership of their tribal "countries" (Woodward 1974:1-3). Nonetheless, Woodward also recognized that Aborigines who lived in the urban areas, in particular the fringe-dwellers, also had needs which the provision of land would help satisfy. Hence, although such people rarely could establish traditional claims on land, their land rights should

be recognized as a first step in resolving a situation which (quoting the submission of the Central Lands Council) he described as "totally unsatisfactory to both themselves, to the white population of these towns, and to Australian society as a whole" (Woodward 1974:50). He also made six stipulations about how urban land claims should be handled: special planning for Aborigines' living areas should be an "integral part of all town planning", Aborigines should be involved at all stages of such planning, Aborigines should be allowed to live where they were used to living at the time of his report, "cultural differences" should be respected so as to avoid tensions, areas should be located with reference to their purpose, and existing Aboriginal living areas should not be seen as "convenient sites" for white development. In summary Woodward said, "It is quite unacceptable that Aborigines should be pushed further and further away from the centre of towns by the apparently inevitable urban sprawl" (Woodward 1974:51).

Mt. Kelly was one of the fringe-camps about which Woodward (and the Central Lands Council which pressed the needs of the urban people upon him) was most concerned. Although the Mt. Kelly residents identified themselves as Arunta, Kaiditja, or Anmatijira people, none could claim that Mt. Kelly was their traditional country. Moreover, many were part-Aborigines who, according to the conventional views of most white Central Australians, had no right to make claims to traditional land. Nonetheless they had occupied the land around Mt. Kelly for over twenty years and were most definitely threatened by the expansion of Alice Springs. In particular, the Mt. Kelly people were engaged in major disputes with the Department of Housing and Construction, the Department of the Northern Territory, Lands and Survey Branch, and the Department of the Northern Territory, Urban Development and Town Planning Branch about a proposed open sewage drain which was to have run through Mt. Kelly from the new Racecourse subdivision to the Charles River. Had the drain been built according to the original

plans it would have bisected the camp, occupied over 25% of its land, and in general made Mt. Kelly uninhabitable. Indeed, in September 1974 it appeared that these three departments expected the Mt. Kelly people to move their camp to another site.

During the first half of 1974, the Mt. Kelly people lodged an application for a special title lease to the land on which the camp was located, incorporated themselves into the Mt. Kelly Housing Association, and objected to the plans for the drain through their DAA community advisor. Nonetheless, plans for the drain continued. On September 3, 1974, a representative of the Department of the Northern Territory, Urban Development and Town Planning Branch, held a meeting in Alice Springs with several local people including George Sharp, other Mt. Kelly men, and representatives of the DAA, CAALAS, and the CAAC. The DNT representative explained that alternatives to the drain route through Mt. Kelly would be considerably more expensive than the original proposal, rerouting would delay the drain for a year, and would make the affected area less attractive as a whole. He further suggested that these objections would encourage other people affected by the drain to object to Mt. Kelly's lease application and to their development plans. After further thought the Mt. Kelly people still refused to agree to move. The DNT made no public decisions about the drain or about the Mt. Kelly lease application for several months. This was so in spite of numerous letters, unofficial inquiries, and public demands for the DNT to act.

In the meantime, the Mt. Kelly people (in particular, George Sharp) began to participate in the efforts to press their case and the cases of all the fringe-dwellers around Alice Springs. For example, George Sharp attended the monthly meetings of the Tungatjira Association. The Tungatjira Association was a group of fringe-camp representatives who, under the encouragement of the Institute of Aboriginal Development, met

together to discuss their individual and joint problems. Although people from the IAD, CAALAS, and the CAAC attended these meetings, Tungatjira was represented as the body through which the fringe-dwellers could effectively participate in the mechanism of self-determination. In effect, it was a lobbying group which pressured the government in the name of the fringe-campers. More specifically, the Mt. Kelly people began to plan how to upgrade the camp's living conditions. They contacted an architect and made preliminary plans for development. The problem was that without a decision from the DNT, the DAA could not fund the Mt. Kelly Housing Association. Nor could the architect make any firm plans or prepare meaningful drawings for the people. Without a lease, the Mt. Kelly people had no rights to any of the resources the DAA had available for it.

Nothing had happened by March 1975 and the problem with the Mt. Kelly drain was raised during the racial tension crisis. Indeed, it was cited as an example of how bureaucratic delays measurably contributed to the decline in local race relations in spite of Aboriginal and white efforts to improve conditions. The Mt. Kelly problem was specifically discussed with Dr. H.C. Coombs at a public hearing of the Royal Commission into the Public Service on March 16,¹ two weeks after Cavanaugh's visit. Dr. Coombs agreed the situation was unsatisfactory and passed on the information he received to the Regional Coordinator of the Department of the Northern Territory.² On March 21, 1975, the Regional Coordinator met with representatives of the Department of Housing and Construction, the drain contractors, Mt. Kelly's architects, and the DAA's community advisor

¹Dr. Coombs was one of the Labor government's chief advisors on Aboriginal affairs, a close confidant of several local white administrators in Aboriginal affairs, and the commissioner of the Royal Commission into the Public Service.

²This position was established after Cyclone Tracy in an effort to minimize the disruption the cyclone caused to local administration in general.

for the Alice Springs fringe-camps. At that meeting the Regional Coordinator announced the drain would be rerouted and constructed north of Mt. Kelly. The Regional Coordinator met with the Mt. Kelly people at the camp on March 27 and explained the new plans to them. He also noted that he had not found any evidence of their first lease application and suggested they lodge a new one. He later informed me that the Department of Housing and Construction had always favoured the northern route and the extra cost was no longer significant.

In consultation with their architects, the Mt. Kelly people prepared a preliminary development plan and submitted it to the DNT with a new lease application. In his letter accompanying the new application, however, George Sharp noted, "As the people have been disappointed in their hopes, e.g. the drain, it is felt that very little serious planning can be expected from them" (Sharp, unpublished manuscript). Although George received acknowledgement of the application from the DNT on April 16, 1975, nothing had happened by the time he burnt the bush. Indeed, the decision to grant the lease was not finally made until June 1976 after many more months of pressure, public hearings, and delay.

There can be no doubt that the Mt. Kelly people wanted the lease to their land. Indeed, title to the land was perfectly consistent with their fringe-dwelling identity and would have created the legal conditions necessary to secure their position in the total context in perpetuity. What is important about their land claim, however, is that in order to secure their withdrawal from the outside world, the Mt. Kelly people (particularly George Sharp) had to enter into negotiations with powerful whites. More particularly, they had to offer themselves and their "problems" as resources in political competition among whites if they were to gain access to what they needed. In this respect, the land claim not only promised to secure their fringe-dwelling identity, it also highlighted

the basic ambiguities inherent in that identity. These ambiguities emerge quite clearly in consideration of the peoples' efforts to upgrade their living conditions and improve the camp's health.

The Facilities

The Mt. Kelly peoples' first priority for the development of their camp was a stout fence around its perimeter. The camp was located on the north side of a dirt track which connected the Stuart Highway to a tourist attraction east of the Charles River. Whenever tourist buses travelled the road, the drivers slowed their vehicles and their passengers stared inquisitively out the windows at the camp. Otherwise, tourists driving their private cars often "got lost" and drove incredulously into the camp. Nothing shamed and angered the Mt. Kelly people more than the looks of these tourists. As they often angrily told unsuspecting tourists, they did not consider themselves "animals" or "tourist attractions". The police also commonly drove into the camp inquiring about one thing or another. Because they could not readily abuse the police, the Mt. Kelly people usually turned away or walked off. Moreover, strangers occasionally visited the camp at night shining flashlights into peoples' eyes or doing "wheelies" with their cars in the dirt. In conjunction with a line of trees they hoped to plant along the road, the fence was designed to obscure the view, protect the camp, and in general keep outsiders from invading the Mt. Kelly peoples' private space. Indeed, the fence was the clearest marker of the peoples' reasons for lodging the land claim; that is, their hopes to avoid interaction with the external world.

It is important to note that a general condition for a special title lease at this time was that the leasee agree to develop the land. Preliminary statements about how the prospective leasee planned to use his

land were necessary parts of the application itself. As I pointed out, the Mt. Kelly people included such plans in their second lease application. Moreover, Woodward reenforced this condition by linking the fringe-dwellers' rights to land to the provision of social welfare programmes designed to upgrade their general living standard. Indeed, he saw this as the primary reason for granting land to fringe-dwellers (Woodward 1974:52). Hence, in order to legitimate their land claims, the Mt. Kelly people had to "develop" the camp. One major consequence of their campaign to upgrade the camp's facilities, however, was a relatively constant parade of officials inspecting Mt. Kelly's "problems". Of particular concern were the standard types of housing and ablution facilities and the poor state of health in the camp.

Although many officials presented themselves as interested in "helping" the Mt. Kelly people, it was not always easy for the camp's residents to distinguish between the inquisitive stares of tourists and of officials. Indeed, the "shocked" reactions of the officials were often exactly the same. I once witnessed a Commonwealth minister "visit" the camp by driving in with his windows closed and driving out again without ever having stopped. If it was possible, the Mt. Kelly people ignored these visitors. The men would turn their backs and the women would often disappear inside their homes. The problem was, however, that the new administrative style of "self-determination" encouraged visitors to enlist the aid of the fringe-campers, in particular, as guides and informants about local problems. Consequently, someone (usually George Sharp) had to confront these people directly, tour the camp explaining its difficulties, and listen to the visitor's observations about Mt. Kelly. In order to present the camp's case and perhaps enlist the visitor's support in their campaign, George had to forego the strategy of avoidance.

The Mt. Kelly peoples' awareness of what whites typically thought of them and their style of living was closely linked to these avoidance patterns. Given the expansion of local Aboriginal administration and the diversity of views about how it should be run characteristic of the time, not all the whites who visited Mt. Kelly publicly presented themselves in the same way. On the contrary, there was tremendous disagreement among whites about how the camps came to be the way they were. In particular, people disagreed on how much the fringe-campers were responsible for their condition. One school of thought (usually associated with erstwhile officials of the Welfare Branch) argued that the people themselves were responsible for their condition. On the one hand, because of their in-grained tribal customs, many fringe-campers did not "want" the material goods of white culture. As Mrs. Thatcher, the welfare officer, put it in a letter to the local newspaper, "Why try to change the life of the older and itinerant Aborigines who have from birth slept in the open round a camp fire with their dogs and with temperatures at freezing point and want nothing else?" On the other hand, many fringe-dwellers were irresponsible drunks who abused the things which were given to them. Another, conflicting school of thought maintained that the people were victims of poor administration and powerless to control the outside forces which afflicted them. Supporters of the self-determination policy expressed this latter view most often.

In the context of local administrative politics these views were usually interpreted as antagonistic. Yet, from the Mt. Kelly peoples' perspective, they shared one crucial feature. They both suggested that the Mt. Kelly people were incapable of looking after their own interests and well-being. They both further argued that precisely because the fringe-dwellers were not self-reliant, they had to have the assistance of white administrators. The Mt. Kelly people unilaterally rejected the view

of themselves as helpless and dependent. Indeed, their general identities as fringe-dwellers as well as regular aspects of camp life such as drinking emphasised the extent to which they were independent, sophisticated people who were quite able to support themselves without the government's assistance. Insofar as they avoided whites, they denied their dependence upon them and the force of these conventional images of fringe-camp life. Hence, when George attended meetings or guided people around the camp, he not only had to forego the strategy of avoidance, he also had to confront these images which contradicted his own self-image and that of his fellow Mt. Kelly people. Moreover, because he cooperated with whites, he validated their images of Mt. Kelly and reenforced the very perspective he denied.

The racial tension crisis raised all these issues and made them public. Yet, Mt. Kelly experienced some particular troubles which focussed the issues on them. Of special importance was the state of the camp's health. A number of outspoken white people in Alice Springs considered the fringe-camps a major risk to the health and, as discussed earlier, the public safety of the community as a whole. Indeed, the conventional image of the fringe-camp was of a filthy, disease-ridden place full of drunken, debauched people. However, there was also a group of people in Alice Springs who were worried about how conditions in the fringe-camps harmed their residents' health, in particular, the health of the children. Evidence from both formal and informal surveys of Aboriginal physical health indicated that trachoma, scabies, salmonella, shigella, various pulmorespiratory diseases, and chronic colds, as well as malnutrition contributed to a high rate of infant mortality and general ill-health among Aborigines, in particular fringe-dwellers (Kirke 1974:81-87). These facts as well as criticisms of the mode of health care delivery to Aborigines were used to

legitimate attempts to upgrade the health care services and to establish a separate medical service for Aborigines.

The Central Australian Aborigines Congress took an active role in this issue, and eventually received Commonwealth funds to create an Aboriginal Medical Service in Alice Springs. At the time of the racial tension crisis, however, it had received no support for its ideas. Soon after the crisis, the CAAC employed a young doctor from Melbourne to conduct a study of the prevalent illnesses in the fringe-camps. He conducted the study and concluded that the conditions in Alice Springs were as poor as anything he had found in the slums and shanty towns of Africa and Melanesia. He noted that although most fringe-dwellers wanted decent housing and ablution facilities, they had what could only be considered disgracefully inadequate and unhygienic services. As a result of these public health conditions and the high rate of unemployment in the fringe-camps, the fringe-dwellers (in particular, children) suffered serious risks which damaged their health and their chances to get adequate educations.

The CAAC followed this study with a number of other assessments of health conditions in the fringe-camps. Its field officers gathered additional data. Moreover, the leading CAAC officers were well-known to the national media. On several occasions, they brought major news reporters and film teams to Alice Springs to record conditions in the camps. They tried to document the close relationship between disease and the poor living conditions in the camps. In their efforts to gather detailed, convincing evidence of the problems, the reporters filmed people and parts of their bodies showing signs of scabies, trachoma, and other diseases. They also filmed shacks and, at Mt. Kelly in particular, the toilet facilities. Throughout these exercises, the reporters explained to the

fringe-campers that they wanted to show all of Australia just how badly Aborigines were forced to live in Alice Springs.

Mt. Kelly became involved in these health surveys in a particularly comprehensive way. Early in their campaign to upgrade the camp's facilities, the Mt. Kelly people applied to the DAA for money to build new ablution facilities, including toilets, showers, and a laundry. As an interim measure until the lease application was approved, however, the DAA decided to install three mobile privies. The order was submitted to an Aboriginal construction company in December 1974. But, the privies were not installed until June 1975, several months after their due date. The problem was that the delay in installation gave the old latrines time to fill and become unusable. Although the Mt. Kelly people had always dug their own latrines, they anticipated the installation of the new privies and did not replace the old latrines as was their custom. Moreover, the DAA promised to dig deep, new holes with a mechanical post hole digger. Needless to say, this was delayed too, and the holes were unusable without the new privie sheds. When the situation became critical, the Mt. Kelly people stopped using the old latrines and walked to an unused area of bush-land in the small hills immediately north of the camp. The open, disused privies and the exposed waste posed a specific health menace to the camp.

As the situation became worse, several people began to pressure the DAA and the Department of Public Health. George Sharp regularly complained to the DAA's community advisor about how urgent the situation had become. The community advisor, in turn, wrote reports on the situation, pressured her superiors, and sent letters to the DPH. The CAAC also sent letters to the DAA and, as I mentioned, paid special attention to Mt. Kelly's toilet problems in their films and surveys. The senior nursing sister who visited Mt. Kelly daily and was close friends with Granny, George Sharp's grandmother, personally lobbied senior officials of the DPH.

In response to all this pressure, the DAA assured the Mt. Kelly people that the privies would arrive soon. Six months passed in this fashion.

The DPH began to get worried officially and sent several health inspectors to Mt. Kelly to examine the situation. Occasionally, the senior nursing sister or the DAA community advisor accompanied them. Under these circumstances, the inspectors were introduced to George Sharp who took them around the camp examining the available ablution facilities and the old latrines. The regular DPH health inspectors, Mr. Ajax and Mr. Dingo, however, usually visited the camp alone and unannounced. They tended to drive into Mt. Kelly, wander around asking questions, and make notes about the latrines without explaining themselves to anyone. Although they made several trips to the camp, they always asked the same questions. Once George Sharp caught them hiding in the hills taking photos of the camp surreptitiously.

The point is that, although the Mt. Kelly people realized that the health inspections, the endless visits from outsiders, the films, etc. were part of efforts to improve their living conditions, they nonetheless felt compromised by the whole process. No matter who inspected the camp, how he justified his activities, or how he expressed his ideas about the camp and its people, everybody concluded the same thing — Mt. Kelly was an unhygienic, unhealthy place in which to live. Such a judgement always cut two ways. Implicit in all statements that the camp was filthy and diseased were judgements about the people and the way they lived. Of particular salience was the commonly known fact that most Mt. Kelly people drank what were considered large amounts of alcohol. The ironic thing was that the Mt. Kelly peoples' drinking habits, their willingness to live in shacks and tolerate less than adequate ablution facilities, and their exposure to disease were all consequences of their general identity as fringe-dwellers. That is, insofar as they were fringe-dwellers, they

asserted their capacity to care for themselves and remain relatively independent of whites. Hence, the public image of the fringe-dwellers as degenerate, dependent people was not only politically unacceptable and "impolite", it also contradicted the peoples' own self-image and misrepresented the general significance of fringe-camps in the wider context. The key point, however, is that it was this misrepresentation of fringe-camp life which legitimated yet further government impingement upon their Aboriginal residents — an impingement which had generated the camps in the first place.

George Sharp

George Sharp was uniquely placed to confront systematically all the ambiguities of this process. Although not a "tribal elder", he was the president of the Mt. Kelly Housing Association and was primarily responsible for handling Mt. Kelly's business with the DAA and its associates. Occasionally, he brought his father or William Samuelson along to meetings or referred his own authority to their approval. Yet, George did most of the work. George was also a field officer for the CAAC. Indeed, he worked intimately with the young Melbourne doctor on the health survey. In this capacity as well as in his role as camp's spokesman, George was closely associated with the CAAC's efforts to publicize the problems of the fringe-camps and use them to legitimate the expansion of the CAAC's programs. George experienced the problems of how to gain access to, but withdraw from, the white bureaucracy in a particularly vivid manner.

George's relationship with the Mt. Kelly people as a whole was not perfectly straightforward either. On the contrary, Mt. Kelly's domestic economy undermined the capacity of anyone in his position to claim authority over the entire camp. Indeed, he restricted his active role as

spokesman to the eastern half of the camp. Whenever he had to produce an opinion for the western half of the camp, he either referred the inquisitor directly to Katie Mayhew or asked William Samuelson to find out Katie's views. George furthermore maintained ambiguous relationships with his own family. At the same time that he was having to negotiate with the endless stream of health inspectors, George was also engaged in major conflicts with his mother. Indeed, he first hit his mother on May 21, the night of the first day of the bushburning. The bushburning occurred, in fact, at a moment when all the conflicts in George's identity as camp spokesman, head of his own domestic group, and son of his mother crystallized together.

On Monday morning, May 20, I was preparing breakfast on my fire when Mr. Ajax, the health inspector arrived. He said to me that, because my daughter had salmonella, a "reportable" disease, he had to ask me some questions. He asked me where I purchased my food, how I stored and cooked it, and how I kept my home. He also asked about the toilet and sanitation facilities I used. He wrote on his health form that my sanitation facilities were unsatisfactory and my home kept poorly clean. While Mr. Ajax was interviewing me, the senior nursing sister drove up with another, unknown health inspector. They stopped at Isabel Sharp's camp. Hope, George's daughter, also had salmonella and the other health inspector had to acquire the same information as Mr. Ajax.

After Mr. Ajax finished interviewing me, he asked Terry Sharp to take him up to examine one of the old privies. The new inspector finished his discussion with Isabel and also looked around Mt. Kelly. After a brief moment, he crossed over to my camp. He said that he could not believe what he saw. The conditions in Mt. Kelly were absolutely intolerable. He could not understand how the government could permit such a situation to exist. He noted that when he got back to his office, he would write some angry letters and thump on a few peoples' desks. After he finished speaking, I

saw that Terry Sharp and Mr. Ajax were coming down from the old privie. The new health inspector and I crossed over to Terry's camp where George, William Samuelson, and Donald Corcoran were seated watching. Mr. Ajax got in his car and left. The new inspector repeated to the men what he had told me. He assured them that he would speak to his superiors and complain about how they had permitted such an outrageous situation to have developed. The senior nursing sister drove up and he left.

Terry Sharp then told us all about his trip to the privie with Mr. Ajax. Terry said that Ajax had asked why the Mt. Kelly people did not dig their own privies and build their own sheds. The men all laughed hard and made scornful remarks about Mr. Ajax. George remarked, "Ajax gives me the shits".

George burnt the small area of bush behind his own tent the next morning. As the bush burned and the flames died down, George, two young men living with him, and I raked the rubbish into piles, loaded it into a trailer, and took it to the city dump. The grass was not yet dry enough to burn easily. Consequently, George poured kerosene on the bush in order to help it ignite. Around sunset the young CAAC doctor who conducted the health survey came out to Mt. Kelly. George had mentioned the unsatisfactory condition of a pan toilet near Emerald Salterson's and the doctor came to inspect it. George, the doctor, and I walked over to examine the toilet. The doctor noted it was indeed useless. The results of the survey had been announced for the first time over the radio while we were raking the grass that morning. As we walked back from the toilet, the young doctor commented upon his survey. He noted how they had discovered that shigella, salmonella, and trachoma were much too prevalent in the fringe camps. He traced the disease to just the kinds of sanitation problems Mt. Kelly was experiencing. He noted that although such diseases were common among the earlier white pioneers, they disappeared with the

adoption of modern sanitation facilities. He said that everyone in Mt. Kelly probably had trachoma. He then examined Isabel Sharp, Hope Sharp, and Kristina, my daughter. Isabel showed scars of earlier attacks of trachoma. Both Hope and Kristina showed symptoms of trachoma on the wane. Because they were taking a penicillin solution which was effective against both salmonella and trachoma, their eyes were improving.

After the doctor finished examining for trachoma, George told him that he had burned a small area of bush just behind his tent that morning and planned to burn a much larger area the next day. I asked George why he burned. In response, he asked us to accompany him to the top of the small hill north of the camp. When we got to the top of the hills, George pointed to one of the old, disused privies. He said that the Mt. Kelly people had dug privies in this area ever since they first moved in. This old outhouse was only the latest of a series of such sheds. He then led us another fifty yards beyond a small rise just to the north of the old privie. George pointed out that because the old privies were full, many people (particularly the children) used the bush just over the rise for their toilet. It was obvious from the waste about that he was correct. In addition the area was littered with cans and other forms of more flammable waste. George said that he would burn all of this area in order to dispose of the flammable waste and make the rest easier to rake away.

The doctor then asked George where the boundary of Mt. Kelly's current land application ran. George indicated that the line ran along the crest of hills adjacent to the small rise from the Stuart Highway to the road along the Charles River. He noted, however, that he wanted to expand the camp's area to include more land to the north. He said that he wanted to incorporate land all the way to the bottom of the small hills. The doctor suggested that George wait until the first application was approved. Otherwise, the DNT would use the supplementary application as a further

excuse to delay action on the initial claim. George agreed with his suggestion. After this we walked back to the main camp. I returned to my caravan. After a short talk with the doctor, George went to work.

The next morning, Wednesday, May 22, George burnt the rest of the bush around the eastern half of Mt. Kelly. The final dimensions of the burnt area are crucial to understanding the significance of the bushburning. George burnt south and east to the roads which were to have become the camp's boundaries in those directions. However, he burnt north beyond the boundary of Mt. Kelly's first land application to a small tree at the base of the hills. This cleared a burnt area approximately to where George had said he wanted to extend the camp on Tuesday night. He burnt west to a road which effectively divided Mt. Kelly into eastern and western halves. The eastern (burnt) region included only those people for whom George felt responsible. The western (unburnt) half included those people George considered were under the influence of Katie Mayhew. The burnt line stopped just short of William Samuelson's tent. Again, the bush was really too green to burn and so George had to use kerosene to ignite it. However, once some of the denser bush ignited, it burned furiously and sent great waves of flame and heat into the sky. At one point most of the camp's northeastern corner was in flames and the whole area shimmered.

In between the moments when George was lighting the bush, he washed his daughter's clothes. Although Isabel normally washed Hope's clothes, she gave up her care of Hope after the beating. As I mentioned in the earlier chapter, she and Terry spent the morning "hiding" from George in Don Corcoran's tent. In addition to their remarks about the beating, Terry and Isabel commented on George's bushburning. Isabel had been worried for some time about snakes crawling through the camp. In the early morning she often called out to people and had them come look at the fresh snake tracks made during the night. When I asked her what she thought of

the bushburning, she approved. She said it was good and would keep the snakes away. The other people in the tent agreed and did not dispute George's right to burn the large area.

George extended the significance of bushburning as much as he extended the area he had the right to burn. He was cleaning the area and thereby expressing his identity as the head of his domestic group. Yet, there was very much more to clean in Mt. Kelly's total environment at that time. Practically everything was out of place and the camp was subject to multiple threats. George's own daughter was sick. Significantly, she had the types of diseases the CAAC traced to the camp's poor living conditions and argued were outside the Mt. Kelly peoples' control. Moreover, these threats had been exacerbated by bureaucratic delays which were also beyond the peoples' influence. As a result of bureaucratic delays, the privies were full and exposed human waste created yet a further disease threat. In the name of bureaucratic intervention, however, outsiders poured through the camp intentionally or unintentionally condemning the people who lived there, and threatening their very identity as fringe-dwellers. These processes were themselves part of wider conflicts between Aborigines and whites which were often expressed in terms which condemned the fringe-dwellers. When George burnt the bush around Mt. Kelly he tried to free the camp of all these sources of contamination.

The Bushfire as Symbol

Bushfires commonly evoke two contradictory images in Central Australia. The most common is of an uncontrolled, destructive force. Bushfires are capable of sweeping through vast regions of the country killing livestock and destroying property. If followed by a period of insufficient rain, a bushfire can even lead to major drought. The sign of

the koala reminds the general public that bushfires are to be avoided. However, the bushfire also evokes an image of regrowth and the generation of new life. After lots of rain, the grass grows tall in Central Australia. As time passes and the rain stops, however, the grass dries and goes brown. Trees shed their branches and break. Brown grass sustains cattle but does not fatten them. Stakes and broken branches make the bush hazardous for man and beast. Bushfires burn the fallen limbs and the dry grass tops. Given rain new, green grass sprouts from the roots of the burnt tussocks. Cattle and horses wander safe from dangerous snakes and grow fat on the nutritious plantlife.

George burnt the bush and cleaned Mt. Kelly. He also said quite explicitly to me that he burned the old grass to allow the roots to sprout new growth on the next rain. I do not stretch the point, therefore, by saying that the bushburning was a symbol of George's hope for the rebirth and renewed health of his family and Mt. Kelly. The fact that he extended the burnt area beyond the boundaries of Mt. Kelly's first land application out to where he hoped the boundary might one day lie documents one dimension of his aspirations. Yet the fact was that the bushfire was also a fundamental manifestation of George's impotence. Although bushburning expressed his identity as the head of an autonomous domestic group, George had little control over his own domestic affairs, the bureaucracy, or disease. Indeed, he depended upon both members of his own domestic group (most notably his mother) and the bureaucracy to protect his daughter and his people from disease. The fact that George did not burn Katie's area marks that the bushburning was a limited act even in its own terms.

The burnt grass could not destroy the camp's health problems or compel the bureaucracy to grant Mt. Kelly's needs. Indeed, insofar as the bushburning was a response to conditions imposed on him by the outside world, it shows how George was controlled by, and dependent upon, others

even in an act of utmost cultural expression. In this respect the bush-fire was most fully a fundamental expression of the total position of the fringe-campers as a whole. Even as white people commonly misunderstand and misrepresent fringe-camps, so too they failed to grasp the meaning of the fire. The senior nursing sister drove up just as the flames reached their peak and danced hotly around most of the northeast segments of the camp. I asked her what she thought of the cleansing. She responded that if George was not careful, a spark would ignite the tents and burn them all down.

Conclusion

Analysts commonly assert that because many Aborigines still observe their customary religious and kinship practices, they must be understood apart from white society. On the one hand, they say that tribal Aborigines have their own culture which is free of white influence. On the other hand, they argue that Aboriginal norms and values conflict with white values and prevent their adherents from participating fully in white society. The analysis I have presented of the fringe-campers suggests that neither of these views is particularly satisfactory. For many years whites have legitimated particular administrative practices on the basis of Aboriginal custom. Under the Welfare Branch, Aborigines who followed "the law" were subject to systematic controls and suffered major political and economic disadvantages. Under the current regime, principles allegedly derived from Aboriginal custom itself (in particular, principles of land tenure and political authority) overtly guide administration. These facts have meant that for at least twenty-five years Aborigines have had to consider their culture as well as their political and economic position in the context of white administration. Even practices as fundamental to

Aboriginal customary life as boys' initiation ceremonies cannot occur independent of the scrutiny and, more importantly, the judgement of whites. On the contrary, if Aborigines are to control whites at all, they must bring them close to such occasions and try to bind them within the boundaries of Aboriginal society. Hence, far from inhibiting the participation of Aborigines in white society, Aboriginal customs have become a major way they adapt to whites and force whites to adapt to them.

Tribal Aborigines share with fringe-dwellers, therefore, the necessity of having to come to terms with the power of white agents. For this reason the meaning of their culture has been as dramatically transformed (even where it appears to have remained untouched or stable) as that of any fringe-dweller. By this remark I do not mean that all Aborigines share the same values or social interests. On the contrary, one consequence of my analysis is that Aborigines are now fragmented more than ever before in their history. Yet, I do mean that Aborigines in Central Australia must all take account of the fact that whites (in particular, white social welfare administrators) monopolize most political and economic resources. The autonomy which many people claim tribal people enjoy is, therefore, as distorted a misrepresentation of their social life as is the "detrribalized" image of the fringe-dwellers. Neither image represents accurately the basic fact that Aborigines must interact with, and try to control, whites if they are to accomplish their own goals or survive generally.

Although the bushburning was the act of one individual in one small fringe-camp on the edge of Alice Springs, it expressed the ambiguities which all Aborigines in Central Australia face in their everyday life. The analysis of Aborigines must come to grips with this kind of situation if it is to progress in the future. I do not think that anyone will illuminate contemporary Aboriginal social life, or, for that matter, help change the

position of Aborigines in Central Australia if they continue to consider it in isolation from the wider society in which Aborigines must live.

APPENDIX I

THE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA CATTLE INDUSTRY

The Northern Territory has been divided into four districts for the purposes of the administration of the pastoral industry. They are: the Alice Springs District in the south; the Victoria River District in the northwest; the Barkley Tablelands District in the northeast; and the Darwin and Gulf District in the far north. The public image of the great northern pastoral industry tends to be dominated by stories about the Victoria River District and the Barkley Tableland. The large company stations and great cattle drives are in these two regions. Vestveys, the Victoria River District, and the Gurrindji have been so important and so visible to the wider Australian public that the important and real differences among the districts tend to be lost. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, however, introduced their 1968 report on the Northern Territory pastoral industry with these words:

The information in this report is on a district basis; because of the heterogeneity of characteristics such as land types, rainfall and station size, no attempt has been made to amalgamate district figures into averages for the Northern Territory as a whole (BAE 1968:i).

These other differences have produced major sociological differences. For that reason, I wish to preface my particular discussion of the structure and development of the Central Australian (Alice Springs Pastoral District) pastoral industry with some discussion of the four taken together.

The annual average rainfall for the Northern Territory varies from five inches at Charlotte Waters, Central Australia, to over 60 inches on the north coast. The annual average rainfall for each district is:

Alice Springs, 5-15 inches; Barkley Tableland, 7-20 inches; Victoria River District, 20-40 inches; the Darwin and Gulf Region, 30-60 inches. Rain is also more reliable in the Victoria River District and Darwin and Gulf Region. The Alice Springs and Barkley Tableland District have erratic rainfall, few permanent waterholes and no permanent rivers. Although the Tanami Desert occupies the southern half of the Victoria River District, the Victoria River provides a much greater amount of natural surface water than in the Centre or on the Barkley Tableland. The Darwin and Gulf District has the highest proportion of natural waters in the Territory.

The Alice Springs District is, of course, the driest of the four. It is also the largest. It covers approximately 212,000 square miles of which 109,500 were under pastoral lease in 1965. The Darwin and Gulf District covers 124,000 square miles. The Barkley Tableland is third with 94,000 square miles and 70,500 under pastoral lease. The Victoria River District is the smallest with 91,000 square miles and 45,000 square miles under pastoral lease (BAE 1968:7-14).

The Alice Springs District and Darwin and Gulf District have a greater number of smaller stations than either of the other two. The Barkley Tableland and the Victoria River District are characterized by relatively few, quite large leases (BAE 1968:15; see Table 1). It is significant that the long east-west belt of plain and tableland which crosses the Victoria River District and Barkley District have the big stations. They also carry the most cattle and the biggest herds. This is so even though they have the fewest square miles under lease.

The districts with more cattle also have more men working per station. The Alice Springs District has the fewest people working, the lowest number of labour weeks per year, and the fewest number of labour weeks per 100 square miles. However, it has the most labour weeks per

TABLE 1
AVERAGE STATION AREA AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STATIONS BY AREA:
BY DISTRICTS (as at 30 June 1965)

Area (sq.mi.)	Alice Springs (%)	Barkley Tableland (%)	Victoria River (%)	Darwin and Gulf (%)
Under 501	6	-	-	8
501-1,000	37	10	-	30
1,001-1,500	24	25	25	38
1,501-2,000	18	35	25	8
2,001-2,500	6	10	31	-
2,501-3,000	6	10	6	-
Over 3,000	3	10	13	16
Total	100	100	100	100
Average	1,359 sq.mi.	2,064 sq.mi.	2,239 sq.mi.	1,412 sq.mi.

Source: BAE 1968:15.

100 head of cattle. The Victoria River District leads in all these categories but the last.

In summary, there appears to be a rough correlation among the size of the stations, the average herd size, the total number of cattle in the region, and the size of the labour force. The bigger the stations, the larger the herds, the greater the total number of cattle in the region, the greater the size of the labour force (BAE 1968:20-21; see Tables 2 and 3). This produces a scale with the Victoria River District in the top position,

TABLE 2
HERD SIZE, STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS - 1963 TO 1965
(as at 30 June)

Year	Alice Springs (no.)	Barkley Tableland (no.)	Victoria River (no.)	Darwin and Gulf (no.)
1962-63	2,401	13,119	18,983	10,047
1963-64	2,490	13,694	18,035	9,979
1964-65	2,040	13,696	17,597	10,312
Average	2,310	13,503	18,205	10,113

Source: BAE 1968:20.

TABLE 3
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STATIONS BY HERD SIZE: BY DISTRICTS
 (three-year average, 1962-63 to 1964-65)

Herd size	Alice Springs (%)	Barkley Tableland (%)	Victoria River (%)	Darwin and Gulf (%)
Under 2,501	67	15	6	15
2,501- 5,000	27	15	-	23
5,001- 7,500	6	20	-	31
7,501-10,000	-	5	19	-
10,001-12,500	-	-	25	8
12,501-15,000	-	-	-	8
Over 15,000	-	45	50	15
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: BAE 1968:21.

followed by the Barkley Tableland, the Darwin and Gulf Regions, and finally the Alice Springs District.

These variations correlate roughly with the distribution of types of ownership from region to region (BAE 1968:17; see Table 4). The most important point is that in 1968 not a single pastoral lease in the Alice Springs District was owned by a company. Sixty-seven percent were owned by individuals. Thirty-three percent were held by partnerships. In contrast, the majority (56 percent) of the stations in the Victoria River District

TABLE 4
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STATIONS, BY OWNERSHIP TYPE:
 BY DISTRICTS (as at 30 June 1965)

Ownership type	Alice Springs (%)	Barkley Tableland (%)	Victoria River (%)	Darwin and Gulf (%)
Individual				
Resident	61	45	19	23
Non-resident	6	5	6	8
Partnerships				
Resident	27	15	19	31
Non-resident	6	0	0	0
Company	0	35	56	38
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: BAE 1968:17.

were held by companies. Only 19 percent were held by individuals. Eighty-eight percent of the owners in the Alice Springs District lived on their stations. Only 38 percent of the owners in the Victoria River District did so. A similar pattern emerges in the distribution of stations by management type (BAE 1968:18; see Table 5). Only 15 percent of the Alice Springs leases had paid managers. On 85 percent of the stations either the owner or a partner managed the station. In the Victoria River District, 62 percent of the leases had paid managers. Owners or partners managed 38 percent of the leases in the Victoria River District.

TABLE 5
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STATIONS BY MANAGEMENT TYPE:
BY DISTRICTS (as at 30 June 1965)

Management type	Alice Springs (%)	Barkley Tableland (%)	Victoria River (%)	Darwin and Gulf (%)
Sole owner	58	45	19	15
Partner	27	15	19	31
Paid manager	15	40	62	54
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: BAE 1968:18.

These features of the four regions have established different structures of industrial relations between the pastoral workers and their bosses. The stations in the Victoria River District, for example, have much larger, more stable Aboriginal communities than are generally found in Central Australia. This is in part connected with the greater demand for labourers in the Victoria River District. The Gurrindji are a famous example of the relatively large communities living on these expansive stations. It is rare to find communities of more than twenty people on Central Australian properties,¹ and the demand for labour in the Alice

¹The major exception is the group of properties approximately two hundred miles northeast of Alice Springs near the headwaters of the Sandover River.

Springs District is much smaller than anywhere else in the Northern Territory (BAE 1968:53; see Table 4).

These differences in the size of resident populations in each district mark as well differences in the scale of operations and the structure of industrial relations. The majority of properties in Central Australia are managed by resident owners. Some owners live on their properties but employ a manager (BAE 1968:17; see Table 5). These men and women have often lived on their stations for many years and recruited their labourers from among the same groups of Aborigines. Relations among pastoralists and their workers tend to be highly personalized. In the Victoria River and Barkley Tablelands Districts, however, the structure of boss-worker relations is more formal and characteristic of industrial settings. Although a significant number of properties are managed by owner-residents, large companies dominate these two regions and hire managers to operate their properties. The workers are segregated according to task, skill, and social prestige. There is a much clearer hierarchy of authority and prestige than in Central Australia.

One final point about the four regions. They have historically developed different markets for their cattle, and, until the governments of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Australia signed a meat agreement in 1951, the fortunes of the four districts varied independently of one another. The Alice Springs District sold its cattle to South Australia. In 1965, for example, 98 percent of the beef sold from the Alice Springs District went to South Australia. Occasionally pastoralists sold cattle for fattening in Queensland. There has also always been a small market for local cattle in Alice Springs. Pastoralists on the Barkley Tableland have historically sent their cattle to Queensland. Most goes to the Channel Country for fattening. Some goes to abattoirs in Brisbane and, in recent years, to Katherine or Darwin in the Northern Territory. This pattern

encouraged companies such as Vestey's to establish a series of properties along the east-west stock route. They bred cattle in the most western properties (such as Victoria River Downs or Wave Hill) and moved them along to the eastern properties for gradual fattening. The Victoria River District divided its cattle between the Wyndham meatworks in Western Australia, Queensland, and Southeast Asia. In recent years it has also sent cattle to the abattoirs at Katherine and Darwin. The Darwin and Gulf River Districts earlier relied upon the trade in live cattle to the Philippines. Since that died, it sends cattle to Queensland, Darwin, and Katherine. As I will describe in detail below, the market for none of these regions was secure until 1951. Moreover, because of the diversity of the demand in earlier times, plans which helped one region did not always affect the others (see Table 7).

The Alice Springs Pastoral District (Central Australia)

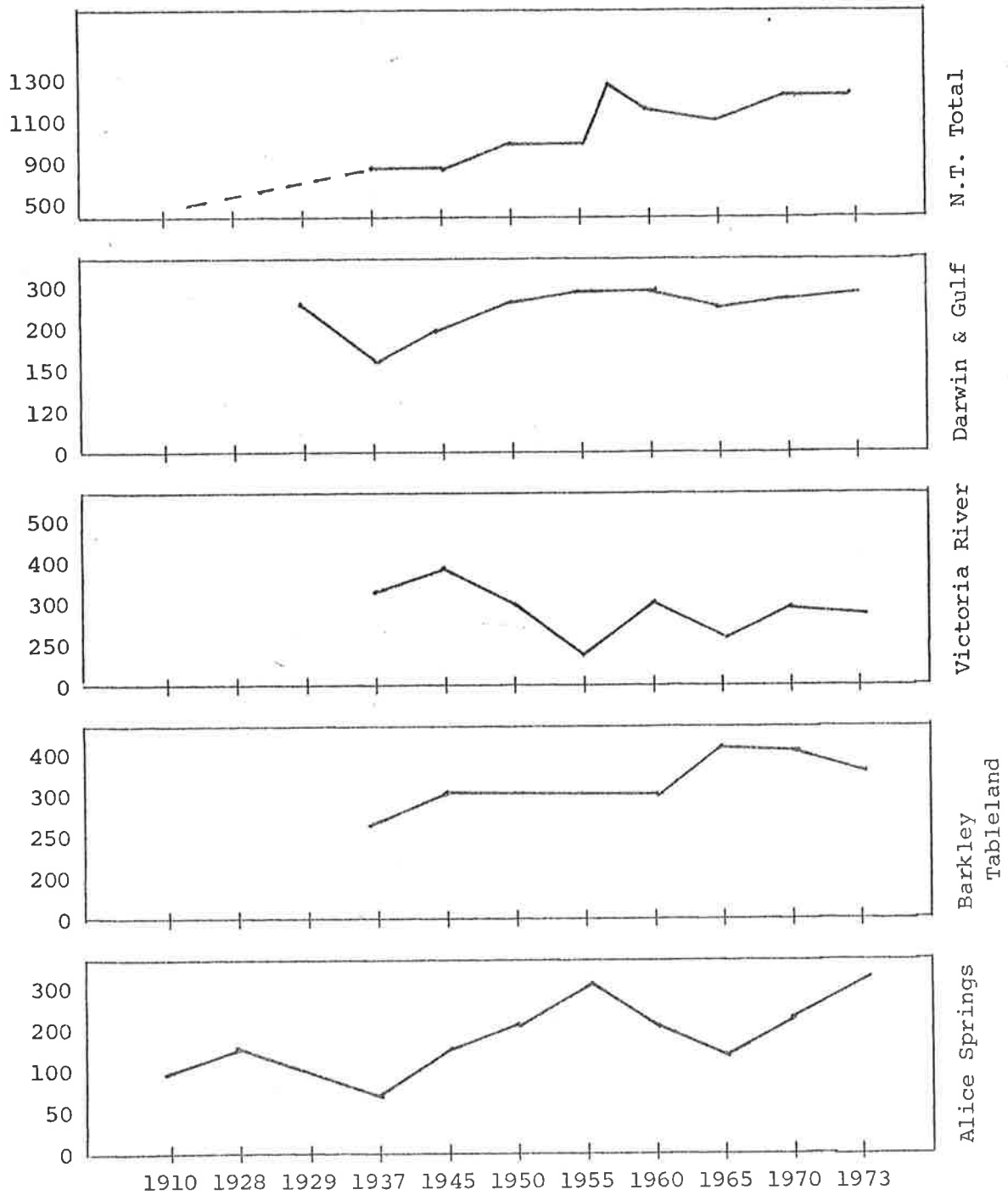
Central Australia is an arid region. Average annual rainfall varies between two inches a year at Charlotte Waters in the south to over 15 inches a year at Tennant Creek in the north. Alice Springs and the MacDonnell Ranges average about 10 inches per year (Perry 1962). The bulk of Central Australian rain comes from the north in the summer as a remnant of the great summer monsoons which water the Top End. Autumn usually marks a drop in the expected rainfall. Rain falls only occasionally in the winter when the wind and the weather blow from the south. In spite of these regularities, both local areas and the region as a whole are subject to wide variations around the norm. Heavy monsoons and severe droughts disrupt the normal curve. Rainfall varies from year to year. The time it falls within given years also varies. Moreover, it sometimes happens that some small, local areas enjoy surplus rain while others only a few miles

TABLE 7

MOVEMENTS IN CATTLE NUMBERS FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY:

BY DISTRICTS 1910 TO 1973

Thousands



Sources: Bureau Agricultural Economics, 1959:2, 1968:5,
 Northern Territory Administration, Administrator's Annual Report
 Central Australian Administration, Administrator's Annual Report

away perish. Variability is the key to Central Australian natural rhythms (Davidson 1972:38-39).

According to the agricultural economists, Central Australia has no particular growing season (Davidson 1972:32-33). Plants germinate whenever there is enough water. Plants vary, however, according to the amount of water they need to germinate, mature, and go to seed again. Normal years provide enough water in the summer to germinate and sustain natural sorghums. Winter rains nourish forbes. These require fairly heavy rainfall followed by secondary falls to sustain growth. It sometimes happens that rain is so widely dispersed in time and space that not enough falls at once to initiate germination. This can happen even if there has been sufficient total annual rainfall. Or, plants germinate only to die from lack of follow-up rain. Hence, normal total rainfall can and has produced droughts.

Although the whole region is arid, the key is microecological variations within a total set of conditions. For example, the mountains provide opportunities which do not exist in the desert. The MacDonnell Ranges bisect Central Australia from east to west. There are also smaller sets of foothills clustered to the northeast, northwest, and southwest of the main ranges. The major rivers of the region have their sources in these mountain ranges and flood out onto the plains below. Although the ranges are somewhat formidable, the countryside around them is the richest of the region. The rivers and mountain crevices store water. The soil provides nutrients necessary to sustain a varied, succulent plant life and rich animal life. Deserts surround the mountains on the east, south, west and northwest sides. Life is possible but the conditions are harsher than within the mountains. Rain falls less frequently and is more irregular. Water is not stored well. The grasses which survive are hardy perennials with deep roots (for example, spinifex). Fewer animals survive per unit of

land. Compared with regions in the southern parts of Australia, Central Australia is uniformly harsh. Yet, the exact conditions which prevail vary from season to season and region to region. These variations are important to the people and animals which live there.

The Aborigines appreciated the vagaries of the climate and lived accordingly (Meggitt 1962:49-50; Sahlins 1974:1-40). The history of pastoral settlement, however, testifies to the fact that few whites understood the region's essential character in the early days. Perhaps the majority of people who approached the region underestimated its capriciousness (Duncan 1967). Before the turn of the century, however, there was abundant evidence that the settlers had to adapt their modes of livelihood if they were to survive. The problem was that the cattle market did not warrant the cost of installing the technical devices necessary for large-scale pastoralism. Bores were quite expensive. Several investors went broke trying to develop the region. They withdrew from the field and either sold or surrendered their leases (Duncan 1967:47-77). The pastoralists who followed had to limit the size of their herds and the scope of their activities to what the natural resources would carry. This meant they ran small herds on large tracts of land among the mountains and along the rivers. Only in this manner could they embrace sufficient natural water to keep their stock alive.

The earliest settlement of Central Australia occurred along the telegraph line, along the MacDonnell Ranges and south of Alice Springs. From 1910 to 1930 settlers slowly occupied the mountain regions to the northeast and northwest of Alice Springs. Although at least one settler brought sheep in from Queensland, many of the new pastoralists originally entered the area for other purposes. For example, Arltunga, a small goldfield northeast of Alice Springs, sparked a minor goldrush from the 1890's to about 1910. During the peak mining period Arltunga had a larger

population than Alice Springs and stimulated some local commerce and demand for meat. After the gold ran out, most of the miners left. Yet, a few men who had run businesses or held minor government posts moved onto the land. At least six pastoral leases in the region around Arltunga were opened by such men during the second decade of the twentieth century. There were similar minor mineral rushes at Hatches Creek, Mt. Doreen, and the Granites (Meggitt 1964:25).

This settlement did not mark even steady development in the cattle industry. The numbers of cattle, for example, apparently either decreased or remained roughly the same throughout this period. Duncan estimates that there were roughly 100,000 head of cattle in Central Australia in 1910. By 1937 the number is estimated to have been less than 80,000 (Duncan 1967:140; BAE 1959:7). Although there was a severe drought in 1928-29, it does not seem likely that its effects were felt for so long or can account completely for the low cattle population. Rather, the small herds indicate the nature of pastoralism at the time and reflect the absence of a market.

It is apparent that the settlement of the region during this period was a piecemeal process and developed in response to the needs of individual settlers. Some settlers, for example, ran cattle and operated other enterprises at the same time. The horse market provided many with an income based on pastoral pursuits. Mining engaged others. Others subsisted. Although the settlers had leases, rents were low and not properly enforced in the Centre. Payne and Jackson report, for example, that in 1937 arrears in rent were £19,650. Of that, £9,492 was on Central Australian properties. The government did not pressure the pastoralists. On the contrary, it made efforts to stimulate pastoral development. It offered to subsidize the construction of bores and fences, and to subsidize the freight charges on hybrid bulls. Yet, the pastoralists failed to

respond. The cost was too great (Payne and Jackson 1937). There were no credit facilities open. The pastoralists either had little reserve capital, spent what they had on costly imports, or saved it. They did not use it to develop their station equipment. The point is that the pastoralists did not overcommit themselves to cattle husbandry. Pastoralism was not an industry. Rather, it was a tactic some men used to provision what was essentially a domestic economy.

In technical terms, the pastoralists used the "open-range" technique of cattle husbandry. The open-range technique is a term which refers to a broad spectrum of husbandry practices which employ natural pastures and permit animals to run virtually wild. It contrasts with techniques which closely manage the animals and employ hybrid, cultivated pastures or feed lots. The two techniques have different capital, land and labour requirements. Open-range husbandry uses large areas of undeveloped land, large amounts of cheap labour sporadically, and little capital. Intensive use of any or all of these three resources marks a more closed technique. Davidson remarks that given a market, the most efficient and profitable approach in Australia employs large amounts of cheap land, little amounts of expensive labour, and, consequently intensive use of capital (Davidson 1972:64). Under the circumstances, anything other than a completely open-range approach was economically unjustified and inimical to the pastoralists' interests. It had certain consequences.

The pastoralists settled in the regions which supported the most bountiful game and otherwise were ecologically the most favourable. The pastoralists introduced a species of animal which consumed great quantities of the same natural resources as the natural fauna which the Aborigines hunted. For these reasons, they directly threatened the Aborigines' ecological base and, consequently, their capacity to survive.

It was nevertheless true that cattle did not necessarily undermine the Aborigines' economy. On the contrary, cattle are far simpler to hunt and could have made the region more bountiful. The problem was that not all pastoralists appreciated having their cattle speared. Aborigines were regularly jailed for cattle spearing. Police and some pastoralists under certain circumstances took more drastic action. In many areas, therefore, the pastoralists and the Aborigines competed over the rights to use the land and its resources.

During this period, however, local Aboriginal groups and individual pastoralists could negotiate private settlements. I have no idea how common such agreements were. Nor do I really know if anything so formal as a verbal or other explicit agreement ever materialized. Yet, it seems certain that tacit agreements developed. I have been told, for example, that some men always had trouble with "the natives" because they did not treat them properly. Duncan observes that "native depredations" were said to cause great hardship in the herds and often seriously deplete them (Duncan 1967:70-73). Yet, not all pastoralists suffered them. Aborigines describe pastoralists as "cheeky" or not according to the extent to which they fulfill certain expectations. The early pastoralists have a relatively uniform reputation of being cheeky. Yet, it is clear that some are remembered with greater distaste than others. The extent to which pastoral settlement undermined the capacity for the Aborigines to live and, consequently, seemed inimical to the Aborigines' interests varies and was a matter of negotiation. This must have been especially true when cattle were relatively worthless and their numbers low.

The point was that the open-range technique of cattle herding required large amounts of cheap labour for short but crucial periods during the year. While labourers could not be hired in Central Australia. Davidson notes that during the time the Northern Territory was being

settled, the urban economy of southern Australia offered greater opportunities for work than it had in the mid-nineteenth century. Hence, white labour was quite expensive (Davidson 1972:65). Aborigines were the only alternative source of labour. The pastoralists had to procure it. The pastoralists did not often pay Aborigines in cash (Rose 1965:34). Nor was there a minimum set wage. Rather, Aborigines gave their labour as part of their agreements and set of exchanges with pastoralists. Aborigines gave labour and access to their land in exchange for being "looked after" by the pastoralists. Exactly what Aborigines received in return varied. Some men were known as "good bosses" and were "generous". Others were not. The point was though that prior to World War II, in many areas the Aborigines and the white settlers managed to sustain linked but functionally autonomous domestic economies. The conflict between their modes of production and their wider social interests was not yet manifest. During this period, the dynamics of interaction between the two societies developed in the context of personal, local relationships between particular Aboriginal groups and local white settlers.

In 1929 the railway arrived in Alice Springs. This meant that Central Australian cattle could be trucked and sold as fats on the Adelaide market. Nonetheless, the demand was sporadic and still insufficient to make the industry flourish. Pastoralists near the railheads benefitted the most. By 1937, Payne and Jackson still complained that the industry was underdeveloped and largely unprofitable (Payne and Jackson 1937:40).

The early encroachment of white settlers into the pasturelands of Central Australia created a different set of circumstances than existed in the Victoria River District or the Barkley Tablelands. The local ecology, the absence of a market for cattle, and the consequent scale and organization of pastoralism established conditions inimical to the emergence of an industrial structure proper. The pastoralists were not overcommitted to

pastoralism. They were free and often did engage in other activities in order to sustain their livelihood. Pastoralism was one tactic among others to live in the relatively sparse and loosely organized field of the time.

These conditions affected the pastoralists' relations with the local Aboriginal people. It was clear the pastoralists occupied their land and introduced a new animal into the local ecology. The scale of operations and the low value of cattle, however, meant that there was no necessary conflict of short-term interests. On the contrary, reasons existed for mutual interaction and localized cooperation. The fact and possibility of violent encounters between the Aborigines, pastoralists, or the police loomed always in the background. Yet, the Aborigines' need for a secure food supply and the pastoralists' need for land and bits of labour provided the opportunity for local agreements. The field was open to and characterized by negotiations between particular pastoralists and particular bands of Aborigines. Given the interpersonal nature of this process, the results went both ways.

There is evidence that the Central Australian industry began to pick up during and immediately after World War II. The administrator for the Northern Territory Administration mentions in a wartime report that the pastoralists were enjoying a buoyant market. Central Australian beef was drawing top prices and top prizes in Adelaide. He notes too that there were no rents outstanding. This contrasts with Payne and Jackson's observations of 1937 (Annual Report 1948; Payne and Jackson 1937:16). The soldiers stationed up and down the track between Alice Springs and Darwin during World War II provided a quite significant local demand. In 1942-43, for example, it is reported that they consumed 2,768 bullocks in Alice Springs. All of that beef was supplied by local pastoralists. This was over 10 percent of the total demand for the year. In addition, 20,525

bullocks were shipped to Adelaide during the same period (Annual Report 1944). This demand collapsed when the war ended. Yet, the figures indicate that the Adelaide demand doubled immediately after the war. Approximately 43,900 head of cattle were shipped to Adelaide in 1946-47. 41,200 were sent the next year (Annual Report 1948). In order to secure this demand for north and Central Australian beef the Commonwealth government entered into negotiations with the government of the United Kingdom for a long-term meat agreement.

On October 11, 1951, the governments of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Australia signed a meat agreement and thereby transformed the Central Australian pastoral industry. The agreement covered the fifteen-year period from July 1, 1952, to September 31, 1967. In the treaty the governments agreed

to develop further the production of meat in Australia,
to increase the export of meat to the United Kingdom,
and to provide a satisfactory market in the United
Kingdom for the whole of the exportable surplus of
meat from Australia during the term of the agreement.

The agreement included a schedule of prices and a method to adjust prices in accordance with changes in the Australian industry's cost structure (BAE 1953:1-7). This agreement temporarily solved two problems the Central Australian pastoralists had always faced: the absence of a regular market for cattle, and a stable price structure. In the late 1950's a demand for manufacturing quality beef emerged in the USA. By 1961 the Commonwealth government had agreed to help supply it. The UK agreement was not renegotiated and ended on schedule. In 1974 the USA imposed quotas on Australian beef. It claimed the Australians had surpassed their allotted amount. Once again Central Australian pastoralists were left without a market. In the meantime the nature of the industry and of Central Australian society had been completely transformed.

Prior to 1940 Central Australian settlers were not wholly committed to pastoralism as an industry. Whatever may have been their individual goals or wishes, they could not afford to invest what limited capital they had in developing their properties. This meant they marketed in response to their own immediate needs and the current demand. How much they produced was a function of the weather. They were not heavily in debt nor were they pressured by outside agencies to produce more. Although they endeavoured to produce and sell cattle for a market, they were not dependent upon it in order to remain viable. The weather could break them, but market fluctuations could not.

The rise of an expanded market in Adelaide, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, however, stimulated them to expand production. In order to do so, they had to increase the relative carrying capacity of the land. They had to sink bores. Bores, however, were expensive and demanded the pastoralists invest capital in their properties, a tactic they had previously avoided. The government encouraged them to do so by granting tax concessions on capital improvements. There were no credit facilities open to them, and they had to reinvest the profits from their cattle sales. Consequently, they became more dependent upon the existence of a cattle market than before 1940. In order to meet the market demands, in other words, the Central Australian pastoralists had to increase the degree of their total commitment to pastoralism as an industry and cease operating only in terms of a domestic economy.

Many pastoralists did invest heavily in their properties. Some settlers who had previously occupied land totally incapable of sustaining cattle on natural water supplies also sank bores and started new pastoral operations. Hence new, previously unused land was exploited. This meant the pastoral industry expanded to include all land of any value for grazing

and increased in total value. Only the most worthless, inhospitable desert land remained vacant.

By 1965 there was an average of ten bores per property in the Alice Springs Pastoral District. There were also two weels, four earth tanks, and one dam on the average per property. The pastoralists dug wells from the earliest days. Yet, they were usually shallow and produced comparatively meagre supplies of water. The soil of the Alice Springs District is not suitable for dams. Hence, bores are the most suitable form of man-made watering point. Unfortunately they are also the most expensive. There were almost no bores in the district prior to 1940. Only the government had the cash to sink them and only along some stretches of the north-south stock route. Although some pastoral experts insist the Central Australian pastoralists have failed to develop their properties sufficiently, the fact remains that they have increased considerably the overall level of their capital investment in the land. This is an important point.

Because their overall investment and commitment to the pastoral industry has increased, pastoralists can no longer easily tolerate loss of stock, water, or grass. Consequently, they can no longer afford to allow Aborigines free reign of the properties and stock. Even those men who had previously struck reasonable agreements with one or more local domestic groups, can no longer withstand the cost of speared or slaughtered stock. Moreover, Aborigines, pastoralists, and government officials all informed me that the change in the cattle market fundamentally altered the demand for Aboriginal labour. Uniformly they said that the demand for Aboriginal stockmen has decreased considerably in the last several years. Because the demand was minimal and sporadic before 1951, the further contraction of job opportunities on the stations has left many Aborigines with no means to

support themselves. There now exists a manifest and fundamental conflict of interests between the pastoralists and the Aborigines.

I mentioned the "open-range" technique of animal husbandry above. Pastoral experts insist that the Central Australian settlers still employ the "open-range" technique. For example, some criticize the pastoralists for not having erected a sufficient number of yards and fences (Kelly 1971:146). Others demand that the pastoralists use more hybrid forms of pasture. Compared with southern parts of Australia where the climate favours intense animal husbandry, Central Australia is indeed relatively undeveloped. Although some pastoralists in the region grow lucerne, a hybrid pasture, the climate in general does not favour it. It requires more water than is generally available and has remained a minor supplementary feed for drought relief and fattening purposes. It is also true that compared to some southern regions, Central Australian paddocks are large. Cattle are left to wander unmanaged within them. Nevertheless, pastoralists have built fences and yards. In 1965, for example, there was an average of 44 miles of boundary fence and 49 miles of internal fencing per station in the Alice Springs District. There were, in addition, nine bronco yards, two drafting yards, and five miscellaneous-type yards on the average per station (BAE 1968:29; see Table 8). According to my informants, this process has continued since 1965. Although these figures are low relative to southern Australia, they have had some important effects on the demand for Aboriginal labour.

Prior to 1940 there were few fences or yards of any kind in Central Australia. Consequently, the cattle wandered anywhere according to the quality of natural conditions. Beasts belonging to different pastoralists got mixed up in the process. In order to sort them for branding and sale, pastoralists and stockmen from adjoining properties established mustering camps at central points. From there they spent several months

TABLE 8
STRUCTURE OF IMPROVEMENTS — STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS
(as at 30 June 1965)

Item	Alice Springs (no.)	Barkley Tableland (no.)	Victoria River (no.)	Darwin and Gulf (no.)
Made waters				
Bores	10	23	9	2
Wells	2	-	-	-
Earth tanks	4	2	-	-
Dams	1	2	1	-
Total made waters	17	27	10	2
	(miles)	(miles)	(miles)	(miles)
Fencing				
Boundary*	44	80	30	19
Internal	49	127	151	92
Total fencing	93	207	181	111
	(no.)	(no.)	(no.)	(no.)
Yards				
Bronco	9	16	11	11
Drafting	2	3	5	3
Other	5	1	5	7
Total yards	16	20	21	21
* In the case of a 'shared' boundary fence half has been attributed to each.				

Source: BAE 1968:29.

each autumn and winter mustering, culling, and branding. Each pastoralist hired eight to ten ringers for the muster. He brought along his headstockmen and supplementary ringers. Most of these men were, of course, Aboriginal people.

Boundary fences eliminate the need for the big autumn muster. Cattle remain on the property. It now takes fewer men less time to muster them. They no longer have to search over miles of another pastoralist's property or to spend time sorting one man's cattle from another's. The pastoralists can therefore do without many supplementary ringers. Before 1940 mustering season extended from April to October, a period of seven months. In 1965, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimated that in

the Alice Springs District an average of 7.6 Aboriginal men worked 22 weeks a year on each station. 3.8 white or part-Aboriginal men worked 26 weeks a year (BAE 1968:53; see Table 9).

TABLE 9
TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES PER YEAR AND AVERAGE DURATION OF
EMPLOYMENT - STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS
(two-year average, 1963-64 to 1964-65)

Labour type	Alice Springs		Barkley Tableland		Victoria River		Darwin and Gulf	
	No.	Av. weeks worked	No.	Av. weeks worked	No.	Av. weeks worked	No.	Av. weeks worked
Male								
Aboriginal	7.6	22	13.3	30	23.3	26	19.2	31
Other	3.8	26	14.4	25	19.1	19	7.9	29
Total	11.4	23	27.7	27	42.4	23	27.1	30
Female								
Aboriginal	1.5	23	5.2	36	11.0	34	5.6	37
Total all labour	12.9	23	32.9	29	53.4	25	32.7	31

Source: BAE 1968:53.

These figures contradict what people in Alice Springs told me somewhat. They suggest that only the time men work has been reduced. The point remains that there is considerably less work now than before 1940. The precise way individual pastoralists choose to allocate it no doubt varies according to particular circumstances. It is clear, for example, that not all pastoralists erected fences at the same rate to the same degree. The process took a number of years and proceeded unevenly throughout the district. In general, however, the pastoralists have erected fences and thereby reduced the demand for men to staff the large muster camps.

Pastoral work has always been seasonal in Central Australia. The demand for Aboriginal workers has always been and still is greatest during the autumn and winter. The point is, however, that the number of men and length of time they work during the mustering season has dropped with the

construction of fences. This has been generally true in spite of the fact that the overall productivity of the stations has increased.² Because the pastoralists put their profits from cattle sales back into their stations, the expanded market financed the process which has reduced the demand for Aboriginal workers.

It has taken a number of years to erect fences over the Central Australian countryside. The change from overland droving to cattle trucking, however, was fairly rapid and dramatic. Cattle droving, particularly in the Top End, has an unassailable place in the mythology of pastoralism. Within the industry, the drovers and their men occupy the top rung in the occupational prestige hierarchy. Aborigines who worked regularly for boss drovers had great prestige among their fellows and even among white bosses. Those who worked on the great routes in the Top End regarded themselves and were often regarded by others as especially skilled.

A skilled drover was essential. Droving occurred during the dry season when grass was normally less nutritious and often in short supply. In the early days water was acutely short on almost all the great stock routes in the Northern Territory (Duncan 1967:55). The condition and often simply the lives of the cattle upon delivery at the market depended upon a drover's capacity to drive his mob properly. If he made errors many cattle could lose condition and die. Skilled drovers are reputed to have defied even the worst weather.

In the mid-1950's men began to experiment with roadtrains. Now all cattle in Central Australia are shipped from station to the market or

²The construction and maintenance of bores and fences created new jobs, of course. Yet, the evidence suggests that men who already had fairly permanent jobs were assigned the new tasks during the off-season. Hence, the new jobs did not offset the decrease in demand for ringers. It was also the case that specialists emerged. Some men formed small companies which took contracts for fencing, boring, and even mustering.

railroad in Alice Springs by roadtrain. Initially roadtrains were rather expensive. It was not long, however, before the cost dropped and the advantages roadtrains provide put drovers out of business (BAE 1968:4; see Table 10). Roadtrains eliminate almost all the uncertainty attendant upon droving. They are safer and quicker too. Pastoralists no longer have to consider the condition of the stock routes in order to decide whether to ship cattle. Roadtrains move cattle from almost anywhere in Central Australia either to Alice or Mt. Isa in a matter of hours or a couple of days. Cattle hardly have time to get thirsty, let alone die of lack of water or sufficient grass. Although cattle can be bruised, they do not lose condition as badly as on drives and arrive in much the same condition as when they left.

TABLE 10
ROAD TRANSPORT OF CATTLE IN NORTHERN TERRITORY
1958-59 to 1964-65

Year	Cattle moved off stations (no.)	Cattle carried by road transport (no.)	Percentage by road transport (%)
1958-59	205,873	41,996	20
1959-60	209,871	49,276	23
1960-61	209,226	93,151	45
1961-62	186,379	85,823	46
1962-63	160,430	67,045	42
1963-64	180,265	101,151	56
1964-65	149,802	113,292	76

Source: BAE 1968:4.

This change further reduced the labour demand particularly for the most skilled Aboriginal stockman. In conjunction with the decline in work on the stations, the death of droving constricted the Aboriginal employment situation seriously. Some pastoralists also became reluctant to support non-working Aboriginal populations or permit them to exploit the land's resources freely. Aboriginal populations which had previously been only unnecessary and part of the local scene were transformed into a dispossessed and dependent people.

The Central Australian cattle industry is now relatively capital intensive (see Tables 11 and 12). Whereas before 1951 most pastoralists relied upon many cheap Aboriginal labourers, they now use relatively fewer and more highly paid men. In the early days pastoralists could be ruined

TABLE 11
CAPITAL STRUCTURE — STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS
(three-year average, 1962-63 to 1964-65)

Capital item	Alice Springs		Barkley Tableland		Victoria River		Darwin and Gulf	
	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)
Made waters	37,274	22	100,089	14	46,596	6	9,652	2
Fencing	23,450	13	51,511	7	55,970	8	36,102	9
Yards	9,628	5	12,962	2	18,178	3	15,861	4
Buildings	7,922	5	29,530	4	29,760	4	11,158	3
Plant and machinery	9,936	6	20,060	3	24,854	3	18,728	5
Total excluding cattle	88,210	51	214,152	30	175,358	24	91,501	23
Cattle	84,436	49	488,447	70	542,024	76	298,561	77
Total	172,646	100	702,599	100	717,382	100	390,062	100

Source: BAE 1968:33.

TABLE 12
GROSS ANNUAL INVESTMENT — STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS
(three-year average, 1962-63 to 1964-65)

Capital item	Alice Springs		Barkley Tableland		Victoria River		Darwin and Gulf	
	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)	(\$)	(%)
Waters	2,816	23	14,550	28	10,946	26	2,108	7
Fencing	1,392	11	5,004	10	8,098	19	8,838	32
Yards	454	4	1,482	3	2,706	7	2,190	8
Buildings	980	8	3,664	7	5,916	14	3,408	12
Plant and machinery	2,266	18	7,232	14	7,934	19	7,712	28
Total excluding livestock	7,908	64	31,932	62	35,600	85	24,256	87
Livestock*	4,394	36	19,510	38	6,198	15	3,518	13
Total	12,302	100	51,442	100	41,798	100	27,774	100

* Includes horses, and transfers of cattle between stations.

Source: BAE 1968:37.

by the weather or fires. They were, however, relatively impervious to the vagaries of the cattle market. Because they sought in the first instance to provision themselves, sold cattle only when the demand permitted, and did not invest heavily into their operations, they had no debts. Banks could not foreclose and the market could not injure them. The relatively intense capital investment in their properties since 1951, however, has changed that situation. Pastoralists now depend critically upon the market simply in order to keep themselves solvent. Indeed, in Central Australia very few pastoralists make a living at all (see Table 13).

TABLE 13
NET INCOME STRUCTURE -- STATION AVERAGE: BY DISTRICTS
(three-year average, 1962-63 to 1964-65)

Item	Alice Springs (\$)	Barkley Tableland (\$)	Victoria River (\$)	Darwin and Gulf (\$)
A. Cash income	24,994	92,096	80,349	42,226
B. Cash cost	23,780	70,959	60,971	40,486
C. Net cash income (A-B)	1,214	21,137	19,378	1,740
D. Interest paid	2,280	1,641	2,480	2,364
E. Cattle investory change	1,427	47,794	36,763	27,739
F. Depreciation	9,030	22,228	24,428	12,184
G. Net farm income (C+D+E-F)	-4,109	48,344	34,193	19,659
H. Operator's labour allowance	1,903	1,903	1,903	1,903
I. Capital and management income (G-H)	-6,012	46,441	32,290	17,756
J. Total capital	172,646	702,599	717,382	390,062
Percentage return to capital and management (100 I/J)	-3.5%	6.6%	4.5%	4.6%

Source: BAE 1968:49.

Aborigines have suffered in the course of this process. One basic condition for their continued ability to maintain their own domestic economy and somewhat control the effects of white settlement was eliminated.

It is now absolutely impossible for them to wander back and forth between their own domestic economy and that of the white settler. The white settler has given away his own domestic economy and thereby made it impossible for Aborigines to sustain one as well.

APPENDIX II

WORK CAREERS OF MT. KELLY ADULTS

NAME	SEX	URBAN	RURAL
Blake, L.	F		
Cooper, J.	M	X	X
Corcoran, B.	M	X	X
Corcoran, D.	M	X	X
Corcoran, R.	M		X
George, H.	M	X	X
Hines, M.	F		
Hines, R.	M	X	X
Jackson, J.	M		X
Jackson, L.	F		X
Jackson, P.	M		X
Mayhew, A.	F		
Mayhew, K.	F	X	X
Peters, A.	M	X	X
Richardson, B.	M	X	X
Richardson, C.	F	X	
Richardson, D.	M	X	X
Richardson, G.	F	X	X
Richardson, M.	F		X
Richardson, N.	M		X
Richardson, P.	F		
Richardson, T.	M	X	X
Salterson, E.	F		X
Samuelson, W.	M	X	X
Sharp, C.	M	X	X
Sharp, G.	M	X	X
Sharp, G.	F	X	X
Sharp, I.	F	X	X
Sharp, P.	F	X	X
Sharp, T.	M	X	X
Taylor, N.	F		X
Williams, G.	F	X	X
Williams, J.	F		

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