

**HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION**

Papers presented at the 8th Annual Lalor Address  
on Community Relations held at  
Adelaide on 3 December 1982

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OFFICIAL WELCOME BY MR J.P.M. LONG,  
COMMISSIONER FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Dame Roma Mitchell and members of the Human Rights Commission,  
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to this the 8th Annual Lalor Address on  
Community Relations.

At dawn on 3 December 128 years ago - it was a Sunday - a force of soldiers and police advanced upon and overwhelmed a group of armed gold miners in a makeshift stockade near Ballarat. No two of the several accounts of this engagement that I have read agree on the casualties but at least twenty-two and possibly thirty or more men died, most of them on the miners' side. The battle of the Eureka Stockade remains the major civil disturbance or riot in Australia's history and it might well be appropriate to commemorate the occasion for this reason alone. Not many countries have enjoyed a comparable absence of civil strife.

But this was not the central reason, as I understand it, for Eureka Day being chosen for an annual address on community relations. And, since this is the first time that the Annual Lalor Address has been given in Adelaide - and only the second time it has been given outside Canberra - it may be appropriate for me to say something about the reason for choosing to celebrate Eureka Day in this way.

It might seem perverse to celebrate the suppression of an uprising by a few hundred miners - small capitalists as they have been described - on a goldfield in Victoria as a 'community relations' occasion (though not perhaps inconsistent with our annual celebration of a failed military expedition in a foreign war to commemorate the service and sacrifice of our countrymen in war, or our making our 'national day' the date when an English penal colony was first established on our eastern

shores). Ambiguity and a touch of eccentricity seem characteristic of our national occasions. This may not be a bad thing if at least it prompts us to think about the significance of these commemorations.

This evening we do not so much commemorate the brief and bloody engagement at the Stockade on that Sunday morning, but rather the events of the days preceding the battle, when a diverse group - mainly of recent arrivals from many different countries overseas - made common cause with the Australia-born, forming a Ballarat Reform League to defend their common interests against what they saw as oppressive laws and bad administration of those laws.

Among the diggers in Victoria and at Ballarat the overwhelming majority were from England, Scotland and Ireland, but there were large numbers from Europe and America. The leaders they elected included, as well as at least two Irishmen, an Englishman and a Welshman, an Italian and two Germans. Many of the diggers had come from the United States and from Canada and a California group - the Independent Californian Rangers' Ririe Brigade - played a conspicuous part in the brief defence of the Stockade.

The elected leader of the diggers - as every Australian school boy and girl I hope knows - was Peter Lalor, the eminent Australian whose name is commemorated in this lecture series. Lalor was then a young civil engineer who had arrived in Melbourne two years before. He was wounded and lost his left arm at Eureka but he went on to have a distinguished career in Victorian politics.

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It is interesting that the Royal Commission which inquired into the events in the following year concluded that "the foreigners formed a larger proportion among the disaffected than among the miners generally" and some contemporary authorities showed a marked disposition to blame the "foreigners" for the incident, rather than their own failings.

But the resistance of the diggers to arbitrary authority has since been accepted as justified - those leaders who were charged with treason were all acquitted a few months later - and Australians then and since have been more inclined to honour than to blame the leaders at Eureka.

It would be comforting if we could feel superior to those Victorians who looked to find foreign scapegoats for the troubles on the goldfields. But regrettably we have all too frequent reports that people are again inclined to blame new arrivals - for example, for the unemployment problems that now face this country.

Our purpose tonight then is to use the Eureka incident as a reminder of our history as a diverse but united multicultural nation and an occasion to consider issues of community relations in Australian society.

I am particularly glad that my predecessor as Commissioner for Community Relations is able to be with us this evening. Al Grassby has presided over each of the previous Lalor Addresses and, with Brian Murray of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, he was responsible for inaugurating this series in 1975, with characteristic energy and imagination.

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Perhaps I might also here record my gratitude to him for his generosity and goodwill in conducting me, his successor, on a strenuous series of visits to organisations in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and in this city, introducing me to some of the great number and variety of people who are working in different ways to develop and improve community relations in this country.

It is appropriate that on this, the first occasion in which this Address has been given in Adelaide, we should have for our principal speaker Dame Roma Mitchell, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission which came into being nearly twelve months ago, and also that our second speaker should be another South Australian, Mr Les Nayda, Secretary of the State Office of Aboriginal Affairs. Our third speaker tonight is another distinguished Australian, Mr Joseph Doueihi, President of the World Lebanese Cultural Union for Australia and New Zealand and this too is particularly appropriate in 1982, the year in which his native country and, in particular, Beirut, the city where he was educated, have suffered horrifying agonies, which we and the world hope may mark the beginning of a new era of peace and reconstruction after years of strife.

The Hon. Dame Roma Mitchell

As Chairman of the Human Rights Commission I am pleased to be associated with this meeting, held on the 128th Anniversary of the Battle of the Eureka Stockade, for the purpose of presentation of the 8th Annual Lalor Address on Community Relations. The first such address was given on 3 December 1975, in which year the Racial Discrimination Act was passed, and it was introduced under the auspices of the first Commissioner for Community Relations, the Hon. A.J. Grassby. It is he who has sponsored all successive Lalor Addresses until 31 October 1982 when he ceased to hold the office of Commissioner for Community Relations. His successor, Mr Jeremy Long, has enthusiastically co-operated in the final arrangements for this meeting.

The Human Rights Commission which came into being a week after the presentation of the last Lalor address, namely on Human Rights Day - 10 December 1981, has endorsed the holding of the address under its sponsorship. The sponsorship of the Commissioner for Community Relations and the Commissioners have shown in a practical manner that they support it in that all but one are present here tonight. The one who is absent is Mr Christopher Gilbert, who is unavoidably detained upon university duties in Brisbane. Starting from the north and proceeding southwards and then westwards, we have as Commissioners present among you Mrs Eva Geia of Townsville, Professor Manuel Aroney of Sydney, the Deputy Chairman, Mr Peter Bailey of Canberra who was present at the last Lalor Address, Mrs Norma Ford of Traralgon, Victoria, Ms Elizabeth Hastings of Melbourne and Professor Peter Boyce of Perth. You will note that we have two Commissioners whose name is Peter. However I doubt whether the parents of either were seeking to honour Peter Lalor whose name is perpetuated in this Address.

The Lalor Address is an Address on Community Relations and it is true to say that all the work of the Human Rights Commission is, in essence, work concerning community relations. That work, in so far as it deals with complaints of infringements of the Racial Discrimination Act, is to be undertaken by the Commissioner for Community Relations on behalf of the Commission, but the Commission is charged with promoting an understanding and acceptance and the public discussion of human rights throughout the country and with presenting and encouraging educational and research programs to this end. These include programs which will combat racial discrimination and prejudices that lead to racial discrimination and will promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among racial and ethnic groups. Meetings, such as this one, form an important part of the Commission's functions.

We have here tonight a cross-section of the community and I should like you to take back to the groups, which some of you may represent, the Commission's request that they bring to it any problems in matters of human rights which they encounter, either as members of a group or in their day-to-day activities. As I have said on a number of occasions during this year, most people are astute to recognise their own human rights but not always so concerned to recognise the rights of others. There may be room for saying that those who strictly obey the injunction to "love thy neighbour" cannot fail to observe all the human rights but the United Nations found it necessary in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to lay down those rights in 27 Articles, some of which contain several paragraphs. I mention this in support of a plea, which I have again made on several occasions through the year, that the study of the provisions of the Covenant and the three Declarations which form the schedules to the Human Rights Commission Act, should be undertaken both at school level and at tertiary level and by ordinary citizens, perhaps at Adult Education centres.

The Declarations to which I refer are the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. There is, in addition, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which is particularly important in the area of community relations and which constitutes the schedule to the Racial Discrimination Act. The Convention contains 25 Articles, some of them with several paragraphs.

The Commission being aware of the necessity to teach human rights from an early age has produced what is, in my opinion, an attractive booklet with engaging illustrations for use in alerting primary school children to the issues of human rights. We have produced a pamphlet explaining in simple terms the functions of the Commission and the way individuals may approach the Commission if they believe that their human rights have been transgressed. That pamphlet is being translated into a number of languages, other than English, for circulation through their respective ethnic groups to people whose first language is not English. I have recently perused papers relating to the 17th Session of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights held in Geneva in October 1982. Australia's report to that Committee, presented under the terms of Article 40 of the Covenant which relate to the measures adopted to give effect to the rights recognised by the Covenant and the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights, appears to have received general commendation. But among the questions which were asked by members of other State delegations was one concerning the nature and scope of publicity activities carried out in Australia in relation to the provisions of the Covenant. One question was whether the Covenant was published in Australia in languages other than English and specifically in Aboriginal languages. It seems to me that the effect of all of the provisions of the Covenant can be appreciated only after

intensive study and I am not convinced that a mere translation of the Covenant itself into other languages would do much to promote the knowledge of the human rights therein enshrined, or their observance. I do think that the progressive publication of various documents relating to the purpose of the Commission and its undertakings and functions in languages other than English is likely to do more to achieve that end.

Another question which was asked at that Committee meeting was whether the Commission was empowered to receive complaints from individuals. Of course it is so empowered and, between 10 December 1981 and 30 June 1982, 381 complaints of racial discrimination were handled by the Commission and 97 complaints relating to human rights, other than those which offended by racial discrimination, were considered. Many of the complaints on matters of racial discrimination concern the publication by newspaper or magazine or by radio or television or by word of mouth which is scurrilous and which is offensive to persons of certain ethnic groups. Similar complaints are made in relation to attacks upon the practices of those adhering to a particular religion. To date there has been no legislation outlawing such statements except that which relates to offences such as criminal libel or the publication of obscene or blasphemous material, which does not afford a basis for proceedings in most of the matters which are the subject of complaints to the Commission. We have called for and received submissions and have conducted a public seminar in Melbourne upon issues related to racist propaganda and the publication of views which may involve a contravention of Article 20 of the Covenant in that they constitute advocacy of national, racial and religious hatred and contain incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The Commission is acutely aware of the necessity to preserve the right to freedom of expression which is enshrined in Article 19 of the Covenant but realises that, as provided in that Article, freedom of speech should be subject to

restrictions necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others or for the protection of national security or public order or public health or morals. We have not yet reached any conclusion as to whether there should be legislation to combat what we see as a pernicious and hurtful course of conduct which some people and groups of people indulge in or whether Australia should rely upon education alone to eradicate this evil.

You will understand that, when I talk of legislation, I must speak of it in the limited sphere in which the Human Rights Commission Act operates. The preamble to the Act specifically states the aim that the laws of the Commonwealth and the conduct of persons administering those laws conform with the provisions of the Covenant, the Declarations to which I have already referred and other international instruments relating to human rights and freedoms. It does not purport to impinge upon the laws of the States or of the Northern Territory. In this respect a distinction is to be drawn between the Human Rights Commission Act and the Racial Discrimination Act which proscribes any act by any person involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition of any human rights or fundamental freedom. That Act makes unlawful certain specific acts, such as the refusal to accept a person as a tenant of land on the ground of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. It was in relation to this statute that Mr Grassby spoke on the occasion of **the** last Lalor Address of a battle to be fought in the New Year, in his words, "but this time not at Eureka but in the High Court of Australia". He was referring to the litigation which has now been heard in the High Court of Australia, and which is commonly referred to as "the Koowarta case", in which the High Court, by a majority of four to three, held that ss.9 and 12 of the Racial Discrimination Act, which are the sections to which I have already referred, generally are

valid. This gives rise to an even greater necessity for the education of the public as to their rights and responsibilities under that Act and to the actions, such as to those of which I have spoken, which may constitute an infringement of the Act.

The Commission intends that its newsletter entitled "Human Rights", of which there has been only one issue to date, will be published on a bi-monthly basis. This will enable those members of the public who are interested in the work of the Commission to keep themselves advised as to what the Commission is doing, what the Commissioner for Community Relations is doing, what has been happening generally in Australia in the courts and elsewhere in relation to human rights and what is planned for the future. We want to encourage the co-operation of those other bodies in Australia which are working towards the acceptance and the recognition of all the human rights referred to in the Covenants and in the Declarations. There are a number of non-governmental organisations undertaking sterling work in this field. The Commission wishes to meet representatives of those bodies wherever possible. To this end we have had meetings of the Commission this year in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as well as in Canberra. Next year we will add Perth to our meeting places and will also return to Melbourne because our meeting there was a brief one in conjunction with the Seminar on Racial Discrimination to which I have already referred. We have just completed our Adelaide meeting and have had the opportunity of discussions with representatives of some non-governmental organisations. Earlier in the year we had a full day seminar with the national representatives of such organisations in Sydney. Our resources are limited for the tremendous tasks which the Human Rights Commission Act and the Racial Discrimination Act have entrusted to us and we do rely upon the assistance of men and women of goodwill in the community, a large number of whom can be reached through the non-governmental organisations. Further, we do not wish to duplicate the work which those bodies are already undertaking with success. So that consultation is essential.

Mr Grassby, early in his term of office, saw the advantage of having consultative committees in the various States, the members of whom could assist him in the performance of his onerous tasks under the Racial Discrimination Act. The Commission and the present Commissioner for Community Relations see great benefit in the continuation of such committees. In South Australia, Mr John Kiosoglous S.M. has willingly acted, with the assistance of a committee which he has gathered, in attempting to solve problems before they reach the stage of formal complaints. I am grateful to him that, in the midst of his many duties both official and unofficial, he finds time for the performance of this worthwhile task and I am gratified that he is willing to continue it.

I have said that the Human Rights Commission Act concerns itself with laws and practices of the Commonwealth. It does envisage however co-operation with the States. By s.11 of the Act the Federal Attorney-General may make arrangements with the Attorney-General of a State for the Commission to operate in association with State agencies. This is an area in which arrangements to date have been somewhat tentative. As this address is being given in my own State may I convey to the Attorney-General and the Ministers of the new Government my hope that a blueprint for co-operation upon a more formal level may be worked out here as a prototype for co-operation with all the other States. Each State is proud whenever it leads in the area of social reforms and this is a part of social reform in which I suggest that South Australia should be able to meet the challenge.

I have pointed out that the Human Rights Commission Act is concerned only with the laws of the Commonwealth and the conduct of persons administering those laws. It has been enjoined to examine such laws for the purpose of ascertaining whether they are inconsistent with or contrary to any human rights and to report to the Minister the results of any such

examination. As the Government has announced its intention of amending the Australian Citizenship Act 1948, the Commission decided that it should give priority to a review of the Act as it stood so that its recommendations concerning any conflict with human rights could be considered by the Government before the Bill was introduced. The report of the Commission, which was presented to the Attorney-General on 25 August 1982, was tabled in Parliament on 21 October 1982. The Commission's view was that some sections of the 1948 Act, under which an alien within the meaning of the Act is subject to disabilities which are not suffered by persons who have the status of British subjects or are Irish citizens, discriminate on the basis of national origin and may infringe not only the Racial Discrimination Convention and the Covenant but also ss. 9 and 10 of the Racial Discrimination Act. Other sections discriminate on the grounds of sex or marital status.

In cases before the High Court and the Federal Court of Australia, reference has been made by some judges to the effect upon the family of the deportation of a parent who is an alien and who has been found guilty of an offence which renders him liable to deportation. Such powers should be exercised only after due regard has been given to the rights of the family which is described in Article 23 of the Covenant as "the natural and fundamental group of society" and as being "entitled to protection by society and the State". Further, the first principle set forth in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child is that the child shall enjoy all the rights set forth in the Declaration "without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself or of his family". What should be ensured is that at least all migrants are treated on equal terms. Whether there should be a period after which we should accept the migrant as being absorbed into this country, even if he has not applied for citizenship, and take him "warts and all", is a matter for further discussion and one upon which there will be varying views.

This evening is concerned with community relations and with the recognition of the fact that Australia is a community made up of people whose origins or the origins of whose forefathers were in many different countries and of the original inhabitants of this country. It is an occasion when we should acknowledge the fact that we are such a country. What I have just said indicates that at some stage we have to accept, as Australians, even those who have seriously blotted their copybooks and whom those from the same ethnic group may not be enthusiastic to acknowledge. There are however many thousands of settlers in this country who have brought to Australia what are the best traditions of their countries of origin. The Commission appreciates the value to be gained by a recognition of multiculturalism in Australia. The four principles of multiculturalism propounded by the Australian Council of Population and Ethnic Affairs are social cohesion, freedom to maintain one's own cultural identity, equality of opportunity and equal responsibility for and commitment to participation in Australian society. Article 27 of the Covenant says:-

"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

The four principles of multiculturalism are in accord with the inalienable human rights set out in Article 27 of the Covenant. We realise that those rights are not always given their full recognition. We will welcome suggestions as to any reforms which we may recommend within the terms of our charter which may ensure the adherence to those rights. Of particular concern are the rights of Aborigines, the majority of whom wish to maintain their own cultural identity and still be given equality of opportunity within the community. A very substantial number of the complaints which the Commission receives relating to racial discrimination concern inequality of opportunities to

Aboriginals - the opportunity to have security of land tenure, the opportunity to participate generally in Australian society, the opportunity to enjoy their own culture, to use their own languages, and at the same time to participate fully in the decision-making of the community. This is a problem which arose nearly 200 years ago. It has gradually increased in dimension and is not going to be capable of simple solution. That is not an excuse for failure to tackle it. The Commission is alive to the many problems in this area which fall for solution. It has no ready answers to these problems but it does intend to come to grips with them wherever they come within its competence and will use its best endeavours at least to effect some reduction in the number and complexity of the human rights problems of Aboriginals.

I would not wish to conclude this address without paying a tribute to Al Grassby. I said when speaking at a seminar a short time ago that he might well have earned the title of "Mr Ethnic". I used that term, not in its original medieval meaning of "heathen", but as referring to one who has done more than anybody else in Australia to make Australians realise that we are a nation composed of many -divers people, He has been untiring in his efforts to make the Racial Discrimination Act work and in my opinion those efforts have met with considerable success. In so doing he has faced .disapprobation with fortitude if not equanimity (a quality which I venture to suggest is unknown to him) and doubtless earned the disapproval of those who would wish to forget our diversity and emphasise the heritage common to a substantial number of but not all Australians. This has not in any way deflected him from his purpose. I have no doubt that, had he been present at the Eureka Stockade in 1.854, he would have been the first to subscribe to the oath taken by the supporters of Lalor "to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties". Indeed, had Al been present at that historic meeting of miners, I think it probable that the address being

given tonight would come to you under the title of "The Grassby Address". I cannot see him in the role of a lieutenant. I think that he would have been the leader. The Human Rights Commission is grateful to him for all the assistance which he has so readily and cheerfully given to it.

Mr Les Nayda

Probably the greatest single cause of anger and frustration among all Aborigines, whether tribal or urban, is the fact that at no time since the annexation of Australia in 1788 have we been officially or unofficially permitted to control our own destinies. The pain, the fear, the anger .. as well as the despair felt by Aboriginal groups, in the past, who have been hunted down, shot, poisoned, institutionalised on the grounds of race alone, dying of introduced diseases ... all this can be imagined by almost anyone who cares to think about it deeply enough. Our frustration over the history of our treatment by non-Aborigines arises from the fact that, across the board, there has been what amounts to an organised conspiracy of silence about what has really happened to us since 1788.

Because history is always written by the victors, the majority of non-Aborigines simply do not know and have never been in a position to know, what it has been like for us, these past 194 years. I am not going to dwell on the bigger, more obvious atrocities which have only recently begun to receive proper historical treatment and in many cases appropriate condemnation. If you want to know about those events, you can read about them in the increasing numbers of books which are becoming available to the general reading public.

What I want to tell you about is how it feels, to be known as an Aboriginal. The name, the label, have you ever thought about it? It's not a name like "English", which comes from the ancestors who were Angles, or "French", which comes from the tribal name Franks. We have to bear a general name imposed from outside, because that is what, for want of a better term, the non-Aboriginal newcomers decidea to call us.

Briefly, they toyed with the idea of "Indians" for us too, and in some parts of the country we are simply, still, "natives". To be "Aboriginal" simply means that we were and we are the original people, or their descendants, still living in the land that has been ours for at least 40,000 years. It means "of origin" and beyond that says nothing of who we are and where our land is. It is a handy, grab-bag term, one that is useful for official purposes and one that denies us the dignity of our true being. We consider it in the same light as the word "foreigner" - simply meaning one who is not from here.

In continuing to use the term, we are, ourselves, denying our heritage, the splendour of our ancient cultures and the specific nature of our own particular nations. Make no mistake, as the white people from Europe have their nations, so have the Aranda, the Walbiri, the Pitjantjatjara. So when I say I am an "Aboriginal", what am I really saying about me? At best, I am saying that I am not something else - I am not German or Irish; I am not Vietnamese or Taiwanese. I am a descendant of the people who were living here on this continent when the English arrived to claim it as theirs. Can you understand what it feels like always to be designated as something that is nothing? Can you understand how different it feels to be known for what one is, rather than what one is not?

I am a person of Aranda descent.

The continued use of the term "Aboriginal" makes it more difficult for those of us facing current problems and fighting to make some sense of the scattered jigsaw which has been our experience for so many desperate years. It means that people can talk about "the Aboriginal problem" as if it were one big difficulty to be solved by one big decision, as soon as anyone, usually white, decides exactly what is for the best. They say "Aborigines ... do this ... do that ...". Well, which group are you talking about? Are you talking about me and my family, plugged into a European lifestyle, living in suburbia,

with a mortgage, a motor car, a deep-freeze and a front lawn to keep watered? Or are you talking about Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji of Wattle Greek, a leader of his people, speaking his own language, running a cattle station and battling the blindness of trachoma?

Correspondingly, when you say, or hear, the word "Aboriginal" do you immediately think about the sad groups of despairing people who are hooked on cheap alcohol and are usually the most visible to whites? I ask the question because this is going to be one of the problems which must be tackled over the next few years. However, the saddest and most depressing fact is that, for most Aborigines, the given term "Aborigines" is about the only one we can, with any degree of certainty, use to explain who we are.

I refer also, of course, to those countless numbers who were removed from their families, dispersed and denied their heritage by succeeding generations of government and church bodies. It is only in the last few years that it has been illegal, in most States of the Commonwealth, to remove Aboriginal children from their families and deny them their heritage. This basic denial of human rights, the right of every person to know who and what they are, has been officially sanctioned policy in this country for over one hundred and eighty years.

To many non-Aboriginals, determined to see Aborigines merely as primitives who refuse to conform to the norm displayed by the majority white European community, there is something foolish in their continuing to cling to the old traditional ways. To control the situation, it became official policy to remove children from the older people, by such methods as taking them away to school, or forcing them to live in dormitories on reserves and missions, or removing them and putting them in homes, like orphan asylums, where they could be brought up white

and trained to be "useful" members of the servant or labouring class, so that the old influences could be watered down and eliminated. This was done, in the very near past, to hundreds of children who were thought to have non-Aboriginal genes in them.

They were declared by the authorities as "white" and thus no longer black, or Aboriginal. The trauma within cannot be imagined. They were taught to be ashamed of their relatives and they were warned to keep away from them at all costs. The psychologically destructive forces at work in such a policy are only now beginning to be acknowledged by people for whom it had previously been an article of faith. They were like animals, kept from their families by wire fences, if not by hundreds of miles.

But then what happens? When you are grown and go out into the world, you find that you are not one thing and you are not the other. You are not Aranda, because you do not know how they live and speak. You are labelled "Aboriginal" and you have to accept that, simply because that name tells the world, and you, that you are not English or Scottish or Italian.

Even if you have a name, which is what normally is used as a cultural identifier, it is a name which has been given to you by a non-Aboriginal, often chosen quite at random and having no meaning beyond being a label. It is an alias. It is an assumed name. It is a denial of one's own true self.

In non-Aboriginal society, if a person chooses to take a new name and to erase forever his or her old, family, name, it is usually because either he or she or they have done something which it is felt is better hidden or forgotten. For one reason or another, the change of name means that the new name is preferable to the old. How then do you think a lot of Aborigines feel when they know that the name they have is a name which is no more and no less than a label, a handle? You have to have a name, so what's in a name?

Since 1788 when we were still a majority in this country, we have become a minority people. Through death from disease, despair and deliberate destruction and dispossession, our numbers fell so fast it was thought that we were going to do the decent thing, follow the Darwinian doctrine of "survival of the fittest" and vanish off the face of the earth. At the same time, waves of displaced persons from the British Isles, Europe and Asia have been flooding in, hoping for a new start and a better chance in life. Many of them were also discriminated against by virtue of their race, the Chinese labourers and miners, the Kanakas of the sugar fields, the Indian and Afghan cameleers, the Italians, the Greeks, the Maltese, the Jews and the Irish. Discrimination was officially sanctioned, because although there was a suggestion that an anti-discrimination clause should go into the Constitution of the new Commonwealth of Australia, when it was being drafted prior to 1901, it was decided not to bother about it, as every State practised racial discrimination.

It was not until 1966 that South Australia, under Don Dunstan, brought in an appropriate Act, the Prohibition of Discrimination Act. However, it proved to be little more than a gesture, being almost impossible to enforce in law.

It was another nine years before the Federal Government decided to act, when Gough Whitlam launched the Federal Racial Discrimination Act in October 1975. In his introductory speech, when presenting the Act, Gough Whitlam said:

"The main sufferers in Australian society, the main victims of social deprivation and restricted opportunity, have been the oldest Australians on the one hand, the Aboriginal Australians, and the newest Australians, the migrants, on the other."

It is important to remember that the last seven years have been *the* only seven years in Australia's history since 1788 when it has been illegal to victimise someone because of their race, their colour, ethnic background or descent. For the previous 187 years, racial discrimination has not only been

permitted, but actively encouraged by governments and community organisations at every level of society.

But here is another problem. The word , "ethnic" originally, I believe, meant all non-Jewish people, that is all pagan and heathen people. Times change, and with them meanings of words. "Ethnic" then came to mean people who were not either Jewish or Christian. Next it came to mean something referring to a specific speech group or race of people. Now it is used to refer to members of the community who are migrants or the descendants of migrants, whose native language is not English.

And this is where we feel hostility and frustration - when we are included in the usual list of minority groups in the community - either as ethnics, or with them, and the handicapped, homosexuals and women. We are not ethnics and never will be ethnics. We are Aboriginal, if we have to be for want of a better word, but we are not ethnics, as the word now is used. I wish people who make the legislation would keep that in mind and keep us as a separate and quite distinct minority group, until we have overcome the vast differences between us and the rest of **the** community and we have effectively controlled the discrimination which has been shown us for so many years.

We are the original people. We are proud of it.

We have no desire to be wallowed up in a mass of other minority groups, whose problems and attitudes are poles apart from ours, although their suffering may well be, to the casual observer, similar. We have fought back, over the years, against dispossession, decimation, pacification, assimilation and integration.

We have resisted it all. We are not, now, going to take kindly to being assimilated into a larger minority grouping of people, simply because the powerful majority thinks it is tidier that way - less discriminatory.

There is another sort of discrimination which we cannot accept. It is a subtle thing and, like so much which we have had to live with over the years, a cause of much hidden frustration and anger. It concerns this business of discrimination against Aborigines who look less Aboriginal than others and who, as a consequence, are expected by the community at large to behave "more like Europeans". That is, I suppose, we are expected to cast off any remaining vestige of Aboriginality and to have gratefully "assimilated".

It doesn't work that way. It is a matter of pride in one's race, in one's cultural heritage, in the values of one's ancestors. There is practically nothing in the past experience of most European-looking Aborigines which make them feel that they want to be classed as European.

To the vast majority of Aborigines, their experiences with the vast majority of non-Aborigines have been that the non-Aborigine has been very much a fair-weather friend when it came to attitudes and relationships with Aborigines. Depending on the circumstances, the cause, the political pay-off, you behave that way - whatever way it is - because you are an Aboriginal. You dress that way because you are an Aboriginal. You only say that because you are an Aboriginal. The implication is that it is your Aboriginality which makes you react that way, if that way is not what your critic, or society at large, wants to hear. The implication is that you are deliberately and unnecessarily playing up your Aboriginality just for the sake of being difficult. Or that your Aboriginality makes you a natural deviant and that no matter how hard you try you are never going to get rid of that deviant streak, which is what they say would be best for everyone. So when it suits them, you are what you are, because you are an Aboriginal.

However, there are other times when it suits them not to see you as an Aboriginal. Sometimes, it is spoken, sometimes implied, but the message is very obvious for all of us, and it is this. "Why do you go on trying to be an Aboriginal when there is no need. You don't look like one, act like one, think like one. You could pass for white. No-one would know you were Aboriginal. Why go on telling everyone you are Aboriginal."

The hidden message? Why would anyone want to admit to being an Aboriginal, if no-one would otherwise know? It is this lack of understanding, this great ignorance of how we feel about ourselves and our relatives, that frustrates and angers so many of us. Can you imagine how it feels always to have the feeling that non-Aborigines consider that you have "advanced" or "risen above" or "left all that behind", if you look more European than Aboriginal, and have chosen to follow your own destiny and slip into a middle-class type job, live in a middle-class type house and aspire to middle-class type possessions? The implied slur on one's relatives who are not interested in the sorts of things that interest you and who prefer to keep more to the old non-Aboriginal stereotype picture of Aboriginality is offensive and hurtful.

Let me explain further. Once the old 1910, 1911 Aboriginal Protection Acts were repealed, in **the** early to mid-sixties, and once the 1967 referendum had allowed us the dignity of being counted as Australian citizens, it was no longer necessary for a lot of near-white Aboriginal families to keep their secret hidden. In South Australia, for instance, from 1911 until the mid-sixties, every child born to Aboriginal parents became, by law, a ward of the State until they were 21 years old. Aboriginal parents had absolutely no say over what happened to their children. Prior to that, they had little say in the matter, either, but at least that had been an unofficial policy and not nearly as repressive in practice.

Once that 1911 Act became law here, no person identified as being an Aborigine, or a descendant of an Aboriginal, had any control over their lives from the moment of birth until they breathed their last. And just before that happened, they were not even allowed to make their wills. You were told you could live, who could employ you, how much you should be paid and who you could live with.

How then would anyone who had not been put on that long, long list of "Persons of Aboriginal Descent" wish to be caught in the dragnet and sacrifice what little freedom there had been for a life utterly dependant on the whims and the nature of every police officer in the State who was, at the same time, both protector and prosecutor; of a variety of all-powerful welfare offices, whose word could have you confined for years to a reserve or mission of their choice, or denied access to your family and friends, because you had been restrained from ever visiting your old home/reserve/mission again.

And so it was that this divisive and mischievous piece of legislation lay for over 50 years on the statute books, dividing families, splitting old friendships, bringing untold shame and pain to those who could not admit to being what they were and bringing hurt and misery to those who would not claim them as kin, in case they too went on the list as "proclaimed" Aborigines.

It is a fact of life Aborigines have lived with for a long, long time. And it was only when it was safe for a lot of us to admit to being what we are, and start acknowledging our great heritage, that this next cruel accusation began to cut deeply into us.

1972 saw the setting up of a Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and with it a new deal for Aborigines right across Australia. There was money to be spent, there were people needed as advisers and as executives in the new Department and its branches in the States. It all coincided with the new-found strength and pride in acknowledging one's identity as an Aboriginal. It led to the non-Aboriginal jibe that it was only after there was money to be had, advantages to be gained, and positions to be filled, that many of us began to say we were Aborigines. We were, and still are, called "Professional Aborigines", yellow-fellers, half-white stirrers (note the switch in emphasis - half-white, not half-Aboriginal). And we have been accused of jumping on the Aboriginal bandwagon for our own doubtful ends.

We know it for what it is. It is all part of the divide and rule game. It is a non-Aboriginal concept, this graded Aboriginality.

If I look European, I have some relatives who look very Aboriginal. To all of us, there is no such thing as being a little Aboriginal or very Aboriginal. We are all Aboriginal. Full stop.

But there are other problems too. And this is one of those delicate areas I would like to talk about. Many of us who have a more sophisticated European education and have come to understand more about how the majority society conducts its business find ourselves in various organisations at various levels of decision making. This is not just a power-seeking urge on our part, those of us who work, for instance, in the public service at a more senior level, as I do. It is not that we are primarily concerned with promotion and power.

It is a very complex business. In Aboriginal society, second hand information can be, and very often is, misconstrued. If I go out to a community, simply as a lower-level liaison officer, to pass on information or to get feedback, the impact of what I am telling them or am being told is usually blunted because they see me as being, rightly, a person who is giving and receiving information, which I must then pass on to someone, unknown, who may or may not react appropriately.

SO Aborigines are needed high up in all branches and areas where Aboriginal matters are being pursued. But it doesn't end there. The sacrifices that are made are enormous. If we act according to the non-Aboriginal model, and meet the expectations of our non-Aboriginal colleagues and superiors, we are always open to the hostility and suspicion of our relatives and friends that, in some way, we have become "coconuts" - black on the outside, white inside. If we try to walk a little more on the Aboriginal side, we are quickly made aware of the fact that it's all very well to be an Aboriginal, as long as we don't behave like one at work.

The problem is: where should our loyalties lie? As we become more and more articulate, as we learn more and more about our jobs, we discover more and more uncomfortable facts about hidden, hard-core discrimination within organisations, departments and society. We understand more and more clearly just how deep are the injustices which society inflicts on Aborigines, how entrenched are the methods of perpetuating these injustices and how pitifully ignorant others, but particularly Aborigines, are about all of this.

Because we are public servants, or employees within an organisation, we are gagged by our position. Silence is the price we must pay if we are to retain our jobs.

Eventually it becomes an internal fight within ourselves whether to speak out and reveal the truth about the injustices or whether we conform to the generally accepted practice of accepting the status quo and let it all limp along as it has for so long. This is where there is very real and distressing conflict. If you speak out, you may lose your job and with it any future chances of doing other things which might, in the long run, be as important as the wrongs you have righted by speaking. On the other hand, there comes a time when what you know becomes too much of a personal burden to carry and your life becomes a nightmare of stress and confusion. You feel anger when you listen to non-Aboriginal people casually and clinically outlining some plan which you know to be totally unfair and which you know will be destructive to the rightful expectations of a group of Aborigines, who are once again going to be let down or sold short or manipulated in some way.

What is the answer? Is there an alternative way of getting the facts across to the group in danger or to those who may be able to act on their behalf, without jeopardising your own position? Is this what leaks are all about? Is this how the game is played at the very highest levels of the executive pyramid?

I think the real problem for a lot of us is that we have quite a different attitude to our role and quite a different set of expectations, as far as our colleagues are concerned. There is no wonder at all that the burn-out rate among Aborigines in the higher decision making levels of all sorts of Aboriginal-oriented organisations is as high as it is. The rules are laid down by non-Aborigines, mainly for non-Aboriginal executives to carry out, on behalf of Aboriginal communities and groups. It hardly seems a formula that can continue unchallenged.

In the meantime our task is to stay within the guidelines, while seeing how far we can bend them to accommodate what we know to be a more enlightened outlook. We accept our role, because it is our belief that without Aborigines in positions of authority, it is only non-Aboriginal needs that are being satisfied.

And that is not what it is all supposed to be about. If self-determination is to be anything more than a comfortable catch-phrase, there must be Aborigines at all levels of the pyramid.

If we are needed at the top, we are equally necessary right down through to the broad base of the structure so that it can really be an opportunity to manage our own affairs.

Sometimes you feel hopeful about the way things are shaping. Many non-Aboriginal people seem to be growing more aware and becoming more sensitive and inclined to listen to what Aborigines have to say. Then you come across something that makes you feel that this is still the nineteenth century.

This was taken from a report, currently being circulated for comment:

"There are great difficulties in having a traditional Aboriginal, such as Mr X, as chief executive officer in a health delivery system. By virtue of the cultural background the traditional Aboriginal does not, and arguably cannot, decide on European issues and problems. His culture has not taught him the role of a task oriented administration ...".

Frankly, in 1982 it is the same old colonial attitude of "Whites Know Best".

Community Relations in a Multi-Cultural Society:  
Community Reaction and a Plan of Action

by Joseph C. Doueihi

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a great honour for me to be officially invited here tonight in memory of such a significant event in the history of this nation, one synonymous with the name of that great Australian Peter Lalor.

It is unfortunate that not too many post-War migrants are fully aware of the Eureka Stockade and those magnificent men and women who stood up, against all the odds, in dignity and heroism.

Their action and their sacrifice, which took place in 1854, played an enormous role in the shaping of the Australian character. At the same time it cemented the foundation stone for Australia's independence from colonial rule (though it was not until 1901 that the six States of this continent came together and agreed to become a Federation). I believe that the men of the Eureka Stockade were strongly motivated by lack of identity and colonial oppression, two essential factors in raising human rights and the human spirit.

The rulers of the day felt appalled and angered that Lalor and his men would embark on such action against the might of their English masters. Having dealt with them in the most severe manner, they set out to suppress their deeds by branding them as criminals, convicts and immigrants who got what they deserved for disturbing the peace.

In most other countries, these men would have been proclaimed as martyrs and heroes by future generations. Yet, with the exception of a small number of those who study Australian history, very few people are in fact aware of the name Peter Lalor, or his contribution to our nation.

No doubt the reason for suppressing such an important event in Australian history was mainly due to the control of the printed media by the so-called members of the establishment. These men occupied important positions within the administration of the colonies. We read that Peter Lalor was a genteel and Persuasive man. In fact, he was well off in his own right and it would hardly seem likely that he would embark on leading an uprising unless he was strongly motivated by a genuine belief that his fellow Australians deserved a better life and some human dignity.

And if one looks at the background of those gallant Australians who fought and died in the battle of the Eureka Stockade, one learns quickly that Australia has always been a nation of immigrants. Irish, Italians, German, Swedes, French and many others have made up the Australian nation - ever since the First Fleet.

They say Australia is a lucky country. I say "yes", because it has always been a nation of cultural diversity. A friend of mind, Reuben H. Scarf, said to me once that when two minds get together, a third invisible mind emerges.

In 1982 - some 150 years later - I believe that we are still searching for an Australian entity in a multi-cultural society.

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Today a large proportion of our People continuously wonder about their true identity. They are mainly Australians of non-English speaking origin. They are often subjected to isolation, lack of opportunity, lack of participation and above all, lack of communication. In other words, as far as the quest for harmony, unity and social integration is concerned, 1982 differs very little from 1854. Some refer to us as Europeans. Others say we are Asians. The majority feel that we are still British. I say we are none of these. We are Australians.

Close community relations are valuable insurance. to the future of our nation, proper communications and an improved educational system are urgently needed for our current and future generations. It would be most unwise to delude ourselves that things will sort themselves out. They will not. We need to work at them. Let nobody tell You that racism and Prejudice is a thing of the past. It is not.

Recent remarks by some more traditional and respected organisations and individuals are very surprising, to say the least.

We have recently read that a growing sector of the community seems (wrongly) to believe that immigration is partly to blame for our serious unemployment situation. This is a most unwise deduction, if I may so, at a time of severe economic recession. It is a classic example of passing the buck and blaming others.

In 1974 a special United Nations Committee came out with some interesting statistics. It showed that a twenty year old person would cost his or her country \$62,000 to reach that age in a western society. The Committee went on to say that the moment he or she decided to migrate, the total amount spent would be gained by the new country of adoption.

Suggestions that multiculturalism is a myth and is unworkable should also be rejected. These suggestions seem to call for total assimilation, in agreement with the thinking of our original colonial leaders, whose lack of understanding created the tragedy of the Eureka stockade. Multiculturalism in Australia has been accepted by all the major political parties, including the current Fraser Government. Mr Fraser has on many occasions declared that Australia is a multicultural society living under the one flag and with total allegiance to the one nation. Freedom of expression and the right to equal opportunity and participation is fundamental to our democracy. Australians of all backgrounds have accepted the need for integration.

Another suggestion which must be rejected is that ethnic organisations and some community leaders are trouble-makers because of their actions in promoting community languages and other divisive issues which are seen as divisive. One would have thought that people making such suggestions would have realised that the learning of English by one newly arrived, whose first priority is to obtain a job in a new country and a roof over his family's head, is not exactly a simple matter.

And while accepting and supporting the concept of learning the language of the adopted country, I often wonder how long it would take people of the views mentioned to learn another language as immigrants in a strange land. It would no doubt be most interesting to ask those people to learn Chinese, Arabic, Greek or any of the Yugoslavian languages while having a wife and two children to look after in a new and strange environment.

These remarks, ladies and gentlemen, which are divisive in nature and often extreme, have all the signs of being unfair and un-Australian. They are often the product of a desire to make political capital at the expense of other people. Such comments by reputable individuals, who happen to be in a position to sway public opinion, is all the more dangerous at a time of economic difficulty, when job opportunities are few. Al Grassby said in 1979 that the ugly face of prejudice was more likely to surface at a time of economic recession.

He went on to say that if the unemployment situation was to deteriorate further, we must be on the lookout to promote harmony, unity, tolerance and understanding, or we may pay a very heavy price for our lack of concern.

I don't know whether we as a community have done enough in the past to promote such wonderful ideals for the benefit of our nation as a whole. Equally, I am not totally convinced that we have been able to promote these sensitive issues in a professional manner. Al Grassby was the original pioneer here. We must all learn from his valuable experience.

The current print and electronic mainstream media must be used fully and professionally to promote closer community relations among all our people, with all its different components.

This undertaking should be accepted by the Human Rights Commission in conjunction with the office of Community Relations and in consultation with various complementary organisations within our Australian society. If you seriously accept such a responsibility, you must obtain the Government's moral and financial support in order to achieve your objectives.

Your argument for special funding, to promote vigorously the concept of community relations, must be based on a total conviction that Australia as a whole will eventually benefit from such an exercise. I am in fact suggesting that a television and radio campaign be seriously considered to promote community relations.

The Vietnamese incident in the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta in 1981 prompted the Sydney Daily Mirror, in a front page editorial, to call for an educational program on community relations as soon as possible.

Our Federal and State Governments spend many millions of dollars annually on community programs that use mainly the electronic media. Programs that immediately come to mind include "Life Be In It", "Keep Your City Tidy", "Save Our Energy" etc., and it would be quite appropriate to argue that community relations is a legitimate and essential community program.

If we believe that ignorance is the main cause of prejudice, and the lack of communication and information is the cause of ignorance, then the answer is quite obvious.

After living in this country for more than thirty years, I have also detected the fact that educational and cultural background indeed do play a very important role in the behaviour of individuals. For example, let me present my own findings from my recent travels around the world, attending and reporting on some cultural conventions. Being of Lebanese origin (and since there are some five million people of Lebanese ancestry in the Americas, and to a lesser amount in Africa), these were my first points of contact. To my surprise, I found that those who happened to migrate to the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand suffered from invisible inferiority complexes, while their counterparts who went to South America and Africa gave me the opposite impression. The latter often felt at least equal or slightly superior within their own different surroundings.

Australia is one of the few remaining frontier nations in the World. It has a unique multicultural population, and an equally important geographical position. As a nation of immigrants, we have a duty to make sure that our current and future generations are equally Perceived as dedicated Australians, irrespective of their origins or their colour, creed or language.

However in order to achieve these great objectives, we must have a national Plan of action deliberated upon and prepared for immediate execution. I have no doubt that most Australian institutions and individuals will strongly support you in your endeavours.

We should also be looking forward to the forthcoming bicentennial celebrations, in the hope that our planners are fully aware of the needs of our nation. This is a unique event in the history of our young country. It should provide us with the opportunity to establish a totally independent Australian identity, that will reflect the composition of our current population.

By the year 1988, we could reduce much bigotry and poverty, and provide more equal and dignified opportunities to the Australian Aboriginal community.

The Australian Bicentenary Committee is in a strong financial position to embark on a number of Projects that are in line with the promotion of community relations.

I believe that one of the first priorities is to commission the publishing of a history of the various ethnic communities, and their contribution to the development of the Australian nation.

Last year in Sydney, the Australian Lebanese community celebrated, over a three day period, one hundred years of Lebanese migration and its contribution to Australia. Yet I was amazed at how little some of our learned guests, and in fact the majority of young Lebanese, knew about the history of such a middle-sized community within our society. Most of them thought that the Lebanese came to Australia after the second War.

In fact, the first Lebanese migrant to Australia arrived at this very city of Adelaide in 1876. I believe that it was accidental. We are told that two brothers, by the name of Fachry, got on an English ship in Beirut in 1875 in the belief that they were going to Brazil to join their brother who was already settled in the city of Sao Paolo. Some four months later, they were off-loaded in the city of Adelaide in a country called Australia. Not knowing a word of English, it was not until some 48 hours later that they realised that there was no brother to meet them, and that they were in a different country. They raced back to the ship and asked the Captain to take them home, but were promptly told that this is what they had paid for, and this is where their journey ended. After a year of settling down, they wrote two letters - one to their parents in North Lebanon and one to their brother in Brazil, to explain their incredible story - their brother was still waiting for them to arrive. At the end of the letter they wrote the following: "Although we have missed you through no fault of our own, we are now settled in a new land. We used to hear a lot about your new country Brazil, and hope that you are happy there. As for our new country, it is called Australia. And without reflecting on your new country, we are glad that the English ship took the wrong turn. We would like you to join us in Australia because it is the greatest country in the world." One year after that, the two young brothers moved to Melbourne, where soon after they were joined by the other brother from Brazil. The other letter - sent to their parents in Lebanon - was the prime instigator in promoting immigration from Lebanon to Australia henceforth.

Over the following one hundred and six Years, Australians of Lebanese origin have played a very important role in the development of this country. They have made significant contributions in the fields of law, commerce, medicine, politics, the arts and many other fields - including process work in Australian factories. My sincere hope is that they will always be perceived as good Australians.

Since 1851, Lebanese have migrated to all Parts of the world. Today there **are** five million people of Lebanese origin - mainly in the Americas (there are only three million living in Lebanon). Some two hundred thousand Australians of Lebanese origin have made this country their new home. And I would like to echo the sentiments of the Fachry brothers in 1876 by repeating that, in 1982, Australia is still the greatest country in the world.

Distinguished guests, the third of December has always been an important day on the Australian calendar. Since 1975, however, and under the auspices of the Hon. Al Grassby, it has also provided a forum for a number of eminent speakers to address us on the most important subject of community relations and the history of our country. Equally important is that such an address carries the name of Peter Lalor who, I am very much convinced, future generations will judge a very great Australian indeed.

In conclusion, may I say that I am very honoured to be given this opportunity to be with you on this very important occasion, and sincerely hope that my limited contribution may be of some help in our future deliberations on community relations.

