

Militant Qld. black march

From Daisy Marchisotti in Brisbane

REPERCUSSIONS from the militant Aborigines and Islanders demonstration against the new Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Bills now before Parliament will be widespread. The march and militant demonstration broke much new ground in the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement Movement.

It was significant for many reasons:

- It was the biggest and most daring Aboriginal action ever to take place. Nine people were arrested, seven being Aborigines, two under 16 years of age. More than 50 police guarded the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Queens Park opposite and another large group guarded Parliament House.

- It made the front page of both evening and morning papers and top billing on all three TV news channels.

- For the first time Australian Council of Churches dignitaries marched with the Aborigines and acted as observers. They were shocked by Queensland's police state methods. As the Rev. Cliff Wright, the Convenor of the Southport Conference against Racism, said: "All this would never have happened if the Director, Mr. Killoran, had come out and talked to the black people as they requested."

- It created schisms and criticisms among members of the Australian Council of Churches who are airing their differences and fears publicly on TV.

- Delegates to the Churches Gold Coast Conference against Racism were faced with the need to prove themselves anti-racist **IN ACTION**. Many of them did. A few were heard to urge others to march on the park side of the road and become involved.

- In bringing forward his new Aborigines and Islander legislation in the dying stages of Parliament, perhaps the Premier thought to avoid confrontations with Aborigines supported by hundreds or thousands of sympathetic militant university students. Maybe he didn't expect Aboriginal militants to win the support of delegates to a Church-sponsored anti-racist conference?

● Lunch-hour strollers and shoppers in Central City streets of Brisbane showed puzzlement, surprise — indeed some showed shock—at such a large 200-strong band of black men, women, teenagers and children and babes in arms—red bands around their heads—"Free Blacks, Stop Act" stickers on their clothes, marching determinedly and proudly along the footpaths to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Offices.

Perhaps they thought of Aborigines as only those naked black men with picturesque spears and woomeras and painted bodies, like you often see on Christmas Cards! But no, here they were, like you and me, and a large body of white people—parsons among them—marching along at the rear!

Well, it certainly was a day to remember

- Like the parson from New Zealand saying a prayer in the Maori language at the service in Don Brady's church.

- Like the Aboriginal Church itself, packed to the doors and whites sitting in the aisles on the floor, then all standing and singing "We are going, We are going, We are going to Freedom!"

- Like Aboriginal leader Denis Walker, standing on the word "POLICE" painted on the bonnet of the police car parked outside the Department of Aboriginal Affairs office door and yelling with scores of his mates, "Come out Killoran, come out Killoran!" (Aboriginal and Islands Affairs Director.)

- Like the little old grey-haired Aboriginal telling her white friend, "We were evicted from our house last night—just put on the street with all our belongings," and proudly, "It was my grandchild that picked up that stone that broke the window in the DNA office." (Dept of Native Affairs.—Ed.)

- Like the middle-aged Aboriginal mother who shook her fist at the white (no Aborigines there) office workers crowded at the windows of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs office, and shouted: "You bloody whites have robbed us of all our money, our land and our mineral wealth while our babies die of starvation!"

- Like Don Davidson, who abjured Pastor Frank Roberts as he left Don Brady's church together with a white parson, for a deputation to the Minister, Mr. Hewitt: "And don't you dare apologise for what we all did today!" and everybody shouted: "No, don't you apologise!"

- Like the arrested Aborigines lined up outside the Court House next morning giving the defiant clenched fist salute.

No! Things will never be the same again in Brisbane — and perhaps even in the whole of Queensland. And that's exactly why the Telegraph got so jittery on Tuesday evening and distorted what its reporters saw, and why Premier Bjelke-Petersen and Minister Hewitt (who never came near the demo. anyway) so eagerly snatched up the Telegraph's words and said the demonstration was "sickening and disgusting".

We wonder do they find the deaths of 17 times more Aboriginal than white babies "sickening and disgusting?" We do!

No, things will never be the same, not ever again!

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