2 STAND STRONG TOGETHER

Surprisingly, my childhood in Perth's tranquil western suburbs had prepared me for the activism of the land claims in Darwin. The years of innocence in leafy Boronia Avenue had been recorded by our gang in a hand-printed newspaper we aptly called *The Boronian*. On pages cut from exercise books were pencilled items on bonfire night, the annual Christmas concerts or the latest trivial gossip. Scandals such as, 'Does Noel have a new girlfriend?' or, 'Smiths Prang Car', boosted circulation into double figures.

Now I felt it was time to revive that dormant talent and use the printed word to reach behind the barriers at Bagot, through the squatters' camps and into the bars where Aborigines gathered. There was a little-used gestetner at the union office on the wharf, and the secretary, Brian Manning, was cooperative. He showed me how to cut the stencil and prime the messy machine with sticky black ink. All I needed was a ream of paper.

Brian featured in Frank Hardy's book, *The Unlucky Australians* (1968). Before the Gurindjis walked off Wave Hill station, he had been supportive to the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights, together with George and Moira Gibbs and Sandra Holmes, three other devoted friends of the Aborigines. Now he was opening doors with no conditions, offering his time and the free use of the old Bedford truck which had run supplies to Wattie Creek.

Choosing a catchy title for the proposed news-sheet was not difficult. One humid moonless night on Rapid Creek Beach a shouted word had registered in my mind as symbolising the bonds of kinship in the black resistance. Across the spring tide flooding the stream came a call, apparently from a wandering Aborigine:

'Bunji! Hey bunji!'

From the darkness, I shouted back a reply, 'What do you want, bunji?'

After a pause, the answer in the still night, 'That's not bunji, that's a whitefella!', revealed unspoken levels of meaning in a single word.

Urban Aborigines popularised 'bunji' as a greeting meaning 'mate' or 'comrade', while in some languages 'bunji' more specifically referred to brother-in-law. Concise, meaningful and memorable, it sounded perfect for the masthead.

The first issue was typed with Brian's typewriter in the union office at the back of the wharfies' mess room, looking over night shift gangs unloading pallets of beer from the State Ship, Kangaroo. The finished stencil with its amateurish layout and crossed-over alterations was stretched on the inky roller and, as the handle was cranked, the foolscap sheets came flicking out, piling up to a stack of five hundred identical pages.

This is your paper. Bunji is written in easy English for all the tribes to understand. But English is not the language our mothers taught us. We are proud of our language! Read Bunji and shout, 'We are proud of our colour!' (*Bunji* 1, 1971).

Wharfies taking a smoko break were non-committal about this novel approach to Aboriginal publications, imitating mission booklets in its style. They may have rightfully questioned slogans like, *Fight for our rights* or, *When are our people going to get good jobs?* in a paper written by a non-Aborigine.

Fortunately, *Bunji's* first edition coincided with the opening of the ABC television station ABD6. On the first bulletin for the new Darwin channel, watched by invited dignitaries and by most home viewers, a close-up of the one and only page was flashed on the screen in black and white. *Bunji* was already 'a household name'.

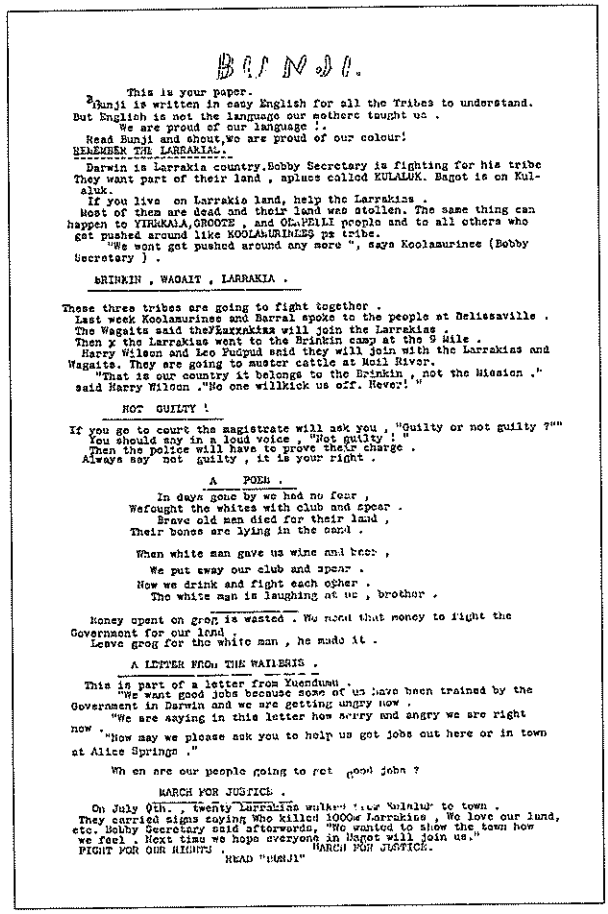
'Aborigines have been urged to plead not guilty in court appearances', said the newsreader, 'so that police will have to prove their charges. Mr Secretary says, "We won't get pushed around any more",' he read, giving details of the land claim. The *NT News* (14 August 1971) followed up next morning with the headline, 'New Black Power Bid'.

Media in Australia fed on the type of radical, racial outbursts then coming from some African Americans. Certainly the black consciousness of Bobby Seale, Angela Davis and Malcolm X was influential. However, one of Australia's most often quoted black militants in 1971, Queenslander Bobbi Sykes, who later achieved a doctorate from Harvard, claimed that: 'The words "black power" are promoted shamelessly for monetary gain by newspapers and television alike' (Harris 1972, 101–102).

The people in the town camps had heard the media version and were afraid. They knew the reality. *We lost the land because we only had spears and the whites all had guns. Many of us don't like the words 'black power'. They say that it makes trouble in America. But it only makes trouble if the government will not give us power. We have no power; we are not strong yet* (*Bunji* 4, 1971).

Resentments were turned inward by a race afraid to make trouble or offend. This was a mentality which *Bunji* attempted to analyse in later issues (*Bunji* 14, 1972):

> *Five ways to train a slave or how they kept the blacks down in the USA.*
>
> *1) Slaves must never think for themselves; they must never for a moment exercise their own will or judgment.*
>
> *2) Slaves must feel they are no good. They must never be proud of their own people.*
>
> *3) Slaves must be afraid and in awe of their master's power. They must be afraid of whites.*



BUNJI.

This is your paper.
Bunji is written in easy English for all the Tribes to understand.
But English is not the language our mothers taught us .
We are proud of our language !.
Read Bunji and shout,we are proud of our colour!

BRADMEN THE LARRAKIA.

Darwin is Larrakia country.Bobby Secretary is fighting for his tribe
They want part of their land , apluss called KULALUK. Bagot is on Kulaluk.
If you live on Larrakia land, help the Larrakias .
Most of them are dead and their land was stollen. The same thing can happen to YIRRKALA,GROOTE , and OLAPELLI people and to all others who get pushed around like KOOLAMURINES pr tribe.
"We wont get pushed around any more ", says Koolamurinee (Bobby Secretary) .

BRINKIN , WAGAIT , LARRAKIA .

These three tribes are going to fight together .
Last week Koolamurinee and Barral spoke to the people at Belissaville .
The Wagaits said theyLarrakias will join the Larrakias .
Then x the Larrakias went to the Brinkin camp at the 9 Mile .
Harry Wilson and Leo Fudpud said they will join with the Larrakias and Wagaits. They are going to muster cattle at Noil River.
"That is our country it belongs to the Brinkin , not the Mission ."
said Harry Wilson ."No one willkick us off. Never!"

NOT GUILTY !

If you go to court the magistrate will ask you , "Guilty or not guilty ?""
You should say in a loud voice , "Not guilty ! "
Then the police will have to prove their charge .
Always say not guilty , it is your right .

A POEM .

In days gone by we had no fear ,
Wefought the whites with club and spear .
Brave old men died for their land ,
Their bones are lying in the sand .

When white man gave us wine and beer ,
We put away our club and spear .
Now we drink and fight each other .
The white man is laughing at us , brother .

Money spent on grog is wasted . We need that money to fight the Government for our land .
Leave grog for the white man , he made it .

A LETTER FROM THE WAILERIS .

This is part of a letter from Yuendumu .
"We want good jobs because some of us have been trained by the Government in Darwin and we are getting angry now .
"We are saying in this letter how sorry and angry we are right now ."How may we please ask you to help us got jobs out here or in town at Alice Springs ."

When are our people going to get good jobs ?

MARCH FOR JUSTICE .

On July 9th. , twenty Larrakias walked from Kulaluk to town .
They carried signs saying Who killed 1000s Larrakias , We love our land, etc. Bobby Secretary said afterwards, "We wanted to show the town how we feel . Next time we hope everyone in Bagot will join us."
FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS . MARCH FOR JUSTICE.
READ "BUNJI"

The first edition of *Bunji*. Five hundred copies were hand distributed in Darwin. Parts were read on the first news bulletin broadcast by ABC television in the Northern Territory, 13 August 1971. The *NT News* headed its coverage, 'New Black Power Bid'

4) Slaves must accept their master's standards of correct behaviour.

5) Slaves must feel helpless and completely dependent on their masters.

The weekly pitiful parade of blacks filing through the court of summary jurisdiction was a rich source of material. Scowling, the magistrate would call the name of those on drunkenness charges. The attendant often replied, 'No appearance your worship'. Those who bothered to attend received a fine with the 'time to pay' period hastily scrawled on a docket. Usually a scruffy party of arrested drunks was escorted across the street after spending the night caged in the zoo-like enclosures of the police yard.

Contempt of court! If you go to court these days, you will hear over and over again, 'No appearance your worship'. Lately our people do not even bother to go to court. Most of us do not believe in English law any more (*Bunji* 8, 1972).

High above the entrance to the courts, a stylish sculpture was suspended with a dominant figure, one arm outstretched, palm turned upward, weighing justice in his hands above another black metal figure, head downcast and submissive. Regulars to the building took the ironical view that Justice was saying, 'Five dollar fine, pay up', to the poor blackfella below (*Bunji* 2, 1971).

Before the introduction of legal aid, *Bunji* was ahead of the times in advising: *If you go to court maybe you don't understand. You can ask for someone to talk for you in English. Ask for an interpreter. Use the name your parents gave you. We must be proud of our names. Nemarluk was proud of his. Remember to say 'Not guilty', it is your right* (*Bunji* 1, 1971).

Most *Bunji* readers had heard of Nemarluk and his 'red band', named for their ochre body-paint. In 1933, these resistance fighters from the Port Keats area defied the pursuing Northern Territory mounted police for three months before being captured. Imprisoned in the Fannie Bay gaol, Nemarluk planned and made a daring escape followed by a long cross-country journey back to his country. Eventually he was recaptured by his kinsman and chief opponent, the stubborn police tracker, Bul Bul, and died in prison in 1940 (Idriess 1947).

While the third edition of *Bunji* was being prepared, a reply to Bobby's land claim arrived from the Minister for the Interior in Canberra. He said of Kulaluk: 'No ceremonies have been conducted there for many years, and the site has long since lost any special importance that may have been attached to it. The Kulaluk water hole seems to be little different to other camping areas used by Aborigines around Darwin, and special measures to preserve the area for members of the Larrakia tribe are not justified by the known facts' (Day 1972a, 7).

Although the minister's information was wrong, in answer to his letter an unusual ceremony was held close to the water hole. I had read of the Mau Mau and Ghost Dance movements that aroused indigenous people in Kenya and North America. Borrowing some of their elements, I led members to a hidden clearing where each stepped forward and, holding a handful of Kulaluk earth, took a solemn oath of allegiance. 'Daddy's going to fight!' shouted the Rankin boys excitedly. Not surprisingly, it failed to make an impression and wasn't repeated, although it was promised that *now Kulaluk will have a new ceremony. A land ceremony. We shall promise to fight for our land* (*Bunji* 3, 1971).

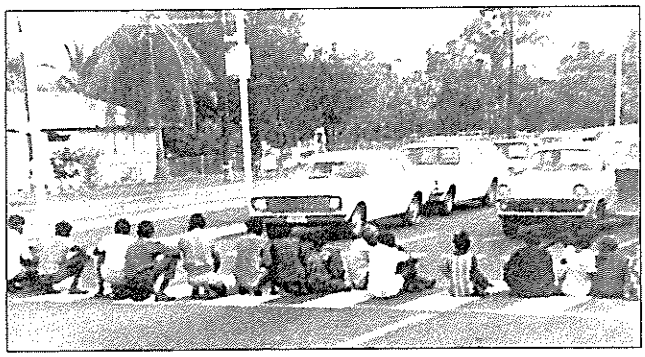
This sort of input wasn't necessary. There was already an operating underground network among the town campers who chose a life free of government interference. These were the nonconformists who did not care about official disapproval. To be sentenced to the 'green house', as the gaol was known, was no deterrent. However, it wasn't long before the Special Branch, the political wing of the police force, was taking an interest in our activities and making regular visits to the various camps.

If you won't listen we will make you listen, cried *Bunji*. Early one Monday a thinly spread line of Aborigines boldly crossed in front of the morning rush hour commuters on the only linking highway between the dormitory suburbs and the city centre, where the road approached a neck of land known as 'the Narrows'. Turning to face the oncoming vehicles, the protesters squatted down on the bitumen, long enough to cause a snarl of traffic that snaked slowly past the line of banners.

Leo Pudpud came with the Brinkin women and kids. 'I am not afraid to be locked up', said Kulamarini. 'We will show the town how we feel'. Twenty-one people sat across Bagot Road and the cars and buses and taxis all stopped for the Larrakia and Brinkin. All over Australia the people heard the news, the Larrakia and Brinkin are fighting for their land. 'Many people have died on this cross-walk,' they said (*Bunji* 3, 1971).

Peaceful sit-downs on the cross-walk were held on three occasions (*NT News* 5 October 1971, 2 and 23 November 1971; *Age* 4 November 1971). These protests required precision planning and an early start to get people from different locations together in the moments of heaviest traffic. After the first two sit-downs caught the police by surprise, the plain clothes Special Branch increased their visits to camps, asking many questions. No arrests were made, nothing more than a threat to charge me with loitering. Such a diplomatic attitude amazed those who were more used to being dumped in the back of a paddy wagon.

On 14 October, Polly wrote to her mother-in-law, 'I have finished sewing the Larrakia flag which is a very simple design. I found it quite hard to sew but tried my best. Each colour means something. Bill has been painting tins so that they can collect donations'.

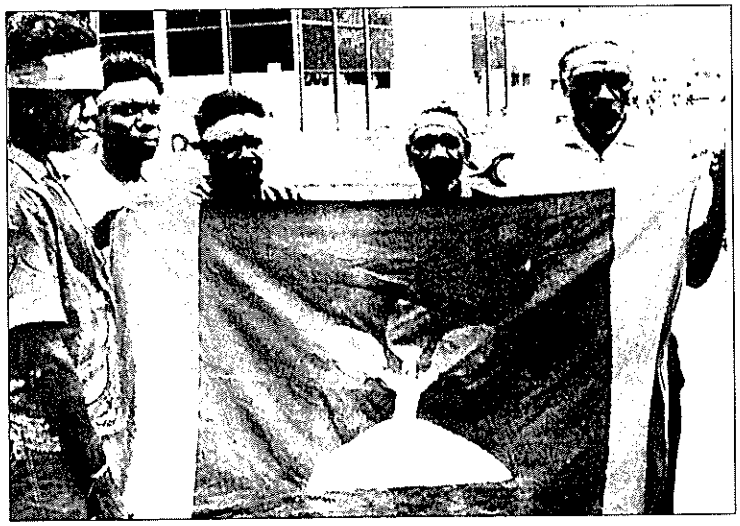


ABOVE Members of the Gwalwa Daraniki sit on the cross walk outside Bagot Reserve, 1 November 1971, halting peak-hour commuter traffic. Photo Joe Viecilli.

RIGHT A police officer asks Bobby Secretary (right) and Harry Adams (left) to leave the road during the November sit-down protest. Violet Adams is sitting and Kim Ross is nearest the camera. Photo Joe Viecilli.

The flag: one end is red for the blood of the old people who were shot. The other end is red for our blood. In the middle is the tree growing on the jungle fowl's nest at Kulaluk. Five men from Kulaluk put up the Larrakia flag outside the law court. Kulamarini spoke in his language to the reporters. 'Captain Cook put up the English flag to take our country for his king. Now we take back Darwin'. All around Australia went the news. At Humpty Doo, in Wulna country, Johnny Fejo saw it on television (*Bunji* 4, 1971).

A Malak Malak elder, Harry Adams, had raised the flag on Sunday, 7 November, witnessed by several journalists and a single police officer. Once Bobby's statement was made, Harry hauled the flag down to keep at Kulaluk, where his sister, Violet, was now staying in her own humpy of scrap iron. I later called for 'a national flag of black liberation to unite the people as history has shown the value of flags'. The idea was part of a submission titled *Challenge to a City* (Day 1972a), showing a map of Darwin with the Kulaluk flag flying triumphantly above it.



Gwalwa Daraniki members wearing red head-bands display their flag before it was raised outside the Darwin courts on Sunday 7 November 1971. Left to right: Freddy Dagwud, Gabriel Secretary, Paddy Danbuala, Bobby Secretary and Harry Adams. Photo courtesy of the *Northern Territory News*.

At the white man's school, what are our children taught?
Are they told of the battles our people fought?
Are they told how our people died?
Are they told why the women cried?
Australia's true history is never read
But the black man keeps it in his head (*Bunji* 4, 1971).

The build-up months as Christmas neared, brought dry gusty storms that whipped up dust and debris from the burnt, parched crust of gravelly soil under the drooping gums along the Stuart Highway. Stockmen and their families were dumped at the crossroads on the outskirts of town, to spend the off-season and their meagre savings sleeping side-by-side in two abandoned sheds with leaking roofs.

Only fifty metres from the highway, these cast-off workers and pensioners spent the rainy season without any power supply. Why demand electricity without land, toilet, shower or even a tap? *The cows on Kentish's farm are better off than our people at Berrimah* (*Bunji* 5, 1972); Kentish being a large land owner nearby and the Member for Arnhem in the Legislative Council in 1971, oblivious to the poverty on his boundaries.

On 13 December fifty men, women and children got ready to stop a train. But three cars of police were waiting to stop them (*Bunji* 5, 1972). Waiting for the daily goods train, each Aborigine present that afternoon was prepared to lie across the track, desperate to draw attention to their needs. Unfortunately, this time the police had been warned and sent enough officers to guard the tracks until the train had rattled through. The claim to vacant Crown land at Knuckeys Lagoon was now on the map.

Between the road and the railway track were the singing wires of the overland telegraph. Multi-strands hung from pole to pole across central Australia to Adelaide, the life-line communication link of the north since 1872. Storms, fires or falling trees snapping the wires caused radios, telephones and telexes to die until the break was detected and repaired. Understanding the importance of what is now scrap metal is necessary to believe the uproar caused by a brief note signed by eight men from Knuckeys Lagoon refugee camp.

The letter sent to the postmaster and the media stated that: 'Unless the government seriously considers all our land claims and pays compensation for past injustices, and unless we are considered with proper respect, we warn that we have the courage, the ability, the people and the will to cut the line between Larrakia country and Jauan country. This means between Darwin and Katherine' (Buchanan 1974, 5).

Reaction from the public was hostile. 'Lives could be in danger,' people gasped. *All these men (who signed) were taken to the police station. 'Someone might shoot you,' the CIB told them* (*Bunji* 5, 1972).

One tall, grim-faced Brinkin stockman and buffalo catcher who signed the press release was not afraid. Johnny Mailer from Major's camp, always ready to rattle the *Bunji* collection tin, gave out the news of the threat to cut the lines from bar to bar amongst sweaty drinkers. The tin was always heavy with coins when Johnny was helping distribute the latest *Bunji. Our ancestors had guts. We have guts.*

Where does the money go? Freddy came from Jimmy Creek with $380. He spent it in one day. Shops, taxis and hotels all make big money from our people. But do they speak out for us? (*Bunji* 5, 1972).

Emotions dampened as monsoon rains swept in across the Timor Sea pelting steadily down day after day. Administrators took leave to more pleasant summer climates and locations. *Our people STAY in their country. They do not go away. They do not get rich. But still we love our land* (*Bunji* 7, 1972). Not according to the first of many letters that slipped into the *Bunji* post box: 'Aborigines are not Australians. This is not their land. They come from Asia,' it crowed.

A more positive letter was delivered from Brisbane in the new year to be excitedly read by the Kulaluk people:

'Dear Brothers and Sisters,' the letter began, *'I just read a paper that you put out called Bunji. I think it is one of the best leaflets I have ever read. It really gets your message across in black terms. As an Aborigine, I wish to put forward to you the following proposition: We will be able to finance a speaker from your tribe who will be prepared to get up at our conference this month and tell the whites the truth about what is going on'. Kulamarini was pleased when he read the letter from Brisbane. 'We will send a younger man, so there will always be someone to carry on', he said* (*Bunji* 5, 1972).

Cheryl Buchanan signed the invitation on behalf of the Australia Day Weekend Action Conference on Racism and Education. It was on the Thursday before this assembly in Brisbane that the Aboriginal Embassy was established in Canberra by the planting of a beach umbrella outside Parliament House. Cheryl was actively committed to both events. Beneath Cheryl's fair skin and youthful good looks, with long straight hair spilling down her back, there was the underlying toughness of a capable organiser and activist in student politics. Originally from Cunnamulla in western Queensland, she had been sponsored by the national student movement to work amongst her people. She became deeply involved with the Kulaluk campaign and later (1974) wrote a booklet published by the Australian Union of Students and aptly called, *We Have Bugger All: The Kulaluk Story.*

To represent the Larrakia, Bobby selected his nephew, Johnny Fejo, a thirty-year-old teaching assistant, station-hand and musician. Brian and I acted swiftly to collate copies of a nine-page submission and progress report which Johnny carried to Queensland in his humble baggage. He posed for photographs and farewells at the terminal, hugging his young wife, Dolly, as further evidence that at last his people were being taken seriously by the nation (*NT News* 27 January 1972).

Johnny Fejo flew back from Brisbane on 3 February. The CIB met him at the airport. 'What did you say in Brisbane?' the CIB (Special Branch) asked. 'I told the conference and our white friends about my people. I told them we are treated like mongrel dogs'. Five hundred people in Brisbane listened to Johnny Fejo tell his story. 'You are doing the right thing, never give up', they told him (*Bunji* 6, 1972).

Meetings continued, despite the heavy rains which turned the mound into a sand island in a sea of green grass. Already part of the fresh water creek had been filled by developers, allowing cars to drive within sight of the growing camp site. Vincent Lingiari and Mick Rangiari, up from Daguragu, or Wattie Creek, encouraged the Kulaluk defenders. White supporters, Robert Wesley-Smith and Jack Phillips, two notable exceptions of the Darwin apathy toward Aboriginal suffering, offered to help in any way.

Wesley-Smith was known to all as Wes, the public servant who had been reprimanded often by the Board for speaking publicly on many issues in his role as a civil libertarian. Jack was a union man and friend of Aborigines when to be called a 'union man' was an expression of respect, dating from the actions a decade earlier. One man who risked censure from the departmental director was welfare officer Bill Ryan, of Gurindji descent, prepared to stand alongside his people.

Another Aboriginal recruit was a nuggety ex-boxer from Queensland. His polite attentiveness contrasted with a ferocious eagle tattoo covering his hairy barrel chest. Seeing the meetings advertised in *Bunji* he attended out of curiosity, introducing himself as Fred Stewart Fogarty. Like most of us who drifted north, he remained reticent about his past, but his strength of body and soul was to be devoted to Kulaluk until the day he died.

Before long, new huts would brighten the scene with their painted land rights murals. Fred Fogarty had come to stay, constantly hammering, digging and gathering material as he put his building skills to good use. His basic but solid constructions with earth floors were quickly filled by Kulamarini's friends. From rooftops, nailing and patching, Fred could see new housing estates spreading toward the sea.

Media reports still spoke of Larrakia demands and actions rather than a coalition of groups, so a suitable name was needed, preferably not using the word

'council' which implied the sort of bureaucracy we tried to avoid. Old photographs show a banner, 'Gwalwa Araniki', meaning 'country belonga we', said Bobby. Later the 'D' was added, and by March *Bunji* announced in large letters, across a cover of dancing mimi spirits, that it was: *The Newspaper of the Gwalwa Daraniki* (*Bunji* 7, 1972).

The Gwalwa Daraniki is an organisation for black men and women who are ready to fight for their brothers and sisters and their land. We have not forgotten how the brave old people fought with spears for their land. Every member of the Gwalwa Daraniki is ready to go to gaol for their land and their people. We do not like to see our people crawling to the government or welfare. We do not like drunks. We know the whole of the Northern Territory belongs to the tribes. The government must pay for it or give it back to the tribes. We are proud people.

Next month's issue gave three aims for the Gwalwa Daraniki:

1. *The government must work out a treaty with each tribe.*
2. *Aboriginalisation. This means that Aboriginal people will take over jobs. We are born, we grow up and we die in this country.*
   Why do we have to bring up people from Canberra to take all the jobs?
3. *Harry Giese must resign.* (*Bunji* 8, 1972).

There are many people going around town trying to split us up. Open your eyes and you will see why these people want to keep us split up. Maybe they are after black women. Maybe they are after our land. Maybe they want blacks to work for them and call them 'boss'. Maybe they want us to fill the empty churches. Maybe they want our money or to take away our children (*Bunji* 7, 1972).

Distributors with the collection tins needed to be able to talk themselves out of potentially dangerous situations. A few drinkers, black, white and brindle, were in outright opposition. Papers were grabbed and scattered across blood-stained floors or the seller could be pinned to a wall for endless debates. One popular footballer, who is now a supporter, wanted to harass me about an article headed, 'Anzac Day' (*Bunji* 8, 1972).

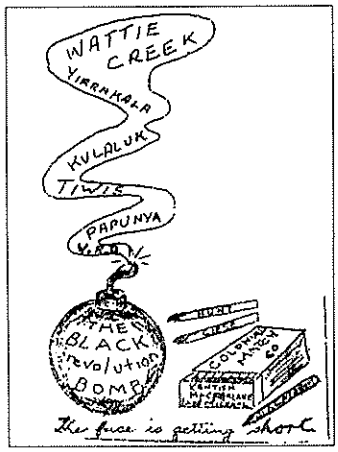
'The whitefellas fought for this land too, you know. If it wasn't for them there'd be Japs running the show. You mob are a bunch of troublemakers and you are a radical stirrer,' he growled, looking prepared to swing his clenched fist, with a couple of mates set to join him. 'Read it,' I said. '*Why don't we remember our people who fought in the 1788-1930 war against the European settlers? That long war still has not finished because no treaties were signed.* What's wrong with that?' I asked him.

Generally, we avoided arguing with goonish types reeking of alcohol. Their own ignorant 'pub talk' usually condemned them, although I dreaded crossing the path of a gigantic Bathurst Islander who once frogmarched me out the hotel door. Aggressive critics often did not realise that the inoffensive balanda (white man) with an armful of papers was the editor of what they termed 'garbage'. One redneck shouted, 'Tell bloody Bill Day that when I see him I'll kill the so and so!'

Bunji does not hate any people. We believe that all humankind, of all colours, should be one family. But that is why we ask for justice for blacks (*Bunji* 10, 1972).

Pastoralists in lonely homesteads shuddered at the two-page history of the rise of Jomo Kenyatta and the Mau Mau emergency: *The whites could not understand why the blacks were angry and they believed that it would be at least one hundred years before the tribes could take part in the government of Kenya...The rich settlers believed that the Africans were being stirred up, so they thought if the educated leaders were locked up, the tribes would be quiet...By now the station owners could not even trust their most faithful servants...there are still white farmers in Kenya happy to live in a state of equality. It helps to understand our problems if we study what has happened in other lands* (*Bunji* 7, 1972).

Trouble was soon to erupt in outback locations: *At Victoria River Downs station the stockmen and their families all walked off. One hundred and fifty men, women and kids took their swags to Wattie Creek to stay with the Gurindjis. They*



The names of six Northern Territory trouble spots rise in smoke from the black revolution bomb. The matches have names of politicians and the Director of Welfare *Bunji* May 1972.

are sick of camping like slaves on the stations, in their own tribal land. Now the manager says he will use white ringers and helicopters. But there is no other work for the people in that country. What can they do now? Our myall ancestors were clever. They could see what was going to happen and that is why they fought and died for their land (*Bunji* 9, 1972).

The same page described an attack on the Papunya police station by an armed mob. As a result of this incident, police began requesting security fencing and anti-riot gear in remote areas. Now the brief *Bunji* version of the riot added fuel to the flames:

On the sixth of May our brothers and sisters at Papunya settlement took up their spears and chased the police away in the middle of the night. Twenty-two men were taken to court next day. All these men are now heroes to their tribe. Now the police are asking for tear gas!

Papunya, the mass media agreed, was a hell hole and a death camp for desert blacks displaced by the use of their country for a rocket test site. However, calling a drunken group who besieged the police station 'heroes' was going too far, scolded the *NT News* (16 May 1972) in an editorial, 'Voices of Unreason'. In Alice Springs the magistrate who sentenced the accused asked the police, 'Why did you shoot *over* their heads?'

Space was given in the *News* (22 May 1972) for a reply, headlined '*Bunji* editor claims it is not violent,' and continuing:

> The Aboriginal rights newsletter, *Bunji*, is a sincere attempt to express the feelings of Aborigines from the grass roots, but does not presume to speak for the majority...Many Aborigines were amazed that the newsletter could openly criticise the Assistant Administrator in Charge of Welfare, Mr Harry Giese. They seemed to think you were not allowed to say that, they thought it was against the law.
>
> It might be *Bunji's* accent on Aboriginal history that was found offensive to some people. Australians must realise there was a bitter drawn out black-white confrontation that was never formally settled, as in North America and New Zealand, by the signing of treaties. But our actions are in the tradition of the father of nonviolent protest, Mahatma Ghandi.

A pair of popular peaceful protests publicised in our press was to prove the point.

Red head-bands on dark skin, flags and slogan-swathed slow-moving trucks added colour and purpose to 'the best May Day in years' (*NT News* 2 May 1972). Even the award for the best float was won by the Gwalwa Daraniki for a mock trial of chained black prisoners. Another presentation had A-frame huts of rusty tin set on the tray of a semitrailer to satirise the Aboriginal housing on Hooker's vast VRD station.

Norman Horrace from Oombulgurri cast off his white shirt, tie and polished shoes, rolled up his pressed black trousers and proudly held high the banner, 'Black is Beautiful'. Old Dolly Gurinyee, the senior surviving Larrakia woman, who could barely walk was gently lifted onto the back of a float. She had lived at Kulaluk before her nephew, Bobby Secretary. *The Tiwis came from Melville Island, painted up* (*Bunji* 9, 1972), making the Aboriginal contingent the biggest in what had become in recent years a tired and predictable workers' parade.

Following the kilted pipe-band through empty streets to the Esplanade, we assembled before the dais to hear speeches from the Party faithful with scarcely an acknowledgment of the black presence, confirming the widening gulf between unions and Aborigines in Darwin. The right 'to have a drink with your mates' was a demand unionists fully supported; land rights was a more difficult issue. Aborigines now needed their own forum.

A united display of strength was needed against the policies of McMahon's Liberal-Country Party government. Removal of the Embassy was imminent under a newly gazetted ordinance. Gough Whitlam, Leader of the Opposition, had spent

Norman Horrace (right) leads the 1972 May Day march. Directly behind him are Fred Waters (left) and Mick Rangiari (right). Photo courtesy of the *Northern Territory News*.

an hour conferring with the Aborigines inside the tents. Now posters and badges arrived from Canberra advertising a national day of protest for July 14, with the question, 'Advance Australia, Where?'

If you live on a 'reserve' do not think you have land. Ask the Yirrkala tribes. Ask the Oenpelli people. Ask the Bagot Council. Our ancestors did not die for 'reserves' (*Bunji* 10, 1972).

Letters were mailed from Darwin across the Territory:

> Every mission, settlement, cattle station and town should send people to march through Darwin on July 14. When we march we show the government and the people of the world how we feel about land rights, wages, jobs, housing and all the things you are angry about, in a peaceful way. If you cannot get in to Darwin for the march there is another way to show that all tribes are standing strong together. Every Aborigine in the Northern Territory will stop work for one day. Do not be afraid of superintendents or station managers. Show them this letter. You should not be penalised for stopping work on National Aborigines Day.

Alleging Aboriginal disunity when some blacks criticised the strike call, the Darwin mayor and council refused a permit for the march around the city block on a Friday lunch time. Rupert Kentish, MLC for Arnhem, wondered 'if the occasion would be a march, a demonstration or a riot' (*NT News* 24 July 1972).

'What about a march for the early explorers?' he added.

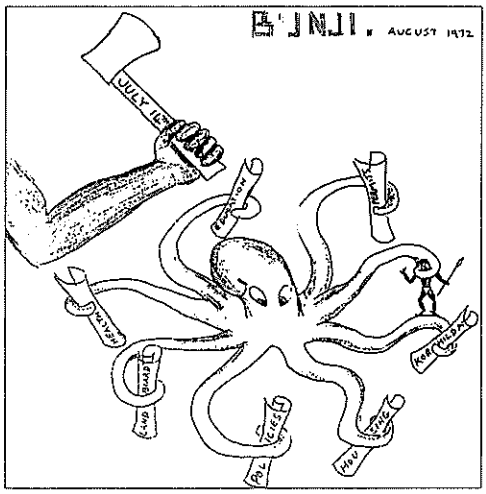
Alerted, the Sydney Black Rights Moratorium reprinted and recirculated the May copy of *Bunji*, adding condemnations of the city council 'reactionaries', resulting in floods of telegrams to the mayor and a sudden council retreat (*NT News* 11 July 1972). Proving the council was wrong, a well-organised united and record-breaking procession of communities stopped traffic as they chanted 'Land Rights Now', along Smith Street to Bennett Park.

Office workers, unionists and hippies stood by as over one hundred Aborigines rested on the lawn to listen to emotional speeches from David Daniels, Bobby Jarron, Bill Ryan, Johnny Mailer, Johnny Fejo and Keith Chulung. These speakers came from Roper River, Oenpelli, Wave Hill, Daly River, Humpty Doo and Oombulgurri respectively, representing an area the size of the United Kingdom. Public servants, sensing the winds of change, courageously stepped forward to the microphones in solidarity. Labor MLC Dick Ward congratulated the Aborigines. 'Your destiny must remain in your own hands,' he advised them (*NT News* 15 July 1972).

Continuing down Mitchell Street after the rally, half the crowd followed Billy Munji as he chanted Wagaitj songs into a megaphone to the rhythm of clapsticks.

Some carried crosses and wreaths which they set in the towering rusty heap of rocks at the iron-ore wharf. Others clambered to the crest of the pile holding aloft flags and a long banner billowing like a sail. It made a memorable front-page photograph in the *News* next day. A fine climax indeed.

Billy was a dancer, singer and pub identity with all the bush skills of his people. Much in demand by the tourist operators at Mica Beach and Mandorah, he was never in one place for long, but remained an active supporter of Larrakia claims. His showmanship added colour to the parade.



The July 14 National Aborigines Day march is shown as a means to loosen the grip of the NT Department of Welfare on most aspects of Aboriginal life including the Aboriginal College (Kormilda), permits to enter reserves and applications for land. Bill Day in *Bunji* August 1972.

One week later the Canberra police moved against the Aboriginal Embassy. Defenders of the frail cluster of shelters turned defeat into victory by their courageous response, returning to make a final symbolic gesture on 30 July. Their novel six months' stand had put Aboriginal needs into the forefront of Australian politics.

The march on July 14 showed that the tribes are ready to take over their own affairs. The Department of Social Welfare controls every part of our lives. A cartoon of *The last days of the 'welfare' octopus* showed tentacles wrapped around papers labelled housing, education, permits, health, policies, Kormilda and Land Board. Above, a black hand wielded an axe marked 'July 14', poised to hack to pieces the creature's twisted arms (*Bunji* 11, 1972).