

# Bankers and British oligarchs behind Aboriginal land rights

Although the first moves toward Aboriginal land rights had begun in the 1920s organized by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which managed to recruit a number of Aborigines as either members or “fellow travellers,” it was not until the 1950s, when the oligarchy’s London-based Anti-Slavery Society stepped in, through its agent Lady Jessie Street, that the operation began to really move.

The Anti-Slavery Society (now Anti-Slavery International) was founded in London as the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in 1839 as a covert organ of British imperial policy. Its purpose was to play upon real or imagined oppression throughout the world, in order to exacerbate “racial” conflicts to British advantage. The society, whose headquarters was in London, the capital of the most brutal empire the world had ever known, and whose leading families were running that empire, had a funny habit of finding its *causes célèbres* in French, Belgian, German, or any other nation’s imperial domains, or in its own domains where independence threatened. It was established two years after the Aborigines Protection Society, another British imperial venture which merged with the Anti-Slavery Society in 1909.

That the oligarchy ran the Anti-Slavery Society no one had any doubt. As Australian historian Peter Read noted in his article “Aboriginal rights” in *Jessie Street: Documents & Essays*: “It stood in the tradition of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury in a belief that issues of social reform were to be identified and rectified by members of the classes [i.e., the oligarchy] who did not suffer from those injustices.”

A dominant family in it from the early days until the present were the Buxtons. Lord Aubrey Buxton was a founder of the World Wildlife Fund in 1961, and is one of Prince Philip’s closest associates today.

The Anti-Slavery Society initiated the present drive for Aboriginal land rights in 1956 when it drafted Lady Jessie Street, a member of a wealthy upper class family who was born in India and later moved to Australia, onto its executive committee in London. As Read recorded, “In 1956 Jessie Street was asked to join the executive of the society as its Australian representative because she was Australian, knew something of Aborigines and was familiar with the work of the United Nations. She was asked to act on behalf of people who, it was assumed, could neither speak on their own volition, nor necessarily understand that there were alternatives

to the conditions under which they lived.”

The Anti-Slavery Society was then in the midst of preparing a case on the Aborigines to be delivered to the Commission of Human Rights at the United Nations.

Lady Jessie started contacting some Australian friends. The result was the establishment of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (Fcaatsi), the organization responsible for all the key early moves in Aboriginal land rights including the 1967 referendum to amend the Constitution, to allow the federal government to enact laws regarding Aborigines, previously the sole province of the states. This referendum, passed in 1967, soon enabled the federal government to start turning over vast chunks of the country to Aboriginal control.

## Fcaatsi

Some of this organization’s history is recorded in *Turning the Tide: A Personal History of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, by Faith Bandler, one of its founders. In 1951, Bandler, then Faith Mussing, traveled to East Berlin to participate in the Youth Festival for World Culture, a communist front. Concerned about their East bloc connections, the Australian Intelligence Security Organization (the equivalent of the FBI) pulled the passports of Mussing and her friends upon their return.

This was the pool of communist Aboriginal activists in which Lady Jessie fished to carry out the directions of the Anti-Slavery Society. Bandler’s circle of communist activists was just what Lady Jessie needed:

“Pearl realized I had valuable contacts within my circle of friends. As a result of her many visits and strong urgings, we formed the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF), the forerunner to the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement. The AAF was under the patronage of Lady Jessie Street, *who was responsible for drafting the original petition calling for a referendum*” (p. 6, emphasis added).

After returning to Australia and taking a tour through some Aboriginal areas, Lady Jessie rounded up the communist-tied AAF activists, added some assorted social reformers and society names (such as Dame Mary Gilmore, who wrote a weekly column for the Communist Party of Australia’s *Tribune* newspaper), and set up the Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement in 1957, soon to be known as the

Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Its president was Joe McGuinness, a longtime member of the Communist Party in Queensland. The new organization held its first national conference on Feb. 14-16, 1958 in Adelaide; its main agenda item was to circulate a petition drawn up by Lady Jessie to call for a referendum.

It was that referendum which became law on May 27, 1967. Shortly after Fcaatsi was set up, its "Land Rights Committee" swung into action. As Bandler recorded, "The Land Rights Committee grew in importance, particularly after the formation of the Aboriginal Land Rights Trust of SA [South Australia] in 1966. That state under the leadership of Premier Don Dunstan became the first to grant Aborigines title to land."

### **The Wave Hill walk-off**

In that year, the Gurindji people, sick of abominably low wages, horrible living conditions, and other discrimination, walked off the Wave Hill cattle station north of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, the largest in the world.

As if by pre-arranged signal, the horrible living conditions of the Gurindji became headline news. As H.C. "Nugget" Coombs later observed, "Perhaps because of this support, the nature of the dispute changed. The Gurindji demanded the return of sufficient of their traditional land to establish an independent, Aboriginal-owned cattle enterprise" (Coombs, *Trial Balance*, p. 281). This incident is universally acknowledged as the first shot in the war for "land rights."

A number of communists and anthropologists had been involved in organizing the Gurindji. Most curious, given the suspicions that the affair had been a provocation, was the identity of the owner of Wave Hill, who had allowed the communists and radical anthropologists onto his property to organize. He was Lord Vestey, head of a 123-company, billion-dollar business empire spread around the globe, anchored on beef production in vast properties in Australia and Argentina.

Lord Vestey was also an intimate of the same British royal family which set up the WWF and its "Primitive Peoples' Fund." There is perhaps no oligarchical family closer to the royals than the Vesteyes; they are present in a royal family portrait a few years ago at the time of the christening of Prince Harry, whose godmother was Lady Cecey Vestey, Lord Vestey's wife. And the first land which the Aborigines ever received in Australia was given to them by Lord Vestey, after the Wave Hill strike.

### **Bankers and Aborigines: enter Nugget Coombs**

Though Fcaatsi would continue to play an important role in Aboriginal land rights—and numbers of its activists still hold key positions in the federal Aboriginal bureaucracy today—the years 1967-68 saw a passing of the torch from Fcaatsi to career civil servant and adviser to seven Australian

prime ministers Nugget Coombs. He was to initiate every crucial turn, every ratchet up in radicalization, from 1967 until the present.

At the time of the referendum, Coombs was the chairman of the Reserve Bank. Like other prime ministers before and since, then-Prime Minister Harold Holt turned to Coombs for advice on what to do after the referendum. Coombs recommended the establishment of a Council for Aboriginal Affairs; he then quit his Reserve Bank chairmanship to become its first president.

What happened? Why had a prominent member of what Coombs himself described as the "international freemasonry of central bankers" suddenly, out of the blue, turned Aboriginal activist?

After an education at the elite Perth Modern School, Coombs worked for a while as a schoolteacher, until he picked up a scholarship to attend the London School of Economics, where his idol was John Maynard Keynes, a leader of the British Eugenics Society who had been recruited while at Cambridge at the turn of the century into the notorious Apostles secret society. Composed of the elite of the British Empire, the Apostles believed in what they called "The Higher Sodomy," that the "bourgeois" (middle class) morals of a husband-wife relationship are transcended by buggery. A notorious homosexual, Keynes characterized his own economic theory as fascist, in the first edition of his celebrated economics textbook—Nugget Coombs's bible—*The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, published in

## **The sayings of Chairman H.C. Coombs**

*The oligarchy centered around Prince Philip is attempting what they call a "Conservative Revolution," to take mankind back to the feudalism which prevailed before the fifteenth-century European Golden Renaissance. H.C. "Nugget" Coombs is definitely an organizer for this proposition. Here is what he says about the glories of feudalism and hunting-and-gathering societies.*

The hierarchy of relationships between persons characteristic of the feudal system seems to have lent a kind of stable functional pattern to the European society of the Middle Ages. (*The Fragile Pattern*, p. 13)

In the age of fable it is more likely that hunters in their leisure time would be competing for territory or other conventional prizes and that success for game would go only or primarily to the winners—and that furthermore

Berlin in 1936.

Keynes was the chief architect of the genocidal “Bretton Woods system” set up in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in the United States in 1944, composed of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. A third “leg of the stool” was to be the International Trade Organization. *Coombs was slated to become the ITO’s first head.*

### **The ‘Freemasonry of central bankers’**

Coombs had arrived at the London School of Economics in 1931 to do post-graduate work. By 1933, he had received his doctorate; his thesis was on central banking. During this process he was recruited into an elite secret society of central bankers in which Keynes was a leading member. *Coombs’s entire career in Australia has been in service to this London-centered secret society.* In his own words from his autobiography, *Trial Balance*:

“Those who practice [central banking] often feel themselves to be members of an international freemasonry, a kind of ‘mystery’ in the medieval sense of a group who possess some exclusive knowledge or skill, and indeed there has always been an element of mystery in the contemporary sense of the word about what central bankers do. This mystery was intensified, perhaps deliberately, by the personality of Montagu Norman, who for 21 years was governor of the Bank of England. . . .

“It was Norman who created the international freemasonry of central bankers.”

As chairman of, first, the Commonwealth and then the Reserve Bank, Coombs emphasized, “We had a responsibility to the profession of central banking itself, to defend its right to act in accordance with its best understanding of the system.” The most effective way to carry this out, since this “system” involves hardship and suffering for the society at large, is for the local central banker to be a native of the country being controlled, said Coombs. “It has always been my conviction that central banks, despite their membership of the international freemasonry, should have an essentially indigenous character.”

Perhaps that is what Coombs really means by “indigenism”!

As documented by the American historian Anton Chaitkin (see *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography*), Montagu Norman, as the head of a cabal of British and American financiers, was the individual most responsible for installing Adolf Hitler in power. He also, according to Coombs’s own account, had arranged for the Bank of England to act as financial agents for the young Soviet government beginning almost immediately after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

### **Coombs in power: crippling Australia**

Coombs returned to Australia during the Depression and then became head of the Wartime Rationing Board. He set up and headed the Postwar Ministry of Reconstruction; became head of the Commonwealth Bank in 1949, and later the Reserve Bank; founded and became the first deputy chancellor

partners in the joys of procreation would go also to the winners, leaving the least successful not merely hungry but wife-less and without posterity. In this way balance between the numbers of hunters and of game was preserved through the ages. It was only when the hunter became a breeder of animals as well as of children, when he stocked his table with home-grown grain and other vegetables, as well as with roasts, that a dissonance crept into the harmony of this little idyll. These developments were the beginning of the technology which has grown exponentially towards its modern explosion.

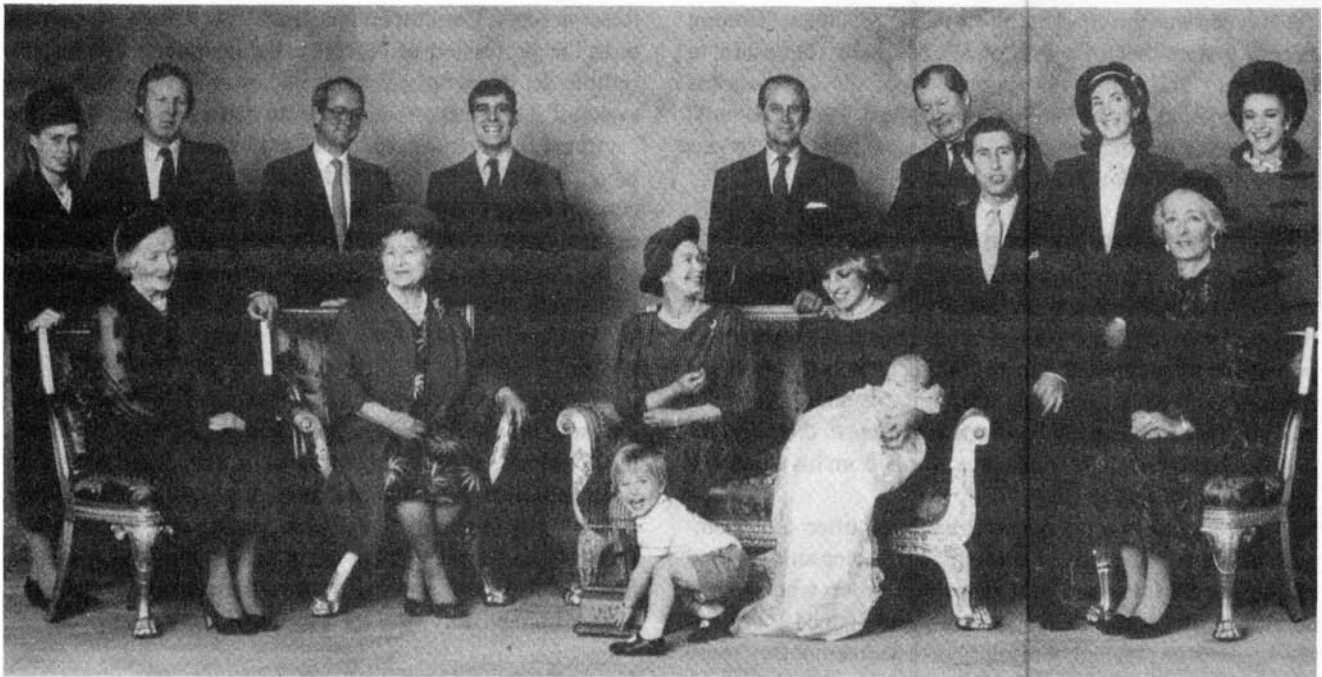
Particularly in this century, man has increased in numbers to an extent which now threatens to run beyond the capacity of the earth to feed, house, clothe and equip the bodies concerned. . . . (*The Fragile Pattern*, pp. 27-28)

Traditionally, in interpersonal disputes, a “spear through the thigh” was a common form of resolution and in extreme and rare instances of offences of a sacrilegious nature, sometimes death was the penalty. The elders state that these forms of punishment have gone into disuse and that they do not seek authority to impose them. It is possible, of course, that the “spear through the thigh”

could remain as an unofficial component in the settlement of interpersonal disputes. Our unwillingness to tolerate such punishment, it seems to me, is ethnocentric. (*Aboriginal Autonomy*, p. 118)

Mankind would be unwise to assume that, because technology has enabled him to cross so many rivers of threatened scarcity to reach survival, he will be able to deal with the oceanic problem of numbers which bring him into absolute conflict with the total environment of which he is a part.

Indeed were it possible to take a God-like view of the human species in his environment—physical and social—one could readily conclude that the whole species had become itself a disease. Even if the God-like viewer were one with a special covenant with mankind and did not view all his creatures with equal tenderness and concern, *he could properly conclude that the human species was like a cancerous growth reproducing itself beyond control and living parasitically on, rather than symbiotically with, the rest of creation* and threatening to destroy not merely the environment but itself also.” (*The Fragile Pattern, The Boyer Lectures*, 1970, p. 34, emphasis added)



*The British Royal Family. Lady Cece Vestey, third from right, is the godmother to Prince Harry and wife of Lord Vestey. The "Wave Hill walk-off" of Aboriginal stockmen which launched the Aboriginal land rights movement was organized by communists and anthropologists working on Lord Vestey's estate.*

and later the chancellor of Australian National University; founded the national Arts Council; and became the "father of Aboriginal land rights" through setting up and chairing, first, the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, and then the Aboriginal Treaty Committee.

The Regional Planning section of Coombs's Postwar Ministry of Reconstruction had compiled an extraordinary series of possible economic development projects for the country which included, according to Coombs's own account, "a program of national works; resources surveys of the Murray Valley and the Hunter River Valley; a report on alternative uses of the Snowy River; a comprehensive water supply for the gold fields and agricultural areas in Western Australia; the development potential of the Inverell and Narrabri districts in New South Wales; the development of Northern Australia; the development of Papua-New Guinea; Land Settlement projects for returned servicemen; development of a Canberra region linking the capital with Jervis Bay; for the development of Darwin and its hinterland; proposals for a Clarence River Gorge Hydro-Electric Scheme; and a development plan for the beef industry in north Australia."

But there was to be no grand postwar development of Australia. With the exception of the Snowy River scheme, virtually all of these were sacrificed on the altar of central banking and its ritual chants of "fighting inflation."

As Coombs records in his autobiography, "fighting inflation" was his only concern: "I argued that to prevent Australian prices [from] rising dangerously it would be necessary

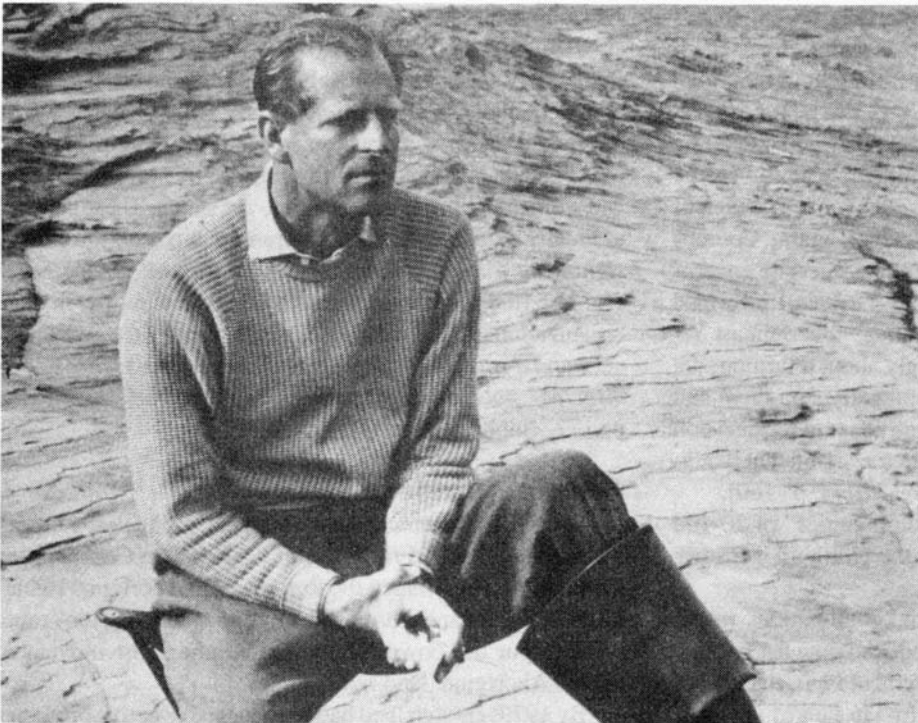
to limit development works, to budget for a substantial surplus, to free interest rates and to tighten the supply of bank loans, and to increase the flow of imported goods by reductions in the protective tariff, by dollar borrowing and by an appreciation of the Australian pound." Under these strictures, the Australian economy was crippled.

Not content with merely "fighting inflation," Coombs set out to cripple the rural sector. In his 1973 report, he urged that most government supports to rural industries and country-dwellers be cut, including the withdrawal of the subsidy for use of phosphate fertilizers.

What Coombs has been doing since 1967, as the "father of Aboriginal land rights" and as the head of the Australian Conservation Foundation, replacing Prince Philip in that post, is, under the guise of "indigenism-environmentalism," *what he has always been doing: attacking the sovereignty and economic development of the nation of Australia.*

### **The 'Great White Father' of Aboriginal land rights**

In April 1968, Coombs, as head of the newly formed Council for Aboriginal Affairs, addressed the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. "In his address," said Faith Bandler, "he indicated that CAA would assume some of the responsibilities and issues on which Fcaatsi had been working, thus freeing up some of our members from the load they'd been carrying for so long" (*Turning the Tide*, p. 116).



Prince Philip founded the Australian Conservation Foundation, the “mother” of both the radical environmentalist and Aboriginal land rights movements in Australia, and chaired the ACF from 1971 to 1976.



Lady Jessie Street. Deployed by the British Crown’s Anti-Slavery Society, she wrote the change in the Australian Constitution that opened the door for “Aboriginal land rights.”

Banker Coombs took up the baton from the communists and oligarchs in Fcaatsi.

The CAA was comprised of Coombs, Australian career diplomat Barrie Dexter, and anthropologist W.E.H. “Bill” Stanner, who recruited Aborigines into “paramilitary, coast watch and construction and . . . special ‘irregular’ units” during World War II (Coombs, *Aboriginal Autonomy*, p. 101). While in Kenya in the late 1930s, Stanner had been recruited into the circles of British intelligence’s famous anthropologist and guerrilla-warfare specialist L.S.B. Leakey.

Leakey and other British intelligence operatives were working on a phony form of postwar “liberation” for African nations, which was reflected in Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s “Winds of Change” speech in Cape Town in 1960. Africans were to be given independence, but in name only: control over raw material prices, access to credit and technology, etc., were still to be determined in London, a sort of early test run of the “indigenist” principle.

As a result of his stay in Kenya, Stanner reported that he was won over to the new “native rights” outlook. Returning to Australia, he became the chief theoretician of Aboriginal culture and “interpreter” of Aboriginal demands, on whom Coombs depended implicitly. According to Stanner, the sacred bond between Aborigines and their land had been established during the primordial “Dreaming” (a term he coined to replace the earlier “Dreamtime”). Control of that land was the all-important issue for Aborigines, said Stanner, and

Aborigines had desired a treaty for this ever since 1788.

With Stanner providing the theoretical justification, the first move of Coombs and his collaborators in the CAA toward carving a separate Aboriginal nation out of Australia was to redefine government policy away from “assimilation,” which had been adopted as official policy at a meeting of the federal and state ministers in 1965, toward “self-determination.” As Coombs expressed it in a report commissioned by the London-based Minority Rights Group, whose leadership, in particular the Cadbury family, overlapped that of Prince Philip’s WWF:

“Essentially the struggle in the early years after the referendum was about the appropriateness of the established doctrine of assimilation. The Council of Aboriginal Affairs became convinced from its contacts with Aborigines that they did not wish to become assimilated, indeed that one of the few things Aborigines had in common was a determination to maintain a distinctive racial and social existence within the Australian community” (“Australia’s Policy toward Aborigines, 1967-77,” p. 6).

Coombs et al. set about creating the institutions for such “self-determination,” first among which was to establish corporate forms which could receive and disburse money, and thus a logistical basis from which to organize. Coombs argued that these incorporated communities would be “under the control of the residents being assisted by professionally trained managers and community development workers. . . .

[Happily], in some circumstances, Aborigines seem able to accept decisions originating from external sources more readily than they can those proposed from within their own society" (*Aboriginal Autonomy*, p. 17).

The next step was to encourage the Aborigines to move back to their "traditional communities," which became known as the "homeland" or outstation movement, which of course justified claiming more land. Once again, Coombs himself was a chief organizer of "the return," despite government opposition: "On my next visit to Yirrkala I informed [the local Aborigines] of this [negative government] response, but said that if they felt strongly about returning, the government administration could not legally stop them and in my opinion would have to accept and adapt to the decision if they 'just went.' That, I believe, was the significant beginning of the return to country in that area" (*ibid*, p. 160).

By 1987, over 588 "homeland communities" of 20-100 people each had been established in the Northern Territory alone.

Of course, people in these isolated communities would have no way to survive, so Coombs cooked up what became the Community Development Employment Plan, the idea of paying a lump sum to the "community" in lieu of any dole payments which might go to individuals in that community. Today such payments consume the largest single portion of the annual budget of the government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee's \$2 billion or so per year.

The next major phase change was ushered in by the Whitlam government, which came to power in December 1972. Whitlam's point man on Aboriginal affairs was the Member of Parliament for Wills, Gordon Bryant, the longtime vice president of Lady Jessie Street's Fcaatsi. Bryant became Whitlam's first minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

As Bryant said of himself, "I became what you might call a runner for the show" (*Turning the Tide*, p. 11).

Whitlam, who had also been associated with Fcaatsi in the early 1960s, announced that Aboriginal rights to land would be restored, and appointed Justice Woodward, a former lawyer for the same Yirrkala people for whom Coombs had served as consultant, to head a new royal commission.

Coombs lauded the Woodward report as "a landmark in Aboriginal affairs." Though the Whitlam government fell in 1975, the legislation prepared as a result of the Woodward Commission was passed almost unchanged by the Fraser government, as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 (NT) which gave large parts of the Northern Territory to Aboriginal ownership. The Land Councils, which had originally been established by Woodward to "aid the enquiry," became permanent bodies, controlling vast sections of Australia.

The same year, the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976 formally allowed Aboriginal groups and communities to incorporate. This created a huge organizing and logistical base from which hordes of "white advisers" and Aboriginal radicals could organize for the next phase of "land rights."

As Coombs put it:

"However, those in white society whose expertise was so desperately needed were not always motivated by exclusively commercial considerations. . . . Thus, in urban centers there developed legal, health-care and welfare services designed by Aboriginal people and with sympathetic professional men and women willing to accept employee status. These services gradually extended to rural and remote areas and *became a significant focus for Aboriginal activism* and service delivery. The Aboriginal men and women given authority in these organizations found them a source of administrative experience and *a valuable base from which to conduct more widely directed political campaigns*." (*Aboriginal Autonomy*, p. 172, emphasis added).

### Coombs: 'Divide sovereignty'

In 1977, Coombs became the head of Australia's peak conservation body, Prince Philip's Australian Conservation Foundation. He initiated the turn toward "Aboriginal rights" by the ACF, renamed its newsletter *Tjurkulpa*, and took other steps to put the power of the environmentalist movement behind Aboriginal land rights.

By 1979, enough land had been turned over to Aborigines that Coombs could start to agitate in ads in the national press for a "treaty" between a presumably autonomous "Aboriginal nation" and the nation-state of Australia. In April of that year, Coombs founded and chaired the Aboriginal Treaty Committee, comprised entirely of white influentials, including his anthropologist friend Bill Stanner.

In June 1987, the Anti-Slavery Society weighed in again with a report by Dr. Julian Burger, then research director for the ASS, and now the coordinator for the United Nations "Indigenous Peoples' Decade" being run out of the U.N. Human Rights Center in Geneva. The report "Land and Justice: Aborigines Today," helped beat the drums for the establishment in October 1987 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

This in turn led to the establishment by Parliament in 1991 of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which is now carrying out a mass propaganda campaign for a "charter of Aboriginal Reconciliation" by the year 2001—an amendment of the Australian Constitution to guarantee "indigenous rights." In his 1994 book *Aboriginal Autonomy*, Coombs calls for Australia and the Aborigines to "divide sovereignty" (p. 208).

And finally, in the 1992 Mabo decision, the most momentous change of all, the hand of Nugget Coombs was once again pulling the strings. According to Coombs's friend Peter Jull, whom Coombs later appointed as the acting director of his North Australian Research Unit at Darwin, Coombs "helped get the whole Mabo thing going" (see interview with Jull).

Fittingly enough, one of the High Court justices who delivered the bombshell decision was Sir Laurance Street, grandson of the Anti-Slavery Society's Lady Jessie Street.