

"WHITE V. BLACK" PROBLEM LIKELY TO EXPLODE AGAIN

FROM A STAFF REPORTER

NAMBUCCA HEADS. — The first signs of what may be a complete breakdown in the aboriginal assimilation policy of New South Wales—and of Australia for that matter—are beginning to show in this peaceful picturesque fishing village.

The case of Gregg Davis, half caste aboriginal who lost his "dream" home, is already being surmounted by a bigger public question.

This is: "What if it happens again?"

I got sufficient answers here yesterday to convince me there will be continuing protests every time attempts are made to integrate blacks in essential white areas of this district.

Gregg Davis, 25, and a father of four, was catapulted into national prominence last Monday when 26 Nambucca Heads residents petitioned the local shire council to stop him from buying a house in the one-street suburb of Newville.

The council accepted the petition and passed it on to New South Wales Chief Secretary (Mr. C. Kelly).

Within 24 hours it was announced that the four-room weatherboard house which Davis wanted had been sold for £400 to Mr. Noel Schafer who lives with his wife and three children in a canvas and fibro home on an adjoining block of land.

For eight hours yesterday I spoke to Nambucca Heads people about this drama which is being staged in their midst.

I found most of them ready to talk but few of them willing to have their name used.

Aboriginals have been living in and around Nambucca Heads for as long as older residents can remember.

There has not previously been any manifest attempts to assimilate them closely in white communities (as in the case of Davis), but there has not been any open colour bar.

200 AT RESERVE

THE aboriginal population of about 200 is mainly confined to a reserve, about two miles south of the town.

There they have homes, a school, and a Roman Catholic Church.

Many of Nambucca's middle-aged men grew up with the elder aboriginals around here; some are employers of aboriginal labour.

Traditionally the aboriginals have always been kept at their distance.

Many with the right have drunk alongside whites in the town's one hotel for years; others are long-standing workmates of white men in the town.

The majority of Nambucca people were content to leave their relationships with aboriginals just like that.

Now, even men and women who did not sign the protest petition and are rather embarrassed that it ever became public, are wondering whether they are about to be forced to accept aboriginals for whom they have always had a kind word as close neighbours.

In considering the possibility most of them don't like it.

"Ask yourself, would you?" a local businessman said to me.

Opponents of a complete aboriginal assimilation policy believe it would depreciate property values and detrimentally affect Nambucca's suddenly blossoming future as a progressive little tourist resort.

FOR AND AGAINST

I MET some people yesterday, including Mr. Noel Schafer, who said they would continue to oppose by petition if necessary any attempt to settle more aboriginals in white communities.

And I met a few who were ashamed of the whole business and decried the protest petition.

Mr. Fred Andrews, who lives next door to the home Gregg Davis wanted, said he had been one of the 26 signatories to the petition but wished now he had not signed.

He said he was given to understand that an "undesirable" aboriginal family was to be moved into the home.

What of the principal character in the whole sorry affair?

Gregg Davis last night was still dazed by it all.

Primitive hovel

He and his family live in a shockingly primitive iron and timber hovel on a swamp just below the aboriginal reserve.

Davis, a well-spoken and quiet man (he was educated to N.S.W. State High School level at Kempsey), has been overcome by the number of people who have suddenly

a better one than this," he said.

"I still don't know if I will ever get one."

Neither does anyone here.

Appeal move

Yesterday three Protestant ministers at nearby Macksville met to discuss the possibility of launching an appeal to buy a house for the Davis family.

The ministers, R. G. Pearson (Methodist), D. C. Gray (Presbyterian), and A. A. Smith (Anglican) took legal advice about the technicalities of launching an appeal.

They said normal procedure was for an aboriginal family to wait until the Aborigines Welfare Board had approved an application for assistance from its funds.

The Davis family had applied to the board for assistance in buying the house they wanted, but the house was sold to a cash buyer be-