

History in black and white

BLAXLAND, Wentworth and Lawson didn't find the way across the Blue Mountains, they were shown it. And Captain Cook didn't discover the east coast, Aborigines were already there. Those are just two historical inaccuracies that Bruce McGuinness would like cleared up.

The Aboriginal writer complained to a seminar on the problems of urban Aborigines in Melbourne this week that he had studied Australian literature (including textbooks) and newspapers and had found them "inundated" with racist innuendo.

A book on Daisy Bates which was recommended reading in schools in the United States is "the worst thing that could have happened to Aborigines." It tells how she had an Aboriginal baby "and tried to scrub it white because she hated it."

Arthur Upfield, in a pre-ample to one of his Boney books, said the Aboriginal detective was half black and half white "which made him a formidable foe, that he'd the intelligence of a white and the animal cunning of a native," says Mr McGuinness.

"In the Modesty Blaise cartoon strip, Aborigines are shown as nothing but primitive savages. Films also exploit black stereotypes. Blacks are shown either as shuffling idiots or supermen. Not one has shown them as normal, typical human beings."

— NIKI SAVVA