

Future history of the FAT

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The Annual Professor Powell History Lecture

Welcome to the Annual Professor Powell History Lecture for 2250. Thank you for tuning in to our online history resource centre. I hope you have an enjoyable and informative experience.

My name is Professor Nampana, and tonight's subject is the political history of the Free Aboriginal Territory of Australia. For the purposes of brevity, and with no disrespect intended, I'll refer to the Free Aboriginal Territory by its acronym, the FAT as the locals call it.

As you may already know, the chain of events that led to the formation of the FAT began with the secession of the Centralian region of the Northern Territory in the early 21st century. At that

stage, the old Darwinopolis region, the Katherinian city-state and the bulk of the FAT were all part of one political entity, known as the Northern Territory of Australia, or more colloquially, as “the Territory”. A century or so previous to the formation of the Territory, the area stretching down to what is now the Flinders Archipelago and the now drowned City of Churches were all one state, known as South Australia. Unimaginative name, but then there was very little in the way of administrative imagination about in those days.

The Northern Territory had the dubious distinction of being the least democratic of the 5 states and two territories that comprised the sovereign nation of Australia. Colonial and authoritarian political institutions had survived there longer than anywhere else in Australia due to the high proportion of the original inhabitants of the country still living there, and the persistence of colonial political forms. The many different language groups in the region were glossed as Aborigines. The highest concentration was in the region that is now the FAT.

The crisis that precipitated the secession of the region and the formation of the FAT was sparked by Darwinopolis’ – or Darwin, as it was known in those days – concentration of political and decision making power and resources. This was evident in the increasingly blatant disregard for, and under-resourcing of the region now comprising the FAT.

This wretched situation had gone on for decades previous to the early 21st century, but was tolerated by the Aboriginal residents of

the region, who had become used to the succession of ignorant and self-interested party apparatchiks, functionaries and departments who comprised the governments of the day. The two major political entities at that time, the Country Liberal Party, and the Australian Labour Party, had become more and more convergent in their approaches to policy formation and implementation, particularly regarding the Aboriginal peoples and settlements of the region.

Government policy consisted mainly of enforced compliance with the colonial invaders' ideas of what constituted worthy citizenship of the nation. Their electoral heartland was Darwinopolis - not even the whole of Darwinopolis – but one small section of the old city whose demographic was mainly middle class and overwhelmingly non-Aboriginal. All the Territory political campaigns and policies were aimed at this demographic. The unfortunate thing was that at the time, this was a very successful strategy.

At this stage, it is worthwhile to reflect upon the fact that the pre-invasion political history of the Aboriginal peoples of the FAT, and of the Australian nation, if that is not too strong a word, was characterised by a flexible and negotiable polity based on relationships to family and country. For example, if a leader for Emu country to the north of the ancient settlement of Alice Springs wished to travel to a country that belonged to a differing language or totemic group, the appropriate negotiations would have to take place with the leaders for that country. People who were “boss” for their own country were not boss in the country of others.

Aboriginal polities based on this system were sustained for 50,000 years. This political system never developed centralised government and bureaucracies. An unfortunate result of this was that the successes of the Aboriginal polity never gained the recognition and legitimacy they deserved from the non-Aboriginal dominant cultures of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. They were too unrecognisably foreign to the non-Aboriginal cultural and political domains. Please note previous comments regarding the invaders lack of administrative and political imagination.

The major political strategy of the Aboriginal peoples of the FAT was to wait out the whitefella invaders' ever changing and incomprehensible attempts to interfere in their lives. The final straw for the waiting strategy was the neo-Stalinist approach adopted by the reigning ALP government of the first decade of the 21st century. This gave the FAT secessionist movement its initial impetus. At this time, a combination of Australian Federal and Territory government strategies removed any vestige of Aboriginal control over their own lives, imposed a repressive and conformist social system on the remote Aboriginal settlements of the region, and foisted a nuclear waste dump on them, the relics of which still remain in the Sickness Country between Katheriniam and the supply centre of The Alice.

The demands from Federal and Territory governments became ever more strident. Aboriginal people were supposed to accept their assigned position as a criminal caste, a problem population, and not protest the poisonous and unsustainable extractive

industries on their country, and the imposed alien social norms of Darwinopolis.

Discussions about the withdrawal of resources and services from Aboriginal settlements deemed to be “economically unsustainable” began to be noised about by the Federal and Territory governments. These proposals came hard on the heels of the instability generated by a new iteration of the Federal government’s infamous Intervention (the last and most extreme of the ongoing invasions perpetrated by non-Aboriginal bureaucracies), a neo-Stalinist local government regime, and the perpetual re-structuring of the NT government bureaucracies that kept them busily engaged exclusively with themselves. As you can imagine, the combination of the simultaneous and multi-level political changes created complete chaos.

Anyone that attempted to protest was silenced. When the disappearances of key advocates began, and the abrupt departures of people even vaguely sympathetic to Aboriginal people became harder to ignore, the coalition that later became the leaderships of the FAT took action. Previous to this, Aboriginal people had tended to political disaggregation, focussing their attentions on maintenance of their own political family based imperatives, at the expense of effective activism on their own behalfs.

The Aboriginal women of the region now known as the FAT held a women’s law meeting in a remote region in about 2067. The women had always been better at overcoming the Aboriginal

cultural tendency to political disaggregation, because of their shared interests in their children having a future. Their timing was perfect. The 100 year drought had been going for 60 years at that stage, many of the non-Aboriginal industries such as pastoralism and mining had failed, Darwinopolis had turned it's attentions inward, and was completely uninterested in the region and it's people. When the women presented Darwinopolis with their petition for secession, Darwinopolis readily agreed, heaving a sigh of relief that they would no longer be responsible for the problem population of largely Aboriginal people, and would have no further responsibility for the decrepit state of the settlements in the region.

The secession petition was presented and agreed to just as the nuclear industries were reaching the end of their lives, and just prior to the brilliant scientific breakthrough by Professors Paddy McFarland and Izaak Hartley-Richards that led to the development of the thorium reactors that now power our much changed continent. Meanwhile, Darwinopolis was truly becoming the Venice of the southern oceans. The inexorable rises in sea levels that led to the drowning of all of Old Australia's coastal cities were turning Darwinopolis into a fetid and disease ridden swamp. The Darwinopolis diaspora began in earnest when the storm surge from Supercyclone Debbie swamped the entire city in 2078. Those who were able, fled the city ahead of the Supercyclone, heading for the more inland settlements. The closest and largest of these was Katherinium, known in those days as Katherine.

Initially, the people of Katherine accommodated and looked after the refugees. However, the sheer numbers of refugees soon

became unmanageable, and the Katherinians tired of the demands of the Darwinopolis political aristocracy. As tensions rose, the Katherine mid-security prison was reassigned as a refugee camp, and the refugees were moved into it en masse. The Katherinian land owners reclaimed the dwellings and offices they had loaned to the Darwinopolis administration, which was also relocated to the “Hacienda Hendo” wing of the refugee camp.

Meanwhile, back in the FAT, an unexpected side effect of the Darwinopolis government’s incarceration was that the community’s fear of crime dropped. Without constant government funded publicity campaigns about how dangerous the streets and settlements were, and the competitive ramping up of “tough on crime” government policies and campaigns, the community populations realised there was, in fact, very little in the way of real crime. Traditional Aboriginal dispute mediation and prevention practices such as the “geographical” were able to be used without impediment. If conflict looked like increasing to the point where it was becoming dangerous, one or all of the groups in conflict would simply re-locate. The general unavailability of alcohol also meant there was a sharp general reduction in violent incidents in Katherinium as well as in the FAT.

Katherinium undertook a skills audit, and re-settled people back into the community who had skills useful to the city state of Katherinium. The first to be resettled were the builders, electricians, power technicians, plumbers, and skilled labourers that were responsible for building the new infrastructure needed to house the new population of Darwinium refugees. The old

Darwinopolis administration had no role to play in the affairs of Katherinium, and by this time were seriously disengaged from any sense of reality. They formed three sub-committees, wrote up a report on the review of their forced move to Katherinium, re-structured again, evaluated the review and the re-structure, and presented the people of Katherinium with an ultimatum to cede control of the city-state to their administration. This was completely ineffective as there was no enforceable consequence for ignoring the Darwinopolis ultimatum. Katherinium suggested that the Darwinopolis administration could try approaching the FAT with a re-settlement proposal.

The Darwinopolis administration duly drafted a proposal, and sent out a search party to find someone from the FAT to talk to. The only documentation of their search and the eventual Powerpoint presentation of the re-settlement proposal comes from the *Khan Chronicles*. Khan is a legendary figure, who has accumulated layers of myth and hearsay around his character. What we do know about him is that he was a poet and a storyteller, and had a number of differing cultural traditions that informed his rich, though at times abstruse metaphorical language. However, his account of the climactic meeting that took place between the representatives of the Darwinopolis administration and the assembled language groups of the FAT is uncharacteristically unequivocal. He describes the reaction to the Darwinopolis Powerpoint presentation in the following way.

“They came from the north, travelling through our country. Their heads were up. They didn’t look where their feet were. Treading

the country, but with no blackfellas under their feet this time. They didn't know our language, but they expected us to know theirs. Lot of words flew out their mouths. They was (sic) praying to their gods. They didn't stop there, they prayed to everyone else's gods as well. They even prayed to Mammon, but he wasn't listening. Why would he! There was nothing in it for him. All they had was their high opinion of themselves.

They talked to the camels, they asked them "where's those blackfellas? We want to talk to them." The camels ignored them too, like the dingos and the lizards. Only ones looking interested were the crows. They thought they might get some of them whitefellas to eat if they waited. After a while the brothers, aunties, grandmothers, uncles, grandfathers, and cousins caught enough of those whitefella's words to understand that they were asking to come back to our country and live there again.

Grandfathers and uncles wanted to kill them then. They picked up their spears. Aunties and grandmothers laughed so hard they fell over, and had to be helped up again by their nieces, cousins and daughters. The elders told the whitefellas "you sit down there while we talk".

The family talked and laughed all that day, through the night, and through the next day. Brothers hunted kangaroo, cooked it up and gave the tails to the old people. Nothing for those whitefellas. They sat in the sun with the flies listening to their every word. Those crows sat round in the trees looking at the whitefellas. No

shade, no tucker, no idea. After everyone finished with those roos, they went to see the whitefellas sitting in the sun.

“You want to sit down here?” they asked them. “Yes, we do” they replied. Blackfellas said “We remember you. We remember the last time you lived here. We’ve talked long time about this question you got. We’ve talked under stars, moon, sun and shade about this question. We got answer for you now”.

The whitefellas stood up and smoothed their hair, welcoming the answer they thought they were going to get. Empty promises, empty pockets and faces full of hopes.

Blackfellas said “Our answer is no. You can puck off now”. We picked up our babies, our blankets, and our billies and left them there.”

The Darwinopolis contingent returned to Katherinium, and declared themselves a government in exile. The people of Katherinium ushered them back into the Hacienda Hendo where they spent the next year drafting a new constitution.

Over the next twenty years, the FAT became the stable self-governing political entity we now know. One of the mainstays of their economic base became the sale of the nuclear waste that had been dumped on their country back to the thorium reactors that were now powering the new major population centres of a much-altered Australia. There was consideration of recruiting the Darwinopolis bureaucrats to become the transport drivers and

handlers of the nuclear waste. However, after a skills audit, it was decided they did not have the skills required, and that they would constitute too much of risk to the populations of the FAT. Robot drones are now used to extract and transport the u-waste, and ironically, it is the Darwinopolis government in exile that are now the problem population for Katherinium.

Next week's Brocklebank-Jeavons Memorial lecture is on the recent bio history of the FAT, with particular reference to the return of some species of mega-fauna, and it's impact on the local economies.

If you would like to go on a scuba diving field trip to the ruins of Clare's Folly in old Darwinopolis, please register at the Faculty's website. It is inadvisable to snorkel in the ruins of the Darwinopolis Parliament House without lookouts and armed guards, as it is now infested with crocodiles.

The Professor Brocklebank-Jeavons Memorial Biology Lecture on the early biohistory of the FAT

Greetings, students and Kowabunga! Welcome to this annual lecture commemorating the work of Hugh Brocklebank-Jeavons, the famous surfing biologist.

As can be gleaned from the set reading for this lecture, the biohistory of the FAT is interwoven with its general history. It will be surprising for those who have not made a study of the early colonial history of the FAT that once vast amounts of the land were seriously degraded and incapable of supporting life. Extinctions of native bio were common. This was due to the imposition of inappropriate cultural practices by the colonists, such as farming and the running of cattle and other livestock that was not adapted for the environment. At that moment in history it seemed the Australian indigenous fauna was going to become extinct and would be lost forever. Wouldn't that have been a bummer during the global warming period – losing biology adapted to arid and low water climatic extremes. What would our ancestors have eaten during the desert era without bush tucker and kangaroo? However, this potentially catastrophic loss of arid zone biodiversity was not the case, as can be seen from a visit to any part of the FAT. You can't walk anywhere without disturbing a host of different marsupials ; wallabies and possums and so on, darting away as you walk through the grasslands and mulga forests. The thriving wildlife evident there is due to a definite policy decision taken by the custodians of the FAT once it had seceded from the NT in 2067.

To back up somewhat, the FAT was in those mid 21st century days a neglected wasteland of failed cattle and farming projects. It was

administered by the city/state Darwinopolis, which is to say, systematically neglected, plundered and eventually leased out as a depository for nuclear waste from all around the globe. Ironically, this was to be its salvation. The breakthrough in the mid 22nd century by the McFarland/Hartly-Richards Research Team in thorium reactor technology meant that discarded nuclear waste could be recycled to produce clean energy, with the only byproduct harmless carbon. Suddenly, the world was bidding for the waste they had so carefully distanced themselves from in a previous generation.

But what bid could tempt the people of the FAT, who had given up on money and were happily living a modified hunter/gatherer lifestyle. The custodians of the FAT met and discussed the situation. According to the Khan Chronicles the elders laughed for a solid week, and further discussions over the next few weeks were punctuated with outbreaks of giggling. The male custodians requested that in exchange for the nuclear waste, they wanted extinct local fauna cloned up from remaining museum specimens and released back into the wild. The female custodians requested a similar program aimed at reintroducing bush tucker into the wild.

Over the next hundred years, the local vegetation and wildlife were returned, much to the joy of the hunters of the region. Now they had a range of meat options, from wallaby to kangaroo rat to selected megafauna, such as the 100kg possum and diprotodons. Hunting enough meat for a family's food was taking a party of men about 4 hours per week, which was about how long it had taken before the time of the Whitefella.

The permaculture plantings of local food plants had taken place in parallel to the cloning. After a century of reintroduction of local flora from seed stock, there was a wide range of natural foods within an easy walk from anywhere in the FAT. It was taking parties of women about 8 hours per week to gather enough food to feed the families. It would have taken less time except that the kids trailing along tended to consume almost as much as they collected, and anyway, what's the rush? It's not like they had any cleaning or washing or shopping to do. And it's great to be out with the women and kids, walking around together a couple of times per week. Again, this was the same as pre-Whitefella times.

The model of nomadic society that the FAT represented, and the clearly enjoyable lifestyle seen in the FAT, had a profound influence on the rest of the world. The FAT demonstrated that it was possible to live in Eden. The average citizen of the FAT lived a healthy, stress-free and active life, full of other people and an unspoiled natural landscape, and with all the time in the world to enjoy it. Without the low quality Whitefella food and alcohol, previously endemic chronic diseases disappeared from the populations of the FAT. The custodians ensured a subset of their youth maintained access to selected useful technologies, but most people had better things to do and didn't worry about it.

The environmental crises at the end of the Oil Age had made the population of the globe receptive to looking at lifestyles that were not so consumer oriented, as it had become clear that the planet could not sustain such lifestyles. It was fortunate indeed for the future of the human race that Indigenous culture in Australia had been so resilient, surviving the madness of the agricultural and machine age with the kernel of their nomadic hunter/gatherer lifestyle intact. This kernel became the

DNA of the global society, as the planet shifted over a few generations into the endlessly sustainable and very enjoyable lifestyle we all now enjoy.

But I digress. That's enough ancient history for today. Students will read up on the next lecture topic : how rubbish saved the world : we will be looking at the era in which plastic mining in landfill produced the oil needed for the transitional era at the start of the Green Age.

Appendix : Introductory lecture on the social and cultural conditions in the 23rd century

Greetings students! In this lecture I will introduce you to the various social conditions that have developed since the twenty-first century. After the old social systems started breaking down at around the end of the twenty-first century for a while there was chaos. For a while, people tried to keep the old but now unviable nations together. In the first decade of the twenty-second century a new social system started spreading across Eurasia and Africa. It is unknown exactly who came up with this new system but it seemed to be loosely based on the social system that had been prevalent in FAT for several decades at the time.

By this time (early 22 century) the population density of the world had decreased greatly. The predominant political system consisted of various independent self governing ethnic groups with overlapping territories. With this system people of different ethnic groups usually did not live in the same community but did live near each other. Trade and intermarriage was relatively common between ethnic groups but not to an extent that reduced an ethnic groups independence.

This system combined with the disastrous changes to the world climate reduced ethnic violence to a minimum. The main reason was that there was a good degree of contact between different groups as they worked together to deal with climatic problems, but enough separation to limit the opportunities for clashes. The occasional intermarriage between groups also helped this along, with people who have married into another culture acting like ambassadors from their old culture. For the first few decades of this system there were exceptions to this little conflict rule, in particular between the Jews and Arabs who had been fighting regularly for over a century, but by the end of the twenty-second century ethnic violence was almost unheard of.

One place where a slightly different system developed was the northern area of the continent of North America in what was then Canada. At the time Canada was much like Australia except with two distinct groups of colonists. Shortly after the formation of the FAT the Native Americans had a similar independence movement with the result being the Independent Nations or IN. The IN covered all of the most northern parts of Canada and like the FAT was not too adversely affected by climate change. The rest of Canada formed a social system similar to that of Eurasia and Africa but with a lot more contact between the two societies, to the extent that they have an identical legal systems and communities that are mixed culture.

While what used to be Canada can be held up as a model society, the USA has a far less positive record. When most of the other countries in the world broke up, the USA tried to hold together, in the end keeping over two thirds of its previous area. What remains of the USA became fiercely isolationist and closed its borders. Over the centuries since then it has if anything become more isolationist and looks back to the days when it was the dominant global power in the late twentieth century. Now its borders are protected by minefields and bunkers manned with American conscripts with orders to kill anyone who comes into sight. While it is still possible to visit the USA it takes permission from both houses of parliament and the president to be allowed past the border.

While the USA still has the same official governing system as it had before the breakup, many details have changed. One change is that the lives of all its politicians are broadcast as a television show and people get voted out of office by the viewers. Also the legal system has greatly

changed with trial by jury having been replaced by trial by combat. Trial by combat consists of the two side's lawyers fighting with sword to first blood with the winner winning the case. A case still has to be ruled as valid by the judge before it goes to combat. These trials are broadcast to viewers all over the USA and a successful lawyer might even go on to become a celebrity.

Another change is that all privacy laws have been removed for all people but celebrities. The USA now has a national religion worshiping entertainment with celebrities being regarded as a higher order of being and televisions being made into household shrines. The American religion of entertainment worship or The Church of Celebrity as it is properly known dominates all social life in America.

The Americans believe that the USA is the centre of the world and hence broadcast their entertainment shows globally. Most are disliked, but fighting to death in the Criminal Arena being especially disliked by the rest of the world.