

We were sitting over at Tatts' on a Thursday night having a quiet beer. There were some aboriginals opposite us and the publican approached them and asked them to go into the other bar (the Tavern). Apparently, he thought one of the aboriginals was a bit of a troublemaker. After a debate between our social consciences and our inertia, we eventually followed the aboriginals into the Tavern (a place, we gather, where no white man has dared to tread in the recent past).

Anyway, we got talking to George, Terry, Ron and Bing and commiserated about how rotten the situation was. We all agreed to go on a pub crawl on the Friday night to see if other publicans shared Tatts' apartheid inclinations.

Friday night came around and we gathered at Tatts' at seven. Ron and Bing and Billy set out with us for the Grand. Julian had a tape recorder carefully concealed in his duffel coat; unfortunately it was not good enough to pick up speech in the pubs, which were very noisy that night. (We got a bloody good recording of the toilets at the Imperial, though). However, Bing faithfully repeated the words of the hotel staff as soon as we were outside. Inside the pubs, we pretended to have no connection with Ron, Bing and Billy.

The aboriginals were served with one beer at the Grand, by a barman whom we must assume was a little inexperienced. For a more senior member of the staff came over and told them it was their last beer.

Bing: We walked in and ordered three beers, the bloke got them. The publican came over and said "no more beers; you're right but your mates are not. If you come in on your own you're right but we can't fit your mates in". He said "they're not allowed to drink here".

The bar didn't look that crowded, so we can only guess at why Ron and Billy couldn't be fitted in. Bing was apparently all right because he plays that sacred White Australian game, darts.

Next on the list was the Railway, where no problems were encountered. At Bruyn's the publican himself came over and joked with Ron, Bing and Billy; this seems to be a particularly friendly pub. A few suspicious glances were cast at the New England, but there was no trouble.

Next we came back to Tatts'. As we are known there, the aboriginals went into the main bar alone, Billy taking Julian's duffel coat. Apparently he held it very close to Mrs Betty Lynd, the publican's wife, for we have a tape recording of her exact words:

Mrs Lynd: Away you go, Billy Vale, In the other bar, in you go.

Tatts' seems to have a rather paternalistic attitude to aboriginals; they are not allowed in the main bar, but the Tavern, a smaller bar, is almost their exclusive domain. Aboriginals we have spoken to do not seem to be altogether delighted with these accommodating arrangements made on their behalf, however.

Next we hit the Imperial and went out to the Lounge. The bouncer at the door allowed us and Kevin Stapleton, who had joined the group by now, to enter without a second glance. After a while, we realised that Ron, Bing and Billy had not joined us, so we went outside to find out why.

Bing: He (the bouncer) said "I'm not allowed to let you in, I've got orders. I've got nothing to do with it but you can't get in".

We then went into the front bar of the Imperial, at which location Ron, Bing and Billy were served without qualms.

By the time we got to the St Kilda, Julian was showing signs of being a seven middle squealer, and made the serious error of talking to Ron, Bing and Billy in the bar. The same thing happened at the Club, the Royal and the Wicklow; although no trouble was encountered at any of these pubs, experimental conditions could be said to have broken down. Our evidence about these last four pubs might be inconclusive.

We must now ask why Ron, Bing and Billy couldn't be served in the Grand, the main bar of Tatts' and the lounge of the Imperial. Unfortunately, the reader must draw his own conclusions. The reader may prefer to patronise bars which will serve aboriginals.

The whole issue may appear to be a storm in a teacup to people who are prepared to compromise or equivocate on the subject of individual rights. To those who are not, it should be important.

From discussions with aboriginals, it appears that, in some pubs, if one aboriginal causes trouble, all aboriginals are barred. Would the same thing happen if one white caused trouble?

It has been alleged that the police have arrested aboriginals for such offences as abusive language, drunkenness and resisting arrest just for asking why a mate was being arrested. We cannot verify these allegations, and they may be entirely unfounded.

"Neucleus" is interested in hearing of instances of racism in Armidale and also in receiving correspondence and ideas for action on this matter.