

BOOK REVIEWS

Br Rory Higgins fsc, *Botthian and Amphian: De La Salle Brothers in Australia 1864-1867*, published by the De La Salle Brothers, Australian Province, 2011.

Botthian and Amphian: De La Salle Brothers in Australia 1864-1867 is a major work. It places the story of the Brothers of the Christian Schools within the context of the local and regional histories of the communities served by these men during the nineteenth century. The study has an international setting too with an investigation of the mission of Jean Baptiste De La Salle, and the later expansion beyond Europe to North America, India and Singapore. Schools in Calcutta and Agra were to be the link between Singapore and the fledgling foundation in the Swan River colony later known as Western Australia. While eventually (1906) the De La Salle Brothers opened a school in Armidale, NSW, it was to be another ninety years after Botthian's departure before the Brothers finally established a school in 'the West' despite ongoing efforts by Bishops Griver and Gibney to re-establish a foundation in colonial times.

Printed by Transprint Corporation, Quezon City, Philippines, the standards achieved in this hard back edition of 344 pages, illustrated volume, reflect well upon both the author and the printer. It has a comprehensive bibliography, index, list of contents, appendices, tables and maps and presented in a clear font. The maps and illustrations are of particular relevance as the volume is targeted at an international readership as well as a national one, while even many Western Australians would not be aware of the singular contribution made by two De La Salle Brothers in Perth and Fremantle in the 1860s. The Brothers, Botthian and Amphian, were domiciled with Bishop Griver and the priests and travelled out to their separate schools. In 1950 Michael Mannix of Wembley then ninety eight, could recall being

taught by these men who also developed the Catholic Young Men's Society and supported the fledgling St Vincent de Paul Society.

The title of the book conveys the thrust of the story which also embraces far flung schools in the northern and the southern hemispheres. The dust cover created by a member of the Institute in the Philippines, links the main protagonist, Botthian Schneider to the origins of the Order and its approval by Benedict XIII in 1725 of Jean Baptiste De La Salle and his outreach to the marginalised.

Through the research, analysis and interpretation provided by the author in this study, the reader gains a sense of mission of two particular men endeavouring to live out their commitment to the Institute; but doing so proactively and not as mere neophytes. Br Rory has brought his material together in a compelling narrative. The reader meets those men as the Brothers, or those others who had been appointed priests or bishops. The reader is not being restricted to an analysis of the institutional church without regard for the human frailties, strengths or social attitudes relevant to the times.

The authoritarianism, unacceptable now, that permeated the Catholic hierarchy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and impacted upon the management of the convents and monasteries according to the strictures of Canon Law and each Congregation's Constitution, is placed in context. The pressure for adaptation to better meet the needs of pioneering conditions whether in America, on the Orient or in Australia as faced both by local bishops their clergy and the Brothers, is well examined by the author. The absorbing narrative loses none of its pace in meeting this test. Archival material is used very effectively and author research unearthed a number of documents pivotal to a more complete understanding of several issues within the Institute's rich

international history with a focus on colonial conditions in Western Australia.

In drawing on public and private archives and collections for photographic material, the author has provided an engaging pictorial record of the era, including previously unpublished photographs and sketches.

The sacrifices and the initiative shown by these resolute men are well captured in the resources marshalled by the author, and give the reader a strong sense of conditions of the time. The sandy stretches designated as streets that led towards the Bishop's 'palace' where one classroom was located are captured as is the Fremantle Presbytery (demolished 1915) where Brother Amphian was thought to have taught and then later visited to offer weekend catechetical lessons.

A long standing member of the De La Salle Brothers and successful classroom practitioner, Br Rory Higgins, a Master's graduate from the University of Sydney, lives in the Philippines where he is Novice master for the Brothers' region of Asia and the Pacific.

The author has consulted archives nationally and internationally as well as communities of De La Salle Brothers during this research, and the readers of this fascinating volume will be pleased with the final result. Sr Frances Stibi pbvm from the Archdiocesan Archives of Perth, and archivists from New Norcia, the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers, and the State Library are among those whose generous involvement has been identified by Br Rory. The formal acknowledgements express a ready appreciation for the local support given in the preparation of this book which brings together many aspects of history.

—**Clement Mulcahy, Past President,
Royal Western Australian Historical
Society**

(This book can be purchased from The De La Salle Brothers Provincial Office at the cost of \$45.00 (no GST). Orders can be placed *via* fax: 0297956400, phone: 0297956400 and email admin@delasalle.org.au. It is also available at *The Record* for \$49.00.)

Concerned Australians, NT Consultations Report 2011: By Quotations, 2012, 72pp. \$15.00. ISBN 978-0-646-57214-7

This is an important sequel to the highly regarded *This Is What We Said* (February 2010) and *Walk With Us* (August 2011).

Between June and August 2011 the Australian Government conducted Stronger Futures Consultations in Northern Territory communities with the stated purpose of finding out what worked and what didn't work under the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) - commonly called the Intervention— which started in 2007.

This book is presented in a most accessible and attractive format with highlights of quotations taken from ten consultations which were independently recorded. Beautifully illustrated, this hard-backed book gives voice to the views of Aboriginal people living under the Intervention.

Mainstream media has given much commentary to the controversial laws under which Aboriginal Peoples in the Northern Territory now live. In this book we hear the true voices of Aboriginal people calling out to be heard. Each page speaks volumes about their frustration and despair at the failure of Government to listen.

Every quotation contains a clear expression of the participants' thoughtful responses to the issues faced by their communities. The reader cannot fail to be moved by the deep commitment of the community members who gave their time yet again to engage in consultations with the government. This commitment was given despite the betrayal of having their voices ignored in previous consultations such as were documented in *This Is What We Said*.

Though these quotations are short they provide insights into the cumulative impact of the NTER laws from 2007. The responses are presented under various topics such as feelings about the consultations, requests for the return of control over communities, support for homelands and the importance of education, including the restoration of bilingual pro-

grammes. Also addressed are job losses, confusion about the constant change of government policies, lack of promised housing, the unaffordability of healthy fresh food and as well, the fact that 80% of Homelands were ‘dry’ before the Intervention started.

Within these quotations are carefully considered, locally-based solutions which could be easily implemented. These solutions should be genuinely considered by the Government— if only they were ‘really’ listening. *‘Are we going to be heard? ... [referring to the previous round of consultations] It just went in here [pointing to right ear] here [pointing to left ear] and blew it out, the wind blew it out.’*

One cannot fail to notice that the solutions offered by Aboriginal people are consistent with the articles of the United Nations Declaration expressed its support on 3 April 2009.

The introduction to this book gives an overview of the strength of the most constant recurring themes during the consultations; the demand for community control to be returned to the people and for the right to self-determination to be re-established. Ironically these are not referred to in the published Government’s Consultation Report. Similarly the desire for the return of bilingual learning programmes to Northern Territory schools, repeatedly called for during the consultations, hardly gets a mention in the Government Report.

What makes this book so unique is that it is based on the only recordings of the 2011 consultations. This book is essential reading

for every citizen in Australia. It provides the opportunity to listen to this country’s First Peoples’ authentic voices which often fail to reach the mainstream media. These voices deserve to be heard and respected.

Full transcripts of the quotations can be found on the ‘concerned Australians’ website. The prequels are also highly recommended and further information about them is at: www.concernedaustralians.com.au.

—Sabine Kacha

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I would like to congratulate ‘concerned Australians’ for putting this book together. It is so hard to hear the voices. The Government—and the Media—cherry pick what is put out in the public domain. There are very few spaces where Aboriginal voices are heard talking about their experiences. This book is so important as it enables us all to question what our Government is telling us. We don’t have to hear it through filters we can hear straight from the people themselves. If you want to read the full transcripts they are on the concerned Australians website.

I might add that *Tracker* is another excellent avenue for hearing Aboriginal voices. It has very quickly established itself as a quality publication which fills a much needed gap for thorough and thoughtful journalism on Aboriginal issues.

—Graeme Mundine, Executive Officer,
Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney
Archdiocese, at the Sydney Book Launch.

The Government seems to have its head in the sand over this Stronger Futures legislation. They received over 450 submissions to the Senate Community Affairs committee’s inquiry into the Bills. The majority of submissions, which included Aboriginal peoples and organisations, community groups, Churches, human rights groups, welfare groups and individuals, rejected the Bills. More than 35,000 people have signed the Stand for Freedom petition. Other Traditional owners have also made strong statements. Yet the Government is ignoring all this informed opposition and is pushing through its own agenda. [...] They need to throw out this flawed legislation and instead commit to real partnership with Aboriginal peoples to develop sustainable solutions.

—Media Statement, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney Archdiocese