'That's not right': Dexter Daniels in 1968*

The high hopes associated with the landmark Cattle Industry (Northern Territory) Award, 1966, which promised equal pay for Indigenous workers soon soured. For many activists the decision was a Pyrrhic victory. This was especially true for Dexter Daniels, the North Australian Workers' Union organiser who, in the lead up to the case, had visited the cattle stations in the Northern Territory. Though embittered by the experience, Daniels continued the campaign and by 1968 he had emerged as a nationally recognised leader in the struggle for Indigenous rights. His frustrations crystallised in April of that year when The Australian reported that Daniels intended bringing twenty Indigenous men and women from the cattle stations of the Northern Territory (NT) to Sydney, where they would live on the dole. This, he hoped, would demonstrate that living in urban Sydney was preferable to existing on an outback station. 1968 was an eventful year for Daniels: he won an appeal against a wrongful conviction for vagrancy; appeared on national television; was elected to the NT executive of the ALP; and attended the World Youth Festival in Bulgaria. The broader struggles he waged against social and wage injustice occurred against a backdrop of internal divisions within Indigenous organisations over the role of the Communist Party and the adaptability of 'Black Power' to the Australian context. This paper examines Daniels' navigation of the politically fraught struggle for equal rights in 1968 in an attempt to understand the personal cost of activism.

By 1967 Indigenous activists began to call for control over their own affairs. By 1968 they demanded it. Buoyed by the referendum, inspired domestically by the Yolngu and Gurindji campaigns and internationally by the civil rights movements, many were angered by government inaction, indifference and belligerence. One of the loudest of these voices demanding Indigenous control belonged to Charles Perkins, who rose to prominence during the 1965 Freedom Rides. Perkins' inspiration was fuelled in part by personal experience, an abiding anti-communism, and interest in the language of Black Power emanating from the USA. He began pointing to 'outside' communist influence in indigenous organisations – in particular the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) – claiming that ideology blinded them to Indigenous interests. As Bain Attwood has commented, 'alongside Perkins' demand for Aboriginal leadership of the Aboriginal cause there was a rejection of assimilation and an assertion of Aboriginality'. Though not welcomed by all, and certainly not easily achieved, these ideas gained prominence and soon marked a shift in emphasis, as occurred internationally, from equal rights to indigenous rights. The altered dynamic wounded many in the process, ended the postwar black-white coalitions and made ascendent an Aboriginality that emphasised pre-colonial cultural, tribal and spiritual traditions. The politics of the new left in the 1960s and 70s influenced activists in the Northern Territory as much as it would the rest of the country. And in many respects the shift in emphasis from civil rights to indigenous rights during this period, with its emphasis on identity politics, reflected the sentiments of many indigenous activists in the Northern Territory. Amongst those affected by these tumultuous events was Dexter Daniels, a young activist from Ngukurr, in South East Arnhem Land.
On a mission
Dexter Daniels was born in the late 1930s on the Anglican Church Missionary Society’s (CMS) Roper River Mission. The mission was run along institutional lines with ‘a strict discipline’, enforced, as John Bern has described, ‘by a variety of sanctions including fines, removal of privileges and expulsion’. It was also a safe haven, of sorts. Established in 1908 to prevent the continued annihilation of the Indigenous populations in the region, it brought together ‘the remaining fragments of groups previously occupying a wide area of the Roper basin and South East Arnhem Land’. Compulsory church attendance and the separation of children into a school boarding house led to their exposure to Western European tradition and culture, and ensured an English literacy in ways not generally fostered on the Northern Territory’s (NT) network of cattle stations. There, in Lupgna Giari’s experience, ‘they never teach you to read, only to count’. A number of Indigenous activists from the Roper Mission were deeply involved in the struggles in the Northern Territory. They included the Roberts brothers, Clancy, Jacob and Phillip and the Daniels, Davis and Dexter. Each man had his own experience of injustice. All were politically active, enjoyed a wide network of support, and were involved in the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights.

From its inception the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights (NTCAR) operated – with varying degrees of success – as a coalition of Communist and Indigenous activists. It had been founded after Brian Manning, the secretary of the Darwin branch of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), met with representatives from the Council for Aboriginal Rights in Victoria in 1961. Manning redrafted the Victorian constitution of the organisation to ensure that the NT branch would provide voting control and key positions to Indigenous members. Jacob Roberts was the inaugural president, while Davis Daniels was its secretary. From its inception the NTCAR worked closely with the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement’s (later FCAATSI) Equal Pay Committee and together they began to put pressure on the North Australian Workers Union (NAWU) to act on the question of equal pay. Earlier attempts by the NAWU, when under communist control, to include indigenous workers in Awards had failed. By the 1960s the union was under the leadership of Paddy Caroll, a strident anti-communist, who was less interested in aboriginal advancement. By 1965, however, the union had created a position for an Aboriginal organizer, and Jack McGuinness, long-term unionist and brother of FCAATSI’s Joe McGuinness had been elected to the position of President. In 1964 the government introduced the Social Welfare Ordinance, and repealed many of the overt discriminatory provisions against Indigenous people in the Territory. The Wards Employment Ordinance, however, remained in force and discriminatory conditions for Indigenous workers continued. The NTCAR and FCAATSI persuaded the NAWU to apply to have Indigenous workers brought under the Cattle Industry Award. As part of this broader campaign, Dexter Daniels successfully contested the position as union organizer with the NAWU. Daniels began visiting the cattle stations in the NT organising Indigenous workers into the union, and promised that they were going to fight, and win, equal pay.

Daniels’ work as union organiser with the NAWU provided a sharp reminder of
the limitations of the system and the slow progress of change. The landmark Cattle Industry (Northern Territory) Award of 1966 failed to deliver immediate parity after the Arbitration Commission found in favour of equal pay but delayed its implementation for almost three years to allow ‘pastoralists to restructure their labour practices and the Commonwealth to implement its assimilation policy smoothly’.9 According to Brian Manning, the delay in granting equal pay left Daniels 'bitterly disappointed'. Daniels ‘took the decision as a personal failure to deliver the goods’. It was this disappointment that would energise Daniels to push for strike action, first, at Newcastle Waters with Lupgna Giari, and later, against the wishes of the Union, at Wave Hill.10

**A co-operative venture**
Dexter Daniels’ role in the Wave Hill walk off has been well told in the literature. Of importance here are the ideas that Dexter, his brother Davis, and the Roberts brothers brought to the strike. The NTCAR’s 1966 ‘Program for Improved Living Standards for Northern Territory Aborigines’ demanded a mixture of civil and indigenous rights, encompassing ‘equal pay’ and ‘full control and ownership of reserves’ for Indigenous people. When in 1964 Davis Daniels and Phillip Roberts visited Kenya on the invitation of a Kenyan Minister, they, according to Attwood, began again ‘to articulate demands that mirrored those presented by the CPA’s policy on Aborigines’, urging the establishment of ‘cooperative farm ventures’.11 In the course of ‘conversations’, Dexter Daniels and Vincent Lingiari ‘narrated a course of action for the Aborigines on Wave Hill, one that would begin with a strike but which also contained an aspiration to displace Vesteys’.12 The shifting emphasis on land rights and self-determination fitted with the CPA’s perception of Indigenous populations, especially in the remote areas of Australia. This perception was framed by the Comintern’s understanding of ‘oppressed national minorities’. As Attwood notes, its redrafted policy in 1963 ‘maintained the Party at the forefront of articulating Aboriginal rights, that is, rights for Aborigines on the basis of their being indigenous’.13 The Party argued against the government’s assimilation policies and argued instead for ‘integration’, the right to decide to live separately or within non-indigenous communities.14

Within the atmosphere of the Cold War, the CPA’s advocacy for Indigenous rights and the involvement of communists in many Aboriginal rights organisations provided opponents with an opportunity to discredit Indigenous protest. The natural fit between the ideas of activists like the Daniels and Roberts brothers and those of the CPA increased the possibility of alleged communist manipulation. In an attempt to head off such accusations in relation to the Wave Hill walk off, FCAATSI’s General Secretary Stan Davey argued for the need ‘to limit the involvement of Communist Party members in public roles in the strike for fear this would inflict considerable damage on the cause’.15 The risk that the Wave Hill walk off would be seen as communist inspired and not a legitimate Indigenous protest fed into a broader anti-communism evident in the attitudes of people like W.C. Wentworth, the soon to be Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.16 These issues began to unravel relationships within the left-leaning NTCAR and between the NTCAR and the NAWU.

These tensions increasingly frustrated Dexter Daniels. They found expression in
a growing animosity between Daniels and CPA and NTCAR member, George Gibbs. In late 1967 Daniels took a break from raising funds for the Gurindji, from the NAWU and from the NTCAR and he returned to his home on the Roper River. At Roper he began agitating against the CMS. When he and Lupga Giari had first pulled workers and their families off the station at Newcastle Waters, Daniels had wanted to pull all cattle stations out in the NT. His response to the Union’s ‘no’ has been widely quoted: ‘why don’t you let my people fight’. He took his belief in direct action to his home and he urged a walk off similar to that conducted by the Gurindji. But Roper River Mission was not a cattle station. The CMS’s protective role and changes introduced by the Mission, which had enabled a small level of consultation with community elders, prevented a cohesive response to the demands for greater self-determination. With these divisions evident the CMS Superintendent was able to drive a wedge between Daniels and others on the Mission. After attempting to persuade residents of the Roper River Mission to demand control over their land the CMS Superintendent decided he needed to remove Daniels from the Mission. He contacted the local Police and Daniels was arrested for vagrancy, and taken away. The action quickly backfired. The Police and the CMS underestimated the fame that Daniels now had. Since 1965 he had become a public spokesman for Equal Pay and for the Gurindji struggle. Thus, his arrest and gaoling became a cause célèbre. Various government departments scrambled to try and reduce the fall out from the case, but misunderstood the growing widespread anger and continued to portray Daniels as an individual ‘nuisance’, a ‘troublemaker’.

**This load behind my back**

If Daniels was ‘bitterly disappointed’ by the Arbitration decision in 1965, by 1968 he was dismayed by his treatment by authorities and by the infighting besetting Indigenous rights organisations. The year was not without some successes, however. With the aid of prominent NT barrister, Dick Ward, and the NTCAR, Daniels won an appeal against his conviction for vagrancy and he was flown to Sydney to appear on the ABC’s *This Day Tonight* program. The experience had not diminished his desire to ‘pull all labour off every station’. This time, however, the object was specifically ‘to fight for our land rights’. He also began to formulate new strategies. His conviction and subsequent appeal, however, cannot be told simply as a story of triumph. The incident left its scars, and these are evident from the words of Daniels himself:

> I felt very lost when they let me out of gaol in Darwin – at first I thought I’d go home and forget the whole thing, the whole fight. But I kept feeling this weight on my shoulders, and I understood it was my people sitting there – this load behind my back, like a swag or something.

When he spoke of the weight on his back – his swag, his people – he went on to say that ‘they’re pitiful these people, but we believe in one another, and I can’t refuse to help them. I still feel the pressure of them. I need to help these people, and I don’t care what happens …’ Daniels began to develop a plan that would see Indigenous men and women leave the stations and missions to live, instead, on welfare in the cities. His rationale was that it would ‘put pressure on the Australian Government to improve wages and conditions on the stations’. One
month later, Charles Perkins suggested a similar approach. In an article on ‘Black Power’ in *Farrago*, Perkins is quoted as saying:

> We need Black Power, ... a militant approach could be most obviously effective in the Northern Territory ... there should be a mass strike for equal pay and decent conditions. The strikers could head for Alice Springs, where the Government would be obliged to feed and clothe them as they were Wards of the State. This action would cripple the cattle industry and force the station and the government to take notice of the aborigines claims... 

Perkins had been sent to the Northern Territory for a ‘familiarisation visit’ by the Department of Territories, but it clearly did not have the desired effect.

**Black Power**

When Perkins returned from a trip to the United States he resigned his position as Vice President of FCAATSI saying that it ‘no longer represented “Aboriginal opinion”.’ Concerned by the influence of left-wing non-indigenous activists Perkins attempted to create an alternate organisation. As Attwood has pointed out, in 1968 ‘two new terms were increasingly heard in Aboriginal political circles–‘Aboriginality’ and ‘black power’.’ It was a language developed by a younger generation of Indigenous activists inspired by the civil rights movements in the USA. ‘Black power became a means of articulating the demand for a greater Aboriginal role in the struggle for Aboriginal rights. Its rise served to heighten this demand by expressing it in terms of “Aboriginal control”.’

Perkins’ call for ‘Black Power’ was widely reported in the press as a call for ‘Black Violence’, rather than as an anti-communist push for Indigenous control. With Perkins intervening in Indigenous issues in the NT, local Indigenous activists were increasingly asked about their position on the issue of ‘Black Power’. Initially the answers were predictable, given the widespread misunderstanding of Perkins’ position. Dexter Daniels, for example, stated publicly that Black Power was not needed as ‘Unions can put pressure on the Federal Government to bring about the changes we want and need’. In an interview with a journalist from the *Australian*, he stated ‘people shouldn’t mention this Black Power – it’s not right’, and argued that ‘we’ve got to find some way to work with white Australians’. What was going on behind the scenes, however, suggests that Perkins’ call for Aboriginal control had more support among activists in the NT than the public statements would suggest. But there was another complication in this dialogue.

After Perkins’ visit to the NT, he began to criticise sharply the role of the Missions. His involvement in the politics of the Territory was not universally welcomed. Clancy Roberts, also a Roper River man, rejected Perkins’ ‘talk of black power’, it was ‘rubbish’, he said, ‘we don’t want American gun law in this country’. He added that ‘Charles Perkins is not even a half-caste Aborigine’. Davis Daniels agreed with Roberts’ opinion. As Perkins was ‘not a full blood Aboriginal’, he had no right to speak on issues in the NT.
Throughout this controversy, Dexter Daniels apparently asked Bill Jeffrey, a Welfare Officer supportive of the Gurindji struggle, what he thought of Perkins. ‘Perkins was a dingo and trying to act like a possum’, he said. The antipathy for Perkins (and especially his strident anti-communism) by some activists in the Northern Territory and beyond proved a bridge too far for Daniels. He came out in defence of him in the *NT News*. ‘My brother has been quoted as having attacked Charles Perkins because he is not a full blood Aboriginal and so can’t tell Aborigines what to do. This is ridiculous, Charlie and I speak with one voice. He’s as much an Aboriginal as I am.’ Both Perkins and Daniels argued that disunity would undermine Indigenous advancement – and they spoke of their fear of a growing division between Alice Springs (where Perkins’ family was from) and Darwin. Aboriginal commonality was more important to Daniels than ideological division.

**To Bulgaria**

Dexter Daniels’ own relationship to the Communist Party had long been in question, especially given his involvement with prominent Communists on the NTCAR. Perhaps to counteract these accusations he stood, and was elected to the NT ALP Executive, in 1968. Nonetheless, ASIO still believed that he was ‘exploited and greatly influenced by the CPA’ and that he was being ‘cultivated’ by communists. Daniels tried not to be drawn into the question. When asked what he thought of communists, he responded by saying ‘I think they are like us … some good and some bad’. But these public statements masked an underlying reality. As early as 1962, Indigenous members of the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights had come under pressure about the involvement of communists. And privately, by 1967, Daniels had made it clear that public perception of the NTCAR was affected by allegations of communist influence. In a conversation with Frank Hardy, Daniels apparently stated that when he’d asked people at Roper River to join the Council, they said they would not join a ‘Communist toolbar’. Daniels’ response to the problem was to suggest ‘we have to have only Aborigines, then nobody can say those words’. Though he did not have Perkins’ anti-communist zeal, Daniels’ nonetheless recognised the difficulties created by perceptions of communist involvement, and he shared a growing belief in Aboriginal control.

Not surprisingly, the allegations of communist manipulation surfaced again when Daniels was selected as a representative to attend the World Youth Festival, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 28 July to 8 August. While preparations for the Festival were underway, four University students visited the Territory, arriving in a ‘red Volkswagen’, in May 1968. According to the ASIO report, they ‘found Dexter Daniels not all that he is cracked up to be, but on the other hand were very impressed with Phillip Roberts’. The file was sent on the same day to ASIO Headquarters that a second report was sent on Daniels and the 9th World Youth Festival. The ASIO field officer commented that ‘Dexter seems to be avoiding people. He might even try to avoid going to Bulgaria at the last moment. He appears to be suffering from a mental burden.’

If Daniels was suffering from depression, he nonetheless carried out his pre-Sofia engagements with typical gusto. Arriving in Victoria on Sunday 16 June, where
he was met by George Seelaf, a communist leader and secretary of Victorian Branch of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union. Daniels spoke at numerous meetings 'on the waterfront and at numerous factories', including one to hundreds of meat workers at the Richmond Abattoirs where he stated that 'Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory must have their tribal lands returned to them'. He also travelled to Sydney and Brisbane where the exhausting round of meetings was repeated. Along the way he responded to criticism of his planned visit to Bulgaria. A letter writer of the Sydney Morning Herald asked, 'Why Bulgaria?' Would it teach Daniels 'how to organise bigger and better strikes'? Daniels responded with dignity: 'my people desire only to live and enjoy the wonderful opportunities that Australia can offer. Only by all people joining together can my people achieve a decent way of life and not as second-rate Australians. By visiting Bulgaria I will be able to raise my people's claims and let the injustices of my people be known.'

In June 1968, in a sympathetic article published in The Sun, journalist Laurie Oakes warmly wrote of having dinner with Daniels during his speaking tour of Melbourne, 'It's a disturbing experience to have dinner with Dexter. The passionate speech and the emphatic gestures are not good for the digestion. But they stir the soul.' He has, Oakes went on to say, 'a fire in his belly'.

With the itinerary in place, Dexter flew from the Roper River Mission to Darwin; Darwin to Singapore; and on to Sofia. Daniels arrived home on the 6th September 1968, 'on BOAC Flight BA716 from Karachi'. Daniels visited Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia just prior to the Soviet intervention, Romania and Russia. More research on this trip is needed to fully appreciate its effect on Daniels. However, a report in Daniels' ASIO files speaks of his unhappiness during the tour overseas. It alleges that his 'ego could be a bit out', and suggests that he did not appreciate having to tour the Soviet Union because he had wanted to come straight home. This contradicts statements that Daniels made prior to leaving for Sofia, but the sense of malaise does ring true.

Navigation of the political machinations during 1968 was fraught with difficulty. And the personal and professional cost was high. An assessment in Daniels’ ASIO files of his role with the NAWU suggested he was a ‘dead loss’. But this was an assessment that has as much to do with political manoeuvring as it does to reality. At the beginning of 1968 Daniels’ felt 'the weight of his people on his shoulder'. This weight had to be carried despite facing personal indignities brought on by a wrongful vagrancy conviction and the sense of injustice that this fostered. His appointment to the NT ALP Executive and nomination to travel to the World Youth Festival were accepted to further the cause of Indigenous civil rights, and they were accepted at a time when part of him wanted ‘to forget the whole thing’. Had these events not collided with the shifting dynamics within Indigenous organisations, and had Daniels’ organic activism been incorporated more easily into the protocols of formal institutions, 1968 may have been simpler to navigate. But they were not. The government’s anti-communist agenda in many ways shaped the direction of Indigenous politics of the time. But many non-indigenous activists were also wrong not to recognise the need for Indigenous control. The bitterly divisive issue of anti-communism clouded the
question of Black Power and Indigenous control and frustrated Daniels’ attempts to get on with the job of changing the conditions for his people. But the emphasis on Aboriginality that would emerge from these divisions dovetailed with Daniels’ demand for control over tribal lands. While acknowledging the usefulness of trade unions and sympathetic organisations in the struggle for Indigenous rights, he, like Perkins, saw the need for Aboriginal control. But getting to this point was difficult. His own doubts, compounded by personal and factional struggles, as well as his vagrancy case, put him under almost unbearable pressure as the political ground shifted under his feet. Daniels could ‘stir the soul’ of others, but the personal and professional cost of activism exacted a heavy toll in 1968.

Endnotes

* ‘That’s not right’, was, according to Frank Hardy, a response of which Daniels was ‘very fond’. Frank Hardy, The Unlucky Australians, One Day Hill, Victoria, 2006, p. 22. I wish to thank the anonymous referees, Melanie Nolan, Phillip Deery, and Peter Love.

3 Bern, ‘Reaction to Attrition’, p. 214.
4 See comment from Lupna Giari in Hardy, Unlucky Australians, p. 30. Lupna Giari, also known as Captain Major, is a Gurindji man born near Wave Hill. He and Daniels both played a large role in the Wave Hill walk-off in 1966. And together, they travelled the east coast of Australia raising funds for the Gurindji’s struggle. See, for example, ‘Aboriginal help call’, Courier Mail, 17 November 1966. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA. Unless otherwise stated, all newspaper reports cited are contained in this file. ‘Aboriginal walk-off’, Tribune, 16 August 1967.
7 See Attwood, Rights for Aborigines, pp. 183-185.
8 Carroll was a member of the Wards Employment Advisory Board, see Bernie Brian, The Northern Territory’s One Big Union: The Rise and Fall of the North Australian Workers’ Union, 1911-1972, PhD Thesis, Northern Territory University, 2001, p. 264.
9 Thalia Anthony, ‘Reconciliation and Conciliation: The irreconcilable dilemma of the 1965 ‘Equal’ Wage Case for Aboriginal Station Workers,’ Labour History, November 2007, p. 28. See also see also Hardy, The Unlucky Australians. Assimilation in this context referred to the removal of people from their land on cattle stations to government settlements.
10 See Manning, ‘A Blast From the Past’. Also Brian Manning interviewed by Cathy Harper; Brian Manning interviewed by Charlie Ward, 2008. I thank Charlie for his permission to listen to this recording and for his generosity in providing feedback on previous work.
14 Attwood, ‘The Articulation’, p. 13. This is not to suggest that the CPA was the only organization supporting some form of land tenure. Nor were they alone in condemning assimilation. See Taffe, Black and White Together, pp. 53-55 and chapter 6.
15 Attwood, Rights for Aborigines, p. 189.
16 Sue Taffe quotes a telegram from Frank Engel for the Australian Council of Churches to the Prime Minister in August 1968, in which, in addition to supporting the Gurindji’s claim to land, he
added 'Support for the Gurindji is not, repeat not, limited to Communists'. Taffe, Black and White Together, p. 208. See Lachlan Clohesy, 'Fighting the enemy within: Anti-communism and Aboriginal Affairs', Australian Historical Studies, forthcoming.

12 See, for example, Attwood, Rights for Aborigines, p. 187.


20 See also 'Aboriginal wins Court appeal', Mercury, 11 April 1968; editorial in the Canberra Times, 'The Daniels case', Canberra Times, 12 April 1968; 'I wasn't a Vagrant – Aboriginal', The Australian, 2 April 1968.

21 Daniels on TV, NT News, 11 April 1968. An uncharitable ASIO report noted that, while Daniels was 'given a sympathetic hearing' on the program, 'his impact on the viewing audience would have been slight because of his language difficulty'. See description by 'Hawke' under 'Dexter Daniels –This Day Tonight'. 'Communist Party of Australia Influence in the Australian Broadcasting Commission', 4 September 1968. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA.

22 'Aborigine says: we will strike', The Age, 11 July 1968. According to an ASIO Minute Paper W.C. Wentworth, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, had advocated 'that the Government could adopt the same policies as those advocated by the CPA'. ASIO and Nixon quickly disavowed him of this idea for fear of 'letting the CPA claim the credit'. Also uppermost in the Government's mind in the decision of land rights to the Gurindji was the possible effect this may have on similar land claims in Papua New Guinea. See ASIO Minute Paper, 29 May 1968. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA. During this time Daniels claimed that his life had been threatened three times. 'I'll Shoot You,' Manager Said. NT fight for rights'. Newspaper report. Source unknown.


24 Ian Moffitt, 'The day an arch white villain and a dangerous Aboriginal agitator dropped in for a chat ...', The Australian, 19 April 1968.

25 Daniels went on to express his dissatisfaction with the internal divisions in FCAA 'the way they fight each other'. Ian Moffitt, 'The day and arch white villain'.


28 Familiarization visit to the NT by Charles PERKINS prior to his visit overseas, Series No. A452, Control Symbol NT 1967/2371. NAA.

30 Attwood, Rights for Aborigines, p. 310.

31 Attwood, Rights for Aborigines, p. 312.

32 'NT Aborigine leader hits “Black Power”', The Age, 18 June 1968. An NT ASIO report states that Phillip Roberts 'is at odds with Davis and Dexter Daniels. The Daniel's [sic] are advocates of black power but ROBERTS is totally against it and has told them so'. 5 July 1968. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA.

33 Ian Moffitt, ‘The day an arch white villain’.

34 See Cecil Holmes, 'Perfunctory Perkins shots at missions went astray', NT News, 27 April, 1967; 'Missions hit back at critical attack', NT News, 20 April 1968. See Familiarisation visit to the NT by Charles PERKINS prior to his visit overseas, A452, NT 1967/2371, NAA.


See for example, Letter from Dulcie Flower to the Council of Aboriginal Women in South Australia condemning Perkins' push for 'black power' and rejoicing in his rejection as a leader by Indigenous activists in the NT. Letter dated 29 June 1968. Perkins, Charles Nelson, Vol. 2, Series No. A6119, Item 3661, NAA. 'Daniels against Black Power', Sydney Morning Herald, 28 June 1968. The article quotes Daniels' saying of Charles Perkins 'We will find a way to shut him up,' 'he said with a smile'.

'Vested interest in disunity'.

According to ASIO, Daniels position on the ALP executive was due to the support of Stan and Mamie Smith and Dick Ward. RD. NT: I.C.R.Davis 3 April 1968. See also an ASIO prepared file on 'A Short History of the North Australian Workers' Union (NAWU) and the influence of Paddy Carroll', May 1968, which discusses Paddy Carroll's strong anti-communism and the various struggles for control within the union. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA. 'Dexter Daniels to ALP Executive', NT News, 5 February 1968; 'ALP elects Aboriginal', Sydney Morning Herald, 6 February 1968. An ASIO report claims that 'The GIBBSs think Daniels is not politically sophisticated enough for such a move', 'Dexter Daniels', 15 February 1968.


See Sue Taffe, Black and White Together, p. 80 cf. 92.

See Hardy, The Unlucky Australians, p. 152.

Australian Festival Committee Circular, 1 May 1968. Aboriginal off on a trip to Sofia', Sydney Morning Herald, 19 June 1968. 'World Youth Festival, Sofia, Bulgaria, 28 July-8th August 1968; 'Aboriginal delegate', 11 April 1968, Maritime Worker, p. 7. 'An Appeal to Support Dexter Daniels [sic] to Participate in the 9th World Youth Festival – Bulgaria' which was 'provided' to ASIO by a contact Report, 17 May 1968, Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA.

Intercept Report, 22 April 1968. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA. NT 'Visiting Students from Sydney and Newcastle', 5 June 1968; The students were named in an ASIO report as Nona Harvey, Chris Donaldson, Michael Jones and Chris Page, the report went on to discuss the negative reports that the students would make from their visit. 'Visit to the Northern Territory by Students from Sydney and Newcastle Universities', 17 June 1968; '9th World Youth Festival Dexter Daniels', 5 June 1968. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA.

Intercept Report, 14 June 1968; 'Aborigines' plight called disgraceful', The News (SA), 18 June 1968. In this same speech Daniels is recorded as having said that Black Power 'must not be allowed to come to Australia'. Donations to Daniels' trip had been received by Russel Ward, Eleanor Dark, Katherine Susannah Prichard, Max Brown, Thistle Harris and Mr A.A. Calwell, MHR: 'Dexter Daniel [sic] to Youth Festival', Source Unknown. Dexter DANIELS – Vol. 2. Series No. A6119. Item 2621. NAA.

See for example, Bernard Coles, 'Dexter Daniels on Land Rights', Honi Soit, 9 July 1968.


Laurie Oakes, 'Man with a Mission: Dexter out to stir souls', The Sun, 19 June 1968. Five days later Acting Director of Welfare demanded to know the following: whether Daniels had been staying with his brother in Bagot Reserve since it would be illegal ('transitional homes should be one-family homes only'); what 'arrangements ... he had made for his wife whilst he is away'; and whether he 'has been working recently'. See E. P. Milliken, 24 June 1968. Dexter Daniels, Social Matters. Series No. E765, Item AW447. NAA.


'Back from Bulgaria, Aboriginal leader seeks change but not communism', NT News, 10 September 1968. An article in Newsweekly made the case that the World Youth Festival was little more than a 'clear Communist stunt'. 'Communists – the Youth Front', Newsweekly, 19 June 1968. See 'Dexter Daniels', 10 October 1968.