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1983

IN THE HERALD
Compiled by
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Triple threat

A threatened strike by aircraft refuellers could disrupt airline flights out of Sydney and Melbourne this weekend. About 220 aircraft refuellers at Kingsford-Smith and Tullamarine airports are threatening strike action unless they are paid at triple rates for working the gazetted extra public holiday as well as for Christmas Day, which falls on a Sunday. The 70 refuellers at Tullamarine decided on Wednesday to hold a 24-hour stoppage next Tuesday.

Cash walks

Australia's Pat Cash walked off Kooyong's centre court yesterday after exchanging words with Davis Cup tennis captain Neale Fraser. The young Melbourne player had lost the second set of a practice match with John Fitzgerald when he clashed with Fraser and walked off. Asked if Cash's temperament was becoming a problem, Fraser said: "It appears that way ... but it's a good sign that they are all keyed up."

Board with the Cup

Two America's Cup games could be subjected to as many protests and legal problems as the original challenge on which the games are based. Sydney's Mr Sean Fraser and Mr Paul Rea, have begun selling their version, *The America's Cup Game*. Last week Perth company, Midas Finance, which has backing of the Australia II syndicate, began marketing *America's Cup - The Game*. Solicitors are demanding that Mr Fraser withdraw his game from sale.

RICHARD BUCHHORN 1932-2022

Activist priest railed against injustice, here and abroad

Richard Buchhorn, or Dick as he was known to many, had a nose for injustice, hence the title of his memoir, *Cry Stinking Fish*, a reference to Christopher Logue's powerful poem *A Singing Prayer*: "And those who say to you: why bother us with this? Sing out, men born with strong noses must cry stinking fish."

Buchhorn didn't simply cry stinking fish. He sought, firstly, to understand the basis of any injustice, then to communicate this to others whom he hoped might join him in action to eliminate the stink.

Born and raised in Glen Innes, upon leaving school Buchhorn attended the University of NSW and graduated as a mining engineer. He also became aware of, and was influenced by, the Young Christian Worker movement (YCW), an international organisation of the Catholic Church. In later life he gave full credit to the lasting influence the YCW had on his life and personal philosophy. He decided to train for the priesthood, first in Australia and then in Rome, where he was ordained in 1960.

Returning to Australia, he was appointed to the Tamworth parish. As YCW chaplain, he learnt many junior bank officials endured poor conditions and were underpaid. Under his leadership, the YCW's local campaign was taken up by other branches, and banks were forced to improve wages and conditions. Their next campaign spread state-wide, resulting in much improved training for young apprentices following legislation enacted by the NSW parliament. During these actions Buchhorn met, for the first but not last time, supportive unionists.

In late 1969 Buchhorn was moved to Narrabri where he made friends with a couple who shared his opposition to Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam. He suggested that, instead of travelling to Sydney for the May 1970 Moratorium, they might organise one in Narrabri. They got a few more people together and the Moratorium went ahead in the town's main street. Posters were displayed, leaflets and flowers were distributed, and an open

forum that same afternoon was attended by some 50 people.

They then formed the Narrabri Forum, which invited guest speakers to regular meetings to discuss a range of issues. Speakers included Bruce Petty, Betty Archdale, Sekai Holland and Faith Bandler, their expenses being covered by funds raised from congenial wine bottlings. The same year the forum organised a symposium at which Ralph Hunt (local federal member) debated the war with a member of the Australian Reform Movement. While government supporters were in the majority, there were converts - and others were convinced they should no longer blindly follow what governments might say. Buchhorn was the catalyst. When he was around, things happened quickly. A little later he was moved to Quirindi.

In 1971 the South African YCW asked its Australian counterpart to oppose the forthcoming Springboks' tour of Australia. Buchhorn wrote a lengthy, well-reasoned open letter addressed principally to Australian rugby players in which he asked them not to play, but to no avail. The Springboks were holed up in a Bondi Junction motel. Buchhorn led an ecumenical service in a nearby park, then joined the noisy protesters.

Anti-apartheid campaigners had unsuccessfully sought to persuade major supermarkets not to stock South African products. So Buchhorn and fellow campaigners would fully load a shopping trolley with groceries and place a South African product on top. At the checkout, he would casually pick up the offending item and then, feigning surprise, cry out: "Agh, South African! I'm not buying any of this stuff", before departing the store and the overloaded trolley.

Buchhorn's political activism was always balanced by his care and compassion for the individual. While living in shared housing in Redfern Buchhorn got a job at the local IXL factory, which he discovered had strong commercial ties with South Africa. He had intended staying for just a few weeks, which he thought would be sufficient time to encourage some Aboriginal youths to get jobs there also. This was successful. He



Richard Buchhorn as a young priest; (left) Buchhorn supporting tenants of a house at Kepos Street, South Sydney, who received a notice from South Sydney Council to move out in 30 days.

would pick them up each morning, with their lunches close at hand, and support them while they gained the work experience which opened their path to a better future. This changed many lives.

Buchhorn then decided to stay with IXL, for he saw the opportunity to promote the economic boycott of South African companies which profited from apartheid. When he realised that the company sourced its baked beans from South Africa, he devised an ingenious scheme. He was on the assembly line. Before the jam jar or tin of baked beans could be sealed, he slipped in an anti-apartheid message typed on aluminium foil - for example "IXL supports apartheid". When irate customers opened their purchases they complained to the media, which gave the campaigners the hoped-for publicity.

Buchhorn never entirely forgot his engineering past. He was always on the lookout for discarded

washing machines, which he found at rubbish tips and council clean-ups. He would hoist them on top of his VW, then drive home and set to work, cannibalising them to get enough parts for a working machine which he would give to one of the mothers on the Block who had lots of children, endless washing and no money.

Such simple acts of compassion and human kindness sat alongside his community and workplace organising, his clever protest actions, his writing and the support and friendship he gave to his many friends.

From 1975 to 1978 Buchhorn was assistant secretary of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. This gave him a platform from which he could advocate for change within the church, sadly with only limited success. He produced a booklet stating concern for Indigenous people for distribution in parish churches and schools. Due to the

intervention of a conservative hierarchy, the final document was watered down. Adding insult to injury, some priests failed to make it available to parishioners.

Buchhorn next applied for a vacancy at Boggabilla. In his own words, he "wished to test the viability of the proposition that one could be a parish priest and respond to the people of the area". He became friends with the Indigenous people living at nearby Toomelah, from whom he would get the occasional request: "Hey, Father Dick, can you come on out - and bring your oils with you." By which was meant not the holy oils, but the machine oil for a broken down washing machine.

During his eight years in Boggabilla - four as priest, four after leaving the priesthood - Buchhorn worked with Aboriginal people as he helped them document their people's history and record details of sites of significance. Offers made to the local high school to make this information available were rejected, or else the material was left unused. Despite his best efforts to bring together the two communities, tensions came to a head over Boobera Lagoon, a sacred place to the Indigenous people - but for whitefellas just a good place for water-skiing.

In 1983, Buchhorn resigned from the priesthood but continued to live at Boggabilla. He and a most remarkable Murri woman, Lilla Watson, entered into a permanent relationship and in time moved to West End, Brisbane. Reflecting on this period of his life, Buchhorn described how important it was to be welcomed so warmly into the Murri community, within which he gained an appreciation of Murri values and their way of life. It was his hope, he wrote, that whitefellas might "do the right thing: respect the law, the culture, of the people into whose country we have come, and chosen to live".

He is survived by Lilla, and the last words are hers. "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Terry Fox