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Meanjin

AUSTRALIANISM

THE invitation from the editor of "Meanjin Papers" for a Jindyworobak introduction to the Nationality Number of the Papers is a significant courtesy, in appreciation of which all Jindyworobaks will join me. It is the completest answer to those who, misunderstanding both our forces, have declared that Meanjin is reactionary to Jindyworobak. To such suggestions I have replied that Meanjin is different, but assumes Jindyworobak; that Jindyworobak roves less freely in certain streams of art, but has clearly recognised that "Some of the greatest Australian literature yet to be may have no local colour at all. Its settings may be in China or Mars." Meanjin, less specialised, more general in creativity than Jindyworobak, has never been without symbol of the tonic shock which Jindyworobak administered to literary circles throughout the country, and, on the present occasion, is heartily implementing Jindyworobak.

The Australianism of the people must be their own synthesis of forces originating within and without the country. All movements towards it must advance such synthesis.

That our remoter, European, heritage has been stressed to a degree which blinds the majority of Australians to our immediate, Australian, heritage has long ago been deplored by a few independent thinkers; but, in the last six years, two separate movements have discovered the obvious in ways which have impressed the imagination of a small but growing section of the public. The one aims at a reconstruction of the whole life of the Australian people, the other at a specifically aesthetic cultural reorientation. The one works with an ideal of reality in mind; the other seeks a reality of ideal.

Australia First draws from Alcheringa but cannot claim to have started there, for in Alcheringa there was no conception that anything might be put before Australia. Australia First started with the perception that the Australianising of the Australian people was being obstructed. To get to Alcheringa we must desert time and circumstance, find original value: which may only be really done in the imagination. Australia First, among other things, aims to make it easier for the imagination. And this is desirable, considering the uphill tight imagination, in this respect, has with commercialism and alienism.

Australia First took its being through the work of men like A. G. Stephens and P. R. Stephensen's essay, "Foundations of Culture in Australia"; Jindyworobak did not start with me, or with L. F. Giblin who, in 1934, showed me the values I called environmental, but, as Victor Kennedy says, existed "all along." It is Alcheringa, the Spirit of the Place, realised.

It will be obvious now that I have not been speaking of The Australia First "Group" or the Jindyworobak "Club." Australia First is not the prerogative of "The Publicist" or the Group, but a matter for the changing Australian people. Jindyworobak is not the prerogative of Jindyworobak Publications or the Club. The Group and the Club are unique in the ways in which they have stirred public consciousness in matters of supreme national importance, but there their distinction could conceivably stop while the stirring continued. Thus the one must not consider its particular theories in every respect calculated to serve the best practical ends, nor the other its particular applications in every respect calculated to serve the best spiritual ends.

Ideal of reality and reality of ideal have been chasing themselves in circles in my thoughts. It seems to me, however, that this is an occasion when the problems involved must be raised. The Nationality Number of Meanjin Papers must prove an important commentary on the Australian situation from a more comprehensive ground than hitherto. For what is unique about Meanjin is its attempt to bestride and speak for forces affecting the Australian people spiritually from both within and without.

—REX INGAMILLS.