

LUNCHTIME SEMINAR  
Tuesday May 24<sup>th</sup>, 12.30 – 2.00pm

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND AUSTRALIAN  
COMMUNISM

Presenter: Bob Boughton

SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND LEADERSHIP  
SEMINAR ROOM  
(NE Edge of Campus, Bldg N3)

Abstract

In the 1960s and 1970s, the discriminatory treatment of Indigenous people in Australia became for the first time a significant concern within education systems, including within universities. UNE was a pioneer in this field, its adult education program having built relationships in the region over the previous decade via its community development work, while other UNE staff had long played a role in the local Aboriginal rights movement. However, as Indigenous education and development became higher education 'business', the traditional conservatism of university teaching and scholarship helped foster a rupture between newer forms of politics and a much longer tradition of Indigenous rights activism associated with the far left of Australian working class politics, especially with the Communist Party of Australia. This presentation will tell some stories from that longer tradition, based on research done as part of my doctoral thesis. My hope is that these stories will encourage some discussion within the School about Indigenous rights today, and the role universities might play in fostering a more equal society in the twenty first century. "The road to the future lies over the bones of the past, on which we dare to tread."

The presentation draws on two 'academic' papers, which canvass these arguments in more detail (but without the UNE slant):

Boughton, B. (2001). The Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Rights 1920-1970. In R. Markey (Ed.), *Labour and Community: Historical Essays* (pp. 263-294).

Wollongong: University of Wollongong Press.

Boughton, B. (In press). Assimilationism and anti-communism. A Reflection on Gerald Peel's 'Isles of the Torres Strait'. In T. Rowse (Ed.), *Contesting Assimilation: Histories of Colonial and Indigenous Initiatives*. Perth: API-Network.

Copies on request, from [bob.boughton@une.edu.au](mailto:bob.boughton@une.edu.au)