

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY STAY THERE FROM 1976 to 1981

Siddiq Osman Noormuhammad

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RECOLLECTIONS OF MY STAY THERE FROM 1976 to 1981

Siddiq Osman Noormuhammad

The Kenyan Government receives British Commonwealth scholarships to allocate to students every year. I was given a post-graduate scholarship to study at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. I am grateful to the British Commonwealth for the scholarship and to the Kenyan Government for selecting me to receive it. Later on, it was upgraded by ANU to an ANU scholarship. I am grateful to ANU for that.

My mother-in-law heard that her daughter, Mallu, was going to this beautiful country called Australia. She did not know where Australia was. Her sons explained to her that her daughter was going to the end of the world. She proudly informed everyone that her daughter was going to the end of the world!

My postgraduate studies in Canberra helped me in my personal development. I met many wonderful people, gained much experience, upgraded my research skills, and acquired typing and computer skills.

These are some of the major recollections of my stay in Canberra from 1976 to 1981.

- **Australians are Jolly Good Fellows**

Australians are the most polite people I have met. The first Australians my wife, Mallu, and I met were the educated ones at the Australian National University (ANU). If one of them wanted to ask a question, they would seek permission by asking, "Can I ask a question?" They are so thankful. If you just serve them a cup of tea, they will go on praising it and keep on thanking you for as long as they drink it. The Australians we met on the streets were always very polite, helpful and friendly. Those who visit Australia will tell you Australians are such good people.

Dr. Dan Etherington was my lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. His family was the first we met in Australia. The house we rented was being renovated so they became our hosts for two weeks and we are very grateful for their hospitality. They were excellent hosts. Both Dan and Maureen were very active in church activities and very helpful to new students. Their son, Richard, told me that only five percent of Australians were Christians so he was deciding to work for Christianity in Africa. They got an opportunity to work for Christianity in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. Dan developed

a machine to manufacture coconut oil. He established himself in the Solomon Islands to help the coconut farmers there. He was a very enterprising professor indeed.

Australians keep their lawns neat and trim. Miss Joan Williams, whose house we rented, mowed her lawn regularly. So did we. Her parents from Melbourne would visit her once in a while. Her father, an elderly person, would do the gardening from morning to evening for as many days as they stayed. And when they left, the garden was transformed. Very admirable!

Someone I knew in Kenya since my childhood visited many cities in five continents. He said that Canberra was the cleanest city he had seen but he also said that it is a dead city. That is true because at night you hardly see a person in town.

The institutions in Canberra worked efficiently. I will give one example of a bank. The Federation of Muslim Students Associations of Australia wanted to organize an Islamic conference in Canberra for which they obtained a donation. Since the conference was to be held in Canberra, a bank account was to be opened there. Two of us were given the responsibility of opening a bank account. We went to a bank and had the bank account opened for that purpose, but we told the teller that we had not yet received the cheque for the donation. We were told that it was not a problem. We could make the deposit when the cheque was received. Now that is customer service!

A visiting Professor from Pakistan fell ill and was hospitalized. The nurses treated him so well and took such great care of him that he was superlative in his praise for them.

Australians are, by and large, very humble and simple people. Mr. Gough Whitlam, the former Prime Minister of Australia, once came to a seminar at the ANU, and as all the chairs in the seminar room were taken, he sat on the floor! Would you see such an episode anywhere else in the world? At once, someone went and brought a chair for him. Mr. Gough Whitlam was truly an outstanding international statesman of his time. Under his leadership, the Australian Government introduced free medical care and free access to university education. He gave land rights with land titles to the indigenous people (the Aborigines) to their lands. He gave independence to Papua New Guinea. He instituted the Racial Discrimination Act to legislate against racial discrimination. He introduced non-discriminatory immigration rules, and abolished conscription. He opposed nuclear weapons testing. He was Australia's Prime Minister for only three years but he had transformed Australia's domestic and international policies for the better.

His political opponents, however, would not let him finish his wicket. Through political machinations, they had him thrown out before his term was over. Instead of telling him, "check what you are doing mate", they called out, "checkmate". Such is the game of politics, mate. In this instance, prejudice triumphed over vision.

There are some policies of Australia which have now come to light that I disagree with but that is not part of this topic of recollection.

Social workers were appointed to help and advise students if needed. Mr. and Mrs. Mills were assigned to us. They were such a kindly couple.

One day, our daughter, Aisha, came home from kindergarten school and told us that the children were teasing her, "you are brown, you are brown", so I reported this to her teacher, Mrs. Darke. She explained to the children why they should not do so and they stopped. Mrs. Darke was such a wise and effective teacher! By that time, Australia had not yet opened its doors wide to immigration. Canada stole a march over Australia in multiculturalism.

Australians whom we knew wanted their children to be friends with our daughters, Aisha and Nurjehan, as they wanted their children to relate to people of colour. They admired the beautiful dresses that Aisha and Nurjehan received from Kenya.

Once we were walking along a street in Sydney, and suddenly an officer told his companion to stop so that he could have a look at Aisha (Nurjehan was not yet born). He said he had not seen a more beautiful baby than her! He removed his cap in salute and they walked on.

When we were returning to Kenya, an Australian family was sitting next to us in a restaurant. Suddenly their son pointed at me and said, "black man, black man". The father was embarrassed and said, "no he is not black, he is almost white". So I drew myself close to the boy and told him, "It does not matter. We have horses that are white, black, brown and all sorts of different colours. Doesn't that make life more interesting?" They appreciated my answer.

Australians have been blessed with many things, especially beaches that are miles long. It would be difficult to find a beach town more beautiful than Woy Woy, perhaps Watamu of Kenya.

Have you seen a more beautiful harbour than Sydney? There are many reasons why Canadians are jealous of Australians.

Australians are too easy-going and they look up to the Americans, perhaps that is why Americans walk all over them, once given an opportunity. Some of the visiting American Professors walked all over the Australian Professors and the easy-going Australian Professors did not mind.

Of the things that you eat in Australia - the taste of which remains in your mouth, is milk, butter and cheese.

The kangaroos and the koala bears are animals specific to Australia. Anyone who sees them, automatically admires them as God's gifts to Australia.

The Laughing Kookaburra bird is also distinct to Australia. The sound of its "laugh" is like the laugh of people, hence its name. One of the lines in a popular Australian nursery rhyme goes:

Laugh, kookaburra! Laugh kookaburra.

If you get an opportunity, swim in one of the Australian beaches and ride Australian horses.

2. Australians can be nasty

I wrote a letter to the editor of Canberra Times, condemning the policy of apartheid in South Africa. I was called by an official of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) and lectured not to waste my time writing letters to the editor but instead to concentrate on my studies. I should also realize that I had been provided a scholarship. ADAB was established to help developing countries. Did ADAB believe in academic freedom?

After some time, I wrote another letter to the editor of Canberra Times against the system of apartheid in South Africa. I was called by another official of ADAB who said such bad things which I cannot reveal here as it would upset Australians to no end. This is the first time I am talking about these incidents.

Mr. Andrew Young, the ambassador of U.S. to the United Nations, when the compassionate Mr. Jimmy Carter was President of U.S.A, came to give a talk at the ANU. He was one Government official who also gave his own point of view if it differed from the position of the Government on the issue. Mr. Jimmy Carter gave him that flexibility. Among other things, he spoke against apartheid in South Africa. Could any official in ADAB stop him? Millions of people all over the world were speaking against apartheid. Could any official of ADAB stop them? Could king Canute stop the tide?

My office-mate from the Philippines said they will never give independence to South Africa. I said they were saying the same thing about Rhodesia but it became independent as Zimbabwe. I said South Africa, God willing, will be independent by the year 2000, and apartheid was indeed overthrown in the year 1994.

3. The Muslims of Canberra

At that time, there were very few Muslims in Canberra. There was only one masjid in the suburb of Yarralumla. Muslim migrants were mostly from Lebanon. Then there were the staff of Muslim embassies and Muslim students. In 1976, there was only one saff (row) for Jumu'ah Prayer. Every year, there was an increase of one row, so that by 1980, all the five rows of the masjid were filled. The masjid was kept neat and clean. There was no snow, but it used to be cold in the winter, so towels were kept in the wudu (ablution) area. The funding for maintaining the masjid came from the Indonesian Embassy which also appointed the Imam.

Besides the Friday Prayer, we used to go to the masjid over the weekend for congregational Prayers.

In the month of Ramadan, 20 Raka'at Salat at-Tarawih were prayed. Arrangements were made for congregational iftar (breaking the fast). The masjid was full for 'Eid Prayers.

Every year, one or more families went for Hajj. Hajj mabrur (may Allah, Majestic is His Majesty, accept your Hajj, Amin).

Some of the families that did not go for Hajj did the qurbani (zabiha), sacrificing an animal in the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham, peace be upon him). Some distributed the meat to the Salvation Army who appreciated it.

Muslims of Canberra were as practising of Islam as Muslims of any other city.

We used to go to a farm to slaughter the sheep according to Muslim rites. Each sheep was only for \$4. Owners of meat stores objected, so we stopped. One meat store began to sell halal meat. Afterwards, certification of halal was introduced. Inspectors used to come from Arab countries to certify that the animals were slaughtered according to Islamic rites. Arab countries imported a lot of meat from Australia. It was observed that when the inspectors were there, everything was done properly, but when they left, it was business as usual.

We would go out to sight the new moon for the months of Ramadan and Shawwal so that we could begin and end the fast. We came across a new concept called "moon

creation". The moon is created, it is above the horizon, but it cannot be seen because it is not enough degrees above the horizon for it to acquire its own light. The Imam of the masjid told us he followed "moon creation". So we went to the Stromlo observatory to find out more about this. We were told that on the 29th of Ramadan of that year, there was no chance of seeing the moon as it would not be enough degrees above the horizon. Even so, we went out to sight the new moon on the 29th to fulfil the Sunnah (Prophetic tradition). So, some of us followed "moon sighting" and some followed "moon creation".

Another difference was in the vision about the type of organization we should have. Some thought that the Islamic Society of Canberra should be an Islamic organization promoting Islam while others wanted it to be a social organization, for social gatherings. Since the latter were in the majority, it became a social organization. There was no such difference of opinion among students. They always kept the Muslim Students Association as an Islamic organization. Someone observed that Malaysian students who came to study in Australia became more staunch Muslims.

The Muslim students obtained a prayer room at the ANU. We were very grateful to the ANU for that. At least, the Zuhr Prayer was performed there. Al-Hamdu Lillah (All Praise is for Allah, Majestic is His Majesty).

Officials of the Islamic Society of Canberra were called for a talk-back radio program. They were bombarded with questions that stereotyped Muslims. One lady, however, praised the Muslims saying that she admired the Muslims for giving their women so much jewellery.

A Muslim died. His wife was a Christian. The burial was according to Muslim tradition. After the burial, the son was persuaded to practice Islam.

We invited the Aborigines to the masjid. They like to call themselves the indigenous people. There was no attempt to preach Islam to them. Their leader gave a talk about the culture of the indigenous people. Dinner was served and we met the indigenous people, al-Hamdu Lillah (All Praise is for Allah, the Glorified and the Exalted).

We became friendly with the Nyazis, a gentlemanly family in the Pakistani embassy. A teenage Australian used to visit them. Mrs. Nyazi would first give her a glass of soft drink after which she would serve her tea. One day the girl visited them with her mother. Mrs. Nyazi served the soft drink after which she served her tea. The Australian lady said that you have already given us soft drink so now it is not necessary to give us tea as well. Her daughter said, "Mom, this is their religion!" How innocent can you get?

A conference of the Federation of Muslim Students Associations took place in Canberra. At this conference too, speakers were from Australia and from other countries. I presented a paper about "Justice in Islam". We realise the importance of this subject even today as justice is hardly achieved anywhere in the world, whether at the individual level, the court level, the national level or at the international level.

The revolution took place in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Some Christians were concerned about how it would affect them. Dr. Nasir-ul-Haqq, a lecturer at a community college, was invited by a church to give a talk on Islam. He explained ways in which Islam is similar to Christianity and ways in which it is different. He said that we revere Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) as one of the greatest Prophets sent by Allah (Majestic is His Majesty) but not as God nor as the son of God. His birth is the most miraculous birth in human history as he was born without a father. We revere the Blessed Virgin Mary (peace be upon her) as the greatest woman who gave birth to Prophet 'Isa (Jesus Christ, peace be upon him).

After the revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran, I was walking along a street in Canberra when a store keeper called out to me. He was concerned about the Iranian revolution so he wanted to ask me questions about Islam which I answered. Then he asked me whether Islam allowed the drinking of alcohol. I said "no, alcohol is strictly prohibited." He was pleased to hear that. He said, "then Australians will not become Muslims!" All the more reason to become Muslim, I thought, as Islam has such beautiful teachings.

We learned new things. We learned from the Arabs that America would favour one Arab country over others at certain time periods, and for geostrategic and political reasons, would favour another country at other times and abandon the country it once used to favour. We learned that 15 per cent of Egyptians were Christians. We learned about the BJP (Bharatya Janata Party) and the RSS (its spy network) in India, and how they worked against Muslims.

There was talk about building another masjid but it was put aside because of the objections of neighbours.

4. A Conference about the Qur'an at the ANU, Canberra

A conference about the Qur'an was organized by the Australian National University. Speakers were invited from Australia as well as from other countries. Australians were divided as to the merit of such a conference. Some were not in its favour while others supported it as they thought it would bring people together and reduce prejudice.

A scholar from Pakistan drew applause when he explained about social justice in Islam as taught in the Qur'an and Hadith (Sayings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him)

A Research Fellow from Australia explained what we learn from Surah Yusuf (A chapter on Prophet Joseph, peace be upon him) in the Qur'an.

Professor Ali Mazrui of Kenya was there. He was introduced as the greatest scholar from Africa. The one who introduced him should have added "in the English language" because our 'Ulama (religious scholars) who talk and write in Arabic are intellectually superior to him. He said that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a revolutionary. When he began to praise the Prophet (peace be upon him), some of the people in the audience began to laugh loudly to divert him away from that subject. He told them that he seldom got an opportunity to talk on that topic so he was glad he got this chance.

A Senior Research Fellow at the ANU talked about the Sufi tradition in Islam.

There were two lecturers from the state of Israel. One of them spoke against Muslim culture, indirectly attacking the hijab.

Someone from the audience introduced himself as an Australian school teacher and he mocked at Indonesians for their poverty even though they were rich in resources.

Another Australian from the audience was against Zakat (obligatory charity) in Islam. He argued that if everyone gave Zakat, and no one remained poor, then there would not be anyone left to receive Zakat, hence Zakat as one of the pillar of Islam would become redundant. Someone else from the audience replied to him that if indeed that happened, then Zakat would have served its purpose and you cannot attack an institution for serving its purpose.

A diplomatic Bengali lecturer illustrated with quotes that Mr. Rabindranath Tagore had, in his writings, borrowed some of the teachings from the Qur'an.

Except for two or three speakers, the rest were not very impressive so the conference did not leave much of an impression on my mind.

5. At the Australian National University (ANU), Canberra

At the ANU, I was based in the Department of Economics, Research School of Pacific Studies. I will talk about some of my recollections at the ANU in four sub-sections. These are:

- Economists were consumed by “Structural Adjustment”,
- Seminars at the ANU,
- Opinions of students at the ANU, and
- Opinions of Professors at the ANU.

(a) Economists were consumed by “Structural Adjustment”

The World Bank put forward the idea that countries should have “Structural Adjustment” in their economies to remain internationally competitive. Economists in the Economics Department of the Research School of Pacific Studies were consumed by this idea. The main talk was about the “Structural Adjustment” of the Australian economy. It was pointed out that Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore had high economic growth rates and they were called the “Asian Tigers” which had already achieved “Structural Adjustment”, and so were put forward as role models to be emulated.

One Professor presented a paper in which he said that the “Asian Tigers” had achieved “Structural Adjustment” whereas Australia had not, so what was to be done? So I said: “When an Asian country like Indonesia had economic problems, your suggested solution was that it should invite economic experts from Australia to solve its problems. If you want to be consistent in your advice, you should advocate that Australia should invite economists from these countries to advise Australians how to achieve Structural Adjustment!” Most of those who were present laughed.

There was a conference in Canberra of economists from countries of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). At that time, the member states of ASEAN were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. No civility was left at the conference. There was yelling and heckling from both sides, by western economists as well as economists from Southeast Asian countries. Economists from Southeast Asian countries were taking revenge against western economists who had demeaned them for many years. Economic nationalism was on full display. Economists wanted millionaire industrialists and large-scale farmers in their countries to survive in international competition. I left after five minutes as I could not stand such a sorry sight.

One Research Fellow was not bothered about “Structural Adjustment”. He told me that Australia had so many natural resources that Australians could live by them for ages.

There was talk of “Structural Adjustment” once again in the Economics Department. The “Asian Tigers” had higher economic growth rates compared to Australia. So I said that port cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore always have high growth rates. The comparison should be between Sydney, a port city, and Hong Kong and Singapore. This cheered up everyone and you could see a smile on everyone’s face.

(b) Seminars at the ANU, Canberra

I went to a seminar at which it was obvious that some Australians had undergone a change in attitude. The indigenous people were no longer considered backward but they were seen to have a rich culture, living in perfect balance with nature. Someone in the informal sector was no longer considered backward but was seen as an enterprising entrepreneur, to be admired as a hero.

On the other hand, another Professor in the Department of Economics said at a seminar that Aborigines died asymptotically. A Research Fellow from another Department was obviously shocked at such a statement, so he sent a memo in which he wrote, "Overheard: Aborigines died asymptotically."

At another seminar, someone tried to prove through mathematics that God exists. How can you do that? I could not understand his mathematics. Belief in God depends on faith and reason. Throughout history, people have marvelled at the earth and the heavens; the sun and the moon and the stars; the animals and the plants; the human body and all the creatures; and concluded that all these must have a Creator and they have called Him God in their own language.

At a lunchtime seminar open to everyone, an Israeli communist spoke about the injustices of the state of Israel against the Palestinians. He was rather cheeky and unreasonable. He was continuously heckled by the Israelis who had come to the seminar. They continued to yell: "how much have you been paid for this?" The chairperson who conducted the session did not control the audience.

The editor of Sinar Harapan, an Indonesian newspaper, came to give a seminar at the Department of Economics. He was Chinese. He mocked at Indonesians and democracy in Indonesia. He asked what power do Indonesians have? He obviously knew that only one percent of Indonesians are Chinese, but they dominate the Indonesian economy.

A Russian at the Department of Economics gave a talk about Russia's economic policies. I spoke against the presence of the Russian army in Afghanistan and about the thousands of Afghans who had been killed as a result.

The Lester Pearson Report titled Partners in Development was under discussion. It was authored by the former Canadian Prime Minister and named after him. It was about helping the developing countries, an admirable objective. It suggested a target of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income which each country should give as aid to the developing countries. Some of the Faculty were jealous that it was a Canadian who had stolen the limelight.

At a seminar that followed this discussion, one Professor said that aid to developing countries is mostly in kind. What has already been used in western countries, and is no longer up to western standards, is sent as aid. Obviously, what is required is sincerity to live up to noble intentions.

We now know that "aid" is mostly loans. The aid of U.S.A. to the State of Israel is greater than the aid to the poorest 20 countries in the world. The aid of Russia was mostly for Cuba. So it is predominantly political considerations that govern the giving of "aid" and as of now, the interest and the principal repaid every year by developing countries to western countries is more than the loans they receive annually. So, there is an annual net financial flow to the west. Yet many economists continue to talk about "aid" without explaining the real situation.

A lady from another Department presented a paper in which she suggested indirectly that Muslims were also governed by the "Protestant ethic". The idea is that Protestants have a positive work ethic, they work hard and so countries that are largely Protestant are economically advanced whereas Catholics do not have such a positive work ethic, hence their countries are poor. I responded that she should not hoist the idea of the "Protestant ethic" on to Muslims. Muslims are governed by the Islamic work ethic as explained in the Qur'an and Hadith (Sayings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). We Muslims also believe that we are answerable for our deeds on the Day of Judgement. The rich and the powerful who think they can do as they like, should beware of the questioning on the Day of Judgement.

Dr. Ross Garnaut presented a paper which came across as something fresh so I expressed my admiration for it. He would become the next head of the Department of Economics and go on to receive national and international acclaim for his academic contributions.

Another outstanding Professor in the Department of Economics was Dr. Sundrum from South India, who put in more hours. I noticed that he worked many days from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The head of the Department delegated much work to him.

A lecturer at the School of General Studies used population pyramids for Australia to demonstrate that Australia had an ageing population, and if the present population growth rate of Australia continued, soon the population of Australia will decline. The message was being passed that the birth rate will have to increase and/or Australian doors will have to be opened up to immigration. Australia had not yet opened its doors to large-scale immigration. It would do so decades later.

Dr. Mohamed Ayoob, a Reader in International Relations, gave a well-attended talk on the revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranians wanted to export their revolution

to other countries. To which country have they been able to export it so far, it might be asked.

Dr. Ayooob said that Islam and communism is a heady mixture. Would any Muslim agree with this statement? Would any communist agree with this statement? Islam and communism are poles apart. Islam is a God-given religion, while communism is a worldly ideology.

According to communists, workers will carry out the revolution to install a communist government. The main propagators of communism were Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In the book, The Housing Question, Engels has nothing but contempt for farm workers as he thought that it was not at all likely that they will carry out a revolution. Communists are against ameliorators like Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and Mother Teresa, who try to improve the situation of the poor and remove their suffering. According to the communists, only if the people suffer, they will arise, overthrow the Government and install Communism. Muslims never hold such views.

Chairman Mao of China accused Russia of "revisionism". Then, China went revisionist and instituted state capitalism. So the history of communism is a history of revisionisms while the teachings of Islam remain as explained by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) 1400 years ago.

Zamakhsyari Dhofier, a Ph.D. student, presented a paper on Islam as practised by two particular sunni/sufi communities in Indonesia. He began his talk in broad terms. He said that all the Muslims

- Believe in one God, Allah (Majestic is His Majesty),
- Follow one Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him),
- Have one Holy Book, the Qur'an, and
- Have one qibla, the direction we turn to when we pray, and that is the Ka'ba in Makkah.

I presented a paper on the commendable Kampung (slum) Improvement Program in Jakarta. The paper was published and translated in Indonesian.

I overheard one secretary say to another that I was smiling all the time. The other suggested that perhaps it was because I was from Africa! How innocent can you get?

Some in the Department of Economics, both Research Fellows and students began to appreciate that I was championing the cause of the poor.

Dr. Ayooob told me that I was the only student who spoke at seminars from the audience.

After I had attended many seminars at the Department of Economics, at one of these seminars, I said that economics cannot explain much if it does not talk about the personalities of political leaders each country has. For that reason, Political Economy can explain much more. I also realized that many of the economists there were promoting the dogmas and interests of capitalists.

(c) Opinions of Students at the ANU, Canberra

These are some of the opinions of students at the ANU on various issues that I recollect. When we go through these opinions and the opinions of Professors in the next section, we come to the conclusion that there are all sorts of people in this world and they come with their strengths and weaknesses.

Sometimes there is a discussion about the English accent. Different groups of people in Britain have accents of their own. The Australians have their own accent. According to a Ph.D student from India, the correct accent is the Indian accent because more Indians speak English than any other people!

In a communist country like Russia, the market is controlled, whereas in a capitalist country like the U.S.A., there is the free market. Mainstream economists in the U.S.A. love the free market so much that they believe they have invented it and they want all the countries of the world to have a free market. Many economists in other countries were convinced of this as well. So when an Australian Ph.D student went to Indonesia, he marvelled at the free market there. He learned that the free market had always existed in Indonesia. They knew of no other way. But we know that there is corruption as well. May God save everyone from corruption everywhere, whether in the free market, or the controlled market.

An Israeli student who was our neighbour told me that Israelis are the "chosen people" because they have been chosen to suffer. He told me that the Christians stole the whole Bible from them. I asked him to explain. He said that the Old Testament in the Bible belongs to the Jews.

The lease I signed for the student residence I rented was in the name of Her Majesty's Government in U.K. I mentioned that to a Ph.D student from India. He said that Australia is one country that refuses to become independent.

Nude beaches were introduced in Australia. None of those who registered themselves as Christians in the census spoke a word against it. It was obvious that the Christians

had completely surrendered to the secularists. Secularists fanatically believe that their man-made rules are superior to the God-given laws in the Bible. They have reduced Christians to weak little nothingness.

Charm and John Formby with their son Ben were our neighbours in student residencies. Such a charming family! Charm became very friendly with my wife. She observed her closely to learn how we lived. My wife told me Charm was so scared of her husband John!

(d) Opinions of Professors at the ANU

After the oil price increase, the oil producers were earning more petro-dollars. One senior Professor in the Department of Economics suggested that they should put them in American banks.

Dr. Ayoob visited the state of Israel. He told me he was given VIP treatment. I asked why they did it, given that he spoke against their ill-treatment of the Palestinians. He replied that perhaps they thought that as a result, he would become less critical. He was shown around everywhere, but when he requested that he be taken to the West Bank, they did not pay heed. Finally, when one day was left for his visit to end, he made sure he went to the West Bank. He said he was appalled to see the miserable conditions of the Palestinians there.

The Russian army had come to Afghanistan to establish communism there. The Afghanis were fighting them to remove them. Muslim and western countries supported the Afghanis and called them mujahidin who were doing jihad (waging battle). One Australian, a committed Christian, told me he wanted as many Russians to die in Afghanistan as the number of Americans who were killed in Vietnam. I wanted the Russians to leave as soon as possible so that there would be the least casualties on both sides.

I asked a committed Christian whether the biblical teaching was "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth", or "turn the other cheek". He told me that "an eye for an eye" was Jewish teaching which is in the Old Testament whereas "turn the other cheek" was Christian teaching and it is in the New Testament. I asked him, "when did your people ever turn the other cheek?"

We were having a discussion. Someone asked why Africans beat their wives so much. There was stereotyping yet again. I did not like that so I asked whether she was sure men from none of the other races beat their wives. Another lady settled the debate

when she said: "the joke in Australia is: 'did you beat your wife today?'" A little discussion can help you solve all the world's problems!

A Research Fellow who specialized in research in Indonesia said that when you go to Jakarta, you are so happy to be with so many people and when you come back to Canberra, you feel so much relief to be back.

The Head of the Department of Economics, Professor H.W. Arndt suggested in a talk-back radio program that Australian uranium waste should be dumped in the desert in the middle of Australia. Many people objected to that including a small boy who raised his objection on the radio program. None of the professors in the Economics Department said a word about it.

The Head of the Department of Economics took me to a meeting of the Faculty of the Research School of Pacific Studies. He said that this is just a talk-shop, much like the United Nations. At the meeting, one Research Fellow said: "We have Fellows, Research Fellows and Senior Research Fellows. Instead, everyone should be called a Jolly Good Fellow".

It is perhaps appropriate to end on this jolly good note.

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