A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF QUEENSLAND

from reminiscences, diaries, parliamentary papers, newspapers, letters and photographs

W. Ross Johnston
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OF QUEENSLAND

Ross Johnston is a historian whose research interests have come to focus on the South Pacific and especially on Queensland. Born in northern New South Wales, he obtained degrees in history and law from the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland and was awarded a scholarship to Duke University, North Carolina, where he received his Ph.D. in 1969. Since then he has lectured at the University of Queensland, where he is associate professor of history. His publications on a range of topics include numerous books on aspects of Queensland's history; over the years he has been active in many of the state's historical and heritage organizations.
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Acknowledgments

The majority of the photographs have been kindly supplied by the John Oxley Library, Brisbane. This library is the main repository of Queensland history in Australia. In recent years it has been actively building up its photographic collection from a wide range of sources, both public and private. Some of the photographs which the library has supplied came from governmental sources, mainly the *Parliamentary Papers*, and some from the *Queenslander* weekly.

As to the printed documents, acknowledgment is due to the Queensland Parliament for use of its *Parliamentary Debates* and *Parliamentary Papers*. Many newspapers have been called upon; these are mainly housed in the John Oxley Library. The printed book collection there was turned to frequently; and some use was made of the library's manuscript collection, along with documents housed by the Queensland State Archives. The University of Queensland Library, especially the Fryer Library, also supplied valuable sources in the form of books and newspapers.
Treatment of Material

In reproducing the documents, every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the words. Archaic or illiterate spelling and syntax have normally been preserved, but obvious typographical errors have been corrected. Punctuation may differ slightly from that in the manuscripts.

The source of each document is cited fully the first time it occurs in a section and is abbreviated thereafter.
## Abbreviations

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<td>BC</td>
<td>Brisbane Courier</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPD</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia, <em>Parliamentary Debates</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPP</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia, <em>Parliamentary Papers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-M</td>
<td>Courier-Mail</td>
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<td>JOL</td>
<td>John Oxley Library, Brisbane</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSWVP</td>
<td>New South Wales, <em>Votes and Proceedings</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QPD</td>
<td>Queensland, <em>Parliamentary Debates</em></td>
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<td>QVP</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPP</td>
<td>South Australia, <em>Proceedings of Parliament</em></td>
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Exploration
Early Account of Aborigines

Captain James Cook’s voyage in the *Endeavour* along the east coast of Australia in 1770 provides the earliest significant description of Aboriginal life. Cook spent seven weeks at the Endeavour River and after taking possession of the eastern coast of New Holland at Possession Island on 22 August 1770 he made some general observations on the Aborigines.


The only tribe with which we had any intercourse, we found where the ship was careened [Endeavour River], it consisted of one and twenty persons; twelve men, seven women, one boy, and one girl: the women we never saw but at a distance; for when the men came over the river they were always left behind. The men here, and in other places, were of a middle size, and in general well made, clean limbed, and remarkably vigorous, active, and nimble: their countenances were not altogether without expression, and their voices were remarkably soft and effeminate. . . .

They appeared to have no fixed habitations, for we saw nothing like a town or village in the whole country. Their houses, if houses they may be called, seem to be formed with less art and industry than any we had seen, except the wretched hovels at Terra del Fuego, and in some respects they are inferior even to them. . . .

They produce fire with great facility, and spread it in a wonderful manner. . . .

The weapons of these people are spears or lances, and these are of different kinds. . . . These weapons are thrown with great force and dexterity; if intended to wound at a short distance, between ten and twenty yards, simply with the hand but if at a distance of forty or fifty, with an instrument which we called a throwing stick.

The canoes of New Holland are as mean and rude as the houses. . . . The canoes that we saw when we advanced farther to the northward, are not made of bark, but of the trunk of a tree hollowed, perhaps by fire. They are about fourteen feet long, and, being very narrow, are fitted with an outrigger to prevent their oversetting. These are worked with paddles that are so large as to require both hands to manage one of them. . . .
The only tools that we saw among them are an adze, wretchedly made of stone, some small pieces of the same substance in form of a wedge, a wooden mallet, and some shells and fragments of coral.

Unfair Exchange?

At Endeavour River Cook had an altercation with a party of Aborigines who considered that he had taken twelve of their turtles without fair exchange. Cook did not appreciate the Aborigines' idea of property.


On the 19th in the morning, we were visited by ten of the natives, the greater part from the other side of the river, where we saw six or seven more, most of them women, and like all the rest of the people we had seen in this country, they were stark naked. Our guests brought with them a greater number of lances than they had ever done before, and having laid them up in a tree, they set a man and a boy to watch them: the rest then came on board, and we soon perceived that they had determined to get one of our turtle, which was probably as great a dainty to them as to us. They first asked us, by signs, to give them one; and being refused, they expressed, both by looks and gestures, great disappointment and anger. At this time we happened to have no victuals dressed, but I offered one of them some biscuit, which he snatched and threw overboard with great disdain. One of them renewed his request to Mr. Banks, and upon a refusal stamped with his foot, and pushed him from him in a transport of resentment and indignation: having applied by turns to almost every person who appeared to have any command in the ship, without success, they suddenly seized two of the turtles, and dragged them towards the side of the ship where their canoe lay: our people soon forced them out of their hands, and replaced them with the rest. They would not however relinquish their enterprise, but made several other attempts of the same kind, in all which being equally disappointed, they suddenly leaped into their canoe in a rage, and began to paddle towards the shore. At the same time, I went into the boat with Mr. Banks, and five or
six of the ship's crew, and we got ashore before them, where many more of our people were already engaged in various employments; as soon as they landed, they seized their arms, and, before we were aware of their design, they snatched a brand from under a pitch kettle which was boiling, and making a circuit to the windward of the few things we had on shore, they set fire to the grass in their way, with surprising quickness and dexterity: the grass, which was five or six feet high, and as dry as stubble, burnt with amazing fury; and the fire made a rapid progress towards a tent of Mr. Banks's, which had been set up for Tupia when he was sick, taking in its course a sow and pigs, one of which it scorched to death.

Aborigine's Use of Land

Explorers often noted that Aborigines had systematically burnt grass to improve the food supply.


The natives seemed to have burned the grass systematically along every watercourse, and round every waterhole, in order to have them surrounded with young grass as soon as the rain sets in. These burnings were not connected with camping places, where the fire is liable to spread from the fireplaces, and would clear the neighbouring ground. Long strips of lately burnt grass were frequently observed extending for many miles along the creeks. The banks of small isolated water-holes in the forest were equally attended to, although water had not been in either for a considerable time. It is no doubt connected with a systematic management of their runs, to attract game to particular spots, in the same way that stockholders burn parts of theirs in proper seasons; at least those who are not influenced by the erroneous notion that burning the grass injures the richness and density of the natural turf. The natives, however, frequently burn the high and stiff grass, particularly along shady creeks, with the intention of driving the concealed game out of it; and we have frequently seen them watching anxiously, even for lizards, when other game was wanting.
Aboriginal Way of Life

Major Thomas Mitchell had numerous meetings with Aborigines and described their life. In the first journal extract below he observes the unusual feature of "cultivation" on the Belyando River; in the next he describes Aboriginal huts in the upper Barcoo region.


We found much of the grass on fire, and heard the natives' voices although we saw none. We crossed some patches of dry swamp where the clods had been very extensively turned up by the natives, but for what purpose Yuranigh could not form any conjecture. These clods were so very large and hard that we were obliged to throw them aside, and clear a way for the carts to pass. The whole resembled ground broken up by the hoe, the naked surface having been previously so cracked by drought as to render this upturning possible without a hoe. There might be about two acres in the patch we crossed, and we perceived at a distance other portions of ground in a similar state. The river had, where we made it, a deep well-marked channel, with abundance of clear water in it, and firm accessible banks. . . .

On proceeding, we passed some large huts near the river which were of a more substantial construction, and also on a better plan than those usually set up by the aborigines of the south. A frame like a lean-to roof had first been erected; rafters had next been laid upon that; and, thereupon thin square portions of bark were laid, like tiles. . . .

Two Aboriginal Camps

Ludwig Leichhardt left descriptions of camps in the Comet River area near Emerald, and at the Lynd in the Carpentaria.


We then rode up to the camp, and found their dinner ready, consisting of two eggs of the brush turkey, roasted opossums,
bandicoots, and iguanas. In their “dillis”, (small baskets) were several roots or tubers of an oblong form, about an inch in length, and half an inch broad, of a sweet taste, and of an agreeable flavour, even when uncooked; there were also balls of pipe-clay to ornament their persons for corrobories. Good opossum cloaks, kangaroo nets, and dillis neatly worked of koorajong bark, were strewed about; there were also some spears, made of Bricklow Acacia: all were forgotten in the suddenness of their retreat. I could not resist the temptation of tasting one of the eggs, which was excellent; but, as they seemed to have trusted to our generosity, I left every thing in its place, and departed. . . .

When they saw us, the men poised their spears, and shook their waddis to frighten us, but when, notwithstanding their menaces, we approached them, they left all their goods, and with their weapons only hurried up the rocks with wonderful agility. Three koolimans (vessels of stringy bark) were full of honey water, from one of which I took a hearty draught, and left a brass button for payment. Dillis, fish spears, a roasted bandicoot, a species of potatoe, wax, a bundle of tea-tree bark with dry shavings; several flints fastened with human hair to the ends of sticks, and which are used as knives to cut their skin and food; a spindle to make strings of opossum wool; and several other small utensils were in their camp. One of my Blackfellows found a fine rock-crystal in one of their bags, when we passed the place next day with our bullocks. The poor people had evidently not yet ventured to return. The natives we had formerly met had generally watched our movements from a distance, and had returned to their camp as soon as we had fairly left it; but these seemed too much frightened; and I should not be surprised to find that the mountainous nature of their country had given them a greater share of superstition.

Aboriginal Dwellings

The Aborigines lived in many different types of dwellings. Here, William Carron, accompanying the expedition of Edmund Kennedy in 1848, describes gunyahs in coastal north Queensland.

William Carron, *Narrative of an Expedition . . .* (Sydney: Kemp and Fairfax, 1849) 15-16.
Near to this spot we came to a native encampment, consisting of eighteen or twenty gunyahs, (huts) of an oval form, about seven feet long, and four feet high; and at the southern end of the camp, was one large gunyah, eighteen feet long, seven feet wide, and fourteen feet high. All of them were neatly and strongly built, with small saplings stuck in the ground, arched over, and tied together at the top with small shoots of the climbing palm, \textit{(calamus,)} which I have already described. They were covered with the bark of the large \textit{melaleucas,} which grows in the swamps, fastened to the saplings with palm shoots.

A small opening is left at one end, from the ground to the top, and the floors were covered with long dried grass. The natives being absent from the camp, I entered the large gunyah, and found in it a large shield of solid wood, two feet in diameter, convex on one side, and flat on the other.

The convex side was curiously painted red, in circular rings and crosses. On the flat side was a handle, cut out of solid wood. In the same hut I found four wooden swords, three and a half feet long, and four inches broad, sharp at both edges, and thick in the centre, with a slightly curved round handle, about six inches long. They were made of very hard wood, and were much too heavy to wield with one hand. I also found a number of fishing lines, made from grass, with hooks attached of various sizes, made from muscle shells.

After I had carefully examined all these things, I left them where I found them. In the centre of the camp were four large ovens, for cooking their food. These ovens were constructed by digging a hole in the ground, about three feet in diameter, and two feet deep. The hole is then filled to within six inches of the top with smooth, hard, loose stones, on which a fire is kindled, and kept burning till the stones are well heated. Their food, consisting principally of shell and other fish, is then placed on the stones and baked.

There were no vessels in the camp in which they could boil anything, and it is my opinion, from what I afterwards saw of their habits, that their cookery is confined to roasting and baking.

In the camp were several large shells, for holding water, and some calabashes, made by taking out the inside of a gourd, which grows plentifully near the camp. These calabashes would hold from one to three pints each. . . .

We saw several natives fishing in the river from their canoes,
which are about five feet long and one and a-half feet wide, made of bark, with small saplings tied along the side, and are paddled with small pieces of bark held in either hand.

Aboriginal Customs

The Quakers Backhouse and Walker visited Stradbroke Island in 1836 and observed Aborigines dancing, at home in their huts, and fighting.


We again went on shore at Amity Point, where some of the Blacks were amusing themselves, during a rainy portion of the day, with dancing. One of them beat two of their Boomerings together, for music, and produced a deafening clack. The men danced, or rather, stamped, to the tune, often changing the position of their hands, and using great exertion, till every part of their bodies and limbs quivered: they chanted at the same time, with a loud voice, and in this the women assisted, adding also to the noise by means of their hands. Once they sent the women out, that they might not witness a dance, which had nothing about it particularly striking; they also collected bushes, and danced with them in their hands, and under their arms, concealing themselves partly by them. They seemed to enjoy this boisterous child's-play, for such it greatly resembled. . . .

We walked to a native village, on the coast. It consisted of a number of huts, formed of arched sticks, and covered with tea-tree bark, so as to form weather-tight shelters, just high enough to allow the inmates to sit upright in them, and equal in comfort to the tilts, inhabited by the Gipsies, in England. . . . Openings were left at their larger ends, opposite to which at the outside, there were little fires, at which many of the women were roasting fern-root. This, after it was roasted, was held by one hand on a log of wood, while its whole length was beaten by a stone held in the other hand, so as to break the woody fibre. In this state it is eaten, without removing the charred surface; its taste is something like that of a waxy potato, but more gelatinous. In most instances, there were a man and a woman in each hut, and in
some of them there were also a few children; but the number of the children is small in comparison with what it is in the families of Europeans. Many of the huts had shelters of leafy boughs placed so as to keep off the wind. We were informed that these people had several such villages on the island; and that they resorted to one, or to another, according to the weather, the season of the year, and the contiguity of food. At present they are near the opening between Moreton and Stradbroke Islands, depending chiefly on the shoals of Mullet for food. A few weeks ago, they went further into the interior, collecting honey and wild fruits. . . .

The combatants, wore white fillets round their heads, and had boomerangs in their belts, and wooden shields, and waddies, in their hands; with the latter, after some fencing, they gave each other heavy blows, upon the head. Then they retreated a few paces, but maintained a vociferous contest, in which the women of the village joined. It was painful to witness this affray, which we could not interfere to put an end to, on account of not knowing their language. At length, to our great relief, a shoal of mullet was announced, The people took their nets, and hastened to the beach; and when there were no abettors, the contest ceased, and the company belonging our boat who had been standing in the rain to witness this painful spectacle, no longer delayed returning on board the Isabella. It is said, the battles sometimes become very general on occasions of this sort, but that they are seldom attended by loss of life. Several of the men, at this time, were armed with spears, and boomerangs; and seemed only to wait, for a little more excitement, to join in the combat; others paid little attention to the fight, and one continued, quietly building a hut, notwithstanding, the combatants were often close by him.

The Role of Aboriginal Women

The women generally had to provide the food, although the men went on hunting excursions for large animals.

The life of a married woman among the Kowrarega and Gudang blacks is a hard one. She has to procure nearly all the food for herself and husband, except during the turtling season, and on other occasions when the men are astir. If she fails to return with a sufficiency of food, she is probably severely beaten — indeed the most savage acts of cruelty are often inflicted upon the women for the most trivial offence. Considering the degraded position assigned by the Australian savages to their women, it is not surprising that the Prince of Wales Islanders should, by imitating their neighbours in this respect, afford a strong contrast to the inhabitants of Darnley and other islands of the N.E. part of Torres Strait, who always appeared to me to treat their families with much consideration and kindness.

Civilization?

Mitchell here compares “savage” and “civilized” culture, Aboriginal and European.


It would appear that the finer the climate, and the fewer man’s wants, the more he sinks towards the conditions of the lower animals. Where the natives had passed the night, no huts, even of bushes, had been set up; a few tufts of dry grass, only, marked the spot where, beside a small fire, each person had sat folded up, like the capital letter N; but with the head reclining on the knees, and the whole person resting on the feet and thigh-joints, clasped together by the hands grasping each ankle. Their occupation during the day was only wallowing in a muddy hole, in no respect cleaner than swine. They have no idea of any necessity for washing themselves between their birth and the grave, while groping in mud for worms, with hands that have always an unpleasant fishy taint that clings strangely to whatever they touch. The child of civilization that would stain even a shoe or a stocking with one spot of that mud, would probably be whipt by the nurse: savage children are not subject to that sort of restraint. Whether school discipline may have any thing to do with the difference so remarkable between the animal spirits of
children of civilised parents and those of savages, I shall make no remark; but that the buoyancy of spirit and cheerfulness of the youth amongst the savages of Australia, seem to render them agreeable companions to the men on their hunting excursions, almost as soon as they can run about. If the naturalist looks a savage in the mouth, he finds ivory teeth, a clean tongue, and sweet breath; but in the mouth of a white specimen of similar, or indeed less, age, it is ten to one but he would discover only impurity and decay, however clean the shoes and stockings worn, or however fine the flour of which his or her food had consisted. What, then, is civilization in the economy of the human animal? one is led to inquire. A little reflection affords a satisfactory answer. Cultivated man despises the perishable substance, and pursues the immortal shadow.

Aborigines and Islanders

Joseph Jukes, who was aboard HMS Fly on its surveying expedition around Torres Strait in 1844-45, noted that the mainland Aborigines differed in appearance and lifestyle from the Torres Strait Islanders; the Islanders had had much more contact with Papua.


It was now indeed for the first time that I became fully aware of the great difference between the two races, which is both a physical and mental one. These five [Aboriginal] men had the spare thin-legged, lanky build of all the Australian people. Their colour was of a more sooty black than the islanders, who are of a reddish or yellowish brown. The hair of these Australians, however, was like that of the European race, equally diffused, rather fine, and either straight, or commonly waving in broad open curls. Among the islanders the hair invariably grows in tufts or pencils. . . .

In their intellectual qualities and dispositions [the Aborigines] were still farther removed from the islanders, and much below those of Murray and Darnley Islands. Houseless and homeless, without gardens, or any kind of cultivation, destitute of the
cocoa-nut, the bamboo, the plaintain, and the yam, as of almost all useful vegetables, they pass their lives either in the search for food, or in listless indolence. Instead of associating with us on something like terms of equality, bartering with us, teaching us their words, and learning some of ours, laughing, joking and engaging in sports, like our Errobian [Darnley] friends, these Australians sat listlessly looking on, standing where we told them, fetching anything or doing anything we ordered them, with great docility indeed, but with complete want of interest and curiosity.

Mount Ernest Island

Jukes describes a village on Mount Ernest Island, one of the islands in the middle of Torres Strait.

Jukes, Narrative, 1:154-55.

Of the rocky islands occurring in the central north and south band of Torres Strait, some are inhabited and some not, or only

British explorers were impressed by the more “civilized” lifestyle of the people of the Torres Strait Islands compared with the Aborigines. Here, islanders from Darnley (Erroob) paddle their canoe, which shows Papuan influences. Reprinted from J. B. Jukes, Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of HMS Fly. . . 1842–1846, 2 vols. (London: Boone, 1847), vol. 1.
EXPLORATION

occasionally so. All those permanently inhabited, and at a distance of thirty or more miles from the Australian coast, have cocoa-nuts upon them. Captain Blackwood landed upon Mount Ernest (807 feet high), and found a group of huts much superior to any we ever saw in Australia, a small grove of cocoa-nuts, and another of large bamboos. The natives did not shew themselves till after he left the island; and though he spent a night on it, he did not suspect their presence at the time. In the huts were found parcels of human bones, ornamented with red ochre, a mask or hideous face made of wood and ornamented with the feathers of some struthious bird, and one or two bundles of small wooden tubes, eight inches long and half an inch in diameter, the use of which we never could discover.

A Torres Strait Village

Europeans tended to see Torres Strait Islanders as more “civilized” than the mainland Aborigines, partly because they lived in “villages” and because their respect for the dead was more obvious; their behaviour, in other words, seemed nearer to that of Europeans. Shortly after Jukes visited Mount Ernest Island, John MacGillivray visited it aboard HMS Rattlesnake.

MacGillivray, Narrative, 2:35-37.

The village consists of a single line of huts, which would furnish accommodation for, probably, 150 people. The huts are long and low, with an arched roof, and vary in length from ten to twenty feet, with an average height of five feet, and a width of six. They consist of a neat framework of strips of bamboo, thatched with long coarse grass. Each hut is usually situated in a small well-fenced enclosure, and opposite to it on the beach is the cooking place, consisting of a small shed, under which the fire is made.

Not far from the village, under the shade of an aged mimusops tree on the outskirts of the wood, we observed a cleared oval space where ten human skulls — of former members of the tribe, as we were informed — were arranged upon a plank raised on stones a foot or so from the ground. In a beautiful opening among the trees behind the village we saw an extraordinary

screen — named *wows* — the purpose of which, so far as we could understand, had some connexion with the memory of the dead. It extended fifty-six feet in length. [See illustration, p. xx.]

**Torres Strait and the Mainland**

The people of Torres Strait developed differently from the mainland Aborigines in a number of significant ways. As well as the influences from Papua, the marine environment also required certain cultural adaptations. Some of these influences spread to nearby mainland Aboriginal groups.


The same kind of canoe which is found throughout Torres Strait has been seen to extend from Cape York along the eastern coast as far south as Fitzroy Island, a distance of 500 miles. It essentially consists of a hollowed-out log, a central platform, and an
outrigger on each side. The largest canoes which I have seen are those of the Murray and Darnley Islanders, occasionally as much as sixty feet long; those of the Australians are small, varying at Cape York between fifteen and thirty feet in length. Even the Kowraregas have much finer canoes than their neighbours on the mainland. . . .

The inhabitants of the mainland and Prince of Wales Islands use the spear and throwing-stick, but throughout the remainder of Torres Strait bows and arrows are the chief weapons. The bows, which are large and powerful, are made of split bamboo, and the arrows of a cane procured from New Guinea. . . . The Kowraregas obtain bows and arrows from their northern neighbours, and occasionally use them in warfare, but prefer the spears which are made by the blacks of the mainland. . . . The throwing-stick in use at Cape York extends down the N.E. coast at least as far as Lizard Island. . . .

The huts which the Kowraregas and Cape York people put up when the rains commence are usually dome-shaped, four to six feet high, constructed of an arched framework of flexible sticks, one end of each of which is stuck firmly in the ground, and over this sheets of tea-tree (Melaleuca) bark — and sometimes an additional thatch of grass — are placed until it is rendered perfectly water-tight.

Not only at Cape York but throughout Torres Strait the males use no clothing or covering of any kind. . . . The food of these blacks varies with the season of the year, and the supply is irregular and often precarious. Shell fish are alone obtainable all the year round, — collecting the former is exclusively a female occupation, but fishing is chiefly practised by the men. . . . Turtle forms an important article of food.


discovery of the darling downs

Allan Cunningham was associated with a number of exploring expeditions in the Moreton Bay region in the mid 1820s. His most important discovery was of the Darling Downs in 1827; immediately he realized the pastoral potential of the region.

At length, on the 5th June, having gained an elevation of about nine hundred feet above the bed of the Dumaresq River we reached the confines of a superior country. It was exceedingly cheering to my people, after they had traversed a waste oftentimes of the most forbiddingly arid character, for a space, more or less, of eighty miles, and had borne, with no ordinary patience, a degree of privation to which I had well nigh sacrificed the weaker of my horses — to observe from a ridge which lay in our course, that they were within a day's march of open downs of unknown extent, which stretched, easterly, to the base of a lofty range of mountains, distant, apparently, about twenty-five miles. On the 6th and following day, we travelled throughout the whole extent of these plains, to the foot of the mountains extending along their eastern side, and the following is the substance of my observation on their extent, soil, and capability.

These extensive tracts of clear pastoral country, which was subsequently named Darling Downs, in honor of His Excellency the Governor, are situated in, or about, the mean parallel of 28°S., along which they stretch east, eighteen statute miles to the meridian of 152°. Deep ponds, supported by streams from the highlands, immediately to the eastward, extend along their central lower flats; and these, when united, in a wet season, become an auxiliary to Condamine's river — a stream which winds its course along their south-western margin. The downs, we remarked, varied in breadth in different parts of their lengthened surface; at their western extremity they appeared not to exceed a mile and a half, whilst towards their eastern limits, their width might be estimated at three miles. The lower grounds, thus permanently watered, present flats, which furnish an almost inexhaustible range of cattle pasture at all seasons of the year — the grasses and herbage generally exhibiting, in the depth of winter, an extraordinary luxuriance of growth. From these central grounds, rise downs of a rich, black, and dry soil, and of very ample surface; and as they furnish an abundance of grass, and are conveniently watered, yet perfectly beyond the reach of those floods, which take place on the flats in a season of rains, they constitute a valuable and sound sheep pasture. We soon reached the base of some hills, connected laterally with that stupendous chain of mountains, the bold outline of which we had beheld with so much interest during the three preceding days. These hills we found clothed, from their foot upwards, with an underwood of the densest description, in the midst of
which, and especially on the ridges, appeared a pine, which I immediately discovered to be the same species as that observed in 1824, on the Brisbane River. Encamping, I ascended a remarkable square-topped mount, which formed the termination of one of these ridges; and from its summit had a very extensive view of the country lying between north and south, towards the west. At N. and N.N.W. we observed a succession of heavily-timbered ridges, extending laterally from the more elevated chain of mountains immediately to the east, which evidently forms the great dividing range in this part of the country; whilst from north-west to west, and thence to south, within a range of twenty miles, a most beautifully diversified landscape, made up of hill and dale, woodland, and plain, appeared before us.

Large patches of land, perfectly clear of trees, lying to the north of Darling Downs, were named Peel's Plains, whilst others, bearing to the south and south-east, and which presented an undulated surface with a few scattered trees, were named after the late Mr. Canning. . . .

In exploring the mountains immediately above our tents, with a view more especially of ascertaining how far a passage could be effected over them to the shores of Moreton Bay, a remarkably excavated part of the main range was discovered, which appeared likely to prove a very practicable pass through these mountains from the eastward.

Pasture Lands Abounding

Sir Thomas Mitchell, surveyor-general for New South Wales, set out in 1845 to blaze a path from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria; he hoped to find a large river system draining northwards from the centre. Travelling via the Balonne and Maranoa rivers he crossed the Main Divide and came upon the Nogoa River catchment — which he here describes poetically. Although he failed in his objective he came across the headwaters of the Belyando and Barcoo rivers, and returned down the Warrego; the expedition had revealed vast, fertile pasture lands in Queensland.


The hills overhanging [the river] surpassed any I had ever seen in picturesque outline. Some resembled gothic cathedrals in ruins;
others forts; other masses were perforated, and being mixed and contrasted with the flowing outlines of evergreen woods, and having a fine stream in the foreground, gave a charming appearance to the whole country. It was a discovery worthy of the toils of a pilgrimage. Those beautiful recesses of unpeopled earth could no longer remain unknown. The better to mark them out on my map, I gave to the valley the name of Salvator Rosa. . . . Crossing the river, (which I called the Claude), we travelled, first, through an open forest, and then across one of the richest plains I had ever seen, and on which the *Anthistiria australis*, and *Panicum loevinode*, the two best Australian grasses, grew most abundantly. The soil was black; the surface quite level. There might have been about a thousand acres in the first plain we crossed, ere we arrived at another small river, or watercourse, which also contained water. We soon reached the borders of other very extensive plains and open downs, apparently extending far to the eastward. . . . Herbs in great variety were just emerging from the recently watered earth, and the splendid morning did ample justice to the vernal scene. The charm of a beginning seemed to pervade all nature, and the songs of many birds sounded like the orchestral music before the commencement of any theatrical performance. Such a morning, in such a place, was quite incompatible with the brow of care. Here was an almost boundless extent of the richest surface in a latitude corresponding to that of China, yet still uncultivated and unoccupied by man. A great reserve, provided by nature for the extension of his race, where economy, art, and industry might suffice to people it with a peaceful, happy, and contented population.

About three miles on I approached the united channel, and found the broad, deep, and placid waters of a river as large as the Murray [the Barcoo]. Pelican and ducks floated upon it, and muskelle-shells of extraordinary size lay in such quantities, where the natives had been in the habit of eating them, as to resemble snow covering the ground. But even that reach seemed diminutive when compared with the vast body of water whereof traces had, at another season, been left there; these affording evidence that, although wide, they had still been impetuous in their course. Verdure alone shone now, over the wide extent to which the waters sometimes rose. Beyond that channel lay the
almost boundless plains, the whole together forming the finest region I had ever seen in Australia.

**Exploring the Gulf Country**

Explorers were important in marking out the resources and potential wealth of new territory, and pastoralists soon followed in their tracks. J. L. Stokes, surveyor aboard the *Beagle* in 1841, investigated the Gulf of Carpentaria. On finding rivers such as the Albert he hoped to be able to journey to the middle of Australia; although he failed in this, he did find “the Plains of Promise”. Like a number of other explorers he held a rosy view of the land he saw.


It was now quite clear that all hopes of water carriage towards the interior were at an end. The boats were at this time above fifty miles from the entrance, and our provisions only admitting of the remainder of this day being spent in land exploration, a party was immediately selected for this service.

Following up a short woody valley, on reaching the summit of the level a view burst upon me, the nature of which the reader may learn from the accompanying plate. A vast boundless plain lay before us, here and there dotted over with woodland isles. . . . The soil was still a light-coloured mould of great depth, and according to one so well qualified to judge as Sir W. Hooker, who kindly examined some that I brought to England, is of a rich quality, confirming the opinion I entertained of it, which suggested for this part of the continent, the name of “The Plains of Promise”. . . .

All I could do was to give one long lingering look to the southward before I returned. In that direction, however, no curling smoke denoted the presence of the savage; all was lonely and still; and yet even in these deserted plains, equally wanting in the redundance of animal, as in the luxuriance of vegetable life, I could discover the rudiments of future prosperity, and ample justification of the name which I had bestowed on them. I gazed around, despite my personal disappointment, with feelings of hopeful gratitude to Him who had spread out so fair a dwelling

... place for his creatures; and could not refrain from breathing a prayer that ere long the now level horizon would be broken by a succession of tapering spires rising from the many Christian hamlets that must ultimately stud this country, and pointing through the calm depths of the intensely blue and gloriously bright skies of Tropical Australia, to a still calmer and brighter and more glorious region beyond... . . .

**Friendly Aborigines**

Most European explorers realized the importance of establishing good relations with Aborigines; hence they usually tried to barter or make exchanges with them for goods that might be needed. Ludwig Leichhardt, on his epic journey from Jimbour on the western Darling Downs to Port Essington in the Northern Territory in 1844-45, had a number of friendly contacts with Aborigines.

Appearances indicated that the commencement of the ranges was a favourite resort of the “Blackfellows”. The remains of recent repasts of mussels were strewed about the larger water-holes, and, as I passed a native camp, which had only lately been vacated, I found, under a few sheets of bark, four fine kangaroo nets, made of bark of Sterculia; also several bundles of sticks, which are used to stretch them. As I was in the greatest of want of cordage, I took two of these nets; and left, in return, a fine brass-hilted sword, the hilt of which was well polished, four fishing-hooks, and a silk handkerchief; with which, I felt convinced, they would be as well pleased, as I was with the cordage of their nets.

Mixed Receptions

Sometimes Aborigines were friendly towards European explorers passing through their territory, helping them with water and directions. On other occasions they were hostile. The following account relates to Edmund Kennedy’s expedition at Princess Charlotte Bay in 1848.

*Carron, Narrative of an Expedition, 60-61.*

**October 9**
They made signs to us to go away. We got our horses together, and endeavoured to make them friendly, but our entreaties were disregarded, and the presents we offered them were treated with contempt. When we found they would not allow us to come near them we packed our horses and prepared to start. They followed us at some distance, continually throwing spears after us for some time; one was thrown into the thigh of a horse, but fortunately not being barbed it was taken out, and the horse was not much injured. We then rode after them in two or three directions and fired at them, and they left us, and we saw no more of them.

**October 11**
To-day when halting in a place where there was no water, but good grass, a tribe of natives made their appearance, and appeared disposed to be friendly. We carefully collected our horses, and shortly after the natives drew near to us. We made them presents of a few fish-hooks and tin plates, and made signs
to them that we wanted water; several of them ran off, and in a few minutes returned with water in a vessel (if it may be so called), composed of pieces of bark tied together at each end, and they continued going backwards and forwards until they had brought enough to fill our cans, besides what we drank. They left us quite quietly.

Edmund Kennedy, a Hero

In 1848 Kermedy set out to find a track from Rockingham Bay, north of Townsville, through Cape York to the tip. He was beset by difficult terrain and usually hostile Aborigines. Almost at his destination he was speared fatally; his Aboriginal companion Jackey Jackey relates what happened. Such an incident made Kennedy a hero of dramatic proportions — but no account was taken of Aboriginal attitudes.

Statement of Jackey Jackey, in Carron, Narrative of an Expedition, 85-86.

The blacks . . . speared Mr. Kennedy again in the right leg, above the knee a little, and I got speared over the eye, and the blacks were now throwing their spears all ways, never giving over, and shortly again speared Mr. Kennedy in the right side; there were large jags to the spears, and I cut them out and put them into my pocket. At the same time we got speared, the horses got speared too, and jumped and bucked all about, and got into the swamp. I now told Mr. Kennedy to sit down, while I looked after the saddle-bags, which I did; and when I came back again, I saw blacks along with Mr. Kennedy; I then asked him if he saw the blacks with him, he was stupid with the spear wounds, and said “No”; then I asked where was his watch? I saw the blacks taking away watch and hat as I was returning to Mr. Kennedy; then I carried Mr. Kennedy into the scrub: he said, “Don’t carry me a good way”; then Mr. Kennedy looked this way, very bad (Jackey rolling his eyes). I said to him, “Don’t look far away,” as I thought he would be frightened; I asked him often, “Are you well now?” and he said, “I don’t care for the spear wound in my leg, Jackey, but for the other two spear wounds in my side and back,” and said, “I am bad inside, Jackey.” I told him blackfellow always die when he got spear in there (the back);
In occupying Australia the British felt the need to stress the noble, heroic dimensions of their achievement. Children learned about the valorous explorers, whose status was even more enhanced if tragedy befell them. Here, Edmund Kennedy, with his faithful servant, hacks his way through dense jungle scrub in far north Queensland on his fatal journey to the Cape. Reprinted from John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Rattlesnake...*, 2 vols. (London: Boone, 1852), vol. 1.
he said, "I am out of wind, Jackey;" I asked him, "Mr. Ken­
nedy, are you going to leave me?" and he said, "Yes, my boy, I
am going to leave you;" he said, "I am very bad, Jackey; you
take the books, Jackey, to the captain, but not the big ones, the
Governor will give anything for them;" I then tied up the papers:
he then said, "Jackey, give me paper and I will write;" I gave
him paper and pencil, and he tried to write, and he then fell
back and died, and I caught him as he fell back and died, and
held him, and I then turned round myself and cried: I was crying
a good while until I got well; that was about an hour, and then I
buried him.

Proposals for a Northern Base

In the 1840s the British government sent out a number of surveying vessels to
chart northern waters: the Barrier Reef, Torres Strait, the Gulf of Carpentaria,
etc. Joseph Jukes, a geologist aboard HMS Fly, in 1844–45, argued strongly
that the government should establish a base at the tip of Cape York to com­
mand Torres Strait. It would be a trade station, a place of refuge for the ship­
wrecked, a base for the provisioning of ships and for military defence, and a
coal depot for future steamer communications. Jukes had great hopes for the
future that a new entrepot would emerge at Australia's northern tip. Other
survey teams pursued the idea; John MacGillivray, aboard the Rattlesnake
(1846–50), was one of its proponents.

Jukes, Narrative, 1:303–4, 308-10.

If, therefore, a post was established either at Cape York, or near
the entrance of Endeavour Strait, a communication might be
had with all shipping passing through, without causing them any
detention, or deflecting them from their route a single yard. Now, as the entire trade of the South Pacific, with the whole of
the Indian ocean, must pass through Torres Strait, as the short­
est and most practicable route, this facility of communication
alone would be an immense advantage to that great and increas­
ing commerce. . . .

There is another set of arguments on which I have not touch­
ed, because they would be based on what as yet has no exist­
ence, steam communication between India and New South
Wales. When this is brought into operation, it appears to me that Cape York must necessarily be one of the coal stations. . . .

I will not conceal from the reader, however, that I should augur for a settlement at Cape York a future destiny of a higher and more important character than would result from any of those considerations I have mentioned as reasons for its present existence. The time must ultimately come, when that great chain of islands, stretching from the east end of New Guinea to New Caledonia, shall be brought within the region of civilization and commerce, when the veil that rests upon New Guinea itself shall be raised, and when the Moluccas shall be freed from the trammels in which they have hitherto been bound. Torres Strait will then be the channel of the commerce between these regions, as well as between the more remote and mighty ones which lie beyond them. It will resemble the Straits of Malacca in this respect, and another Singapore may be expected to rise on its borders, just where the converging streams of commerce are compressed into the narrowest and closest channel. This must be somewhere about Cape York, or the entrance of Endeavour Strait. It is here, indeed, if any where, that the true analogy is to be sought for, between Singapore and any point of Australia; the narrow strait, where, from physical necessity, the wide spread commerce of neighbouring seas must inevitably converge; the pass, through which one of the great highways of the world must necessarily run.

MacGillivray, Narrative, 1:132.

As one of the more immediate beneficial results of our survey of the Inner Passage would be to facilitate its use by steamers, should arrangements at present contemplated for the continuance of the “overland” communication between Great Britain and India, from Singapore to the Australian colonies, by way of Torres Strait, ever be carried into effect, so it was of importance to find some place in the neighbourhood of Cape York, convenient as a coaling station during either monsoon. An eligible spot for this purpose was found in Port Albany, the name given by Lieut. Yule, who surveyed it in 1846, to the narrow channel separating Albany Island from the main land. Here a small sandy bay with a sufficient depth of water close inshore, was,
after a minute examination by Captain Stanley, considered to be well adapted to the running out of a jetty, alongside of which the largest steamer could lie in perfect safety.

These extracts highlight only some of the European explorers of Queensland, their attitudes and problems. Exploration to establish the potential of the land and waters for European occupation continued through the mid nineteenth century. Much exploration was done by pastoralists themselves, as they fanned out over the countryside with their stock. Perhaps the most memorable were the journeys by cattlemen from the Channel country of western Queensland into the Northern Territory and the Kimberleys. At the same time British navigators were charting the dangerous waters of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait to make passage safer for the hordes of immigrants to come.
Convicts and Early Settlement
Selecting a Convict Base

The beginning of European settlement in what was to become Queensland was linked with the issue of the punishment of convicts. In Great Britain and in Sydney it was considered that transportation was not proving to be an effective deterrent to crime. J. T. Bigge was appointed to New South Wales by the British government to investigate why this was so and to make recommendations for the more efficient administration of the law. He suggested that a penal base be established in the hitherto unoccupied northern part of the colony. Moreton Bay was one of the three locations considered, and Bigge prepared regulations for the running of such an establishment.


The settlements at Port Bowen, Moreton Bay, and Port Curteis, are to be considered as receptacles for the convicts that have been transported to New South Wales for heavy offences, and for long terms, as well as for those who have, during their residence in the settled districts of the colony, shown, by their bad conduct, that they required a more severe and rigid system of discipline than those districts were capable of affording.

The Commandants of these settlements will therefore impress upon the minds of the convicts, on their arrival, that the change that has taken place in their condition, and the removal to which it has led, from the settled districts of the colony, has been the consequence of their crimes; and that nothing but a patient endurance of the hardships which they now have to encounter, and a manifestation of corrected habits, will lead to a termination of them.

The convicts will be mustered in gangs, at day-light, on every morning, except Sundays, by their overseers; and the names of those who are missing are to be immediately reported, in writing, to the principal superintendent, who will visit the separate gangs on uncertain days and hours, for the purpose of checking the returns of the overseers. The hours of labour for the convicts will be from day-light to 8 o'clock; one hour and a half will then be allowed for cleaning themselves and breakfast; from half past 9 till 12, the work will be resumed. One hour will be allowed for dinner, and the work will continue from 1 o'clock till sunset.

The labour of the convicts at the settlements of Port Bowen, Port Curteis, and Moreton Bay, is to be devoted, in the first
place, to the construction of such buildings as are immediately required; secondly, to the cutting and sawing of wood, and clearing the ground from roots; and thirdly, to the cultivation of maize, vegetables, flax, and tobacco, and the collection and preparation of bark. . . .

When these buildings are completed, the labour of the convicts will be altogether devoted to the cultivation of land in maize, flax, and tobacco, and the procuring of timber and bark for exportation to Port Jackson, and the southern settlements.

The object to be kept in view by the commandants and the superintendents of convicts at these establishments, is the constant employment of the convicts in labour that will raise a proportion of the food required for their own subsistence, and make some return to government for the expense which is incurred in their clothing and maintenance. . . .

A station will be selected by the commandant for the draught cattle that will be employed in assisting the construction of the buildings, and the cultivation of the land; at which it will be necessary to place an overseer, and a few convicts under him.

A station and stock-yard are to be made for the reception of a breeding herd of cattle and swine, and a flock of sheep for the use of the settlement, which should also be placed under the care of an overseer, and a certain number of convicts.

Redcliffe Point

On 14 September 1824 a small party of convicts under Lieutenant Henry Miller was landed at Redcliffe Point on Moreton Bay to make a first base for a convict establishment. It offered a handy position and valuable stands of hoop pine were noted in the vicinity (along the Brisbane River). And so the settlement began, but in less than a year a move was made to a permanent base up the river.

_Sydney Gazette_, 21 October 1824, 2.

In our shipping intelligence we have noticed the return of His Majesty's brig _Amity_, Captain Penson, from our New Settlement in Moreton Bay, after a passage of only four days, touching at Port Macquarie. The Surveyor-General (John Oxley, Esq.)
and the King's Botanist (Mr. Cunningham) have returned to Headquarters. The New Settlement is formed on Red Cliff Point, no island being found fit for that purpose. Red Cliff Point was deemed peculiarly eligible, from its centrical situation; the anchorage, however, is not very good off it, nor is it in fact properly sheltered until within a few miles of the heads of the Bay.

A new and valuable species of pine was discovered on the banks of the river, growing to a very large size, and in great abundance. Sanguine expectations are formed that this tree will prove of great advantage to the shipping interests; more especially if it should prove, on trial, to be well adapted for the masts of ships; as, hitherto, no timber of that description has been found in the colony. Several fine specimens were brought up in the Amity, and are now in His Majesty's Dockyard.

The country in the vicinity of the river was hilly, but well clothed with grass; the vallies and flats composed of rich soil, adapted to the production of tropical plants. We understand that Mr. Cunningham, H.M. Botanist, who accompanied Mr. Oxley, has made extensive and valuable collections, it being remarkable that most of the plants found were of genera hitherto supposed exclusively to exist within the tropics.

The natives were very numerous, and showed, by their manly forms and athletic appearance, that they had no difficulty in procuring a sufficiency of wholesome food. Many opportunities were not afforded of frequent communication with them, and they most carefully kept their women and children out of view; indeed, none were seen by any of the party.

The Settlement was left in good health and spirits, and they were rapidly proceeding in erecting comfortable huts, and the formation of little gardens. The scite of the Settlement was dry, and open to the sea breeze — an indispensable advantage in that hot climate.

The Brisbane River

Although the first base was established at Redcliffe Point in 1824, in December of the previous year the surveyor-general John Oxley came across
the Brisbane River, while reconnoitring for possible penal sites in accordance with Bigge's suggestions. His brief journey along its course convinced him that here was a major watercourse draining the interior of Australia, and it seemed to him that it would be an excellent site for a free colony. As a result of his glowing recommendations the penal establishment was moved to the present site of Brisbane.

Oxley to Secretary Goulburn, 10 January 1824, in Governor Brisbane to Earl Bathurst, 3 February 1824, *Historical Records of Australia*, 1st ser. 2:221-23.

A consideration of all the Circumstances, connected with the Appearance of the River, justify me in entertaining a Strong belief that the Sources of this River will not be found in any mountainous country, most probably from some large collection of Interior Waters the reservoir of those Streams crossed by me during an expedition of discovery in 1818, and which had a northerly Course; whatever may be its origin, it is by far the largest fresh water River on the Eastern Coast of New South Wales, and promises to be of the utmost importance to the Colony, as, besides affording a water Communication with the Southern Countries bordering upon the Liverpool Plains, it waters a Vast extent of Country, a great portion of which appeared to me Capable of Supporting the Cultivation of the richest production of the Tropics. . . .

We did not reach the Vessel until late in the night of the 5th Decr. amply gratified in the discovery of this important River, as we sanguinely anticipated the most beneficial consequences as likely to result to the Colony by the formation of a Settlement on its Banks. . . .

Should it be deemed expedient to establish a Settlement in Moreton Bay, the Country in the vicinity of Red Cliff Point offers the best Site for an Establishment in the first instance; it is centrical in the Bay, and there is no difficulty in effecting a landing at all times of Tide, though the Soil immediately on the Sea Shore is but indifferent. Communication can easily be opened with the Interior.

[Bathurst wrote that Oxley's report "commences a new era in the History of the Continent of New Holland by the discovery of a large and important river".]
Commandant Patrick Logan

Patrick Logan, commandant of the penal colony from 1825 to 1830, was an efficient military man determined to make the Moreton Bay penal establishment work and become self-supporting. To this end he set about establishing its rural base. He also indulged his passion for exploration, discovering new fertile regions in the near vicinity such as the Logan valley.

Logan to Colonial Secretary, 20 May 1828, Logan Letterbook, JOL.

I have the honour to report in compliance with the directions of His Excellency relative to the intention of materially increasing the numbers of Prisoners at this Settlement that in Consequence of the inferior nature of the Land in the immediate neighbourhood of Brisbane Town, superior soil being found only in small detached portions, it appears to me that the most advisable plan for at once [growing?] sufficient grain for the consumption of the Settlement, would be to form an Agricultural Establishment further up the River; there is an extensive plain of about five thousand acres situated on Oxleys Creek which falls into the Brisbane nine miles above the settlement. There are some hundred acres that could be immediately ploughed up without any preparation and should his Excellency sanction this plan there would be no difficulty in preparing one thousand acres for a wheat crop for the year 1829 which at the moderate calculation of 15 bushels per Acre would produce 15,000 bushels, a quantity more than sufficient for three years supply for the present numbers. In estimating the produce at so low a rate as 15 bushels per acre I have taken into consideration the possibility of a partial failure in consequence of its being the first crop. It would be advisable to break up the ground as soon as possible as the longer it is exposed to the influence of the weather before the Seed is put onto the ground the better chance there will be of a crop.

Should this plan meet with the approbation of His Excellency 150 of the best disposed prisoners could be immediately selected and it would be further advisable to send about 30 working Bullocks for the Plough and I have no hesitation in stating my belief that from the harvesting of the crop for the year 1829 more grain would be produced than the Settlement could consume, notwithstanding any increase that may take place. When this object is attained it will be necessary to form plans for the employment of the Prisoners not employed in Agriculture.
There are great quantities of Lime Stone and Coal on Bremers Creek about 45 miles from Brisbane Town. I think a number of hands could be usefully employed in preparing and transporting these articles to Dunwich, which place still appears to me the most desirable station for the head Quarters of the district. Altho’ the Soil is of an inferior Description it is the only place in Moreton Bay calculated for a Depot to receive Supplies from Sydney and likewise timber and other articles that may be prepared here as a return Cargo.

[The Governor agreed to set up an agricultural establishment, but at Eagle Farm not Oxleys Creek.]

The Terror of Transportation

When the Moreton Bay penal establishment was being set up the British government hoped that a system would be instituted whereby transportation would induce terror in the minds of the public and hence be a deterrent to crime. At various stages the effectiveness of this form of punishment was investigated by select committees of the House of Commons. At one such inquiry in 1831-32, the explorer-botanist Allan Cunningham, who had visited Moreton Bay on various occasions, gave evidence, mainly about Logan’s period as commandant. He had also been to Norfolk Island where the worst kind of convict was sent.

Report from Select Committee on Secondary Punishment, (547), Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 7 (1831-32):596-98.

246. You were understood to say, that Moreton Bay was a place for minor offences, or for persons whose sentences are for short terms] — Yes.
247. Is that an accidental circumstance, or the established rule? — It is the established rule.
248. What is the nature of the crimes? — Robberies chiefly.

... 255. You cannot define very particularly the difference between the treatment at Norfolk Island and Moreton Bay? — On one occasion a man at Norfolk Island, a very bad character, received 75 lashes, which was, I believe, considered an unusual
thing. Punishment to such an extent was, however, common at Moreton Bay. It was necessary for the Commandant to act with great determination in order to govern so large a body of desperate men.

256. Did there appear to you to be any unnecessary severity used? — Not in the least.

257. When the irons had been taken off, as an indulgence for good behaviour, were they put on again if any occasion arose for it? — Certainly.

258. How long has Moreton Bay been established as a penal settlement? — I think in 1824 or 1825 the first convicts were there.

259. From what you have observed of the convicts generally, are you of the opinion that those two settlements operate as a check to crime in the Colony of New South Wales? — Yes, I should think so; although the numbers transported do not decrease. When I left the last time, which was in September 1829, there were between 900 and 1,000 convicts there; and I believe that number has been increased by 200, perhaps, although no doubt many have left from their term having expired.

260. Has not the total number of convicts in New South Wales considerably increased during that time? — Yes.

261. Do you know what the rations were at Moreton Bay? — I do not recollect the quantity. The food was partly vegetable and maize meal, made into a sort of homaney.

262. Are they allowed any meat? — Yes, a few ounces of meat boiled; but it was boiled to that degree that only an ounce or two comes to each convict; the food was barely sufficient to support animal life.

263. And yet they were healthy? — Not very.

264. Homaney is nutritious? — Yes; but the ration of it, with little meat, was but a small one.

265. What was the average number of persons in the hospital at the time you were at Moreton Bay? — Fifty, I think. . . .

276. You have stated there are great facilities for escaping from Moreton Bay; Are they not generally recaptured? — No; But very many of them have come back again, and given themselves up to the Commandant, though they knew he would flog them; because they have been in a state of starvation, and were fearful they would be killed by the natives. After being out several months and living on fern-roots they have come back in a state of starvation.
A Convict Remembers

Wiliam Ross who was a convict at Moreton Bay between 1826 and 1832 left a more dramatic account of convict life than the one by Cunningham. Ross published his account in 1836, and it strongly condemned Commandant Logan.


I arrived at Moreton Bay on the 20th of March, 1827, and the scene that presented itself to my view is beyond the power of man to describe.

I was struck with amazement and horror at the cruelty and hardships every poor and unfortunate sufferer, like myself, appeared to have been subject to for a length of time. Their countenances bespoke starvation, and their bodies bore marks, evidently of most severe flogging. They were exposed to a hot and scorching sun, without a rag to cover their nakedness, and at night they were mustered into a cave, and were treated in the same manner, as respects night clothing, as above mentioned. I was certainly impressed with an idea, that I could not exist but a few days, or weeks at the furthest, I had nearly sunk under this impression. I was sent to work in the fields in breaking up hard ground, and the task that was measured out to me daily was more than the strength of my body could perform; I was therefore exposed to the will of a cruel overseer, who was invested with full power to bring me before the Commandant, who without asking him a second question, would not hesitate to award me one hundred lashes, and repeat the same punishment day after day, and the unfortunate sufferers around me frequently expressed a wish that they might be found a corpse in the morning, for they dreaded the labour of the day, and the almost certainty of punishment before the evening closed upon them. . . .

I will now endeavour to paint as well as I am able, the labour and manner of treatment of the unfortunate sufferers in this settlement. They are hurried up before daylight in the morning at the ringing of a bell; their scanty pittance of food is given to them; they are then hurried out to their daily labour: some were employed in falling timber, others burning off, some breaking up hard rocky ground: and many other occupations being for the greater part of the day exposed to a broiling sun, and their bodies in a complete state of nudity. Their strength altogether
exhausted with fatigue and starvation, and their spirits broken down with cruel treatment, such as the most uncivilized nations would shudder at. I leave you to imagine the distressed state of these unfortunate individuals, when I have known them to eat Snakes, Pigs that have died of disease, Cabbage leaves in their raw state, and every filth that was thrown into the streets; such bringing on complaints in the bowels, and causing often immediate death; and hundreds have followed each other at a rapid rate to the grave, and many have expressed themselves happy at the change. I have known them actually cut off their fingers to avoid having the labour to perform, and others to commit murder, to have themselves sent up to Sydney to be hanged, several of whom have suffered death upon the gallows for like offences; hundreds have flown to the bush to live among the Native Blacks, many of whom have been murdered by these cannibals, and a great many have died, for their bones have been scattered in parts of the bush where our travellers have been. Should they return to the settlement, their doom would be to wear irons of not less weight than 18 or 20 pounds on their legs, to be hard worked in the Iron Gang, and receive from 100 to 300 lashes, therefore they have preferred dying in the bush, rather than return to undergo a punishment worse than the former.

The character of Captain Logan, the late commandant, is so notoriously known that it is almost needless to mention any more of his tyrannical proceedings, the public being fully aware long since of his outrageous conduct. . . . Two other men died through excessive flogging: and one lad named Geary was starved to death in the cell, having been kept there ten days, on the scanty allowance of four ounces of bread and half a pint of water.

I have known them to begin flogging from sunrise, and not finished till past sunset in the evening, having given about 3,000 lashes.

**A Convict’s Lament**

The convict plight is well illustrated in the following popular lament. Commandant Logan developed a reputation as the “tyrant of Brisbane Town”. 
I am a native of the land of Erin,
And lately banished from that lovely shore;
I left behind my aged parents
And the girl I did adore.
In transient storms as I set sailing,
Like mariner bold my course did steer;
Sydney Harbour was my destination —
That cursed place at length drew near.

I then joined banquet in congratulation
On my safe arrival from the briny sea;
But, alas, alas! I was mistaken —
Twelve years transportation to Moreton Bay.
Early one morning as I carelessly wandered,
By the Brisbane waters I chanced to stray;
I saw a prisoner sadly bewailing,
Whilst on the sunlit banks he lay.

He said, "I've been a prisoner at Port Macquarie,
At Norfolk Island, and Emu Plains;
At Castle Hill and cursed Toongabbie —
At all those places I've worked in chains,
But of all the places of condemnation,
In each penal station of New South Wales,
Moreton Bay I found no equal,
For excessive tyranny each day prevails.

Early in the morning, as the day is dawning,
To trace from heaven the morning dew,
Up we started at a moment's warning
Our daily labour to renew.
Our overseers and superintendents —
These tyrant's orders we must obey,
Or else at the triangles our flesh is mangled —
Such are our wages at Moreton Bay!

For three long years I've been beastly treated;
Heavy irons each day I wore;
My poor back from flogging has been lacerated,
And oft-times painted with crimson gore.
Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews,
We were sorely oppressed by Logan's yoke,
Till kind Providence came to our assistance,
And gave this tyrant his fatal stroke.
Yes, he was hurried from that place of bondage
Where he thought he would gain renown;
But a native black, who lay in ambush,
Gave this monster his fatal wound.
Fellow prisoners be exhilarated;
Your former sufferings you will not mind,
For it's when from bondage you are extricated
You'll leave such tyrants far behind!

Anon.

[This song attributes the killing of Commandant Logan to an Aborigine, but it was actually never known who killed him.]

**Punishment**

Being sent to isolated Moreton Bay was in itself meant to be punishment. Logan increased the punishment by introducing solitary cells and a treadmill (as part of the windmill structure).


Father also saw the unfortunate chained men on the treadmill working out their punishment. You would hear the "click, click" of their irons as they kept step with the wheel, and those with the heavier irons seemed to have "a great job" to keep up. Some poor wretches only just managed to pull through till they got off at the far end, then they sat down till their turn came to go on again. They all had to do so many hours, according to their sentence; an overseer kept the time, and a couple of soldiers guarded them. When they had put in their time they were marched back to barracks.

The leg irons for the chain gang were made in the lumber yard by a blacksmith prisoner there. A supply was kept always on hand, some light and some heavy, and when a prisoner was sentenced to wear them for a certain time he was taken to this blacksmith's shop to be fitted up. . . . Prisoners wearing chains had a peculiar way of walking, and you would see the poor fellows just released after six months or so, going along as though they still wore them.
Brisbane Town

In 1836 two Quaker missionaries, Backhouse and Walker, visited the convict establishment of Brisbane Town.


After making a hearty breakfast, we set out to inspect the settlement, which is called Brisbane Town: it consists of the houses of the Commandant, and other officers, the barracks for the military, and those for the male prisoners, a penitentiary for the female prisoners, a treadmill, stores, etc. It is prettily situated on the rising, north bank of the Brisbane River, which is navigable fifty miles further up, for small sloops, and has some fine cleared and cultivated land, on the south bank, opposite the town. Adjacent to the Government-House, are the Commandant's garden, and twenty-two acres of Government-garden, for the growth of Sweet-potatoes, Pumpkins, Cabbages, and other vegetables, for the prisoners. Bananas, Grapes, Guavas, Pineapples, Citrons, Lemons, Shaddocks, etc. thrive luxuriantly in the open ground, the climate being nearly tropical. Sugar-cane is grown for fencing, and there are a few thriving Coffee-plants, not old enough to bear fruit. The Bamboo, and Spanish Reed have been introduced. The former attains to about seventy feet in height, and bears numerous branches, with short, grassy leaves, the upper twenty feet bending down with a graceful curve. It is one of the most elegant objects in the vegetable world. Coffee and sugar will probably at some period be cultivated here, as crops.

Eagle Farm

Various out-stations were established around Brisbane, such as at Limestone (Ipswich) and Dunwich. Here the Quaker missionaries describe the female establishment at Eagle Farm.

We visited the establishment at Eagle Farm, six miles from Brisbane Town, toward the mouth of the river: It is under the direction of a Superintendent who, with his wife, resides in a small cottage, close by some huts, formerly occupied by the male prisoners; by whose labour seven hundred acres of land were formerly cultivated, chiefly in maize. At present, there are no male prisoners here; but forty females, who are employed in field-labour: they are kept in close confinement during the night, and strictly watched in the day time, yet it is found very difficult to keep them in order. Some of them wear chains, to prevent their absconding, which they have frequently done, under covert of the long grass. Though these women are twice convicted, and among them, there are, no doubt, some of the most depraved of their sex, yet they received a religious visit with gladness.

Brisbane in about 1837

The Petrie family arrived in Brisbane Town in 1837, when the convict establishment was being run down. Tom Petrie gives this account of the village (as recorded by his daughter).


The family came as far as Dunwich in the James Watt, then finished the journey in the pilot boat, manned by convicts, and landed at the King’s Jetty — the present Queen’s Wharf — the only landing place then existing.

Although my father cannot look back to this day of arrival, he remembers Brisbane town as a city of about ten buildings. Roughly speaking it was like this: At the present Trouton’s corner stood a building used as the first Post Office, and joined to it was the watchhouse; then further down the prisoners’ barracks extended from above Chapman’s to the corner (Grimes and Petty). Where the Treasury stands stood the soldiers’ barracks, and the Government hospitals and doctors’ quarters took up the land the Supreme Court now occupies. The Commandant’s house stood where the new Lands Office is being built (his garden extending along the river bank), and not far away was
Map of Brisbane Town in 1829 reconstructed by J.G. Steele, with inset of Brisbane Town in 1825. Reprinted, with permission, from J.G. Steele, Brisbane Town in the Convict Days: 1824–42 (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975), following p. 134.
the Chaplain's quarters. The Commissariat Stores were afterwards called the Colonial Stores, and the block of land from the Longreach Hotel to Gray's corner was occupied by the "lumber yard" (where the prisoners made their own clothes, etc.). The windmill was what is now the Observatory, and lastly, a place formerly used as a female factory was the building Mr. Andrew Petrie lived in for several months till his own house was built. The factory stood on the ground now occupied by the Post Office, and later on the Petrie's house was built at the present corner of Wharf and Queen Streets, going towards the Bight (hence the name Petrie's Bight). Their garden stretched all along the river bank where Thomas Brown and Sons' warehouse now stands, being bounded at the far end by the salt-water creek which ran up Creek Street.

Kangaroo Point, New Farm, South Brisbane, and a lot of North Brisbane were then under cultivation, but the rest was all bush, which at that time swarmed with aborigines. So thick was the bush round Petrie's Bight that one of the workmen (a prisoner) engaged in building the house there was speared; he wasn't much hurt, however, and recovered.

Abandon Moreton Bay?

In the 1830s the British government was anxious to reduce and later close down the penal establishment at Moreton Bay, partly on the grounds of cost but also because in Britain there was a swell of opinion against transportation. Governor Bourke at Sydney, however, found it not so easy to close Moreton Bay. Where could women convicts be sent, there being no other penal settlement that catered for women second-offenders. How would free settlement and land sales be handled? Problems had arisen when the Port Phillip area had been thrown open for free settlement and the governor wanted to avoid a repetition of that exercise. In any case, Moreton Bay was beginning to operate successfully, with excess food production, reduced costs and better control.

Abandon Moreton Bay?

With regard to Moreton Bay, I have been led to desire its reduction, and to retain but one Penal Establishment for the whole
Colony, with a view to diminish expenses of management, to lessen the dispersion of the troops, and to place the Convicts in greater security on Norfolk Island than I found them at Moreton Bay. These motives to its abandonment, and the transfer of the Prisoners to Norfolk Island, are still in force though not in the same degree as formerly. Escapes by land from Moreton Bay, which were frequent at the time of my arrival, have since almost wholly ceased. None but offenders under short sentences, who are generally not disposed to run, are now sent there, and encouragement is offered to the Aboriginal Natives to look out for runaways and apprehend and bring them back to the Settlement, a duty they have occasionally performed with great spirit and cleverness.

Expense has been to some extent diminished by the success which has attended the cultivation of grain on the settlement, a large supply of food being now annually raised at Moreton Bay for the consumption of the convicts detained there, and admitting of annual exportation to Norfolk Island or Sydney. The number of convicts at this settlement has been reduced from 800 in the year 1832 to 300 in 1837, and the Military Guard has been consequently diminished. In this state of the Settlement, I have felt less anxiety for its reduction than formerly, whilst at the same time other considerations of some weight have delayed the proposed abandonment. Great difficulty presented itself in the disposal of the Convict Women, who have hitherto been exclusively sent to Moreton Bay, when sentenced in the Colony to transportation for a second offence. Their removal to Norfolk Island would call for additional buildings and for new arrangements, and incur consequent expense. Another consideration connected with the removal of the Penal Settlement from Moreton Bay is the question that would immediately follow as to the propriety of its being thrown open to settlers, and as to the means by which the Government of the Settlement when free should be carried on. All the difficulties, which are gradually giving way at Port Phillip, would be encountered over again at Moreton Bay; and, although I have little doubt that the sale of land will equally supply at Moreton Bay, and at Port Phillip, the means of maintaining the necessary Civil Establishment at Moreton Bay has been delayed, though I would still recommend its being effected by the earliest favorable opportunity.
Commandant Sydney Cotton

Sydney Cotton commandant of the Moreton Bay settlement from 1837 to 1839, was another efficient and determined military leader. When he took charge the Moreton Bay penal establishment was being deliberately run down, but Cotton worked hard to ensure that the area was properly prepared for free settlement. He made provision for the continuance of the existing pastoral out-stations; he sought to improve communications; he suggested plans to bridge the gap between Aborigines and Europeans.

Commandant Cotton to Colonial Secretary, 14 November 1837, Colonial Secretary, Main Series of Letters Received — Moreton Bay, 1839, CSIL37/10899 with 39/9639 in 4/2460.3, Archives Office, New South Wales.

I may affirm that as yet little or no effect has been made beyond that which necessity and circumstances have led to, to establish a friendly relation between the European and native on this part of the Coast. . . .

The tribes, which occupy the lands immediately adjacent to Brisbane Town, after an acquaintance of several years, come amongst us in confidence; a good understanding prevails between them and us, both within and without, the limits of the Settlement; amongst them are the tribes which live near to Amity Point, and on the banks of the Brisbane beyond the Settlement. These tribes were formerly extremely hostile to Europeans, and committed such acts of aggression, that Capn. Cluney of the 17th Regiment was compelled to send out armed parties to punish them summarily, and a number of natives were killed; since which murders have been rarely committed in these parts.

To the northward of Moreton Bay, between Moreton island and Wide Bay several natives' tribes are to be found. There has been but little intercourse, as yet, between these tribes and Europeans; they are entirely ignorant of our desire to cultivate a friendly acquaintance with them, and appear to entertain, altogether, a most unfavorable opinion of us.

We may ascribe this, in some measure, to the effects produced upon them by their intercourse with the run-away convicts, who have gone occasionally amongst them, and by whose helpless conduct and dissolute conduct, they would naturally be induced to form but a poor estimate of our character and consequence.

I think this intercourse has partly led to their subsequent treatment of the Ship-wrecked sailors and may also, in some measure
account for the little fear they have exhibited when visited by Europeans in search of them.

It is of paramount importance, therefore, that they should be made to know not only our good feeling towards them, but our power to redress grievances if we chose to exercise it.

I would recommend that a party armed of course and fitted out with Tomahawks, Fish-hooks, and Blankets as presents should be sent in boats along the coast.

The party should encamp at Briby's Island, being the station of the first tribe to the northward. They should remain there, at least ten days, should converse with the blacks, get them to engage in the little pastimes of fishing and shooting and distribute a few presents amongst them. They should then proceed to the next tribe, pay a similar visit and thus by degrees get along the coast to Wide Bay. . . .

I think these visits would lead eventually to the desired object of establishing a confidence amongst us, and when European stragglers are found they would probably bring them in partly to obtain rewards, partly from a friendly feeling, and partly from fear of offending us. . . .

An intelligent person, who takes an interest in these matters, would be required to take charge of the party; the survey of the coast and the rivers might, at the same time, be accomplished. The river immediately to the northward of Wide Bay which is but little known and is supposed to be the finest that has as yet been discovered on the coast of New Holland might furnish an interesting and useful object of inquiry. . . .

I feel confident that a supply of Coals of the best quality might be held in readiness at a depot in the bay for the use of Steamers, if Government should send for timber by such conveyance. . . .

Adverting to the very considerable reduction that has lately taken place in the effective strength of this Settlement, I have the honour to request that His Excellency may be pleased to take into consideration the difficulty under which we labour in carrying on the various duties of the Engineers and Agricultural departments. . . .

The late increase in the number of Sawyers calls for a corresponding increase in the number of labourers to prepare logs and pits; and the increase in the flocks and herds requires also additional hands to attend to them.
Whilst the demand for labourers increases the numbers of
them decrease. . . .

We have three distant stations for Sheep and Cattle besides
the Eagle Farm, and one station for falling and cutting timber;
each one is near to the banks of the ‘Brisbane’. . . . The most
distant of them is ‘Limestone’, the sheep station, thirty miles by
land from this Settlement and fifty by water; next, the ‘Eight
Mile plain’, another Sheep station, twenty miles by land and
thirty two by water; and then the station of the horned Cattle at
‘Cowper’s plains’, and the Saw-pits at ‘Canoe Creek’ each dis­
tant by land ten miles and by water about twenty miles.

Heretofore communications between these stations and the
Settlement have been carried on by water; and it is shown that
the distance of each by water, owing to the winding of the river,
far exceeds that by land.

There is and has always been an excessive deal of labor expen­
ded, and I may say wasted, in carrying on the communication
with these places by water in supplying the Troops and prisoners
with rations. . . .

Since I assumed the command of this Settlement, with a view
to rendering myself as independent of water conveyance as
possible, I have marked a line of road by a plough from hence to
each out station, and I shall, shortly, be enabled to make a road
sufficient good, by cutting away the banks of four dry creeks to
enable a Cart and Bullocks to travel. The rations will then be
forwarded by land at the expense, in hands, of only one con­
stable to guard the Cart and one bullock driver.

The Beginning of Free Enterprise

Until 1842 Brisbane Town was officially closed to free settlement; after that
date private settlement and enterprise was allowed to move in. Actually a few
private individuals did commence settlement, and business, before that date;
John Williams was one of the most enterprising of the new settlers. Here was
an area open to men of initiative and to those willing to take risks. Trade and
communications with the interior and the south provided obvious opportuni­
ties. The following article describes the first sign of free enterprise in the town:
a general store at South Brisbane.
The writer, Old Tom, was Thomas Dowse, the town clerk; he was describing Brisbane in about 1842.


Let us extend our vision across the river. Not a sound came up from the camping ground on the south side, close to the present Russell street Ferry, and at which some three or four drays were drawn up after turning out the bullocks. The camp fire was burning, around which sat, or reclined, about a dozen knights of the whip who, after the toils and hardships of their journey from the upper districts, were that morning enjoying their ease.

About two hundred yards from the camping ground the blue smoke from the chimney of the only house in the settlement on the south side, rose and spread a vapoury mist over the landscape.

Beneath that roof-tree dwelt the earliest of our Brisbane pioneer storekeepers and shipowners, Mr. John Williams. The pluck and enterprise of this tough old veteran richly deserves a passing remark in recording "Old Times".

In 1841, Mr. Williams obtained permission from the authorities in Sydney to open a store for the sale of general merchandise in the district of Moreton Bay. Under this privilege John fixed his tent pegs on the south side of the river, near the approaches of the present Russell street Ferry, but shortly afterwards removed to a more commodious building which he had erected at the top of Russell street. In the same year (Mr. Williams) received a license from the Government to run a small cutter named the John, between Sydney and the settlement of Moreton Bay. This handy little craft was in the following year replaced in the trade by the schooner Edward, John Chambers, master. This small craft for some time held possession of the carrying trade to this port, in conjunction with the steamer Shamrock. In 1843 the indefatigable J. Williams launched, from the southern bank of the river, the first punt built outside Government superintendence. In the same year John obtained the lease for three years of the only existing ferry between North and South Brisbane.

Some two years or there abouts later, we find this colonial veteran opening out the first coal mine on the Brisbane River. In fact, the great tact, pluck and energy displayed by this very active go-ahead colonist is worthy of imitation, and his well merited success in these and many other enterprises has been well deserved; and the home circle around which he diffuses his
comfort and happiness will, I trust, for some years longer enjoy the presence of an honourable, upright man.

With the exception of this homestead of Mr. Williams', the south side of the river — from Kangaroo Point upward to the head of the long reach — was a waste of uncultivated ground. A very short time, however, elapsed before various stores and dwelling-places began to be erected, and upon the A.S.N. Company building a wharf and stores for the accommodation of their steamers, the south side of the river rapidly progressed.

**Establishing a Run**

In 1840 the brothers Patrick, Walter and George Leslie led hordes of squatters with their sheep and cattle to the Darling Downs. It was easy to choose a large run but much more difficult to make it viable. Markets were distant, at Maitland, so boiling down, a process whereby cattle are reduced to tallow by boiling, was common after 1843. Prices were unreliable and low, especially when New South Wales was plunged into an economic crisis in 1843. Transport was difficult, which made freight costly. Labour was scarce and dear; the Aborigines troublesome, the weather erratic, and the potential of the land untried.

Walter Leslie to father, 1 May 1841, Leslie Letters, JOL.

New South Wales is at present in a dreadful state with regard to the money market. A man with ten pounds in his pocket is a rich man and the only way I suppose it can be accounted for is that this is such a country for bills and orders and they are now floating about while the people have not the funds to meet them so that one just pulls down another.

Stock of every description is very low just now. . . . Sheep that were last year selling at from Twenty to Thirty shillings a head would not fetch more than from Ten to Fifteen shillings at present and that only in very favourable situations. . . .

George Leslie to parents, 18 July 1844, Leslie Letters, JOL.

[Three years later]
I have been Nineteen months up the country and am perfectly
satisfied with our station. I may safely say there is not a better in N.S. Wales and I don’t know where to name one as good. Our stock has thriven exceedingly well too and the only disadvantage we labour under there is the want of a road over the mountains between us & Moreton Bay.

It was disagreeable and often discouraging work at first but that was to be expected going out upwards of Two hundred miles beyond any other settler but we have got supplies for our station sent to Moreton Bay now and tho’ the road is shocking still it is better to send there than to Maitland, a distance of nearly 600 miles.

We sent down an average lot of 25 Wethers to Brisbane a few weeks ago, to ascertain what we were likely to realize by boiling down. Kent, who has charge of the Government Stock, boiled them down for us, as we could not depend upon the person who has charge of the boiling establishment. Several people have sent Wethers and Bullocks down for an experiment, and the people at the Boiling Establishment always return them more Tallow than they really turned out, to encourage them to send a draft down to boil. Our Wethers turned out 20½ lbs. of fat, each, wh. at 3d pr lb will come to 5/1½ and the skin will fetch from a Shilling to Fifteen pence wh. will defray the expense of
boiling down, so we calculate upon realising about five shillings pr head. Seventeen and a half pounds of Tallow is the most, that any sheep have turned out at Brisbane, & those we sent down were by no means the best, but about the average. We intend boiling down a few Bullocks, which I think will turn out about 250 lbs of fat each, @ 3 pr lb = £3.2.6., the hide 6/-, in all £3.8.6., deduct 13/6 for expenses will leave about £2.15. pr Bullock. These are small pieces but we must take them such as they are. The Blacks have done no damage to our Cattle for some time now, but I fully expect they will be among them ere winter is over. We have had a very bad increase this year not above 35 pr cent, but we will no doubt have a good increase this spring, if the Blacks let them alone. The Sheep are doing as well as we could wish, and they are the Stock we put our dependence on. We run them in flocks from 2 to 3 thousand, the breeding Ewes about 1600 in a flock, & divide the flock at Lambing time. Our horses are doing very well, but our last years foaling was bad, only at the rate of 48 pr cent. 

We are now at a stand still as to making any improvements on the station, as the times will not afford it, and we have discharged every man we could possibly do without. Our crops turned out very well. We had about 600 Bushels of maize, but cannot get a remunerating price for it, so will keep it on hand in case our next crop should fail. We had only a few acres of wheat last year, but it turned out very well. We have now about 15 acres of wheat, which promises well, and if we have 20 Bushels to the acre, wh. is a good crop, it will save us purchasing 7 months supply. We cannot grow wheat for what we can purchase it, but the land carriage costs us £10 per ton, wh. brings it to a high price. It will not pay us to grow all the wheat we require as we would then have to keep extra men, and as we must keep one spare man on the Station, it will only pay to grow what he can raise. The country on the Downs could not be excelled for grazing, but for growing crops it is rather indifferent.

The Emergence of a Pastoral Establishment

The early squatters on the Downs suffered many hardships and many were broken by the economic crash of 1843. But there were survivors, and they were
Two of the early squatting families in south-east Queensland: the Archer brothers (top), who eventually settled at Gracemere, outside Rockhampton, and the McConnell family (bottom), who became established at Cressbrook in the Brisbane Valley. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
gradually turning themselves into an establishment. Many of these original squatters felt themselves entitled to a position of social preeminence.


The year 1843 was rather a disastrous year for those engaged in pastoral pursuits. Wool was low in price and there was no market for surplus stock, so that the pioneers of the new country could not afford much luxury in their homes. The slab huts with bark roof and earthen floor formed the usual dwelling, while mutton or salt beef, damper and tea, formed their usual fare; and yet they were happy; the free life and the prospects of doing something better in the future being sufficient to sustain their hopes. There were, however, some few stations where the accommodation and the fare were better. Mrs. Patrick Leslie was the pioneer lady, and she lived for a time at Canning Downs, where a large and prettily situated cottage had been built and fairly well furnished, and many a pleasant evening was spent by those who called in passing, or visited there from the neighbourhood; and when sometime afterwards George Leslie married Miss Emmeline McArthur, the sister of Mrs. Patrick Leslie, their station was the most charming residence on the Downs. Arthur Hodgson married Eliza Dowling, daughter of Sir James Dowling, the Chief Justice. He had a long slab house with verandah in front and at the side, with a large store at one end, and his wife’s apartments at the other; all surrounded by a high paling fence, with garden in front for fruit and vegetables. They lived there in great comfort and entertained all who called there most hospitably. . . .

**Pastoral Expansion**

The first squatters moved into the Darling Downs in 1840; and soon after they were moving into the new untapped areas of the Moreton region and the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. Being unfamiliar with the new surroundings, they experienced problems of adaptation, and had to experiment with ways of making a success of their ventures.

In the latter end of 1846, and throughout the year 1847, a great and continuous migration of stock — chiefly sheep — on to the mid-waters of Barambah and Burnett took place. Amongst the hardy active pioneers of the time, men capable of doing anything from driving their own teams, laden with wool, which some of them had to do, to the port, to taking active part in the administration of the affairs of the country, may be mentioned: E. Hawkins, of Boonara; C. and P. Lawless, of Boonbygan; H. and T. Herbert, of Ban Ban; W. Humphries, of Wetheron; J. B. Reid of Ideraway; Robert Wilkin, of Yenda; and the Archer Bros., of Coonambulah and Eidsvold — all sheep men — together with numbers of other squatters, settled and unsettled, the latter on the lookout for suitable country, and pushing out still further north. . . .

After the decimation of the Barambah sheep by blacks and catarrh, the remainder had to be removed back to the station by the way they came; and finding no cure could be effected, the whole flocks were afterwards destroyed. That was the last of the sheep at Barambah, so that the occupation of the Wide Bay country, near the Mary River, for depasturing of sheep proved its unsuitability. . . .

As for cattle, much need not be said here. The whole of the district, upper and lower, appeared naturally well adapted to their improvement and thriving, so much so that within a decade or two they have quite superseded sheep farming. . . .

**The Squatter's Lot**

The squatter's lot was not a happy one. Some went mad, many took to drink, some got lost, some were killed. This anonymous poem conveys some of the loneliness and despair encountered on a sheep run.

Of sheep I had a precious lot
Some died of hunger, some of rot,
For a divil a drop of rain they got
In this promised land of Australia.
My servants they were always drunk,
That kept me in a constant funk,
And I said to myself, as to bed I slunk,
I wish I was out of Australia.
Of ills I've had enough, you'll own;
There's something else my woes to crown,
One night my loghouse tumbled down,
And settled me in Australia.

_Hunter's River, Botany Bay,
Port Macquarie, Moreton Bay,
If you wouldn't become an orang-outang,
Don't go to the wilds of Australia._

Anon.

**Labour Shortage**

For the pastoralists who spilled into “Queensland” in the 1840s there was an abundance of land, but a distinct shortage of useful labour; this problem was compounded by the ending of transportation. Various attempts were made to boost labour numbers, including a scheme to import “coolie” labour. [Moreton Bay Courier, 22 April 1848, 3.]

The demand for labourers in the country is still very great, and there are few men to be hired even at extravagant wages. We understand that the greatest inconvenience is experienced in the Darling Downs district, not only from the scarcity of servants, but from the misconduct of those who have condescended to hire themselves. It is not an unusual thing for one of these individuals to announce his intended departure from the station to look after his horse, coolly requesting his master to attend to his duty during his absence. . . . The higher the wages, the less satisfied labourers appear to be with their lot. It is a notorious fact that there are great numbers of men in the district who earn money sufficient during shearing time to support them in idleness until the following season. This class will not accept employment on the stations; they are to be seen lounging about the public-houses in the towns, and on the road. . . . The only remedy for this state of things is a copious supply of immigrants. [Measures were introduced to try to restrain such “freedom” of “servants”.]
This colony will suffer severely this year from the low price of wool last year and even lower this. Many of the settlers are bringing Chinese from Hong Kong to prevent absolute ruin, as after all said and done by the Government, the supply of English emigrants is not equal to one tenth part of what is wanted for immediate use. We can import the Celestials for about £10 per head [in passage] at £6 per year [in wages], and they will be engaged for 5 years, so that we shall be able to grow wool at a very low rate. Those Chinese who have been brought into the country are found to be most excellent shepherds; they are even better than the Europeans. The only drawback there is with them, we do not understand one word of their dreadful language; but they do everything by signs most readily. We are going to get a lot of them as soon as possible, now that we know their value.

Confrontation on the Downs, 1843

European settlers quickly took up large squatting runs on the Darling Downs; and soon they had extended down the Range into the Moreton region. The Aborigines found themselves under pressure from these land-occupiers with their flocks and herds, and sought to contain, and repel invaders. They also sought to interrupt their pastoral activities. The squatters established a dray route from the Downs to Brisbane where they could obtain supplies, as well as have an outlet for their produce. John Campbell, one of the first to bring secondary industry to Queensland (a boiling-down works), describes how the Aborigines tried to wage economic warfare against the Europeans. In 1841 Campbell had taken up land on the Downs and had established friendly relations with the local Aborigines — hence his contact with Multuggerah described in this document.

My first salting season was nearly over at Kangaroo point, when one day a black-fellow came to me, and in a very earnest manner warned me not to go to the Darling Downs. He proved to be a messenger sent by Multuggerah to tell me that it was to be war
The missionary and Presbyterian minister Christopher Eipper (left) was brought out to Moreton Bay in 1837-38 by the Reverend J. D. Lang to minister to the Aborigines. With some German colleagues, Eipper established a station at Zion Hill (Nundah). Lay Germans such as the shoemaker Gottfried Wagner (right) assisted Eipper and the Reverend Schmidt. Wagner later became a successful small farmer in the area. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

now in earnest — that their intention was first to spear all the commandants, then to fence up the roads and stop the drays from travelling, and to starve the ‘jackaroos’ (strangers). Altogether, they, in fact, intended to let no more rations go to the Darling Downs... .

It now became evident that [the Aborigines] must be conquered, or there really would be no more rations go to the Darling Downs; so it was resolved to follow them up until they gave in. The horses were accordingly sent back, and some twenty men started on foot to follow the blacks, which they did persistently, giving them no time to procure their food, and pouncing upon them by night or by day, in camp or in trees, when trying to procure food. The white men had this advantage that they could carry their own rations. At the end of three weeks the blacks sent in a message to say that they would fight no more, but make peace now — they had had ‘plenty fight’.

[There is a lapse of about three weeks in the above passage, from when Campbell heard that the drays would be stopped to when the whites took action to remove the harassment of the drays by blacks at the foot of the range.]
Right of Occupation

In November 1848 Richard Jones, the holder of Bowi station on the Mary River, lost seventy-six sheep in two Aboriginal raids. The station manager led a reprisal party to punish the Aborigines; an act of retaliation that the press considered legally justified.

Moreton Bay Courier, 9 December 1848, 3.

If we hold this country by right of conquest, and if that right gives us a just claim to its continued possession, we must be empowered to enforce our claim by the strong arm, when necessary. The blacks of this continent have just the same claim to the restoration of their ‘decayed nationality’ as would the principal­ity of Wales have, if it rose in open rebellion against the Crown. One law must apply to all conquered nations, so far as regards the rights of the conqueror. . . . Lands held by the Crown in virtue of a good title, such as we conceive that of the Queen to be over the lands of New Holland, should carry with them to their possessors a certain and expressed right of defending their interests in them to the utmost extremity of warfare, if necessary. . . . Order and rule must be maintained at any cost, either in the wilds of Australia, or in parts that bear the reputation of civilization; and if this cannot be done by kindness and indul­gence, it must be effected by the iron rod.

[Note that even at this early stage there was no hesitancy in asserting that Australia had been won from the Aborigines by conquest, and with that came all the rights of conquest under international law.]

White Man’s Paradise

The Reverend John Dunmore Lang was an ardent advocate of the northern districts (Queensland) and became an eloquent spokesman for separation from New South Wales. A champion of the idea of free white labour, he favoured, in particular, hard-working, thrifty Scottish (Protestant) “mechanics”. He encouraged the establishment of an economic staple, cotton, which he thought could be successfully grown in the Moreton district by free white labour. Immigration schemes to “Queensland” also received his promotion: three boat
loads arrived in 1849. In his emphasis upon free labour he clashed with squatters who wanted cheap labour, such as convicts or “exiles”.


And as all sorts of agricultural labour had been carried on by white men in that vicinity [Moreton Bay] with perfect safety to their health for twenty years before, it was a natural and warrantable conclusion that cotton could be grown by white men at Moreton Bay as well as by slaves and negroes elsewhere. This was the second reflection which the circumstance suggested. And as cotton was an article of agricultural produce for which there is a constant and unlimited demand in Europe, while it is supplied at present to the European market almost exclusively by the labour of slaves, I could not help recognising in what I saw a certain prospect of adequate remuneration for the Australian farmer, who should betake himself to cotton cultivation; while I was led to cherish the hope that the cultivation of cotton by means of British free labour in Australia might be designed by Divine Providence to give its death-blow to negro slavery in America.

All these ideas crowded into my mind simultaneously on seeing the cotton-plants in Dr. Ballow’s garden in Brisbane; and I confess I have ever since been endeavouring, under every discouragement, both at home and abroad, to realise them . . .

No sooner was the boon of separation obtained *in prospectu* for the future colony of Queensland, than a great effort was made by the principal squatters — gentlemen who consider themselves the veritable aristocracy of the country — to get that colony established as a penal settlement or convict colony, in order to enable them to procure cheap labour for their flocks and herds. I had succeeded, however, in the fact of much unexpected discouragement during the three years I spent in England, in directing a stream of emigration, consisting of three shiploads of emigrants — about six hundred persons in all — to Moreton Bay, now Queensland. These emigrants, whom I had collected and selected myself, were all persons of reputable character and industrious habits, and almost all members of evangelical churches in the mother-country; and settling, as they did, in and around the only two towns then in the country, Brisbane and Ipswich, they set themselves vigorously from the first to oppose the movement of the squatters, and to prevent, if possible, the degradation of their adopted country into a mere
convict colony. And I am happy to be enabled to add that, through the incessant agitation they kept up on the subject, by public meetings, addresses, and petitions, etc., they succeeded at length in preventing the foul conspiracy.

Separation

Through the 1850s a vigorous campaign was mounted in the northern districts for separation from New South Wales. There was criticism of remote and neglectful government; but the major complaint referred to the shortage of population (and labour) in the north. The British government had ended the transportation of convicts; for a while, however, a scheme of sending out "exiles" was tried, but the bulk of the population in Sydney and the south was opposed to this tacit revival of transportation. Northern squatters, however, did not baulk at such a prospect of cheap labour. This caused a division in northern ranks, with many (such as Lang's protégés) stressing the need for free settlement. Eventually the latter cause won. The British authorities had been reluctant to grant self-government to a transportation colony, but now the issue was defeated the separation of Queensland from New South Wales could proceed. This occurred on 10 December 1859.

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1850, 2.

The arguments put forth in the speeches of these pro-convict gentry are not worth answering, simply because they have been answered a thousand times over, and have been scouted by the all-but unanimous verdict of the colonial public. The plea of a scarcity of labour, however, deserves different treatment. It appears from the general tone of discussion, on both sides alike, that the Moreton Bay district has not been fairly treated by the government. There seems to be no just proportion between the amount received into the land fund from its inhabitants, and the number of immigrants forwarded to it during the present flow of immigration. If this be the truth, the government are in some measure responsible for the false step the petitioners [the squatters] have taken. To see free labour pouring into all parts of the colony, and none, or next to none, into theirs, while they have contributed largely to the fund out of which the importation of labour is provided for, is, it must be confessed, enough to rouse
very angry feelings, and to provoke the adoption of very rash expedients. Under such circumstances were cannot wonder that the Moreton Bay squatters use strong language; nor can we wonder much, although we must deeply deplore, that they should have been maddened to the desperate extremity of asking for convicts.

Combating the Blacks

The Aborigines did not willingly give up their land. They used their knowledge of terrain (such as the location of scrubs) to protect themselves and their interests. Europeans, however, brought a wide range of tactics to bear against the Aborigines.

The writer, James Demarr, was writing about the Moreton and Darling Downs districts in the 1840s.


They were a fine specimen of Australian natives, some men being giants in size, and well proportioned, and were if anything of a fiercer disposition, and more courageous than the tribes further south, whilst their impenetrable ‘scrubs’ enabled them to set both horse and foot at defiance. At one time, drays going with supplies to the Downs, although the men were well armed, were frequently robbed by them at Cunningham’s Gap.

In the early days of the settlement, when the whites were comparatively few in number, the blacks that we were called upon to face, would not have been driven away so early. The thick ‘scrubs’ served them for a fortress, but they could not live in the ‘scrub’ always. Their chief source of food lay in the open country, and there it was they came into collision with the settlers. They could not there, stand against the forces brought against them. The settlers’ horses, dogs, and guns — and poison — gained the day. No wonder the natives eventually lost heart.

...Yet there were amongst [the convicts] in this district, a not inconsiderable number of the vilest scoundrels and ruffians, who thought no more of shooting a stray black-fellow than they would a mad dog. ...
It was no unusual thing to hear these ruffians in conversation with one another, boasting of the blacks they had slaughtered, and when relating the particular qualities of a savage brute of a dog, say, he would pull down a blackfellow, or seize a blackfellow, and tear his entrails out. But the use of the dogs to pull down black-fellows, was not the only method used by these ruffians. They were made away with, sometimes by treachery, when apparently on friendly terms.

Less than twenty miles from where I lived, some blacks had been given milk poisoned with arsenic. How many were poisoned was never known, but it was no secret in our district.

Early Contact with Aborigines

Although Europeans wanted to use the land profitably, not all of the earliest occupiers of the land were regardless of the position of the Aborigines. A sympathetic stance was taken by such people as Tom Petrie and the Archer brothers. The account here by Christopher Hodgson, who lived on the Darling Downs in the early 1840s, explains Aboriginal links to the land.


Every place has some peculiar claim to their affection and, though black their colour, yet they have as keen and sensitive a regard for the scenes of boyhood and the hunting grounds of their lives, as ever white man felt for his mountains and vallies; no wonder then that they long to revisit them, and their piety is death. Exasperated, hurt beyond measure, is it to be wondered at that they seek retaliation; their kangaroos have fled, their emus are dispersed, or become the prey of the white man's dogs. . . . They must live, and a fine bullock or a few sheep are tempting feasts to an empty stomach. They come, they see, they steal, and patiently await the consequences of their crime, which is generally death to one or more of their number. Such causes are the precursors to an indiscriminate massacre, — and revenge has been the cause of death to thirty-five white men in the districts of Moreton Bay and Darling Downs alone!
Outwardly the convict heritage of Queensland is slight. There are a few build­
ings and artefacts. Indeed, one might well see the convict era as providing an abortive start to the history of European settlement in Queensland. By 1839 most convicts had been removed from the Moreton region; by 1842 free settle­
ment was allowed in the area. But the more direct story of the European occu­
pation of Queensland begins in 1840, when white settlers with their flocks and herds began to spill northward from the New England region into the Darling Downs — and from there across the Main Divide into the Moreton, Wide Bay and Burnett districts. It was almost as though the convict episode had never existed.
Frontier: Aborigines and White Settlers
Survival

For Aborigines the presence of European squatters meant a struggle for survival. Europeans occupied Aboriginal lands with their cattle and sheep, thereby depriving Aborigines of food. Not surprisingly, violence broke out. The missionary William Ridley here describes the plight of blacks on the Balonne River in 1855.

"Journal of a Missionary Tour among the Aborigines of the Western Interior of Queensland, in the year 1855, by the Rev. William Ridley, B.A." in J. D. Lang, Queensland, Australia (London: Stanford, 1861), 439.

On this river the effect upon the aborigines of the occupation by Europeans of the country was forcibly presented. Before the occupation of this district by colonists, the aborigines could never have been at a loss for necessaries of life. Except in the lowest part of the river, there is water in the driest seasons; along the banks game abounded; waterfowl, emus, parrot tribes, kangaroos, and other animals might always, or almost always, be found. And if, at any time, these failed to supply food for the human tribe, the fish furnished a sure resource. But when the country was taken up, and herds of cattle introduced, not only did the cattle drive away the kangaroos, but those who had

Traditional Aboriginal groups had regular fights and festivals among themselves. Although Europeans considered the fights violent and barbarous, little killing occurred. Here, Brisbane blacks meet Bribie blacks in 1853. Reprinted from *Illustrated London News*, 17 June 1854.
Aboriginal life studies in the days of early contact with white settlers: a family group with some weapons and utensils outside a thatched dwelling in the Russell River district, far north Queensland (top); and two men constructing a hut in the Bellenden Ker district about 1900 (bottom). Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
charge of the cattle found it necessary to keep the aborigines away from the river, as their appearance frightened the cattle in all directions. In fact, it is said that while troops of aborigines roam about the runs, and especially if they go to the cattle camps and watering places, it is impossible to keep a herd together.

After some fatal conflicts, in which some colonists and many aborigines have been slain, the blacks have been awed into submission to the orders which forbid their access to the river. And what is the consequence? Black fellows coming in from the west report that last summer very large numbers, afraid to visit the river, were crowded round a few scanty water holes, within a day's walk of which it was impossible to get sufficient food, . . . that owing to these combined hardships many died.

**Aboriginal Reaction**

There was no one attitude that Aborigines adopted in response to the arrival of Europeans in their lands. Explorers and settlers noted a variety of Aboriginal reactions to their presence. William Forster pioneered settlement in the Wide Bay district between 1849 and 1855 where he put together runs of about 26,000 hectares; here he comments on his experience of the Aborigines.


After the country has been occupied a certain time, the blacks appear to reach a different stage altogether. I think there are three stages. At first they are thoroughly wild, and at war with the whites, though in appearance disposed to be rather civil than otherwise; they do not commence their depredations until they understand our habits; then they reach another stage, which is a kind of open war; after which they reach the third stage, when they understand our superior power, and at the same time their predatory habits are still in existence — they will carry on small depredations, and no doubt take life at times, but their object is not to take life — it is not war.
This posed photograph was probably an attempt to capture the "noble savage" image of the Aborigine. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
Frontier War

It was not unusual for people in the mid nineteenth century to refer to relations between Aborigines and European landholders as amounting to a state of frontier war. Gideon Lang, who became a prominent pastoralist, as well as being a man of letters, commented upon how these wars broke out; this knowledge he had gained through practical experience in south-east Australia. In the early 1850s he was in southern Queensland. In 1865 he wrote a series of lectures on the Aboriginal question, and how good relations might be established.


As nearly two-thirds of the Australian continent is still to be occupied, and that I believe the most numerously peopled by the blacks, it is a matter of grave importance, and a solemn duty for both the Government and the frontier squatters to adopt some system calculated to diminish, if not altogether prevent, those fearful petty wars, resulting in such destruction of property and life.

The causes are threefold:

First. That no Colonial Government has ever recognized any policy, authority, or property, tribal or personal, among the aborigines.

Second. They have been deprived of their hunting grounds without any provision being made for them, the country having been occupied by the white settlers with as utter a disregard of their interest, rights, and even subsistence, as if they had been wild dogs or kangaroos.

Third. From difficulties arising between the blacks and the pioneer squatters and their men.

The squatters and the blacks have been left to settle matters between themselves, and to ‘shake down’ into peaceful joint occupation without any regulation or much interference on the part of the Government; and that very rough process and its results I shall now describe, previous to suggesting a remedy. Let me premise, however, by clearing away some popular errors.

In the first place, the idea is very generally entertained that, when the whites take up new country among the blacks, the squatters, as a body, commence the destruction of the natives as a matter of course, and without hesitation. Nothing could be more erroneous. It is of the most vital consequence to the
pioneer squatter to keep on good terms with the blacks. He thereby secures all the bark required for his first rough huts and woolshed, besides valuable assistance for lambing and shearing. On the other hand, should he excite their enmity, he not only forfeits these advantages, but incurs such a heavy expenditure as would and has ruined many. He must then have two shepherds for each flock, and two hut keepers for each hut, all at exorbitant wages; and as the danger is an excuse for keeping close to the hut, the sheep are starved, and consequently there is a miserable lambing, and a very poor clip.

In the second place, it is not the interference of the white men with their women; they don’t value their women enough for that.

In the third place, more particularly in the case of sheep stations, the blacks are generally the aggressors, as to them such a mass of food as a flock of sheep, to be had without danger is irresistible, and a man’s life is nothing. They kill the shepherd and steal the sheep, are followed and killed, and so a blood-feud is established.

The grand foundation of all the evil is the absence of any systematic provision, on the part of the Government, for the location of the blacks, when their country is occupied by the whites. Even when individual squatters have management enough to keep the blacks quiet, this renders a border war almost inevitable. Every year the white men advance, and occupy new country, often the entire area at once; and every squatter, on his own run, follows his independent plan of dealing with the blacks. Some allow them to remain quietly and come to the home station, which, with proper precautions, I believe the best system; and on cattle stations break the cattle into the blacks when breaking them into the run, which is very easily done. Others will at once drive them even from sheep runs, and shoot them down without further offence, wherever they are seen; but this is very rare, for the squatters as a body are most kind to the blacks, until war actually begins, and many of them even then.

If only sheep stations were in question the matter might more easily be managed, but the chief difficulty is with cattle, which are very often first put upon new country. The business of the white man is to get his cattle to settle on the station — always a tedious, difficult operation. They are at first yarded and tailed like a flock of sheep, and then allowed to take up their habitat on the different portions of the run, when they divide them-
Conflict on the frontier, was rarely captured in illustrations. Here, an engraving gives the European perspective of a wronged party creeping up on a black camp to wreak revenge. Reprinted from *Queenslander*, 2 December 1876.

selves into mobs, form their camps, and frequent particular water-holes. But all this preliminary work is liable to be undone, should any natives come upon the run, as the cattle detest the smell of them, and make off; and after being speared, they scatter in all directions, take to the scrubs, and become almost valueless. The usual practice is, to prevent the blacks from coming on the run at all, so that they are not only cut off from their own water-holes, but when the country is watered by one river or creek distant from any other, they are deprived of water altogether for more than half the year.

The squatters most anxious to befriend the blacks are then placed in a very difficult position. When white men are murdered, it is indispensable to punish the murderer; but still the ordi-
nary law is powerless, as the blacks never leave any survivor who might give legal evidence. The frontier settlers, however, can always obtain conclusive evidence from the natives themselves, and upon such testimony they are often obliged to act. The usual course is then for a party of whites, guided by blacks usually of another tribe, to start during the night, creep up close to the enemy's camp, wait till daybreak, and then commence the onslaught, in which, even when the greatest possible care is taken to avoid it, the women and children are sometimes shot. Everything in the camp is then destroyed, the blacks are scattered, destitute of the means of existence, and, of course, perfectly desperate.

The Native Mounted Police

Frontier violence led to the formation of the Native Mounted Police in 1848. Black troopers under white command moved around new settlement areas to punish Aborigines where violence (to life or property) had occurred. But many complaints arose about the inefficiency of this force — and sometimes about its brutal methods of law enforcement. The inefficiencies of the system were further highlighted when massacres of Europeans occurred, such as at Hornet Bank on the Dawson in 1857 (when eleven were killed) and in 1861 at Cullin-la-ringa on the Nogoa (where nineteen were killed). In the late 1850s the Leichhardt district (coastal central Queensland), which was just opening up, was the scene of most conflict between white settlers and Aborigines.


MURDERS BY THE ABORIGINES ON THE DAWSON RIVER

Report from the Select Committee:

The Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly, appointed on the 15th June last to inquire into and report upon the Murders which have recently taken place on the Dawson River, and generally on the state of outrage between the white population and the aborigines in the Northern Districts, with a view to providing for the better protection of life and property . . . have agreed to the following Report: —

Your Committee are convinced, by the evidence of the various
The New South Wales government created the Native Mounted Police to deal with black–white conflict on the frontier. The force operated for almost fifty years and attracted a reputation of undue brutality and violence. Here, an engraving and a photograph provide contrasting versions of the police. Engraving reprinted from *Illustrated London News*, 8 June 1863; photo John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
witnesses examined, that the murders which have been committed on the Northern Frontier of this Colony may be attributed to those inevitable collisions which take place more or less between the blacks and whites in opening out a new tract of country, aggravated in a great measure by the inefficiency of the Native Police Force, and the mountainous and scrubby nature of the district.

It will further appear that the sudden disbandment of a large portion of the Native Police was a most untoward event, as there is too much reason to believe that the disbanded troopers have been leaders in most of the murderous attacks upon the whites, and to this cause the inefficiency of the Native Police Force, as at present constituted, may be undoubtedly traced. It appears also that the troops who did such good service from 1848 to 1852, under their late Commandant, Mr. Walker, on the McIntyre, and other places, were brought from the Murrumbidgee, Murray, and Edward Rivers; and it is conclusive that the conduct of these men was the cause of the force enjoying that high character which it is deeply to be regretted it no longer possesses.

After a careful consideration of the evidence taken, your Committee would submit the following recommendations for the favorable consideration of your Honourable House:—

(1). That the Native Police Force, properly organized and well officered, is the force best capable of protecting life and property in the outlying districts; and an attempt to amalgamate white troops with such a force would probably be futile, as in almost every instance the natives, after perpetrating an outrage, take refuge in the scrubs, which are inaccessible to horses, and where, except in certain instances, none but native troopers could follow and overtake them. To discipline a mixed force of this kind would, moreover, be a difficult task, as considerable jealousy would undoubtedly arise, and would generally result in the white troopers compelling the native troopers to act as their servants, and do all the more menial work.

(4). Your Committee are of the opinion that the system of recruiting in the Northern Districts is most pernicious, and has led, and will continue to lead, to the most mischievous results — wholesale desertion having, in consequence, taken place. All the witnesses agree that troopers should be raised from distant parts of the Colony, not less than 500 or 600 miles away from the district in which they are to act. . . .

The efforts now being made are well calculated to allay those
feelings of alarm and apprehension which have been so long prevalent in the unhappy district of the Leichhardt; and whilst they repudiate, in the strongest terms, any attempt to wage a war of extermination against the Aborigines, they are satisfied that there is no alternative but to carry matters through with a strong hand, and punish with necessary severity all future outrages upon life and property, in order that the sanguinary conflicts between the native blacks and the settlers may for the future be avoided.

“Dispersal” of Aborigines

Numerous complaints were made about the operations of the Native Police Force that they were inefficient or too ruthless; consequently, a number of government inquiries were instituted. Although certain charges against individual members of the force might be sustained, these inquiries tended to argue for the continuation of the force, although with reorganization and certain improvements. Control of the Aborigines was seen as a difficult task, since they seemed to be “beyond the pale” of western civilization: the force was regarded as necessary. Outrages were always being perpetrated on the frontier, against people or against stock. Incidents such as the Fraser massacre at Hornet Bank led to instructions being given on the “dispersal” of groups of Aborigines; what was meant by “dispersal” was not spelt out, but in practice it meant that the force could fire at and kill any Aborigines found in the vicinity upon the basis that they looked potentially troublesome or dangerous.


Your Committee, although aware how difficult it may be in cases where depredations are committed by the blacks to make them amenable to British Law, cannot countenance the indiscriminate slaughter which appears on more than one occasion to have taken place. . . .

The evidence taken by your Committee shews beyond doubt that all attempts to Christianize or educate the aborigines of Australia have hitherto proved abortive. Except in one or two isolated cases, after being brought up and educated for a certain period, the Natives of both sexes invariably return to their savage habits. Credible witnesses shew that they are addicted to
cannibalism; that they have no idea of a future state; and are sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism. Missions have been established amongst them at different periods with but partial success; and the same may be said of the schools established in the different Colonies.

[Evidence of Alfred Brown, Gin Gin station, in the Wide Bay district, 1858.]

I consider that one essential object of the employment of the Force is that they should be continuously patrolling the country, which they do not do. I consider they adhere too much to the roads, instead of following the blacks and patrolling through the bush. I consider, also, that the officers do not keep up that degree of discipline amongst the troopers. . . . I consider that the troopers ought not to know in which direction they are going out, for this reason, that at the stations they make acquaintance with the blacks, principally through the women, and I believe they give them information which they ought not to possess, as to where the next movement of the Force will be. . . . Have you allowed the blacks in at your station? Yes. Always? Always. Have you suffered from them? I have had no person killed on my station, but I have had them injured. Are the blacks generally allowed in, in your part of the country? Yes. There is scarcely any station in my neighbourhood where they are not allowed in. I speak of the station where we are living; but I am forming a station where we would never think of allowing them in. Do you think it desirable they should be allowed in? I think so, where they are quiet. . . .

[Evidence of Pollet Cardew of Upper Dawson, 1858.]

You had a station then upon the Dawson? Yes. Do you remember the Frazer murders? Yes. Was not that a horrible affair? Yes, there were eleven persons killed in one night. Including the murder of some women? Yes; Mrs. Frazer and her four daughters were murdered, her three sons, and their tutor, and two men. To what cause do you attribute those murders? To the inefficiency, at that time, of the Police Force; in fact they were unable to do anything.
The Force was then in a very inefficient state? Yes, perfectly useless.
Is it not true that some of the disbanded troopers were concerned in that outrage? I cannot say; it was reported to be the case. It was believed that they were at the bottom of it? Yes.
Without reference to those murders, was not the district in a very dangerous state? Yes, the blacks killed eight men on my station, and two on Mr. Yaldwyn's, all within the period of eleven months.
When was that? It was in 1857 and 1858 that my men were killed, and I think the others were killed in 1859...

[Evidence of Charles Parkinson of Kenilworth station.]
What had the blacks been doing up there? Killing cattle.
To what extent? They had killed a considerable number; they had been killing cattle as far back as four years. I had placed 1270 cattle on the run, out of which 700 were breeding cows; we had branded cattle up to 2500, and up to the present time there are only 1694 head; instead of which, allowing for increase, there ought to be at least 2500, or more.
What proof had you that they were killed by the natives? I have frequently seen the cattle with their tails bleeding; I have seen others hocked, and otherwise injured.
How many have you seen in this condition? A good many. Mr. Frazer has seen them; they would be all right in the morning, and in the evening five or six of them would be seen at the camping ground, with their tails bleeding. On this occasion he found all our own blacks at the head station, round about the house, and they told him that strange blacks were killing our cattle. The blacks camped in sight of the station, across the paddock. He went down with some of our blacks, and dispersed the camp, and he then found their nets and other convenient articles for carrying away the spoil, filled with ribs of beef, newly killed, the flesh still quivering...

The blacks became more outrageous than ever. When we went to one part of the run, they would be committing some mischief in another. A few days before we heard anything of Mr. Morisset [of the Native Police Force] the blacks had gone to Billi Creek; we saw the smoke of their fires there. We ran their tracks as far as Mr. Lawless's station, Imbil, and there we found Mr. Hickson, the Superintendent, in a great state of fright; he had been kept up all night, and had been barred up in the house all
day by the blacks, who had threatened to take his life, and that of Mr. Knaggs, another Superintendent, who was up there.

What occurred after Mr. Morisset went to Maryborough? I heard nothing more about the blacks at that time, until Mr. Frazer came up to our station, and told us the blacks had been threatening him and killing the cattle. They told him they should kill as many cattle as they chose; that Mr. Bligh had been removed, and that they did not care for the white men. They made use of very strong language and called Mr. Frazer by a good many abusive names. He was not strong enough to cope with them, and had to come home. We agreed to wait for three days, and then to send to Kilcoy for help to drive the blacks away. The cattle were being killed hourly.

How far was Mr. Mortimer's station from that? About 30 miles across the bush. Well, as we were about to send off for assistance, we heard of Mr. Morisset having shot some blacks at Mortimer's station, or in that direction. A black-fellow came in and told us that. . . .

What do you call "dispersed"? Some of them were shot; I believe they were dispersed three different times. . . .

[Evidence of E. Morisset, Commandant of Native Police, 1861. (Lieutenant Morisset was his brother.)]

It appears from the evidence of Mr. Mortimer and another, that the detachment in charge of Lieutenant Morisset was sent up on the representations of Mr. Parkinson and some others, and that they killed a number of blacks, and left them lying dead about his run — we have heard of at least eight found dead in that way.

Do you think this is a justifiable act under the circumstances? Yes, I think so; perhaps I may be allowed to explain. I received a report from Mr. Morisset which is now in the Colonial Secretary's office; he was on his way to headquarters with a number of horses, and when he got to this district on his way up to Wide Bay, he was informed by several squatters that the blacks were very troublesome killing cattle, and that they threatened to attack the horses. He reported this to Mr. Murray, when he got to Wide Bay, and Lieutenant Murray sent him back with a detachment of his own men. When Mr. Morisset got back, he found the blacks in large numbers at the Bunya Bunya, and, I think, he first dispersed them there and then met them again somewhere else — at least, the blacks found he was following them, and went in towards the station of the Messrs. Mortimer, and got
close to it, when the Police came up with them. I believe they thought the Police were coming to shoot them, and made the first attack. . . .

[Tenth — and final — instruction given by Commandant to Officers and Sergeants of Native Police, 1858]

It is the duty of the Officers at all times and opportunities to disperse any large assemblage of blacks; such meetings, if not prevented, invariably lead to depredations or murder; and nothing but the mistaken kindness of the Officers in command inspired the blacks with sufficient confidence to commit the late fearful outrages on the Dawson River. The Officers will therefore see the necessity of teaching the aborigines that no outrage or depredation shall be committed with impunity — but on the contrary, retributive justice shall speedily follow the Commission of crime; nevertheless the Officers will be careful in receiving reports against the blacks, as it frequently happens that mistakes are made as to the identity of the aggressors. In case of any collision with the aborigines a report is to be forwarded to the Commandant without delay.

Slaughter of Aborigines

Squatters (backed by the government) were determined that their occupation of the land should proceed peacefully and profitably. Any black resistance was met by force — by the squatters themselves or, if they could not handle the situation, with the assistance of the Native Police. Large-scale slaughter of Aborigines resulted, as these few examples by George Carrington, a “university man”, indicate.

George Carrington, Colonial Adventures and Experiences by a University Man (London: Bell and Daldy, 1871), 150-53.

When a new district is first taken up, the blacks fly, like wild animals, at the approach of a white man, and as soon as they become accustomed to his presence, and strange ways, are generally inclined to be peaceable. The first outrages committed by them are almost invariably in retaliation: some party of men propose for amusement to go out after the blacks. Perhaps they
can't as yet reconcile themselves to the idea of shooting them in cold blood: but they find a camp, the black-fellows fly at their approach, leaving all their possessions, nets, spears, wooden water-vessels, etc., in their hurry, behind them. Most probably the white men take away as many of these things as they can carry, and wantonly destroy the rest. The damage to be repaired involves many months of ingenuity and hard work. These heroes return to the station or township, and the blacks meditate revenge. They find some poor shepherd, or traveller, wandering alone or sitting under a tree; they creep upon him through the long grass and kill him. They smash in his face with their clubs, and, having cut open his body, they take out his kidney fat, and smear themselves with it, and leave him pinned to the ground by a spear. Thus perishes innocent man number one. As soon as the murder is discovered, there is a great "hullabaloo" in the district and a party turns out to disperse (i.e. to shoot) the blacks. . . . Led by a black tracker and riding on swift horses, the party soon find the blackfellows, whom they proceed to "disperse", by shooting them down — men women, and children, the object being to destroy as many as possible. The remnant of the tribe then go on to a neighbouring run, and kill another shepherd, or perhaps two, and they are "dispersed" again. . . . These troopers, as may be imagined, are not wanting in zeal, and are not likely to err on the side of injudicious mercy. . . . On occasion, when their prey takes to the scrubs, they are willing enough to strip off their uniforms, all but their belts and cartridge-boxes, and go in after them, when they seldom fail to give a good account of their errand. I have seen two large pits, covered with branches and brush, secured by a few stones, and the pits themselves were full of dead blackfellows, or all ages and both sexes.

On another occasion, I was travelling on a road where, for more than a quarter of a mile, the air was tainted with the putrefaction of corpses, which lay all along the ridges, just as they had fallen. It was true that the offence here was the murder of five shepherds, on one station, in a week, but such wholesale and indiscriminate vengeance seems rather disproportionate, to say the least.
“Keep the Blacks Out”

Very few squatters established friendly relations with local Aborigines although sometimes attempts were made to solicit them as labourers. The usual policy was to “keep the blacks out” in the hope of avoiding trouble and leaving the stock undisturbed. After about ten years, when the Aborigines had been sufficiently “tamed” — and reduced in numbers — they would usually be “let in” to the fringes of white society. The following letter to the editor of the Port Denison Times, headed “A Black Protector”, referred to the opening up of the Kennedy district (coastal north Queensland, from Bowen to beyond Townsville) in 1861.

Port Denison Times, 20 November 1869, 2.

[T]he Majority of these [Aborigines] were inclined to be friendly with the Europeans. Some, however, were not so, and upon several occasions showed their hostility and treachery, thus compelling the pioneers in their own defence to keep them out — that is, never to allow them near a camp, out-station, head-station, or township; consequently they were hunted if seen by

Sometimes Aborigines became labourers for European settlers. This occurred with most success on the northern pastoral runs. Here, a cattle camp is watched by white and black stockmen. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
anyone in open country, and driven away or shot down when caught out of the scrub and broken ground. This course adopted by the early settlers and pioneers was unavoidable and quite necessary under the existing circumstances.

This system of keeping them out, however, has led to the most dreadful results. Instead of the Government sending police enough to protect the pioneers in the first instance and assist them afterwards to civilize the blacks . . . every bushman had to take the law into his own hands in self-defence, and for a time every man's hand was against the blacks, and their hands against every man — as those who had been peacefully inclined towards the settlers at first became revengeful, and committed several most horrible murders, cutting and hacking their victims in a dreadful manner, and killing sheep, cattle and horses — cattle especially — in every direction. This state of affairs lasted from the early part of 1864 to 1868.

Trouble Spreads North

By the 1860s the scene of friction between Aborigines and white land-occupiers had moved north to Bowen (Port Denison), and as far west as the Burketown area. The Native Police went in hot pursuit.

Port Denison Times, 4 July 1868, 3.

I much regret to state that the blacks have become very troublesome about here [Burketown] lately. Within ten miles of this place they speared and cut steaks from the rumps of several horses. As soon as it was known, the Native Police, under Sub-Inspector Uhr, went out, and I am informed, succeeded in shooting upwards of thirty blacks. No sooner was this done than a report came in that Mr. Cannon [Cameron] had been murdered by the blacks, at Liddle and Hetzer's station, near the Norman. Mr. Uhr went off immediately in that direction, and his success I hear was complete. One mob of fourteen he rounded up; another mob of nine, and a last mob of eight, he succeeded with his troopers in shooting. In the latter lot there was one black who would not die after receiving eighteen or twenty
bullets, but a trooper speedily put an end to his existence by smashing his skull. . . . Everybody in the district is delighted with the wholesale slaughter dealt out by the Native Police, and thank Mr. Uhr for his energy in ridding the districts of *fifty-nine* (59) myalls.

**Aboriginal Leaders**

It was commonly thought by Europeans that Aborigines were lazy and unreliable labourers. Most squatters avoided them and some were hostile towards them. Only a few took a friendly approach and sought Aboriginal help. It should be remembered that in the early squatting days labour was very scarce.


I have no doubt Mr. McLeod’s statement [that he washed 22,000 sheep with 20 blackboys] is correct, I having for the last three years used this description of labor for sheep-washing,
lambing, shepherding, during shearing, and at other times when white men were scarce. At present I have six blacks lambing, in charge of an overseer, and two boys shepherding, and for all these purposes find them quite equal to, and as careful as, white men. . . . I have always found that if they agree for a certain time, generally ‘two moons’, for consideration in the way of tobacco, blankets, etc, they will stop to their time, but not an instant longer.

As for black labour being a failure, I can only say that, had it not been for the aborigines doing nearly all my work during the late rush to the Palmer, while white labor was not to be had, my losses would have been ruinous. . . . That they spend their money in spirits, tobacco, etc, is not to be wondered at, considering the example set them by their confreres, the white washers, shepherds, and others.

There is little doubt that the doom of the race is utter extermination within the next fifty years, wherever brought into contact with Europeans; but in the meantime, if properly treated, they may do ‘the State some service’, and are not the utterly useless, lazy, treacherous people some persons would have us believe.

[From the beginning of the nineteenth century it was commonly believed by Europeans that the so-called “primitive” peoples (of the Third World) were dying out in the face of the seeming superiority of the western world.]

Aborigines and Miners

Aborigines probably suffered most at the hands of the miners as they invaded the scene of a “rush”. Here they suffered an immediate dislocation: the disturbance of food and, most disastrously, the selfish exploitation of water resources by mining operations. Perhaps not surprisingly violence became marked in areas such as the Palmer River.

Queenslander, 8 December 1877, 16.

The Cook district [Cape York] is a case in point. For four years a war of extermination has been waged against the blacks. Not only the native troopers, but each white man carrying a rifle, tries its range on every blackfellow he sees. But the blacks are in
no way intimidated. They constantly spear cattle and horses within a few miles of Cooktown up to the present time, and if an opportunity offers itself to kill and eat a white man, they never fail to avail themselves of it. Perhaps the determination they show may be the courage of despair. The country is not fertile, is poorly stocked with game, and the whites have taken possession of all the main watercourses. Native police officers say that most of the Palmer blacks seem half-starved, and recent advice from the Hodgkinson [goldfield] describes the aboriginals there as suffering from famine. The white men occupy their only hunting-grounds, and in default of the fish, roots, and game of the waterholes and creek 'bottoms', they are in a manner compelled to eat horses and bullock.

[Europeans sometimes referred to cannibalism as a practice of the Aborigines, but apart from its use in certain rituals actual cases are difficult to document accurately. A psychology of fear often operated on the European mind.]


Notwithstanding the increase of the population and the necessarily unsettled state of affairs in the new and scattered gold fields of the Cook and Palmer, it is satisfactory to observe that crime has decreased during the past year. The chief difficulty in the Palmer District has been occasioned by the aborigines, who in that district have shown themselves to be unusually hostile and intractable.

In every other part of the colony the advancing settlers have been able to enter into some arrangements, more or less friendly, with the native inhabitants; but since the Cook and Palmer Districts have been opened up no instance is known of any communication having been established, or of a single aboriginal having been induced to enter the camp of a white man. Notwithstanding this fact, well known to every man in the districts mentioned, no precautions whatever are taken by travellers for their own protection.

Arms are sometimes carried, but in many instances either strapped on pack-horses or stowed in such a manner as to be useless when required. Instead of travelling in company, diggers and packers are to be met with straggling leisurely along in detached parties, some carrying swags, others driving loose
horses before them, camping at any spot that may seem convenient without regard to its safety, no watch being kept, or measures adopted, to guard against sudden attacks by the blacks: it is therefore not to be wondered at that loss of life and property is frequently experienced, and that an outcry should be raised about the inefficiency of the Police, without its being taken into consideration that common precautions are necessary on the part of the travellers themselves, and that the principal part of the duty of the Police now is to protect travellers from the consequences of their own want of caution. . . .

The abolition of the Native Police Force, as advocated by some, would be attended with very serious consequences, as the services for which they are retained could not be performed by the ordinary police; while, on the other hand, it would appear unnecessary to maintain them in settled districts, safe from the attacks of the aborigines; in such localities the plan previously indicated, namely that of attaching trackers to the ordinary police stations, ought to prove sufficient.


When the carriers reached the abandoned spot they found Strau's body beneath the dray. The dead body of his wife was a little distance away. A spear had been driven through her mouth, and had pinned her to the ground. Both bodies were warm. Three horses were lying dead, but there was no sign of the little girl.

The carriers immediately galloped on to the fifteen-mile bend of the Normanby River, where a number of teams and packers were camped. In the morning a well-armed search party was formed. On arrival at the scene of the murder, scouts were posted to give notice if the blacks were returning. A grave was dug, and the bodies lowered into it. While this was being carried out noises were heard in the scrub. The party proceeded in the direction of the sound and found the little girl, a large gash across the forehead, her stomach ripped up by the blacks' wooden knives, and her eyes picked out by crows. . . .

The police learnt, through the troopers from some blacks who were captured, that Strau's party was camped for dinner when the blacks attacked them. The man was speared while
reading a book beneath the dray, and the woman was sewing, sitting against the wheel of the dray. Before being killed outright, the woman was subjected to horrible outrage by the blacks. It was intended to keep the little girl, but two old gins quarrelled over her possession, and it was decided to kill the child, and so avoid dissension among the tribe. From these murders the lagoons were known as the "Murdering Lagoons".

Aborigines Attack Chinese

Aborigines suffered badly at the hands of miners in the Palmer region. Not surprisingly the Aborigines retaliated, picking off individual prospectors, and setting upon unarmed Chinese.

Queenslander, 27 December 1884, 1022.

The civilization of the darkies in North Queensland, especially about this district, does not advance, apparently. They seem to have a predilection for Chinamen. During the last two years attacks have been made on Chinese located in or about Fine Gold Creek. These attacks are simple acts of reprisal, as well as retribution. In days gone by, and in many instances at the present time, if a blackfellow is seen he is brutally shot down the same as a dingo, and with about the same feeling of remorse. No wonder we hear of outrages committed by the blacks. The game apparently [in the] North is who gets first sight; a solitary swagman or Chinaman frequently gets speared out of vengeance for someone else's misdeeds. The value of a blackfellow's life is viewed as nothing more or less than a wild beast's. They are hunted as wolves and shot down whenever seen. It must be admitted it is very annoying to have one’s cattle speared and valuable horses maimed for life by blacks. Is it justifiable, though, because these ignorant creatures do this, that they should be killed, poisoned, or otherwise deprived of life? I have been told instances in the North where a whole camp has been poisoned, somewhere in the Gulf country. . . .
The Spread of Settlement

Pressure on Aboriginal communities continued through the 1870s and 1880s as European settlement spread to the northern and western limits. Native Police were sent to the west to meet the problems head on.


The native police have been pushed out close to the western boundary of the colony, one detachment on the Gregory, and another on the Burke Rivers; but this is insufficient, additional detachments are required.

I have endeavoured hitherto to meet the outside demand by transferring from the inside districts rather than increase the force. The camps formerly at Nebo, Conway, Yo Yo, and Blackall have been broken up, and it was intended that the Bloomsbury camp should also be removed, substituting, as in other places, a white police station with trackers attached. This, however, will not suffice now to provide for the wants of the West, and a small increase to the number of troopers will be necessary.

The complaints of cattle-killing and hut-robbing by the blacks along the northern coast, from Cairns to the north of Cooktown, are never ending, and never will cease as long as there are blacks there. The whole coast from the Mulgrave to the Mosman is studded with timber-getters and settlers, by whom the blacks are disturbed and prevented from obtaining their natural food in that direction, while on the other side of the range the country is all occupied by small cattle stations, which again cut them off from their hunting and fresh-water fishing grounds. The intervening scrub is small, affording but a scanty supply of fruits in their season, and the natives are thus literally starving, and take advantage of the cover afforded by the scrub to make sudden raids on the cattle and huts, which is rendered more easy by the careless less of the owners, the huts being left unguarded and the stations insufficient looked after. Too much dependence is placed on the police, and too much expected from them, the ordinary precautions that all persons should take for the safety of their lives and property being almost systematically neglected.
Dispersal and Destruction

In 1880s the Victorian squatter E. M. Curr surveyed the condition of Aborigines in Australia. He noted that the population in Queensland was being reduced; the first account below refers to Aborigines of the Cape River area, and the second to Halifax Bay in north Queensland.


The territory of the Pegulloburra, Mr. Chatfield informs me, was first occupied as a station in 1863, but the tribe was not what is technically called *let in* until 1868. Generally, after the first occupation of a tract of country by a settler, from three to ten years elapse before the tribe or tribes to which the land has belonged from time immemorial is let in, that is, is allowed to come to the homestead, or seek for food within a radius of five or ten miles of it. During this period the squatter’s party and the tribe live in a state of warfare; the former shooting down a savage now and then when opportunity offers, and calling in the aid of the Black Police from time to time to avenge in a wholesale way the killing or frightening of stock off the run by the tribe. Acting on the well-known feature of aboriginal ethics, that every male stranger is an enemy, who must, if possible, be slain, the Queensland Government has largely availed itself of its aboriginal population for the purpose of punishing aboriginal aggressions. The stereotype proceedings which follow the taking up of a run may be described in this way, and if I mention them, it is only on the chance that further publicity — for they are well known — may possibly contribute to the adoption of more humane measures.

When the settler then locates his stock on a piece of country hitherto in the sole possession of a tribe, the roots, grass-seeds, and game on which the people habitually live quickly fail. Then come hunger and also anger, for amongst themselves the hunting or gathering of food by a tribe on land which does not belong to it is always considered a *casus belli* by the rightful proprietors; just as in our case to take or destroy a neighbour’s sheep or cabbages is a punishable act. Then some cattle are speared, or frightened off the run by the mere presence of the Blacks in search of food. In either of these events the Blacks are attacked and some of them shot down. In revenge, a shepherd or
stockman is speared. Recourse is then had to the Government; half-a-dozen or more young Blacks in some part of the colony remote from the scene of the outrage are enlisted, mounted, armed, liberally supplied with ball cartridges, and despatched to the spot under the charge of a Sub-inspector of Police. Hot for blood, the black troopers are laid on the trail of the tribe; then follow the careful tracking, the surprise, the shooting at a distance safe from spears, the deaths of many of the males, the capture of the women, who know that if they abstain from flight they will be spared; the gratified lust of the savage, and the Sub-inspector’s report that the tribe has been "dispersed" for such is the official term used to convey the occurrence of these proceedings. When the tribe has gone through several repetitions of this experience, and the chief part of its young men been butchered, the women, the remnant of the men, and such children as the Black troopers have not troubled themselves to shoot, are let in, or allowed to come to the settler’s homestead, and the war is at an end. Finally, a shameful disease is introduced, and finishes what the rifle began. The Pegulloburra were not let in until 1868, having in the interim, Mr. Chatfield says, “been murdered by Whites and Native Police wherever seen.” When they were let in, there were only 125 able-bodied men left, the numbers of the women and children being considerably greater. Measles also ravaged the tribe, so that the Pelgulloburra at the time of Mr. Chatfield’s writing reckoned only thirty men, fifty women, and some few children, for infanticide has become general among them. . . .

In 1865, when the Halifax Bay country was first occupied by the Whites, the tribe is estimated to have amounted to about 500 persons. The numbers which existed in 1880 are set down approximately to have been 40 men, 30 boys over ten years, 100 women and girls over ten years, and 30 children of both sexes under ten years; in all 200 souls. This decrease my informant attributes to the brutality of the Native Mounted Police and some of the settlers, who, in the beginning, relentlessly hunted down and shot as many of the males of the tribe as possible.
By 1880 a debate was warming up about the ruthless operations of the Native Police. Most criticism arose from the southern colonies and the settled parts of south Queensland. White north Queenslanders did not feel so secure and wanted this police protection to continue. It was not until 1897 that the work of the Native Police Force was absorbed within regular police operations.

Queenslander, 1 May 1880, 560.

This, in plain language, is how we deal with the aborigines: On occupying new territory the aboriginal inhabitants are treated exactly in the same way as the wild beasts or birds the settlers may find there. Their lives and their property, the nets, canoes, and weapons which represent as much labor to them as the stock and buildings of the white settler, are held by the Europeans as being at their absolute disposal. Their goods are taken, their children forcibly stolen, their women carried away, entirely at the caprice of the white men. The least show of resistance is answered by a rifle bullet; in fact, the first introduction between blacks and whites is often marked by the unprovoked murder of some of the former — in order to make a commencement of the work of “civilising” them. Little difference is made between the treatment of blacks at first disposed to be friendly and those who from the very outset assume a hostile attitude. As a rule the blacks have been friendly at first, and the longer they have endured provocation without retaliating the worse they have fared. . . . The protests of the minority [of Europeans] have been disregarded by the people of the settled districts; the majority of outsiders who take no part in the outrages have been either apathetic or inclined to shield their companions, and the white brutes who fancied the amusement have murdered, ravished, and robbed the blacks without let or hindrance. Not only have they been unchecked, but the Government of the colony has been always at hand to save them from the consequences of their crime. When the blacks, stung to retaliation by outrages committed on their tribe, or hearing the fate of their neighbors, have taken the initiative and shed white blood, or speared white men’s stock, the native police have been sent to “disperse” them. What disperse means is well enough known. The word has been adopted into bush slang as a convenient euphemism for whole-
sale massacre. . . . When the police have entered on the scene, the race conflict goes on apace. It is a fitful war of extermination waged upon the blacks, something after the fashion in which other settlers wage war upon noxious wild beasts, the process differing only so far as the victims, being human, are capable of a wider variety of suffering than brutes. The savages, hunted from the places where they had been accustomed to find food, driven into barren ranges, shot like wild dogs at sight, retaliate when and how they can. They spear the white man's cattle and horses and if by chance they succeed in overpowering an unhappy European they exhaust their savage ingenuity in wreaking their vengeance upon him, even mutilating the senseless body out of which they have pounded the last breath of life. Murder and counter murder, outrage repaid by violence, theft by robbery, so the dreary tale continues, till at last the blacks, starved, cowed, and broken-hearted, their numbers thinned, their courage overcome, submit to their fate, and disease and liquor finish the work which we pay our native police to begin.

Aboriginal Demise

Through the nineteenth century most Europeans believed that "primitive" peoples had no future: they could not withstand the apparently superior civilization of the western world, and so were dying off. In Australia Aboriginal numbers were falling drastically through the nineteenth century due to the introduction of European diseases (and clothing), alcohol, warfare (as the Europeans imposed their settlement and "protection" upon the land), and demoralization. Even in the twentieth century Queensland politicians talked of the Aborigines as a dying race, doomed for extinction.


The Queenslander has taken his part as against the bloodthirsty scoundrels, officered by white men, and known as the "native police". In the northern colony there are two classes of blacks between whom there runs a distinct and appreciable dividing line. In the south of Queensland the average blackfellow is just as depraved and miserable as in New South Wales, for the few who survive come into contact with "civilization"; but in the Far
North things are otherwise. When the Palmer goldfield was opened the blacks were at first by no means hostile, and some white man gave them bread; but they commenced to spear horses and then the white man gave them lead. Since then there has been open war between the races, and there is hardly a man in North Queensland whose motto is not ‘see a nigger and “pot” him’. The blacks have been murdered by thousands, and, whether on the Palmer, Hodgkinson, Gilbert, Etheridge, or Coen fields, to say nothing of the pastoral districts, the white settlers’ policy has been one of extermination. Blacks are brought up from Wide Bay and Rockhampton to do duty as troopers, well mounted, armed with sniders, and taken out regularly on slaughtering expeditions by white officers. In several far northern districts it is by no means uncommon for residents to ask the native troopers to procure young blacks for them; and the writer has frequently seen a long string of native police filing into a township — some of them carrying in front of their saddles black children from two to ten years of age. Anyone in the troopers’ company a day or two before would have witnessed a wholesale massacre of human beings — a relentless violation of women. He would have seen the brains of the infant bashed out against a tree after its mother had been murdered. . . . And what is happening in Queensland now once happened every day in New South Wales. It is too late to talk of preserving the aboriginal race. It is and always was Utopian to try and Christianise it. Rum and European clothes have ruined the people who half a century ago were temperate and naked. The aboriginal race is moribund. All we can now do is to give an opiate to the dying man, and when he expires bury him respectfully.

Fisheries

Aborigines were sometimes engaged in the marine industries of north Queensland. For the Torres Strait bêche-de-mer fishing vessels Aborigines were normally obtained from the Batavia River district on western Cape York Peninsula. But Aborigines were also involved elsewhere, on vessels working along the Great Barrier Reef and between Cooktown and Townsville. The
following account tends to play down reasons why Aborigines might be pro-
voked into acting violently and directly.


A matter demanding serious attention with relation to the bêche-
de-mer fisheries of Northern Queensland is associated with the employment of native labourers. Of late years, and in the Torres Straits district more particularly, outrages committed by these labourers, in which the boat-owners or their agents have been assaulted and lost their lives, or the boats with stores on board have been stolen, have become so frequent as to paralyse the in-
dustry to a very large extent. In occasional instances it would appear that these outrages have been previously provoked by unjust treatment, or through the interference by the employers or their agents with the native women that accompany the family or tribe engaged as labourers. In the majority of cases, however, there is abundant evidence to show that the outrages have been committed with the simple object of obtaining loot, the many opportunities presented in gaining possession of a boat laden with stores proving an irresistible temptation to the uneducated native intellect. A circumstance which has contributed materially to the increase of these outrages of late years has been the impunity with which they have been committed. Not only have the originators of these outrages escaped punishment, but in many instances individuals known to have been associated with previous massacres and outrages have been re-engaged by other employers. Some essays at indiscriminate retribution on the native tribes, in which more often the innocent have suffered for the guilty, have been occasionally attempted.

Torres Strait Islanders

Europeans saw Torres Strait Islanders in a more favourable light than they did mainland Aborigines. This was mainly because the Islanders seemed more “civilized” by European standards, with regard to housing, gardening, and skills and crafts generally.

From these and other sources I learn that these people are strongly differentiated from our own mainland aborigines on the one hand and from the Papuans of New Guinea on the other, and, while in some respects approximating to some islanders of the South Seas, they still retain a marked ethnic individuality of their own.

As contrasted with our mainland aborigines they present a type of humanity advanced several stages in mental evolution beyond that reached by their continental cousins, as is evidenced by their habit of living in houses in settled communities, of cultivating the soil, and by their skill in agriculture, in the construction and navigation of canoes, and by the use of the bow and arrow. Owing to the efforts of the missionaries most of them have some knowledge of Christianity, and many can read and write their own language. It is not necessary to say more to show the difference between the two races and to make clear the fact that different methods of management are requisite in dealing with them; but although the great superiority of the islander is manifest, I incline to the opinion that sufficient racial affinity exists to justify the belief that island natives would prove valuable auxiliaries in civilising work on the mainland.

Problems on Cape York

In 1896 Archibald Meston visited various Aboriginal groups on Cape York, noting the effects of white contact. Some groups he found relatively unaffected: they were still leading a healthy, sound traditional life. But among groups which had had contact with other races engaged in the bêche-de-mer and pearling industries, a marked deterioration in Aboriginal welfare was apparent.


At present the pearl-shell boats are nearly all controlled and manned by coloured men; a heterogeneous mixture of Javanese, Malays, and Polynesians. I saw at least 100 luggers with not a white man on one of them. These men, as a class, are not fitted by either natural or acquired qualifications to come into contact with the mainland aboriginals — men, women, or children.
By the end of the nineteenth century a few Europeans were becoming interested in Aboriginal culture and sought to preserve some aspects of it, such as the traditional preparation for a corroboree. Here, an Aboriginal group from the Gulf of Carpentaria were ready for a display. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

One of the first effects on a black race of contact with a white one is to excite cupidity, involving degeneracy towards a social and moral depravity that even sacrifices the virtue of the women in order that the cupidity may be gratified.

It is a common practice for bêche-de-mer and pearl-shell boats to run down to some point on the coast where blacks are camped, send their boats ashore, and purchase a number of women, paying for them usually with flour and tobacco. These women are sent ashore before the boats depart. In some cases the women are taken by force, and in the disturbance that followed one or more of the men were shot. Before the boats were prohibited from taking native women on board for a cruise, the abuses were of a much more serious character. The pearl-shell boats are a mischievous nuisance to the Batavia River missionaries. Even on the morning of my arrival at Mapoon, by way of the Ducie River, when crossing Port Musgrave, I saw a lugger just leaving the anchorage off the open beach about a mile behind the Mission Station. She had anchored there on the previous night, sent the boats ashore, bought half-a-dozen women, took them on board all night, and returned them the next morning. Most of the blacks were away using the flour and tobacco
which formed one of the terms of contract. These practices are well known to the boys and girls on the Mission Station; and if the schoolgirls were not under proper control and guarded at night, the old men of the tribe would periodically dispose of them in a similar manner. These undesirable marine visitors sometimes leave a legacy of disease, and always a certain demoralisation against which the missionaries have to wage perpetual warfare. There is reason to believe that from Albatross Bay south to the Mitchell River, or even to the mouth of the Gilbert, and fifty miles eastward, the wild coast tribes allow their women no acquaintance or contact whatever with any outside race. These tribes are still in a perfectly wild state; active, strong, healthy men and women, with abundance of food. The inland tribes call them “mangrove people”, as they live chiefly in the solitudes of vast belts of tall mangroves along the creeks and rivers of the west coast. Their food is principally oysters, crabs, mussels, stinging rays, porpoises, dugong, and many kinds of fish. There are also fruits, yams, nuts, grass seeds, mangrove shoots, eggs of birds and crocodiles, besides bustards, emu, pigeons, wallabies, kangaroo, iguana, snakes, phalangers, bandicoots, etc., etc., in the open forest country, and lily roots and game in the swamps . . .

The Batavia and Ducie tribes are clean-skinned healthy people, with fine eyes and beautiful teeth. The men are chiefly of good physique, and many are 6 feet in height. Some of the women are tall and graceful, and others are small and slight. They are elegantly made, walk erect as palm trees, and are active as cats. In the dry season they have a fair supply of food, but in the wet months they are frequently half starved. If they spear a horse or bullock occasionally at such a period they are doing what most white men would do if they and their wives and children were suffering from hunger.

Bêche-de-mer Fishing

Violence seemed endemic in bêche-de-mer fishing in the Torres Strait/Great Barrier Reef area. Aboriginal labour was obtained by force or trickery.

The beche-de-mer business is a dirty one but profitable, and seems to possess attractions for the lowest class of whites and Manilla men, who have no scruples whatever in dealing with their black employees.

By a local arrangement among the Government officials at Thursday Island no mainland blacks can be shipped on the fishing boats until passed for the purpose by the officer in charge of police, but this and all other regulations are easily evaded by the following or similar methods: — a beche-de-mer man owning a small vessel will sail from Thursday Island with two congenial ruffians (usually coloured men of nondescript nationality) shipped as mate and cook for Cape Melville or the Batavia, Pine, or Coen rivers. He will then by presents and promises induce as many blacks, male and female, as he can carry to come on board, and with them he will make for any island as near settlement as he thinks safe. There he will land all the blacks except four or five males, with whom he will proceed to Thursday Island, get them regularly shipped, and then make all haste back to his depot, where he will pick up the temporarily marooned blacks and sail for his ultimate destination — some islet or lonely sandbank in the Eastern Fields, in the Great Northeast Channel, or far out on the Barrier Reef. Here he will erect his “smoke house” and commence real operations. Taking all the male blacks, he will sail to another sandbank perhaps fifteen or twenty miles distant, will there land them, and leaving them a small dingy in which to reach the neighbouring reef, where the beche-de-mer is to be collected, he and his mates will return to their headquarters, where they will revel in the society of the grass widows of the fish collectors, whom they will occasionally visit for the purpose of bringing in the fish obtained by them to the “smoke house”. Meanwhile the blacks will work patiently for a time, fed on a small allowance of “sharps” (an inferior kind of flour), and such fish as they can catch. Those that get sick die unrelieved and unrecorded, and they all live the hardest possible life, generally on the verge of starvation, and frequently in want of water.

They weary of this after a time, and cast about for means of returning to their country, when perhaps the beche-de-mer man and his mates will be suddenly tomahawked and thrown overboard, and the whole mob of blacks will return triumphantly to their country, where, having stripped and gutted the vessel, they will leave her on the beach to be presently found and towed into
port by the "Albatross". Or they will essay the voyage in the little
dingy, when they will in all probability be drowned and never
heard of, and they will even attempt escape by swimming. A

case occurred in 1889, in which two boys and a gin swam from a
beche-de-mer station sixteen miles from reef to reef till they
reached one near the Piper Lightship, where they were seen and
picked up and landed on the mainland by the lightship's boat.

Aboriginal Recruitment

Aborigines along coastal Cape York were "recruited" to work for the Torres
Strait-based boats that were engaged in collecting pearl shells and bêche-de-
mer. The recruitment was not always voluntary — bribery was generally used,
and sometimes force. Violent episodes were not uncommon, so that by the end
of the nineteenth century the government felt increasingly obliged to intervene
and try to regulate the labour situation. Aboriginal society (including their
traditional crafts) was disintegrating under the impact of this contact with
Europeans. At a Royal Commission, the Reverend Nicholas Hey, superintend-
ent of the Mapoon Presbyterian Mission, gave evidence.

Report of the Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Royal Commission, QVP 2(1908):693.

Are the natives increasing or decreasing in number? They are
increasing in number. I have kept a strict record for the last
fourteen years, which shows that the ratio of the birth rate to
the death rate is as one to three.

Are the natives physically fit for the work of swimming for
beche-de-mer and pearl-shell? On the whole the work is detri-
mental to them, but there are a certain number who are fit for
the work, and I think the life is congenial to them; but they are
exceptions. Taking it all round, working in any kind of boat is
detrimental to the natives. . . .

Some years ago men in charge of boats used to go to the
grounds and bring the natives away? The men in charge of
boats remained there for some days, sometimes for some weeks,
and lived among the natives, and by bribery induced them to go
away with them in the boats.

To whom were the bribes given — to the young men themselves
or to the old men? The bribes were given to the more influen-
tial members of the tribe, so that the relatives left behind were the persons who were benefited.

What was the nature of the bribes given? Flour, tobacco, and liquor.

Has that system proved detrimental to the interests of the natives? Of course, it has had a very detrimental effect on the natives — in fact, it has demoralised them to a great extent. The most able-bodied men, who were perhaps fit for the work, became parasites, and the weaker ones were put on board the boats.

Do they still continue their hunting expeditions for game? Occasionally they fish and hunt. In fact that is encouraged, because it is essential to their health that they should have an occasional spell in the bush.

Do you think it would be a good thing to have the whole of the recruiting of natives — not only on the Mapoon Reserve, but north of Mapoon also — carried on under the supervision of a Government official, instead of permitting men in charge of

Dispossessed and huddled in fringe camps, many Aborigines became dependent upon white society. The government made an annual distribution of blankets before the onset of winter — as part of Queen Victoria's birthday celebrations. Here, Aborigines in 1862 receive blankets outside the Brisbane Police Court (the former Female Factory). Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
fishing boats to go down the coast and come in contact with the natives? Outside the Aboriginal Reserve there is no supervision of the natives at the present time, and they are in a deplorable condition on account of the boats still continuing to call there, because, even if those men do not recruit, they live among the natives. I have visited the natives north of Mapoon up to Cape York, and have found that even their spears have disappeared, which shows that they make no effort whatever to provide any means of living on their own account, but are dependent upon the boats. The women are the only means of livelihood for the men. They use the women for purposes of prostitution? Yes.

The white man on the frontier was determined to "win the land", regardless of the former occupiers. Land must be used! Must be tamed! Must be cultivated! To the Aborigines this was a totally different world. They resisted stoutly, to preserve what they knew and loved. But they could not withstand the greater firepower of the Europeans, introduced diseases, the power of the state, the increasing influx of white immigrants. By the late 1890s the frontier of Queensland was said to be under control. There was no more need for the native police, no more call for policies of "dispersal": the Aborigines were sufficiently reduced to a small, subdued fringe group. For some Europeans, however, there was a nagging worry: perhaps European methods had been too effective. What was to be the future of the Aboriginal remnant?
Aboriginal Protection
Policy on the First Reserve

With a little government subsidization George Bridgman opened the first Aboriginal reserve, outside Mackay, in the early 1870s. This was meant to provide a "civilizing" experience for the Aborigines through work and education.


The operations on the reserve have been continued. There are now four camps or settlements, where areas of from one to six acres of land are cultivated by the blacks for the production of sweet potatoes, bananas, etc. On three of those places there are substantial slab buildings roofed with iron, used partly as stores, and also for shelter in wet weather. The blacks do not reside continuously at these settlements, going on occasional hunting expeditions, and often taking employment on neighbouring plantations during the crushing season, but they look on these places as their homes, and at such times usually leave a few individuals in charge.

When aboriginals are employed by planters and others, it is always with my consent and supervision, and, as a rule — to which, however, there are occasional exceptions — the aborigines in the Mackay districts are under command, and do not wander about the townships or closely settled areas.

In January last year, at the desire of the Aboriginal Commission, a school was established for the training and education of the male children; a suitable building having been erected in the proximity of the reserve, twenty boys between the ages of six and twelve were taken in hand as an experiment; they are fed partly by produce raised on the reserve, and partly by purchased supplies. To the present time they have made good progress in reading, writing, geography, and drill; many can read the ordinary school lesson cards in one syllable through, and write copies in round hand. None of the boys have left, and their conduct is generally good.

In reference to the condition of the adult blacks in the Mackay district, they, perhaps, perform more work, and are kept out of the town more than in other localities, but I am not able to report any perceptive improvement in their moral or social condition. . . .
In the same document A. C. Gregory (at p. 61) worried about the effects of giving an education to Aborigines.

There can be no doubt that both aboriginal men and women who had received a rudimentary education could, while single, easily find employment at fair wages — the men as stockmen on out stations, and the women as domestic servants in the more occupied districts. If they marry they are no longer eligible, as few persons would employ them when encumbered with families, while the prejudices of the majority of the white population would preclude aborigines from assimilating with the working classes, or their becoming tradesmen or small farmers.

With the ordinary occupations of civilised life close to them, they would be almost forced to return to the nomadic life of their fathers — unskilled in bushcraft and disgusted with the white man's civilization, which had not only proved useless to them, but prevented the acquisition of that knowledge by which their living was to be procured.

Civilizing Aims

Missionaries tried to "civilize" and Christianize the Aborigines, but generally they failed. The imposition of discipline and the regular habit of work were seen as the most efficacious ways of "civilizing the blacks"; and Aboriginal adoption of western ways, such as manner of dress, was applauded.


The fact that the missionaries see but little fruit from their labours does not therefore allow us to draw the conclusion that the Australian race is quite unsusceptible to religious influence.

In my opinion, an Australian native cannot be christianised unless he is brought up outside his own tribe from infancy. In such circumstances he has been found to be capable of considerable mental development. Many of the natives have learned reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, etc. It is even claimed that they acquire these accomplishments more rapidly than white
Government and mission policy through much of the twentieth century stressed the Europeanization of the Aborigines and Islanders. These two photos show an Aboriginal servant girl bedecked in European finery and some Weipa boys in Boys' Brigade outfits. Reprinted from QVP, vol. 3 (1912).
children, but that they also more quickly forget them again. They are also able to play cards, even "euchre", a game requiring considerable thought. A squatter in the far west informed me that when he forgot what day in the week it was he only needed to ask his black boy, who never failed to know.

The highest degree of civilisation attainable by the blacks is skill in the work to be done at a station. Women are usually employed in the house, and at each station two or three find work. They make good waiters, but poor cooks. As stock-men and shepherds the blacks are excellent, in this work sometimes even surpassing the whites. They are superb riders, and have a wonderful talent for mastering an unruly horse. On the other hand, they are unable to break a horse properly, and as a rule have very heavy hands.

Among the sheep and cattle the blacks are wellnigh indispensable at every station. They know every animal, and give it much better care than it can get from a white man. A black boy whom I knew was able to distinguish the footprints of the various horses belonging to the station. Some of them have great skill in making whips and bridles, in carving whip handles, and in doing other handiwork.

These civilised blacks soon try to acquire the white man's manners; they like to wear clothes, and they like to have their clothes fit nicely. Some even shave and wash themselves, use towels, and are perfect bush dandies. They soon acquire a very high opinion of themselves, of their ability, and of their importance. They look upon themselves not only as equally good, but as better than the white men. No man on earth is more proud than a black man on horseback, with good clothes on, his clay pipe lit, and his pocket full of tobacco and matches.

This "civilisation", which is quickly assumed through intercourse with the white man, does not, however, strike deep root, and the good nature which often accompanies their brutal qualities rarely wholly overcomes the latter.

A New Reserve Policy

Archibald Meston, commissioned by the government in 1894 to prepare plans for the improvement of Aboriginal welfare, thought that the "wild tribes" — those who had had little contact with Europeans — should be allowed to con-
tinue in their traditional lifestyle. Tribes affected by the European presence (and the policy of "dispersal"), however, needed government help and protection, so he suggested a reserve policy of isolation.


The aboriginals in immediate need of attention and assistance are those between whom and the pioneers there has been perpetual warfare. They could easily be conciliated and future trouble prevented.

Specially entitled to practical sympathy are the aboriginals scattered among the settled districts and wandering about the towns. They have lost their old habits and customs, abandoned their old hunting life, and descended gradually through various stages of degradation to a condition which is a reproach to our common humanity. They require collection on suitable reserves, complete isolation from contact with the civilised race to save them from that small section of whites more degraded than any savage; kept free from drink and opium and disease, the young people and the able-bodied taught industrious habits, and to raise their own food supplies; the old people being decently cared for, and receiving the modest amount of comfort they require, or all that is necessary in the declining years of their existence. Even acceptance of the "doomed race" theory can in no way absolve a humane and Christian nation from the obligations they owe to this helpless people, or our solemn duty to guide them kindly across the period which spans the abyss between the present and the unknown point of final departure. . . .

There is no prospect of any satisfactory or permanent good without the creation of suitable reserves, the establishment of "Aboriginal Settlements", chiefly, if not altogether, self-supporting, and absolute isolation from contact with whites except those specially appointed to guide them and control. These reserves would afford the only field on which the missionaries could effect work satisfactory to the blacks, the cause of humanity, and Christianity. The scattered tribes would be gathered together, and in that collected form, under a system of government adapted to their general character, they would present the most favourable field for a display of missionary zeal and the operation of any species of philanthropy or benevolence.

The gathering together refers only to those aboriginals who have been crowded out by encroaching settlement, and those frequenting the towns. The tribes occupying territory not re-
quired for settlement should be left alone and undisturbed. Two or three Missionary Stations among them, in suitable positions, would afford protection from unscrupulous whites and otherwise have a beneficial effect . . . .

That "Aboriginal Reserves" be created in South, Central, and North Queensland, where certain of the aboriginals can be collected to form a permanent home, and marry and beget children, and live happily, free from all contact with the white race, except those placed in charge to see that order is established, their allotted food supplies distributed, and teach them gardening and farming so as to make the reserves as far as possible, if not altogether, self-supporting.

This principle of isolation on reserves, and total exclusion of whites, has long been adopted by the Canadian and American Governments towards the Indians of both nations.

To keep our aboriginals away from contact with the whites, or that section with which they unfortunately mingle, is the most beneficial act of friendship within our power to bestow. It is also the only possible method of saving any part of the race from extinction.

Government Protection, 1897

In 1897 the government instituted a major reform of Aboriginal policy. By that stage the task of submission which the Native Police was enforcing was practically complete, so the force was reconstructed to fit in with more regular police operations. At the same time Archibald Meston had investigated the condition of Aborigines in the colony and noted how much their society was being debilitated, and even destroyed, by contact with Europeans. His answer was to remove and isolate Aborigines from this harmful contact and put them on reserves. In particular, the reserves would take those Aborigines who had succumbed to drink, opium, vagrancy, prostitution or other forms of antisocial behaviour (by European standards). Meston hoped that through this segregation Aborigines might be restored to his idea of their pristine, traditional state. To support his notions he put "fine examples of Aboriginal manhood" on display at exhibitions and other public occasions. The government also provided relief stations to supply food and tobacco, a scheme that had been started in the Atherton area in the mid 1880s to prevent food raids by hungry blacks; and the blanket distribution scheme that had been instituted
before separation was continued. As well as these government initiatives to protect the Aborigines and improve their conditions, different church organizations ran six mission stations.

MEASURES RECENTLY ADOPTED FOR THE AMELIORATION OF THE ABORIGINES

During the year 1897 two important innovations in the treatment of Australian aboriginals have been inaugurated. One consists in the creation of reserves on which they are entirely isolated from contact with other races; the second is represented by certain changes in the manner of working the native police in the North, by which they become an impartial tribunal entrusted equally with the defence of the whites and the protection of their countrymen. The latter chiefly affects the Northern tribes, between whom and the pioneer whites there has ever been more or less mutual hostility.

The native police system originated in Victoria in 1842; a sum of £2,675 for their expenses first appearing on the Port Philip Estimates for 1843. The first detachment on Queensland territory came over from New South Wales to the Condamine in 1848. These police were therefore engaged here eleven years before Separation. They appear on the first Queensland Estimates, where a sum of £10,216 is granted to cover the cost of three lieutenants, eleven second lieutenants, nine camp sergeants, and 120 troopers. Thence onward to the present year a Native Police Force has been kept up in Queensland, provision being made in the Estimates 1897–8 for 110 native troopers. Of these 68 are employed as "trackers" in conjunction with the white police. There are only 42 at present worked together in detachments, doing purely native police work, and these are all stationed in the Cape York Peninsula. The native police have, as a force, been protective always. That it has at times been severely retaliatory has laid it open to the charge of having been unduly aggressive and highly imaginative persons, without knowledge or practical experience, have frequently conjured up visions of wholesale murderous slaughter on the part of the native police merely for the purposes of contrast with unreasoning humanitarianism. The Commissioner of Police during an inspection tour last year in the Peninsula was dissatisfied with the native police system as he found it working, and it has under-
gone a complete reconstruction, with already highly satisfactory results. The native police in each district where their services are considered desirable are carefully instructed to protect the blacks from all forms of injustice by lawless whites, to warn them in an earnest and friendly manner against committing any offences on the settlers, and in case of an outrage by aboriginals to take special care to capture or punish only those who are directly responsible. The white officers in charge of native police have received imperative orders to see that this pacific and conciliatory policy is faithfully administered. They are also entrusted with the distribution of food and tobacco to the aboriginals as a satisfactory guarantee of genuine friendliness. The effect is already pleasantly conspicuous in the change among the aboriginals throughout the Cape York Peninsula.

The plan of feeding the blacks, along with a general policy of kindness and forbearance, has done wonders in a brief period to inaugurate a reign of peace and terminate hostility between the two races. The working of this system will be materially facilitated by each party of native police including at least one man belonging to, and speaking the dialect of, the neighbouring tribes.

While the Commissioner of Police is initiating this principle of protecting and improving the condition of the tribes in the more unsettled parts of the North, the system of reserves is being established to provide for the scattered remnants of the blacks in the older and settled districts of the South.

The first of these reserves is on Bogimba Creek, Fraser's Island, 36 miles from Maryborough. It comprises an area of 44 square miles, extending from the inner side of the island to the outer beach, a width of about 12 miles. The first blacks brought under this reserve system were 52 removed from Maryborough on the 24th February. The whole of these men and women were in a deplorable state of mental and physical degradation caused by opium, drink, imperfect nutrition, exposure, and disease. The death-rate among these blacks had been incredible. In two years 46 had died out of 105. After eight months on Fraser's Island there has not been a single death recorded among the 52, and all are in perfect physical condition, healthy, and happy. This also describes the condition of the others who have joined the settlement since February. Not one of these blacks has ever expressed the slightest desire to return to the mainland. The 25 Fraser Island men who were brought down to the Brisbane Inter-
national Exhibition in July were fair specimens of the males on
the settlement.

The first change to be effected on these reserves is the transi­
tion of all sexes into a healthy condition, and restoring their
proper sense of manhood and womanhood, independence, and
self-respect. After this they are required to face the problem of
doing all within their power towards their self-support.

The absence of agricultural land on the whole of Fraser's Is­
lank compels this settlement to regard the sea as the chief source
of food supply. From that they get dugong, turtle, fish, crabs,
and shellfish. From the forest they get honey, roots of ferns,
lilies, orchids, nuts of macrozamia, and several fruits and ber­
rries. They receive a moderate quantity of flour, tea, sugar, and
tobacco from the Government, by whom they have also been
clothed to the present time. They were also allowed beef occa­
sionally up to the 30th August. They are supplied with boats,
 fishing nets, hooks and lines. The area of fishing has no limit,
and they can hunt all over Fraser's Island.

A second settlement is being started at Durundur, 15 miles
from Caboolture Railway Station, on an area of 2,300 acres set
apart as an aboriginal reserve over twenty years ago. This
reserve is all fenced, is splendidly watered, contains several hun­
dred acres of excellent land, and is favoured by a particularly
healthy climate. It is intended to accommodate some of the
cost blacks, and also a number who will be brought down from
the West, kept clear of opium and drink, restored to complete
health, and gradually initiated to industrious habits. This
reserve possesses all the natural advantages necessary in making
the Durundur settlement self-supporting within a reasonable
time.

The third aboriginal reserve is the largest in Australia. It is
situated near Cairns, and extends from False Bay, in Trinity
Bay, south to the Mulgrave River, about 24 miles. This reserve
would be extensive enough to accommodate all the aboriginals
in North Queensland. It possesses boundless fishing resources,
an abundant supply of excellent water, and a large area of good
agricultural land. It is also isolated from all white settlers by a
lofty jungle-clad range, and forms an ideal reserve for Aborigi­
nals. At present it is occupied solely by Mr. Gribble, of the
Church of England Mission, and those blacks who are under his
protection. He has so far done his best with the funds at his
disposal.
At present there are six Mission Stations among the Queensland aboriginals. One at Deebing Creek, 5 miles from Ipswich; one at Marie Yamba, 60 miles north of Mackay; one near Cairns, on the shores of False Bay; one on the Blomfield River, south of Cooktown; one at Cape Bedord, 14 miles from Cooktown by water; and one at the mouth of the Batavia River, on the east shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria. All these stations, except that at Cape Bedford, are receiving a grant from the Government for the ensuing year.

The Deebing Creek Station provides a home and food for blacks varying in number up to 150. The expenditure of the Government grant of £470 is controlled by an Ipswich committee, of whom the Rev. Peter Robertson is chairman. The children on this station receive a plain public school education. Aboriginal labour is employed in clearing, fencing, and cultivating whatever portion of land is fitted to grow any produce. So far, on this station the blacks are free to come and go at any time, there being no restriction on their liberty. The great majority, however, are voluntary permanent inhabitants. . . .

In addition to the five Mission Stations supported by the Government there are fifteen stations for the distribution of food and tobacco. . . .

Blankets for the aboriginals in 1897 were distributed at 151 stations. There were 7,756 new pairs sent out, in addition to a surplus of 480½ from 1896.

Removal to Reservations

In the 1890s the position of the Aborigines in Queensland was becoming desperate: many had died, many more were dying. The report from Warwick that follows was typical of what was happening in other towns.

Warwick Argus, 24 September 1898, 2.

CLEARING OUT THE BLACKS

Acting under instructions received from the Home Secretary's Department, Major Moore has during the past few days had about thirteen aboriginals collected in the vicinity of town and
sent by rail to Brisbane, where they will be taken charge of by Mr. Protector Meston and sent to one of the reservations. The little party, who were under the temporary command of well known 'Paddy Perkins', represented practically all that is left of the once powerful Yoocum tribe, the original inhabitants of this part of the Darling Downs.

Condemned to Fraser Island

The reserve policy could be made to operate very much to the disadvantage of Aborigines. Places such as Fraser Island became like gaols, where "undesirable" persons could be herded.


The Q. Govt., alarmed at the general protests against the cruel treatment of the aborigines, passed laws recently 'for the aborigines' benefit', but handed over the administration of them to tied protectors, and to the blacks' worst enemies, the slave-owning squatter J.P.s and native police officials. These now have the power to deport to Fraser Island for life without trial any unfortunate who can be easily made out to be a bad nigger — if anyone covets his wife or children, or he claims a good-looking horse, or a police-gin as his wife. The methods employed are those of the slave-owner, to abduct, deport, and assign under permits, and otherwise, the aborigines to Fraser Island, the mission stations and employers, to work for a peppercorn wage. I have an experience ranging over many years, and, in my opinion, the aborigines never had such a bad time all round as they have had since this so-called 'protection' started. In the district where I am, no blacks are fed or given medical attendance, but there are many parents deprived of their children and driven off runs when found hunting for food, for no other apparent reason than that, if the parents or relatives hang about, the black-boys and house gins will run away. The blacks are allowed none of the 'rights of the subject'. I enclose a newspaper cutting showing that an aboriginal has got two months for leaving hired service!
The condition of the blacks, I contend, is practically that of slaves.

(The 1897 legislation limited for Aborigines many natural rights that Europeans ordinarily enjoyed.)

**Government Protection**

Legislation was also introduced in 1897 to protect Aborigines in employment but the provisions in respect of wages, for example, were not very stringent. Employers found they needed to pay only scant regard to the provisions. The legislation also sought to check the supply of liquor and opium to Aborigines. A system of (police) protectors was created which endowed them with considerable authority.

*QPD 78 (1897): 1541-43.*

Home Secretary Tozer: We have to make provision for protecting these blacks and securing them in some suitable employment. Of course they are not suitable for all kinds of employment, and we do not intend to bring them into conflict with the whites in that respect. Although we must regulate their employment in some way, we do not intend to make such regulations as we have in the case of other races, and provide for contracts being in black and white. I do not propose to have any such elaborate machinery as that, although I hope that in time the person who takes my place will make the system more perfect. For the present we intend to appoint their protectors, and I think if we make the police their protectors they will be much more inclined to do their duty, when they know they have a trust imposed upon them. That may be only a sentiment; but I think it will have a good effect. It will be the duty of the police to see that they do not get any liquor or opium, that they keep their blankets, and are not injured in regard to their children and their wives. If they keep them out of town they will protect the women from many of those vices which unfortunately are causing nearly all the trouble between the whites and the blacks. They will have to see that none of these contracts are made with these women for immoral purposes. We know that black women
are brought into stations nominally as servants; but their service is the service of immorality. . . . When a man wants the services of aboriginals the protector will explain to them the agreement under which they are going to work. There will not be a single word in it attempting to interfere with the rates of wages, or dictating whether they are to be paid in gold, silver, or copper. I would prefer that whatever is agreed to be paid is bona fide paid in whatever form may be most suitable for the aboriginal. Sometimes it may be clothing, sometimes food; but whatever the arrangement may be, the protector will see that they understand it, and that they get everything for which they are contracted. . . . I hope the result of this legislation will be to show the civilised world that however black may be the page of history in Queensland on account of the past, there is a bright page to be written, and that bright page will be written by the legislature in a determined effort to ameliorate the condition of the aboriginals.

Mr. Browne: I think we should see that these men do get wages. With all the cry against coloured labour, I do not think there is a white man in the colony who would offer any objection to the employment of the aboriginals. They have a right to be employed; a right to the first show to get a living, and if an aboriginal does a day's work on a station, a farm, or anywhere else he is entitled to a fair wage the same as a white man or anyone else. I do not think it is good enough to say that it is all right if these men get a bit of beef or 'bacca, or an old shirt or anything of that kind. If they are employed to work they should get a comfortable means of subsistence. . . .

The *Torres Straits Pilot* is speaking out straight on the subject — against the employment of aboriginals by kanakas, Manilla men, and others who are bigger savages than the aboriginals themselves, but who, being employed in the industry for a little time themselves, know the ropes, and are allowed to take the aboriginals away with them on the boats. The unfortunate aboriginals from the mainland are taken away by these aliens in the beche-de-mer and pearl-shelling boats and treated as they should not be.
Protection of Work and Women

By the beginning of the twentieth century the government was applying a new "protective" system wherein a more regulatory attitude was taken towards most aspects of Aboriginal life. Conditions of work, such as wages, were specified, as indicated in the following circular from the Northern Protector, Walter Roth, sent to all local Protectors in the northern district in 1903. Note the low wages mentioned.


Cases have been repeatedly brought to the knowledge of the authorities where aboriginals do not receive the wages to which they are entitled under their agreement, and though the difficulties attendant upon the various local Protectors ensuring the due payment of all labour is fully recognised, the present time is considered opportune for doing something to minimise the evasion of the law in this direction. It is the Minister's wish that a commencement be now made with all female half-castes and female aboriginals in permanent legal employment (i.e., under permit and agreement), and that in future the wages be paid to you every three or six months, as may be convenient (under the powers vested in you by the Aboriginals, etc., Act of 1901, section 12, subsection 2, and by section 13). With regard to the amount of wages to be paid in all future agreements, the following scale may serve as a guide:— Aboriginals up to 12 years of age, 1s.3d. per week (the minimum allowed by law); from 12 to 14 years of age, 2s. per week; over 14 years of age, from 2s.6d. upwards (according to the nature of the work, the capability of the employee, etc.). A good deal must be left to the discretion of the Protector. . . .

Please be good enough to deposit all wages received by you, in the names of the aboriginals respectively, in the Government Savings Bank, with yourself (the local Protector) as trustee. All moneys thus received by you will be accounted for through the Government Savings Bank, for which the necessary cashbooks, etc., have been forwarded you from the Audit Office. . . .

[Roth outlined the problems of securing proper work conditions for Aborigines.]

Care continues to be exercised in the issue of permits for
publicans to employ blacks — three hotelkeepers have been refused. In one instance, the police reports showed that the two gins were being harboured for immoral purposes; in another, the police reported the publican to be a cattle-stealer. . . .

In the course of my peregrinations, I have reason to believe that aboriginal women are on several Northern stations employed at cattle mustering. Personally, I am much averse to women doing this kind of work, especially when I believe that the practice is supplementary to concubinage, but the whole subject is one difficult to cope with.

I note also that comparatively young males — in some cases, almost children — are largely employed at horse-work. So long, however, as they are properly treated by reputable employers, I have raised no objections, recognising that in the long run it is far better to see them trained to some useful purpose than to have them continuing to wander in the bush as useless vagrants.

I was very much struck, also, in the Gulf districts, with the large amount of aboriginal labour employed on the cattle-stations. At Normanton, for instance, Inspector Galbraith showed me the application for permit received from a manager, acting on behalf of a bank, for ten males and eight females. On several occasions I have pointed out to managers that, while I naturally like to see aboriginals humanely treated and regularly employed, it seemed to me somewhat of a hardship that the work could not be given to the numerous deserving and unemployed Europeans of these and more southern districts. The reply has almost invariably been that such white labour is not obtainable, and even if available, that it is unreliable and too expensive. This last expression of opinion has generally constituted my argument why the payment of a minimum wage of 5s. per month is, to say the least of it, equitable, and one upon which I am determined to insist, but to which many employers, I regret to say, continue to object. Another factor that comes into operation here is that, though higher wages (from 10s. to 30s. etc. per month) may be here and there named in the agreements with males, I believe that in several cases the blacks receive comparatively nothing.

[Aboriginal women and children, in particular, were unfortunate victims of western society, and so came very much within the care of the Protector.] My sincere thanks are again due to the superintendents of the Yarrabah and Mapoon Missions for their continued willingness
to receive the little waifs and strays, as well as unprotected women, that are continually being sent them. On the other hand, it is only right that they as well as other mission superintendents, should be protected from abuse of their charity. With the general public, for instance, the opinion appears to be gaining ground — though I am exerting my utmost to destroy it — that these in-

European authorities stressed the virtue of hard work. Aborigines were encouraged to adopt European practices such as gardening even in the barren ground of the Mitchell River mission (top). Many destitute and unwanted Aborigines were brought into government stations, such as at Barambah (Cherbourg) (bottom), where help was offered to the sick and helpless at a primitive soup kitchen. Reprinted from QVP, vol. 3 (1912).
stitutions are being run for the convenience of employers, and afford them an easy means of obtaining or ridding themselves of their black labour. Mission stations are not registry offices for domestic servants, neither are they dumping grounds for blacks whose services their employers deem it inconvenient any longer to retain. . . .

[In the circular, Roth included a letter he wrote to a woman in Cairns.]

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 22nd October, re removing an aboriginal woman to Yarrabah, but note with surprise that you omit to make mention of the rather important particular as to whether she herself is willing or unwilling to go there. Your letter also appears to me to call for further comment. Having been in your service so long — twenty years — you have presumably obeyed the law, put the woman under agreement, and paid her wages. Has she any savings, or is she absolutely destitute? Your reason for wishing to have her removed is apparently because she has a child now. Am I to conclude that she is, therefore, of no further use to you? If she has been your faithful servant for twenty years, surely she has some claim on your indulgence in her days of trouble, and I am accordingly anxious to learn to what extent you, as a Christian woman, are prepared to help her. Because the poor creature has sinned according to our standard of morality — but certainly not according to her own — I decline (on this account only, of course) to make any recommendation to the Minister for her compulsory removal.

[The government was concerned to prevent “mixed” marriages between Europeans and Aborigines, and the Protector controlled marriage applications respecting Aborigines. Inter-marriage with other ethnic groups, especially Melanesians, was also regulated.]

My chief anxiety, however, has been in connection with the marriage of kanakas with our native females, in view of the federal legislation for ultimately deporting these islanders, a matter which I discussed with Commander Rason on his last visit to Brisbane. While realising the present social condition of affairs, I have had to guard the rights of the women themselves, equally with those of the kanakas they have been consorting with, and those of the aboriginals to whom they have been ‘betrothed’ or tribally belong. With the Geraldton kanakas, I
have received great and valuable assistance from Mr. Thomas, of the Queensland Kanaka Mission, and I cannot do better than quote some very pertinent remarks, more or less endorsed by the local police, in his letter to me of 5th November, 1903:—

“In every case the women have declared their desire for the official marriage, and also their readiness to accompany their respective husbands to their island homes when they have to return thither. . . . These women are all undoubtedly better off with the kanakas than with their own people. The aborigines only too often have nothing but blows for their women, besides being evidently always ready to sell them to any and every debased profligate that will pay for the service. On the other hand, with the kanakas they are wives. They are regularly clothed and fed, and lead decent lives, and not infrequently are brought by their husbands to school.”

Disease

Europeans introduced numbers of new diseases against which Aborigines had no immunity. Smallpox was one disease which wreaked great havoc on the population in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Tuberculosis and leprosy were also very troublesome, as were venereal diseases. Aborigines tended to believe that venereal and related disorders were caused by the sorcery or witchcraft of an enemy; because of the long incubation period there was nothing to suggest a causal connection between sexual contact and infection.


To arrive at any absolute conclusions as to the proportion of aboriginals suffering from venereal disease is a matter of impos­sibility. As far as can be gathered it is at present very prevalent in the North-western districts, and along the Peninsula coastline, especially on its lower Gulf shores, and, of course, is common in the neighbourhood of white settlement generally. At Cloncurry I reported 29th May, 1900, that the few remaining blacks are nearly all diseased; at Camooweal (27th June, 1900) that nearly all the 35 individuals in the local camp are suffering more or less from venereal; at Normanton, Dr. Rendle (25th
August, 1900) states that about half the blacks (out of a total of 176) are suffering slightly from the same complaint; at Mount Garnet, Dr. Shorter (3rd November, 1900) reports that the natives are reeking with syphilis, etc. Disease amongst the blacks is undoubtedly a source of danger to the whites. I have met with two cases in private practice where European children have been thus accidently infected with syphilis. People employing native women as nurse-girls, publicans engaging aboriginals to work at hotels, and employers of black labour generally are either ignorant or callous of the risks they run.

**Missions**

Apart from government efforts at “protecting” Aborigines, different church groups had taken a humanitarian attitude towards Aborigines as early as the 1830s, when Moravians set up a mission at Xion's Hill, and the 1840s, when Catholics tried at Dunwich. In the 1880s Lutherans followed with mission stations on Cape York. Other church groups soon became involved, especially in the far north where Aborigines were most numerous but were becoming demoralized under the impact of the frontier conflict there. Aborigines turned to the missions for food rather than spiritual nourishment. At the stations, some education was given and habits of work encouraged. But for the missions themselves, it was a struggle for survival.


**MAPOON (Batavia River)**

The general behaviour of the inmates continues good, and the seventeen reformatory children are, on the whole, doing well, though some of them require constant watching and careful supervision. I took the opportunity of attending school, where as many as eighty-five children, under the kindly care of Mrs. Ward, are receiving instruction which will be useful to them in their future lives. It is unnecessary to reiterate the Rev. J. B. Russell’s and Bishop White’s high opinion of the work which this lady is so conscientiously and satisfactorily carrying on. As the superintendent expresses it: — “The school seems to be the most important branch of work among the aboriginals; it is not
only that many of the pupils become Christians, but they also
learn gentleness, order, obedience, diligence, which is more
than unnatural to them.” In connection with the day school, a
large weekly sewing-class meets for the instruction of all the
girls and women in the village. The Government grant of £250 is
spent wholly and solely on the maintenance of these school
children. Additional payment at the usual rates is, of course,
received from the Department for the reformatory children.

At the present time the station finds permanent employment
for twenty-one adult males, who, in view of the recruiting tak­
ing place here for the beche-de-mer, etc., boats, have to be paid,
in common fairness, in addition to their clothes and mainten­
ance, a similar monthly wage of 10s. It is needless to say that
many more could be, and already have been, so employed at the
mission; but owing to the want of funds and the gradually in­
creasing price of flour (from 5s.6d. to 8s. per 50lb. bag) the sta­
tion work has been greatly curtailed. As an unfortunate result of
this state of affairs, I may mention that some ten or twelve boys,
who would have preferred employment on shore, have been
tempted to accept service on the boats. During the year there
were recruited for the beche-de-mer boats 133 boys, an increase
of ten over the number recruited during 1902. The acting super­
intendent writes: — “Although the change of life might do them
good sometimes, very often they return with broken health, or
they may be bitten with a shark. One boy was sent off from the
boat after five months working. His lungs seemed to be injured
very much. Some days afterwards he died here suddenly of
haemorrhage. Another was killed by a shark. . . . On the whole
the recruiting seems to do more harm than good.” . . .

I regret having to report that thirteen deaths of women and
girls, mostly of syphilis and consumption, have taken place at
the station; nine others died on the reserve. This is a rate of
mortality which, in spite of the unvarying attention given by the
missionaries to all matters of general sanitation, it would seem
impossible to cope with. Mapoon, for some years past, appears
to have been especially afflicted with consumption. During
April there was plenty of malaria of a peculiar type, i.e., accom­
plished with vomiting and dysentery, similar to that drawn
attention to by Protector Bennett, at Red Island and Cape
York.

Amongst improvements in the village, the single men’s dormi­
tory, built on high piles with iron walls and roof, is now almost
the first structure to command attention when, passing round Cullen Point into the bay, the settlement comes into view. Furthermore, three cottages have been entirely rebuilt, and six repaired. With regard to the latter, an excellent sign of social progression lies in the fact that the owners undertook the work entirely on their own initiative, and carried it through without assistance. Facing the whole front of the village street there is an avenue of cocoanut palms, two of which are assigned to every cottage. Attached to these thirty-one cottages are their own gardens, in which are here and there to be seen growing cocoanuts, pawpaws, sweet potatoes, rosellas, watermelons, pumpkins, beans, even bananas and pineapples. Unfortunately, the owners are not as a rule too keen on keeping them well watered.

WEIPA (Embley River)  [Extracts from the annual report of Rev. E. Brown, superintendent, presented to the Moravian Mission Board.]

On the whole, I think it may be said that during the year our people have been more inclined to settle here, even when not being fed by us, according to our monthly returns furnished to the Government, was seventy-six, the same as the previous year, made up as follows: — Children, 52; adults, 24. We were disappointed in not being able to feed more, [as] our garden produce was much greater than the previous year, but flour and rice were much dearer, and consequently the quantity we were able to purchase with our Government grant was nearly a third less. Thus it will be seen that things beyond our control regulate the number who can reside with us. It is only a question of providing for them to enable us to have a much higher number. The largest number fed on any one day was 194, though that does not represent the number who have been here, as some are coming and others going constantly.

The training we received for the medical part of our work has still continued to prove itself useful. For our people, who are of course our first care, a dispensary was opened in July, and we are thereby able to attend to their various ailments much more cleanly and expeditiously. It has a room attached, which can be used as a dressing-room, or in case of necessity a sick person might be taken in there for more constant attention instead of in the toolhouse as has been done formerly. In May, influenza again visited us, and, as nearly every man, woman, and child went down with it, we were kept busy for about a month attending to them. Seven cases terminated fatally.
The great event of the year, to the children, was the tea party, which took place on New Year’s Day. Although it was in the middle of their Christmas holidays, when they might have been enjoying themselves in the bush, fifty put in an attendance, and did justice to the good things provided. A week later, school re-opened with forty-eight pupils. The daily average attendance at school for the year was forty-nine. The total of names on the register was seventy-nine, but several of them are quite bushmen, whose parents belong to districts 30 to 60 miles away, and, consequently, do not come very often to the station. Seven new girls came to reside in the dormitory, bringing the number up to twenty-four. Part of the year the children have been working under more favourable conditions, through the introduction of home-made desks and benches. Having the former, they have been able to write in copybooks, in which they are making fair progress, and the latter enables them to keep their books cleaner than was possible when they had to sit on the floor. The lower classes are advancing toward the higher classes, and the highest class has made progress in the way of reading louder and clearer and with more expression. We have recently received a new set of more advanced reading books from the Government, which will be used when the school reopens after the Christmas holidays. During the latter part of the year, the school teacher has been absent on furlough, and Mrs. Brown and myself have carried on the school.

Adult classes have been reorganised: Mrs. Brown has one evening a week for women; Miss Schick another for the young men who know a little and the kanaka assistants; and I another for any men who care to receive religious instruction.

Manual labour has occupied again a great deal of time and attention, it being the chief means of keeping the people on the station. Our gardens gave us a return of about 5 tons of sweet potatoes besides other things. One garden of about 7½ acres requires a great amount of labour. Up till near the end of the year everything was done by the hoe, but latterly we have used a cultivator, a tooth-harrow, and a clod-crusher, with gangs of men or children pulling. We had hoped to employ horses at this, but owing to inability to finish fencing our paddock could not keep the horses near for the purpose. About two miles of post and rail fencing was erected around the paddock, and there, owing to shortage of rations, we had to call a halt for the present. Water-carrying from the lagoons to the station, about three-
quarters of a mile, takes a lot of labour all through the wet season, and at the end there is nothing but living people to show for it.

**Aboriginal Education**

Mission stations made efforts to educate Aborigines living in their midst, but only a limited teaching was given. This was partly because mission objectives were mainly to provide just enough education for religious purposes; furthermore, it was commonly believed that Aborigines were not capable of much education, and, conversely, other people feared competition from educated Aborigines. Education might also foment trouble. The following account relates to Hope Vale mission on Cape York.


School continues its progress satisfactorily; thirty-nine children are in attendance, and no trouble is experienced in maintaining discipline. Each child has three and a-half hours’ schooling daily, and I am glad to find that their hard-working teacher, Mrs. Schwartz, spares no pains, on every possible opportunity, in in-
culcating habits of attention, obedience, and cleanliness. With the present prices ruling for flour, etc., the Government grant of £250 is spent wholly and solely on necessary rations, so that any bought clothing is out of the question. Common decency, however, required that the children should have a covering of some sort, a difficulty which Mrs. Schwarz overcame by cutting up calico flour-bags, piecing them together, and herself doing all the sewing; during the past two years she has thus made some fifty pairs of trousers for the boys attending school, and several dresses for the girls. (It is true that the Lutheran committee, responsible for the late Marie Yamba Mission, have recently sent up a few bags of clothes, some of them secondhand; the latter, while very acceptable, cannot, however, be expected to last long). The children are, of course, learning their three R’s, and getting along capitally, but I cannot help, at the same time, recognising that the strain, coupled with all her other work, is becoming too great for their teacher to bear single-handed. Mrs. Schwarz’s salary as provisional school mistress is being raised from £60 to £100 per annum (the same as that granted at Mapoon), so as to enable her to obtain certain help which she already has in view.

In the course of a conversation with the superintendent as to the limits of the school subjects that should be taught to our Australian natives, I learn that he is in agreement with me in the view that no practically useful results can possible accrue by teaching our mainland blacks composition, fractions, decimals, or any other subjects that will in any way enable them to come into competition with Europeans. Of course, here and there a more intelligent child may be met with, whose mental powers it might, perhaps, be worth cultivating for future utilisation in infants’ classes, etc. A not unusual source of trouble, fortunately now, I believe, nipped in the bud, has been letter-writing by more enlightened blacks to mission inmates, with ill-concealed attempts at making them dissatisfied with their lot, as compared with the apparent freedom of the outside world.

**Miscegenation**

The half-caste problem was of concern to the government, and especially Chief Protector Bleakley, in the early decades of the twentieth century. The mixing of the “bloods” was frowned upon and Bleakley sought to ensure that
there was no inter-marriage of blacks and whites. However, offspring did exist from such unions, and there was also a sizeable mixed-blood population as a result of the cohabitation of Aborigines and other non-European peoples. These offspring were left in an anomalous position, fitting neither into white nor black society.


The problem of the increase of the half-caste population is a matter that in all States has caused grave concern. It is difficult to see how this social blot can be erased as long as the white and black races are allowed in contact, no matter how stringent the laws may be made. Only complete segregation of the black races, which is financially impracticable at present, or, as even suggested by some, sterilisation of the females, an absolutely unacceptable solution, will prevent the results of intercourse.

The efforts of this Department have in the past been directed to the checking of this evil, by sternly preventing miscegenation, as far as the limited machinery made possible. The marriage of whites and aboriginals, unfortunately not discouraged in earlier years, has been absolutely prohibited, and every encouragement given to these women to marry amongst their own race.

Regulations have been framed to ensure strict control of females in employment, keen prosecution of maintenance cases, and removal to settlements of women found to be promiscuous. Additional legislative power to deal with normal abuses and check procuring, trading and prostitution by the aboriginals themselves, has been provided in proposed amendments of the Acts and should, when approved, assist still further.

The above policy has naturally resulted in the mating of the half-castes, removed to the reserves, with other half-castes or aboriginals and the birth of half-caste children, but it is claimed that this is a less evil than the promiscuous intercourse of these crossbreeds with the lower elements of the white population.

In past reports the important question of the future of the crossbreed element has frequently been considered, on which considerable variance of opinion exists. One view — that they should be separated from the aboriginal class and educated for absorption into the white races — appears to overlook certain serious difficulties.

In this State probably not more than 30 per cent. are of European extraction, the others being of Asiatic or Polynesian breed. This latter element, or the progeny by their further cross-
breeding, already present a serious social evil, especially around certain Northern coastal towns, because of their freedom from protective control.

Of the European crossbreed element, experience has shown that the majority find the blood call too strong to allow them contentedly to separate themselves from their mother's people and aspire to a higher civilisation. Even the superior type and those with a preponderance of white blood, who are encouraged to uplift themselves, unfortunately, because of their social disabilities, are often forced to seek the companionship of the aboriginal or other coloured races.

Applications were made by 42 half-castes or other crossbreeds for exemption from the Aboriginal Protection Acts; but, after careful investigation of the claims as regards the character, education, intelligence and breed, certificates were only granted in 15 cases. Of these 8 were for complete freedom, the remaining 7 having conditions attached protecting the property of the candidate while on trial.


The crossbreed presents the most difficult problem. Measures to check the increase of them are just as important as action for the care of those now with us.

The halfcaste of fifty per cent. or more aboriginal blood rarely wants to be separated from the blacks, in fact, is far happier amongst his mother's people. He is not wanted by the whites nor does he want to be pushed into a society where he is always an outcast.

He should certainly be rescued from the camps and given the benefit of education and training, but will usually be happier if raised to this civilisation in company with the young aborigines of his own generation.

Even when brought up amongst whites, the halfcaste usually chooses to marry his own colour or even amongst the full-bloods and where they have been equally civilised, these unions are for the benefit of both sides.

If trained in useful trades, these young people can be made an asset to the great rural industries of the outback, which can absorb all such trained labour, whether brown or black.
Those with a preponderance of white blood or showing a capacity for bettering themselves should be given every opportunity and help to do so. They should be treated as special cases, as they embrace perhaps less than ten per cent. of the class.

These children should be removed from aboriginal associations, at the earliest possible age, and given all the advantages in education and vocational training possible to white State children, to minimise, as far as possible, the handicap of their colour and friendless circumstances.

To avoid the dangers of the blood call they should be placed where they will not come into contact with aboriginals or half-castes. In spite of this, however, some will doubtless drift back and to avoid worse evils it may be advisable to allow such to marry back.

Barambah

In the mid-1920s the largest government reserve was Barambah, which provided accommodation for 600 to 700. The following rosy picture by the journalist Spencer Browne ignores the social, psychological and economic problems that festered in such settlements.

R. Spencer Browne, “Preserving the Aboriginals”, BC, 16 October 1926, 16.

Barambah has been greatly improved. It has a very fine hall, a beautiful hospital equipped on modern lines, a State school, general administrative buildings, and the latest accession is a big two-storied building, which is a girls’ club or home, really an industrial club — the word ‘home’ has rather a sinister meaning nowadays — where coloured girls may live under very comfortable and elevating conditions, and where they are taught domestic duties, such as the economy of a household, cooking, laundry work, sewing and so on. They have a sympathetic matron and assistants, and an aim is to fit the girls for domestic service; but the paramount object is to fit them for wifehood and motherhood — to become partners and helpers of the men of their own race. . . . The men at Barambah work on the land producing food and fodder crops, and in the dairy, at wood getting, and in the sawmill; but a great many take outside work, and some of
The idea of protection and paternalism was enshrined in official Aboriginal policy at the beginning of the twentieth century. The blanket handouts continued, as in this scene at Ravensbourne (top). Even vice-regal visits were made to Aboriginal settlements, such as on the occasion pictured at Barambah in 1912 (bottom). Reprinted from *QVP*, vol. 3 (1912).
these, just like white men, leave their wives and families at home while they go out to earn cheques. At Barambah last year there were 958 engagements, including 800 casual jobs, and of course a proportion was of women and girls. . . .

Wide streets radiating from a public square are planted with avenues of trees, and for each family is a neat, well-built weatherboard cottage; each of the newly wedded couples having a comfortable three-roomed little home. The idea is to develop the outlook, the psychology, of the people, and so far there is evidence that they are rising to the situation. The aspiration is for a comfortable home, a competent wife, and an industrious husband, and the development of appreciation and of a state of dignity.

The Example of the Islanders

Bleakley, "Can Our Aborigines Be Preserved?", 75.

The fine races of the Torres Strait Islands, who were once headhunters and whose tribal life was long ago destroyed by the invasion of the pearl fishers and traders, have, under the system of protection and assistance afforded them by the Government, completely rehabilitated themselves. The wisdom of the policy adopted, preserving to them sacredly their island and home waters, has shown itself in the results.

These island communities, numbering 3500 people, are now living a civilized, well ordered life, entirely self supporting and self governing. The only cost to the Government is that of staff for supervision.

They have their own fishing fleet, trading store and boat-building slips. Those not employed fishing cultivate gardens and breed poultry and pigs.

They govern themselves by their native Courts, with Councillors and police chosen from the elders of the village.

They have their own schools, staff as far as possible with trained native assistant teachers, and are ministered to spiritually by native clergy trained at a native Theological College under the Anglican Mission.
The people still live a picturesque native life, building their house, as in the old days, from native material, but on improved hygienic plan, and laying out their villages on attractive and orderly lines. The native language and many of their customs, dances and songs are still preserved.

The idea has been not to make poor imitation whites of them but better natives.

Aboriginal and Islander legislation, 1939

In 1939 the Labor government passed two Acts, which separated Torres Strait Islanders from the system that pertained to mainland Aborigines. The Acts also afforded a little more freedom and some extra rights to Aborigines and Islanders under the charge of the government. At the same time the legislation was still marked by a heavy strain of paternalism, and many departmental and police controls and restraints were still exercised over the lives of the people. There was still a very strong sense of white racial superiority.


Secretary for Health and Home Affairs Hanlon: As most hon. members are aware, the aboriginals of this country have received a very bad deal indeed from the white people who took their territory. The conscience of Australians generally has been sufficiently aroused to make them want now to do what they can for the remnant of the race.

The previous aboriginal legislation referred to all our coloured people as aboriginals irrespective of whether they were Torres Strait islanders, mainlanders, or half-castes. We propose to deal with the Torres Strait islanders under an entirely separate Act because they have proved that they are capable of doing a great deal for themselves and do not need the strict control that is exercised over the mainland aboriginals.

By this Bill we aim at not only the protection from abuse of the mainland aboriginal but also the preservation of the remnant of the race. We have realised that it is no good whatever to treat the aboriginal as a kind of museum piece, or, in the way that one writer referred to, as “easing the bumps along the road to the cemetery”, but to endeavour to make him earn his own live-
lihood and recover a little bit of pride of race and confidence.

By this Bill we propose to eliminate the half-caste from control unless a court places him under the control of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals. . . . Furthermore, on each of my visits to the islands, I have been requested by the islanders to have them taken from the jurisdiction of the protectors under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, as they object to being regarded as aboriginals. There are social grades even there, the islander regarding himself as being superior to the mainland aboriginal. The question whether our mainland aboriginal would not have done as well as the islander if he had been given the same opportunity is a matter of opinion, but the islander has had greater advantages than the mainland aboriginal, inasmuch as his territory has been preserved to him. All of those islands are reserves upon which no white man can trespass without the permission of the protector of aboriginals, and, consequently, the islander has had his gardens and fishing left to him, while the mainlander has had his natural means of living taken from him. The mainlanders have not only declined in numbers, but have deteriorated in build and are of a much poorer type to-day than the islanders. Under a separate Act the islander will be given some small control of his own local affairs.

The title of Chief Protector of Aboriginals is being altered to that of the Director of Native Affairs. In addition to having the direction of the settlement associated with church missions on the east and west coast of Cape York Peninsula, he will have the direction of the aboriginal industry in the Torres Strait, which has reached large proportions. Until last year, when for some reason the price of shell collapsed, the islanders had been able to maintain themselves and to contribute something towards the destitute mainlanders. We had to go to the aid of the islanders owing to that collapse in prices last year, but it is expected that they will soon recover, and when they again receive a good price for their product they will be self-supporting. That was one of the most pleasant features of the administration. It is hoped that that position will soon be restored. On the other hand, the mainlander has to be helped and protected, and taught to live in competition with white people. . . .

We are all inclined to think that because we take an aboriginal kiddie away from school and teach him only the few things that he can glibly apprehend he should measure up in capacity to the white people. We have to realise that when this country was in-
vaded by the white race the aboriginal was about a million years behind the European, and was still entirely in the food-gathering age. He had not reached the stage of human development where he provided for his food requirements ahead. He did not plant anything or plan anything either a day or a week ahead.

This Bill is designed more for the preservation of the race than the mere protection of the aboriginal from abuse. The legislation of the past was designed merely to protect the aboriginal from the kindly spirit of those who thought it necessary to sell him opium and rum — that is, to prevent the white people from abusing or destroying his race. Now we have reached a stage when we can see an opportunity of preserving the remnant of the race in the Gulf and far northern districts by giving the necessary assistance and encouragement to those missions that are working so hard for the maintenance of the existence of the aboriginal.

Quite a large number of aboriginals are at work on contract employment on stations and other industries in the North. We have also aboriginals on our aboriginal settlements at Cherbourg, Woorabinda, and Palm Island and the Anglican mission at Yarrabah near Cairns. The Yarrabah mission is particularly valuable inasmuch as it has taken in the broken-down section of the aboriginal community, those who are incapable of looking after themselves — the aged and the sick.

[Wages are fixed] by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, subject to the approval of the Government. The local protector must see that the scale rate of wages is paid into the savings bank account of the aboriginal employee. The local protector must also protect the kindly white man from robbing the aboriginal of his wages. He might be inclined to sell him an old gramophone, a gold brick, or liquor. There are any number of white men who would do so. The local protector has a very unenviable task and meets with an immense amount of criticism, because he will not allow the aboriginal to be got at when he desires to draw a few shillings of his savings from the bank in order to pay for the ordinary necessaries of life.

Whatever he wants the money for, the protector has the thankless task of finding out what he is going to do with it, and he then has to say to the storekeeper, the publican, or some other kindly person that the aboriginal cannot have that money. That is why numbers of letters often appear in the Press about
the aboriginal’s being robbed by a hungry department that seizes his savings. . . .

It must be understood that the slaughtering of the native races of Australia — the callous manner in which the natives were destroyed by the white settlers, or invaders, as they could be termed, is one of the blackest pages in our history — was actually due to misunderstanding. We often hear of the atrocities that were perpetrated by the natives, but in actual fact the natives of Australia were a very kindly people who were not by nature inclined to be cruel to anybody or hostile to the strange white invaders. As a matter of fact, in almost every incident in Australian history where white men have become lost in the bush or cast on her shores we hear nothing from the survivors but stories of the kindness of the natives to them, their care of them while they were sick or weak, and their help until they reached civilisation again.

A good deal of the trouble, I say, was caused through lack of understanding. The aboriginals lived entirely by hunting and gathering native foods. The white people settled in Australia for the purpose of raising stock. . . .

The greatest evil imposed on the aboriginal was the introduction to them of the diseases and evil habits of the whites. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs played havoc with the native population, as did the diseases that in general the whites manage to survive because of a very strong resistance acquired through the centuries but which nevertheless take their toll of even them. Tuberculosis is a disease that takes toll of the white races despite the fact that they have attained a certain resistance and immunity to this disease. Then there is venereal disease. The white races have greater resistance to these diseases than the native races and consequently they have played havoc with the black population. Then there is leprosy and granuloma and other repulsive Asiatic diseases that have also taken their toll. . . .

The Chief Protector gives in round figures the estimate for the mainland of Queensland as —

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<td>Full-blooded aboriginals</td>
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Of the 4,500 half-castes, some 1,500 will not be under the control of the department. The bulk of them are already free on exemption certificates issued from my office. The 3,000 half-castes who will be left under the control of the department are those who are living on native settlements and with aboriginal tribes.
In Queensland our aboriginal reserves total 6,000,000 acres. I do not want hon. members to think that they are 6,000,000 acres of choice farm land. In keeping with the attitude of the whites towards the aboriginals, there has always been an urge to take the best land from them. I have had to resist agitations for the removal of the aboriginal settlement from Barambah Creek, simply because there is excellent farm land — which the white people desire to exploit — in the Barambah Creek settlement. I do not subscribe to the belief that we should be kind enough to the aboriginal to segregate him in the desert where he must simply die out for want of food. . . .

Nicklin: After all, the aboriginal, if handled in a proper manner, can be made into a very valuable citizen. We all know how useful aborigines are on cattle stations. Encouraging them to have their own herds and embark on pig breeding as well as growing their own vegetables will have a beneficial effect upon them as well as increasing the products of the State. In those settlements in which saw-mills have been established we have seen how readily the boys adapt themselves to the work, and in those places in which trades are taught, what excellent tradesmen they have become.

I agree with the Minister that the aboriginal is by no means a coward. I had experience of aboriginals in the A.I.F., and quite good soldiers they made. When their stamina is built up with good food they become excellent soldiers. . . .

Jesson: The proposed Bill provides for the giving of a measure of self-government to the Torres Strait islanders. The object is to give them a better understanding of themselves and their own problems and of our feeling towards them. . . .

Some months ago I visited Palm Island, where I investigated many matters concerning the welfare of the aboriginals. I found that the place had been well cared for. Credit is to be given to the people carrying on that work. On visiting the school, I was struck by the number of children who could almost pass as whites. As a matter of fact, I have seen many Northern children browned by the sun who could easily have been sitting alongside some of these children without showing any marked difference. However, the children there have to go into the blacks' camps, while the white children on the island have a separate teacher and study in a separate part of the school building. Quite a number of half-caste and quarter-caste boys and girls, of 10 and
12 years of age, were present at the school, and you see a look of bewilderment in their eyes. They could not understand why they should be separated from the white children. . . . I think that the Government might go even a little further in their humane treatment of the aboriginals and see if it is not possible to remove these near-whites from their parents and have them adopted by white people. The quarter-castes, or the near-whites, could be readily absorbed into our white population.

**Persistent Racism, 1940s**

In 1946 Queensland politicians still talked of Aboriginal inferiority and extinction. Consequently, they talked of ways of protecting and preserving Aborigines, and of finding some form of employment for them, as second class citizens.


G. Devries: My concern is to see that the native labour is educated to the extent that the aboriginal becomes a useful citizen. I do not say that he should be placed on the same level as the white man and I do not for a moment think there are many in this Chamber who believe that that should be so. I do not admit for a minute that the nigger is as good as I am. The fact is that he is a human being and he is entitled to that measure of respect which helps him to overcome his inferiority complex and to become an asset to the nation. . . .

I hope that the aboriginal race is never exterminated — and I do not think we shall live to see the day when it does disappear — but I cannot agree to allow natives to intermingle freely and unfettered with the white community. We know what a gigantic problem faces America with the negroes today. Fortunately for this country the numbers of our natives are small. . . .

I know that [in the shearing sheds] they got the full award rate and that they were not exploited. It is my experience that the average employer, in either cattle or sheep, gives them fair treatment. After all, the native is a very hard subject to handle; you cannot handle him quietly. I have seen the treatment that policemen have given them, not because they desire to be cruel but
because they wish to demonstrate to the natives that they, the policemen, were their masters. If they had not done that, then the native would have assumed an air of equality or superiority; he would have cast off his inferiority complex. . . .

Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, T. Foley: We do not employ any virile type of aboriginal on Woorabinda (an Aboriginal reserve). Such men are sent to employment on stations throughout the State. We do not want them on the settlement [reserve] because they cost us so much a head when they leave one job sitting down on the settlement waiting for a new employer. Our job is to find young virile men skilled in station work to go out to employers. The men we usually employ in the settlement are those with some disability. . . .

E. Decker: The black men are very useful to the squatter and the pastoralist, but I do not place the black fellow on a level with the white man. I do not think the aboriginal will ever have the mentality to reach the same standard as we whites have attained. . . . We have evidence that over the years there has been a gradual decline [in Aboriginal population] and that eventually the race will disappear. The best we can do is to preserve the race as long as possible and we do this on our settlements. . . .

After all, money is not what these natives want. They do not value it. All they want is comfort in life and if we try to provide comfort and do everything we can to care for them we have a right to use them as we think fit under the conditions we lay down in a particular settlement. After all, the settlement is not an employment agency, it is an attempt to do something in a humane way to preserve the race. I agree with previous speakers that this State has nothing to worry about in its treatment of the natives. When we examine what the Commonwealth is doing for the Northern Territory natives and what the other States are doing we can be proud of the fact that what we are doing stands far above all others.

Mineral Development at Weipa

The discovery of extensive reserves of bauxite at Weipa created problems for the Aborigines. For years a church mission had operated in that remote area,
which was long assumed to be of no use for white settlement or development. However, when the ground was found to contain valuable minerals the area's significance changed almost overnight. A large mining consortium was given permission to develop the bauxite reserves, which brought in both much money and outsiders. A service town was built, the environment disrupted. There was no room for the mission station as against the needs of land, minerals and development. H.W. Noble, minister for Health and Home Affairs, gave this answer to a question about the future of the mission Aborigines.

QPD 218 (1957): 316.

1. The long-range policy of the Government, and, in fact, of all people interested in the care, protection, and development of our aboriginals is the final and complete assimilation of the aboriginal into the general community. The more immediate policy as regards any aboriginal reserve or mission on which valuable national assets are discovered, and the development of which should proceed in the interests of the whole of the people of the State, and where such development makes necessary the removal of the reserve or mission, is that the reserve or mission shall be placed in a no less advantageous position elsewhere both as regards the land and developments. An example of this policy in practice may be seen in the contemplated removal of the Weipa Mission Station to Aurukun. Lengthy and numerous conferences were held with both the Company concerned and the Mission authorities. As a result of these conferences, the Mission authorities agreed that it was to the advantage of those of the 150 inhabitants of Weipa who would not be taking up employment there, that they be transferred to Aurukun. The Company on its part undertook to provide accommodation and amenities for those remaining in Weipa, and to provide at Aurukun suitable building for the people transferred from Weipa.

2. All informed people who have the interests of the aborigi­nals at heart realise that one of the greatest problems to be over­come in the assimilation of our native people is to provide or find for them suitable employment within reasonable distance of the home settlements and missions, particularly in the remoter areas of the State. Further, it is accepted by all with the interests of Australia at heart, that the development of the far Northern portions of the State is not only desirable, but, from a defence point of view, absolutely necessary. Both from a
humanitarian, as well as a national point of view, it is essential that our native peoples be not kept forever segregated as interesting museum pieces. Having these facts in mind, I would be indeed surprised if anyone with more than a superficial knowledge of, and interest in, our native peoples, opposed the developments that are taking place in the Cape York Peninsula area.

After further negotiation between the government, the mining company (Comalco) and the mission (Presbyterian), certain changes were made, including the decisions not to remove the Aborigines to Aurukun (although they remained on a greatly reduced reserve), and to make no payment of compensation to them. H. W. Noble again:


There is no proposal that the Weipa Mission should be transferred from its present site, and, as pointed out previously, the amount of land that will be available to them as a reserve, is more than sufficient for their requirements. It could then be argued that having suffered no loss there would be no claim for compensation. However, the company has undertaken to provide modern homes on the mission settlement to replace the native houses that are there now, and, in addition, to provide a building for a Trade Training School. I have also undertaken the provision of equipment for that school. The result is, therefore, that the people of Weipa will benefit to a great extent from the proposed arrangement.

Assimilation

Through the twentieth century government policy moved from protection to assimilation — fitting the Aborigines into the European mould without any serious regard for separate Aboriginal identity or integrity. The government was pleased to find Aborigines moving into “conventional housing” and the state government gradually accepted the federally inspired move towards payment of full award wages (the federal government was setting a more active Aboriginal policy than Queensland). White standards were expected, for example, in education, and it was required that Aborigines aspire to those levels.
Only limited regard was given by the government to the preservation and functioning of Aboriginal life — the Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act was passed in 1967. The protective, controlling hand of the state was still evident.

The year under review [1968–69] could well be regarded as the most significant and historic in the development of Aboriginal people, not only in Queensland but through Australia because of the particular participation by the Commonwealth in this field.

Since first recorded Departmental activity in 1904, the people of Queensland have borne the burden and the cost of extending to Aboriginal Queenslanders opportunity of participation and prospects of progression as fellow Queenslanders and it is indeed rewarding to find that after so many years of particular effort not only are the Aboriginal people themselves recognized as fellow citizens of Australia but practical assistance is forthcoming.

To supplement Queensland's State allotment of funds of $5,500,000 annually, initially the Commonwealth made available to Queensland the sum of $1,450,000 as unmatched capital grants in the specific fields of housing, education and health. Whilst it is reasonable to expect that these fields will extend as a pattern of policy developments at Commonwealth level, there is no doubt that this practical assistance will provide the stimulus which should encourage Aboriginal Queenslanders to project themselves as members of a single Australian community.

The housing grant enabled a considerable number of established homes to be acquired within the normal residential areas of country towns as well as new homes being provided in more isolated centres.

The opportunity to purchase established homes is of particular importance because Aboriginal tenants who occupy these homes have not only been provided with the opportunity to show but have in fact shown during a period of occupation that they are quite able to enjoy and maintain conventional homes and surrounds at a level compatible with the development of the street and suburb of their residence at a standard that the premises are not distinctive from others in the street in any way.

The Aboriginal people, particularly those of the Aboriginal Reserves, are becoming increasingly aware of their political significance, so much so that it is recorded an Assisted Aboriginal
Regardless of the rhetoric, real improvements in the living standards of Aborigines changed only very slowly through the twentieth century. These two photographs show Aboriginal dwellings in the late 1920s (top) and early 1970s (bottom). Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane; bottom photograph held by author.
Queenslander, Ernest Hall, of Weipa, nominated as a candidate in the State Election for the Cook Electorate.

A Brisbane resident (not an Assisted Aborigine) Mrs. K. Walker, also nominated and stood for a city electorate.

Although neither candidate was successful, it is of practical benefit to all Aboriginal Queenslanders to have from within their numbers, persons who are ready and able to nominate and conduct a political campaign with the vigour and enthusiasm significant during the last election. . . .

It is accepted from reliable records that numbers exceeding 20,000 are living as ordinary members of the general community while the Department has a population record of the remainder who live as sponsored people in community and/or country areas and who now number 30,852, including Torres Strait Islanders. . . .

The Department's policy continues to be aimed towards assimilation of Aboriginal and Islander Queenslanders in the manner of living enjoyed by others.

At the same time it can be appreciated that a percentage of the indigenous people may, of necessity, require to remain sponsored by the Department. Particularly this has reference to the aged and infirm and numbers of others who require some sponsorship, and they will, as they desire and require, remain sheltered in Government and Church sponsored communities.

The implementation of policy generally, however, is towards assimilation of the majority without particular loss of identity. The aim is to foster within the individual Aborigine and/or Islander a desire to live as an individual, choose his own way of life and accept the responsibility pertaining to his own family management. . . .

The Pastoral Industry continues to be the largest and most stable employer of Aboriginal Queenslanders and it is appreciated by all people with a knowledge of the industry, that throughout the years the Aboriginal people have earned for themselves a reputation of being efficient and loyal employees in stock work.

It had been mentioned last year that previous clauses, which excluded Aborigines from the Station Hands' Award, are now deleted and as in all other industry, Aboriginal stockmen are entitled to participate and enjoy the full benefits of the Award as indeed a great many have been doing for a number of years.

The response by employers to the claims for Award rates of
pay and working conditions in the Pastoral Industry as far as sponsored Aboriginal employees are concerned, is good.

[Some assisted Aboriginal workers were still being paid less than the Award rate.]

Unrest on Reserves

Aboriginal reserves scattered around Queensland were the scene of much tension. The community of Palm Island, where about 1,000 Aborigines were housed, saw frequent disturbances. Aborigines felt deprived of civil rights and opportunities, and resented their second class status. They could be removed from the island by official decision; they were not necessarily subject to the regular process of the law. The following incident was symptomatic of problems facing Aboriginal communities.

_Townsville Daily Bulletin, 12 June 1957, 2._

There had been no damage caused and no violence took place during the reported outbreak of a disturbance at Palm Island, Sub-Inspector J. T. Cooke said by telegraph from the aboriginal settlement on Tuesday afternoon.

Sub-inspector Cooke was in charge of a party of police, which went to Palm Island by high-speed R.A.A.F. crash launch early on Monday evening.

The superintendent of the settlement (Mr. R. H. Bartlam) had asked for assistance by 6 p.m.

It is understood a disturbance was threatened by some of the aborigines on the island, when one native was to be transferred elsewhere.

Sub-inspector Booke said the reason the police party was sent to Palm Island was because it was feared the transfer ‘might develop into something’.

_Townsville Daily Bulletin, 14 June 1957, 2._

Seven handcuffed Aborigines were brought ashore by police at Townsville on Thursday after having been transported by a R.A.A.F. crash launch from Palm Island.
Three squads of police, totalling 20 men, had gone to the settlement earlier in the week in response to a request for assistance on Monday by the Superintendent (Mr. R. H. Bartlam). . . .

In an early morning operation on Thursday, police rounded up seven aborigines for transport to the mainland under a removal order. The operation passed off quietly before five o'clock.

_Townsville Daily Bulletin, 19 June 1957, 2._

Twenty-five Palm Island aborigines left Townsville under police escort on the Brisbane mail train last night.

They were removed from the island by police in a 'dawn raid' last Thursday. Six of the aborigines are under removal order. The other nineteen are members of their families.

Three of the families will go to the Cherbourg settlement (Murgon) and the remainder to Woorabinda, near Rockhampton. A police escort of two sergeants and two constables is accompanying them on the trip.

A police spokesman said that the 25 aborigines had been kept in the Townsville watchhouse until their departure.

Another incident occurred on Palm Island at this time, although it was said to be unrelated to the above removal incident.

_Townsville Daily Bulletin, 15 June 1957, 2._

Four Palm Island aborigines, who were each sentenced to six months' imprisonment in the Townsville Court of Petty Sessions on Friday on two charges of stealing, told the magistrates they had committed the offences so they would be brought to the mainland 'to get a fair trail'.

_Palm Island_

In 1971 Gordon Bryant, a federal Labor parliamentarian, visited the Queensland Government's Aboriginal settlement of Palm Island; he was accompanied
by members of the Aboriginal Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.


The Committee believes that the isolation of this island, resulting from lack of transport and the provisions of the Act requiring permission to visit the island, has seriously inhibited the development of the community.

The first sight of the island is depressing. Although the situation is basically an attractive one, the housing has improved very little in the last ten or twelve years. Many of the houses are poorly maintained, and general planning of the community seems to ignore most of the principles upon which housing development takes place in other Aboriginal communities.

Although the State school is staffed on a more liberal scale than is the case in other Queensland schools, educationally there is little real effort being made to tackle the problems of largely under-privileged children being trained to live in a relatively foreign environment. The infant school procedure for the teaching of reading seems to be outmoded. The staff should have the advantage of being specially trained for the task. Generally speaking the procedures inside the school, being no doubt the same as those in most Aboriginal schools, particularly in Queensland, seemed to be both authoritarian and inflexible.

The resident manager and his staff have an absolute authority over the Aboriginal inhabitants which ought not to be tolerated. The administration of justice on the Island has been placed in the hands of the Island Council for the purposes of minor misdemeanours. However, a minor misdemeanour can end up in a prison sentence of up to fourteen days in a prison which is described by one of the Committee as the worst in Australia. It is a series of cells, eight in number, about 6ft. by 8ft., made of concrete and surrounded by an iron fence.

The Committee finds it difficult to understand the need for a prison on an island such as that. The evidence is that for such things as drunkenness, or even perhaps just heavy drinking, or gambling, or, as the term had it, being found in a compromising position with a person of the opposite sex, can incur a relatively heavy sentence.

It is probably an exaggeration to say that Aboriginal people on Palm Island have no civil rights, but they are inhibited and
controlled to such an extent that it's difficult to say they have a right to anything in particular. Some of the powers which the manager has are not enforced, but they can be. These include control over bank accounts, family life and even such things as tidiness of the home. . . .

While the development of agriculture is a doubtful proposition economically at the present moment, it is still true that the island should be self-supporting, with nearly everything that can be grown in the tropics. But the morale of the community is such that the manager has been unable to get them to even accept the opportunity to grow things for themselves (such as bananas), but part of this attitude must flow from the inadequacy of any financial return, no matter what they do. . . .

It appeared that no Aborigine on the island received the full Australian award rate. There is some concept of wages which would be quite alien to anything on the mainland, except in Aboriginal communities. . . .

The local government system, which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is establishing in the Aboriginal territories, is more apparent than real. There are four councillors. Two are elected by the people and two are appointed by the management. It is difficult to believe that they have any real authority. It is possible for their decisions to be vetoed. They don't have the impression that they are the management, and this was a constant complaint around the island from adults to whom one spoke. In fact, they had no say, they weren't really consulted, and one could say that the Island Council is not a real Council. It's kept as a pet or as a front for the management.

Citizenship — and Dependence

In 1965 the Queensland government, following federal leads, introduced legislation which among other things provided for more local Aboriginal control and conferred Australian citizenship on Aborigines as a birthright. The Opposition, however, criticized the slowness of reform in Queensland.


We have contended for some time now that the previous procedures and practices adopted under Queensland legislation in
relation to the preservation and protection of the aboriginal population have become outmoded on world standards. We have always considered that citizenship should be an inherent birthright of the indigenous population of this country. . . .

But at the same time a paradox was created which instilled in the minds of these people an inbred inferiority complex and a feeling of dependence on the rest of the community which was slowly and surely taking away any desire on their part to secure citizenship rights or to accept the responsibilities that go with them, until now they cannot accept the fact that they have to be independent, as the Minister said, of the “Great White Father”, or of humanitarian Public Service control. One reason why we have so few of the coloured population of this country assimilated or integrated into our community is that their will to become citizens has been taken from them, and they have been deprived of that opportunity by many of our laws.

Commonwealth — State Tensions

The Commonwealth government sometimes found itself at odds with state governments on Aboriginal issues. In the election campaign of 1969 Prime Minister Gorton undertook to remove all discriminatory legislation against Aborigines; but the policies of the Queensland government did not always fit in with the direction of Commonwealth policy. In 1971 the Commonwealth minister for Social Services made eleven requests to the Queensland government to amend its laws and practices relating to Aborigines. At a meeting with Queensland officials, federal representatives worked out a basis of agreement.

There was agreement in 9 out of the 11 cases. All the points raised were for the benefit of the Aboriginals. . . .

One of the points related to the right of the Aboriginal to leave the reserve if he wanted to do so. This was agreed to. Another was in regard to access to the reserves, and it was decided that the councils on the reserves should have the decision. Thirdly, we looked at the question of separate legislation for the Torres Strait Island Aboriginals. This was agreed to. Special regulations relating to a part of the vagrancy codes were also agreed to.
Consequently, we were then left with the other two problems that I have mentioned. One related to the supply of alcohol on native reserves. The agreement we reached here was that the officials of the reserves, who to a large extent are Aboriginals themselves, should have the right on each occasion to determine whether their own reserve should have free, limited or no access to alcohol. From going down to Ringwood and one other part of Victoria, I have found that this is the practice followed there, and consequently their wish is in accordance with the wish of people in local government areas. The second point related to the exploitation of Aboriginals if they were given freedom over their own assets and funds. I had to agree that in special cases there was a responsibility on the Aboriginal councils, if they wanted to exercise that responsibility, to protect — not to discriminate against — their own Aboriginal people.

It was also agreed that in cases of exploitation the administration itself should have the right not so much to control but to protect. It is a measure to protect the Aboriginal people themselves. So far from there being any discrimination now, the work done by the Minister for Social Services was really worthwhile. Every one of the recommendations has been carried into effect, in two cases with some modification, and I believe this removes any claim of discrimination against the Australian Aboriginal.

Housing Problems

Even today tensions often flare when blacks and whites live together. For so long Aborigines have had to be fringe dwellers, on the edge of white society. Whites disapprove of the “shanties” that have provided homes for so many Aborigines and sometimes governments have tried to provide “modern” housing — again, using white standards as to what is thought to be suitable for Aboriginal living. What kind of housing is best suited to Aborigines is still a debatable subject.

THEODORE

A community of about 120 Aboriginals cram into 11 homes and two shanties in this central Queensland town where the State Government has refused more land for additional housing.

Some Aboriginal families, including children, are living in appalling conditions without power and sleeping on wooden floors with more than five people to a room.

Gary and Yvonne Dodd share a four-room shanty on the outskirts of Theodore with their three young children and an elderly friend.

There is no power and cooking is done on a wood burning stove. The family bathes in cold water in a tub outside the shack.

The children, Justin, 19 months, Lynette, 3 and Sean, 8, sleep on the wooden floor in one stark bedroom.

Their elderly guest sleeps on the floor in the other room.

The family is waiting for housing to become available in Theodore.

They came to the shack about nine months ago after moving from house to house in Theodore. They stayed with Aboriginal friends who put them up.

The homes they stayed in already were overcrowded and they felt obliged to move.

Not far from them is Doc Roberts, 67, a former police black-tracker. He lives in a dilapidated room with boarded-up windows.

With him live Roberta Smith, 33, her three young children aged three to 10, and two brothers Rex Smith, 25, and Ross Smith, 20.

Again, there is no power. This time there are no beds — five on an open verandah protected a little by torn hessian and plastic sheeting.

In both shanties, there are old, basic wooden tables, rundown cupboards and the barest of living essentials. . . .

In Theodore (population 800), there are racial tensions. It is a town going through the throes of assimilating a significant number of Aboriginal families into community life.

Where two years ago much of the Aboriginal community was camped outside of town on the riverbank, many more white families now find they have black families as neighbours.

This has caused problems for both black and white.
Flexing Their Muscles

By the 1970s, various protest and reform groups had arisen within the Aboriginal community. One such pressure group was the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), and it began to tackle governments, including the Queensland government, on a variety of issues, such as wages and the control of money.


[Advertisement]

Should a Queensland Aborigine still beg for his own wages?

The abolition of the 'Trust Fund' system in Queensland.

An assisted Aborigine in Queensland is not granted the elementary freedom of managing his own wages.

A district officer of the Department of Aboriginal and Island...
Affairs of Queensland may require that whole or part of the wages of an assisted Aborigine be paid into a ‘trust fund’. Pocket money is doled out from this fund only as a result of humble begging. The Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia acts as a banker to the Director for this fund.

Recently the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Islanders decided that unless the Commonwealth Banking Corporation dissociates itself from this fund by March 21st, 1971, it will transfer its business to another bank.

The Battle Continues

In 1979, when introducing an amendment to the Aborigines Act, 1971-75 and the Torres Strait Islanders Act, 1971-75, the minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs C. R. Porter presented the government’s case.

Any Government must accept at all times public debate, examinations and criticism of its various polices and record. Aboriginal and Island Affairs are no exception. What was disturbing last year, however, was not just the focusing of attention on Government and its policies, but the uncouth intrusion of radical political pressure groups into the day-to-day life of Aboriginal and Islander citizens. These people were spotlighted, virtually placed under a microscope, where it must have seemed to them that the outside world was pressing them to be, to do and to say things contrary to what they themselves wished.

These peoples, with the traditional courtesy of their race, patiently and without complaint withstood invasions of privacy and misrepresentation by generally uninformed pressure groups pushing their own political or promotion barrows and by media teams seeking headlines, to a degree which would have been found intolerable by any other group in our community. . . .

[The Aboriginal commissioners appointed to inquire into Aboriginal legislation rejected proposals for special and permanent rights in land and minerals (as in
the Northern Territory) and found unanimously for a general enhancement of the quality of everyday life and continued progressive assumption of control of their own day-to-day affairs.]

Another truth which must be emphasised is that, although the last of Queensland's Aboriginal citizens ceased to follow a tribal way of life well over a generation ago, approximately half of the citizens continue to reside on great tracts of Crown land set aside as reserves. In this way we have 1.73 per cent of our land set aside exclusively for 1.2 per cent of our people: over 3,000,000 ha for fewer than 30,000 people. Obviously these communities, which have not yet developed productively viable centres in the same way as other towns and cities through the State, need special assistance in the building up of amenities and the fostering of enterprises which provide occupations, income and eventual independence from Government assistance.

The Opposition argued: Legislation relating to Aboriginal and Islander affairs must have as a fundamental basis that these people are of equal worth and dignity with every other Australian. The present lack of economic development and low social status accorded the majority of Aborigines and Islander people is a direct result of the deliberate destruction of both of these cultures — and that could never be more aptly described than here in Queensland. . . . Aborigines and Islanders should be given, as corporate bodies, ownership and responsibility for all existing reserves. . . . Responsibility for welfare, health and education should be handed over to the appropriate departments.

[The granting of land rights to Aborigines was contentious. The Commonwealth government granted land rights to Northern Territory Aborigines, and the Queensland Opposition adopted the same policy for Queensland. The Queensland government, however, opposed the granting of freehold title to Aboriginal groups, and condemned the Opposition's spokesperson.]

He spoke about land rights, and he wants to segregate Aborigines. He wants to create a different society in Australia, while the decent thing to do would be to try to integrate all Australians into an Australian community.
The First Aboriginal MP

The first Aborigine to be a member of an Australian parliament was Neville Bonner who in 1971 was elected a federal senator from Queensland. Some issues that particularly concerned him were relations between Aborigines and the land and between Aborigines and European law.


After some 40,000 years of peaceful possession of this vast continent, living under a culture so totally different from, and in many respects much better than, that of their conquerors, many of my ancestors were unceremoniously butchered. Those far too few who escaped the guns, knives, and poisons of your so-called civilised ancestors were herded in droves into reserves and missions, there to live in enslavement, under conditions which were so completely foreign to their former life style. In that former life style they had lived in a strict rotational system, in clearly defined tribal areas, brother to all creatures, and so completely in tune with nature.

Those who avoided death, and the subsequent great roundup, and others who had escaped from the missions and reserves, came to the cities and towns, there to be completely shunned by white society and forced to lead the life of pariahs in tin shanties, in bark humpies and in other degrading accommodation, on the banks of creeks, on the outskirts of the towns and, indeed, in any place sufficiently far from the cities and towns so that they would not offend the delicate senses of their so-called superior white masters. These of my race were the fringe dwellers, the legion of the lost, the dirty, ignorant, mentally inferior, 'Abos', 'Boongs', 'Blacks' as you were wont to call us, and treat us accordingly.

It was within this deprived society that I grew up; within these harsh confines of human degradation that I, Neville Bonner, suffered the cruel barbs of discrimination and depravity at the hands of my white brother. It is little wonder that there is suspicion and mistrust. The wounds are still raw, and the resultant psychological scarring remains. . . .

As our culture was systematically destroyed and the tribal law and customs which had sustained us for aeons were deliberately eroded, my forefathers were subjected to the white man's law, laws which were incomprehensible to them and which, in many
incidents, were in complete contrast to those which had formerly nurtured them. The white man's law had evolved from custom — European custom — tailored to meet the requirements of the European civilisation that in no single way faintly resembled those codes of conduct which were socially acceptable to my ancestors and to their mode and style of living. . . .

These seeds of suspicion, mistrust and fear were sown and allowed to flourish, watered by the hands of ignorance and callous indifference. Therefore, is it any wonder that in such conditions as these we have today the inescapable fact that the indigenous and Islander people of Australia are the most incarcerated race in the world? . . .

What we are faced with, is the damning truth that in Australia there is Aboriginal incarceration to the extent of one-third of all prisoners. What a condemnation! What a malignant cancer in the much vaunted system of 'British justice'? This is an even more disagreeable state of affairs when it is considered in the cold harsh light of reality that the indigenous and Islander peoples of Australia represent less than 1 per cent of our total population.

N. Bonner, CAPD (Senate) 70 (1976):2770.

What is land, earth, and all that it entails? To an Aborigine in the tribal situation it is almost impossible to define. It goes far beyond the somewhat coldly calculated white man's concept. Land ownership to my fellow tribal Aborigines is a continuing dynamic motion and is not, Sir, bounded by the geographical limits of a government surveyor. It is a living entity made up of earth, sky, clouds, rivers, trees, rocks and the spirit which created all these things. Land is their everything. In my wallet on a piece of paper, worn and somewhat faded now, are written certain words. I present them to you, Sir, and to honourable senators for I feel the verse best sums up literally the affinity existing between an Aborigine, particularly in the tribal sense, and his land. It is taken from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. It reads:

My body's life and strength alone thou art;
My heart and soul art thou,
Oh! Soul and heart!
Thou art my being; and I am thou;
Since I in thee depart.
Aurukun and Mornington Island

Between 1975 and 1978 a struggle was going on between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments with respect to the Aboriginal communities of Aurukun and Mornington Island and the reserves run there by the Uniting Church (formerly the Presbyterian Church). Valuable bauxite deposits were located at Aurukun and the Queensland government wanted to ensure that these could be worked. The Aboriginal community was not consulted, and the Uniting Church and federal government tried to offer some protection to the Aborigines. The Queensland government finally resolved the matter by declassifying the reserves, thereby ending the church's administration there, and directly taking over the two communities. A local government structure was established in both communities, removing them from possible federal jurisdiction. The Aboriginal senator, Neville Bonner, denounced the actions of the Queensland government.

N. Bonner, CAPD (Senate) 577 (1978): 1564.

I made a speech on land rights some little time ago. I wish to read from that speech also because those things which my brothers and sisters of Morningon Island and Aurukun are endeavouring to achieve and are concerned about are embodied in that speech. I stated:

"I baulk at the task of adequately describing this mystic affinity which has been handed down from father to son for nigh on 40,000 years. Even I, the urban and so-called sophisticated Aborigine, can not explain, nor escape from, the strong ties that bind me to the earth of this continent. Still today, one of my greatest joys is to walk upon virgin land, untouched and unsullied by the whiteman's progress. . . .

"This absolute love of the land moves us all. It is completely foreign to the white Australian, who looks upon land as a selfish possession, a symbol of wealth, something to be fenced off and enjoyed to the exclusion of all others. . . . Land ownership, particularly to our tribal brothers, is something which defies adequate definition. Perhaps land ownership can best be described as a continuing dynamic notion, not bounded by geographical limits of a government surveyor. It is a living, breathing entity, made up of earth, sky, clouds, rivers, trees, rocks and the spirits which created all these things. It is the place wherein our spirits will reside in the great dreamtime. It is an extension of our very souls, it is our everything. . . ."
“In what is termed the Deep North of Australia, we have colonialism personified by a government whose policies are outmoded, outdated, and reek of racism. In our State, Queensland, we have the worst case of racial discrimination, the great white father image, whose policies are designed to oppress our people and keep them dependent on the State Government. . . . These attitudes must not be allowed to continue and relegate our people into the category of second class citizens. I have and will continue to attack these antiquated and discriminatory laws, both outside and inside the Parliament.”


A cartoon by McCrae appeared this morning [15 March 1978] in the Courier-Mail and it pretty well sums up what is happening at Aurukun. The cartoon depicts Mr Charles Porter, the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement in Queensland, a reverend gentleman, an Aboriginal gentleman and an Aboriginal lady. The caption underneath states: “But Reverend, the meek SHALL inherit the earth — after we’ve extracted the bauxite.” I believe that that sums up what is happening. Bauxite is at the heart of the events occurring in Queensland at the moment. . . .

The Queensland Government is taking over from the church two communities that the church has been administering for a number of years. It has been administering these communities for nigh on 70 years. It was only in 1954 that the Queensland Government came into the picture to help, financially or otherwise, the church that had been administering and trying to assist those of my people who live in these two communities. . . .

I have some reports of interviews that have taken place in the last couple of days. Mr Frank Purcell, one of the people interviewed, has been involved with the Aurukun people since the bauxite business came to light. He has been giving legal advice to the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal councillors, and in an interview he had this to say in answer. . . .

“The Queensland Government is determined to keep going on a policy of oppression and to prevent the self-determination of Aboriginal people. They are going right against the whole stream of thought throughout Australia.”

I believe that the 1967 referendum was an indication from the people of Australia that the Aboriginal people should have the
right of self-determination. The referendum gave power to the Commonwealth Government and the Commonwealth Parliament to make special laws pertaining to Aboriginal people.

I return again to the question of the bauxite. I personally became involved in it when the Queensland Government rushed legislation through the Parliament in less than 50 hours. For the Queensland Parliament that was a lot of sitting hours, in view of the fact that it sits for only 30 days a year. The 50 hours must have been quite a strain on members [but] because the Government wanted to get out the bauxite it was prepared to sit for that length of time. It rushed through a piece of legislation giving the mining company the right to go ahead with its mining operations without proper consultation with the Aboriginal people or the Presbyterian Church, which at that time was responsible for the administration of Aurukun.

Regarding the Queensland take-over, Bonner tabled a letter from the Queensland minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs to the moderator of the Uniting Church of Australia.

Dear Reverend Sir,

I have to advise that Cabinet has considered the overall position relative to Mornington Island the Aurukun Aboriginal Communities and to inform you of the following decisions by Cabinet:

1. The Uniting Church be informed that at the expiry of the current advance payment period, viz 31st March 1978, the Government will no longer continue to provide subsidy support to the Church for management of Aurukun; and Mornington Island and the Aboriginal Councils be similarly advised.

2. The Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement takes steps forthwith to provide an effective management service at each of the Communities and assumes total responsibility for the material well being of the people from that date on a similar basis to other Aboriginal communities in the State.

I have another short letter which I will read into the Hansard record. It provides an indication of the feelings of the people of Aurukun, who have not been consulted. The letter is addressed to Mr J.C. Hooper, Division of World Missions, Uniting Church in Australia. It states:
Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned members of the Aurukun Community Council, have, after extensive talks with the members of the Community of Aurukun, found that it is the people’s wish to remain under the Administration of the Uniting Church of Australia.

We would therefore appreciate it if you would pass this to the Synod of North Queensland, along with our thanks for their support. We look forward to working together in the future.

The letter is signed by five members of the Aboriginal Council at Aurukun.

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**Land Rights**

Through the late 1970s and early 1980s the Commonwealth and certain state governments granted freehold land title to Aboriginal groups. The Queensland government opposed such grants to Aborigines on reserves; instead in 1984 it enacted legislation giving deeds of grant in trust.


R. Katter (Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Advancement): Some 25,000 people on reserve areas — I do not have the exact figures; it is very difficult to ascertain them — have been given a firm legal title from which they can move forward with, I hope, dramatic speed. They have been given a firm title to 7.5 million acres of land in the 30-inch rainfall area. Few groups of people anywhere in the world would have that sort of land ownership of an area that can be used for grazing and farming purposes. I certainly cannot think of any other group that would have such a resource placed at its disposal.

I emphasise that this legislation does not give the Aboriginal people one extra square inch of land. I do so because many poor white people in the community resent strongly anything being given to people of Aboriginal or Islander descent, and they take out their resentment quite unjustifiably. I reiterate that the Government is not giving them anything in this Bill. They have possessed the land. As far as one can make out, it has been their
land from time immemorial. What we are doing is changing the legal title so that we can give them a tool with which to move forward economically. . . . We have provided Queensland people of Aboriginal descent on what are now called reserve areas, which will soon be deed of grant areas, with one of the finest resources anyone could have — that is, land with the potential for grazing and farming use.

Ms Warner: The worst and the most potent sanction that has been imposed has been the systematic breakdown of the relationship that Aborigines had traditionally enjoyed with the land. It is no wonder that the Aboriginal people are seen to be in a category of welfare recipients dependent upon hand-outs and the grudging left-overs of white society — the crumbs from the white man's table.

Aborigines have mounted vigorous campaigns to change the chain of dependency that has bedevilled their race for generations. It is the Government's responsibility to listen very carefully to the Aboriginal message that was demonstrated so clearly in the recent land rights demonstrations that took place. It seems that only the Queensland Government is deaf to reason on that issue, in that it cannot find enough compassion or humanity to give to Aborigines who have been forcibly deprived of their land secure land tenure under appropriate land rights legislation.

When will the Queensland Government stop playing games with legal tricks and semantic distinctions between deed of grant in trust and real land rights? Real land rights, which is the only acceptable reparation that white society could make, would include five basic principles; inalienable freehold title, protection of sacred sites, veto provisions over mining on Aboriginal land, equivalent royalties and compensation for lost land. . . .

In this legislation no recognition is given to sacred sites — the existence of sacred sites, the establishment of what are and what are not sacred sites — or to the mechanisms to be used to determine those matters. All these things are extremely important to Aboriginal people. It is because of the destruction of their sacred sites and the different relationship that white society has with land that a lot of the welfare problems have arisen and that there are many Aboriginal drunks in Musgrave Park. Aboriginal people are alienated from their culture and from white society. These Acts only place them back into some kind of unknown territory, which is neither one thing nor the other, and they suf-
fer very badly. . . . Land, and a special relationship with land, can provide that identity.

That is why Aborigines say that there is only one thing that they really want from us. They do not want handouts from welfare agencies and all the rest of it. First of all, they want land rights. They want their relationship with the land restored so that they can decide where they can go.

New Legislation, 1984

With the Aborigines asking for land rights, with criticism mounting that Queensland's existing legislation, especially that of 1971, was too paternalistic and restrictive, the government in 1984 brought in new legislation relating to Aborigines and Islanders. This related to local government and other community services for the two peoples, and tied in with the granting of the new form of land security, deeds of grant in trust.

R. Katter (Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Advancement):
In 1971, the Parliament approved further changes under a policy mantle of integration and assimilation. The reserve areas at this stage were being administered by Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement staff, with all local government services and decision-making powers being exercised by the department.

For the benefit of all those persons who are listening in this Chamber, I point out that this legislation changes that situation. When the Bill is passed, those decisions will not be made by the DAIA or the Community Services Department; they will be made by the people themselves. It is a pity that some Opposition members did not read the Bill.

We are now about to open another chapter in what may well be the final stage in the progressive development of the Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines of this State. For the sake of our political opponents, let me stress that this is the quintessence of this legislation: Local government decision-making powers will, with this legislation, shift to the local democratically elected community council. . . .

We will dispense with the Department of Aboriginal and Is-
landers Advancement and create a Department of Community Services equipped ideologically and resourcefully to help Aborigines and Islanders move into this process of self-development and self-management. . . .

D. Hamill: This Bill is based on the Big Brother mentality. It is based on the sort of thinking that characterised politics in the late nineteenth century, and somehow or other this Government still seems to think that the Islander people and the Aborigines are the white man’s burden. The Government does not recognise that these people are quite capable and totally able to look after their own lives. . . . The Island Councils do not have the status of local authorities under the Local Government Act. It is patently obvious that the Government is not prepared to give the Island Councils the status of local authorities under the Local Government Act. . . .

The Minister’s initial ideas have been thwarted by powers outside his control. What is left is a half-hearted attempt at legislation. To use the Minister’s words, it is an attempt to achieve something like local government. I suppose it is a little bit like local government but the legislation provides none of the basic rights and privileges of local government. . . .

If the Government is not prepared to offer the Aboriginal and Islander people the same basic human rights that we, as ordinary Queenslanders, expect for ourselves, its commitment to these people is a sham and a total cop-out. All of the fine words about communication and consultation are worth nothing. All the Minister has succeeded in doing is transfer the control of the lives of these people from the DAIA to a new department. The director will become the under secretary, and the managers will become the agents of the under secretary. The powers of the Department of Community Services are listed under the regulatory powers provided in the Bill. Any by-laws that the community councils may pass are still subject to the control of the Minister. Differential treatment will apply to people in local council areas, and on and on it goes. It is a litany of discrimination, yet this legislation is supposed to be a step forward.

The place of the Aborigines and Islanders in Queensland of the 1980s is still a matter of intense debate. The question of land rights for Aborigines and
Islanders has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. The existence of separate Aboriginal and Islander cultures is coming to be appreciated, but many people are missing out: there is a serious problem concerning urban Aborigines and Islanders who have lost touch with their ethnic heritage. If Queensland is to become an harmonious multicultural society great effort needs to be made by everyone — governments and people, whites and blacks.
Developing the Land
Squatters

Pastoral operations (running sheep or cattle) were the most obvious way to establish an economic base in the vast tracts of territory in Queensland. In the mid nineteenth century squatters swarmed into Queensland with their large flocks and herds, and took up (or squatted upon) extensive runs; 250 square kilometres was not an unusual size. Although the land was quickly occupied, it was not being "improved". A case was soon put forward, especially by townspeople, that after the initial pioneering occupation had occurred, the squatters should be replaced by farmers who would engage in intensive rural activities on small holdings.

_Weekly Herald, 29 July 1865, 7._

The pastoral occupant of Crown lands is a most valuable settler, and every reasonable encouragement should be offered to him to induce him to select the unsettled districts of Queensland as the scene of his operations. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the agriculturist is a very much more desirable settler than the squatter. The pastoral farmer leaves his run at the end of fourteen or nineteen years very little better than he found it. There may be a few waterholes made, a head station and one or two out stations built, and stockyards erected; but the land itself will otherwise be much as it was before. The agriculturist, on the contrary, cannot perform a single operation without improving the land. Every rood of ground that is broken up, even every single tree that is grubbed up, is a permanent improvement to the land that no subsequent mismanagement can neutralise. Therefore, while we are quite ready and willing to see the squatter dealt with in the most liberal manner, we claim at least an equal liberality towards the agriculturist. Above all, it behoves the people of this colony to take care that their land laws are such as to prevent their Crown lands from being practically handed over to a few greedy speculators of any class.

Labour Problems

Pastoralism in the nineteenth century was labour intensive. Shepherds were needed to tend the sheep and many general labourers were also required.
Queensland was short of labourers because it was short of people generally. This tended to push up wages and increase the sense of independence of the workers. Legislation on the duties of masters and servants attempted to make workers more subject to their employers, such as the pastoralists, but its success was limited. The following document relates to conditions on the Belyando in 1866.

Gordon Ralston & Coy., Banchory, Belyando to Minister for Lands and Works, 7 October 1866, 466/66, Department of Public Lands, Letters received (LAN/A2), Queensland State Archives.

As the government has requested settlers to make known to you their wants as regards labour; we take this opportunity of doing so.

With stock of about 25,000 sheep and 500 head of cattle we are employing 15 shepherds and 11 other hands, including Overseers, Bullock drivers and men making improvements, etc. These men are receiving wages from 25/- to 40/- per week, with full rations. We have never had any shepherds under that figure (25/-) and very few at that. The engagements of most of the shepherds expire during the next two or three months: and we fear that the wages will have to rise, as shepherds are not to be had. I saw two of our neighbours at Clermont last week offering 30/- to shepherds, and could not get one, and we fear a like result with ourselves, unless we can by any means retain the men we have got. We have repeatedly tried to bring up emigrants, but have always failed with them, some of them absconding on the road, others after arrival on the station, and although warrants were issued for their apprehension (and rewards offered by us) they were allowed (either from an inadequate supply of police, or from indigence of the force) to pass on, in some cases right through the township. So that the emigrants we have been able to retain from a lot, have cost us as high as 40/- per week although hired at £45 p.a., through the others absconding.

We beg also to state that if we could get labour at from £40 to £45 per annum we could employ many more men, making dams, and improvements, which the present high price of labor debars us from doing at present.

We beg also to take this opportunity of reminding the Government that we are here now for over 4 years: and have from time to time during that period been promised survey of our runs, and although it is now nearly 12 months since we placed £100 stg. to the credit of the Chief Commissioner of Crown
Lands in order to have the survey proceeded with at once, nothing has as yet been done. This is surely very hard, seeing this year we are paying the extra rent for our run, and our neighbours are running stock on what we believe to be our country, and for which we have been paying rent for the last 5 years.

Pastoral Problems

The early squatters were plagued with problems — distance from markets, low prices, difficulties obtaining supplies, shortage of labour, and having to adjust to the new environment. This document relates to a station on the South Burnett.

A. & R. Lawson, Boondooma, to Messrs Gilchrist, Watts & Co., Sydney, 18 January 1855, Boondooma Station Correspondence, JOL.

We now write to inform you that we have again cleared our shipping port this season to Wide Bay. Although at the same time the freight is high still we find their will be a considerable saving of expense in so doing. The inland carriage is so much less by Wide Bay being distant only 115 miles from our station whereas the Moreton Bay road by Ipswich from Boondooma is 180 miles. From your letter last post we observe that you have forwarded 2 tons of rice which we are sorry to say we will not require, as we intend discharging all our Chinamen, as soon as the Germans arrive which we understand will be in about a fort-night. If you can dispose of the rice to any parties in Ipswich you had better do so. We have no doubt [Messrs. W. Grey & Co.] or Mr. Cockburn will be glad to purchase. We regret that you should have taken so much trouble with respect to the rice and hope you will not be the loosers by it. We wrote to you some time ago informing you that our sheep had become infected with the disease called scab and have since received no answer. We have now to inform you that 17,000 of those sheep have been destroyed in accordance with Mr. [Manning's] new Act, and as soon as enquiries are instituted by the Magistrate regarding their destruction of the scabby sheep we will secure the Government compensation 4/- per head. We will start in a week or so two loads of wool to Wide Bay and by the time the[y]
return again (say 5 weeks) we will most likely be able to send 3 more drays. Their will be altogether 150 to 160 bales of wool and 5 tons of tallow this season. You will of course get it all insured from Wide Bay against sea risk. Enclosed is a list of supplies which you will have the goodness, for first vessel for Wide Bay, consigned to E. B. Uhr Esq. Maryborough. We will require very little supplies from Sydney this season to keep the station going, as the store is now well fitted with the principal articles requiring sugar and flour.

List of supplies to be forwarded to E. B. Uhr Esq.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ ton salt</td>
<td>1 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tea chests</td>
<td>3 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tins coffee/say 4 lbs.</td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 boxes soap/each 1 cwt.</td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 gallons rum/blood quality</td>
<td>4 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 cases Pale Brandy</td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 casks porter/each 4 doz.</td>
<td>4 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 casks ale/each 4 doz.</td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 octave sherry wine</td>
<td>1 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small bottle essence of lemon</td>
<td>½ doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small bottle essence of peppermint</td>
<td>3 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ doz. quires letter paper</td>
<td>2 bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ doz. note paper with envelopes to correspond</td>
<td>1 box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a little blotting paper</td>
<td>4 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 doz.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please have the cask of rum enclosed in a larger cask when you pack it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 box wafers</td>
<td>1 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bottle quinine</td>
<td>1 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bottle [calomel]</td>
<td>1 doz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 doz. pocket knives</td>
<td>2 dozen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 dozen castrating knives</td>
<td>2 dozen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pastoral Adjustment

Pastoralists had problems adjusting, as they moved their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle into strange new lands — wet coastal lands in the subtropics, or dry plainlands elsewhere. It took time for the pastoralists to understand the environment. At Bendemere station on a branch of the Balonne River in the late 1860s, many of the sheep died as a result of drought and speargrass.
We begin to feel very uneasy about the state of the country. For the last eight weeks we have had dry frosty weather and it has cut up the grass to an alarming extent. . . . The country from here to Dalby is quite destitute of grass and all the squatters are beginning to complain. The late severe droughts here nearly ruined the country as the grass in some places has been quite swept off. To look at it you would say it could never grow again. To make matters worse, the only grass that has stood the drought is the seedy grass & all the runs in this district are covered with it. We think that by shearing before the seed ripens a good deal of it can be avoided. We shall shear our lambs next February & if it answers make that our shearing time until the seedy grass dies out which we think would happen if we got a few good seasons. Mr. Miles of Dulacca, our neighbour, who had the best sheep & one of the very best runs in the district says that his wool is completely destroyed with the seeds & that until within the last 3 years he never saw such a thing.

The High Risk of Ruin

Success on the land was not easily assured. It was necessary to possess sufficient capital (or access to it) to tide over establishment costs, climatic catastrophes and changeable markets. Many early squatters failed for want of sufficient money. The squatter would come in to undertake the pioneering work and fail, ownership then passing to his bank, land agency, or even a town merchant.

Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Robertson, 1873), 61.

Undoubtedly the staple of Australian wealth is wool, and the growers and buyers and sellers of Australian wool are the chief men of the colonies. In Queensland, when I was there, six out of the seven ministers of the Crown were squatters, men owning runs for sheep or cattle. Though many squatters, — probably the majority, — confine themselves to sheep, very few of those who breed cattle do not keep sheep also. The cattle are reared chiefly
for home consumption. The wool is all exported. As wool goes up or down in the London markets, so does the prosperity of Australia vacillate. Any panic in commercial matters of Europe which brings down the price of wool, — as panics have done most cruelly, — half ruins the colonies. Sheep sink in value from 10s. and 7s. 6d. a head to 4s. or 2s. Squatters’ runs become valueless and unsaleable, and the smaller squatters, who are almost invariably in debt to the merchants, have to vanish. Then, when trade becomes steady again and wool rises, sheep again resume their former value, and the rich men who during the panic have taken up almost deserted sheep-walks become richer and richer.

The great drawback to the squatters’ prosperity is to be found in the fact that a large proportion of them commence a great business with very insufficient capital. A man with £5,000 undertakes to pay £30,000 for a run, and finds himself enabled to enter in upon the possession of perhaps forty thousand sheep and the head station or house which has been built. To all outward appearances he is the owner. He manages everything. He employs and pays the various hands. He puts up fences and erects washpools. He buy and sells flocks. He makes great bales of wool which he sends to Sydney, to Melbourne, or to London as he pleases. Any rise in the price of wool is his good fortune, any fall is his calamity. But still he is little more than the manager for others. He has probably bought his run from a bank or from a merchant’s house which has held the mortgage on it before, and the mortgage is continued. He has simply paid away the £5,000 to make the security of the mortgage commercially safe.

Pastoralism Established

The Darling Downs was the first area to be occupied by squatters. By the 1860s the fortunate among them had become established, successful pastoralists. Those who had been able to withstand problems of capital, weather, settling in, and markets were now flourishing. Rough slab huts and a primitive lifestyle were now replaced by grand homesteads and a social life aping British society. The successful pastoralists were improving and developing their lands, and
were freeholding the better slices. Felton was one of those properties. The following sale advertisement sets out its advantages (note that the auction was to be held in Sydney). The property came under the control of the millionaire pastoralist James Tyson.

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1871, 11.

**FELTON, DARLING DOWNS. MAGNIFICENT SHEEP PROPERTY FOR POSITIVE SALE**

WANT and SIMPSON have received instructions to sell by auction at their Rooms, 273, George-street [Sydney], on Wednesday, 25th January, at 11 o'clock,

The above magnificent STATION, including 24,000 acres of purchased land, together with 70,000 first-class sheep, 1,000 head of well-bred cattle, situate in the Darling downs district, Queensland, and comprising those two (2) blocks of country so well and favourably known as FELTON and BEAUARABA, embracing an area of 160,000 acres (more or less), the whole being equal to the finest pastoral land in any of the Australian colonies, abundantly watered, and possessing fattening properties of the very highest description. Felton adjoins the far-famed stations Eton Value, Clifton, and Ellangowan, and is within the immediate neighbourhood of the terminus of the railway.

The IMPROVEMENTS are all very extensive and complete, and comprise homestead cottage (with kitchen and garden), superintendent's cottage (with garden and grape vines), store and office, overseer's hut; slaughterhouses, boiling pots and yards complete, stable, coach-house, etc; five (5) paddocks, covering 1000 acres; woolshed with new rack and pinion press; wash-pool complete, with tanks, vat, and gear for hot water washing; one (1) ten (10) horse power portable engine, one (1) six (6) ditto ditto ditto ditto; two (2) Appold's centrifugal pumps, large stockyard, with necessary divisions and speying bail, for working 2000 head of cattle; together with the necessary improvements for the working of the station. On the run are four (4) reservoirs (two (2) fenced in) and five (5) good wells, with troughing; three (3) pumps, and one (1) hand pump.

The stock consists of 70,000 sheep, more or less, 1000 head of cattle, and 70 horses.

The sheep are acknowledged to be second to none in the district, and the rams on the station have been selected lately from the celebrated flocks of Dr. Traill, 'Collaroy'. With the run will
Prosperity came first to the pastoralists of the Darling Downs, where some fine residences were constructed. Among them were Gowrie homestead (top), outside Toowoomba, and the showpiece of all Queensland pastoral homes, Jimbour house (bottom), outside Dalby, with its French-chateau pretensions. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
In the north more exotic influences affected housing styles than on the Darling Downs. Heat, repites, white ants and other pests necessitated elevated living quarters after the fashion of this Herbert River residence. Notice the Aboriginal servants in the garden near the outhouses. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

be offered in addition 11,000 acres of freehold land, which the purchasers will have the option of taking.

Messrs. WANT and SIMPSON have much pleasure in drawing the attention of capitalists and investors to the above choice pastoral property, situated as it is in the heart of the Darling Downs, and they solicit an inspection, as no description can convey to the intending purchasers the many advantages which it possesses.

Any further information can be obtained on application at the Rooms.

Shearing and Farming

For some, shearing was meant to be a stepping-stone to acquiring a small farm — and although the dream was held out for all, it was seldom realized. The following anonymous poem alludes to this, and as well to the life of mateship shared by the shearmens; it also makes clear that life on the land was a man’s life.
The Banks of the Condamine

Oh, hark the dogs are barking, love
I can no longer stay,
The men are all gone mustering
And it is nearly day.
And I must off by the morning light
Before the sun doth shine,
To meet the Sydney shearsers
On the banks of the Condamine.

Oh Willie, dearest Willie,
I'll go along with you,
I'll cut off all my auburn fringe
And be a shearer, too,
I'll cook and count your tally, love,
While ring-o you shine,
And I'll wash your greasy moleskins
On the banks of the Condamine.

Oh, Nancy, dearest Nancy,
With me you cannot go,
The squatters have given orders, love,
No woman should do so;
Your delicate constitution
Is not equal unto mine,
To stand the constant tigering
On the banks of the Condamine.

Oh Willie, dearest Willie,
Then stay back home with me,
We'll take up a selection
And a farmer's wife I'll be:
I'll help you husk the corn, love,
And cook your meals so fine
You'll forget the ram-stag mutton
On the banks of the Condamine.
Oh, Nancy, dearest Nancy,
Please do not hold me back,
Down there the boys are waiting,
And I must be on the track;
So here's a good-bye kiss, love,
Back home here I'll incline
When we've shore the last of the jumbucks
On the banks of the Condamine.

Anon.

Pioneering Women

Life on the land was hard; but it was not just a land of "mates". Farming families struggled to survive and it was usually the wife/mother who had to hold the group together, often do the bookwork, offer sustenance, courage and hope, and do some of the hard work herself.

George Essex Evans, "The Women of the West" in The Secret Key and Other Verses (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1906), 8-10.

The Women of the West

They left the vine-wreathed cottage and the mansion on the hill,
The houses in the busy streets where life is never still,
The pleasures of the city, and the friends they cherished best:
For love they faced the wilderness — the Women of the West.

The roar, the rush, and fever of the city died away,
And the old-time joys and faces — they were gone for many a day;
In their place the lurching coach-wheel, or the creaking bullock chains,
O'er the everlasting sameness of the never-ending plains.
In the slab-built, zinc-roofed homestead of some lately-taken run,
In the tent beside the bankment of a railway just begun,
In the huts on new selections, in the camp of man's unrest,
On the frontiers of the Nation, live the Women of the West.

The red sun robs their beauty, and, in weariness and rain,
The slow years steal the nameless grace that never comes again;
And there are hours men cannot soothe, and words men cannot say —
The nearest woman's face may be a hundred miles away. The wide bush holds the secret of their longings and desires, When the white stars in reverence light their holy altar-fires, And silence, like the touch of God, sinks deep into the breast — Perchance He hears and understands the Women of the West.

For them no trumpet sounds the call, no poet plies his arts — They only hear the beating of their gallant loving hearts. But they have sung with silent lives the song all songs above — The holiness of sacrifice, the dignity of love. Well have we held our fathers' creed. No call has passed us by, We faced and fought the wilderness, we sent our sons to die. And we have hearts to do and dare, and yet, o'er all the rest, The hearts that made the Nation were the Women of the West.

Pastoral Life

In 1881 the Norwegian ethnographer Carl Lumholtz spent some time in western Queensland at Minnie Downs, where he saw pastoralism at work.

Carl Lumholtz, Among Cannibals (London: Murray, 1889), 40-41.

The raising of cattle and sheep, the most important industry of Australia, has more or less influence on all kinds of business in that country. In the older colonies the cattle and sheep farmers are also the owners of the land where their herds and flocks graze, but in the larger part of Queensland the pastures are rented from the Government. These great cattle and sheep farmers are called squatters, and they are the aristocracy of Australia. If the squatter is a sheep-farmer, he not unfrequently has 200,000 sheep upon his station, while the cattle-farmer often owns 15,000 head. He does not hesitate to pay as high as £2000 for a fine bull, or as high as £600 for a ram of choice pedigree.

A station resembles a little village. Besides the main building, which is the residence of the squatter or his superintendent, there are a number of shanties for the workmen, a butcher's shop, a store-house for wool, and a shop where most of the necessaries of life may be bought. A garden of vegetables may usually be found down by the water, for there is always a creek or a water-hole near every station. The garden is generally
managed by skilful Chinamen, who are, it is true, hated by all colonists (every Chinaman must pay £30 for permission to settle in Queensland), but at the same time are recognised as the most able gardeners. The secret of their art is chiefly the untiring attention they give to the plants, watering them early and late in sunshine and even in rain.

The stock-yard is an enclosure indispensable to every station. The cattle are driven into it when they are to be captured, but it is usually occupied by the horses, which are lodged there every morning so that the stock-man may select his own animal. Most of the work on a station is done on horseback, and one can hardly conceive of an Australian unable to ride.

There is of course much work to be done on a station having such extensive pasturage. The sheep cause the most trouble. The transporation of the wool to the coast is very expensive, and often costs more than the freight from the coast to England. And yet sheep-raising may often give a profit of as much as thirty per cent. The cattle are sent alive to the cities to be slaughtered. Milk is scarcely used at all in the bush.

**Cotton Growing**

The establishment of Queensland as a separate colony posed problems such as finding an economic staple that would provide the settlers' livelihood and promise future growth. Sheep and cattle were introduced to tap the resources of the vast grasslands, but the colony obviously had tropical potential, and agriculture was always regarded as a higher form of land usage than mere pastoralism. The first crop to receive encouragement was cotton. The crisis in Britain caused by the American Civil War in the early 1860s provided an immediate impetus for cotton cultivation in Queensland: the cotton factories of Lancashire (such as Manchester) needed to be assured of a future. Attempts were made to tie up English capital in cotton cultivation in Queensland, and the experiment did work for a while, until the Americans sorted out their problems.


The Queensland Legislative has done its utmost to aid the mother-country in the present crisis of the cotton supply, by
offering free grants of land for cotton plantations, and premiums (for several years) on the growth of that plant. And there are no restrictions here, as in some of the other Australian Colonies, on the importation of cheap labour from India. . . . Mr. Bazley [of Manchester] wrote to me not long since, that he believed that the best cotton in the world could be grown in Queensland. He proceeds to say that ‘he will endeavour to get up a company of English capitalists to grow cotton on a large scale in Queensland’.

**Land and Immigration**

The government was anxious to use the land intensively and hoped through immigration schemes to create an agriculture sector. But the pressing question arose as to what crop could be successfully grown. In the 1860s and 1870s the adaptation of wheat to Queensland’s environment had not been made.

_Trollope, Australia and New Zealand, 27._

In Queensland the bounties offered to emigrants are bestowed chiefly with the view of creating a class of small farmers, — men who shall select small portions of the crown lands, by means of land orders or by gradual purchase, and who shall become freeholders and thus permanently wedded to the colony. In Queensland, and indeed generally throughout Australia, the farmer is a small man as opposed to the squatter, who is a great man and an aristocrat. But a small farmer must have a convenient market for his produce before he can thrive, and must be able to produce what that market demands. The world wants wheat, but the Queensland farmer cannot produce it. Queensland produces wool, and meat, and sugar, but these things as articles of trade, are generally beyond the reach of the small farmer. If one is to believe the Queensland squatter, these ‘free-selectors’ or small farmers, do deal in beef, but they steal the cattle from the large cattle runs. The stealing of cattle is undoubtedly a trade, but I hope is not so general as my friends the squatters have represented to me. Indian corn, or maize, is grown on these small farms, and oaten hay, and something is done in the manufacture of
butter. But the markets for these things are bad. The farmer with his Indian corn is generally forced to take other goods for his produce, — tea or clothes, or perhaps rum. Wheat he could no doubt sell for money. Such being the case the prospect to the small farmers is not good, and they who manage things in the colony not unnaturally find a difficulty in establishing permanent agriculturists on their soil.

Problems of Land Settlement

From the 1860s through to the 1940s governments were always looking at means of attracting settlement on the land. Angus Gibson, who became a prominent sugar planter at Bundaberg, emigrated in 1863 under a land grant scheme. Many problems faced these small agriculturalists — lack of capital, absence of roads and other social facilities, and the unreliability of markets, prices and the weather.

A. Gibson, QPD 113 (1904):81-82.

Away back in the sixties the Government, through the late Mr. Henry Jordan, who was then Agent-General for Queensland, offered people in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and on the Continent, land orders equivalent in value to their passage money if they would come here and pay their own passages. With my people I was among those who came here under that system. I had not arrived at my majority then, but I did so when I was on board ship. That was forty-one years ago. My father and I paid our passages, and came here, and finding that land orders were for sale — a £17 land order was sold for £12 — we bought certain land orders, with which we purchased land 10 miles from Brisbane, on what was then called Doughboy Creek, where we made our first home in Queensland. That shows what may be done to induce men of the better class, as the Speech phrases it, to come to Queensland. They were men of the better class who came out in those days, though I say it myself. . . .

During the forty-one years I have been in Queensland I have gone through the pinch as an agriculturist. I have heard a great deal lately about the roads which ought to be made and the condition which ought to be offered to settlers. When I first went to
In contrast to the prosperous pastoralists the houses of the small landholders were much simpler: pictured are a typical farmer’s house in southern Queensland (top) and a labourer’s hut (bottom). Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

the little home we made down at Doughboy Creek, we had to cross creeks without bridges the best way we could, and we had to make roads the best way we could, and we had no idea of asking for assistance from the Government. In those days it was said that cabbages could not grow in that district. We proved that cabbages could be grown there, and we made our own roads and bridges, and it never occurred to us to go cap in hand to the Government for anything until later on, when everybody else was seeking such assistance. As a farmer I want to see roads made to settlements, and I think we ought to consider the difficulties with which the agriculturist has to content. The last
season was not a very profitable one. I have bought maize for 1s.4d. per bushel, bags thrown in, and 1d, or 1½d. had to be paid for carrying the maize to one station in my district. How can a farmer live when he gets such a price for his maize, even if his crop runs to 40 bushels to the acre? . . .

We want a proper class of men to come here, men with some money, men who will not require to go to the Government during the first year or two of their lives on their new selection. No doubt some hon. gentlemen have read the book called “Our New Selection”. The record in that book is a true picture of what has taken place in many an outside place in the bush. I have men coming to work for me from 40 or 50 miles towards Nanango, to which a railway should be built. I am glad the Government have this idea with regard to the construction of railways, but I do not know where the money is to come from to carry out their policy.

Corn

Corn was usually the first crop that the struggling farmer would plant. The local storekeeper or carrier might survive on it but the grower could not expect to become rich.


The corn shelled out 100 bags — the best crop we had ever had; but when Dad came to sell it seemed as though every farmer in every farming district on earth had a heavy crop in Egypt — and we could get no price for it. At last he was offered 9½d. per bushel, delivered at the railway station. Ninepence ha’penny per bushel, delivered at the railway station! Oh, my country! and fivepence per bushel out of that to a carrier to take it there! Australia, my mother!

Dad sold — because we couldn’t afford to await a better market; and when the letter came containing a cheque in payment, he made a calculation, then looked pitifully at Mother, and muttered — “Seven poun’s ten!”

[This account arose from Rudd’s experiences with small farmers on the Darling
Downs in the 1890s. The following account relates to similar problems experienced by small farmers elsewhere.\]

Maize-growing is followed by at least three-fourths of the farmers in this district. Years, however, of hard labour have failed to bring in anything approaching an adequate return for their time and trouble. . . . It being an admitted fact that maize-growing does not pay, sugar is bound to follow. The effect of sugar production on a large scale in the Isis would realise the dream of the politician of smiling homesteads on every side in place of former miserable hovels in the maize-growing days.

**Corn or Sugar?**

A farmer's first crop was usually of corn but this was not very profitable. In Bundaberg in 1876 the crop was wiped out, and the credit-givers — the banks and the storekeepers — moved in. Small businessmen also suffered; the auctioneer G. T. Bell was among them, as the following extract reveals.

Suddenly [in 1876] the district received a terrible reverse by a failure in the maize crop — some disease attacking the cobs of corn.

Nearly every businessman in the place was ruined. The farmers could not settle their six month's accounts; and meetings of creditors and insolvencies were the order of the day. To add to our troubles our only bank “put the screw on” — owing to the New South Wales Government bringing in a measure to divide the Government deposits among the various banks — the one, of which ours was a branch, being the holder at that time of some two millions of Government funds.

I was the last of seven forced into the Insolvency Court by this unforeseen combination of circumstances. And in July of the same year, I returned to Bundaberg from Brisbane, after giving
up all my worldly possessions to my creditors. So little did people think of the chances of the recovery of the district that over one thousand pounds of my book debts were sold by auction — by myself! — under instructions from the trustee of the estate, for the sum of twenty-five pounds!

I returned from the metropolis to Bundaberg one Saturday night — my world wealth amounting to exactly thirty-two shillings and sixpence!

The distress among the poor farmers and their hard-working families was very acute. The majority of them did not know the taste of butcher’s meat for months, and subsisted on pumpkins, sweet potatoes, wallabies and birds caught in snares and traps.

Fortunately the winter crop of maize was very prolific, and the people soon recovered from their impecunious condition; but several of the old pioneer storekeepers were completely wiped out. New blood and fresh capital came along; and many people have since made moderate fortunes and successes on the ashes of the first comers who paved the way and went to the wall.

Sugar supplanted maize eventually; and land, both in town and farming areas, increased in value enormously.

Selecting a Farm

Government encouragement was not enough to ensure success in establishing a new farm. The following trials and tribulations of the fictional characters, Dad, Mother and Dave, as they took up their new selection were typical of the hardships that faced new settlers who went on to the land without capital. Family labour (and denial) was necessary for survival. Short stories and novels can provide useful historical understanding, when based upon real life experiences; in this case Arthur Hoey Davis (pen-name Steele Rudd) had seen farmers struggling on the Darling Downs.


It’s twenty years ago now since we settled on the Creek. Twenty years! I remember well the day we came from Stanthorpe, on Jerome’s dray — eight of us, and all the things — beds, tubs, a bucket, the two cedar chairs with the pine bottoms and backs
that Dad put in them, some pint-pots and old Crib. It was scorching hot, too — talk about thirst! At every creek we came to we drank till it stopped running.

Dad didn't travel with us: he had gone some months before, to put up the house and dig the waterhole. It was a slabbed house, with shingled roof, and space enough for two rooms; but the partition wasn't up. The floor was earth; but Dad had a mixture of sand and fresh cow-dung, which he used to keep it level. About once every month he would put it on; and everyone had to keep outside that day till it was dry. There were no locks on the doors; pegs were put in to keep them fast at night; and the slabs were not very close together, for we could easily see through them anybody coming on horseback. Joe and I used to play at counting the stars through the cracks in the roof.

The day after we arrived Dad took Mother and us out to see the paddock and the flat on the other side of the gully that he was going to clear for cultivation. There was no fence round the paddock, but he pointed out on a tree the surveyor's marks, showing the boundary of our ground. It must have been fine land, the way Dad talked about it! There was very valuable timber on it, too, so he said, and he showed us a place, among some rocks on a ridge, where he was sure gold would be found, but we weren't to say anything about it. Joe and I went back that evening and turned over every stone on the ridge, but didn't find any gold.

No mistake, it was a real wilderness — nothing but trees, "goannas", dead timber, and bears; and the nearest house — Dwyer's — was three miles away. I often wonder how the women stood it the first few years; and I can remember how Mother, when she was alone, used to sit on a log, where the lane is now, and cry for hours. Lonely! It was lonely.

Dad soon talked about clearing a couple of acres and putting in corn — all of us did, in fact — till the work commenced. It was a delightful topic before we started; but in two weeks the clusters of fires that illumined the whooping bush in the night, and the crash upon crash of the big trees as they fell, had lost all their poetry.

We toiled and toiled clearing those four acres, where the haystacks are now standing, till every tree and sapling that grew there was down. We thought then the worst was over; but how much we knew of clearing land! Dad was never tired of calculating and telling us how much the crop would fetch if the ground
could only be got ready in time to put it in; so we laboured the harder.

With our combined male and female forces and the aid of a sapling lever we rolled and thundered big logs together in the face of Hell's own fires; and when there were no logs to roll it was tramp, tramp, the day through, gathering armfuls of sticks, while the clothes stuck to our backs with a muddy perspiration. Sometimes Dan and Dave would sit in the shade beside the billy of water and gaze at the small patch that had taken so long to do; then they would turn hopelessly to what was before them and ask Dad (who would never take a spell) what was the use of thinking of ever getting such a place cleared? And when Dave wanted to know why Dad didn't take up a place on the plain, where there were no trees to grub and plenty of water, Dad would cough as if something was sticking in his throat, and then curse terribly about the squatters and political jobbery. He would soon cool down, though, and get hopeful again.

"Look at the Dwyers," he'd say; "from ten acres of wheat they got £70, last year, besides feed for the fowls; they've got corn in now, and there's only the two."

It wasn't only burning-off! Whenever there came a short drought the waterhole was sure to run dry; then it was take turns to carry water from the springs — about two miles. We had no draught horse, and if we had there was neither water-cask, trolley, nor dray; so we humped it — and talk about a drag! By the time you returned, if you hadn't drained the bucket, in spite of the big drink you'd take before leaving the springs, more than half would certainly be spilt through the vessel bumping against your leg every time you stumbled in the long grass.

Somehow, none of us liked carrying water. We would sooner keep the fires going all day without dinner than do a trip to the springs.

One hot, thirsty day it was Joe's turn with the bucket, and he managed to get back without spilling very much. We were all pleased because there was enough left after the tea had been made to give each a drink. Dinner was nearly over; Dan had finished, and was taking it easy on the sofa, when Joe said:

"I say, Dad, what's a nater-dog like?" Dad told him. "Yellow, sharp ears and bushy tail." "Those muster bin some then thet I seen — I don't know 'bout the bushy tail — all th' hair had com-ed off." "Where'd y' see them, Joe?" we asked. "Down 'in th' springs floating about — dead."
Then everyone seemed to think hard and look at the tea. I didn’t want any more. Dan jumped off the sofa and went outside; and Dad looked after Mother.

At last the four acres, excepting the biggest of the iron-bark trees and about fifty stumps — were pretty well cleared; and then came a problem that couldn’t be worked-out on a draught-board. I have already said we hadn’t any draught horses; indeed, the only thing on the selection like a horse was an old “tuppy” mare that Dad used to straddle. The date of her foaling went further back than Dad’s, I believe; and she was shaped something like an alderman. We found her one day in about eighteen inches of mud, with both eyes picked out by the crows, and her hide bearing evidence that a feathery tribe had made a roost of her carcase. Plainly, there was no chance of breaking up the ground with her help. We had no plough, either; how then was the corn to be put in? That was the question.

Dan and Dave sat outside in the corner of the chimney, both scratching the ground with a chip and not saying anything. Dad and Mother sat inside talking it over. Sometimes Dad would get up and walk round the room shaking his head; then he would kick old Crib for lying under the table. At last Mother struck something which brightened him up, and he called Dave.

“Catch Topsy and — ” He paused because he remembered the old mare was dead. “Run over and ask Mister Dwyer to lend me three hoes.” Dave went; Dwyer lent the hoes; and the problem was solved. That was how we started.

The “Cockatoo” Farmer

The “cockie” is a term of derision for the small, struggling farmer; the “Dad and Dave” stories fit into this class of farming. From the late 1880s the government was taking steps to encourage farming and make it more scientific; for example, the Agricultural College was opened at Gatton in 1897 and the Queensland Agricultural Journal started publishing the same year. By this time, better-established, prosperous, scientifically operated farms could be found in some parts of Queensland, mainly on the Darling Downs. In most areas, however, the “cockie” was still pioneering — clearing virgin land, putting in crops, struggling to make enough to live on.

The great strides made in agricultural reform during the past few years would give colour to the remark of a late visitor to the Queensland Agricultural College, that — "The day of the cockie is past." And this would appear to be the case to anyone who has only visited the splendid farms on the Darling Downs and on other great plains in different parts of the colony. Not only on the rich treeless plains do we observe the higher forms of agricultural procedure, but they are also in full evidence in districts which were once heavily timbered, such as the land bordering on the Bremer, Brisbane, Logan, Albert, and other south-eastern rivers. Further inland, we see still more evidence of scientific farming as at Laidley, Gatton, Forest Hill, Rosewood, and in other directions, as, for instance, on the North Coast line from Nundah to Yandina. Everywhere the farmers, whose lands have long been cleared of timber and stumps, have adopted the latest styles of farm implements.

In the dairying districts, again, we see a vast improvement in dairy stock and in swine. On all sides the value of the silo to the dairy farmer is being recognised, and by-and-by, we shall hear no more of stock starving for want of feed. . . .

Again, it may be observed that the old slab and bark or shingle-roofed 'humpy' has everywhere on the plains and on older scrub land given place to the neat well-built 'frame house', or, as we should call it in Queensland, the weather-board cottage with its cool verandas and surrounding garden. The only blot on the scene is the universal iron roof. . . .

Some may ask, "What is a cockatoo farmer?" The reply is, that he is the man who laid the foundation of the prosperous agriculture of today. He is the man who, in the face of great difficulties, made the rich agricultural districts of Rosewood Scrub, the Isis, the Oxley, Brisbane, in fact; who turned the dense scrub or jungle into the thriving agricultural districts they are today. He was the pioneer to whom we owe our present-day agricultural prosperity.

With no capital beyond a few pounds, which he expended in tools and rations, he attacked scrubs which would make a new arrival stand aghast if he were told to go there and make a home and a living for himself, and many of them, despite great difficulties, of which droughts and floods were not the least, are now reaping the reward of their early labours, and are living in comfort and affluence. But are there no cockatoo farmers now? It needs only to travel into the Blackall Range, the Blenheim
Mountain scrubs, to take a tour in the North amongst the sugar-growers, on all the Northern rivers, to receive ocular demonstration that the cockatoo farmer is still at his glorious, self-denying, laborious work, and that work will be continued until the very last tree is felled on the very last scrub selection in the country.

But how many sight-seers and globe-trotters ever venture into the mountain scrubs? There is the place to see the true pioneer of Queensland farming. Following the timber-getter and shingle-splitter, come the men dauntless and full of energy who carve out a home for themselves in a wilderness which might well make the stranger exclaim: "Is it possible that men can be found stout enough of heart to attack this tremendous jungle?" Not only are the men found to attempt it, but they do it, and after years of toil and privation, we see, in place of the mass of tree vegetation, miles of cleared land, covered with luxuriant crops of sugar-cane, maize, potatoes, arrowroot, lucerne, etc. Townships arise, sugar-mills are built, and the district where once the sole occupants were the dingo and the wallaby, becomes wealthy and prosperous. No plough or horses can be used by the cocka-
too farmer for two or three years. All work is done with the hoe. All his acres are studded with innumerable stumps. Every bag of corn or potatoes has to be carried on his back out of the field. When sugar-cane has been planted on newly-felled scrub it is necessary when his crop is ready for the mill to cut roads through the stumps to allow of the passage of the cane carts. Only after about three years can the scrub farmer begin to indulge the dream of a plough. Most of the stumps have rotted out by that time, and only the larger ones remain to be laboriously extracted. Often these pioneers locate themselves in waterless scrubs, and in addition to their daily labour have to cart water often for several miles. This is the case today in the mountain scrubs between Laidley and Gatton, as it was in earlier times in the Rosewood and other scrubs. The scrub farmer rarely can keep even one cow during his early struggle, so that often he and his family saw no milk except on occasion of a visit to the nearest township. Corned beef and bread constituted the family’s daily diet till a first crop of potatoes and vegetables could be grown. Today a better state of affairs obtains in this respect, owing to the extension of railways, but the labours of the “cockatoo farmer” are the same, and will be the same until, as we said before, the last scrub is cleared. The day of the “cockie”, then, is not past.

Through the twentieth century farming became increasingly mechanized. The photograph illustrates early reaping machinery at Yangan on the eastern Darling Downs about 1905. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
Labor Land Legislation

The Labor party's policy was opposed to giving freehold title over land; instead a variety of leases, including perpetual lease, was offered. Like the nineteenth century Liberals Labor people wanted to stop land being locked away by one individual: often it was not used productively.


The Pear Pest is bad, but next to that, men of the type of Kidman are the worst. These men today hold large areas of land which at one time was held under profitable occupation for sheep purposes, and today they are simply deserts carrying a few head of cattle and the country is fast becoming infested with native dogs and pests. These men neither employ labour nor do they improve their areas; they simply hold them for opportunities that may come for speculative purposes. . . . Should [the Bill] again fail to pass the other Chamber, then it is proposed to submit the Bill by referendum to the people of Queensland; because we believe that this Bill must appeal to the people of Queensland. . . . This Bill, without hesitation, sets out that in the future the tenure for agricultural land should be a lease in perpetuity — giving a man a title which will make him secure and at the same time at a price which he cannot possibly obtain under any other system. . . . It is designed that he have cheap land.

[By 1916 various pests were beginning to make inroads into rural lands, in particular prickly pear. Sidney Kidman had become the biggest landholder in Queensland.]

I want at this stage to make plain to the public the Government’s reasons for not agreeing to give one-third of the area that has fallen in to the former lessees by extensions of their leases. We have a duty to the country — a duty to all sections of the public, who tell us they are willing and anxious to develop that land in smaller areas; and the duty of a Government is to give them the opportunity. The land belongs to the Crown. There is no great cost in getting it; but there is a tremendous cost in developing it. There are any number of people with money who are willing and anxious to put their sons on the land in Western Queensland; and to say that the Scottish Australian Investment
Throughout the twentieth century, closer land settlement has been a marked feature of the policies of all governments; this illustration shows a closer settlement scheme for the Brisbane valley in 1904. Reprinted from *Queenslander*, 30 January 1904.
Company, which has many stations, Goldsbrough, Mort, and Company, and the Coreena Pastoral Company should get preferences when others are willing and anxious to make their homes upon the land and develop it similarly to the way in which the companies have been developing it would be a fatal political blunder. And I do not believe — I cannot believe — that the Opposition as an Opposition, as a Country Party, standing for a principle — for the man on the land — can put up a case in this Chamber or anywhere else in favour of giving back to these companies any portion of land which can be settled by selectors who will live on that land with their families.

The Cause of Closer Settlement

In 1920 Premier Theodore was rebuffed in his attempt to obtain a loan for Queensland from London financiers; this rebuff was partially linked to opposition from pastoralists in Queensland who objected to Labor's land and tax policies. On principle, and stung by this refusal, Labor governments gave little attention to the sheep and cattle industries, and aimed to break down the big runs and subdivide them for closer settlement. Premier McCormack had little time for the big pastoral companies — often based overseas — that were so powerful. The Upper Burnett and Callide land settlement scheme was an example of the government's large-scale planning for subdivision.


It was invariably recognised that, with the coming of the railway and the demand for closer settlement, the time of the 1,000 square-mile area had passed away. The inevitable was accepted by these people. My own personal opinion is that no Government could refuse to allow a man with the money to settle on 20,000 or 30,000 acres, with the object of making a living for himself on that property. The argument is unanswerable. In the old days when all this land was held in big areas, were there any really nice towns in Western Queensland? The centres of population have grown up in the districts where the big leases have fallen in and the grazing farmer has become the proprietor of the land. I was through most of that country many years ago, so that I am not wholly without knowledge of Western Queensland.
I have seen the growth of towns like Hughenden, Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, and Blackall, which has been soley due to the advent of the grazing farmer. If we are going to get settlement in those western areas, the settlement must take place in areas on which men can make a good living. We are going to secure that by allowing the settler a good margin for carrying on. In that way we shall people our empty spaces.

The fact of a district like Longreach getting, say, 200 settlers with their families on this land means better conditions of life, better schools, and better everything that counts in the life of such towns.

If we were only considering the wool industry — the production of wool and the produce therefrom — a good case could be made for the keeping of the big areas for the more profitable working of the industry — I do not deny that. In that respect the State loses by closer settlement. It could be worked more profitably as a big sheep undertaking than it can by small selectors. But would anybody tell me that progress lies in that direction? Every country in the world has had to give way in regard to the wholesale control of land as settlement advances, and give the land to smaller settlers. The financial factor is not the only factor to be considered.

**Dairying in the Twenties and Thirties**

In the 1920s and 1930s the government keenly sought to promote dairying and agriculture in general. It was part of its policy of closer settlement, of getting people out of cities and on to the land. Moreover, it seemed that a rural life was the most satisfactory way of handling problems of unemployment and economic depression.


Does this, then, mean that dairying should be restricted to the requirements of Australian consumption, or little more? We do not think so.

Of our great primary industries, only wool, meat, and minerals compete with other countries in the markets of the world. All other primary industries are bolstered in some way or other.
Even timber, which has been given us lavishly by nature, without any costs of production, is buttressed by tariff imposts on foreign woods, which, in the case of Baltic Pine, range from 100 per cent. to 200 per cent. \textit{ad valorem}, according to the size of logs. Only the wool, the cattle, and mineral industries stand alone and unsupported. After these industries the Dairying Industry ranks next in economic soundness.

To say, therefore, that the Dairying Industry should not be extended would be a counsel of despair. It would mean the end of closer settlement because no farming would pay; the congregation of people in impoverished cities; and eventually the overthrow of our social order. Not by such craven policies shall Australia find the way out!

We need to go forth boldly to meet our economic adversaries, to readjust our costs of production, to revise and reduce our taxation, and also our tariffs on many items, and to alter the basis of our whole wage system if need be, without penalising the worker, and particularly the family man. Unless closer settlement is made prosperous so that people may be distributed throughout the country, Australia will never succeed. Approximately 30,000 boys reach working age in Australia every year, and a large proportion of these must go on the land. How are they to be placed if land settlement wanes and production is curtailed? We cannot stay still; we either go forward or back!

It is well also to remember that, in an economic muddle, the farmer is the most independent person of all. The city man is
wholly subservient to the economic system but the farmer is not. To quote from a recent issue of a leading Producer's journal: —

"Farmers are carrying on a job far older than the money and credit system. They are handicapped by its rules, but in a pinch, in most cases, they can defy them. No penalty of sudden extermination hangs over their heads. If their books do not balance, if their debits exceed their credits, they can throw their books out of the window and go out and pick some vegetables or milk the cow. They can stand a siege, if they must, far better than city folk."

Any readjustment of our economic system which does not start with the man on the land, to encourage our exporting industries, will, in our opinion, be starting at the wrong end and eventually will be futile.

Pastoral Problems in the Twenties and Thirties

Although the government and community in general believed that the subdivision of large runs into smaller grazing and farming areas was best, success did not come easily for the smaller rural operators. Even though rural activities had been pursued in Queensland for one hundred years, more knowledge was still needed about the correct area for efficient and profitable rural operations. Climate, prices, markets, and pests still bedevilled the primary producer.


The next big land reform, destined to have far-reaching results on the prosperity of Queensland, was the constitution of the Prickly-pear Land Commission by the Theodore–McCormack Government in 1924. This Commission was given administrative and judicial jurisdiction over all prickly-pear land, totalling 65,000,000 acres. Of this area about 26,000,000 acres was so densely infested with pear as to be of very little value. . . . The scientific investigations were successful, and the biological material, when spread throughout the State, completely annihilated most of the pear. . . .

Thus the devastation wrought by prickly-pear a short ten years
ago is now merely a memory, and instead of its terrifying and ever-increasing spread one meets with development on every hand. To date the great majority of lessees have fulfilled their proportionate part of development conditions, while many have exceeded requirements.

Meanwhile, in other spheres of land administration many errors largely the result of the influence of uninformed public opinion, had been made. These errors were subsequently remedied, so far as subsequent rectification ever can be a remedy.

The general prosperity and the keen land hunger experienced in the years following the Great War, forced the undue subdivision of Crown lands. Soldier settlement blocks, the subdivision of repurchased estates, the new Upper Burnett and Callide Settlement, the Theodore Irrigation Settlement, ordinary grazing land settlement, both cattle and sheep — all were wrongly based.

The current idea was that great incomes could be made from small areas of land, and the Government was pressed and badgered to take land away from those who were using it to advantage and open it in small areas. Wellshot grazing blocks, in the Longreach district, were made available in areas of 5,000 acres, and Mount Abundance blocks (Roma district) in areas of 2,560 acres, although three times the area in each case is needed to make a reasonable livelihood.

This land-seeking frenzy culminated in 1924, when 6,560 applicants sought to acquire a single block of 10,000 acres near Longreach. Subsequently the bubble burst.

The bursting of the bubble was due to the 1926-28 drought. The previous decade had been a time of unparalleled good seasons and prices. Then, with no one expecting it, drought descended on the grazing areas, and holdings once so eagerly sought after became more of a liability than an asset.

As months went by without rain, graziers commenced to feed their sheep, hoping that the dry period would be of short duration, but the drought went on and on. Having once commenced artificial feeding, graziers could not well give up — any day the rain would come — and so immense sums, often exceeding the value of the sheep, were expended in keeping them alive. This expenditure was more pronounced on the downs country in the Central-West and the North-West; other districts had edible scrub or dry grass available. . . .

In the drought of 1900-02 sheep numbers fell from 19,500,000 to 7,200,000, whereas in the 1926-28 drought the reduction was
from 20,600,000 to 16,600,000. The economic advantage reaped by the State from the graziers' expenditure is thus apparent. . . .

This was the turning point in the financial history of the Queensland Sheep Industry. The graziers helped the State but well-nigh ruined themselves.

**Economic Development: City versus Country**

While the Labor government was actively promoting rural development and settlement, partly in the hope of arresting the drift to the cities, the Opposition argued for more emphasis upon promoting secondary industries and urban development. H. M. Russell for the Opposition expressed concern about Queensland's backwardness in secondary industry compared with the southern states.

Evidently the main objective that the Government have in mind is the greatest possible development of primary production because most of the works that have been outlined involve rural occupations. It appears to be the desire of the Government to bring about the fullest encouragement and development of our rural industries and at the same time prevent the aggregation of large populations in the cities and towns by sending the men to the country where they will be used in rural occupations. There is only passing reference in the Governor's Speech to the absolute need for the greater encouragement of secondary industries and consequently, I think I am reasonable in the deduction that the main objective is the fullest encouragement of rural production.

Our primary industries have reached a very high peak of production and I am quite in accord with any movement to bring them up to a greater pitch of excellence, provided, of course, that we are able to market the products. Some persons say that the primary industries are the backbone of the country and while I feel that they are the main source of our wealth, it would be a very unsound policy to rely on primary production alone. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether the inauguration of this policy will stop the drift to the cities. A good deal has been said about the need for arresting this drift and bringing about a greater
population in country areas. Recent reference was made to the matter by Mr. Colin Clark, Government Statistician, in the June issue of *Economic News*, in which he says—

"The so-called 'drift from the land' is an inevitable economic process. It can only be reversed in a country like Australia if we concentrate our activities on production of primary products for export and purchase all our manufactured goods from abroad. Even so, the provision of services for our population would continue to divert some 30 per cent of the working population to tertiary production."

I do not think that Australia is prepared to subscribe to any such policy. No nation has ever become great by being a nation of primary producers — hewers of wood and drawers of water. If any nation is to progress it is necessary to establish secondary industries, and a country that depends on primary industries alone is depending on a very rotten reed indeed, particularly in case of need — in case of war. . . .

Instead of forcing large bodies of men into the country I suggest that we should be able to maintain them in the cities, particularly in the large centres of population in the rural areas. I do
not altogether wish to concentrate big bodies of men in the metropolis but surely cities like Ipswich and Toowoomba should be able to establish secondary industries and employ a large section of the population in them who may not be suited for employment in primary industries.

The wishes of the people concerned should also be taken into consideration. I would not be a party to forcing men against their will to go into the back blocks to engage in occupations that might not suit them. I am not suggesting that employment in the country does not offer better health, nor am I suggesting that there should not be a greater distribution of population in our rural areas, but I do say that opportunities exist in Queensland for the establishment of secondary industries which would create greater employment for factory workers.

The End of Pastoralism?

In 1950 the Labor government set up a royal commission to investigate the settlement and use of pastoral lands. From the 1920s successful Labor governments tended to overlook the pastoral industries and sometimes discriminate against them. Big companies and monopolies should be replaced by family groups of small farmers, the royal commission advised.


From these early struggles can be gleaned principles of lasting truth as applying to land settlement: —

Man will brave all hardships and perils to acquire land and knows few restraints in the struggle to retain it:

Land policy must be realistic and directed to the future even when dealing with problems of the present:

The pastoralist must make way for the farmer and land must be put to the most intense use for which it is suitable:

The profit of the individual must give way to the needs of the many — a democratic people will not permit monopolisation of the lands of their country. . . .
The principle of leasehold was adopted and a system of tenures devised to ensure that there would always be a steady flow of land back into the hands of the Crown, and without cost to it, to meet the progressive needs of new settlement, until that far off time when all the land would have been put to intense agricultural use. This point was to be reached in three stages.

There would be a primary or pioneering tenure of Pastoral Lease for a finite term of years but without restriction as to areas or ownership and therefore attractive to Companies and Corporations.

When this lease had run its course these Companies and Corporations were no longer needed, nor to be encouraged, and the land would be broken up into grazing selections to be held for the exclusive use and benefit of the individual and with limitations as to the area one man might hold. These leases could be renewed only until such time as the land in them became suitable for, or was needed for, still closer settlement purposes when they would again break up into smaller and preferably farming units.

As has been explained elsewhere, the policy of successive Queensland Governments has been the gradual extinction of large sheep holdings and the setting up in their place of Grazing Selectors personally residing on units of comfortable and sufficient size to ensure the continued production of good quality fleece and stock.

That this policy has achieved desirable results is generally and widely agreed and we heard little, if any, adverse criticism of the living area standards applied by the Land Administration Board to subdivisions made since 1927, nor in fact of land administration in general.

The soundest land policy is that which will create the greatest number of permanently resident families, consistent with a reasonable way of life, and only closer settlement can offer this. In short, the welfare of the inland is to be measured by the number of families it can be brought to support. Large properties do not, and have yet to demonstrate that they can, offer to more than a few of their employees the opportunity to fulfil man’s natural destiny of marriage, home and family.

The life of station workers is arduous, often lonely and the standard of accommodation has usually been poor; opportunities for advancement are slight and these things, combined with
the denial of that sense of permanency only to be offered by home life, lead to a high turnover of labour.

The provision and permanent maintenance of married quarters and up to date amenities on big properties for all those employees who might desire them is impracticable, nor could these ever be a charge on either the State or the individual employee.

In consequence there can be no permanent future in the pastoral economy for very many large holdings and a gradual breaking up into living areas units seems to be inescapable.

The Peak Downs Scheme, 1948

In 1948 the Queensland government made arrangements with British agencies for a massive, planned scheme of land settlement and food production in the Peak Downs area of central Queensland; it was partly designed to solve food shortages in Britain after the Second World War. Large-scale resumptions of pastoral runs were made but, despite much state planning for sorghum production, the seasons and pests conspired against the success of the scheme.

Queensland Country Life, 1 April 1948, 6.

As the picture unfolds of the British Food Corporation’s sorghum and pig plan for Central Queensland, and the implications of legislation now before Parliament become clear, it is evident that Queensland has been chosen for a gigantic experiment in State-controlled farming.

There are certain perplexing angles. Most people were under the impression that Britain needed foodstuffs and oils in a hurry. The C.Q. scheme disregards the time factor. It is a long-range plan which will take years to bring to fruition, by which time it may be found that the country within a 100-mile radius of Emerald is not a farming paradise after all!

Surely the Government’s advisors have stressed the risks associated with any pioneering attempt at farming in an area of such erratic rainfall.

Remember, every tractor, every mile of fencing wire, to be used in this scheme will deprive some established farmer of the opportunity of making an immediate contribution to increased production.
Frankly we are sceptical of a State-controlled venture of this kind succeeding. Its future would be hazardous in the hands of people with a lifetime’s experience of local conditions. Controlled by public servants without local knowledge it appears to be doomed from the outset.

Perhaps we are about to see £2 million go down the drain. . . . The problem the Corporation and the Queensland Government will have to solve is one of finding feed for the pigs when the sorghum crop fails — as assuredly it will fail in seasons of low rainfall.

Brigalow Scheme

In the 1960s the Queensland government (with financial help from the Commonwealth) undertook the development of useless brigalow scrub lands in the Fitzroy River basin. The land was cleared and through ballot and auction taken up by cattlemen; later some of the land was also sown with grain. On the whole this scheme has been quite successful, unlike the Peak Downs scheme.


At the moment the Brigalow Scheme is very much in its infancy and the introduced pastures on the pulled brigalow country are considered to be some of the finest cattle fattening areas in Queensland, but I think a bit of time is needed before we make our final assessment of the scheme. . . .

To see this country today, and then endeavour to visualize what it looked like half a century ago, makes one stand in amazement and wonder if it’s a dream or a nightmare. The general transformation is unbelievable. The country more or less resembles nature’s open black soil downs, with pastures of green panic, Rhodes and buffel grass [various herbages] growing profusely. . . .

Around my old home town of Rolleston, we had scores of thousands of acres of brigalow, wilga and prickly pear scrub, absolutely useless and full of wild unbranded cattle. Cattle were born and died of old age in these scrubs, without ever having a brand on them.
Clearing the scrub and forest was an arduous task that the early selector had to face. Through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries timber-felling and bullock teams hauling logs were common sights in the bush. Here, a team near Yarraman winds along a rutted track (top). By the 1940s more machinery was adapted to land clearing; in the bottom picture, a modified tank has cleared some brigalow scrub. Top photo reprinted from D. J. Beal, *Rosalie Shire Council* (Toowoomba: Rosalie Shire Council, 1979); bottom photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
On the eastern side of the Expedition Range, large areas of leasehold land, practically all brigalow scrub, were considered so useless that the Lands Department couldn’t even get anyone interested enough to select it.

By the mid 1970s problems were being experienced by new brigalow settlers because they were caught in the serious slump that affected cattle-growers around Australia. R. Braithwaite raised the matter in federal parliament.

Braithwaite: I would like to speak tonight about an area that combines the problems of the beef industry and that of rural poverty. The comparison is all the more striking because this particular area fringes on probably one of the greatest and wealthiest mining areas in Australia. I refer to the Utah Development Company mines at Dysart and Moranbah. In 1967 the Brigalow Land Agreement Act was introduced by the Commonwealth to provide financial assistance to Queensland for area 3 of the Brigalow scheme. The project involved breaking down the larger leases previously existing into smaller living areas.

The scheme was evolved through the active encouragement of the Queensland State Government and the Federal Government at a time when the beef industry was affluent and the future appeared bright. Conditions on the ballot blocks ensured a minimal equity by the settlers with the Queensland Land Administration Commission allowing for the block being paid off over a period of years, interest free. Further funds advanced through the Land Administration Commission by the Commonwealth were allocated towards improvements and the purchase of breeding cattle at a variable rate of interest, currently at 10.2 per cent, repayable over 20 years from the date of advance. The interest rate of the commencement of the loan in 1971 was only 7 per cent.

Before full development could be undertaken in Brigalow area 3, and before the breeding herds could develop saleable cattle the beef market deteriorated badly. Interest rates on loans escalated dramatically and the political climate changed, thereby making unattainable the budgets and financial projections on which the original settlers had been accepted for the scheme. The changed circumstances were unforeseen by government,
financiers, stock and market specialists and particularly the settlers themselves. The changed circumstances must pose questions of future viability for some of the settlers, even if the beef market improves to a cut-even point. . . .

I do hope that the Government and its Ministers will take note of the particular problems of these settlers. They are people who have chosen to follow this way of life and to develop a particularly rich area of land and who, through circumstances beyond their control, have fallen upon bad times.

McVeigh: They are the salt of the earth.

Braithwaite: They are, too. I believe that if the Government could assist in the manner in which I have mentioned it would assist not only Brigalow 3 but rural areas throughout Australia and particularly the beef industry.

Queensland is still known as the beef state, although the industry in recent years has gone through very hard times. By mid century a more scientific approach was being taken to cattle-raising, with the improvement of stock by the more extensive use of tick-resistant breeds such as Zebu and Santa Gertrudis. However, contracting markets have constantly plagued growers. Meanwhile, although by the 1940s Queensland had become a prominent dairying state, that industry has declined markedly since then, as a result of federally inspired rationalization schemes. Today Queensland often imports dairy products. Sheep and wheat are not as significant for Queensland as they are for some of the other states but both sectors have been buffeted in recent times by problems in world marketing. Until 1957 the pace of freeholding land moved very slowly in Queensland; emphasis was put upon leasehold tenures. Under the current conservative government, however, the freeholding of land has been encouraged.
The Sugar Industry
Sugar on the Burnett

Although in the convict period the potential of growing sugarcane in Queensland was discussed, it was not until the early 1860s that commercial production was successfully undertaken. Initially growing was attempted in the Brisbane region by people such as Captain Louis Hope at Ormiston, Moreton Bay. By the 1870s the young sugar industry was rapidly spreading north from its base in the Moreton region. Mackay became the most important growing area but plantations were being established all along the coast: at Geraldton (Innisfail), Mossman and Bundaberg. Various problems of adjustment were experienced, such as rust. The following document relates to early sugarcane cultivation in the Bundaberg region. While small farmers were experimenting with various crops, plantations were also being established, along with small crushing mills.

Bundaberg Star, 19 May 1876, 4.

Maize can be produced at less cost, and with less risk, than any other crop; that is during the early days, the tentative stage, of an agricultural district.

The harvest is nearly certain, and however abundant, a market more or less remunerative is always to be found. . . . Potatoes here are practically untried; at best they yield 80 per cent less than in those countries where they are either indigenous or have been acclimatised for centuries. . . . Wheat has been tried, but never tried in earnest. . . . The poor farmer, at any rate, cannot be expected to speculate, to abandon a certainty for an uncertainty. Wheat may indeed be ultimately grown with profit on the Burnett, but the proof will not be demonstrated by the class of farmers who are complaining of the low price of maize just now; and in the meantime the supply of the latter is increasing season after season in a greater ratio than the demand. No one grows anything else; every extended clearing means so many more acres under maize; every fresh settler but adds to the plethora of supply. If these conditions were likely to be permanent, the prospects of this portion of the Mulgrave would be gloomy indeed; but even thus early in the history of settlement here there is hope of a change for better, in the probable development of an industry which, notwithstanding the serious epidemics of last year, is still looked upon as the sheet-anchor of the agricultural interest in Queensland.

The sugar industry here is in the early experimental stage of its existence; there are, however, two sugar mills in use, and a
third will shortly be erected by Mr. Henry Palmer, of Maryborough. The first mill was put up by Mr. Richard Palmer, of Millbank, about three years ago, but the plant was scarcely more than equal to the requirements of his own estate. Mr. John Stewart, the Father of Bundaberg, followed his example the next year, though his machinery was on a smaller scale. ... Nor will the purchase, by Mr. Henry Palmer, of the Good Hope mill, from Messrs. Graham and Co., of Maryborough, be any incentive to the planting of cane, his own crop being quite large enough to keep his proposed factory at work all the year round.

The plant is small for the size of the property, the engine being of only four-horse power, while the rollers measure only 16 inches. There is sufficient power however, to crush about 2000 gallons of juice a day — less than a ton of sugar — by the ordinary process of manufacture, even at a high density.

The Hon. A. H. Browne’s plantation at Fairymede, a selection taken up under the sugar regulations, in the heart of Tantiba run, is a thing of the past, the cane-field being turned into a meadow.

At North Bundaberg is Mr. Dunn’s farm (Woondooma), which comprises about 100 acres of land — rich, deep alluvial soil — under the plough, the greater part of it lately under corn and grass for winter fodder. ...

There remains on Woondooma from sixty to sixty acres of scrub still standing, but this will be cleared by next year and under crop.

Five acres of this farm are leased to a fraternity of Chinamen gardeners, who cultivate it in their usual high and minute fashion, and are the only source of vegetable supply to the township. They obtain water by sinking, irrigate by channels and sub-channels or watercourses between the beds in the usual way. ...

One of the river frontage selections between this expanse of scrub and North Bundaberg is Mr. Henry Palmer's sugar plantation, and on the opposite or south side, but a little nearer Bundaberg, is Mr. Richard Palmer's estate, comprising 480 acres of land, a little more than half being alluvial scrub. 180 acres of this are under cane, about 60 of which will be crushed during the forthcoming season, the remaining 120 standing over for next year. Between the stools of this latter an excellent crop of corn is growing which has somewhat retarded the cane, a matter
however, of no material consequence in a crop destined for so distant a crushing as 1877.

I noticed on either side of a well-kept drive, gravelled and clean as a garden walk, a patch of good-looking Bourbon cane, which has weathered the rust and the wet of the fatal year 1875, and also some very fine-looking Bourbon ratoons of last year.

... The plant is housed in a well-constructed building, roofed with corrugated iron, and floored with hardwood boards, as clean and smooth as an oaken dancing-floor. The engine, of thirty-five horse-power, by Messrs. Walker and Co., of Maryborough, as are the double-geared mill, rollers — four feet wide, clarifiers, and indeed all the machinery except the centrifugals — under-driven — and wetzel pans, of which latter there are three. Besides the sixty acres I mentioned as being destined for this season's crushing, Mr. Palmer will put through the mill about fifty acres of cane, grown on Mr. Henry Palmer's plantation, some account of which I shall furnish you with in my next.

Plantation Society

A plantocracy emerged in Queensland in the 1870s. It was strongest in the Mackay region, the heart of sugar-growing, but wealthy and powerful planters were to be found scattered all along the tropical coast. They aped the life of earlier planters in the West Indies, built themselves grand homes, and generally led a leisurely life. They were normally "well-born and bred", had a good education, knew the right people. If they did not possess wealth themselves (which they frequently did) they could command it, and they acquired positions of political, national and local importance. The visiting British politician, Michael Davitt, described sugar country around Mackay.


Mackay (and district) has a population of about 15,000 white and 4000 Kanakas. The town has a sleepy and 'sugary' look. It is entirely dependent upon the sugar industry. The roads outside the municipal boundary were prairie tracks to a large extent, but fairly good for traffic, and were bounded by hedgerows of the rantan with a pretty flower, giving, with the bell-shaped hibiscus
Life was great for the plantation owners ensconced on their large estates, such as this one on the Burdekin River, Pioneer House, owned by the Drysdales. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

of blood-red bloom, the brightest of coloured borders to the yellow tints of the ripening fields of sugar cane on each hand. Now and again we got charming vistas of plantation scenery; houses perched on pretty knolls, groves of cocoanut palm trees spreading their graceful boughs and grateful foliage over the roadway, as if fanning the delicious air with their feather fronds, while birds with the brightest plumage flew from field to field. Miles upon miles of cane, in all stages of growth, from the dark green of the young plant to the golden hue of the ripened stalk, lay to the right and left as we wended our way over the luscious plain, with Kanakas moving about at work and filling in with a human detail, though a reproachful one, a landscape picture of the richest hues.

Sugar Milling

Most plantations were almost self-contained establishments, each with their own crushing mill. They operated on a large scale, with numerous labourers,
from raw Melanesian field workers to skilled white mill operators and supervisors. At Bundaberg the Gibson and Howes families combined to form Bingera plantation, which is still in existence. The degree of technology involved in milling was not particularly high, but it did bring some industrialization to Queensland — notably in the establishment of the machinery works of Walkers Limited at Maryborough.

_Bundaberg and Mount Perry Mail, 13 October 1885._

It is our pleasing duty to announce the completion of Messrs Gibson and Howes sugar factory at Bingera Plantation. This magnificent estate is situated some twelve miles from Bundaberg on the north bank of the Burnett River. The rich red scrub lands and chocolate forest loam soils have an elevated position some 200 feet above the bed of the river. Between 1883 and 1885 they have cleared and planted many hundreds of acres, erected a splendid sugar mill, a sawmill, expensive water pumping machinery, a railway, a tramway, erected 22 substantial buildings, put up several miles of fencing, and possess about three miles of portable rail for cane haulage. Over their railway all the iron-work used in the construction of the mill was carried. . . . The bricks used for setting the boilers, except the fire bricks, have also been obtained on the estate and are equal in all respects to any I have seen elsewhere.

An evening festival in celebration of the completion of the mill, was held by invitation in the large sugar house. The com-

Melanesians provided the brawn for the plantation industry — clearing land, planting and harvesting. Here, the numerous labourers indentured to the Gibson brothers' plantation at Bingera, near Bundaberg, were all assembled for a picnic. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
pany, which included all the white employees, seventy-five in all, with their wives and families, all settlers residing in the neighbourhood, and several visitors from Bundaberg, were banquetted in a most lavish style.

Sugar at Cairns, Mid 1880s

The Queensland economy was booming in the early 1880s and with it the sugar industry. Rapidly, new areas were coming into production, especially with a boost of capital from southern Australia. At Cairns’ Melbourne money had developed Hambledon plantation. Labour was pouring into these areas; the workers were mainly Melanesians but other groups were also involved, such as the Chinese.

W. R. O. Hill, 45 Years Experiences in North Queensland (Brisbane: Pole, 1907), 89-90.

I was the first Police Magistrate appointed to Cairns, where I had also to act as Polynesian Inspector. I found the town in a wild and primitive state, but evidently progressive, as many buildings were being erected. I was fortunate in securing half an acre of land on the beach, and on this I built a good house which was afterwards sold to R. A. Kingsford, once M.L.A. for South Brisbane.

The principal plantation was Hambleton, started in 1882 by Swallow and Derham, and that employed four hundred Kanakas and one hundred Chinese. Swallow and Derham expended a capital of about ninety thousand pounds before they got a penny in return. The machinery was up-to-date, and light tramways were run through an estate which only a few months before had been a dense scrub.

The Kanakas and Chinese were not a harmonious crowd, and the Chinese often gave us serious trouble.

An an election time in Cairns, when the local police were very busy, a serious strike at a critical time was reported, and something had to be done at once.

I therefore enlisted the services of the water police, who were armed and mounted on quiet nags. They proceeded to Hambleton, where it was necessary for me to arrest forty Chinamen, but
when marching them away, a mob of two hundred, armed mostly with cane knives, attempted a rescue.

With the assistance of a lot of European mill hands, we stuck to our men and bagged a few more, and when we had them secure in a large store room, it was necessary for me to go and pick up and attend to the wounded Chinamen, several of whom I found badly hurt, mostly by the Kanakas, who sided with us and belted the Chinkeys with sugar-cane waddies. One Chinaman was dead, but this was expected, and we knew exactly how he met with his death.

The Need for Labour

Clearing the tropical scrublands along the Queensland coast was arduous work; so was planting the sugarcane and harvesting it. In the nineteenth century it was commonly believed that white men could not work satisfactorily or healthily in the tropics, so a cheap alternative labour supply was needed. Close to Queensland were the islands of the South Pacific — Vanuatu (the New Hebrides), the Solomon Islands and New Guinea, and it was from there that the Melanesian peoples were brought to work in Queensland between 1863 and 1904.

J. Y. Walker, History of Bundaberg (Bundaberg, 1890), Appendix, ii.

A cheap and reliable source of labour is at present an indispensable condition to the profitable cultivation of sugar. [In Bundaberg], the bulk of the most valuable sugar land is newly-cleared volcanic scrub, a considerable proportion is stony and more or less encumbered with surface boulders, and a large area of scrub is still standing. Except at an impossible expense therefore such land cannot be made immediately fit for horse or steam cultivation. It follows that until stumps decay and stones are removed, most of the field work must be done by manual labour. For such work, as well as for thrashing and cutting, the kanaka is entirely suited. The white laborer cannot, or will not, except under the pressure of extreme want, perform such work. If he could or would, a sufficient supply is not available when requisite; and if there were, the enhanced cost, at current wages, would kill the industry.
Melanesian Stereotype

Although the Melanesians were necessary to the establishment of a successful sugar industry, Europeans generally took an unfavourable attitude towards them. Most saw the island labourers as less than human, an attitude that fitted in with much contemporary thinking about race. They were generally regarded as childlike, savage and immoral, and it was feared that they might weaken the moral fibre of western civilization. The supply of alcohol to Melanesians was forbidden by law but supplies still got through. Europeans frequently referred to Melanesians as Kanakas, boys, Marys, and other derogatory terms.


The predominate note in the Kanaka character is certainly a merry one. . . . He takes life as he finds it, and does not prematurely age himself trying to solve the complex, ever-varying problems of civilization. . . . A Kanaka is always a 'boy'. . . .

On a sugar plantation, whether cutting and burning scrub, weeding or cutting cane and loading it on the trucks for the mill, the 'boys' are always a cheerful feature in the landscape. . . . Board and lodgings, clothes, blankets, soap, pipes, tobacco, and medical attendance are questions about which the cane-tillers need take no thought. At the first tingle of the “knock-off” bell, “Bell, oh!” is repeated from field to field in every degree of shrillness, and soon the cane-rows are deserted. Not like tired labourers, but rather as frolicsome urchins school-released, do the gangs make for their huts. Some have long reeds with which they practise throwing spear, others skylarking, all are talking or shouting, with the exception of a few musical enthusiasts who stride along to the strumming of their jews' harps or reed mouth-organs. A gentleman from the Solomon Islands, perhaps, brings up the rear; with a small cloth round his waist, a black clay pipe stuck in the lobe of one ear; a round tin match-box in the other, and a red hibiscus flower in his hair, he looks an imposing object on the face of nature.

The Kanaka likes to be his own architect; he therefore generally builds his own grass hut, and refuses to live in the brick or wooden barracks with a galvanised roof which the plantation owner may erect for him. Although he scornfully rejects the idea of living in the barracks, he has no objection to keeping the precious box there, as they are not so liable to be burnt down. Every Kanaka has a trade box, in which he stores those treasures...
dear to his soul and pocket. His clothes, weapons, ornaments and musical instruments are all locked away together. The key he always carries with him, and it is a most exceptional thing for a box to be touched by anyone save the rightful owner. The rights of personal property are strictly regarded among Kanakas, but then, of course, they are only savages. They are, however, thoroughly communistic in their habits.

When the evening "ki-ki" [meal] is disposed of, the Kanaka begins to lay himself out for amusement. The musical contingent produce their mouth-organs, jews'-harps, and concertinas, and round the fires the boys from the different islands sing their songs of the immortal themes of love and warfare. Once fairly started, they will "meke" or dance and sing together for hours.

The weekly half-holiday on Saturday brings the Kanaka out in a new light. He dons those cherished garments stowed away in his box, and accompanied by his Mary, also gorgeously attired, proceeds to "walk-about". He visits his friends, and if there is a town within reasonable distance, it will be thronged with a law-abiding dusky crowd on Saturday night. The stores are never-ending sources of pleasure, for if a Kanaka does not want to buy anything for himself, he can always comment on the purchases of his friends and tender his advice. These are privileges of which, being of an eminently sociable disposition, he is never slow to avail himself. If he buys two or more articles at the same place, he pays for each separately, receiving his change each time. Thus he escapes the pitfalls of mental calculation.

As a sportsman the Kanaka is not a shining example. A Malli-collo boy was one day observed taking aim with a very old musket at a very small bird not twenty yards from him. The weapon was heavy and rusty, and probably required a twenty-pound pull of the trigger; consequently the barrel was dropped a little, the charge buried itself about ten yards from the muzzle, and the bird flew unharmed. "My Word!" said the would-be bird-slayer, rubbing his shoulder, "me no bin pull strong fellow that time." He was evidently under the impression that the harder the trigger was pulled the farther the shot would go — a conclusion to which his experience with his native bow and arrow would naturally lead him.

The Kanaka and his Mary, if he is fortunate enough to possess one, as a rule dwell happily together, each devoted to the other. They are, however, very jealous, and have a unique manner of
venting their feelings if aroused by the green-eyed monster. For the offended party at once proceeds to tear up every shred of clothing that may be in it; new or old, cheap or expensive, it all goes into small pieces. . . .

He is moreover, a vain personage, much given to adding to his personal appearance by strange ornaments. He also bores holes in his nose and ears. These are used in lieu of pockets. . . .

At intervals the Polynesian blood boils over, the instincts of a line of fighting ancestors are aroused. The natives of different islands take sides, spears and bows and arrows are looked to, and the favourite tomahawk is sharpened. . . . Thus armed, the antagonistic bands parade, each side keeping its spirits up by loud abuse of the other. At last a meeting comes off, generally on a holiday. The first performance consists of representatives of the rival forces, like heralds of old, howling defiances, from a safe distance, with truly Homeric fluency. Then a spear is thrown, the distance between the two warriors gradually lessens, and the *melee* becomes general.


The joys of living in a Kanaka town. On Xmas Eve 1900 Kanakas, inspired by whisky, gin, and opium, started to raise Cain in the town of Bundaberg. A posse of police, assisted by sundry citizens, managed to arrest the ring-leaders and eventually put down riot. Some of these days some of the Kanaka towns of Queensland will be laid in ruins by the drunken orgies of their semi-cannibal population. Nominally, grog is forbidden and withheld from the Polynesian; in reality, he gets as much as ever he wants when a spree is contemplated. Just think of it! A *thousand* semi-intoxicated heathen raising Hades round the residences of decent citizens; women and children unable to stir out without peril of outrage; business paralysed for hours in the neighbourhood and everyone filled with apprehension. And we are gravely informed by leading Q[ueensland] politicians that these fellows 'made the country and created the sugar industry'. If aforesaid legislators don't mind, those same howling savages will yet lay some of the cane-fields in ashes and rouse such a feeling in the sugar districts that deportation may be necessary.
White Labour or Melanesian Labour

The labour trade attracted many critics, not only in Australia but also in England, where a group of humanitarians based upon Exeter Hall mounted a campaign against the trade; they likened it to a revamped slave trade. The economic argument was that the Melanesian labourers were affording very cheap labour in contrast to the cost of white labour. Planters, however, argued that the industry could not survive without its cheap labour, and the writer Anthony Trollope tended to agree. Note that the word “Polynesian” was used but the labourers were, in fact, Melanesians.

Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne: Robertson, 1873), 94-95, 99-100.

The white labourer in Queensland, who is not a good political economist, does believe that cheaper labour than his own is injurious to himself, and therefore desires to keep the Polynesians away. He does not understand that the very business in which he is allowed to earn 4s. or 4s. 6d. a day would not exist — could not be carried on — without another class of labour at the rate of 2s. or 1s. 6d. a day. He therefore becomes quite as zealous in the cause as the philanthropist at home; but he in his zeal hates the shining Polynesian, whom he sees with a warmth greater even than that which the philanthropist throws into his love for his unseen man and brother. There are a pair of hands, and a supple body, and a willing spirit, and a ready brain to be had for 2s. a day — underselling the white man’s labour after a fashion most nefarious to the white labourer’s imagination! How can this crushing evil be avoided? Are there no means by which good labour at 2s. a day may be made possible — a thing not to be obtained in the colony of Queensland? Then the white labourer, with indistinct intelligence on the subject, hears something of his philanthropical friends at Exeter Hall, and begins to find that there may be common cause between them. . . .

It may be taken for granted that the sole object in England on the part of those who object to the emigration of Polynesians to Queensland is to save the islanders from suffering from oppression. It is said of these islanders that as they cannot understand English — and as they speak various languages amongst themselves, in regard to which it is impossible for us to send interpreters who shall understand them all — therefore they cannot understand the contracts made with them. That they understand
the verbal niceties of these contracts no one can imagine. Their contracts to them are very much the same as are our legal documents to most of us at home. We sign them, however, because from various concurrent causes, we believe them to be conducive to our advantage — not because we understand them. We trust the person who asks for our signature; and though we know that there is sometimes deceit and consequent misfortune, we believe that the chances are in our favour. . . . But the failure or success of the business will, I think, depend altogether on the manner in which the question of labour shall be settled. If the South Sea Islanders be expelled, it is possible that Chinese or Indian coolies may take their place. The exodus of the Chinese is probably as yet hardly more than commenced. But without imported labour I doubt whether Queensland sugar can be grown.

I found the cost to the sugar planter of these Polynesians to be about £75 per head for the whole term of three years — which was divided as follows: —

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey out and back (which is always paid for by the employer of the man)</td>
<td>£15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost of getting the man up to the station</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages for three years</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rations (3s 9d. a week, say for three years)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets, clothes, etc.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For lost time by illness, etc. (say)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This amounts to nearly 10s. a week for the entire time. The average wages of a white man on a plantation may be taken at about 25s. a week, including rations. I was told by more than one sugar-grower that two islanders were worth three white men among the canes.

**Investigating the Labour Trade, 1876**

The Queensland government was concerned about the various complaints that were raised about the operation of the Melanesian labour trade. Various committees of inquiry were set up to investigate the charges. Through the 1870s
Melanesians were used in a wide variety of occupations, not only in sugar but also on pastoral properties in the west. The 1876 committee considered a variety of complaints about such issues as wages, recruiting procedures, and the return of islanders to their homes. Generally, however, their assessments were favourable, although certain improvements in legislation and regulations were suggested. Queensland was not alone in obtaining labour from the islands: it was generally accepted that recruits preferred to go to Queensland rather than to Fiji. William Brookes, a liberal humanitarian, was an ardent opponent of the labour trade. He stressed its worst features: that the labourers were treated like chattels, and that they were often obtained illegally or unwittingly.

Select Committee on the General Question of Polynesian Labour. QVP 3 (1876):3-5.

The evidence which has been given on this point [the occupations of the islanders] shows that the Islanders, whether employed on sugar plantations on the coast, or on stations in the interior, are physically improved at the expiration of their term of service. Nothing has come under the notice of the Committee to warrant the supposition that station life is distasteful to the men; on the contrary, they are represented as being cheerful and contented, and willing to take charge of sheep, or to perform the ordinary bush work required on stations. . . . Your Committee, therefore, consider themselves justified in recommending that there shall be no restriction as to the part of the country for which the men are engaged. . . .

Instances have come under the notice of your Committee where the Islanders have been unable to obtain their wages, through the insolvency of their employer, until after considerable delay and trouble and they recommend that the Government in any future legislation, should make provision for the half-yearly payment of wages, with due arrangement for the return passage of the Islander to his native island at the expiration of his contract. . . .

Your Committee considers, not only from the evidence of Government Agents, but from examining the Islanders on board the 'May Queen', several of whom had been employed previously at Fiji and Noumea, that abuses do exist in the mode of their being recruited for those places, and that the Islanders are very often kept beyond the time of their engagements, and receive hardly any wages — one or two muskets being often the remuneration paid for three or four years’ service; and that the many false reports that are circulated about the way Islanders are recruited for Queensland are entirely due to the way agents
recruiting for Noumea or Fiji behave at the Islands; and that the Islanders thoroughly understand the difference of coming to Queensland and going to Fiji and Noumea, and are therefore more willing to come to Queensland.

Statement of William Brookes

Every vile feature of the traffic in Polynesians came early into full view. Not an inhabitant of Queensland but had a long stare at them. We became so familiar with them that we seemed to lose our first sense of their horribleness. The idea of obtaining servants over whom we could have unlimited control; who would be obedient, docile, handy, industrious, cheerful, fat, smiling, contented, always laughing, for wages so small that they seemed next to no wages at all, — this idea apparently drove out all consideration as to how these people were procured.

So it came to pass that citizens who were religious men; officers of churches; nay, even ministers of religion, saw no shame in availing themselves of the labor of poor helpless savages who had been inveigled from their natives homes, or in many, perhaps in most instances, who had been sold at the island by their chiefs and bought by white men and bought and sold a second time at our wharves in Brisbane, Maryborough, Rockhampton, and Mackay. Our newspapers contained advertisements that the injured helpless creatures could be bought on application to agents. They were carried by our steamers, not as passengers, but as freight, like horses, cattle, and sheep. They had a market price; were quoted at so much a head. Promissory notes were given for them, discountable by the banks. They were, in fact, merchandise. I have used the past tense in speaking thus, but everything I have said goes on now.

Voluntary Recruitment

Sometimes Melanesians were kidnapped, decoyed or otherwise tricked into being part of the Queensland labour trade. This happened more frequently in new areas of recruitment. However, recent research has established that most of the recruits were obtained voluntarily — that they wanted to come to Queensland for a variety of reasons. Not all, however, probably understood
the full implications of entering into a labour contract for three years in a foreign country. The labour recruiter William Wawn here describes one instance of voluntary recruitment.


The four boys wished to go away in some ship — the Roderick Dhu or any other — to Queensland, but knew that, if they made their wish public, their friends — and the missionary through them — would prevent them leaving. So they stole away quietly, apart from the crowd, and, as soon as their friends had gone back from the beach, swam off after the boats, which were then pulling away. The recruiter, seeing them following, put back and picked them up.

These boys were free agents — not the slaves or servants — of the missionary and the chief. They had as much right to emigrate from their home as a European labourer has to leave his. They knew equally well — perhaps better — what sort of a life they were about to experience. They were not even asked to go, but they had heard of Queensland from their returned countrymen; the justice and better treatment of labourers there than that they received from missionaries and chiefs; the better payment for services rendered; the security of life there. To gain these advantages they took the chances of sharks and drowning, and forsook sloth, dirt, and a religion their intellectual faculties are not yet sufficiently developed to entertain, for wealth, comparative freedom, and civilization.

"Recruiting" in New Guinea

For eighteen months in 1883-84, Queensland labour vessels plied a new recruiting ground for Melanesian workers for the sugar plantations; these were the north-east islands of New Guinea. Here men were easily obtained, mainly because they were not familiar with the work set-up they were being taken to in Queensland. William Wawn recruited in this area and he was strongly censured by the Queensland government when it set up a royal commission to inquire into abuses that occurred in New Guinea waters.

I sailed from Port Hunter with a light south-easter, passing over to New Ireland, where I spent three days recruiting. I worked the coast between Cape Givry and Cape Strauch, having the quickest success I have ever experienced.

On the third day, April 28, I engaged seventy-one men by 3 p.m., being even obliged to send back several who came off in the recruiting boats, as my licensed quota was made up. I had now 143 men and one woman on board; and, had I been able to carry them, I might have doubled that number in the course of the next twenty-four hours.

The excitement all along this part of the coast was intense. The boats were sometimes fairly rushed by men eager to get away, who tumbled in without waiting to be asked, and fought and struggled with such of their friends as strove to detain them. Many, who were afraid they might miss the opportunity, paddled off to the ship in small canoes, or on bamboo catamarans. Several even swam off, with the aid of dry logs of wood.

Some of the older men, who disapproved of this wholesale exodus, also took to their canoes and chased the runaways.

All round the ship at least fifty canoes, carrying over a hundred men, were paddling about, chasing or being chased. There was an uproar of shouting, laughing, very likely swearing also, with prodigious splashing. Every now and then some young fellow, who had been cut off from the ship by his friends, would take a header. Diving down under the other canoes, he would not come up until close alongside, when he would seize a rope left conveniently hanging, and so would speedily clamber on deck.

There was no waiting for "pay", nor yet for any agreement with regard to the term of service in Queensland, or the remuneration at the end of it. All they wanted was to get away, till the Fanny's decks began to be crowded.

Well satisfied with the day's work, I then stood off until safe from attack. Next, we took stock of the crowd we had on board, taking down their names and explaining the terms of agreement for service in Queensland. Lastly, we served out blankets, pipes and tobacco to them. Many had never used tobacco as yet, but they all seemed eager enough to learn how to do so.
Recruitment Abuses in the New Guinea Islands

In all six labour vessels made eight trips to New Guinea islands such as the Louisiade archipelago to obtain labourers. In this new area numerous abuses occurred, including kidnapping, killings, other violent and destructive acts and trickery. These incidents led the Griffith government, which was opposed to the labour trade, to set up a royal commission. The commissioners found the charges proven. The most notorious involved the Hopeful, two of whose crew members were found guilty of murder. Although condemned to death, their sentences were commuted and they were released in 1889. As a result of the commission New Guinea was closed to Queensland labour recruiters.

In order to secure labourers the principal device of the recruiting agent would seem to have been an appeal to the cupidity of the savage. He displayed a tempting array of tomahawks, knives, tobacco, and calico — in fact, those articles most coveted by the inhabitants of the islands of the southern seas.

Presents of trade more or less liberal, and promises of other supplies, generally secured a ready acquiescence to the proposal to go in the boat or ships.

The love of home of these Islanders amounts to a passion, and the recruiting agents had to overcome dislike of practical exile by assurance that they would not be absent for any length of time. Wherever there was pronounced unwillingness on the part of natives to go in the boats or remain in the ships they were too often impressed by threats, though cases of overt kidnapping were confined almost wholly to one voyage — viz., to that of the "Hopeful" — as was also the dastardly act of wrecking canoes and driving occupants into the water that they might be rescued by the ship's boats.

Even under the most favourable circumstances the natives had very little conception of the real purpose for which they were invited on board or engaged to go in the ship to Queensland. That purpose ought to have been explained on three separate occasions — first, by the recruiting agent through his interpreter, and that in the presence of the Government agent who was bound to be in the covering boat — supposing the recruiting was being conducted from the beach; second, by the Government agent when on shipboard he was entering the names of the
recruits in his log; third, by the Polynesian Inspectors at the port of arrival in the colony.

At times no interpreter was carried in the recruiting agent's boat, and then, no matter how desirous he might be of dealing fairly with the natives in his negotiations for their hire, he had to depend on signs — a most unsatisfactory method, however expressive the pantomime may be; in fact, the more ingenious the gestures the more likely are they to be misunderstood. A favourite device was to hold up two or three fingers, and to intimate the cutting of cane and grass or the digging of yams. One agent with a sense of humour took a yam and bit it three times. Nor could the simple intimation that they were wanted "to go and work in white man's country" convey more than a rudimentary notion of continued labour to people who, when not fighting or fishing, spend their days with their "heads in the shade and their feet in the sun."

Many of the recruits were utterly astonished when they arrived on the plantations in Queensland to find they had to perform the hard tasks involved in the cultivation of sugar; and as matter of fact they are for many months useless as labourers, and must be gradually broken in even to the simplest field-work.

But, with or without the assistance of interpreters, the recruiting agents appear at best to have discharged their duty, in explaining the nature of their engagements to the would-be recruits, in the most perfunctory manner.

The Governments agents seldom seem to have "informed themselves by personal observation and inquiry that the intending recruits understood the nature of their engagements." In truth, the regulation that the Labourers should be recruited in the presence of the Government agent was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. One Government agent at least was too frequently under the influence of liquor. So far as we could discover when the recruits were brought on board ship, the Government agents sometimes tied a piece of calico round their necks, sometimes they entered their names in the official logs; very rarely indeed did they take any trouble to learn whether the recruits really appreciated that they had entered into an engagement or the purpose of it. When the Government agents did execute their duty in this respect, they had to avail themselves of the services of the interpreters who had engaged the "boys" on shore, or in canoes, or on deck, and of course that was little check on the recruiting agent. We, however, are con-
vinced that no man of ordinary penetration need be deceived by interpreters to the extent shown to have been the case in some of the proceedings which were the subject of the inquiry.

There can be no doubt that many of the evils which the evidence taken by us discloses have arisen from the utter inefficiency of the Government agents. Had these been men of character, courage, and firmness of purpose — the outcome of a high sense of their important and responsible duty — illegal recruiting, kidnapping, wilful imposition on the Islanders, would have been hardly possible.

More care was exercised by the Polynesian inspectors at the ports of arrival in Queensland, although, as the result has proved, the means taken by them to ascertain whether the natives had a "proper understanding of the conditions of their agreements, and that they voluntarily entered into the same," were utterly inadequate. Why this should be so will be more fully referred to later on.

In discussing the third head of our inquiry, viz., the understanding by the Labourers themselves of the nature of their engagements, and the period for which they agreed to remain and serve in the colony, we must revert to the question of interpreters.

Much of the success of a labour cruise depends on the recruiting agent and the interpreters employed by him. There would seem to have been looseness in the engagement of interpreters; and although we only obtained little direct evidence of it, there is ample reason to believe that in many cases the interpreters, who in fact too often were unscrupulous and uncontrolled recruiting agents, were rewarded according to, or promised compensation corresponding with, the number of recruits obtained. This vicious principle must be credited with many of the evils it becomes our duty to expose. . . .

The interpreters seldom appear to have taken any pains to really explain to the Islanders that they were wanted to go to Queensland to work on a sugar plantation for three years. Either of their own initiative, from a desire to earn reward according to success, or as instructed by the recruiting agents, they invited the Islanders to go and "work on the ship"; to "sail about"; to "go to white man's country to walk about"; "to go and see white man's island"; "to go and fish on the reef for beche-de-mer"; "to go to Queensland to work"; comparatively rarely "to go and work sugar." And the periods of time during
which the interpreters said the recruits were to be absent from
their islands were quite as diverse — ranging from one night up
to three 'borimas,' which latter might mean in the estimation of
the Islanders, according to local interpretation, any term vary­
ing from three moons up to thirty-nine moons. . . .

The Voyage of the ‘Hopeful’, 1884
The history of this cruise of the ‘Hopeful’ . . . is one long record
of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping, and cold­
blooded murder. The number of human beings whose lives were
sacrificed during the “recruiting” can never be accurately known.
In addition to the two men killed at Sanaroa, for which the
recruiting agent, McNeil and Williams (boatswain), were tried
before and condemned by the Supreme Court, and in regard to
which cases it is needless for us here to enlarge further than to
say that the stories narrated to us more than confirmed the facts
brought out at the public trial — there is in our estimation abun­
dant evidence of the commission of many other murders. The
inhuman slaughter of the natives of Hiliwow was amply corro­
bated by six or seven witnesses. Anything more heartrending
we have never heard or seen than the tale by the father, Togai­
wina, of the drowning of his little boy, or the horror depicted in
Waneipa's eyes, and in his face, as he described the doing to an
atrocious death of the boy on the reef. There are some little
discrepancies as to the names of the boys who were killed in a
particular manner, but the identification of persons must have
been almost impossible when the witnesses themselves were div­
ing and swimming in a broken sea and trying to escape. All,
however, were at one as to the facts of the shooting and throat­
cutting. The very variation in minor details, at any rate, proves
that they were not retailing a previously arranged story. The
main incidents were then testified to by the boatmen Jack and
Charley. It is true that in their first examination they denied
having seen any such tragedy. It was, however, evident from
their demeanour that they were endeavouring to conceal a guilty
knowledge, and we were not at all surprised when they after­
wards came back and wished to make a clean breast of it all.
Further, neither Charley nor Jack could have had any inter­
course with the Hiliwow witnesses, for the former could not talk
the language of the latter, and the latter could not speak
English.
Recruitment: The Road to Freedom?

The debate over the effects of recruitment was fiercely waged in Australia, the islands and Britain. Missionaries led the attack, pointing to harmful effects such as the depopulation of the islands. Planters and ship's captains such as William Wawn defended the labour trade and argued its beneficial effects upon the lives of the young islanders; it was alleged they were trapped in the stifling restrictions of traditional life, and that recruitment delivered them.


We must look to the benefit of the masses, notwithstanding that individuals may undergo hardships to some extent. There can be no doubt that the South Sea Islanders derive benefit, both morally and physically, from being transported into the midst of a civilized community, where they are taught to labour steadily. And do they not appreciate the change? How is it that so many return to Queensland for a second and often for a third term of service? How is it that so many remained in the colony, prior to the passing of that Polynesian Act which compelled them to return home, either at the termination of their first engagement, or of a second, if they chose to serve it.

Nevertheless, missionaries and their friends continued to agitate, crying out about the horrors of 'slavery' — of the deceptions, outrages, and bloodshed committed by those they were pleased to stigmatize 'labour traffickers.' Yet whenever the circumstances detailed in their reckless accusations have been inquired into, they have found to rest on little or no foundation of fact.

That abuses have occurred, I do not deny; but what line of life is exempt from abuses? Are missionaries themselves immaculate? The Rev. Shirley Baker, late prime minister of Tonga, who was deported from that group only the other day, for abusing the power he had acquired over the weak and superstitious king, is an example. Was he the only man in the Pacific who commenced life preaching the gospel of love, charity, and humility with an empty pocket, and who ended with a good banking account? I fancy not. Nor is 'sweating' confined to the large cities of Europe. There is plenty of it to be found in the South Sea Islands, by those who choose to open their eyes and look for it — in the New Hebrides as elsewhere.

Accompanying Mr. Paton's letter there was published a 'copy
of minute of New Hebrides Mission Synod on the labour traffic.' In this it was said: 'the Kanaka labour traffic has, to a large extent, depopulated the New Hebrides and adjoining islands.' This was a gross exaggeration, to say the least of it. The population of Aneiteum Island has decreased much more sensibly than that of any other island in the New Hebrides, although it has been under the sole control of the Presbyterian mission for about thirty years, and has been almost unvisited by traders or labour vessels!

Tanna Island comes next. Further north there is very little difference in the number of inhabitants, only the surplus population having been removed. One good result has been apparent: intertribal wars are not nearly so frequent, and cannibalism has been checked. Consequently, the tribes recover much more quickly from any loss of numbers entailed by the labour trade.

My first recruits were obtained at Mewstone Island. The interpreters I had engaged proved themselves thoroughly competent to make the natives understand what we required, as also what would be expected of such as might be engaged. The first two or three were spoken to in my presence by the interpreters, and I am certain that they thoroughly understood how long they were to remain in Queensland, what kind of work they were to engage in, and, as near as they could be made to comprehend it, what return they would receive for their services. This, I say, in spite of the report to the contrary formulated by a Royal Commission in the year following [1885],

One thing I admit: I do not suppose these men had ever undertaken what we call a hard day's work. They had never had any opportunity of gaining such experience. So, no doubt, they afterwards repented having left their homes, and their easy, slothful life, when they found out what work really meant.

A 'Queen-streeter' — a Brisbane politician — to whom I once made a similar statement of this matter, said that, under such circumstances, I had done wrong in bringing these natives away from their islands, morally, if not legally.

Now, I explained to them, through competent interpreters, what they had to expect on their arrival in Queensland. They knew well enough that they had had no experience of the work that would be required of them, but they expressed themselves as being willing to chance that. They engaged themselves of their own free will, to go to Queensland. So much for my legal right, now for the moral view.
By taking these men away from their island, and from a life of sloth, brutality, and cannibalism, they are improved intellectually, as well as physically, through contact with Europeans. It is said that they pick up the white man’s vices. So they may, but a returned island labourer would look with contempt and aversion on the average Aneiteum [Island] native, with his thin veneer of Christianity.

As I have before stated, Aneiteum has been under the sway of Presbyterian missionaries for about thirty years. Now, it has not been either war, emigration, or disease that has caused a diminution of numbers there. On the contrary, peace, idleness, and licentious habits have contributed to make the population dwindle away to a mere fraction of what it was.

To change an islander into a decent citizen of the world, he must be forced to work for his living after his dancing and fighting have been stopped. If he is allowed to remain idle, he becomes a very much worse subject — morally and physically, Christian or pagan — than the raw savage.

Indenture System, 1890s

When force or deception were used to recruit Melanesian labour it was usually in an area where recruiting had just been introduced and was still a novelty. The trade there would soon settle down, and a regular exchange occur between the relations and friends staying behind on the island and the recruiting ships taking away the men and sometimes women. The indenture system involved the islander entering into a three year contract of labour service in Queensland, at the initial rate of £6 per year in wages (plus rations, clothing, etc.), and free return transport to the island village. Many recruits, indeed, liked their Queensland experience and either stayed on at the end of their three years, or re-recruited after being taken back home. Recruiting started in 1863 and continued until 1904, and over 62,000 indentures were entered into in that time. By the 1890s it was quite an orderly operation.

The Inspector of Pacific Islanders [Mackay], Mr Frank Charles Hornbrook, gave evidence before a royal commission.


Will you please explain in general terms, and as concisely as you can, the process of indenting and inspecting the men? In the
first place the employer fills in a form of application, asking for permission to introduce a certain number of laborers by a certain vessel to be employed in a certain estate in a certain locality. When he makes such an application he has to enter into a bond with two sureties to return these boys to their islands when their time is up. The shipmaster acts as his agent in the matter of recruiting these boys, and he is under three bonds of £500 each that he will duly observe the Acts and regulations with regard to recruiting them. When these conditions are fulfilled the ship sets out for the trip. She is inspected by the shipwright, surveyor, and harbour master, and they have to certify that she is fit to undertake the voyage. Then her stores and clothes are inspected by me for the purpose of seeing that they are of sufficient quantity and quality, and the Government agent accompanies her. When everything is completed to the satisfaction of the authorities the Chief Secretary issues a licence for the introduction of the number of islanders applied for, and then the ship sails. When she arrives at the islands the boats go ashore, and the Government agent always accompanies them — it is illegal for any boat to go ashore, without the Government agent. There are always two white men, exclusive of the Government agent, in the boats. When the boats reach the beach the islanders all come around them, and they put the questions — "Where that ship come from?" "Where you take boys to?" The agent in this instance would say, "To Mackay," at the same time asking if any boys wanted to come. The natives ask, "What master wants boys?" and if there is no master that the boys know or care about wants them then none will come; but if there is they say, "Stop awhile," and then some of them will talk over it among themselves. Then they ask, "What wages are you going to give?" If a new chum, the invariable reply is £6 a year, food and tobacco, and medical attendance; if an old hand, he makes his own bargain, up to £12. In addition to these things, if they are satisfied with them, they ask you to give the boys £2 worth of things in pipes, tomahawks, calico, etc. and these the boy hands round to his friends, or perhaps he gives the lot to his father as he comes away. If one comes you will generally get half a dozen from the same village. You go around every island and call in where you can until your ship is full. It generally gets about three-quarters full; they do not wait until quite full.

When the boys come aboard ship the whole thing is explained to them over again, there generally being two witnesses who
hear the thing explained to them the second time. They are again asked if they are quite willing to come, etc., and the pen is held out to them, and they are told, “If you want to come catch the pen”; and when one holds the pen he is held to have been duly recruited. He is served out with a suit of clothes and a tin plate and pannican. When the vessel comes back to Queensland she is signalled, and the medical officer goes out and sees that there is no sickness amongst the new arrivals. They send a wire to the inspector. If the ship was for this place it would be sent to me, and then the ship is towed up the river. I go aboard the ship immediately she arrives. I gather any interpreters there may be on the ship among the boys, but if not satisfied with them I send out for a few local boys to come and talk with them. I go around the ship and ask if the boys have any complaints to make, and then I ask the crew the same question. The health officer has to satisfy himself whether or not there are any boys to be tabooed. He strips every boy and examines him thoroughly, and says whether he is fit or not, and if there are any boys not fit they have to be sent back at the expense of the ship, and if they are sick they are sent to the hospital until fit to go home again.

The ship takes all the responsibility until they are finally allotted to the planters. I have a difficult job at times to allot the boys without separating relatives. I divide them into lots before I know who is to get them. Say one man wants six, another three, another two, and so on. When they are allotted like that the agreements are made out. The employer comes along and says he wants half a dozen boys; I show the lot to him and tell the boys they have come here to work for three years, and explain to them what they are each to get. Then I ask each by himself, “You come away yourself, or did any man steal you.” If he says, no; he did not come freely, then I stand him back, and there is an enquiry. If there is a doubt it is left to the boy’s option, he can either sign or go back. Some have gone back; there has been one or two instances of that. Then each boys comes up and I formally introduce him to his employer, telling him that he is engaged to him for three years, and that if anything goes wrong he must come and tell me. They then touch the pen and the agreement is completed. I then see that they have their clothes with them when they go off to the plantation. Then the Government agent goes to Brisbane after he has been here and goes through a second catechism down there. When the boys go on the plantations, as nearly as time will permit, I visit them all
within the first month after their arrival. Very often I see all of
them and find out how they are getting on, and that none are
sick, and that they are being properly looked after. Their own
countrymen look after them, and they will often come to me in
case the boys has not the savey, for he may be sick and say
nothing about it.

Within three months after their arrival there is a second batch
of clothes due to them, and I go out and see that the clothes are
of good quality, and I ask them if they are getting their tobacco
all right. I have a look at their food occasionally, and so it goes
on until the first six months of their time is up, when their first
instalment of wages is due. I have then to see that each boy gets
the proper wage. I keep an account of the wages due. Every boy
comes up to a table, the employer and myself sitting there to­
gether, and when he comes up I say, “This money belongs to
you,” at the same time telling him that it would be better for him
to give me £1 of it to go into the Savings Bank; and invariably
the boy will leave some of it for that purpose. After their pay
another instalment of clothing is due; then they get a fresh supp­
ly. When the cold weather comes they get their blankets. About
a month before the expiration of their three years’ engagement I
make out a list of all the Savings Bank money and send the
books to Brisbane, when the money is sent up to me a week or
two before the boys go away. The employer sits alongside of me
when the boy’s time is up, and when the boy comes up I say,
“Here is the rest of your wages.” Perhaps he says it is all right,
or perhaps he may say it is not right, when I have to explain it to
him. Then I ask him what he wants to do — whether it is his
wish to go home or stay here to get some more money. Then I
explain to him that it will not cost him anything, and that he can
go home if he likes. Very often they say, “We will stop.” I have
then to get the whole transaction witnessed. Then those who
want to go home are sent home by the first ship, and each land­
ed on their own island. Those who stay will walk about for a
week or two and then make another agreement, and so on, some
staying for twenty years, and some going home after the first
three years. About a third of every shipload that comes here are
old hands who have done three years’ work here before.

Would you mind telling us what they are supposed to be supplied
with in addition to their wages? Immediately they go aboard
the ship they have to receive a shirt, trousers, and hat, and then
when they arrive here they have to get another set, and again
every three months after that; every six months they get a hat. The women have to get a petticoat and chemise and a hat every three months. With regard to food, 1 1/2 lbs. beef, 2 lbs. bread, 3 lbs. potatoes, or, if not procurable, 6 ozs. of uncooked rice in its place every day. Then they have a certain amount of sugar, and tobacco allowed them. They like their tea very sweet, and are permitted to make it to their own liking.

Can you tell us whether the regulations made in regard to clothing, etc., in the Act are faithfully carried out? With regard to clothing, payments, and food, they are more than carried out. The Act has to be adhered to. There are little trivial breaches, but the offenders are called to account if they come to my knowledge. . . .

Can you give us roughly the number of the kanakas you have in the Mackay district? There are 786 under three years' agreements, 1472 under re-agreements, also about forty ticket boys, making 2,300 in all here at present.

What is the percentage of Marys to the boys? There are (actual number) 150 Marys in the district.

What is the general health of the kanakas? Very good.

What is the mortality? At the end of last month I made up my monthly returns, and they are carried on from month to month during the year; and there were ten deaths in the four months. Last year there were about fifty-seven or fifty-nine for the whole year.

What is it that the kanaka generally suffers from? At least 60 per cent. die of lung disease — consumption and inflammation of the lungs.

Is there any other complaint that they suffer from? At odd times they get dysentery — that is more common among the new arrivals.

Can you give us any information as to the mortality amongst the new arrivals? There is no doubt about it that the large proportion of the mortality is among the new arrivals.

Is there any particular island from which the boys are brought that shows a greater mortality than the others? No, not here; for since I have been at Mackay all the bad islands have been left out, and they are forbidden to recruit from them.

Is there any other disease they suffer from independent of chest
affections? They get ordinary diseases such as headaches, toothaches, fevers, and rheumatism.

Are the hospitals in the districts under your control? Yes; as regards the treatment of the kanakas. I have power under the Act to go wherever there is a kanaka and supervise and look after him.

How many cases have you had of syphilis? It is pretty prevalent, but chiefly amongst the old hands who get with the aboriginal women.

[Melanesian mortality rates were higher than for Europeans. In some years they were particularly bad, for instance at Maryborough in 1876. The highest incidences of death and sickness related to recruits brought from New Guinea between 1883 and 1884, when recruiting from that area was banned. In the 1880s some Melanesian hospitals were established, but the system worked badly.]

Sugar Industry Depression, 1889

In 1885 Griffith's Liberal government called for the abandonment of the labour trade after 1890. But in the latter part of the 1880s the sugar industry went into a serious decline, and a royal commission was set up to investigate the problems. These included drought, disease, a fall in prices, competition from beet sugar, the high cost of borrowed capital, possible mismanagement, and uncertainty over the labour issue.


Travelling over such a large area of country, and examining such a large number of witnesses and visiting and inspecting almost every sugar plantation in Queensland, necessarily gave us a very accurate idea of the value of the sugar industry to the colony. The total area of land under cultivation in the colony on the 31st December 1887, was 205,737 acres, of which 51,815 acres were under sugar cultivation (vide statistics of Registrar-General), thus showing that the sugar industry represents one-fourth of the entire area cultivated in the colony. From the evidence obtained, we estimate that the capital invested in the
The cheap labour of Melanesians (then called Polynesians) led to many Europeans objecting that white jobs were being lost; so in 1886 legislation was passed to prohibit the importation of Melanesians after 1890. In this newspaper cartoon the sugar industry laments the phasing out of this labour from islands such as Tanna in Vanuatu. The cartoon caption reads: "A Polly-uneasy-un Question. Polly Saccharinometer: 'Boo hoo! Goodbye Tommy Tanna, I'll never see your like again. Bother that Morehead.'" Although the Morehead government was meant to implement the legislation, a stay was granted until 1904. Reprinted from *Queensland Figaro*, 15 June 1889.

The sugar industry of the colony is about £5,000,000 sterling; the machinery alone represents a value of £1,000,000; the annual expenditure is scarcely less than £800,000 sterling; and the value of the sugar exported is about £800,000. The number of white Europeans who are permanently employed in the sugar industry cannot be less than from 2,000 to 3,000; the total number who are more or less directly interested in the industry, and whose livelihood almost depends upon it, cannot be less than double that number; and the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau at Townsville assured us that 70 per cent. of the immigrants were engaged for the plantations, and the number of Polynesians who are engaged in the industry is about 6,000. The wages of the kanakas amount to about £50,000 per annum, whilst that of Europeans, not including managers, would amount to £200,000. In the districts north of Rockhampton the farmers' produce is almost entirely consumed by the plantations, the number of horses that are being worked being enormous, averaging in many
instances over a hundred on a single plantation. The effects of 
the existing depression of the industry have been already felt in 
the timber trade and in the iron foundries of the colony, and the 
prosperity of the important towns of Mackay and Bundaberg is 
already, to some extent, affected by it. The shipping trade of the 
colony is also seriously interested in the sugar industry, and its 
importance in this connection may be judged from the fact that 
the A.U.S.N. Company's returns for 1888 show a diminution in 
receipts on the freight of sugar alone of £22,000 (vide Mr. 
Munro's evidence, question 8480), arising from the shortness of 
the crop of that year, which was occasioned by the drought.

And it must also be borne in mind that sugar is the only article 
of agricultural produce of which any appreciable quantity is 
exported from the colony. It is therefore apparent that the ex­
tinction of this industry, involving, as it would, the loss of so 
great an amount of capital, the loss of employment to so large a 
number of our population, and of a market for so much local 
produce, as well as of an important item in our commercial ex­
change, must very seriously, and prejudicially, affect the pro­
sperity of the colony and the welfare of every class in our com­
munity.

Is the sugar industry now depressed, and is its condition such 
as to justify inquiry and remedial measures? The results of our 
researches fully justify the appointment of this Royal Commissi­
on, and give unmistakable evidence of a serious depression in 
in the industry, and of the necessity of immediately adopting 
measures for its relief. The most northern plantation is that at 
Weary Bay, in the Cook district. This your Commissioners were 
unable to visit, but they have learned from evidence supplied by 
the manager that, after the expenditure of £100,000, it is about 
to be abandoned. The only plantation in the Port Douglas dis­
trict has ceased operations, and is in the hands of a liquidator. 
At Cairns there were a few years ago three plantations. One 
(Hop Wah) is abandoned, and the machinery is removed. The 
others are still at work, but neither are paying interest on the 
capital invested. Hambleton is still in the hands of the original 
proprietors, who have invested £180,000 in its development. But 
the Pyramid Plantation is now in the hands of the mortgagee, 
the pioneers having had to relinquish it after expending the sum 
of £130,000. On the Johnstone River there are four plantations. 
On one the mortgagee has foreclosed, but is still carrying it on. 
The others, as is shown in the evidence, are not at present pay-
ing expenses, notwithstanding the fact that they are in the hands of wealthy proprietors and are replete with every appliance for economical working.

The Herbert River (Ingham) Plantations are in no better condition, although also in the hands of wealthy proprietors. They are all being worked excepting one (Gairloch), which has lately been sold and is now closed. Another (Hamleigh) has passed from the hands of the original proprietors for one-tenth of its cost. Macnade, lately the property of the Sugar Company, Limited, has been taken over by the mortgagee for a sum of £35,000; although it cost the previous owners over £130,000. The Victoria and Ripple Creek Plantations are still held by their original owners, but, like all the others, fail to give any return on the capital invested. In this district there are eleven farmers who supply from 600 to 700 acres of cane to the Victoria mill. These small growers also suffer from the depression and are unable to make more than bare working expenses. On the Burdekin Delta there are three plantations in active operation, and another, on which £200,000 has been expended, is now closed. Here the effects of the depression are painfully evident, as two of the three working plantations have lately passed from the hands of the first proprietors, who have lost their all and are now the managers.

At Mackay, which has heretofore been regarded as the chief centre of the sugar industry in Queensland, there are 22 plantations with mills, a large number of farmers growing cane, and two Government Central Mills. Here, for the season ending 31st May 1887, 16,138 tons of sugar were manufactured, while 16,062 tons were made the following year, but during the 1889—89 season the falling-off was very great, only about 5,500 tons being produced. Evidence went to show that in no single instance either amongst farmers or planters was a profit being made, all the plantations being carried on at a loss. The town of Mackay itself is most seriously depressed in its trade and general business, and from the evidence of the commercial men there it was quite apparent that the whole of the town's people seriously felt the depression which rests on the sugar industry of that district. In 1887 the exports were £304,322 of which £284,829 worth was sugar; and in 1888 they had fallen to £137,529 of which £112,540 worth was sugar. The imports for these periods were £125,730 and £91,128 respectively, and the import of flour, which in 1887 was 1623 tons, fell to 769 tons in 1888. These statistics were fur-
nished by the Sub-Collector of Customs at Mackay, and very clearly demonstrate the serious effects of the depression in the sugar industry upon the trade of the port. At Rockhampton there is only one plantation (Yeppoon) now in existence, the Pandora Mill having been closed some time since. The Yeppoon plantation is in liquidation, and was sold for £10,500 during the visit of the Commission to that district. About £40,000 had been expended upon it.

At Bundaberg the condition of affairs is somewhat different. There are forty plantations, twenty-two manufacturing plants, fourteen crushing mills, seventeen small growers of cane, and one sugar refinery. This district bears evidence of a certain amount of prosperity, and it was shown that in twelve instances interest ranging from 2 to 11 per cent. was paid on capital invested. In all other cases more or less loss was the result of the year's work, and planters and farmers alike were beginning to feel the effects of the depression, and were looking forward to the future with anxiety. The Messrs. Cran's Millaquin refinery represents a capital of £150,000, and an annual expenditure of nearly £60,000; and from the excellent system it possesses for bringing juice from the planters' crushing mills to the refinery has contributed largely to the success of the cane growers in the past, and will no doubt do so in the future. That the prosperity of Bundaberg largely depends upon the sugar industry, is borne out by the official statistics of 1888, the total exports for that year being £362,500, of which £308,422 was for sugar alone.

The depression at Maryborough was most marked, as shown by a return furnished by the honorary secretary of the Planters' Association of a list of twelve plantations now closed. The aggregate area of these plantations was 2,860 acres, and the estimated value of the machinery now lying idle, £49,600, while an additional £25,000 worth is only being partially used. The primary cost of putting those 2,860 acres into cultivation and erecting machinery on the various plantations now out of use was £128,330. At one time the export of sugar from Maryborough ranged from 5,000 to 6,000 tons; it has now fallen to 1,500 tons, notwithstanding that at Yengarie there are large manufacturing works similar to Millaquin, in which £100,000 has been invested, and which is capable of manufacturing from 4,000 to 5,000 tons of refined sugar in the season.

In the Logan district we found many of the older plantations abandoned, but many of the smaller ones are still in existence
and are growing cane, in some cases profitably, and in others affording the owners only a bare subsistence. The co-operative principle, judging from the experiment which has been made at Eaglesby, appears to have been to a certain extent successful, and the Germans, who have established a co-operative mill there and who have worked it for the past seven years, are perfectly satisfied with what they have done in the past and with their prospects for the future. At the Coomera, at Mr. Grimes's plantation, a similar hopeful condition prevails, and Mr. Grimes is so satisfied with his past efforts and his prospects for the future, that he intends to place forty acres more under cane. The foregoing will, we think, show beyond doubt that the sugar industry on the whole is very much depressed and its existence as an industry seriously imperilled from a variety of causes.

The causes assigned for the depression, as will be gathered from the evidence, are numerous and varied. They comprise mismanagement, extravagance and inexperience of planters in the early days of the industry, financial embarrassment owing to working on borrowed capital, losses through unfavourable seasons, disease, exhaustion of the soil, fall in the price of sugar, and loss of confidence in the industry, which, it is alleged, is owing to the abolition of black labour in the near future, and which prevents planters obtaining the necessary advances to carry them on.

Whilst we admit that amongst the large number of persons engaged in sugar planting, there have been some (as there are in all other industries) whose failure may have been attributable to their own incompetence or recklessness, we feel bound to state that the great body of the planters are in no way liable to such a charge. On the contrary, we should give them credit for careful study of all new inventions and discoveries by which the progress of their industry may be assisted, and for remarkable enterprise in introducing every improvement, the value of which has been established. In proof of this we may point to the work of Messrs. Swallow at Hambleton Plantation, where they are supplementing their sugar works by the creation of a large fruit-preserving establishment, which promises to be most successful, and to be a great benefit to the Northern fruit-growers. They also employ in sugar-making two patents of their own, one for cutting the cane up before it comes to the rollers, thus equalising and regulating the feed, and another process for the treatment of the juice. All of the operations in the Colonial Sugar Refining Com-
pany's mills are carefully watched and the results tested by chemists, who ascertain the amount of sugar in the cane, and the quantity obtained, and endeavour to prevent all waste. We have to thank Mr. Smellie, the managing director of Mourilyan Sugar Company for valuable information respecting the progress of sugar making in the United States, contained in recent publications which he kindly lent to us, and we saw in the nursery of that plantation a few stools of the new Borneo cane recently introduced by him from Java. The cane is said to contain 22.6 per cent. of crystallisable sugar, whilst ordinary cane contains only from 12 to 18 per cent., and the improved varieties of beetroot cultivated in Europe contain only 20 per cent. As the competition of beet with cane sugar, which has so seriously depreciated the value of the latter was only rendered possible by the great improvement in the sugar producing qualities of the beetroot, we consider that the Queensland planters would be moving in the right direction when they turned their attention to the discovery of a variety of cane surpassing even the improved beetroot in its yield of sugar, and we regret that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which had planted fifty acres of this cane at Goondi, becoming alarmed by the report of a disease existing amongst the cane in Java, deemed it advisable to plough out and burn the plants.

In the Burdekin Delta also the sugar planters have taken the lead by establishing a system of irrigation, which, if it were generally adopted throughout the colony in those localities where a supply of water is available, would very much lessen the losses which are so often sustained through protracted drought. Again, the refineries owned by Messrs. Cran at Maryborough and Bundaberg, in which sugar is made by a patent process, have done much towards making the growth of sugar cane profitable in those districts.

We therefore consider that, instead of the depression of the sugar industry being attributable to the ignorance and incapacity of the planters as a body, they have, on the contrary, shown great enterprise, directed by careful study of their work. The machinery on all the large plantations in the Northern districts is of the newest and best description, double crushing being almost universal and maceration generally practised. As an idea prevails in some quarters that the Queensland planters are behind the times, owing to their not having adopted the diffusion method of manufacture, we may direct attention to the
results of an experiment tried in Demerara, particulars of which are published in "Sugar Cane" of December 1st, 1888. Two lots of cane of 100 tons each were treated, the one by diffusion and the other by double crushing and maceration. By diffusion 19,344 lbs. of sugar and 1717 gallons of molasses were obtained, whilst double crushing and maceration yielded only 18,304 lbs. of sugar and 679 gallons of molasses, the value of the yield being $40.20 in favour of diffusion. But the additional fuel required by the diffusion process cost $75.12, the net return being therefore $34.92 more by maceration than by diffusion. Mr. Knox, the general manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which has a diffusion mill on the Richmond River, appears to be in some doubts as to whether that process would here yield a larger money return than the present process, though it would undoubtedly yield more sugar. It is worth while here to draw attention to the fact that the average return of sugar this year in the Northern districts was about one ton of sugar for ten tons of cane. At Mourilyan plantation the average was one ton of sugar for 9.90 tons of cane, or at the rate of 22,624 lbs. of sugar for 100 tons of cane, being 3,280 lbs. of sugar more than was obtained in Demerara by diffusion from 100 tons of cane. We consider, therefore, that we are justified in finding that the depression in the industry is not caused by any defect in the machinery used, or to mismanagement or ignorance.

There is no doubt that a large number of planters are at present seriously embarrassed through inability to pay the interest on borrowed capital invested in their plantations, the working expenses having generally during the last two years exceeded the value of their produce, and there is reason to believe that many of them exceeded the value of their produce, and there is reason to believe that many of them retain their position as nominal owners of their properties solely owing to the inability of the banks and other mortgagees to realise on their properties under present circumstances. It seems to us, however, that this embarrassment is an effect rather than the cause of the depression. Most persons who embark in business of any description in the colony avail themselves largely of their credit, and there is no reason why a sugar planter, any more than a squatter or any person carrying on any other business, should not obtain the assistance of borrowed capital. At the time when the great advance in sugar planting in Queensland took place the price
obtained for the product gave so large a profit that the planters had every prospect of not only paying interest on these advances but of soon repaying them. The changed condition of the industry by converting this profit into a loss has produced the embarrassment now existing. It must be borne in mind, too, that even if the planters themselves owned all the capital invested they could not be expected to continue to grow sugar at an annual loss in working expenses as well as of all interest on capital, and, in fact, planters who are in this position have stated to us their intention to give up the industry before they have exhausted all their resources unless some change in its prospects shall appear.

The last year being a season of prolonged drought has, no doubt, caused severe loss to the sugar planters as well as to all other agriculturists, and to the pastoral industry. This cause of loss, however, does not affect sugar planters only. All persons engaged in any agricultural pursuit must expect occasionally to sustain loss through adverse seasons, and in those pursuits the profits of the good years must be expected to balance the losses of unfavourable ones. Even before this drought, too, the sugar industry was failing, and the losses occasioned by it have simply increased the depression which had commenced before. We are glad to report that we have heard of no disease in the cane at present. The last year's crop in the Northern districts suffered, however, considerably from the ravages of a grub, the multiplication of which appears to be succoured by drought, as the Northern planters stated that it was always worst in dry seasons, whilst Mr. Angus Gibson, of Binger, near Bundaberg, has discovered that irrigation destroys it. There is no reason to believe that exhaustion of the soil has as yet affected the yield of sugar, except, perhaps, in the Maryborough district; in the rich scrub lands of the Northern districts it will take many years to exhaust the stores of vegetable mould, and in other places a proper system of manuring the ground is already being initiated. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company on its Herbert River Plantation, uses large quantities of imported chemical manures, with different kinds of which it is experimenting. The general depression in the sugar industry is, therefore, due to causes altogether outside of those treated of in this paragraph, which can only be considered as accidental aggravations of it.

Since 1883 sugars of all classes have fallen in price fully 50 per cent., and there can be no doubt that this fall, which is likely to be permanent, has been a principal cause of the depression of
the sugar industry in Queensland. That is to say, that if sugar had maintained its price the plantations in the colony would have well paid their owners, instead of ruining them. But if sugar can be grown and made in other countries at a profit even at present prices, why not in Queensland? No country in the world can have a soil and climate better adapted for the growth of sugar cane than in the districts north of Townsville; very few, we believe, have any equal to them. We have already drawn attention to the fact that 100 tons of cane on the Johnston River gives by double crushing and maceration nearly a ton and a-half more sugar than an equal quantity of cane treated by diffusion at Demerara; and Mr. Knox states that Queensland cane is much sweeter than that grown in Fiji. We are nearer, too, to the Australian markets than any foreign producers, and therefore in those markets we should be able to compete with them. To ascertain the reasons why we cannot do so seems, therefore, to be the object of this inquiry.

It is alleged that one principal cause of the present depression of the industry is the refusal of capitalists to assist planters to tide over the losses occasioned by the late unfavourable seasons, such refusal being due to the fact that by “The Pacific Islanders Act of 1885”, section 11, the importation of these islanders is to cease on the 31st December, 1890. It is, no doubt, true that advances cannot now be obtained on sugar properties because capitalists do not at present see a prospect of sugar-growing being carried on profitably in the future, and it is probable that one reason why they do not believe in its future success is that, in their opinion, it cannot be profitably carried on without a supply of cheap coloured labour. It is evident, however, that the willingness of capitalists to advance to sugar-growers will depend on their opinion of the prospect of profitably carrying it on, and that if they were satisfied that it could be carried on profitably without black labour they would be just as willing to make advances under these conditions as if black labour was to be employed. We postpone any expression of opinion as to whether sugar can be profitably grown without black labour until we come to discuss the remedies proposed for the existing depression. At the present time, however, it must be borne in mind that the cost of black labour in the colony has increased by more than 50 per cent. since 1883, and we find that this increase in working expenses, concurring with a great fall in the price of sugar and unfavourable seasons, has caused the working expen-
ses of the plantations generally to exceed the value of their produce; this result, with no better prospect in the future, naturally alarming capitalists, and causing them to refuse the accommodation required to carry on with.

It is clear that unless by some means the production of sugar can be rendered profitable in Queensland the entire extinction of the industry must come about in time — and in a very short time, we fear. A rise in the price of sugar in the markets of the world is scarcely to be looked for, as other countries are fostering and encouraging the extension of the industry by every means in their power, and the supply has already more than overtaken the demand. At the present time the United States of America, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, and Holland, are all engaged in the production of sugar, and are adopting every means, scientific and otherwise, to encourage its culture and to assist its progress.

Resuming the Labour Trade, 1892

After the royal commission of 1889 considered the depressed condition of the sugar industry, the government decided in 1892 that the importation of labourers from the Pacific islands should be resumed, in spite of protests from the growing labour movement that such a labour force undercut the market for white labourers.


Economically speaking, the relation of coloured labour to the industry is the same as the relation of machinery to other manufactures, and the agitation against it, which is maintained by the labour party on the assumption that the introduction of coloured labourers deprives the white workmen of employment, is an almost exact parallel of the agitation against the introduction of machinery into England in the beginning of the century. I do not wish, in saying this, to seem to ignore the fact that there is an opposition conducted upon much higher grounds, which protests, for social and political reasons, against the introduction of a servile race into a self-governing colony, whose institutions are founded upon a basis of popular representation.
Settling the North

By the 1890s notions of a "White Australia" — using only European labour — were beginning to emerge. This was linked with the question of how the tropical north could be populated. Already Queenslanders were taking pride in the thought that they were creating a white civilization in the tropics; that this was based upon a sugar industry that had depended upon the labour of Melanesians to undertake the pioneering task, was conveniently disregarded.


The Attorney-General: I say the men who have attempted to settle this country with white people — the pioneers of this country — are the men who deserve our utmost consideration. The much abused squatter, the sugar planter — the men who have attempted to convert the jungle into fields of fertility — we know very well how those men have been treated by hon. members opposite. We had a sample of it from the hon. member for Enoggera who introduced the Polynesian question. Let us consider the Polynesian question with this Asiatic question. I say it was a most fortunate thing for the southern portion of settlement that we had a race so near at hand as the Polynesians who could be used to do a great deal of rough initial work of civilisation.

Mr. Reid: Used?

The Attorney-General: Yes; "used" for that purpose. I am not looking at it from a petty parochial point of view such as the hon. member for Toowong views it from. I say it was fortunate that we had a race so near to us to do some of the rough work of settling the tropical parts of Queensland. We are the only country on the face of the whole of God's earth who has attempted this, the most difficult problem the world has ever had before it — the settlement of a tropical country with a purely white race. I ask hon. members to think for one moment. Has any other country in the history of world attempted to do this? There are some countries where there is a mongrel population — black and white, or brown and white; but no country where the problem of settling a tropical country entirely with a white race has yet been solved. The planters of this country have been harried by agitation throughout the country; they have been harried by legislation; they are attempted to be harried by the latter part of
this resolution if the hon. member could carry it. What would be the result? Assume that they were driven out of Northern Queensland, assume that Northern Queensland became a wilderness, is it in the nature of things that when the nations of the world are travelling about seeking one another's country that Queensland would be allowed to remain a desert? No country of the world is in so much danger of Asiatic irruption as Queensland. The settlers of the North who have for so many years fought hard against heavy odds; the settlers of the West, much of which is in tropical latitudes, are the men to be encouraged and not harassed. Is anything to be gained by perpetually endeavouring to raise the white people against those who employ them? Has not that been the settled policy of a large number of those hon. members opposite and the person they represent?

Mr. Turley: Nonsense!

The Attorney-General: The hon. member says "nonsense" but...
in his heart he knows it is absolutely true. Our chance of opposition to an Asiatic irruption — and there is danger of it — is not by mere paper resolutions of this sort, but by populating our own lands, by building our railways into the interior, by giving millions of acres in exchange for millions of people, by encouraging by every means in our power the pioneer, whether he be squatter, sugar-planter, or farmer. That is the true policy of this country, and in that lies our greatest protection against any danger of invasion.

Sugar Situation, 1900

From the 1870s attempts had been made to encourage the cultivation of sugar-cane by small farmers; but it began to succeed only in the 1890s when the government stepped in to help, mainly through the provision of central crushing mills. Gradually, the big plantations were replaced by small family groups. Melanesian and other foreign labour was still being used, but increasingly whites were entering the labouring ranks. Many of the jobs, especially the skilled ones, were reserved for white labour only; Melanesians were becoming expendable, and after 1904 most were being repatriated to their islands.


A similar situation obtained in Queensland in the earlier history of sugar-growing. The previous large estates, however, have recently, and more particularly since the inauguration of the Government Central Mill system, become divided up into small farms, which have been rented or sold to canegrowers. This great change has brought about a condition of things which is unique, and, in a large measure, peculiar to the Australian cane-sugar States. The most highly important economic and social result of this change is found in the circumstance that the ownership and occupancy embrace a large number of strong, responsible, and progressive white settlers, with families of coming men and women, who are being planted over the sugar-growing areas. Those settlers are furnishing the cane which keeps the mills in operation, and it is not only apparent that the maintenance of the sugar industry, but also the settlement of the country, is to be very chiefly in their hands. At this time there are
2,610 cane-growers in the State of Queensland, with an average area, per grower, under sugar-cane of 42.6 acres.

Next in significance to the social environment which results from this extensive white settlement, its effects upon the demand for and supply of labour are the most noteworthy. Those thousands of small farmers, into whose hands the occupancy of the lands has fallen, are not only the owners or tenants, they are also settled white labourers, with this vital distinction — that they and their families are engaged in cultivating their own lands for their own direct gain. As labourers, working for hire, many of those settlers would never had been found on the soil; but as free men, with a personal interest in the occupancy of the lands, they are the hardest performers of given kinds of work in the field; and by their labour they have already, to a very notable extent, modified the exclusive employment of subject labour, and in localities where hitherto the white labourer had hardly been found. As a result of this white settlement, the following table [table 1] sets forth a decrease in the number of Pacific Islanders employed, yet a simultaneous expansion in the sugar production.

Table 1  Sugar production and number of Melanesian labourers, 1885–1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Acres of Cane Crushed</th>
<th>Tons of Sugar Made</th>
<th>Pacific Islanders in Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>38,557</td>
<td>55,796</td>
<td>10,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>40,208</td>
<td>68,924</td>
<td>9,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>79,435</td>
<td>123,289</td>
<td>8,826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the present natural course of white settlement is not interrupted by any untoward economic changes, there is no apparent ground for considering that it will not go on. There is abundant room for more men and families upon the areas suitable for cane culture and contiguous to manufacturing centres.

There would be advantage in locating more growers upon the areas already occupied, if new applicants for such land came to hand; and the lessening of the acreages controlled by the present occupants should lead to a higher producing power of the soils, and to a still further measure of substitution of white labour for the subject labour at present in the fields.

It is of paramount importance, however, at this place to understand that denser settlement is not possible at a quicker rate than is determined by the further available men who are
ready for occupation of the lands. It is also of allied importance to realise that the present production of the lands, centring round the respective sugar-mills, cannot be maintained unless the present sum of labour power, in some form, is kept up. To reduce the present equivalent of labour power will be to reduce the current weight of cane produced, and to cut down, below a given minimum, the bulk of available cane is stop the mills; for they cannot operate and meet the bare expense of running, unless a given tonnage of cane passes the rollers, and a given minimum of sugar is made.

At the present time the labour power furnished by the cane-growers, themselves, and by their families, is utterly inadequate to produce the bulk of cane demanded by the mills to keep them in operation. Hired labour is therefore engaged to supplement the work of the growers; and not only are the few remaining large planters employers of such labour, but most of the farmers pay wages to several hired hands.

The labour employed embraces Europeans, chiefly of the Anglo-Saxon race; and other races, including the Asiatic, the Hindoo, and the Polynesian. The great majority of the alien labourers engaged in Queensland belong to the South Sea Island tribes.

POSITION OF THE WHITE LABOURER

By reason of a legislative enactment, known as the Pacific Island Labourers Act, the white labourer in Queensland holds a unique and relatively protected position. In the citation of kinds of labour which the South Sea Islander may perform, the positions of "engineers, engine-drivers, engine-fitters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, farriers, sugar-boilers, carpenters, sawyers, splitters, fencers, bullock-drivers, mechanics, grooms or coachmen, waggoners, or household servants" are not included, all these several kinds of employment being reserved for the selection of the white labourer.

While the white labourer is protected in the exclusive enjoyment of the kinds of occupation set forth in the said Act, he of course is not debarred from the lines of work allowed to the Pacific Islander. As a matter of fact, the white labourer is engaged in some kinds of field work, but more chiefly in such as are performed by use of implements, and command a higher rate of compensation, and from which the Pacific Islander is debarred.
Establishing a European Industry

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the new Commonwealth parliament was determined to make the sugar industry a flourishing white enterprise. This it was able to achieve through the payment of a bounty to growers using only white labour and the imposition of customs duties on foreign, imported sugar. The rationale for these policies was to boost industry and employment, to enshrine the principles of White Australia, and to provide for the defence and security of the young nation.


A white community which prefers to grow its own sugar in its own territory with white labour, rather than purchase from abroad sugar grown by cheap coloured labour, must face the responsibility of making good the increased cost of production under the higher standard of living and reward. Either the consumer or the taxpayer must pay. In Australia, under the Customs Duty, the cost is paid by the consumer. . . . At present, Australia’s demand exceeds 250,000 tons per annum. Assuming that amount to be produced locally, and assuming, as experience warrants, that within a protected area, the price of the protected commodity will generally run to foreign market price plus freight plus duty, the present Customs duty of £6 a ton pledges the Australian consumer to the extent of £1,500,00 per annum. In actual fact, certain deductions have to be made. . .

On all coloured-grown sugar the Commonwealth Treasury receives the full Excise, while paying nothing in the way of Bounty. As we have already said, approximately 6 per cent. of the Australian output of sugar is grown by coloured labour.

When due allowance is made for the foregoing qualifications, it will be apparent that the Australian community is pledged to, in a sense, an annual subsidy to the Sugar Industry of over £1,000,000 per annum, and that this amount will increase in proportion as the local production approaches the local demand and in proportion as the policy of excluding black labour proves prohibitive.

The importance of the Sugar Industry in Australia may be considered from several points of view.

1. INDUSTRIAL: (a) Every industry established in the Commonwealth is a national asset. We have already referred to the
By the twenties and thirties, sugar was a "whites only" industry, but migrant labour was relied on to perform the hard tasks, such as cutting, as cheaply as possible: a Finnish gang of cane cutters at Cairns about 1927 (top), and lads enjoying themselves outside their barracks after a hard day's work in Ingham about 1932. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
estimate of from ten to twelve million pounds as representative of the capital employed in the Sugar Industry in the Commonwealth. The following official figures illustrate the relative importance of the growing and milling industries in New South Wales and Queensland.

The tonnage of sugar produced in the several States of Australia, yearly [is shown in table 1].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>2,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>7,300</td>
<td>15,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>26,533</td>
<td>69,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>19,938</td>
<td>92,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>18,828</td>
<td>207,264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 2) applies to the numbers of persons engaged in the year ended 31st December 1911, in the four districts into which the Sugar Industry is divided for the purpose of administering the Bounty Regulations. The figures are avowedly approximate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earning Bounty White Labour</th>
<th>Not Earning Bounty</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1</td>
<td>5,935</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>5,524</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3</td>
<td>8,533</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Queensland*          | 21,762 | 1,305     | 1,537  | 23,299   |
| Total New South Wales      | 3,525  | 113       | 113    | 3,650    |
| Total Victoria             | 500    | —         | —      | 500      |
| Total                      | 25,787 | 1,418     | 1,662  | 27,449   |

* Exclusive of 3,745 white persons employed in factories; exclusive of 360 coloured persons employed in factories, total, 4,105.

(b) An industry of such importance as the foregoing figures indicate necessarily implies far-reaching stimulus to accessory industries. Some of these are local, such as trade, dairying, gardening, etc. Others extend throughout the Commonwealth. Every State of the Commonwealth finds consumers for some of its goods in sugar-producing areas. In this connection, we may
cite, as a concrete example, the evidence of Mr. William Gibson of Bingera, as to one plantation and mill:

"I claim that the industry requires the utmost consideration from our legislators, in view of its great value to the Commonwealth. I am willing to give any information required, and if there is anything the members of the Commission would like to see at Bingera, we shall be glad to show them. The following statement shows what a plantation and sugar-mill means to the public in trade:— Revenue to railway per annum, £7,000; shipping company freights, £6,500; harbor dues and wharfage, £1,000; firewood cutters, £2,000; merchants' accounts, £13,000; foundry, £4,000; saw-mills, £1,500; cattle purchased for beef, £5,000; horses bought, £1,500; corn, £3,500; other produce, £1,000; lime, £300; flour, £1,500; coal, £1,000; wages, £45,000; cane cutters' contracts, £21,000; railway lines, permanent, 22 miles 2-feet gauge, 8½ miles 3ft. 6in. gauge, portable, 10 miles 2-feet gauge; locomotives, 6; increased value of land to farmers by railway and river bridges, past six years, £10,000."

2. SOCIAL: The industrial aspects of the Sugar Industry are less important than the social. The Sugar Industry is a contribution of the first importance to the policy of a White Australia. The change from coloured to white labour conditions in transforming the character of the population of the Queensland coastal area. While much remains to be done in the direction of encouraging white settlement, a great change for the better has already been effected as regards the numerical ratio of the white population and their morale. Further, as a result of the increase of the white population in the Queensland littoral, a new stimulus has been offered to the opening up and settlement of large inland areas. The importance of the fact can hardly be over-estimated, in view of the circumstances that these inland areas, owing to their elevation above sea level, enjoy a climate of admitted excellence, and allow of a very varied cultivation.

3. POLITICAL: While the social aspect of the Sugar Industry is more important than the industrial, the political aspect is perhaps more important than either. Unsettled areas in the tropical parts of Australia are not only a source of strategic weakness. They constitute a positive temptation to Asiatic invasion; and may give to the white Australia policy a complexion which must inevitably weaken the claims of Australia to external
support. As we have already remarked, the ultimate, and in our opinion the effective justification of the protection of the Sugar Industry lies beyond questions of industry or wealth production. It must be sought in the very existence of Australia as a nation.

Sugar, the Tropics, White Australia

By the 1910s, and thereafter, the Commonwealth government saw the sugar industry, the settlement of the North and White Australia as essentially linked concerns. Australia's whole security, its very existence, was believed to be at stake, as the following documents indicate. White settlement in the tropics was succeeding in a way that had not been paralleled elsewhere. In the 1920s and 1930s the sugar industry in northern Queensland was boosted by the arrival of Italian immigrants who quickly adjusted to the local scene and soon became successful sugar farmers. The highest concentration of Italians was in the Ingham-Tully area.


While the wide divergencies of opinions which exist to-day with respect to [the problem of the relation of public control to the sugar industry] are often the result of a mere ignorance of essential data, they are still more frequently the result of a failure to outgrow ideas, opinions or policies which belong to the limited outlook at pre-Federal times. The problem of the Sugar Industry to-day is not, save in subordinate respects, a problem of industry, of wealth, or of production; it is primarily and essentially a problem of settlement and defence. No nation can afford to regard lightly the development of its industries, the progress of its wealth, or the economic efficiency of its productive machinery. But, important as these undoubtedly are, they rank, as regards the Sugar Industry, on an inferior plane. The Commonwealth to-day is brought face to face with one of the gravest problems which has ever taxed the ingenuity of statesmanship — that of the settlement of tropical and semi-tropical areas by a white population living under standard conditions of life. And, intimately associated with this problem is the question of national defence. If the ideal of a White Australia is to become an enduring actuality, some means must be discovered of establishing
Crushing mills were built along the coast to serve the different sugar districts. Plane Creek, Sarina, was one of the mills in the rich Mackay district; here, the little trams are delivering cane for processing. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

industries within the tropical regions. So long as these regions are unoccupied, they are at invitation to invasion, as well as a source of strategic weakness. Granted so much, it follows that the supreme justification for the protection of the Sugar Industry is the part that the industry has contributed, and will, as we hope, continue to contribute to the problems of the settlement and defence of the northern portion of the Australian continent. The recognition of the nature of this supreme justification is the first condition of a sound public policy in relation to the Sugar Industry. Relatively to it, all other issues are of minor importance.

White Settlement in the Tropics

Although there was criticism of the cost of sugar subsidies, defenders of the industry pointed out the importance of peopling the north to act as a bulwark against invasion.

Australia has been and is one of the great gifts to the white race. There were no warlike people to oppose the first immigrants; there were no wild animals, no pests, no vermin, and no noxious weeds of any consequence. It has a good climate over a large area that with the soil produces wood, wheat, fruit, and other products not excelled elsewhere, and nature had £600,000,000 in gold waiting to give the people a start in life. Nature also made a soil and climate in North Queensland adapted for an industry that employs thousands of persons, and are a garrison in an area that without it would be an open door to the rest of the country.

People talk of Darwin as though that area is the most inviting to an invader. It does offer an opportunity, but is not equal to the North Queensland coast. . . . Once an enemy obtained a strong footing [in North Queensland] he would make use of its immense resources for his schemes, and from it move and take all the cities on the coast in the rear as far as Melbourne and Adelaide. All the forts at the capital cities, with the muzzles of the guns pointing seaward could not save them. . . .

The effect that the sugar industry has had on the increase of population in North Queensland may be gauged by noting the difference between it and the Northern Territory. About 8000 men are producing sugar and close on 20,000 are directly employed in connection with the industry, and many thousands indirectly. The dairy industry has also prospered in the north, but the sugar industry was a powerful aid to it, because it provided the wealth for much of the pioneer work in the districts suitable for dairying; for example the roads to and on the Atherton tableland. Under the active stimulus of the sugar industry the population of the northern part of the State has grown steadily. Consider the Northern Territory. Fifty years ago it had a population of 5000 white people, and the total is still round that figure, despite the expenditure of £15,000,000 by Governments in that period. It has no industry to attract people, and it remains as weak a link round the Australian coast as ever it was in respect of resident defenders. North Queensland has had a yearly increment of people, and it has been growing stronger all the time, and is still growing, chiefly because of the sugar industry. It should be unnecessary to ask whether the industry is an asset to the nation.

Australia owes more to the sugar industry than many are aware. Various statements have been made that it is a heavy burden, and to support this the price of raw sugar in Java is
Sugar was a well-established industry in the inter-war years, but the pioneering spirit still existed, as shown by this cane farmer's house (top), and the tough living conditions of cane cutters in barracks near Ingham, about 1932 (bottom). Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
quoted, but it is not mentioned that men, women, and children work in the canefields of Java for very low wages. The men get up to 1/ a day and the women 4d., and yet the sugar industry here is compared with a similar industry with those conditions. Does anyone in Australia want sugar cheap in monetary cost, but so dear in the price of humanity?

Tully is the last district in Queensland to be brought under cane, and its mill is the most modern in the State. The birth of the Tully mill followed the findings of a Royal Commission appointed in 1922 to inquire into the most suitable location for sugar mills which might have to be erected in the future. The Queensland Government then decided to erect a mill at Tully. The construction was placed in the hands of a Queensland firm, and the mill and tram lines were completed at a cost of £800,000. Last year an area of 9652 acres yielded a crop of 201,389 tons of cane, from which 29,156 tons of sugar were obtained. This year it is anticipated that 256,000 tons of sugar cane will be crushed. The mill has been co-operatively controlled since May 1931, and serves 300 growers and their families. Cane keeps the district alive, and during the crushing season employment is found for 1300 persons, included 500 cane cutters, who in this wet belt work under trying conditions. They earn on the average 28/ per day.

Sugar, like any primary industry, has had its ups and downs. For a while the plantation system worked well, but then began to fail. Over 1,000 Melanesian labourers were allowed to stay on in Australia after the government ended the recruitment system; but they have become Australia's forgotten people. After some problems the small-scale, white-farmer structure began to succeed. The industry became a very secure one, especially when in the First World War the government stepped in with the acquisition and disposal of the crop. Thereafter the industry became highly regulated, with government controls on production and marketing. International agreements also were worked out to give security on the sale of the crop on the world market.

In the 1960s and 1970s cane farmers undertook vigorous expansion of their crops. They had been encouraged by government reports of growing markets. By this time, too, the industry had largely become mechanized and improvements in port facilities, notably bulk-grain handling, seemed to herald greatly increased exports of sugar to the world — and greatly increased profits for the cane farmer. By the 1980s it suddenly became apparent that the industry had
dangerously overexpanded. Severe competition, especially from the subsidized beet-growers of the Common Market, brought a disastrous slump in the price of sugar. In the mid 1980s the sugar industry of Queensland was prostrate, desperate for assistance.
The Mining Industry
Canoona Rush, 1858

The story of mining is crowded with "rushes" that failed, of miners who failed, of heartbreak and disappointment. One such failure occurred at Canoona, outside Rockhampton, in 1858. Reports of a gold find aroused a rush mentality. Miners flocked from Sydney and Melbourne only to find nothing. Their misfortune was to benefit central Queensland's fledgling pastoral industry as the stranded miners provided a ready labour force to tend the sheep and cattle.

Colin Archer, Journal, 8 October 1858, Rockhampton Historical Society.

Probably about 3000 people have landed at Rockhampton. Those who arrived first immediately proceeded to the diggings, but what must have been their disappointment and chagrin to find that the diggings consisted of a few acres of ground or a gully all of which was already worked out or in the possession of the few who were there before them. Hundreds of them have

Technology has played a vital part in the success of mining, from simple alluvial panning to the most expensive and complicated processes of refining in use today. Here, a party, "a bunch of mates", operated a windlass in a shallow shaft at Clermont, where gold was discovered in the early 1860s. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
returned without putting a spade in the ground, thus deterring others from going at all, and Rockhampton is consequently crowded with disappointed and disaffected diggers.

A great many who have the means are returning to Sydney as fast as they came, but there are also a great many who are not able to pay their passage back, and are consequently left destitute, and suffering from want of the necessaries of life. Some of them are making their way into the interior in search of employment. No doubt labor is very scarce in the interior, but after all, squatting stations can only absorb a very small portion of such a multitude. We are finding work for a number of them here, such as digging wells at dry sheep stations, trenching the garden, etc., but advise all who come to go further in the country where they are more wanted and wages higher.

**Bushranging**

Queensland was not the setting for the type of notorious bushranging activities that occurred in the southern colonies, but there were a few holdups of gold escorts. In the following incident Gold Commissioner Griffin in the company of two troopers was escorting money from Rockhampton to Clermont when an unusual attack occurred. Usually, however, the Queensland goldfields were not thought to be particularly lawless or violent.


In Brisbane, Griffin was a prominent society man, and a regular attendant at Government House festivities.

He made use of a Crown Minister, whose sister had acquired an infatuation for him, to obtain sudden promotions on the pretence that they were necessary before he could ask the young lady to be his wife. And all this time his lawful wife was in Melbourne! He had adopted a scheme to delude her into the belief that he was dead. During his four years at Clermont, he was much addicted to gambling, a vice which led him finally to the gallows.

Finally, after various suspicious acts of Griffin on the way,
the escort arrived at the crossing of the Mackenzie, and camped about a quarter of a mile from Bedford’s Hotel.

Bedford heard a couple of shots fired about two or three o’clock in the morning, and Griffin came in about four o’clock, and said the shots were fired by Power, who had lost himself. Griffin then had all the money in his valise, and he and Bedford started for Rockhampton, Griffin keeping Bedford in front all the way.

On the second day after they left Bedford’s Hotel, the two Troopers were found dead in the camp.

A party including Griffin, Dr. Salmond, H. P. Abbott, Sergeant Julian, and Sub-Inspector Elliott left at once. On the way up, Griffin asked Salmond to give him a seat in his buggy, and let him drive.

He drove in such a reckless fashion that Salmon ordered him out of the trap. Griffin’s intention was to disable or kill Salmond, so he would not arrive and discover that Power and Cahill had been poisoned or drugged. Elliott had decided that the murders were done by Griffin, whose revolver he got possession of for a few minutes at the Hotel where they stopped for dinner, while Griffin was asleep, and he made the caps useless and returned the weapon to the case on Griffin’s belt. When the bodies of Power and Cahill were examined, Dr. Salmond found bullet wounds in both heads, and both men had been shot from behind, probably while asleep.

The probability is that Griffin had drugged both men, that Power was unexpectedly awake when Griffin went to remove the money, and fired at him, and Griffin had to shoot both men so they could “tell no tales.” On arrival at Rockhampton, Griffin hid the valise with the 3,730 one pound notes in a hollow stump. On the scaffold, Griffin protested his innocence to the last. He was hanged in a dress suit, and lifted his long fair beard to let the hangman put the rope under his chin. After Griffin was buried, a man who had died on board the steamer “Tinonee” was buried in a coffin above him, so as to guard against his head being taken, but two enterprising Rockhamptonites got down to Griffin’s coffin, cut his head off, and took it away, after filling up the grave and leaving it in nice order.
Gympie

The discovery of gold at Gympie in 1867 by James Nash proved a boon to the young colony with its finances in a very weak and straitened condition. People flocked to the new diggings and a township emerged almost overnight. The port of Maryborough benefited, and pastoralists in the Wide Bay area suddenly had a ready market near at hand. Charles Allan was visiting Queensland from England at the time of the discovery.


Soon after my arrival in Australia, I was standing one morning in a store in one of the towns of Northern Queensland, when the telegraph brought the news that gold had been found at a place called Gympie Creek. In vain did we examine every available map of the colony, and seek through almanacks and directories — in none of them could we find any mention of this insignificant spot. This was in October, 1867, and at that time Gympie was an uninhabited creek in the heart of the Queensland bush, not very far from the sea-coast, and lying in a southerly direction about sixty miles from the small town of Maryborough. When I visited it a very few months afterwards, two large towns had arisen on this wild and desolate spot, and 7,000 inhabitants were busily engaged in the work of gold-digging.

In the deep solitudes of the bush, where so lately the kangaroos and other wild animals fed undisturbed, except by occasional visits from the flocks of sheep belonging to the neighbouring squatters, I now found at Gympie Creek two large and populous townships, scattered far and wide over the hills, and extending for several miles in different directions, as hundreds of fresh comers were constantly trying fresh spots for gold. One of these towns is called “Nashville”, after the prospector; the other is called “One Mile Creek”, being about that distance from Nash’s claim. Each township has its long, narrow, main street, winding its unformed, crooked way through the bush, as house after house and store after store is quickly run up by newly-arrived adventurers. Banks, stores, shanties, and other buildings of wood and iron, had sprung, as if by magic, from the ground; and amongst these you may see a circulating library, two or three theatres, and other pretentious erections, that one would not expect to find in such a truly infant settlement.
Miners at Gympie

Gympie, although a successful mine in overall terms, was frustrating for many of the miners. Only a few found wealth; most went in want. The rush mentality, the gambler's instinct, the sense of adventure, drove many men on for little reward. At Gympie a strong sense of individualism was noted, the miner preferring to work for himself or in partnership with a few mates, rather than work for wages under company control. Like other mining areas, Gympie developed quickly and so took on a ramshackle air. Yet unlike many centres, it continued to produce gold for decades, booming after the turn of the century. An air of permanence was slowly settling over the community when Anthony Trollope visited in 1871.

Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (Melbourne; Robertson, 1873), 56-58, 60.

I have spoken of a happy family, — but most of the mining families at Gympie were not so blessed. There were, perhaps,
fifty or sixty reefing claims at Gympie, in which mining was actually in progress when I was there, but I did not hear of above ten in which gold was being found to give more than average wages, and I heard of many from which no gold was forthcoming. This claim had been abandoned, — that other was about worked out, — a third had been a mere flash in the pan, — at a fourth they had not got deep enough, and did not know that they ever would or could go deep enough, though they were still working hard with no returns; at a fifth the gold would not pay the expenses. The stranger is of course taken to see the more successful ventures, and the thick streaks of gold which are shown him among the pet lumps of rock, kept by the miners in huge boxes instead of being thrown out among the unguarded heaps of quartz, produce a strange fascination. Where is the man who would not like to have a chest three times as big as a coffin full of such noble stones? But the traveller who desires to understand Gympie or any other digging, should endeavour to see the failures also. It is by no means every little wooden shanty near the mouth of a shaft that has such a box so filled. The unfortunate ones are not far to seek, — and they are very unfortunate though almost invariably brave. It seems to be an understood thing among Australian gold diggers that a man is not to be querulous or downhearted in his plaints. They are free enough in speaking either of their good or bad fortune, — will own either to the one fact of £10 a day, or to the other that they have not earned a brass farthing for the last three weeks; — but they neither whine or exult. They are gamblers who know how to bear the fortunes of the table.

Probably the class of miners which as a class does best is that of experienced men who work for wages. A good man, who has either come out from England as a miner, or has learned his trade in California or the colonies, can generally earn £2 10s or £3 a week. For this he must work underground nine or ten hours a day. But he can live very cheaply, — for 12s or 15s a week, and yet, as far as bread and meat and tea are concerned, can live plenteously. To such a man two or three hundred pounds is a fortune, and he may earn his fortune very quickly. In ten years' time a man intent upon his object, and able to resist temptation, might return with £1,000. But unfortunately this is not the object on which they are intent, and they do not resist temptation. They all want to work for themselves, and generally, as I have said before, put their savings into other mines, — or rather live
on their 12s a week, in order that they may speculate with the money they save. The miner who works for himself and runs the hazard of the work is regarded as a higher being than he who contents himself with wages. Men will tell you that the real miner always 'goes on his own hook'. This feeling and the remote chance of great wealth, stand in the way of that permanent success which the working miner might otherwise enjoy.

And probably the class of miners which as a class does worst is that composed of young gentlemen, who go to the diggings, led away, as they fancy, by a spirit of adventure, but more generally, perhaps, by a dislike of homely work at home. . . .

Gympie as a town was a marvellous place, and to my eyes very interesting, though at the same time very ugly. Its population was said to consist of about six thousand souls, but I found throughout the country that no statement of the population of a gold field could be taken as accurate. The men go and come so quickly that the changes cannot be computed. It consists of a long street stretching more than a mile, — up and down hill, — without a single house in it that looked as though it had been built to last ten years. And probably no house has been built with any such ambition, although Gympie is now more than ten years old. The main street contains stores, banks, public-houses, a place of worship or two, and a few eating-houses. They are framed of wood, one storey high, generally built in the first place as sheds with a gable-end to the street, on to which, for the sake of importance, a ricketty wooden facade has been attached. The houses of the miners, which are seldom more than huts, are scattered over the surrounding little hills, here and there, as the convenience of the men in regard to the different mining places has prompted the builders. All around are to be seen the holes and shallow excavations made by the original diggers, and scattered among them the bigger heaps which have been made by the sinking of deep shafts. When a mine is being worked there is a rough wooden windlass over it, and at a short distance the circular track of the unfortunate horse who, by his rotatory motion, pulls the bucket up with the quartz, and lets them down with the miners. Throughout all there stand the stunted stumps of decapitated trees, giving the place a look of almost unearthly desolation. At a distance beyond the mine-shafts are to be seen the great forests which stretch away on every side over almost unlimited distance. If at any place one is tempted to quote the *aurum irrepertum et sic melius situm*, it is at such a place as Gympie.
There is a hospital, and there are schools, which are well attended, and, as I have before said, various places of worship. I put up at an inn kept by a captain, which I found to be fairly comfortable, and by no means expensive. There were a crowd of men there, all more or less concerned in the search of gold, with whom I found myself to be quite intimate before the second night was over; and from whom, — as from everybody at Gympie, — I received much civility, and many invitations to drink brandy and water.

Charters Towers

The rush mentality was characteristic of so many goldfields in Queensland and the rest of Australia. In 1872 Ravenswood was a flourishing gold centre when the announcement of a find at nearby Charters Towers set in train the next inevitable rush.

Ravenswood correspondent, Port Denison Times, 24 February 1872, 2.

A good deal of excitement prevails here at present about a new rush to a place about 14 miles from the Broughton (Jessop's Creek) named Charters Towers. The place was discovered a few weeks ago by Mossman and party, who then applied for a prospecting claim of a reef opened by them there. There are now on the ground, I heard, between 400 and 500 people, the population daily increasing, and over 100 prospecting areas have been pegged off. The reefs are said to crop up in every direction over a very large extent of country. A great many are leaving here for there, indeed if the stampede continues much longer, Ravenswood will be depopulated. Several practical miners from this camp have visited the rush during the past week, and report very favourably on it — among them Mr. King, M.L.A., who thinks so well of it that he intends placing his large machine (now at Cleveland Bay) there at once. There is a very large quantity of surface stone which there is no doubt will be payable. Some of it is very rich. Should the reefs run down — none of them have been tried to any depth as yet — and there is no reason why they should not, the rush will eclipse anything yet known in Queensland. The gullies are nearly all auriferous, and some good alluvial has
been found in the vicinity. On Friday last, Jack Wilson, formerly of Bowen, and mate arrived in town from the new field with a parcel of over 400 oz. of gold, including some fine nuggets, one weighing 123 oz.

**Palmer Rush, 1873**

Soon after gold discoveries were reported in the north at Cape River, Ravenswood and Charters Towers, an exploring party reported on a new find on the remote Palmer River in 1873. The distance and difficulty of the site did not deter the miners in their frenzied quest for the gold.


The difficulties of travel, the absence of the necessities of life, the impracticability or utter absence of roads, the inhospitable nature of the climate, the miasmata of the swamps, the certain danger from the natives, were all as though they had not been; and such have not yet been experienced that would deter the intrepid and adventurous digger from pursuing his quest of gold and penetrating to its probable location on the first hint of the proof of that probability. . . .

The discovery, made by an exploring party, was hundreds of miles beyond any considerable settlement. There was no convenient port then opened or well known to navigators which could be used for the ordinary requirements of passengers and goods traffic; the route from whatever port would be through unknown, unexplored, and hostile country; the locality was seven degrees north of the Tropic of Capricorn, where the tropical sun evaporates any moisture . . . [and] long dry seasons prevail there. But the Endeavour River was utilised as a port, and the other difficulties were at defiance, when, after a short experience, it was found that this discovery eclipsed everything of the kind previously made in Queensland; and, notwithstanding the almost inaccessible position, the locality was soon transformed from a sterile wilderness into a scene of busy industry and activity, and yielded during the first five years of its existence nearly
Mining helped to spread white settlement across Queensland. Ravenswood, built upon gold, was one of the first towns in the north; it was a new straggling settlement in about 1876 (top). Mount Morgan (bottom) developed in the 1880s as a company town. Here, the belching chimneys of the smelters dominate the scene and the landscape is disfigured by slag heaps. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
Mining in Queensland today looks to other minerals besides gold. The Mount Isa field, rich in copper, lead and zinc, has brought urban settlement to the far north-west of the state. Photograph courtesy Premier's Department, Brisbane.

1,000,000 oz. of gold of very rich quality. This yield has not, however, been maintained.

The Rise of Cooktown

Because of the isolation of the Palmer River diggings there was an urgent need for an access port. Almost overnight, Cooktown was born as a service town for the goldfield and the rich hinterland. At this time (1873), George Dalrymple, who was associated with many exploratory and developmental activities in north Queensland, was engaged by the government in an exploration trip of the coast north from Cardwell.

Narrative and Reports of the Queensland North-East Coast Expedition, 1873 (G. E. Dalrymple), QVP 2 (1874):635.

On the day before (Friday) we had sailed into a silent, lonely,
distant river mouth, with thoughts going back a century to the arrival of the brave navigator [Cook], its discoverer and his people, in knee breeches, three-cornered hats, and small swords, pig tails, and silver shoe-buckles. On Saturday we were in the middle of a phase of enterprise peculiarly characteristic of the present day — of a young diggings' township — men hurrying to and fro, tents rising in all directions, horses grazing, and neighing for their mates, all round us — the shouts of sailors and laborers landing more horses and cargo, combined with the rattling of the donkey engine, cranes and chains — many familiar faces of old friends, thought to be hundreds of miles distant, peeped in at our tent doors for a morning call.

Croydon

Discovered in 1885, Croydon was one of the richest fields of the north. It was "boomed" by promoters and speculators in 1887, but by 1890 depression had caught up: backward technology, limited capital and haphazard management all reduced the efficiency (and prosperity) of the field. It should be noted that such problems were not only confined to Croydon.


On my arrival on Croydon I was at once struck with the backward state of the mining on the field, considering that it is now over ten years since its discovery.

As an instance of this I may mention that the Warden, in his Annual Report for the year 1895, states that in December of that year there were 134 mines being worked, and also that gold was produced from 285 different holdings during that year; and from his tabular statement showing what winding machinery exists on the field it appears that only 27 out of that number of mines are worked by steam winding-gear, and of those as many as 15 use only single winding-gear. There are only two horse-whims in use on the field, and the rest of the mines are worked by the primitive 'whip', of which there are 40, or by the windlass.

Then, again, taking into consideration the most productive and principal reefs of the field — such as the Golden Gate, the
True Blue, the Lady Isabelle, the Queen of Croydon, the Iguana, and the Highland Mary — the greatest vertical depth at which any of these reefs are actually being worked is only about 250 feet, while the average vertical depth would not be more than 150 feet. There certainly are a few block shafts which are down a little deeper, but they have either been abandoned before striking the reef, or, in cases in which the reef has been met with, no work has been done because the reef was not payable at that particular point. Considering the richness of some of these reefs in the higher levels and the amount of gold they have produced, one would have expected the holders of some of the block claims to have given them a more thorough prospecting. The Iguana and Highland Mary Reefs were certainly cut off and lost, but nothing of the sort has happened in the cases of the Golden Gate, the True Blue and the Queen of Croydon Reefs.

Then, too, the workings of many of the mines somewhat resemble rabbit warrens; only just the richest stone had been followed and worked out, and often it requires three or four separate handings to get the stone from the working face to the surface, and the profit is to a great extent swallowed up by this unnecessary work; whereas if the mine had been properly opened out by sinking a good working shaft and driving fair-sized levels, the poorer grades of stone could have been won at a profit.

There is a too greater tendency to stop the driving of any particular level or working place immediately the stone gets poor or thins out, forgetting that it may be only a local blank, and that fresh ‘shoots’ of gold may be found. I give in my detailed notes on the claims several instances of levels being abandoned by one party, and on the property being taken up by others payable gold has been obtained on continuing them a few feet.

In many cases reefs have been abandoned on account of the quantity of water in them, and often, on inquiry, I have been informed that the reef left behind when the mine was abandoned was of a fair size and carrying gold in payable quantity, and yet over the whole of the field I see there are only twelve steam pumps at work.

There is no doubt that in many cases this state of things is due to the mines being worked by small parties of two, three, or four men, working at or near the surface, and who, unless the reef proves exceptionally rich, are compelled to abandon it and, with
such a large number of reefs as exist, there are always fresh places for trial.

But it is not so much to these mines that I refer as to the larger ones worked by syndicates and companies, in which the methods of working are far behind those on the other large Queensland fields. The want of outside capital is usually given as the excuse for this, and there is no doubt that its introduction would lead to the better prospecting and development of the mines, but still, I think, much could be done in this direction by the present owners without the expenditure of large sums of money by more foresight being used in opening out the mines, and many mines which are now closed might still be at work.

The question of the supply of water for the crushing mills has become one of the most serious import to the progress of the field, and I have no hesitation in saying that until this matter is settled satisfactorily, and the mills have a supply of water sufficient to enable them to crush all the year round irrespective of the seasons, I see no chance whatever of the field making any permanent advance.

Life on a Goldfield

Living conditions on the goldfields, especially the alluvial ones with a limited life expectancy such as at the Cape River, were particularly makeshift and harsh. Police had trouble imposing law and order. W. R. O. Hill was sent to the Cape field in 1868 as the clerk of petty sessions and the mining registrar.

I showed him my credentials, and he installed me in what I had by courtesy to call my office, a bark humpy, very leaky in wet weather, and like an oven in summer, dimensions being twelve feet by ten feet. This noble edifice had to serve me also as a bed room, and I dined at a pub.

The Cape in 1868 was a decidedly rough locality, there being fully two thousand five hundred men, representing many nationalities, and among them the scum of all the Southern Gold Fields. . . . Gold was easily obtained and much more easily spent. Dreadful stuff, called whisky, rum and brandy, was sold
The Atherton Tableland and Upper Carpentaria area yielded a great variety of minerals at the turn of the century; tin, in particular, and silver, copper, lead, gold and coal. John Moffat became king of operations in the area; the photograph shows one of his tin-shafts near Irvinebank. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

in shilling drinks, and there was no need to wonder that many of the poor fellows, after the usual spree, became raving maniacs.

Picture in your imagination a mob of two hundred or three hundred half drunk semi-madmen running amok with each other in the brutal fights which were a daily occurrence!

I have seen a man kicked to death in the open daylight, the police and everybody else being powerless to interfere. . . .

My humpy had a small pigeon hole cut through the back to enable me to transact business. . . . We held our Court on a primitive stage in the dining room of a pub. . . .

Chinese at the Palmer River

The easy alluvial pickings of the Palmer field proved a magnet to the Chinese who flooded there from China and the south. Their thorough working and
reworking of areas that Europeans had quickly abandoned aroused European resentment, especially since a considerable amount of the gold was being repatriated to China.

Hill, *45 Years Experiences*, 76-77.

Only for the influx of Chinamen the Palmer would have given profitable employment to thousands of Europeans for many years.

The hordes of Celestials, at one time about twenty thousand, absolutely worked out the bed of the river. The amount of gold obtained by them was enormous, and thousands of ounces of gold were taken back to China privately, as one of the Boss Chinamen told me he sent home at least one thousand ounces a month for some considerable time, and I believe him.

Just to show how easily gold was got on the Palmer, I was in my office one morning when a European miner came in for a Miner’s Right. He told me he was going prospecting, and next morning the same man came to me and asked if I would put a bag into my safe for a time. He said, “It’s a few specimens I got yesterday in about three hours.” He said he was up a gully looking for his horses and found that one of them had kicked a large stone over, disclosing a nest of nuggets. I asked him how much he got, and he replied, “Weigh the lot, sir, please.” And I did, and found the lot weighed one hundred and seventy-nine ounces three pennyweights, the smallest piece weighing seventeen pennyweights. The nuggets were lovely to look at, all water worn and of the most fantastic shapes. One “beauty” was exactly thirteen and a-half ounces.

**Chinese Luck?**

Thousands of Chinese came to Queensland in the mid 1870s in search of gold. Most indebted themselves in some form to make the journey from southern China to north Queensland. Although much European resentment arose over Chinese gaining wealth from the goldfields of Queensland, from the Chinese point of view they were not always so blessed with good fortune. Taam Sz Pui
came to Cooktown in February 1877 with his father and brother, and started searching.


It took us fully three months to cover one hundred miles in our journey. We then began to sift sand but to our utter disappointment, there was no gold. . . . Just then we heard that the gold strike was very rich about ten miles ahead. We immediately dashed on helter-skelter like fowls. When we covered one hundred thirty miles, it was already July.

Having started out our claim, we began panning and obtained daily about six or seven candareens. But then my father and brother, one after the other, fell ill and were confined to their beds groaning. . . .

It was about December when we located ourselves one hundred and sixty miles and here we remained stranded for a considerable number of years. I first thought of being a peddler which idea my father favoured. But in this business a heavy load on the shoulder would restrict the territory one could cover; yet the lighter the load, the less the gain would be. Next my thought turned to domestic service, but the position was disrespectful and the wages poor. There was no work that seemed to fit. Finally I was driven back to take up my former occupation of digging for gold. . . .

One day we reached the Mitchell River which looked like a spanse of the ocean. Here we settled down for the night. About nine o'clock that night we suddenly heard the hues and cries of the black natives. We aroused ourselves, set off a signal of alarm and kept watches throughout the night as if we were encountering a mighty enemy. When dawn came, we immediately moved away to avoid them.

Five years had passed, I now realized that to search for gold was like trying to catch the moon at the bottom of the sea. For-saking it for something else, I worked in a restaurant at the wages of two pounds a month. At the end of the year I had already saved twenty-five pounds, sixteen shillings and six pence, after deducting expenses.

It was six years since we first came but we had accomplished nothing. Sending him my savings for expenses I beg my father in my letter to return home. He declined the suggestion for he wanted to buy the vegetable garden with a few pigs in it which
Lo Sham Lee were offering for sale. He disregarded my entreaties and closed the transaction. Then followed a drought; the vegetables withered and the pigs all died. . . .

In March 1882, some Englishmen advertised for labourers to go to Johnson [sic] River Valley to develop the barren land into a sugar plantation. Mr. Lum Leung and I immediately set out for Cooktown together and accepted the call. We reached Johnson River on April the 5th. Such barrenness met our gaze that we felt we were dwelling in an age of universal wilderness. There were neither roads nor means of navigation or transportation. . . . Prospects began to brighten and soon [another] Englishman promoted me to be the foreman. . . .

Up to the 9th year, my younger brother had no success. So I asked him to come to my place. When finally he came, he was interested in a banana plantation. Too eager to take time to find a good partner, he associated with a disreputable character and the result was the loss of about sixty pounds.

By that time, my savings had increased. A peddler named Yuen Kiu was offering to dispose of his whole stock-in-trade because of reverses in gambling. I knew there was profit in it and went into partnership with Mr. Luk Fui to purchase the whole business. We sold the goods later at favourable prices, and each shared some profits. Henceforth my mind was set to become a merchant.

The Chinese Stereotype

European anxiety about the presence of so many Chinese, especially on the goldfields, was quick to appear. The Chinese were caricatured and denigrated in a variety of ways, and a host of unfavourable characteristics were attributed to them, such as that they were dirty, leprous, immoral, poor colonizers, undercut white labourers, and so on. These notions were widely and uncritically held among the white community of Queensland; few, if any, questioned them. Not surprisingly, there were sometimes violent outbreaks between the two ethnic groups. The following five documents from the press and even from the colonial Secretary, Premier John Douglas show the range of negative feelings that Europeans held towards the Chinese. Often the question of jobs and wages underlay much of the antagonism: the Chinese were often lumped with the Melanesians as cheap labourers taking away work from Europeans.
In the pages of the *Northern Miner*, printed in Charters Towers, one can see the expression of radical as well as racist protest against planters and other men of capital looking for cheap labour; the rise of the labour movement — and its links with the later White Australia policy — was under way.


There are at present located on the Palmer 15,000 Chinese. Put their average savings at the low scale of £1 per week and we find a result of £15,000 per week or the immense sum of (£780,000) seven hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling! taken to enrich China and rob Queensland of that amount yearly! This is a very serious matter and must be looked straight in the face and prompt action taken. Besides this loss of wealth they displace a large number of the European gold miners, who contribute so largely to swell the revenue and who also invest their earnings towards the further development of the resources of the colony. Yes, if immediate steps are not taken John [China] will monopolise the labor of the mines, the farms, the railroad, and the factory, and our colonial youths left as drones in the market. Even so near home as Cooktown we find already the Chinese drayman, packer, carter, publican, doctor, aye, shame to say, that even the telegraph messenger is of Chinese extraction. The free labor of the European and the servile labor of the Chinese cannot exist together.

Premier John Douglas to Agent General, 20 April 1877, QFP 2 (1877):1205.

Industrious, frugal, and law-abiding as the Chinese people may be, they are not colonists in the best sense of the term. They do not bring their women with them; or, if they do, the women who immigrate belong for the most part to an immoral class. They come and go, carrying back with them the proceeds of their industry. It is possible, indeed, that their presence here in large numbers might produce an industrial activity of a certain kind; but it would be of a kind different from that which has hitherto contributed to our prosperity. The probability is that, in a country so sparsely populated as Queensland now is, it would entirely supplant European labour; and the creation of a large, intelligent, docile, but servile class would, I do not doubt,
seriously affect and change the conditions upon which our political system is founded.

*Northern Miner*, 26 May 1877, 2.

Kanakas and Chinese are distinct types of the genus *homo*—some would go so far as to deny that they belong to the human family at all. There is no affinity between them and men of the Caucasian race, and miscegenation of races, so physically antagonistic must inevitably degrade the higher race. Hence it is not only the right but the duty of the governing power of the supreme race to preserve it from deterioration morally and physically, and to repress by statute the unnatural desires and unholy cupidty of planters and squatters to associate themselves with ‘human vermin’ for the purpose of making money.

*Queensland Figaro*, 12 May 1883, 19.

Shoals of pigtails, almond-eyed,  
Flooding all the country side,  
Skimmed off as their country’s scum,  
Odorous of opium.

Yellow rascals, cunning, knavish,  
Bowed in foul vice-bondage slavish,  
They, with Eastern filth embedded  
Form one monster hydra-headed.

Orientals, leprous-fitted,  
Blood diseased and small-pox pitted;  
Noxious, maid-devouring dragon he!  
That’s Sam’s loathsome *Yellow Agony*.

*Northern Miner*, 10 December 1878.

The Asiatics were not children but savages, with irrepresible savage natures of a kind most dangerous to the safety of unprotected females. . . . We are cherishing in our bosom an instru-
ment of corruption and debasement which if it is tolerated much longer will injuriously affect the character of the people. . . . What happiness can any poor foolish country woman of ours expect from uniting in marriage with a soft, pulpy, childish but passionate kanaka or the lithe, yellow-skinned mummy of the Celestial Empire?

Expel the Chinese!

Resentment towards Chinese built up throughout Queensland (as it had done in southern Australia) over their rapid influx to the goldfields. North Queensland, in particular, saw the arrival of Chinese in great numbers. Europeans showed their resentment of the Chinese presence in a variety of ways — sometimes using overt violence, sometimes turning to the legislative process and drawing up petitions of protest.

QVP 2 (1877):1203.

PETITION (CHINESE IN NORTHERN QUEENSLAND)

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the undersigned Miners, Traders, Graziers, Artisans, and other residents of the Charters Towers Gold Field.

SHOWETH, —

1. That your petitioners regard with great alarm and apprehension the continued influx of Chinese into the colony, there being now not less than eighteen thousand Chinese in Northern Queensland, being in some places from ten to fifteen to one in excess of the European population.

2. That your petitioners pray your Honourable House to totally prohibit the further introduction of Chinese, and also to exclude the Chinese now in the colony from actual mining operations on the gold fields.

3. That the presence of so large a number of Chinese in the colony is dangerous to the lives and property of the European population; and in the event of a conflict between the races the European miners would be at once overpowered and
Chinese entry into Queensland is associated with gold mining but resentment over their presence was quick to build up: by the 1880s they were restricted from working in the goldfields. Many turned to farming or gardening, and in the Cairns—Innisfail area they became successful banana growers (top). They adapted successfully to the unfamiliar conditions in Australia but they also kept alive various aspects of their own culture, as suggested by the joss house in Atherton (bottom). Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
driven off the gold fields; is calculated to retard the settlement of the country by a civilised and Christian population, and effectually to check the immigration of our own race from Europe and America.

4. That the settlement of a large and pagan population in the colony would be a standing menace to our most cherished institutions, and prove a moral and social evil of the most aggravated kind; and your petitioners fear that both our rights and our civilisation may be compromised, and our social and political systems may be imperilled, if, on any plea whatever, a Chinese immigration is forced on us against our wishes and our interests.

5. That the Chinese are objectionable as colonists, because the net proceeds of their labour are abstracted from the productive interests of the colony, and are added to those of the Chinese empire. Settled on the gold fields of the colony, they become centres of immorality and disease, and the experience of our sister colonies, and of California, goes to prove that they are in every way an objectionable addition to a civilised community.

6. That for the better protection of the European population, all Chinese in the colony be disarmed, and no Chinaman be allowed to carry firearms on any pretence.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[Here follows 814 signatures]

Leprosy and the Chinese

Two of the most common charges levelled against the Chinese was that they were diseased and immoral. Leprosy was always associated with them, unfairly, but cases did arise, as in the following document. Europeans were also affected, and poor victims were consigned to miserable lazarets, well removed from the mainstream of white civilization.

Progress, 17 June 1899, 7.

... Instructions were received from Brisbane for Sergeant Casey to immediately place Ah Dick under
ARREST AS A LEPER

On Wednesday, a World representative went out to see the man, and when Ah Dick came to the door of his house that World man received somewhat of a shock. Ah Dick had his face covered with ointment and bandages very much like an Egyptian mummy; the knuckle joints were terribly swollen, and his arms and legs were covered with leprous sores. The poor fellow, who had no idea of his coming fate, was quite cheerful and said, “Doctor make me much better”. In the course of the conversation it was elicited that Ah Dick had been 26 years in the colony, having come out from Canton to Queensland at the outbreak of the Palmer rush. Since then he had been in Cairns and other parts of Northern Queensland, and for the past six years had been residing on the Johnstone River. He denied every having been intimate with aboriginal women, but admitted to AMOURS WITH THE JAPANESE in Geraldton about four years ago, about which time “sore fellow first come”. Ah Dick fortunately did not offer to shake hands with the World representative at the close of the interview, but extended his hospitality by waving a leprous arm towards some orange trees laden with ripe fruit saying, “You like em orrangee, take em plenty”. The World man “wasn’t having any at the time”. Constable Casey, who had displayed considerable tact in the whole pitiable affair, intends burning down the premises as soon as Ah Dick has been taken away en route to his living death in the leper lazarette, far away in one of the Islands in the Torres Straits.

Rush at Mount Britten

While some gold discoveries led to permanent urban establishments — most notably at Gympie, Charters Towers and Mount Morgan — other discoveries supported only temporary settlements, such as in the Etheridge in the Carpentaria region or Mount Britten, west of Mackay. Publicans, storekeepers and carriers did well out of gold rushes; so did nearby cattle-growers because here they had a ready market for fresh meat. In this document, reference is made to
the legislative efforts of the Queensland government in the late 1870s to restrict the flow of Chinese on to the goldfields.


It is to that same hunger that no surfeit can satisfy, and no defeat blunt the edge of, that we owe the constant supply of victims, eager to embark in an industry which all must allow is a very necessary one, but which is clearly proved to be anything but profitable to those actually employed in it. Besides the race of veteran diggers, a new rush, of course, always attracts a heterogeneous crowd of outsiders, many of whom have never handled a pick and shovel in their lives, and whose pale faces and dissipated appearance proclaim them town-loafers, and strangers to the bush and hard work.

When I first arrived on Mount Britten gold-field there were seventy men on it, all living in tents. The only building that had any appearance of permanence about it was a butcher’s shop and store, made out of a few sheets of bark and saplings. Flour had run out, the drays having all stuck in the mud half way from port to the diggings; but there were tea, sugar, and tobacco, and a few tools to be had, and any amount of beef, supplied by fat cattle from the neighbouring run, two or three of which were run in every week into a sapling yard near the butcher’s shop, and killed. For some time beef was all we had to eat; but it was very good, and there was plenty of it, so we were glad enough to get it. . . .

In two months from the time I came there were nearly two thousand men on the field. Hundreds came from the adjacent colonies, and many even from New Zealand, attracted by the fabulous reports that never fail to be circulated about a new rush, and never fail to be believed.

These mad stampedes to a new rush are occasionally attended with very serious consequences. Thousands flock from all sides, each anxious to get first on to the field, without the slightest idea of how he is going to support life when he gets there, and usually entirely destitute of means to carry him away from it should the new field prove a failure. . . .

The rush to Mount Britten was stopped before it assumed a serious phase, but at no time was the field capable of supporting more than two hundred men on payable gold. Most of those who came were rank new-chums at digging. Instead of setting to work
to look for a new run of gold, they generally confined themselves to the melancholy pastime of sitting down and watching others getting it, and by-and-bye, finding that, with a few exceptions, gold is no more to be picked up without hard work on a diggings than anywhere else, they cleared out, leaving the fortunate ones who had secured good claims to work them out.

By-and-bye a mob of Chinamen, the most patient, persevering, hard-working of all races under the sun, will start and systematically "ground-sluice" the whole course of the creek, from one end of the workings to the other, and make a real good thing of it.

A dead set has been made at this unfortunate race by the inhabitants of Queensland. A poll-tax of £10 a head has been imposed upon them on entering the colony, and they are not allowed upon any gold-field until it has been open two years.

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A Queensland Coal Mine: Ipswich

Coal mining in Ipswich in the 1870s was on a very small scale, employing not much capital and only a few men. There were a number of different mines and mine owners in the area.

Queenslander, 18 June 1870, 8.

The Tivoli Coal Mine is situated between three and four miles north of Ipswich, about half-a-mile from the river Bremer, and close to the Waterstown estate. A little over four years ago coal was struck in different parts of the neighborhood, and for a short time coal mining there became almost a mania. Several shafts were sunk with several results, but all have been abandoned from one cause or another, with the exception of that under notice, which is owned by Messrs. Hooper and Robinson, and is well worth a visit by any person who finds himself in the quiet town of Ipswich with a few hours to spare. The road to the mine is very bad indeed, having been much cut up by the coal teams during the late wet weather. The first attraction on arriving at the scene of operations is the recently erected coke ovens. They number twenty-three, and, being built back to back, they form
an oblong about seventy yards by ten, and the average height is about seven feet. They are composed of stone and brick, the walls being about three feet thick, and the whole structure has a very substantial appearance. Each oven is circular and dome-shaped, the base being ten feet in diameter. They cost about £35 each, or nearly £800, which speaks well for the enterprise of the proprietors. As some of our readers are doubtless aware, coke is made from slack or clean and finely screened coal, and the finer the slack the better the coke. Previous to the erection of these

Since the 1950s coal has increasingly become the king of mining, but in early decades it was not so highly prized. Mines were small and dangerous; typical among them was this one at Howard in the Burnett, with its band of “happy” diggers. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
ovens, the slack was thrown away as useless, but it now proves a source of profit not only to the proprietors, but to the miners also, who now receive a liberal allowance per ton, whereas before the manufacture of coke was commenced, they merely sent the slack up when its accumulation in the pit became a nuisance. . . . The mine is about fifty yards from the ovens, and at its mouth, which is covered by a substantial shed, is a very fine fourteen-horse power stationary engine, which is used chiefly to raise the coal from the mine. The principal portion of the mine is a tunnel, which now extends 350 yards from the entrance, with ascent being one in five. . . . A wooden tramway runs to the end of the tunnel, and the coal is raised to the surface in small waggons which are run on a trolley, the hind wheels of which are constructed to suit the gradient from various levels. Each waggon holds five hundredweight of coal, and the trolley is made to carry four waggons, or one ton. The trolley is brought to the surface by means of an inch wire rope which is wound round a wooden drum six feet six inches in diameter by the engine. . . . And a curious sight it is.

Men naked to the waist, and almost as black as niggers, working away in every conceivable attitude in remote corners, others filling waggons and running them out to the stage in readiness for the trolley, others screening 'slack', and some taking a spell. What was even more interesting than this was to see them partaking their mid-day meal, for then they all assembled on the stage and presented a laughing picture to the visitor. A glance around, however, is sufficient to banish all mirthfulness, for the dread of some accident which might result in serious consequences is rarely absent from a person unaccustomed to such places, and every unusual sound causes alarm. A very pleasant feeling of relief is experienced on reaching the surface of the earth. The mine is well ventilated, and every care appears to be taken to guard against accidents. Fortunately the mines are not troubled with much water. . . . The quantity of coal and slack raised per day is about fifty and fifteen tons respectively. Nearly all the work is done by contract, and about fifty men are permanently employed in one way or another, at the mine. . . . The coal is conveyed about a mile and-a-half to the proprietors' shutes, which were erected at a great deal of expense on the bank of the Bremer. The quality of the coal is too well known to receive a recommendation. . . .
Coal Town Conditions, 1930s

For most of the time coal was a cinderella industry among minerals. The Moreton field was the maid producer but in all areas conditions were far from favourable. Work conditions were poor and living conditions were demoralizing. One of the worst examples was to be found at the state mine of Collinsville. After the Second World War a Commonwealth inquiry was set up to investigate the condition of the run-down coal industry around Australia, in the hope of finding ways of reviving it.


Collinsville, where the Bowen state mine is situated, is one of the poorest mining townships of which this Board has had experience. The population is approximately 2,500 people and there are no farming or other industries in the vicinity. The water supply is taken from Pelican Creek, about 3 miles distant, but is impregnated with mineral to a degree that, especially in dry weather, is said to cause kidney trouble in those who drink it. The streets are drab, dusty, unlighted, and without trees, and there is not even a park. There is only one church in the charge of a Roman Catholic priest who, to his eternal credit, is making valiant efforts to improve the surroundings and culture of the inhabitants. Under his supervision a school with five teachers is provided and is attended by children of all and of no denominations, although there is a fairly good state school. A few of the miners’ dwellings are satisfactory, but many are of poor type. In addition, during the war a number of huts have been brought from some labour camp and set up for the accommodation of workers in the mines and elsewhere. These huts are said to be a temporary provision, but as is usual will in all probability remain as slum centres. As residences for families they are a disgrace even to a poor neighbourhood. A doctor practises in the town but it was stated that the only X-ray equipment is unworkable. The reverend gentleman assured the Board that his congregation was much too small to represent the normal number of adherents in an average community, whilst the majority of the population were Communists who were opposed to religion in any form. He also explained that girls were accustomed to marry at an early age young men in the same district, and the children were growing up with a narrow and jaundiced outlook on life engendered by their miserable conditions. His sugges-
Modern mining is very capital intensive and uses sophisticated machinery, such as the gigantic dragline (top) and underground equipment (bottom) used in the Bowen basin coalfield. Photographs courtesy Premier’s Department, Brisbane.
tions, with which the Board agrees, were that something should be done at once to remedy the isolation and lack of social amenities which are only too apparent. Three coal trains with a passenger carriage run each day from Bowen which is only 57 or 60 miles distant, but they are extremely slow and uncomfortable and, it is alleged, have no sanitary conveniences for women and children. The train on which the Board travelled occupied seven hours on the journey. The only road exists merely in name. It is practically unfit for use by vehicles.

Queensland depends very much on the export of wealth generated from the land, whether it be farm products or mining. Last century goldfields at Gympie or Charters Towers helped bail out a weak economy; through the depression of the 1930s the government gave attention to gold mining (for example, at Cracow) as a way of trying to overcome the social and economic dislocation being wrought upon the population. Today, however, not much mining attention is given to gold, except with the recent opening of the Kidston mine. Since the 1950s Queensland's mining wealth has been tied up in the extraction of coal — and not from the Moreton field established in the nineteenth century. Vast reserves of coal lie in the Bowen basin of central Queensland. Huge mining operations have come into operation at places like Moranbah, Blackwater, Clermont, and Norwich Park. They involve a large investment stake (often of overseas finance), complicated technology and machinery, extensive infrastructure (new railways and ports) — and, indeed, the provision of whole new company towns (complete with schools and parks). This is development on the very largest scale. At the same time, there has been considerable diversification of mineral activity — from bauxite at Weipa, to petroleum in the Suvat basin, natural gas at the Jackson field, nickel at Greenvale. After more than fifty years the silver-lead-zinc and copper mine at Mount Isa is still producing strongly. Meanwhile there is also some processing of the minerals extracted — notably the production since 1982 of aluminium at the Boyne Island smelter, after the refining of Weipa bauxite at Gladstone. Queensland contributes more than its share to the mineral wealth of Australia.
Colonial Politics
Democracy and Voting Rights, 1860

Queensland was separated from New South Wales in December 1859 as a self-governing colony. It immediately acquired a legislative assembly whose members were elected, in secret ballot, by men holding a certain amount of property. It was not a high property qualification and, in this document, the first governor, Bowen, wrote to the Colonial Office in London that the electoral arrangements were unlikely to lead to democratic excesses. He considered Queensland voters to be somewhat conservative, more interested in making money than in overturning governments. He also noted that there was little or no social or class distinction in this new colony: there did not appear to be an under-privileged, depressed minority of paupers such as the British community knew. Bowen claimed, perhaps extravagantly, that all were workers.

New South Wales acquired a more liberal franchise (full manhood suffrage) in 1858 but Queensland operated under 1853 legislation. The property qualification meant that itinerants, such as shepherds, and men without property were not enfranchised. Squatters were in favour of giving the vote to these men, believing that the shepherds and other farm labourers could be influenced to vote according to the interests of the squatters.

The granting of self-government was applauded as a positive and patriotic step, which strengthened bonds with Britain rather than loosened them. Republicanism was set at bay by the granting of this measure of local self-control.

Governor G. F. Bowen to Secretary of State for the Colonies Newcastle, 6 February 1860, in S. Lane-Poole (ed.) Thirty Years of Colonial Government, 2 vols., (London, 1889), 1:131-35.

It has long been known that a large proportion of the animal and vegetable productions of Australia is distinguished by characteristics directly the reverse of what is familiar in Europe. It would also appear than an anomaly of similar nature exists in the influences exercised at the antipodes by certain political institutions.

I find that it is a very general opinion among competent authorities that vote by ballot and manhood suffrage, as compared with open voting and a low property qualification, are, in this community, institutions of a conservative character, and calculated to give increased influence to the landed proprietors and rich settlers in the country districts, as opposed to the mixed population in the towns.

In Australia, aristocratic influence cannot be said to exist, but the ballot protects the voter against the occasional violence and dictation of democratic opinion. Again, energy and industry,
with the prosperity consequent on those qualities, are so com-
mon among the Australian settlers, that in the towns and villages
of Queensland there is hardly a working man who does not
possess at least the property qualification required by the New
South Wales Constitution Act of 1853. In fact, the majority of
our labouring classes live in their own houses, built on their own
land. In the towns and villages, therefore, manhood suffrage
may almost be said to have practically existed before it was for-
mally enacted (with slight modifications) by the Electoral Law
of 1858.

If a general view be taken of the important question now
under consideration, it will appear that vote by ballot and man-
hood suffrage are not likely to lead, in this Colony, to those
dangers and inconveniences which have been apprehended from
similar institutions in older, more thickly-populated, and less
universally prosperous communities.

In the first place, distress and pauperism, those comprehensive
terms so frequently used in European politics, are unknown in
Queensland. All classes of this community appear to be thor-
oughly imbued with the love of law and order, and the other vir-
tues which naturally grow up with the acquisition of property,
however small, and with the enjoyment of the prosperity which
is the legitimate reward of honourable industry.

Again, in an Australian Colony there exist none of those
classes and institutions to which vote by ballot and manhood
suffrage are supposed to be antagonistic. Here there are no paid
idlers or sinecursists; every man, from the Governor downwards,
is emphatically a working man. Nor have we a Church establish-
ment, a House of Lords, or hereditary privileges of any kind to
which democratic sentiments and prejudices are hostile.

But in this colony there is a numerous class of shepherds,
stockmen, and agricultural labourers settled on the pastoral sta-
tions of the interior. Though equally trustworthy and pros-
perous, in most cases, with their fellow workmen in the towns,
these men were excluded from the electoral roll by the provision
of the Constitution Act of 1853, because they are regarded, in
some degree, as hired servants living in houses belonging to their
employers. They acquired the franchise by the introduction, in
1858, of the principle of manhood suffrage, and are stated to
have usually exercised their new privileges, when well treated by
their employers, as those employers recommended. This class of
men are now again disfranchised, in consequence of the con-
struction put upon the Order in Council of June 6, 1859, by Sir William Denison's legal advisers, and many of our great pastoral settlers ('squatters') consider that they have thereby lost a large amount of political influence.

The most important consideration of all yet remains to be stated. In several British dependencies, in the Ionian Islands, in parts of British India, and elsewhere, the full concession of political power to the people would have the unfortunate effect of arming alien and disaffected races against British supremacy. But next to an enlightened and reasonable attachment to the principles of local self-government, in analogy to the use of the British constitution, the strongest political feelings of the overwhelming majority of the population of Queensland — let me say, of all the Australian Colonies — are undoubtedly at the present moment loyal to the person of the Queen and pride in the mother-country. Speaking of Queensland in particular, I might say that the feelings to which I allude almost approach, in a large proportion of the inhabitants of this Colony, to that *maladie du pays*, that passionate love of England*, which an acute writer of extensive colonial experience (Mr. Gibbon Wakefield) foretold thirty years ago would be the result of allowing the Australian Colonies to manage in their own way their own internal affairs. As Lord John Russell wrote in 1855, the avowed desire of the Australian colonists to assimilate their institutions as far as possible to those of the parent country is in itself a proof that their sympathy with that country is 'not merely the expression of a common sentiment arising from a common origin, but is connected with a deliberate attachment to the ancient laws of the community from which their own has sprung'.

**Democratic Queensland**

In the 1860s and early 1870s the squatters or pastoralists formed a powerful political base in the legislature. Townspeople characterized as “liberals” formed the main opposition to this landed group, and the former sought to woo working people (especially on the issue of the importation of cheap labour).
By and large, however, a certain apathy seemed to characterize the attitude of ordinary Queenslanders towards politics.


Queensland began her self-government with about 20,000 souls, — and it must be admitted that there was danger. But the Queensland Assembly has not been distinguished for rowdiness among colonial parliaments, and has held up its head, and done its work, and attained that respect without which a parliament must be worthless.

In Queensland the system which regulates a man’s capacity to vote for a member of the legislative assembly is certainly not democratic. Every man aged twenty-one can vote, provided that he is possessed of one of the following qualifications, — which qualification, however, must appertain to the district or town in regard to which the vote is to be given. He must have resided for six months. He must then possess some one of the following positions: —

- Own a freehold, worth £100 above encumbrances.
- Occupy a tenement worth £10 per annum.
- Hold a lease of £10 per annum, of which three years are still to run, or of which three years have already run.
- Hold a pastoral licence.
- Enjoy a salary of £100 per annum.
- Pay £40 per annum for board and lodging.
- Or pay £10 for lodging only.

By this law the nomad tribes of wandering labourers, — or of wandering beggars, as many of them may be more properly described — are excluded from the registers.

It cannot be said that this young colony has shown any tendency to run headlong into the tempting dangers of democracy. It would appear that the prevailing feelings of the people lie altogether in the other direction. As I have said, I fear more than once before, the squatters are the aristocracy of the country, and I found that a cabinet with seven members contained six squatters. The general election which took place while I was there supported this ministry by a majority of six in a House of thirty-two members, giving nineteen on one side to thirteen on the other. This would be equal to a majority of one hundred and twenty in a House of six hundred and forty, — a result which would with us be taken as showing the sense of the country very
plainly. At home, in England, we are inclined to regard the institutions of our Australian colonies as being essentially democratic, — as showing almost republican propensities. In this, I think, we are mistaken, — certainly as regards Queensland. Among the working population outside the towns political feeling is not strong in any direction. Men care little about politics, — not connecting this or that set of ministers with the one important subject of wages. In some districts a certain amount of zeal has been aroused against cheap labour, — and here and there an election may have been turned by the feeling of white men in that direction. The opposition to squatters comes of course from the towns, — and chiefly from the metropolis. But it cannot be described as being strong or enthusiastic, and is chiefly due to the ambition of men who, sitting on the left hand of the Speaker, are filled with a natural desire to sit on the right. I am inclined to report as my opinion, that politics in Queensland are very quiet, whereas the loyalty to the Crown is very strong.

William Lane

The labour movement was gathering strength in the late 1880s and early 1890s, firstly through the rise of trade unions and then through the creation of a political party. The leading propagandist was William Lane, who became the first editor of the *Worker*, the weekly journal of the labour movement. In its first issue he urged unity among the workers of Queensland.

*Worker*, 1 March 1890, 9.

Together you are all powerful, workers of Queensland, workers of Australia, workers of the world! Together you can be free men and women, citizens of a free land, never needing to crave from a fellow man permission to earn a bare living by making somebody else richer, never needing to fear the bitterness of unemployment, never needing to shrink at the thought that those you love want. Together, by standing together, you can insure that your boys and girls will have opportunities now denied them — opportunities to be strong and learned, and honoured and happy; that in old age you and those who come after you
will have enough; that in sickness or in death there will be no thought of destitution; that the workers will no longer squabble for the buttermilk of their wealth production, while the idle cunning glut themselves with the cream. All this you can do, and more if you only stand together, and be patient and wise. You can take all social injustices and industrial inequalities and vested privileges, and strangle them one by one with your million-muscled hands as Hercules strangled in his cradle the serpents of Juno. Not all at once, but gradually, patiently, slowly, by being thinking men working in harmony with each other for the good of all, and by ceasing to crouch in helpless apathy within the prison-walls of competition, or to rise spasmodically and disconnectedly in impotent, because only partial revolt.

The labour movement argued strongly for electoral reform, in particular, one-man (and woman) — one-vote. It complained about electoral inequalities, plural voting (people could vote wherever they held property) and unfair electoral representations, all of which helped the propertied class and disadvantaged the workers.

*Worker*, 13 June 1891, 5-6.

... Here in Queensland, as in other parts of the world, we have found out that our noses are ringed by gross electoral inequalities; here, a small minority of squatters and land-grabbers have hold of the legislative rope with which they haul us about much as they like. One-man—one-vote means equal voice in law-making for all men, thereby giving the men of Queensland opportunity to be the rulers of Queensland and effectively snapping the ring-in-the-nose wherewith the propertied classes now control us for their own selfish purposes. ... One-man—one vote has this weakness, this failing, that it does not include the women. Not a single principle can be advanced in support of the rights of men which does not apply with equal force to the rights of women. Our mothers, our wives, our sisters and our daughters are as essentially citizens of the state as any man of us. ... The classes which have usurped government, which make pretence of representative authority while controlling the laws and domineering over the community by means of plural voting for themselves, wholesale disfranchisement of the workers, unequal electoral districts and nominee chambers, have certain specious
arguments against one-man-one-vote with which they seek to lull their own consciences and to delude and bewilder us. They ask if the drunken and the sober, the industrious and the idle, the ignorant and the intelligent, and so on through a whole catalogue of opposites, are to be equal at the ballot-box.

What is this other reason, the real reason, why one-man-one-vote is opposed? It is opposed only by the propertied classes in their own selfish self-interest, by the great land monopolists, by the great mine monopolists, by the importing and trading monopolists, by the banks, the syndicates, the employers’ associations, and the hundred and one cringing dependents of these high priests of the great god Mammon. They oppose it for this reason only, that the masses are intelligent enough, sober enough, earnest enough, to see that Society as it is constructed is not sound, that the Laws as they stand are not Just, that Government as we have it is a farce which is exerted for the advantage of Capitalism regardless of the well-being of the People at large. They fear that if one-man-one-vote is secured by the common people, the labourers who toil and have nothing, the masses who are worse off amid all the luxury and glitter of our Christian civilization than ever savages were in so-called heathen lands, that the first use made of that power will be legislative ‘interference’ with existing industrial conditions. They are afraid of Eight Hour Bills and Factories Bills and Lien Bills, of the abolition of imprisonment for ‘absconding’ labourers, of resumptions of the squatter-lands and reform of the land laws generally, of work being found for the unemployed and of the refusal of popular parliaments to let workmen be shot down like dogs at the bidding of tyrannical Capitalism. They object to Reform: that is the only real reason for this opposition to one-man-one-vote.

William Lane’s passion for reform for the workers assumed a quasi-religious aspect. But he became disillusioned with the chances of change in Queensland, especially after the failure of the 1891 shearsers’ strike, and so set off with a band of devoted followers to establish the “ideal society”, New Australia, in Paraguay.

Worker, 6 August 1892, 2.

Our civilization is slaying us all, all that is best in us, all that is manly and brave and strong. We know it, every one of us. It is a
hateful thing, a painted harlot whose very touch is disease and corruption. And it is so because our civilization is based upon sin and buttressed with wrong, because every institution in it is an institution for robbery and because in it the robbery of the many induces the selfish greed of all. . . . All this is true — and more, yet still there is hope for us. There is hope if men are still capable of Faith. . . .

It has sickened me for years to watch the weeding out of the best men everywhere and particularly to see that cruel pitiless ceaseless crushing out of the western men. . . . They are the flower of Australia, to me, and Australia will not have them, will not understand their passionate hatred of oppression, will not lift her hand except to enforce the industrial cordon that closes round them. . . .

For this to me is what New Australia means, to the landless, the homeless, the wifeless, the childless, to those whose hearts are sick and sore, to those who long to be manly, to be true, to be what men should be. Come out from this hateful life, the life that is full of unspoken misery. . . . Come together, in all unselfishness, to trust each other and to be free! To live simply, to work hardly, to win not the gold that poisons but the home life that saves!

**Australian Labour Federation Platform, 1890**

The Australian Labour Federation (ALF) emerged to coordinate the activities of the expanding labour movement. In 1890 it issued its political platform. One part of it, the Political Aims, were quite forward-looking and theoretical, pointing to ultimate objectives. The People's Parliament platform, however, was more practical, addressing itself to immediate and realizable ends. Taken from the Rules of the ALF, the platform was printed in the *Worker*.

*Worker*, 1 September 1890, 9.

**POLITICAL AIMS OF THE FEDERATION**

1. The nationalisation of all sources of wealth and all means of producing and exchanging wealth.

2. The conducting by the State authority of all production and all exchange.
3. The pensioning by the State authority of all children, aged, and invalid citizens.
4. The saving by the State authority of such proportion of the joint wealth production as may be requisite for instituting, maintaining, and increasing national capital.
5. The maintenance by the State authority from the joint wealth production of all educational and sanitary institutions.
6. The just division among all the citizens of the State of all wealth production, less only that part retained for public and common requirements.
7. The Reorganisation of Society upon the above lines to be commenced at once and pursued uninterruptedly until social justice is fully secured to each and every citizen.

MEANS TOWARDS POLITICAL AIDS

The General Council is satisfied that political aims worthy of the Australian Labour Federation are impossible of attainment so long as political power is withheld from the people.

Queensland is so happily situated that a true People's Parliament would certainly be favourable to the Reorganisation of Industry, yet as parliaments are at present constituted the capitalistic minority rules, and has only to express its opinions to have them duly registered. Therefore the General Council recommends the adoption of a People's Parliament platform and the subordination of all other measures to that all-important step. In one year a People's Parliament will give Queensland workers more justice than can be wrung from capitalistic parliaments in a generation.

THE PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT PLATFORM, 1890

1. Universal White Adult Suffrage for all parliamentary and local elections; no plural voting; no nominee or property qualification chamber.
2. State registration of all citizens as electors.
3. Provision for full and complete enfranchisement of the floating population.
4. All parliamentary elections on one day, and that day a close holiday, and all public-houses closed.
5. Equal electoral districts on adult population basis.
6. Annual parliaments.
7. Abolition of veto.
The 1891 Strike

With new unions emerging and rapidly gaining in strength in the late 1880s the labour movement became confident that through direct action it could achieve political reform and assert worker power. Strike activity increased and had some success. The real test came, however, in 1891 when shearsers went out on strike because pastoralists were trying to reduce shearing rates and combat union strength. The pastoralists had responded to union organization by forming their own association and insisting upon freedom of contract (the right to negotiate with individual employees rather than with organized labour unions). In the following exchange of telegrams Hinchcliffe represented the strikers and McIlwraith the government (and employers). The strike became very much a law and order argument, which the state won.

Telegrams between A. Hinchcliffe (ALF secretary) and T. McIlwraith (colonial treasurer), in BC, 28 February to 4 March 1891.

Hinchcliffe to McIlwraith, 28 February 1891.
"We approach you now as the resident head of the Government and as a member of the Pastoralists’ Association to secure in the interests of the colony at large an unconditional conference between representatives of pastoralists and the Central district labour unions with a view to bringing about a speedy settlement of the present dispute. . . .”

Hinchcliffe to McIlwraith, 2 March 1891.
"We consider your reply evasive. Unions, judging from experience, regard so-called freedom of contract as simply meaning freedom to victimise unionists. We are prepared to meet employers’ associations fairly and fully to discuss all points raised, and hold it to be the duty of the Government to exercise authority to secure justice for all classes before it enforces, with ball cartridges and Gatling guns, what are considered the arbitrary and unreasonable claims of organised capitalism. Unconditional conference can harm nobody, and should lead to amicable settlement if met in the same spirit. . . .”

McIlwraith to Hinchcliffe, 2 March 1891.
". . . What the Government are doing is to use the power at their disposal to uphold the law, to defend in their lawful occupations all members of the community. In the present case certain men called free labourers have made, of their own choice,
The shearers' strike 1891. These newspaper sketches show aspects of the strike in which organized labour flexed its muscle for the first time. The government responded with force and called out the military (left). Although the Barcaldine area was central to the dispute, the strike moved out to many parts of inland Queensland, such as Hughenden (right). Reprinted from Queenslander, 30 May 1891, 28 March 1891.

legal contracts to do certain work on certain terms with which both sides to the contract are satisfied. Certain men called unionists are determined that these men shall not work as they wish, and determine further to illegally prevent them by force of arms. The Government defended the men working according to the law. Were the case reversed and the free labourers were preventing the unionists from working, then the Government forces would defend the unionists. The unionists do not make the law. Let them alter it as much as they can constitutionally; but they cannot give the law to the Government. They must obey the law as it stands. I call upon you to obey the law; to cool an excitement which has been raised greatly by hot big words. . . .

Hinchcliffe to McIlwraith, 3 March 1891.

"You still evade a direct answer. We are not breaking the law. Those who introduced armed labourers from other colonies and
those who threaten under the name of law to disperse with ball cartridge men whom the police authorities know are not breaking the law are the law-breakers. It was the same during the maritime strike. The police knew, and the Government has admitted, that we faithfully maintained the peace. Yet armed force was called out, and the wildest of the big hot words were used by the capitalistic class. They use the same big hot words now. The bush workers have no voice in law-making. The town workers are systematically disenfranchised. To invite them to alter laws which organised capitalism controls for its own class ends is absurd. Disarm the free labourers, disarm the capitalists, leave the police alone to maintain the law, which has not yet been broken, and will not be if the true spirit of the law is adhered to. . . ."

1891 Strike: Government's View

I deeply regret that, notwithstanding the bountiful provisions of Providence in the form of exceptionally favourable seasons, the prosperity of the colony has been most injuriously affected by an organised attempt to override the reign of law and order and to prevent the carrying on of one of our most important producing industries, except in accordance with the dictates of an irresponsible tyranny. The operations of this organisation, which sometimes seemed to assume an insurrectionary character, extended over a large area of the interior, and for a time there appeared grave danger that the freedom of men to pursue their lawful avocations under the protection of the law would be seriously impaired. My Ministers recognise that it is the first duty of every civilised Government to secure this freedom to its citizens, and took prompt actions accordingly. The ordinary Police Force being naturally insufficient to deal with so extensive a combination, it was found necessary to call out large bodies of the Defence Force in aid of the civil power. I am glad
to say that the conduct of the officers and men of both forces, often under circumstances of extreme difficulty, has been such as to raise the greatest credit upon them, and has shown that Queensland possesses, in the Defence and Volunteer Forces, a body of troops who may be relied upon to discharge their duty whenever called upon. These organised disturbances have now ended, and happily without bloodshed, but not without entailing a very large outlay, as well as shaking public confidence and materially interfering with the settled industries of the colony.

I sincerely hope that the ill-feelings engendered by this prolonged struggle will soon pass away, and that all classes of the community, employers and employed, recognising that their interests are common and not diverse, will endeavour to arrive at a basis of mutual understanding, without which the resources of the colony cannot be satisfactorily developed or the social relations of the people continue on a lasting and peaceable foundation.

The Labour Party

By 1892, after the strikers were defeated in 1891, a Labour Party had emerged. It was gearing up for battle through the ballot box; the seizing of political power seemed a better solution than direct action through strikes. The party began casting its net wide, seeking full adult suffrage, a fair deal for the small farmer, jobs for all, and a solution to the problem of unemployment that plagued Queensland in recession in the early 1890s.

Manifesto of the Queensland Labour Party, signed by Thomas Glassey, 9 September 1892, in Seymour Papers, JOL.

LABOUR AND THE LAND

From out of the "slough" of misfortune brought about by misgovernment and into which Q'land has been plunged it is the task of the future to rescue her from, so that her people may be contented & have happy homes. The Labour Party believes that to accomplish this it is necessary that all adult men and women should have an equal voice in making the laws which govern them. The political parties that refuse this are the real causes of disorder....
Farming must be encouraged at the expense of the land grabs­bers who never use the land but hold it solely to obtain the un­earned increment given it by the whole community. This will al­low railway freights to be reduced. Farmers ought to be brought in touch more closely to the consumer than they are at present by dispensing with unnecessary middlemen who now fleece the farmer without decreasing the cost of his produce to the con­sumer. Never will we relieve our congested centres of population of the surplus unemployed until the people engaged in farming are more encouraged than what they are at present & until those also who do not understand the way to draw their living directly from the soil are shown how. When men can supply their neces­sities at all times and have the opportunity of engaging their labour productively then will our people be contented and labour troubles a thing of the past. Co-operation can gradually but eventually take the place of competition.

Those who doubt that the placing of people on the land in this manner cannot be accomplished can see it done in the now most prosperous province of New Zealand. Political equality and a solution for the unemployed difficulty is what the Labour party are after and both comprise all that is contained in their detailed political platform.

The Labour Party fought its first general election in 1893, and did particularly well, winning sixteen seats and becoming the main part of the Opposition. The party had to counter many attacks by conservative forces who tried to arouse fears in the community by linking it with the 1891 shearers' strike and the financial crisis of 1893. Thomas Glassey was leading the Labour Party at this time.

Glassey to North Brisbane electors, 21 April 1893, Worker, 29 April 1893, 4.

The Labour Party has been described as the lawless party, dis­turbers of the peace, and destroyers of the sugar industry. They had been credited with a desire to acquire other people's property and so forth. He had on various occasions and in various parts of the country been obliged to contradict these wild, outrageous and non-sensical statements, made by certain interested parties to destroy the influence of the party to which he belonged. That party did not want to destroy the sugar industry. They wished, if possible, to place the sugar industry on a more satisfactory basis than it was at present, and he believed that that could be done in
a reasonable and equitable manner, and that, too, by the employment of white labour and white labour alone.

They had also been charged with attempting to injure certain financial institutions in Brisbane. That charge he emphatically denied. So far as he was personally concerned, he would not knowingly do anything that would tend in the slightest degree to weaken any financial institution that we had in our midst; but if inquiries as to where the people’s money was, and how it was invested, and what sort of security we had for it, would tend to weaken financial institutions, then there was something grossly and radically wrong in connection with those institutions, and it was his intention in a reasonable and proper manner, from his place in Parliament if returned, to ascertain the truth.

The charge that the Labour Party wanted to get hold of other people’s property was absolutely false. What the Labour Party had aimed, and would aim, to do, was to prevent as far as possible the people’s property, from being unjustly confiscated by those who had been hitherto, and now were in power. The Labour Party wished to protect, as far as they could by law and by constitutional methods, the weak from being oppressed by the strong. They wished to protect the girl behind the counter and in the shop-room from being sweated. They wished to protect the child who was unable to protect itself from being robbed of its education in consequence of the impoverishment of its parents. The Labour Party aimed at elevating and not injuring, and at establishing the right to oppose — as far as in them lay — wrong.

Economic Crash and Bank Closures, 1893

In 1893 Queensland was plunged into a particularly severe economic crisis; even the banks were forced to close their doors. This depression greatly affected the future course of the colony’s economic development by emasculating the small, rising entrepreneurial class. Even the Queensland National Bank, the largest in the colony, was affected, and the government had to help bail it out with a reconstruction scheme. The rising Labour Party was disgusted with this collapse of capitalism, as the following editorial in the Worker discloses.
It was urged that a Labour regime would have to take over and sort out the mess of capitalism.

Worker, 20 May 1893, 3.

Such is the conception of Man and the State by the “Reconstructors of the banks,” and little did they dream that a society run on the strength of banking institutions with high sounding titles — Royal this, and National that — paper money, embossed windows, cedar counters, and Government deposits would inevitably come to smash. How could it be otherwise? Banks are private commercial concerns, governed by laws precisely similar to those of the importers of pianos, hats, boots, or galvanised iron — with this important difference, that when they haven't got a stock of their commodity — money (gold, or silver) on hand, they can manufacture a fictitious article in the form of notes, and put it on the market as a genuine article of commerce. They are not allowed to mint to coin their own money, but may turn out paper by the ton. It is supposed, of course, for every £1 note there is issued there is a sovereign in the bank to meet it; in fact, the law is supposed to demand it, but as the law is invariably administered by bank directors the “law is an ass”. So long as bank-notes represent gold of a standard value and the notes issued are not in excess of available coin and merely used as a convenient medium of exchange there is stability in the concerns — but the moment that principle is departed from (and generally it is) that instant with the help of overdrafts and boom valuations the banks enter on a career of insolvency. And as in the case here in Queensland — where there is no State bank and politicians are bank directors and shareholders — they drag down thousands of innocent people with them in their headlong gallop to ruin.

Did the “reconstructors of society” propose the continuance of any such state of anarchy as now obtains, and as will recur again and again till Socialism outgrows the present system, no words could be used strong enough to condemn them. But they do not. They point out that the staple industries of this colony are controlled by the banks to everybody’s detriment — even to the gamblers who fattened on the game. Every Queenslander needs work — not much of it — and the reward of his labour should assure him a home and the requirements of modern social life. He should be mated if he wishes; should be able at all times to be well fed, comfortably clothed, and not denied any of the
Thomas McIlwraith: born Scotland 1835, died 1900; engineer, pastoral-holder, director-investor-speculator; elected to parliament 1870; various ministries 1874–8; premier 1879–83, 1888, 1893; Conservative — especially associated with development, (trans-continental) railways, bank crash 1893. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
refinements possible to civilized people. Does our present mode of life enable all worthy citizens to secure this essential necessary to the realisation of our manhood? Will the reconstruction of the banks effect it? It is idle to suppose it will. Yet that right should be the inheritance born with every mother’s son that comes into the world.

By the size of a giant’s toe you can tell the strength of his wrist. In like manner by glancing at what is passing in our midst in Queensland today we can accurately take the measure of the whole capitalist world. On receipt of the news of the closing of the Q.N. Bank in Ipswich the municipal employees were immediately discharged; at Croydon mines were shut down as no wages were forthcoming, and exemptions claim in consequence; factories and shops in Brisbane have been closed and workers discharged; even the hospitals are tied up, and the mass of the people crying out in despair. Bad as all this is, and attributable as most of it is to the maladministration of public affairs by men who should long since have been impeached and deposed, it is common to the system under which we live. It is a necessity of it, and were all the banks “reconstructed” tomorrow the evils would substantially remain.

Until we, the working people — and we all, every healthy adult man and woman, should be workers — establish the principle of co-operative production and equitable distribution of all the wealth we shall be at the mercy of solvent and insolvent capitalists, bank smashes and Panama swindlers. To do this we must combine in unions and send Labour members to parliament. And don’t let us forget that the break-up of the banks and return of Labour members to the legislatures of the world is to Commercialism what the down-fall of the barons and the rise of the trading class in the sixteenth century was to Feudalism. It marks a new epoch — and we are going to realise it — if not in all its fullness, yet a good part of it — before the close of the century.

Socialist Queensland?

A growing confidence began to infuse the labour movement. Especially after the success of the Labour Party in the 1893 election. W. G. Higgs had just
taken over as editor of the Worker and he introduced the motto, “Socialism in our time”. But no clear sense of socialism was spelt out; there was a heavy dose of social democracy, with specific examples of pragmatic reform, and some loose, woolly, more extreme statements of belief and hope. The confident Labour Party, now the main opposition party, began to look askance at the disjointed remnants of the “Liberal” party and questioned the value of coalition; Labour organizers were insisting on full adherence to the Labour platform.

*Worker*, 27 February 1894, 2.

Out Motto: ‘Socialism in our time.’

Socialism in our time! A large order, you will say. True, but why not? What’s the use of tinkering with small things. We know that two men working together can do more than double what one man can; that four men co-operatively can accomplish more than double the work of two. Why not apply the principle of co-operation intelligently on behalf of the nation instead of planlessly or unscientifically on behalf of a few individuals? It can be done, provided, of course, that the majority of the workers are prepared to say it shall be done. The *Worker* doesn’t think it impossible to induce the majority to say so. The *Worker*, by the way, with a knowledge of what has been accomplished in the arts and sciences during the past 50 years, doesn’t think anything impossible. We have a boundless faith in and hope for Humanity and its early realisation of the Socialistic ideal. The business men of Queensland who dismiss with a wave of the hand the Labour movement may consider us knaves or rogues, “Idlers or bunglers or both who are willing To fork out our penny and pocket their shilling.”

They may be of the opinion that we are wild and revolutionary anarchists whose speedy execution would be of the greatest benefit to ‘society’; but we guess that’s a mere circumstance which doesn’t trouble the *Worker* staff much. We’re going for Socialism in our time, and propose to come down with both feet on every political candidate who refuses to sign the Labour platform. Trimmers please note.
New Guinea

Queensland's imperialistic ambitions were dramatically revealed when in 1883 McIlwraith's government suddenly annexed eastern New Guinea. Reasons were given variously as strategic (to forestall Germany or other foreign powers) or economic (with the possibility of importing New Guinea labour in mind). The British government disallowed this move, but the next year a protectorate was established over the southern part (later called Papua), and responsibility of administration devolved upon Queensland until 1906 when the Commonwealth government took over.

Telegram from Colonial Secretary T. McIlwraith, Brisbane, to Agent-General Archer, London, 26 February 1883, QVP 1883:776.

Urge Imperial Government annex New Guinea to Queensland. Reasons large increase steamer traffic through Torres Straits. Population settled there require government. Imperial coaling depot established. Danger to colonies if other powers take possession. Queensland will bear expense of government and take formal possession on receipt of Imperial authority by cable Letters by mail.

H. Chester, Police Magistrate (Thursday Island) to Colonial Secretary T. McIlwraith, Port Moresby, New Guinea, 7 April 1883, QVP 1883:778.

Sir,
I have the honour to report that, in accordance with your instructions, I left Thursday Island in the "Pearl" on the 24th ultimo. There being a difficulty in engaging a crew, I took with me three of the water-police and two men from the pilot cutter. Mr. Frank Walsh also accompanied me as a volunteer. I proceeded to Somerset to water the vessel, and left for Port Moresby on 27th idem. We experienced light easterly winds, with a strong westerly set, and did not reach the Port until noon of 3rd instant. The same afternoon the annual large trading canoes arrived from Motumotu (Freshwater Bay) with supplies of sago.

At 10 a.m. on the 4th instant I took formal possession, in Her Majesty's name, of all that portion of New Guinea and the adjacent islands not already in occupation by the Dutch, and read the accompanying proclamation in presence of about 200 natives and thirteen Europeans. A royal salute was fired from the
Late last century Queensland was interested in New Guinea for many reasons, such as defence and labour. At the time of the Colonial Exhibition in London in 1886 the state mounted a special display on aspects of New Guinea life; at this stage the southern part (later Papua) was a British protectorate, and two years later Queensland acquired administrative responsibility over the area. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

“Pearl”, and at the close of the proceedings three cheers were given for Her Majesty the Queen. I then, in presence of the people, recognized Boé Vagi as head chief of Port Moresby, and gave the flag into his charge until such time as an official should be sent to represent the Government. Mr. Lawes [missionary] kindly explained the meaning of the ceremony to the people, and assured them that they would remain in undisturbed possession of their lands. . . .

T. McIlwraith to governor, 13 April 1883, QVP 1883:780.

... it is considered desirable that Your Excellency should impress upon the Secretary of State that the Queensland Government have acted under the full belief that the matter was too urgent to admit of the delay necessarily involved in waiting for instructions from the Imperial Government. As the possession
In colonial times Queensland gained responsibility for its own local defence. From the 1860s various military units of volunteer soldiers were formed, such as the Scottish Volunteer Rifles, pictured outside Fernberg (later Government House) (top). By the 1880s some degree of local naval protection was also provided when two gunboats, including the *Gayundah* (bottom), and some smaller craft were purchased by the government. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
of this valuable territory depended on mere precedence in the formality of annexation, and as the Queensland Government, from information received from various sources, had strong reason to believe in the possibility, and even the probability, of being anticipated in their proposed course of action by a foreign power — a contingency which could not but gravely affect the Australasian Dependencies of Great Britain, as tending not only to limit the range of their development but possibly also to imperil their safety — it is hoped that the Secretary of State will perceive that in the step taken by the Queensland Government they have been guided by considerations of expediency, which justify their promptness in taking action in the matter. In anticipating instructions from the Imperial Government they have been also largely influenced by the consideration urged in a former despatch, viz: — That by undertaking the whole expense in connection with the formation, maintenance, and defence of a British Settlement in New Guinea, they effectually dispose of the only objection raised on the part of the Home Government, during previous correspondence on the subject, to the annexation of New Guinea by an Australian colony.

Agent-General for Queensland to Colonial Office, 28 February 1883, QVP 1883:783.

In addition to the reasons stated in the telegraphic Despatch [26 February] I beg to call your Lordship's attention to the rapid development of several industries on the coast of New Guinea and the islands adjacent, carried on principally by Queensland colonists. The principal of these are gold-mining, pearl-diving, and bêche-de-mer fishing, which employ a rapidly increasing number of colonists, among whom it becomes more and more difficult for the authorities appointed by the Queensland Government to exercise adequate control — the jurisdiction of that Government extending at present only to islands within sixty miles of the Queensland coast.

The High Commissioner of the Western Pacific is also quite unable, on account of the very extended nature of his jurisdiction, to exercise an adequate supervision over those settlers who are rapidly peopling the islands and coasts of New Guinea, who are beyond the sixty-mile radius, and therefore practically outside all legal restraint in their dealings with the natives and with
each other. A glance at the map will show that whoever is in possession of the southern coast of New Guinea, and more especially of the mountainous peninsula forming the south-eastern extremity of the island, practically dominates Torres Straits and its numerous and important islands, commands the only direct approach to Queensland from Europe, and is able to establish an effectual blockade of the northern terminus of the Transcontinental Railway, about to be extended from Brisbane to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Queensland has already experienced much inconvenience and some loss from the escape and landing on her coast of political convicts and other malefactors from the French penal settlement of New Caledonia, though that island is separated from her by nearly 1,000 miles of ocean; it is not unreasonable, therefore, that some apprehension should exist in the colony at the possibility of a similar establishment being formed by some foreign Government almost within sight of her territory, and that the Government of the colony should be desirous of taking timely steps to prevent the occurrence of such a misfortune.

It is hoped that these reasons will induce your Lordship to give the sanction of the Imperial Government to the proposal embodied in Sir Thomas McIlwraith’s telegraphic despatch.

Federation: The Sway of Sentiment

Queensland was a somewhat reluctant entrant into the federation of the Australian colonies. The matter had been discussed in the 1880s and early 1890s — in Federal Councils and in special conferences on common problems. At the 1891 Federation Convention Queenslander Samuel Walker Griffith played a leading role, suggesting and drafting federation proposals. Interest in federation in Queensland then died until a referendum was held there in 1899. The matter was fiercely fought and a bare majority was secured in favour. Queensland became one of the constituent states of the new Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901.

One of the factors influencing the move to become a federation was sentiment — the sense of “Australianness” shared by all the colonies, of being one,
Samuel Walker Griffith: born Wales 1845, died 1920; trained as barrister; elected to parliament 1872; various ministries 1872–; premier 1883–88, 1890–93; Liberal—especially associated with railways, immigration, land policy, 1891 strike; chief justice of Queensland 1893–1903, and first chief justice of High Court of Australia 1902–19. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
with a common background, language and country. The following document refers to a pro-federation rally in Ipswich.

*Queensland Times*, 10 August 1899, 7.

Mr. T. B. Cribb, who was warmly received, alluded to a statement which, he said, had been circulated to the effect that, had his father, the late Mr. Benjamin Cribb, been alive now he would not have been an advocate of union. In reply thereto, he intimated that he had no hesitation in saying that, were his father alive today, he would be one of the foremost workers in the cause of federation. He then recommended for consideration two questions — first, what had they obtained by separation? and secondly, what were they to surrender under federation? In reply to the former query he remarked that they had practically obtained the freehold of the land of the colony, the right to engage in public works and the construction of railways, and the power to impose taxation, etc. Under federation, he continued, those things were not to be surrendered — all they handed over for control by the Federal Parliament were those things which were of common interest to all the colonies. The mining, land, local government, and other laws would not be surrendered. Dealing with the question of the cost of federation, he pooh-poohed the assertion which had been made that union would result in additional taxation. . . .

**Other Pro-Federation Arguments**

In addition to sentiment, economic advantage also sometimes dictated a pro-federation stand. Other reasons also operated, such as defence, and patriotism. The arguments for and against flowed to and fro, and were more often assertions of faith than provable statements of fact.

*QPD* 81 (1899):319-20, 348-49.

G. Jackson: Speaking for myself and the electorate I represent, it might be expected that I should be a warm federationist, because the hon. member for Lockyer, in opposing the Bill, admitted readily enough that the goldminer and the cattle-producer
would certainly benefit under this scheme. So, seeing that my electorate only produces cattle and gold, it would naturally be thought that I was an ardent federationist, as indeed I am. . . . It seems to me, looking at the fact that the people of this great island continent are practically all of the same race, of the same language, have the same standard of living, and expect the same destiny, that the imposition of border duties as between one State and another is rather an absurdity. In any arguments I may use, therefore, I do not intend to deal with the matter from the protectionist standpoint. I quite admit that under federation there will be some temporary disarrangement of our industries. . . . I wish, however, to give a few of the main arguments from a federalist's point of view.

What appears to me most important is the question of inter-colonial free-trade. I think it will be a great gain to Queensland and to Australia if we can remove the present tariffs and border duties that exist between the different colonies. The next gain, I think, would be from having a federal defence force. When we consider that Queensland has an immense coast line with a large number of ports that require to be fortified, and when we think that Queensland is the nearest colony to Asia, where possibly complications may arise in the future as they have in the past, it seems to me that Queensland has perhaps more to gain than any other colony from the point of view of defence. From the point of view of alien labour, I think Queensland will gain by having that question turned over to the Federal Government. I do not anticipate that a Federal Government taking control of alien labour would do anything very rash in dealing with the question. Probably, though we on this side believe in “Australia for the white man”, yet if the responsibility were placed on our shoulders to-morrow of dealing with this traffic, we might hesitate before we wiped it out of existence in one act. I do not think the Federal Parliament will do anything so sudden in that respect; still, I believe we should gain considerably by having the question turned over to that Parliament.

Then there is the question of white immigration. The time may come when it may be thought desirable for the colonies to spend some money in introducing white immigrants, and it seems to me that no power could do that so suitably as the Federal Government. Whenever immigrants are introduced by any of the colonies — as they have been introduced into Queensland — there is no guarantee that they will remain in that colony. Then
with regard to the franchise — though I admit that the federal franchise does not spell a reformed State franchise — it will be a great advantage to abolish plural voting. Another reason that appeals to me as a federalist is that the States will have more scope for domestic legislation; and I think the working classes will benefit greatly from that fact. There is also one more reason which influences me in favouring the federation of the colonies, and that is the question of sentiment or nationality. Some hon. members may say that sentiment does not buy bread and butter, but there has been a time in the history of nations — and there will again be a time in the history of nations — when sentiment, the feeling of nationality, is of more value than can be estimated in £ s. d [pounds, shillings and pence]. When the North American colonies separated from the old country the question of sentiment or of nationality, was more of importance; it assisted those colonies much more than money. . . .

R. Philp, Treasurer: We are often told the farmers of the colony will fare very badly under federation, as all the produce from the other colonies will be dumped down in Queensland, and our poor farmers will starve. As far as I can make out, the only article of farm produce that we are now importing into the colony in any quantity worth mentioning is wheat. Of everything else we can grow sufficient for our own consumption. A great deal has been said about maize. But what are the facts? During the last ten years we have exported as much maize as we have imported. In a good season we grow more than we require ourselves, and it is only in a bad season like that of last year that we have to import maize. . . . I maintain that under federation we shall have any number of farmers coming from the other colonies to Queensland, because our land is good, and is much cheaper than the land down south, and we have as great facilities for shipping produce as they have in the other colonies. I believe that before three or four years are passed we shall be growing sufficient wheat to supply our own requirements, and that we shall be one of the first in the manufacture of dairy produce. Mr. Reid is a strong federationist, and is quite satisfied that he can hold his own under federation, and is now shipping hams, butter, and cheese to the other colonies. I think the bulk of the farmers of the colony are in favour of federation; certainly the pastoralists are anxious for it, as under federation they
will get better prices for their stock. The miners must benefit, because they will get cheaper food and cheaper clothes, and their condition generally will be improved. If they are satisfied with federation under the present Bill, I think the rest of the colony ought to be satisfied too. . . .

There are no foreigners coming here. What difference is there between the people of New South Wales and Victoria and the people of Queensland? Many Queensland people have been born in those colonies, and they have the same aspirations and feelings all over the colonies. Surely the people can trust their brothers, their cousins, their aunts, and their uncles? What reason can the other colonies have to injure Queensland? In injuring us they will injure themselves. Under federation we shall have common laws and common Custom duties for the whole of Australia.

**Economic Competition**

Free trade between the colonies was a hallmark of the federation movement. But in the young colony of Queensland there were many worries that its own industries could not effectively compete with the more established industries of the southern colonies. The following document relates to agriculture (grain-growing and dairying) and manufacturing, which were just getting on their feet in Queensland. Notice the simple level of processing that constituted the young secondary industries in southern Queensland at this stage — small factories that had grown up under the umbrella of protection.

*QP D 81 (1899):280-86.*

**W. D. Armstrong:** Taking the position of the agricultural industry generally we find that there are 7,103,000 acres under cultivation in the other colonies as against 371,857 acres in Queensland. Omitting sugar, the cultivation here is at the rate of about an acre per head of population as against two acres per head in the other colonies. Looking at the interchange tables we find that a great amount of the interchange last year was for agricultural produce. Out of the total imports from New South Wales, amounting to £1,836,933, over £400,000 represented agricultural produce. From Victoria, £55,000 out of a total of
£323,269; and from South Australia £75,493 out of a total of £115,000 was for agricultural produce. Out of a total interchange of £2,275,803, the value of agricultural produce imported was £581,593. And what do we send them? The whole of the agricultural exports sent from Queensland, omitting sugar, was — to New South Wales £52,000, to Victoria £44,000, and to South Australia £10,000 worth; or an aggregate of £100,000, as against the £581,000 they send here. Does not that prove my contention that it is the wish of the southern colonies to secure our markets by means of federation? If they can secure our markets without any import duty they see that it is to their interest to do so, and that is the direction in which they are striving. No doubt the miner, the grazier, and the consumer will benefit directly by federation, but the agriculturist will suffer, because he is not in a position to compete with the accumulated wealth of those colonies, where cultivation has been carried on for so many years.

I think that the acceptance of this Constitution as drafted will have a contrary effect, particularly on a very large portion of the community in the Southern part of Queensland. I have been a protectionist since I understood politics. I have been a protectionist since I entered this Assembly, and whenever the question has come up I have tried in my small way to assist as far as I could the encouragement of that policy; and I believe that one of the most important points in connection with this very important question of federation is the question of intercolonial freetrade and protection. It is only right that if a man cannot agree with this Constitution he should vote against it, and I am forced to that conclusion by the fact that I believe that the introduction of intercolonial freetrade will largely affect the interests of a large portion of the community, both employers and working classes. That, I admit, may be a selfish position to take up; it may be said that we should take a wider view of this question; but in my opinion this question of federation is very largely a selfish question. The hon. member who last addressed the Committee has placed before us some facts in connection with the action of the southern colonies, and has shown — I think in a very fair way — that the desire of those colonies in going into the federation is to secure a market for their producers and manufacturers; and it is because I believe that this is largely the motive of the southern colonies, that I am encouraged in making
the statement that federation in the different colonies is largely
looked at from a selfish point of view. . . .

F. McDonnell Armstrong: Is Queensland in a position to do
that? Can she send her manufactured products into New South
Wales and compete there on equal terms with the products of
the old country? I say Queensland is not in that position; that if
we are placed in that position under a policy of intercolonial
freetrade, and have to compete with Victoria and New South
Wales on equal terms, the manufacturing industries of Queens­
land will not be able to stand. We must remember, and I am sure
every hon. member will recognise it, that for thirty years Vic­
toria has had a protective policy. In fact the protective policy of
Victoria has been almost — if I may use the expression — prohi­
bitive. We know it has been one of the highest tariffs in any part
of the world. . . . We have, I think, been getting on very well in
this colony in the matter of manufacturing industries during the
last eight or nine years. There has undoubtedly been a remark­
able advance in Queensland since the adoption of protection in
1888, and it is only at the present time — after ten years of pro­
tective policy — that the industries of Queensland are practically
getting on their feet. To-day we are practically getting out of our
swaddling clothes, and if this protection is withdrawn from
these young industries, a very large number of them will suffer
by this competition that they will have to experience. . . .

In 1888 we imported £179,097 worth of boots and shoes; in
1897 we imported £51,097 worth, a reduction in nine years of
£128,000. In 1888 we had eighteen small boot factories; in 1897
that number had increased to thirty-nine, employing 1,546 per­
sons and during 1897 those factories manufactured boots to the
value of £221,023. That shows that under protection our boot
factories have done very well, and if that protection, which has
done so much for the industry in the past, is going to be imme­
diately withdrawn under the Commonwealth Bill, it will be the
deathblow to that and other industries. In 1888 we imported
£21,464 worth of soap and candles, and in 1897 we imported
£12,119 worth. In 1888 we had twenty-five soap and candle fac­
tories, and in 1897 we had twenty-six such factories, employing
168 persons, and the value of the goods they manufactured in
1897 amounted to £84,538. During those same nine years our
population has increased by 97,000, and yet the imports of those
articles have considerably decreased. . . . Now I find that in
1888 we imported jams and jellies to the value of £36,381, while
in 1897 we imported only £5,130 worth, or a decrease of £31,257 in nine years. In 1888 we had two jam factories here, and in 1897 that number had increased to nineteen, employing 273 persons and manufacturing jams and jellies to the value of £77,707. I think those little tin-pot jam factories which give employment to so many people and produce goods to the value of £77,707 are deserving of a little more consideration than they have received at the hands of some persons who are very ardent federationists, and who are prepared to make any sacrifice in order to get this colony to join in federation. In 1888 we imported pickles, sauces, and vinegar to the value of £34,265, and in 1897 to the value of £27,962, which is a decrease in nine years of £6,303. In 1897 we manufactured £13,347 worth of pickles, sauces, and vinegar. Those industries were not established nine years ago, and seeing that they have got on so well, that shows that under protection we are making very good headway, and that it would be wrong and unjust to both the manufacturers and the workers if that protection were withdrawn now when it is most required.

We, in Queensland, are not in a position to compete with either New South Wales or Victoria excepting in a very few articles, such as meat, sugar, and green fruits; but even with those the Queensland producer has very largely to depend on the foreign market. For instance, during 1898 we exported meat — chilled, frozen and in other forms — to the amount of £1,159,374, out of which we only placed £63,937 worth on the intercolonial markets, the balance, amounting to £1,055,439, being exported across the sea. It is contended that if Queensland stands out of this federation, we shall be practically locked out of those intercolonial markets, but here is one of the most important of Queensland products, of which almost the entire amount found a market in the old country. This market we shall always have whether we enter the federation or stay outside. We shall always have a market for our butter and other produce, and I think the producers of Queensland have to look more to those markets beyond the seas than to depend on the intercolonial markets, where they will have to compete with producers who have much greater advantages. . . .

The hon. gentlemen must recognise that the introduction of intercolonial freetrade must undoubtedly affect a large number of the manufacturing industries of this colony. . . .

Retailers all over Queensland will recognise that under the
Commonwealth we are going to have intercolonial freetrade, and they will cease to replenish their stocks locally, because it is recognised that the southern people can sell their manufactures at a cheaper rate than the local manufacturers can. . . .

We have been told repeatedly by the advocates of federation that, so far as sugar is concerned, it will be grown by white labour only, and that federation will mean the abolition of black labour. I am satisfied that, under the new phases of the question which we have seen of late, there is a very small possibility of the coloured labour question being interfered with by the Federal Parliament. The planters contend that the question of sugar-growing to-day is not a question of whether the white man can work in the cane-fields, because it is now generally admitted that he can, but the question now simply resolves itself into the cost of production.

A Capitalist Plot?

The Bulletin, very pro-federation, strongly condemned the Worker and the Labour Party for their lack of enthusiasm, their indecisiveness, and even their opposition towards an Australian Commonwealth. The Labour Party was not convinced that there were any immediate benefits for its workers; there seemed to be more benefits for the owners and employers of Queensland. However, the party could not agree on a united stand on the issue. The following article appeared in the Worker.

Worker, 1 July 1899, 2.

1. This journal is allied with neither [Sir Hugh] Nelson or the [Legislative] Council stagnants, nor the black labour employers, nor with the anti-Federalists, any more than it is with the Federalists. On the part of the wage-earners the Worker recognises that the Federal fight is between the big capitalists and their sycophants, on the one hand, and between the small capitalists and their barrackers on the other; and that the working classes with the gyves of industrial captivity on their wrists are largely at the mercy of either or both of the two opposing factions, and that whichever party comes out on top isn’t going to release Labour from its thraldom if it can help it. . . .
2. 'The Q. Labour Party is divided in theory (upon Federation), in practise its influence has been given against the present Federal Movement'. The Q. Labour Party is also divided in theory upon the fiscal question, but like Federation or anti-Federation, it would probably prefer Electoral Reform to either Freetrade or Protection. . . .

We know all about the great advantages that are to come to us under Federation. Every wild boodle rag in Australia has been drumming it into our ears this many day. Fortunately, too, we are not fools enough to believe in the philanthropy and altruism of the Capitalist class. . . .

The Labour Parties of Queensland, N.S.W., Victoria, and South Australia, are nearly all indifferent to, or against, Federation, in a mild way. Consequently, in the eyes of the Bulletin, they are all 'men of mean capacity and narrow intellect'.

Referendum

A referendum on federation was held in Queensland on 2 September 1899, and produced a bare majority in favour. Voting patterns showed a clash of regional interests, such as north versus south; there were also competing economic interests; and a widespread resentment towards southern dominance, a feeling that has persisted through to today (especially in the form of “Canberra-bashing”). Last century the resentment related more to ways in which Sydney and Melbourne asserted an economic control over Queensland in matters such as shipping and investment.

Bourke Banner, 9 September 1899, 6.

The referendum vote taken last Saturday in Queensland advanced Federation by another important step. . . . The referendum vote has however given a majority of something like 5,000 in favour of Queensland joining the Federation. . . . The Brisbane Metropolitan vote showed a majority of nearly half against Federation on the lines of the Bill. . . . The first is the strong feeling which still obtains in Brisbane against Sydney commercial dominance. One can scarcely conceive of a stronger or more bitter feeling than that which had existed in the minds of Brisbane people against Sydney, and it must be confessed that for a
good deal of this there has been a cause. Until the establishment of the British India Line, and mail steamers by the McIlwraith Government at the cost of a very heavy subsidy, all Queensland was commercially at the hands of Sydney commercial houses. Sydney barred any big line of steamships from visiting Queensland ports. All goods by steamer had to be transhipped and as far as possible Queensland was kept in the background. The Australian Steam Navigation Co. was also a Sydney corporation, and for years fares were high and freights almost prohibitive and the battle between this Co. and the struggling young colony will be remembered by all who knew Queensland in the days referred to. The result of all this, and much more which cannot even be questioned in the limits of a small article, was that a strong anti-party sprang up especially in Southern Queensland against the parent colony and what was considered its selfish policy, and to this day much of this feeling continues, and it is to this more than anything else that many will attribute the strong vote which was cast there against Federation on Saturday.

By a singular coincidence in this case, however, the opposition of the South was more than counterbalanced by a very similar feeling on the part of North Queensland against Brisbane and the South. In the North the voting was something like eight to one in favour of the Bill, or, as the Brisbane Telegraph put it, in favour of separation from South Queensland.

The creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 reduced somewhat the powers of the several sovereign states, although it was meant to be a federation, not a unitary state. The championing of “states’ rights” has been a hallmark of successful Queensland premiers; Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen has been a master at the game of “bashing the feds” to preserve the authority of the state and to stop a “centralist takeover”. Labor premiers such as T. J. Ryan also saw merit in taking such a stance. At the same time Queenslanders readily accept that they are part of the Commonwealth and must share in joint efforts. In two world wars, Queenslanders made valiant efforts to defend “God, King and Country” — although one must also remember that in the Second World War there was an element of self-interest in the sense that Queensland was directly in the firing line.
Politics since 1901
Sugar Strike, 1911

The 1911 sugar strike sought to bring industrial relations in the sugar industry into the twentieth century by giving the workers (and their unions) greater bargaining rights. The changeover to white labour had not been without problems. The heritage of cheap, indentured labour meant that white mill-workers found themselves at a disadvantage with respect to negotiating powers, wages, conditions, and so on: the old-fashioned, restrictive legislation in the Masters and Servants Acts could be used to the advantage of employers. In the cane-fields, the butty system emerged whereby each gang of cutters negotiated its own rate of pay.

Worker, 27 May 1911, 9.

When the enormous profits extracted from the sugar industry are considered, there can be no gainsaying the fact that the sugar workers deserve much better treatment than what they have been receiving in the past. There is much justifiable discontent in their ranks through their just claims being arrogantly set aside and ignored by the bosses of sugar production.

This year the Amalgamated Workers' Association, of which the sugar workers are members, has tried hard to bring about conferences with a view of allaying the unrest among the men, and settling all disputes in a reasonable and sensible manner.

... Unionism is a legalised institution of Australia, and employers who refuse to meet and confer with its representatives engender a bitter spirit which generally ends in industrial conflict injurious to the community. The A.W.A. desired to avoid anything like this, but in consequence of the overbearing attitude of the planters, growers, and millers in certain districts, and their refusal to confer with the workers' representatives, the situation in the sugar industry is now strained as between master and man. Through the despotic conduct of the sugar planters and manufacturers, the A.W.A., therefore, in defence of its members, dispatched the following letter of instruction to its district and branch secretaries and representatives throughout Queensland:

Letter of instruction

"... The Executive consider that any further overtures for a peaceful settlement would be useless, therefore they are now submitting to you a list of the demands that are to be made
upon the employers, such demands to be enforced by a cessation of all work in the sugar districts.

"The following are the three chief matters to be made a fighting platform for the coming sugar season:

1. An eight (8) hour day in mill and field.

2. Modifications of cane cutting agreement so that the workmen will have equal rights with the employer.

3. A minimum wage of 7½d. per hour and found, or 30s. per week for mill-labouring workers. The average rate at present is about £1 2s. 6d. per week for a week of 60 to 70 hours.

"The employers will fight us before they give any concession, so it behoves everyone now to take up his portion of the fight and get all the men who will be in or about the sugar fields to thoroughly understand what is expected of them. Australians are not likely to submit without a protest against being treated like the Kanakas of slavery days."

General Strike, 1912

In 1912 the union movement again flexed its muscles by calling a general strike. It started as a tramways dispute in Brisbane over the wearing of union badges; soon other unions and other centres came in, such as the railwaymen and miners at Ipswich. The government responded with the full force of the law. After the strikers gave in, a harsh Industrial Peace bill was introduced, aimed at containing strikes and protecting "scabs".

Telegraph, 5 February 1912, 5.

The position at Ipswich assumed a more serious aspect on Saturday. There was a pervading air of restlessness throughout the morning and when the news was noised about that the men at the railway workshops had ceased work, excitement became intense. Later in the morning it was learned that the employees of several establishments in the city also had joined the ranks of the strikers. A satisfactory feature is that, so far, no attempt has been made to interfere with the food supplies.

Various wild rumours were current on Saturday and yesterday, most of them being equally absurd, as groundless. It was asseve-
rated by unionists that the locomotive engine drivers and firemen had decided to cease work, and that the disorganisation of railway traffic would be succeeded by complete stoppage. Inquiry showed that this was not the case, indeed, the men have decided to remain loyal to the department.

A mass meeting of railway men and miners was held in the Central gardens on Saturday. The speakers earnestly appealed to those present to stand firm in the stand they had taken up.

Mr. T. E. Brown intimated that he had called out the shunters in the local railway yards, and they had come out to a man. Mr. James Wilkinson, who presided, in the course of his speech, assured his hearers that the prospects of their ultimate success were most encouraging.

Mr. T. E. Brown said that, after two and a-half hours' sleep, he and others went over to the workshops to do picket duty. Out of the 1400 men who struck 32 men reported themselves that morning.

A voice: Who were they?
Another voice: Give us their names!
Mr. Brown said that the names had been secured, and would
be made available. "The time is coming," he said, "when we shall go back to those shops. When I go back there these men — these 32 — will have to go. (Applause) Their names would be out on the board that afternoon. He declared that they were all going back to the shops, and going back to a man — going back in a body, or not at all. (Applause) Some people told them they would lose their privileges — their long service and other privileges — but that was a matter which concerned them all, and which they would not submit to.

A second mass meeting was held in the evening, when the following resolution was carried: —

"Resolved that no action be taken by this conference in calling out any unionists employed in the manufacture and distribution of foodstuffs for the people, and that permits be granted to those workers accordingly, so long as the prices be not raised."

General Strike, 1912: Government Reaction

The 1912 general strike saw the government mobilizing all the resources at its disposal in Brisbane to enforce its rule. Special constables were sworn in from the local citizenry to assist the regular police, and arrangements had to be made for the supply of essential food to the people. At the time, however, the community was divided, and some businesses — for financial gain, perhaps — threw in their lot with the striking unionists.

*Telegraph*, 6 February 1912, 6.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In Consequence of all Operative Bakers having been called out, the Master Bakers are UNABLE to Continue Supply of Bread, and fearing many families in City and Suburbs may not be provided with FLOUR, the Government has invoked the aid of Local Authorities to meet requirements.

The GOVERNMENT Will deliver Flour to Any Depot Indicated, and require just bare cost thereof. Delivery to depot will be at Cost of Government. Adequate Police protection will be
afforded to all concerned. Local Authorities have been invited to communicate with Home Secretary.

Home Secretary's Department
Brisbane, 2nd February, 1912.

W. H. Ryder
Home Secretary

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Telegraph, 3 February 1912, 3.

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General Strike, 1912: A Conservative View


The members of the party on this side of the House, which has been returned with such a large majority, agree that a measure of this description is necessary. A promise was given to the elec-
tors that such a measure would be introduced for the purpose of minimizing if not completely stopping, strikes, and I think that a measure which aims at securing industrial peace should have our strenuous support. The people by a large majority have expressed themselves in favour of a Bill of this description. . . . Of course members on this side — the Liberal democratic side of the House — are in favour of law and order. The people on the Downs suffered very much from the strike. Years ago, when we had no railway communication, we generally laid in a good supply of eatables, but since we have had railways, and townships have sprung up alongside the lines, we have depended upon the stores in those townships for our supplies from week to week. During the strike we could get only a few pounds of sugar, and hardly any potatoes, and owing to the dry season we could not grow potatoes locally. We could only get a few pounds of sugar, and 10 or 12 lb. of flour.

That was the position of the Downs people during the strike. At the Hotel Cecil in Brisbane, where I stayed one day, the waiters and the "boots" went out for some supplies. They managed to get meat of all description — sausages, chops, steak, and so forth. When they were returning they met some of the followers of the strike committee, who demanded their goods or their lives; and they gave up the meat and ran for their lives, and left us at the hotel with nothing to eat. It is absolutely necessary that a measure of this description should be passed so as to prevent a recurrence of such things. I do not know much about unionism as I have never been a unionist, but it seems ridiculous to me that, because some butchers have a dispute with their employers, the carpenters should go on strike, and that neither butchers nor carpenters should be allowed to work. I trust that this measure will be passed, and that it will put a stop to picketing, so that workers may get employment from those who are able and willing to give it to them.
Patriotism, 1914

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the fight to defeat Germany and its supporters was the common goal of all Queenslanders (and Australians), as this speech by the Labour treasurer Ted Theodore reveals.


The Queensland Government realised that all the energy and all the resources available must be placed at the disposal of the Empire in order that victory be ensured. (Applause). They realised that the highest form of patriotism demanded that their whole service must be made available. (Applause). He believed the duty of the Government to be quite clear, and it had been made clear by the speeches of the leading statesmen in England, who had pointed out that they must subordinate everything in the effort for a good victory. . . . The policy must in future be one of true patriotism. Unfortunately in the past their one idea of success in trade had been to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest markets. Germany had profited by their shibboleth until it had become abundantly clear that henceforth the security of the Empire must be made the first of all considerations. (Applause).

. . .

Germans and the First World War

Although through the nineteenth century German immigrants to Queensland tended to be favourably received — they quietly went about their rural occupations and did not intrude upon the mainstream Anglo-Celtic community — this situation changed drastically when the First World War broke out. Almost immediately there was fierce resentment and hostility among most Queenslanders towards German residents in the state.

BC, 22 January 1916, 7.

There are daily in your valuable paper letters on the Germans in this beautiful Australia of ours. The freest land, I take it, under
the sun. No nation on the whole earth has enjoyed its freedom more than our German residents. They are in every walk of life and every business and in what way have they prospered more than on the land? They and their parents were only too glad to get away from German rule at the close of the Franco-German War in 1871 and put themselves under the Union Jack or Southern Cross. They have done well; they have their freehold farms that only cost them 2/6 per acre. Had they stayed in Germany they would not own as much land as a threepenny bit would cover. Here they are living in peace and comfort, while our own British sons, English, Irish, and Scotch, are going in thousands to fight their kith and kin on the battlefields of Europe. I tell you, Mr. Editor, there is not a more disloyal, unthankful lot than some of the German farmers.

In some districts they are as thick as ants. Some of them have married English or Australian-born women. These same women are afraid to speak up in defence of their own flag. . . . In taking count in some of our districts the Germans on the land are three and four to one Britisher. Why should they have all the benefits of this fair land? No. What many of us say is this: They came here with only what they stood up in, and at the conclusion of the war they should be packed back to their fatherland as fast as they could be sent, and every inch of land and property confiscated, and the land given to loyal ones who have proved their worth. It is a well-known fact that when asked to subscribe to any patriotic object in eight out of ten cases they refuse. . . . In conclusion let me say that men or women who call themselves British should not accept German-made goods.

Another Disgusted One,
Darling Downs.

[Numbers of Germans were interned during the First World War.]

Some Labour Policies, 1915

In 1915 the Labour Party, skilfully led by T. J. Ryan, won office in Queensland. The previous government under Denham had become discredited, partly
because of rising prices as the war crisis developed. It was alleged the government had been too closely associated with giant American (and British) companies, such as in meat-processing. Labour carefully planned its policies to appeal to a wide sector of the community; the small man on the land was especially looked to, as, indeed, was the small man everywhere. Labor then stayed in government until 1957 (with a short interruption during the Great Depression).

Note: In November 1918 the Central Political Executive adopted the name "Australian Labor Party, Queensland Branch"; however, the old spelling of "Labour" was still used occasionally for some time after this date.

Excerpts from election speech of T. J. Ryan delivered at Barcaldine, Worker, 1 April 1915, 14-16.

During the past quarter of a century the movement has progressed in the face of all the misrepresentations and all the forces which its opponents arrayed against. Time and again members of the Labour Party have been described as mere 'visionaries', who could accomplish nothing in the way of practical government. Pictures have been drawn of capital fleeing from the country before the withering blast of Labour rule; and of enterprise, industry, and thrift being destroyed on Labour's accession to power. . . . With the progress of time, however, the Labour Party attained to power in several of the Australian States and notably in the Commonwealth of Australia itself . . . and has proved to the people of Australia, and indeed to the world, that it is a party of action — that it conceives bold national ideas, and accomplishes what it sets out to attain resolutely and fearlessly. . . .

The gross incompetency of the [Denham] government and its callous indifference to the welfare of the people are to be seen in the neglect to grapple with the startling increase in the cost of living. During the past few years the cost of living has gone up in Queensland by leaps and bounds, and since the outbreak of the present war the increase in Queensland has gone on much more rapidly than in any other State of the Commonwealth. . . .

Apparently, the Liberal idea is that the Government has no more responsibility in connection with such important matters than it has with the motions of the earth. Liberalism, as interpreted by Mr. Denham declares to the people that 'Dear meat is part of the sacrifice you are making on behalf of the Empire'. If that is so why has the cost of living increased in Queensland since the war much more than in any other State of the Com-
Thomas Joseph Ryan: born Victoria 1876, died 1921; teacher, then barrister; elected to parliament 1909; premier 1915-19; Labor — especially associated with industrial and political reform, state enterprises; federal politician 1919-21. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
monwealth? Indeed, why were prices so high before the war? It is idle for Mr. Denham to contend that the war is alone responsible. He would have the people believe that trusts, combines, monopolies, honourable understandings, and speculators, have had nothing to do with the extraordinary forcing up of prices.

The Labour Party refuses to allow the people to be exploited by the greed of speculators in foodstuffs. The Government is not doing its duty which sits complacently by, while the people are plundered and compelled to pay extortionate prices for the necessaries of life, so that the privileged few may be enriched.

That these problems of living and wages must have close and urgent attention is clear to any social student, and what is much more clear is that the only party with the capacity and the inclination to delve into and solve the problems is the Labour Party. At all events, our policy of controlling the trusts and smashing rings and honourable understandings must have the effect of reducing the cost of commodities, and vigorous action in regard to State and Municipal enterprise, in conjunction with a closer alliance of the producer and consumer through the abolition of the middleman, will have an appreciable influence upon the cost of goods and necessaries of life generally.

Although the Liberals are professedly the friends of the farmer, it is very aptly urged, notwithstanding that they have controlled the affairs of the country for the past fifty years, that they have done little or nothing to assist the genuine farmer or promote stable closer settlement. Under the existing regime, agriculture has languished deplorably, and the small areas under crop in our vast state of Queensland reflect gravely upon the bona fides of those in power. Indeed such far-reaching and necessary matters as Water Conservation and Irrigation have been entirely ignored. In this, as in the matter of cold storage the establishment of State and Export Agencies for primary products, the platform of the Labour Party for years has been most emphatic.

The establishment of State farms in favoured centres for the propagation, hybridization, and cultivation of wheat, maize, oats, barley, sugar, lucerne, potatoes, and other staple crops, would at once secure not only the purest seeds but the most prolific varieties at moderate prices to growers, and in a similar way stud cattle and sheep might be bred.
works for the manufacture of farm implements, and the offering of rewards for the discovery of deposits of phosphates, now regarded as essential in modern agriculture — are matters which must not be overlooked by any Labour Government desirous of rendering the assistance necessary to the primary producers of the State and carrying out some of the leading planks of the labour platform. The Agricultural Bank should be remodelled on lines giving more speedy and effective assistance to those requiring advances.

There are certain enterprises and businesses which obviously can be much better managed and controlled by the State than by private ownership; and there are certain businesses which, by reason of their inherent qualities, are particularly subject to monopoly control, which, in the hands of private capitalists, afford dangerous means of exploiting the people. This is partly admitted by the Liberals in their acceptance of the policy of the State ownership and management of railways, harbours, wharves, savings banks, etc. but vested interests are too great an influence among the Liberals to allow them to agree to many useful and necessary extensions of the principle.

The Labour Party believes that by a further extension of public ownership and the establishment of State enterprises the community will be saved from a great deal of exploitation at the hands of private capitalists.

By this means the evil of private monopoly can be counteracted; new industries can be established; and goods and manufactures can be supplied to the people at a reduced cost. Under [the Liberal] regime, the great combines of capitalism, transplanted from America, are taking firm root in this prolific and beautiful land of ours, and bid fair to become a perpetual menace to producer and consumer alike.

The Conscription Debate, 1916

Queensland was racked by divided opinions and loyalty in 1916 over the issue of conscription — sending Queenslanders overseas to fight in the Great War on behalf of Britain and the Empire. T. J. Ryan and most of the Labour Party opposed the conscription issue, and some of the Labour supporters, such as
During the First World War, the light horse and infantry were prepared for duty. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
J. A. Fihelly, were very ardent in their denunciation of it. The *Brisbane Courier* took a pro-conscription line and urged people to vote Yes in the referendum. In the following document the newspaper denounced the anti-conscriptionists.

*BC*, 16 October 1916, 6.

The “Abandon-your-mates” party is endeavouring to gain some support by craven-hearted appeals about coloured labour, injury to industries, and conscription of married men.

The appeal about coloured labour is conceived in cowardice, and penned in paltroonery. Mr. Hughes and Senator Pearce [Federal politicians for conscription] said again and again that no coloured labour will be introduced into Australia. . . . We have been told again and again, as plainly as can be stated, that conscription will not touch the vigour of one single industry. Are business men going to be guided in this matter by the fears of drivelling dotards in the traitorous I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World — the “Wobblies”] or by the assurances of our greatest statesmen? . . .

Britain is asking us for 100,000 men up to the end of next July. About 270,000 men are under arms now, or in camps of training, and nobody has found any ruination of industries. . . .

The “Abandon-your-mates” party insidiously whispers to the suburban and country business men that Australia has done enough. Look around, however, and we find Australia much more prosperous and happy than any country in the world. . . .

“Stand by your women and children and vote ‘No’” says the Fihelly, Collins and Co. circular. To this insidious suggestion Mr. Hughes has replied: — “Do not be deceived by those who are deaf to the calls for reinforcements and to the call of patriotism. By voting ‘Yes’ you choose the only way open to you of saving countless lives. To our Australian soldiers engaged in a life and death struggle reinforcement means rescue and salvation.”

**Conscription Referendum**

The referendum was held because of the need for more Australian men to fight the war in Europe. The federal government favoured this approach and
used the pleas of loyalty and patriotism to whip up support. The anti-conscriptionists also turned to emotional pleas, emphasizing the issue of Australian nationhood and the fact that it was a foreign war, far from Australia's interests. The following two documents come from the anti-conscription side and were placed in the media and public places to build up support. The No votes won the day.

*Worker, 12 October 1916.*

**AUSTRALIANS**

Hughes says married men will not be wanted —

*let us figure it out!*

Hughes' scheme in one year, beginning from the first of last month will call up

MEN 214,000

Allowing for those exempted by law, physically unfitted, and industrially indispensable, the single men available number 70,000

Shortage (which must be made up by Married Men) 144,000

The drafts for Sept. Oct. Nov. & Dec. will absorb 80,000

Consequently *before the end of the year* married men must be drawn on to the extent of 12,000

Thereafter only married men or single rejects will be available.

Men and women of Australia do not be trapped.

**Vote “NO”**

**VOTE FOR CONSCRIPTION AND NATIONAL SUICIDE**

Conscription demands the awful price of *16,000* of the nation's manhood each month.
As part of Brisbane’s war effort, money was collected at a Queen Street bank and many women joined the Red Cross. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
This number will undoubtedly be added to in the near future.

To grant such an outrageous demand is madness: to present such a bill for payment to so small a population as Australia contains is equivalent to asking Australia to commit National Suicide.

This impossible sacrifice is demanded of Australia in the interests of the movement outside of the national life of the Commonwealth and only infecting her through her relationship with other countries.

Is this relationship with other countries to count before her duties to her own people?

Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and if Australia at the frenzied behest of war-mad Imperialists, pours out her life blood on the battle fields of Europe the price of that insane violation of nature's law must be paid. The price will be the annihilation of the nation.

Even now the Asiatic menace is threatening. A nation of widows, orphans, old maids, old men and cripples; in short degenerate and impotent people.

Australians, Think before it is too late: Think of the future of this Democracy if her manhood is sacrificed on the bloody altar of Conscription for a war on foreign soil 16,000 miles away. . . . Vote No Conscription.

Literature Committee of Queensland Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee.

Fear of Communism

The successful outcome of the Russian Revolution in 1917 caused fear in Queensland that communism was taking hold; many conservative people thought that the Labour government was heading in a communist direction. In north Queensland, in particular, radical and militant sentiments were being expressed, especially by certain trade unions. Also, during the war the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were active in such places as Hughenden. Townsville by 1919 was the scene of much union activity when the meat-workers' strike broke out. The following document is critical of union militancy
A street parade in Brisbane was held to celebrate the defeat of the Germans in 1918 and the Union Jack was hoisted at Canungra in an armistice day ceremony. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
and the influences that were believed to be at work in the meatworkers' strike and in general discontent in the north.


Take Townsville as an example of unionism in which an alien preponderance has degenerated democracy to despotism. The streets alone reflect this attribute, but to visit the meat-works shows the evil compressed into narrower compass. Most of these foreigners confess to be Russian although many of them have Teutonic rather than a Slavonic cast of countenance and their speech savours more of the Hun than the Muscovite. Those who are Russians are largely Siberian products and Siberia is not alone the home of the political prisoner, but also of the very worst criminals that the Empire of the Czars produced. This explains why constituted authority has no influence over these men. They have drunk at the fount of Bolshevism and have quite an inflated idea of what they can accomplish. I.W.W.-ism also has permeated to some extent through the veins of legitimate unionism and produced a mongrel philosophy that is inimical to the best welfare of those professing it. . . . It advocates something like anarchy and operates against "Constitutionalism". It is opposed to all politics and seeks for the sectional control of the State by local committees, whilst rather illogically advocating "One Big Union".

[Premier T. J. Ryan used considerable state power to put down the strike and subdue the militant elements in the north.]

**Labor’s Agricultural Policy, 1922**

In 1922 Premier E. G. Theodore, anxious to cement relations with the farming population, spelled out a clear policy on agriculture. Central to Labor's approach was the need for planned development so that production and marketing could be orderly and controlled: hence a Council of Agriculture drawing upon district councils should work out policies. Co-operatives and pools were
to be promoted, undeveloped lands opened up, irrigation provided, agricultural education stimulated, and rural conditions generally improved.


I lay down the following as a tangible and realisable objective:
(1) Agriculture as an industry must be made a remunerative industry to those engaged in it.
(2) The industry must be greatly extended, for only in that way can an additional population be absorbed; and it is only by increasing the population that we can reduce our per capita financial burdens.
(3) The conditions of life of all country dwellers must be made more attractive than at the present time. An agricultural policy, to be effective, must include proposals dealing with all the following topics. These would constitute some of the leading planks of an agricultural programme:— (i) Co-operation; (ii) pools; (iii) advisory boards for the different sections of the agricultural industry; (iv) agricultural education; (v) main roads; (vi) extension of social amenities to rural life; (vii) opening land for settlement; (viii) representation abroad to promote trade for primary products.

Under the present limited extent of co-operation among those engaged in the primary industries the farmers are the greatest sufferers from market fluctuations. When depression occurs in the market price of products the farmer has to bear almost the entire burden of the fall. The middlemen gain most of the advantages by refusing the lower prices to the consumers. When there is a rise in prices, the middlemen enjoy the benefits for the simple reason that the increases in prices are not passed on to the producers. . . .

I advocate the establishment in all farming localities of District Councils of Agriculture, these to be linked up with a central council having jurisdiction over the whole State. These councils . . . should work in close co-operation with the Department of Agriculture. . . .

We shall endeavour to co-ordinate agricultural tuition with the general system of State education, providing thereby a scheme of agricultural secondary schools for all pupils leaving the primary schools who decide to take an agricultural course.
1927 Strike

In 1927 industrial trouble broke out at the South Johnstone sugar mill involving members of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU). Railwaymen followed in support, but the railway commissioner ordered them back to work. Premier William McCormack threw his weight behind the commissioner, leading to a major breach between the industrial wing and the political wing of the labour movement. Such a division between the trade unions and the Parliamentary Labor Party has not been unusual in Queensland's history, for example, in the 1890s, and most seriously in 1956–57. On the occasion in 1927 the whole labour movement was seriously weakened by this division, especially since the AWU was usually a mainstay of the different successive Labor governments. In editorials the AWU's newspaper, the *Worker*, heavily castigated McCormack and his cabinet for destroying the labour movement. Through the 1920s there had been considerable tension between the militant, left-leaning Australian Railways Union (ARU) and moderate right-leaning cabinets.

*Worker*, 31 August 1927, 6.

HAS CABINET GONE MAD?

The Labor Movement in Queensland to-day is faced with one of the greatest crises in its history, a crisis from which, at the moment of writing, it is impossible to see even the faintest ray of hope if the Premier and Cabinet maintain their present attitude in relations to railway employees involved in the South Johnstone dispute. . . . It was realised that the officials of the A.R.U. and the members of the Cabinet were at loggerheads, and, in the event of trouble arising, very serious consequences would inevitably ensue, unless these ancient enemies were well advised and kept very level heads. . . . But the Government did throw down the gauntlet. . . . It is almost unbelievable that Premier McCormack would have taken up the attitude he has taken, or that he would be able to get a single member of his Cabinet to second him. . . .

He must have known, too, that the whole Labor Movement would rapidly become involved, and not only did he support the obnoxious attitude of the [Railway] Commissioner, but he even went further and issued an ultimatum which, if carried out, can mean nothing but war to the bitter end, and an ultimate breaking up of the Labor Movement.

The Premier, when he backed up the attitude of the Railway
Commissioner, must have known that the A.W.U., which had been the strongest supporter the Government has had, would be compelled to stand shoulder to shoulder with the A.R.U. against this senseless, high-handed attitude, and yet apparently, he did not hesitate to involve the A.W.U. . . .

It remains to be seen whether the Government will have the support of the rank and file of the Parliamentary Labor Party, or even a section of that body, most of whom came from the ranks of the toilers themselves, and who must, if they are true to themselves, repudiate such a senseless and dangerous anti-working class attitude.

It seems that in forcing the position and making a declaration of war on its railway servants for standing beside the members of the A.W.U. at South Johnstone the Government has deliberately forfeited its right to represent the Working-class Movement.

That is our opinion, anyhow. What is yours?

McCormack came out in defence of his stance, using the argument that as the government elected by the people of Queensland it was his duty to govern in the interests of all and not just on behalf of the trade unions. He alleged that the unions were trying to usurp the role of government. These arguments were invoked in the other clashes between the political and industrial wings of the labour movement.


It is interesting for the House and the country to know that between these unions — the Australian Railways Union and the Australian Workers’ Union — a vendetta has been going on, and that the Australian Railways Union has, in season and out of season, charged the Australian Workers’ Union with being the tool of this Government. It has told the public, the unions, and its own members that the Australian Workers’ Union was not worth its salt and that it could not conduct its own affairs. For three long years that vendetta has been going on. . . .

The grievance that the Government have is with those men who are in control of these unions, and who have again and again challenged the authority of the Government. They have made it an issue. If we are to regard every dispute as being the basis for calling some commodity “black,” and the Australian Railways Union is to be the judge as to whether that commodity is to be carried or not, it raises the question at once as to who is
to control the affairs of this State. . . . Labour has said that it can govern; and it has governed successfully in all the States and in the Commonwealth. As the hon. member for Kennedy said, it has also governed in Britain — not with a majority — but it has been the Executive Government of Great Britain. It can govern. If it is going to face this question, it cannot govern. . . . When I took my oath of office, I undertook to be loyal to constitutional government; and, when members here took their oaths of office, they also undertook to be loyal to constitutional government. It is a difficult problem. Torn one way with the desire to remain faithful to an allegiance [to union rules] that they probably love and have worked for all their lives; on the other side faced with the dislocation of constitutional government if they evade their higher responsibility. If it is once admitted that members of Parliament owe a first allegiance to any irresponsible group and not to their constituents, the end of our present form of government is in sight. (Hear, hear!) It must be faced! . . .

If any member here believes that a principle of unionism — and in this case not well established — is at stake, and that, because he is a member of a union, he is compelled to give allegiance to some outside body and not to this Parliament, then he ought not to be in this Parliament — (Hear, hear!) — and if the Government give way to the authority of any outside body in a matter like that, then I say the final result will be revolution. . . .

I was proceeding to say that in the future Labour people will recognise that they cannot have a Labour Government and expect it to bow to the will of any section of the community. . . . I urge the members of my own party to stick loyally behind the Government. I can see nothing else for them to do. I urge them also to leave out the personal element, to recognise that their elected Cabinet has come to a definite decision, and that it is going to stand by that decision. We are prepared to stake our existence on that decision here to-day. When the phantoms of prejudice and the ill-feeling and hatred engendered by this dispute are forgotten, Labour opinion from one end of the Commonwealth to the other will endorse the action of the Queensland Labour Government in courageously meeting this issue and establishing beyond doubt that Labour can govern.
Labour Movement and Parliamentary Labor at Odds

The *Worker* was not impressed and continued to denounce the government for its lockout of the railway workers.

*Worker, 7 September 1927, 6.*

... there can be no doubt that almost irreparable damage has been done to the Labor Movement by the high-handed ultimatum of the Government and by its subsequent closing down of the railways. ... In the eyes of 90 per cent of the workers of Queensland, the Queensland Labor Government has committed an unforgivable industrial crime. It has thrown on to the industrial scrapheap staunch and stalwart men who would die rather than break an article of their industrial faith. ... It has paralysed the business of the State ... all because of a sudden whim of the Premier to demonstrate — that which it is not possible for him to demonstrate under the circumstances — the fact that 'Labor can govern' ... By what peculiar process of reasoning he can persuade himself that it is an attribute of good government to attempt to force union men to 'scab' on their fellow workers, when their organisations expressly forbid them to do so, the *Worker* cannot understand. Such actions rather befit those of a hostile despotism, contemptuous of Labor's ideals and reckless of the country's welfare, in its desire to suppress them.

As far as the rank and file of the industrial movement is concerned, the die has been cast. The Government may be unanimous in Cabinet, it may have the support of the majority of the Parliamentary Party, but it has lost entirely the confidence of the toilers, and for this unfortunate position it can blame no one but itself.

*[In the subsequent elections (1929), Labor was thrown out of office.]*
Economic Development in the 1930s

Premier W. Forgan Smith (1932–42) continued Labor's rural bias as espoused by Theodore in 1922. The Great Depression of the early 1930s, with all the woes and distress that best industrial societies, seemed to confirm in Forgan Smith's mind the virtue of primary industry. He stressed rural development and set up a Bureau of Industry not so much to stimulate secondary industry as to encourage development around the state. The neglect of north Queensland was a matter attracting considerable interest at the time, but this was a problem not easily redressed.

W. Forgan Smith, QPD 162 (1932):1731.

I take the view that, no matter how much secondary industries may be established in Queensland, this state will continue for all time to be largely a primary producing state. It is desirable that this should be so. Primary production is the natural occupation of mankind. No one would desire for this state the industrialised type of civilisation which exists in many countries to-day. In any case, secondary industries are part of the general developmental problems of the state, and can only exist side by side with the development of its natural resources, and to a large extent that...
development is dependent on the consuming power of the people. The [Bureau of Industry] Bill proposes to introduce a system of orderly planning so that we can achieve the best results possible for the people with the resources at our disposal, and in that way provide new activities for the people. Take the position of development in many areas in Queensland. For example, is the development of North Queensland to be left to the whims of a chance political majority in Parliament; or is it desirable that an organised scheme should be adopted.

Protestant Labour Party, 1937

In the 1930s the Labor government was popularly thought of as being close to the Catholic Church; Archbishop James Duhig was a very commanding figure in the Queensland scene. The question of state aid for religious schools became an issue again; and in reaction to this perceived power of the Catholic Church, a Protestant Labour Party was formed in 1937.

In a State where Roman Catholics were 19.2 per cent of the population the Labour Party in the State Parliament consists of 27 Roman Catholics and 16 Protestants.

The Protestant Labour Party believes that once Queensland ceased to be Protestant it ceases to be the home of free men. The Protestant Labour Party has no desire to see what has happened in Brazil and Spain, and is now happening in Ireland, happen in this country. At the moment Irishmen are seeking jobs in Great Britain, despite the lavish promises of a Roman Catholic Free State.

In history Roman Catholicism has never meant industrial freedom for the working classes. Clerical interferences with A.L.P. branches, industrial unions, and a political party will convert Queensland into another Spain.

Some Roman Catholics here in Queensland find difficulty in saying anything couched in terms of admiration regarding Great Britain — the home of freedom and parliamentary government.

The recent demand by Catholics for State aid to denominational schools could come only from men who disregarded the
wishes of Queenslanders and the repeated decisions of the conventions of the Labour Party.

The Protestant Labour Party believes in democratic government. It believes in absolute freedom of religious expression.

The Second World War

The Second World War did not attract the same internal dissension over matters such as conscription as did the First. This was partly because the boundaries of Australia within which Australian troops fought were extended northwards. More importantly Australia came directly within the firing line, and the necessity for defence was urgent. With the sudden Japanese invasion of the South Pacific in late 1942, Queensland became particularly vulnerable. It was then that the "Brisbane line" idea of abandoning the north was mooted. The
war threat contributed to industrial neglect in Queensland and the railways were overtaxed, but inland road improvements were made.

E. Ward, CAPD 172 (1942):1813.

When the Labour party took office the position was desperate. No honourable member will deny that. This country was practically defenceless despite the fact that war had been in progress two years. The Opposition parties were then in power. We were defenceless to such a degree that there was a plan in existence which, if put into effect, would have meant the abandonment of the whole northern part of Australia. I was criticized on a previous occasion for making that statement. I repeat it. If Opposition members of the Advisory War Council spoke their minds, they would admit that the High Command was so alarmed by the situation shortly after the entry of Japan into the war that it prepared plans for the abandonment of the whole of north Australia. That position has been changed, by the use, not of conscript soldiers, but volunteers. . . .

The High Command said that, with the equipment and materials available, it would be impossible to defend large and important areas of north Australia. We have changed that by a voluntary method. Not one member of the Opposition has yet advanced any argument to show that the voluntary system has failed. . . .

Twelve months after arriving in Australia General MacArthur gave a confidential analysis of the war in the Pacific. The war correspondent George Johnston filed this account.

*Argus*, 18 March 1943, 2.

So much has changed in the intervening 12 months that it can now be revealed that this time a year ago, when Gen MacArthur first came to Australia, the defence plan for the safety of this continent involved North Australia being taken by the enemy. This was based on the conception of the 'Brisbane line' of defence. It had been drawn up on the fundamental that the littoral of islands to the north of Australia would be taken by the enemy, and that northern Queensland and Darwin area would be overrun by the Japanese. It was the intention of Australia to
defend along a line somewhere near the Tropic of Capricorn, which would be known as the Brisbane line. . . .

This largely defeatist conception was brought upon us by the fact that we were almost completely unprepared to defend against a large-scale Japanese move. It was not Australia’s fault: the cream of her youth was fighting thousands of miles away. Airfields and aircraft were lacking, supplies and facilities for movement were far below military requirements. . . .

It was Gen MacArthur who abandoned the ‘Brisbane line’ concept and decided that the battle for Australia would be fought in New Guinea. . . . The new conception was carried out, roads and a great system of airfields were hacked out of North Australia.

The **AWU**

The Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) emerged out of industrial trouble in tin-mining areas in north Queensland in the early years of the twentieth century. It rapidly expanded to become the largest union in the state, encompassing...
wide groups of general workers. By 1915 it was clearly tied in with the operations (and fortunes) of the Parliamentary Labor Party.

*Worker*, 24 January 1949, 4.

Whence, then, comes the power of the Labor Movement in Queensland? Where is the basic strength — the resiliency which has enabled Labor Governments to occupy the Treasury benches in this State ever since 1915, with the exception of three years from 1929 to 1932? . . . The answer is: The Australian Workers' Union.

It is the Australian Workers' Union throughout Queensland which is the backbone of the Labor Movement in this State. It is the Australian Workers' Union which is responsible largely for the return of Federal and State Labor Governments. The Australian Workers' Union in the main provides the network of organisation. Its secretaries and organisers, representatives and rank and file are everlastingly preaching the gospel of Labor in the places where votes count most.

With few exceptions every one of the huge membership in Queensland (and throughout Australia) is a disciple of Labor. And, where A.W.U. members do not participate in A.L.P. activities, their union supplies much of the funds to fight political campaigns.

**Railway Strike, 1948**

Through the twenties, thirties and forties there was considerable underlying discontent in the labour movement. More left-wing unions such as the Australian Railways Union felt themselves ignored and disadvantaged by the mainstream of the Labor Party (which was moderate to right-wing in attitude) and the conservative Australian Workers Union. Friction was not uncommon between the two groups. Furthermore, through the 1940s Communist activity in the labour movement had been increasing. Matters came to a head in the railway strike of 1948. Conditions in the railways were poor because the whole system had been running down, especially during the Second World War. But the strike was also one in a pattern of significant industrial action that plagued Australian recovery after the war. The government of E. M. Hanlon replied to the strikers sternly, seeing it partly as a struggle for power with the Communist
Ordered last week by the Industrial Court to return to work on Monday, striking railwaymen in Queensland held a “mass meeting” at Brisbane Trades Hall and decided not to obey — about 500 made the decision after listening to Communist Rowe from Melbourne. Premier Hanlon promptly declared a state of emergency, ordered the men back to work, and outlawed picketing or the counselling of strike action. The Railways Commissioner told his men to start on Monday or consider themselves sacked. Apparently in the conviction that Communist treachery is now little short of war against the State, the publication or broadcasting of Com[munist] exhortations to go on with the illegal strike were banned.

In a broadcast of his own, Mr. Hanlon made no bones about the position. He asked the men to go back and avoid “all the elements of civil war”:

“"The Government and people of Queensland have been very patient. . . . Women and children are now threatened with hunger . . . all the processes of law have been tried . . . but interlopers from the south have decreed that the law shall be violated and that their will shall prevail. . . . [They] are threatening violence. . . . What do they think we are? . . . I have yet to know that Queenslanders have abandoned their love of freedom and will bend their knees before the first mimicking Molotov who enters the country. . . . As along as I am the leader of the people’s Government I shall refuse to capitulate.”

The strike was never justified or legal. Strike leaders, reinforced by what Mr. Hanlon called “the high command” of the Communist party, ignored and defied the Industrial Court all along the line. Mr. Hanlon made it clear at once that he stood by the law, and he never deviated, despite threats. Knowing that it was started by a minority and kept going by Communists, he gave the majority of workers a chance to settle it themselves. Either they lacked the will or were disorganised by Communist tactics. The Premier only needed the final defiance to act with decision.
On Monday morning some trains resumed running; the Ipswich workshops reopened with a reduced staff; an attempt to bring the tramsmies out had flopped. There was the usual shrieking from the Communist "high command". Comrade Brown, boss of the A.R.U., called on all railwaymen to extend the strike; Comrade Elliott, of the Seamen's Union, threatened to blockade the Queensland coast; Queensland wharfies announced a strike till "the emergency regulations were lifted". It was the yelping of curs and vicious mischief-makers.

Canberra's only visible help to Mr. Hanlon was a prohibition of Commonwealth unemployment-relief to strikers and members of unions "sponsoring a strike of their members in key positions". But there is a pattern in this Communist energy that aims directly at Canberra. Twice within two months State Premiers have had to take drastic steps to break Communist attacks on the peace and welfare of their people. The mere winning or losing of a strike is by the way to Communists. Their aim is production loss, confusion, unemployment, idle factories, distrust, suspicion, hatred. They had many Victorians facing that position in January; in February the target was Queensland. Which State next?

If there was a real Government in Canberra there would be no next. There is ample evidence to justify use of Commonwealth power to deal with these internal enemies — surely Dr. Evatt and Mr. Chifley are not blind to what is happening this very moment in Europe, China and elsewhere — and since both Mr. Hollway [Victorian Premier] and Mr. Hanlon have shown that a display of backbone settles their hash, they should not be left to fight singly and alone. But singly and alone is to be their position while Commonwealth 'Labor' is in. Meantime, it is clear now that all State Governments would be wise to set about finding a means of stopping these Communist-led upheavals before they begin.

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Bulletin (Sydney), 3 March 1948, 10.

Launching a midsummer railway strike in tropical and subtropical Queensland when industrial law was at the service of all hands was an act of Oriental barbarism, designed to produce conditions — of misery, disorder and the collapse of all authori-
ty other than Communist — under which Oriental barbarism could make itself supreme. The foul plan miscarried, because Queensland is no longer wholly dependent on railways for transport; because the Court, despising Communist threats and insults, stood steadily for industrial law; and because the emergency produced the man. No cringing coward like the Czech Benes, who, during the same period, abandoned his people to internal enemies and their foreign masters, but a real leader in the Old Digger Premier Hanlon. It has been shown in Queensland, as in France and Victoria, that a resolute man with a good cause and lawful weapons can put Communist ruffianism to rout.

Said Hanlon in his Saturday-night broadcast: “The High Command of the Communist party has invaded Queensland.” Again: “Interlopers from the south have decreed that the law shall be violated.” Further: “These opponents of constitutional Government are threatening violence to anyone who dares to obey the order of the Court.”

When Hollway brought in the emergency legislation that ended the Communists’ Melbourne tram and bus strike and strangled their Victorian railway strike in its birth, the “Age” protested that he had gone too far. Similarly, “S.M. Herald” discovered that Hanlon “damaged a strong position by attempting to impose a partial censorship on newspapers and broadcasting services.” This means, if it means anything, that in the situation to which Communists reduced his State it was Hanlon’s duty to sit back and let “newspapers and broadcasting stations,” led by A.B.C., publish “Strike Committee” incitements to continued lawlessness. If a Government chooses to defend its people against the Communist conspiracy it must on no account depart from the lily-fingered conventions of nineteenth-century Liberalism. Cold feet or softening of the brain?

Electoral Redistribution, 1949

Labor governed Queensland between 1915 and 1957, with a brief interruption (1929–32) during the Depression. By 1949, however, Labor’s electoral stocks had slipped, partly because of the industrial and political uncertainty that set-
tled upon Australia after the Second World War (as evidenced in the 1948 railway strike). In 1949 Premier E. M. Hanlon brought in an electoral redistribution, creating four zones, with a different vote weightage for each zone. Since 1931–32, electoral reform had been moving in the direction of vote weightage, but the 1949 redistribution introduced a large disparity between remote rural electorates and Brisbane. At this stage Labor was still polling well in rural and provincial areas. The government rationalized that decentralization was vital for a state the size of Queensland; rural areas must be helped and Brisbane contained.


Industry in the metropolitan area is growing rapidly. Notwithstanding the lesson of the last war it is very difficult to get industrialists to decentralise their industries.

The population of Brisbane is growing rapidly, but we do not wish to reach the stage in this State when the representation of Brisbane in this Parliament will overshadow country representation. It has not in the past and it would be very foolish for Parliament to allow that result to take place. It would be a bad thing not only for the country people but in the last analysis a bad thing for the metropolitan area, because on the successful

Premier Hanlon checking the new electoral boundaries, 1949. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
development and expansion of our country areas depend the very life and security of our capital cities. It is not a good thing for a growing population in the metropolitan area to obtain an overwhelming control of representation in Parliament. Therefore we propose to make a drastic alteration in the method of representation under this Bill.

The present law provides for the division of the numbers of electors in the State by the number of members of Parliament, the quota for our metropolitan area being the same as for the out-back areas. To continue that principle would be fatal. There would be the ever-lessening representation of the rural and, particularly, far northern areas. To my mind the danger spot of the Commonwealth is the Far North, and consequently it is essential for our welfare — and the welfare of the people in Sydney and Melbourne as well, if they only realised it — that the northern part of the State would be populated. So we propose to zone the State and to make the first zone the metropolitan area and put a limit on the number of members the metropolitan area can have. . . .

We propose to increase the total membership of the House by 13, allowing four in the metropolitan area and nine additional representatives of the country. That will keep the balance of the representation of the country. . . .

Warrego 92,090 [square miles]
Gregory 129,640 [square miles]
Carpentaria 156,535 [square miles]

Hon. members should give a thought for a moment to the Gregory, Warrego and Carpentaria electorates. Each one of these has a greater area than all the electorates represented by the Country Party in this Parliament today. . . . The Warrego electorate is nearly 5,000 square miles larger than the State of Victoria. The whole State of Victoria, or the whole of England, Scotland and Wales, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands would go into the Warrego electorate.
Tully Falls Hydro-Electric Project

The hydro-electric power scheme at Tully Falls was one of the developmental schemes proposed by the Labor government after the Second World War. Defence of the north, after the imminent Japanese invasion, was one of the motivating factors as were the desire to settle the empty reaches of northern Australia and the desire to encourage decentralization. In other words, it fitted in with labor's rural bias: take cheap electric power, irrigation and the like to country regions, and people would follow.


We have submitted the matter to the Commonwealth Government, asking them to provide a subsidy for the undertaking, not on the ground that it is a completely economic undertaking but on the ground that it is desirable in the interests of the settlement and industrial development in the North that electric power should be made as cheap as possible in that area. It is hoped that the Commonwealth will give the same assistance as the State and if it does the Cairns region will have electric supply at a cheaper rate than in any other part of the State. This is desirable in the interests of industrial development in the North. The undertaking will supply the electrical energy that is essential for comfortable household work and living in the tropics . . .

It was not until the Japs were threatening the people in the South that they became conscious of the necessity to do something in North Queensland. However, the existing threat to the safety of the democracies will surely once again bring to the minds of the people in the South the necessity to develop the North . . .

I get awfully tired of listening to people asking us to send population to the North. You do not send population anywhere; population goes to where there are means of living. For instance, you cannot send a mass of people to live in some town or some area in the North, but the people will follow where there are means of livelihood. In order to create the population you must first of all create the industries, and this is one undertaking that will help to create them. Where you have cheap power you have the possibility of establishing industries . . .

The whole of the output of the big Mt. Isa Company goes away from Queensland to be treated elsewhere because electricity in the northern part of the State is too dear for this purpose.
The lead and silver goes to England, and zinc concentrates to Tasmania. If we had cheap electric power in the North made available by hydro-electric undertakings there, the whole of the output of the Mt. Isa Company would be treated in the North. One of the persons who urged the production of hydro-electric power in North Queensland was the general manager himself of the Mt. Isa undertaking.

A Fledgling Premier

Since the 1890s there had been various moves to create a separate party for country people, and at different stages a Country Party emerged. An important reconstruction occurred in the late 1930s/early 1940s out of which the current National Party emerged, or Country Party, as it was known originally. Since 1957 that party has held the reins of power in coalition with the Liberal Party until 1983 and in its own right since then. The National Party has been led by two premiers, Frank Nicklin and Joh Bjelke-Petersen. The latter is regarded as a conservative politician who has fiercely attacked Labor's policies. The "socialist" bogey is regularly employed. The following two documents come from Bjelke-Petersen's early career on the Opposition benches. He condemned labor's industrial policies, the role of the unions and demands for improved working conditions, such as shorter hours and higher wages; instead, he held out the virtue of hard work and individual initiative, and looked in particular to the model of the farmer.


In the first place I have shown that the shorter working week is not giving us the contentment and the production that the Premier assured us would come to pass. On the contrary, the community still suffers from many shortages, and mounting costs resulting from that legislation have rocked the State from end to end. Secondly, reduced train services with increased freights and fares, with restrictions on modern forms of transport, are inflicting a severe penalty on those sections of the community who receive no benefits and at the same time it denies them the modern facilities enjoyed in and around city areas. I have already drawn attention to the tragedy of having a Government who, by reason of their dependence upon the workers in industry, see fit to ignore the well-being of the State when,
periodically, certain sections hold the State up to ransom. Then we have the Government’s difficulties and misfortunes in the socialistic arena when seeking to foist a socialistic policy on the people. In looking back over the recent past these examples stand out as monuments of the incompetence of the Government, hindering the increased production of which we are capable and the benefits of which we should be enjoying and people overseas should be receiving.

J. Bjelke-Petersen, QPD 206 (1953-54):142-43.

I say it is time the Government adopted a realistic attitude and faced up to the position. Now we have the spectacle of the Australian Council of Trade Unions seeking, not three months but six months every 20 years retrospective long-service leave throughout Australia. Although this application is made under a Federal award — it will affect 80,000 workers in Queensland — it is an indication of the drift that things are taking; and if granted it will send up our costs. I am one who believes that with
the holidays and annual leave enjoyed by all in industry — not primary producers — are all that could be desired but we cannot keep on continually granting additional concessions if we are to face up in a realistic way to maintaining our standards of living and meeting our costs. And speaking of costs, we have Japan buying large quantities of our commodities and aiming at being allowed to market her goods here. How can we hope to meet that position?

The Government and the unions, through their constant demands for something for nothing, are doing nothing more or less than building up a fool’s paradise. Since the introduction of the 40-hour week, together with other concessions and benefits granted by the Government, we have had the spiralling of costs, and we have now reached the position where you can almost say that wages and conditions are getting out of proportion to the services rendered. . . .

I maintain that the Government cannot go on indefinitely granting further concessions as demanded if we are to hope to meet the conditions that confront us now and that will confront us in the immediate future. I go further and say that the unions are in the near future going to prove to be the biggest enemy the worker has to contend with because of the impossible position they are creating in industry as far as labour and services are concerned. . . .

I maintain that the primary producers are doing an extraordinary job, considering all the aspects and angles that confront them today, and the increase in fares and freights is nothing more nor less than an additional tax imposed on all inland wealth-producing activities. The recent increase in fares and freights is extremely drastic, particularly those in relation to livestock. . . .

This is just another outstanding example of how the Government are run and by whom they are run, and it is time the people of the State realised the methods by which many of our laws are made. It is time they realised that the decisions are made not by the elected representatives of the people but by certain men who, by virtue of the position they hold and the number of votes they control, can direct the Government. That is why we on this side have always claimed that this Government are not working in the interests of the people at all. It is obvious that they are union-controlled and for that reason we shall never bring the progress and development that is necessary to bring
this State to full prosperity. No-one on the Government side can deny that they are union-controlled and we all know that unions think and act along the one line. They have no regard for costs. They are always striving to get something for nothing, and a great State like this cannot be built on that foundation. . . .

At union request the Government introduced a 40-hour week and at the time of its introduction the late Premier painted a very rosy picture of happy homes amid plenty and prosperity.

**Liberal Party**

The Liberal Party was always the junior member of the coalition that governed between 1957 and 1983. It was a paler version of the National Party: like the latter, it embraced the philosophy of development, as well as raising the Labor "socialist" bogey. The following document is a Liberal Party election pamphlet of 1963 which highlighted the government's work.

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**Election pamphlet, 1963.**

YOU WILL VOTE LIBERAL BECAUSE . . . with its Country Party partner the Liberal Party has provided Queensland with six years of revolutionary new Government in Queensland.

Revolutionary because it has swept away all the old anti-business hysteria that characterised the quarter-century of Labor’s rule. And because it has introduced a new climate of integrity, trust and unbounded enthusiasm in Queensland's future.

The Liberal–Country Government is sweeping our State from the doldrums of Labor's 'pick-and-shovel' planning into the high excitement of tremendous development and expansion.

Just check the list —

- **Oil at Moonie!** £37,000,000 spending on an oil pipeline and refineries.
- **On the Gulf!** £45,000,000 on huge Bauxite development at Weipa and £35,000,000 for Alumina manufacture at Gladstone.
- **In the hinterland!** £23,000,000 on roads to expand beef production, and further spending on brigalow lands.
North and North-west! £15,000,000 on bulk sugar handling, £45,000,000 expansion at Mt. Isa, £26,000,000 on the Townsville-Mt. Isa railway.

Coal and Power! £14,000,000 for Callide and Kianga-Moura coal projects, £177,000,000 for a colossal State power grid.

And these are only some of the great projects not just in the planning stage, but either commenced or firm commitments. YOU WON'T VOTE LABOR BECAUSE... all this dazzling prospect could wither and die if a Labor Party, utterly dominated by the Left Wing and committed to Socialism, obtains office.

A Question of Morality

Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen projects a strong religious image as a dedicated Lutheran. And he has regularly introduced considerations of religious and moral teachings into his arguments for government policy. This can be seen in the following documents relating to Sunday observance and drinking and gambling, for example a flutter on the Golden Casket lottery. Bjelke-Petersen has stood up for the principle of individual responsibility for one's actions; he sees thrift and abstemiousness as virtues to be inculcated. His Lutheran philosophy has a heavy paternalistic stream in the sense that the state should intervene to protect people from themselves. Obviously there are contradictions in such an approach: Bjelke-Petersen himself, in the interests of promoting tourism in the state, has had to allow Sunday drinking and the establishment of gambling casinos.


I have had it said to me by many, "Why should we not be free to drink when and where we want to? We are living in a democracy. Why all the legislation and laws contained in this Bill?" Admittedly, we recognise the fact that the individual is free to drink within limits when he so desires. On the other hand, as a Government, we have our responsibility to protect the people from themselves as far as possible.

That principle applies not only with drinking with which this amendment deals, but in many other ways of life. We protect
people with our traffic laws; we protect them in relation to hygiene throughout the State. There are protective restrictions in relation to how one flies in and out of an airport. I know only too well that the individual cannot please himself how he approaches an airport or flies over a built-up area. So, we must have various clauses in a Bill such as this, in an endeavour to protect people from themselves. . . .

I should point out the moral aspect of drinking on Sundays in particular areas. The Rev. Keith Braithwaite dealt specifically and realistically with Sunday drinking in the following article that appeared in "The Courier-Mail" yesterday:

"The whole character of Sunday is threatened. This is a serious matter with inevitable and far reaching consequences affecting the moral fibre of the people generally and the lives of each one of us.

"Sunday, as a day with a difference is a valuable part of the life of the State especially where the emphasis, alongside the need to worship, is on the strengthening of the family unit and the welfare of human society generally.

"Unfortunately, it cannot be claimed that, as a people, we have recognised this and utilised Sunday for the common good. Rather, the evidence is to the contrary in that it seems as though Sunday is becoming more and more a replica of Saturday."

He went on to say —

"The treachery lies in the threat to the wholesome character of Sunday with the accompanying detriment to society."

The amendment seeks to extend drinking facilities within the 40-mile radius [of Brisbane]. We often say that Communists are trying to destroy our way of life. The amendment of the Leader of the Opposition would have a tendency to destroy the sanctity of Sunday and to break down the invisible barrier that we have through the teachings of Christianity. In that respect the amendment seeks to destroy our way of life.


All these things point to the need for the individual to realise that there are a responsibility and an obligation upon him to
curtail all unnecessary spending if he wishes to maintain the present standard of living in the community. At the same time, there is a tremendous obligation on the Government to encourage people to conserve their funds to meet present-day conditions. That is why I have always condemned and criticised this Government, in that they have rather encouraged the people to dissipate many millions of pounds of the working man's money. They hold up before the people the hollow and the empty sham that if they contribute to the Golden Casket they will help finance the hospitals of Queensland and at the same time stand a big chance of winning a large sum of money. A Government who use such immoral avenues to raise their finances have sunk to the lowest levels, and nothing will ever convince me that it is not one of the greatest blots on our community life. It was instituted, and is still sponsored, by the Queensland Labour Government, and if this Government are sincere in their oft-repeated concern for the welfare of the people, they should take action to abolish this evil, which helps to destroy the incomes of countless thousands of people.

The Government continue to take the view that they can extract enormous sums of money from the many and give them to the few. Over £5,500,000 has been contributed from the people's earnings towards the Golden Casket during the last 12 months. Then the Government talk against capitalism and about the emancipation of working people, the ordinary men and women in the community. How contradictory are the words of the Government on the one hand and their actions on the other!

Bjelke-Petersen: An Early Assessment

Joh has been a highly controversial political leader. He is determined upon development and upon the furtherance of individual enterprise and initiative. His has been a stern morality. Yet the man has been extremely approachable and personable — a person of contradictions, some say a person of charisma. When he was suddenly and unexpectedly thrust into the premiership in 1969 he
performed badly at first, but survived a move to depose him. He has now settled into a unique style and seems unmovable.


Mr. Bjelke-Petersen's most obvious qualities are his friendliness, courtesy and sincerity. His determination and political toughness never have been doubted by friend or foe, who really know him. It is his political astuteness and ability to lead and maintain the coalition forces that have been suspect. . . . He was unknown to many people when Mr. Pizzey's sudden death threw him into the limelight.

He received unfavourable early publicity because of his staunch principles over the years that had found expression in Hansard and were easily turned against him. What was not generally appreciated was that Mr. Bjelke-Petersen always has been tolerant of people who did the things of which he disapproved. He doesn't drink, but he is not at all embarrassed if people around him are drinking. He doesn't bet, but he will discuss horse-racing enthusiastically from the bloodstock angle.

He hasn't much time for pomp and ceremony.

[Bjelke-Petersen was still establishing himself as leader of the government when this article appeared.]

## Capitalist Development

The Bjelke-Petersen government encourages capitalist development and decries socialism; yet it is not averse to state priming for private entrepreneurial schemes. This approach has encouraged a sense of optimism that Queensland is the land of opportunity with resources waiting to be exploited. The ideal is held out that anyone who has done his homework, is prepared to work hard and take risks, and has some capital (or access to it) can succeed in Queensland. During the years of the resources boom, this approach seemed to be reaping economic rewards for Queensland and development proceeded apace. There was a drift of migration (and capital) from the south of Australia. Tourism, for example, became a very rapid growth industry — in places like the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Barrier Reef, Cairns and surrounds. But the persistence of recession conditions through the 1980s, and Queens-
land's sluggishness in recovery, is raising questions about the soundness of this approach.


[Jim Kennedy, accountant turned entrepreneur:] The government has created a climate where private enterprise can operate. It's very simple. In the south you will often hear government leaders say "Look what we have done". Here the government says "Look what we have allowed private enterprise to do". In Queensland we are reaping the rewards of that long-term policy. Queensland is the last refuge of private enterprise. The place is chockablock with opportunities. If you can't make a quid in Queensland you're not trying.

People come up here in increasing numbers and many like what they see and want to come and live here. There is so much media exposure of everything that happens — success breeds success.

The attitude of optimism rubs off on real estate agents. A prospect for high-rises, casinos, motels is seen. Joh has provided strong leadership. Where you have wishywashiness you have confusion, people don't know where they are going. Once they make a decision in this state they stick to it. I like Joh personally — think he has been a great premier but I think he has also been a benefit to those who don't like him.

Our climate is another factor. It is more and more difficult to get people to leave here. Once Brisbane used to be a stepping stone to the south. Now state managers forgo promotion because they don't want to leave. There are plenty of small pools that are satisfying — you can become a reasonably-sized fish.

Australian Business, 7 January 1982, 45.

The reasons for Queensland’s success? "We've got massive development in mining," [Sir Roderick Proctor] says, "significant development in the tourist industry and a substantial influx of internal migration from other states and that leads to the prosperity in the housing industry and all the other industries that feed into the construction industry.

"We've still got our traditional primary industries — sugar has been very good although it's having a bit of price trouble
right now, but it’s a generally prosperous industry, and of course there’s coal, bauxite, alumina and now a smelter going in so we’ll be producing aluminium.”

He gives the credit for the flow of internal migration to Joh’s decision to abolish death duties.

“That started a lot of people, especially people from Melbourne, bringing themselves and their money up here. The other states have had to follow, otherwise the trickle would have become a flood. At the moment, more than 50 per cent of the total highrise cranes in Australia are in operation on the Gold Coast.”

(Of the 21 major urban growth centres in Australia no fewer than nine are in Queensland. Gladstone and Noosa are both developing at a faster rate than the Gold Coast.)
Queensland politics this century have been marked by periods of long political stability — Labor rule from 1915 to 1929, 1932 to 1957, conservative rule unbroken since 1957. Many critics, especially in the south, point to a failure of democracy in Queensland dating perhaps back to last century. One constant issue is that of vote weightage, a country vote being worth more than a city vote, an idea that has operated strongly since 1949. By and large Queenslanders seem tolerant of strong, even authoritarian rule and generally take an apathetic stance in respect of the fine tuning of politics. The “Sunshine System” allows politicians a fairly free hand in devising new rules to run the ship of state — especially after the check of an upper house was removed with the abolition of the Legislative Council in 1922.
People at Work
Social Structure, 1860s

The first governor of Queensland, G. F. Bowen, found two "classes" in his travels — the squatter "aristocracy" of the Darling Downs, and the townspeople of Brisbane. He was referring to "class" in a loose sense.


These gentlemen [squatters] live in a patriarchal style among their immense flocks and herds, amusing themselves with hunting, shooting, fishing, and the exercise of a plentiful hospitality. I have often thought (especially in reading Thackeray's novel, *The Virginians*) that the Queensland gentlemen-squatters bear a similar relation to the other Australians that the Virginian planters of a hundred years back bore to the Americans.

But there is a perfectly distinct class of people in the towns. Brisbane, my present capital, must resemble what Boston and the other Puritan towns of New England were at the close of the last century. In a population of 7,000, we have fourteen Churches, thirteen public houses, twelve policemen. The leading inhabitants of Brisbane are a hard-hearted set of English and Scotch merchants and mechanics; very orderly, industrious and prosperous, proud of the mother-country, loyal to the person of the Queen. . . .

Immigration Propaganda

In the 1860s the new colony desperately needed labour, and population in general. Only a little over 28,000 people resided in Queensland at the end of the decade. The government hastily instituted schemes to encourage immigration, appointing Henry Jordan as Queensland's agent-general in London to handle such matters. Many immigrants arrived, only to find that conditions were not as rosy as the propaganda suggested.

*BC*, 27 February 1862, 2.

Nice freehold farms are pictorially represented to simple-minded audiences in the mother-country; the idea of having, for the
A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF QUEENSLAND

first time in one's life, a comfortable agricultural property in fee simple, is eagerly seized upon by many who take ship directly; and it is not until they have been for about three weeks jogging from one office to another in Brisbane that they begin to wake up slowly to the fact that talking and promising by no means imply doing. A farmer just arrived, enquiring for a suitable bit of land, is met by advice, perhaps not without some soundness, but certainly distasteful. . . . He has been told that, had his wife been only a little younger, he would have had a good deal more land than can now be allotted to him. . . . While he is rubbing his mosquito-bitten face with a wet pocket-handkerchief, the cool official pulls out of some pigeon-hole or drawer another pamphlet, remarking what a pity it is that his friend did not get the latest edition [of Henry Jordan's immigration pamphlet]. . . . [Some one points out] that the nearest good land reserved for agriculture is seventy miles off; but adding consolatorily that if he does not mind a farm, to reach which it is necessary to cross two rivers where the tide runs high sometimes, and no end of ugly creeks — a bad marshy lot may be selected about fifteen miles off. Is it any wonder that the man receives an indelible impression that he has been grossly deceived, and that Queensland farming is pure nonsense?
The Passage to Australia

The following accounts describe some of the problems and difficulties that faced passengers intending to emigrate to Queensland in the 1860s. The first relates to one of the vessels of the Black Ball Line, which was the main carrier from the British Isles. An agent was also seeking emigrants in Germany and the second account relates to the inadequacies of the German vessels that undertook the journey. Health matters were an obvious concern for immigration officials.

QV 1866:1032, 1016-17.

In regard to the ship the *Light of the Age*, the greatest part of the poop cabin was allotted to the married couples, of whom it contained nearly the whole. This part of the ship was light, airy, clean, and well arranged.

The between decks under the poop cabin was on the one side appropriated for the use of the remaining married couples, on the other for the young men. This part of the ship was ill-arranged, rather dark, and ill-ventilated. Behind this compartment, quite at the stern, was a dark semi-circular space communicating with the married couples’ compartment. This space, although ventilated by two bell-mouthed ventilators, was perfectly dark, and altogether unfit for the accommodation of the eleven single females who occupied it. The other part of the between decks was occupied by the single men, who had enclosed cabins, eight in each cabin, with the exception of a few in the bow who had open berths. The latter much better in every respect. Little attention appears to have been paid to the ventilation, and less to cleanliness. Many of the bunks were, I am given to understand, wet during the greater part of the voyage. This arose from leakage from the galley and single females’ water-closet. The surgeon-superintendent complained of this to the captain and first mate, but little or no attention had been paid to it. The main deck I found extremely dirty, and much lumbered. I am given to understand that this was generally the case throughout the voyage. The water-closets for men, four on each side, were without doors, and certainly disgusting looking when seen filled by occupants. The surgeon-superintendent complained of the state of the water-closets to the captain, but nothing was done. The water-closets for single women were decent, and two in number under the poop deck. The female hospital was rather
small, and had no bath room or water-closet as usual attached to it. The male hospital and surgery occupied one part of the deck house, only sufficiently large for the latter; the other part of the deck house was occupied by eight single men and two families, intermediate passengers.

German emigrant ships, before taking passengers on board, are supposed to be examined by an officer appointed for that purpose, who certifies to the number of passengers each ship is to take on board, and that she has on board a good and sufficient supply of stores and water. The captain is bound, under a heavy penalty, to take on board water, stores, provisions, and medicines, according to an established scale; but he appears, in practice, to leave the supplying of stores and water entirely to the ship chandler, and in the case of the "Wandrahm," did not even profess to know, of his own knowledge, how much water was on board when he sailed.

The doctor is required to examine the stock of medicine, and to sign a certificate that it is sufficient; but no medical examination of the emigrants previous to shipment takes place. This is a serious omission, as there is evidence to show that emigrants frequently go on board in a very bad state of health, and bearing with them the seeds of disease. For instance on board the "Wandrahm," the doctor says: "They received on board several people in the last stage of consumption, two with cancer of the stomach, one perfect idiot, three with very much impaired mental faculties, one person just out of jail (crime 'rape'), and several old people who have no other chance than to become inmates of benevolent asylums." It also seems that the doctors of these ships are chosen with very little, if any, inquiry into their character or professional acquirements, and when on board, no proper status or position is accorded to them, except by the courtesy of the captain; which latter officer is solely and absolutely responsible for everything, the doctor being irresponsible and without authority.

Comparing the dietary scale authorised by the Hamburg Emigration Act with the scale enforced by the Imperial Passenger Act, 18th and 19th Victoria, cap. 119, or that required by the
Queensland Agent-General for Emigration, the German scale appears so inferior as to lead the Board to believe that, except under a combination of very favorable circumstances, it is insufficient to ensure strength or good health to the immigrants.

There seems, moreover, to be considerable doubt if the Hamburg Act be honestly complied with in matters relating to diet; for instance, the Health Officer states in his report, dated February 8th, 1866:— “On the arrival of the “Wandrahm,” a piece of pork was shown to me by one of the immigrants, in the presence of the captain; I was told it was rations for two. I had it weighed in my presence by the doctor, who found that it was 4 ozs. apothecaries’ weight, equal to 8 German loth.” The German Government scale requires the issue daily of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of pork, beef, or an equivalent in salt fish, per head. The daily allowance of water appears also to have been insufficient on board both “La Rochelle” and “Wandrahm.” It is professedly required to be taken on board at the rate of 129 gallons per head for an Australian voyage, and is directed to be served out at the rate of three quarts per head per diem. This allowance, if honestly adhered to, would probably be sufficient for all ordinary purposes; but as it is not usual for German ships to be provided with any apparatus for the distillation of water, it follows that if the water placed on board is short in quantity, or any be lost by accident, or should turn putrid, or the voyage should be prolonged, necessity compels recourse to be had at once to a diminution in the daily issue. On board the “Wandrahm” the immigrants, according to the captain, received as their daily allowance for drinking, one bottle. This is very vague, but is certainly less than one quart. According to the doctor’s statement, the daily issue for drinking was actually sixteen and a half ounces. As twenty fluid ounces are equal to one pint, the above, if correct, quite explains the complaints of suffering from thirst made by the immigrants, and the mortality among the children.

The deck space allotted to each emigrant by the Hamburg Act is twelve superficial feet; the Imperial Passenger Act requires that in the lower decks eighteen superficial feet, on the upper or poop deck fifteen, be allowed. This is a great difference, and in the “Wandrahm” the result is, that on the main deck she has berths for 240 persons, when, according to the English Act she should only have 135 6/18, and on the second deck her berths number 112 instead of 96 12/18. The total number of berths on board the above ship is 362, whereas an English ship of the same
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deck measurements would only be permitted to have 239; if this latter number be considered, by persons competent to express an opinion, to be the full number such a ship should carry, due regard being had to cleanliness and health, the inevitable conclusion is, according to English ideas, that the Hamburg Emigration Act, even if carried out in its integrity, does not allow space sufficient to permit the immigrants either to practise the one or to enjoy the other. Should a ship crowded to the above excess meet with weather requiring the confinement of her passengers below hatches, sickness would assuredly make its appearance as an almost necessary sequence. It may also be observed that, amongst medical gentlemen, the rule that two children under twelve years of age are to be counted as an adult, is considered wrong, their opinion being that the child requires as much air as the adult; — this applies as well to English as to German ships.

Decency and cleanliness are entirely overlooked, in the number and arrangement of the water-closets, especially on board the "Wandrahm." The total number provided on board that ship for the use of passengers and crew was only four, which were so placed in the bows as to be at all times difficult of access to females; when the ship was on a wind the two lee closets would be inaccessible, and at such times the available number would be only two. This is in direct disobedience of the Hamburg Act, which requires a much larger number.

Land Order System

One of the main inducements offered by the government to encourage immigration or land settlement was the land order system. People with some capital who could pay for their passage were given in exchange a land grant of equal value. Free passages were offered to poorer farm labourers, domestics and the like. A trade in the land grants, however, soon developed; likewise, free passengers abused the system, by not staying in the colony but moving to the
milder climate of the south. The system proved costly to the government, with little return and was abandoned.


The colony, from the first, has been quite alive to the expediency — it may almost be said the necessity — of bidding high for Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, and has been tempted to bid too high. There have been various acts passed by the legislature of the colony with the object of inducing persons to come and occupy land in Queensland on terms profitable to themselves; passages have been paid for them and lands allotted on certain terms; and to those who pay for their own passages, lands have been allotted on other terms, more seductive, of course. Endeavour has been to make the ‘land orders’ — the orders under which the land was to be given up to the immigrants — not transferable; so that the man with his family whose passage had been paid out of the colony’s revenue, or the other comer who had paid for his own passage with the object of obtaining the fuller grant of land, should be a *bona fide* beneficient Queensland immigrant, and not simply a traveller passing through the colony, availing himself of the liberality of the colony with the view of going on elsewhere — and, in fact, robbing the colony by selling his land orders. But these not transferable land orders granted under the Immigration Act of 1864 were sold, and the poorer class of immigrants who had come out with free passages did pass on to other lands. Emigrants from home did come to Queensland with the express view of leaving it, after they had used its liberality. In 1869 there came from the British Isles to Queensland 1,635 souls — 1,635 souls over and above the comparatively small number who had returned home. And in that year 2,272 souls left Queensland for the other Australian colonies — 2,272 souls over and above the number that came into Queensland from the other Australian colonies. So that not only did Queensland lose in that year all its immigrants from England, but sent also 637 emigrants to the other Australian colonies. Now this was by no means what Queensland meant when she made her liberal overtures to the would-be emigrant from our own islands, nor is it the way in which any young colony can prosper. It was simply a wasting of her funds. She therefore passed another immigration law in 1869 — which is now in force — the express intention of which is to compel those who take land orders in Queensland to live on the land so bestowed,
and also to compel those who accept assisted passages or free passages to work out within the colony the money which has been expended on them. Great dissatisfaction already prevails because they who have recently brought out themselves and families under the recent act cannot sell their land orders or avail themselves of the land without residence. . . .

It implies that Queensland had found it necessary to offer higher bounties than have sufficed with the other colonies, — or these re-emigrating immigrants would not trouble themselves to come to Queensland in the first instance; and it implies also that when she has got her dearly-purchased immigrants she cannot keep them. This no doubt is so at the present period of her career. One cause of this will probably not be permanent, — the greatly superior success, namely, of the New Zealand gold-diggings. What number of men go from Queensland to New Zealand cannot be told, as the route is via Sydney, and these gold-seekers are therefore counted among those who depart to the other Australian colonies; — but that the number has been great there is no doubt. The next cause may probably be found in the heat of the climate, and must be permanent. Setting aside for the present the allurements of gold, I think that wheat-growing countries offer the greatest inducement to the class of men who generally emigrate from our own islands.

1866 Crisis

By 1866 Queensland was plunged into economic chaos, partly through government mismanagement. The government had overextended its loan borrowings and suddenly found itself buffeted by factors beyond its control, such as the international economy and the weather. Some of the loan money had gone on the importation of migrants, some of it on public works such as railway construction.


By the stoppage of the [Agra] Bank [London], the Government have been informed that the arrangements, with regard to our New Loan and the immediate assistance we were to receive, are at an end. . . . The Government account at the Bank is largely
overdrawn; our credit is stopped, and the Government cheques dishonoured. We are landing thousands of immigrants upon our shores without the means of paying for landing them from the ships or of supporting them for a single hour. We are largely indebted for the conveyance of these immigrants from England without the present means of meeting such indebtedness. We have introduced many thousands of individuals who have landed in Queensland on the faith of being employed on our Public Works, and upon whose labour along our several railway lines thousands of other are dependent. We have entered into large contracts for the employment of these people and we are considerably indebted to the Contractors at this moment without having money to meet their demands. If these works are stopped, we are equally unable to support the labourers while the possibly dangerous consequences to stations and property along our lines cannot be estimated. We are also liable, at any moment to be sued by all parties who have claims against the government.

... It is not relief that is to be obtained in a week, a month or three months hence that can satisfy our wants, but it is instant assistance that we require.

The Mob in the 1866 Crisis

Immigrants had been brought out to Queensland with the promise of jobs, but the 1866 crisis left them without jobs, money or sustenance. Many gathered in Brisbane and, with the assistance of some railway navvies who came down from Helidon, demanded government action. Although for a while their mood looked threatening, no violence broke out, and the matter was defused fairly quietly.

Governor G. F. Bowen to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Lowe, 21 August 1866, in Lane-Poole (ed.), Thirty Years of Colonial Government, 1:262.

The populace of Brisbane was told by a few stump orators that an issue of unlimited 'greenbacks' would create unlimited funds for their employment on public works, while at the same time it would ruin the bankers, squatters, merchants, and other capitalists — those objects of the jealous dislike of a democracy. A so-called 'indignation meeting' was held, at which the Governor
and the majority of the Legislature (which was also hostile to the ‘greenbacks’) were denounced in violent terms; several leading members of Parliament were ill-treated in the streets; and threats were even uttered of burning down Government House, and treating me ‘as Lord Elgin was treated at Montreal in 1849’.

**Problems with Immigration**

There were two schools of thought about immigration: country people preferred the cheap, indentured labour from Melanesia, and townspeople argued for free migrants from Britain and Germany. But the economic crash of 1866 revealed problems with the latter course because it left stranded a great number of migrants who had recently arrived — there was no employment to be found for them.


As to the Polynesians, there was, seemingly, a general hatred against them by the town populations, and he had no doubt that the honorable member for North Brisbane, Dr. O'Doherty, as a professional gentleman, objected to Polynesians coming here, and wished rather that a reckless system of immigration from Europe was again inaugurated. He had no doubt the towns had suffered from the discontinuance of immigration, and the expenditure of public money on useless or worthless works, to keep the immigrants from starving, because there was no private employment for them. Now, if they allowed the Government to send home an immigration agent, with authority to send people out here, the colony would very soon afterwards be in the same condition it was in about two years ago, when numbers of men and women were walking about the streets and the country roads in a starving state. The people of Brisbane, of course, would not suffer by it. On the contrary, they would make great gain by it, but at the expense of the whole colony, by the Government having to provide public works for the maintenance of those unfortunate people. . . .
Work for Immigrants

Queensland needed people on the land as pastoralists, farmers and labourers. But many immigrants from Britain were not interested in rural Queensland — in the harsh, hot, lonely, isolated, unrelenting bush. Although wages for shearsers and other rural workers were good, this was not sufficient inducement for many of the "new chums" who had just arrived from the "mother country"; they clung to the few cities and towns sprinkled along the coast.


Will the immigrating labourer arriving at Queensland find himself sure of labour to suit him? Is it fairly certain that he will fall into one of these places, with all the mutton and flour and sugar and tea? It is at any rate all but certain that he will have no such success unless he be a man who can really work. The old, the idle, the reckless, and the soft-handed will only come to worse grief in a colony than the grief which they will leave behind them. I am speaking now of intending emigrants who purpose to reach the colony without money in their pockets; — and while so speaking I will say at once that the chances in any Australian colony are very bad both for men and women who go thither with some vague idea of earning break by their education or their wits. The would-be government clerk, the would-be governess, the would-be schoolmaster, lawyer, storekeeper, or the like, has no more probable opening to him in an Australian town than he has in London or in Liverpool. Such a one may possibly prosper in Brisbane or elsewhere; but the would-be government clerk will probably find himself after some months of hardship a shepherd in the bush, — a condition other than which nothing in humanity short of starvation can be more wretched; and the would-be governess will find herself vainly striving to fulfil the duties of a nursery-maid, should she even succeed in getting food and shelter with such intention.

But the young man with sinews and horny hands, — the man who is young enough to adapt himself to new labour, — will certainly find occupation. He is worth his rations, and high wages beyond his rations. On that subject of wages he will probably find himself contesting points with employers of labour. Cheap labour, or at any rate labour as cheap as possible, is in Queensland as much regarded as elsewhere. The various industrial enterprises of the country are dependent on it. In that mat-
ter of sugar it has already been stated that canes can hardly be grown successfully with white labour. In timber-sawing, meat-preserving, in the working of gold-reefs, at sheep-washing and sheep-shearing, the rate of wages to be paid is all important; and no doubt an effort is continually being made to reduce them. But I rarely found that a white man's labour could be had for less than 15s. a-week in addition to his rations. At meat-preserving and sugar establishments men earn from 15s. to 20s. a-week. Washers at sheep-stations earn about 4s. a-day. Shearers will earn, according to their skill and strength, from 7s. to 14s. a-day, paying, however, for their own rations. These two last employments are only to be had during the last four months of the year. Shepherds on a sheep-run are paid from £30 to £40 per annum, and their rations; — but the life is a life of absolute solitude and of almost continued inaction, and ends very frequently in madness or drunkenness.
The Immigrant Farmer

Advancement was held out to the immigrant who obtained a small block of land and was willing to endure the hardships and privations associated with trying to make that plot productive. Hard work, simple living conditions, thrift and abstinence from "demon" drink were offered as the formula for success. This style of life was seen to be better than what the immigrants could have achieved back in Britain. In Queensland they could be independent, be land-owners, be their own bosses.


In England if a working man become a freeholder, he can hardly be free on his freehold. He cannot possess himself of the absolute property unencumbered by debt. If he feel the passion strong he must indulge it on some new-found soil, where the old forest still stands, where a man's work is as yet worth more than many acres. I do not know that he can do it anywhere on much better terms than in Queensland; — but he must understand that the land is cheap because the struggle required to make it useful is severe.

The labourer who can live and save his money, who can refrain from knocking down his cheque, may no doubt, in Queensland, become the real lord of all around him, and dwell on his own land in actual independence. As far as I have seen the lives of such men, they never want for food, — are never without abundance of food. Meat and tea and bread they always have in their houses. The houses themselves are often rough, — sheds at first made of bark till the free-selector can with his own hands put up some stronger and more endurable edifice; but they are never so squalid as are many of our cottages at home. For a labouring man, such as I have described, life in Queensland is infinitely better than life at home. It is sometimes very rough, and must sometimes by very solitary. And Queensland is very hot. But there is plenty to eat and drink; work is well remunerated; — and the working man, if he can refrain from drink, may hold his own in Queensland, and may enjoy as much independence as is given to any man in this world.
Immigration and Land

In the 1880s Queensland was undergoing an expansive developmental phase — with land reform, the building of railways and an inflow of immigration. The Land Act of 1884 was another step aimed at the break-up of large pastoral runs and the encouragement of smaller-scale rural pursuits. Henry Jordan, who had been Queensland’s emigration agent in London in the early 1860s, now urged that Queensland attract men of capital from Britain and Germany, and divert the flow away from the United States and Canada. He was critical of the current system which paid for the passage of labourers; he suggested some sort of revival of the land grant system, to bring in people with capital who, in return for paying their passage, should receive land in Queensland.


I suppose the best agricultural lands will be set free under the Act of 1884. That, I think, will be the operation of the Act. Then suppose the 50,000,000 acres are divided into agricultural farms of an average area of 100 acres each. That will give farms to 500,000 families. If each family, with children, averages five persons, that will be 2,500,000; allow 500,000 more for servants and their children, and the 50,000,000 divided into agricultural farms of 100 acres gives sufficient land to settle 3,000,000 of people. Where are those people? . . .

They are in England, leaving by hundreds and thousands, and they are taking millions of money every year to the United States of America. They would rather come to this colony if they could get here at as little expense, and if we held out the same inducements as are offered to them by the United States of America and Canada. . . .

What do we find for our contentment in this colony, which is twelve times as large as England and Wales put together? We find a small population of 310,000 according to the returns of the Registrar-General for 1884: a debt of £19,000,000 sterling; a taxation to the extent of £4 per head for every man, woman, and child in the colony, including babies; and an expenditure for immigration of £266,000 every year, and that immigration almost entirely an immigration of poor people. I am not content! I do not think we are doing the best we can for the colony — that we are doing out best to develop the rich and varied resources of this great country. I venture to say that with our heavy debt, our small population, this great extent of territory lying
waste, and our great treasures of mineral wealth almost wholly undeveloped, the crying necessity of this colony is the importation of capital — a great accession of money-bringing and money-producing people from the old country. And until we adopt some such scheme as that which the Premier tried to get the House to adopt in 1882 — a system that would attract a large number of those farmers whom we know are waiting to come here with their capital — a land grant system of immigration such as I am now advocating, with proper safeguards against abuses, such as the Premier, with his long experience, assured this House in 1882 would prove effectual — a scheme which would attract a large number of English, Irish, and Scotch farmers, and Germans too, who would bring their money, their experience, and their natural love of the soil, and settle in this colony and occupy those beautiful lands now thrown open by the Land Act of 1884. Until we do that, I believe the Act will prove to a great extent inoperative, and may possibly become the very instrument of frustrating the great object we had in view in passing that Act — of settling a large agricultural population on the land. There is another consideration which strikes me as very important: Without a large increase of population in this colony, and a large accession of capital, and of employers of labour — not mere paupers — the magnificent railway policy of last session will prove abortive. I have no hesitation in saying so. A grand railway system, with a population of a miserable 300,000 or 400,000 people only, will prove a grand failure. I thoroughly believe in the railway policy of the present Government. I believe in railways on our seaboard to connect all our large cities and ports on the eastern coast; I believe in railways throughout the settled districts of the colony, to enable those who have had the courage to settle on the land and contend with all the difficulties of pioneer farming to bring their produce to market; I believe in the extension of the three great trunk lines of railway until they penetrate that vast extent of beautiful pastoral country to the west; I believe in that line of railway the Government have talked of, which is to go from the Gulf of Carpentaria, to open up the rich mineral district of Cloncurry; and I believe in the direct line to Warwick, . . . .

The average annual cost of immigration for the four years ending June, 1885, was no less than £266,825 2s. 7d. That is what it costs every year for this pauper immigration. These poor people are costing us, on an average £22 15s. 5d. per head
annually. The people of this colony were invited by Mr. Griffith, in this amendment he brought forward to the Immigration Bill of 1882, instead of paying £22 15s. 5d. per head for the immigration entirely of the lowest class, to give a £30 land-order — thirty acres — to such persons as would be willing to pay their own passages from Great Britain. That is, in other words, that instead of having an immigration consisting entirely of the labouring class — and some of them the very lowest and most ignorant people — we should adopt a system whereby a proportion of the people would be likely to bring money with them; and, instead of paying £22 15s. 5d. a head, we would have to pay nothing, but give them thirty acres of land instead.

More Migrant Propaganda

The 1880s marked the most vigorous phase of immigration into Queensland. Both the McLlwraith and Griffith governments promoted active immigration policies, and Queensland agent-general George Randall was ardently wooing prospective candidates from Great Britain.

Daily Observer, 29 November 1883, 2.

We cannot too strongly condemn the romancing of the lecturer for the colony who is working in England. Mr. Randall no doubt is a very energetic man, and manages to have his successful meetings fully recorded, so that those at home who do not hear him may read of him and of Queensland. With an enthusiasm, however, which is scarcely discreet he is inclined to over colour his picture of colonial life, and the inducements which this colony offers to those who are not content with life in the old country, and are inclined to try their fortunes abroad. . . . Through all Mr. Randall’s work there is the same inclination to cleverly exaggerate. He paints in glowing colours the chance the farm labourer has of getting land and farming his own broad acres. He tells the mechanic that in Queensland, the land of perpetual spring, employers will readily seek his services at rates of wages from ten to fifteen shillings a day, and, worse than all, he puts silly notions of capital marriages with bearded squatters into the heads of young girls. The clever tongue of the Government lec-
turer turns the heads of many people who come out here, and when they arrive they experience disappointment at nearly every step.

In the 1880s the government wanted migrants to work the land under schemes of land subdivision that it had devised, but most migrants preferred to stay in Brisbane or the coastal towns.

Queensland Illustrated Guide (Brisbane, 1888), 89.

The new arrival may obtain, but should not depend upon obtaining, employment in Brisbane. But Brisbane is not Queensland, and if a man hangs about the streets and lodging houses, without money, without courage, without energy, without everything — he can just as easily become a loafer, a pauper, a drunkard, or a criminal in Brisbane as in any other city. . . . But he may have the offer of an engagement on a farm or a run scores or hundreds of miles from Brisbane; the wages may be £35 to £45 per annum. . . . There are many who grumble and complain, but they know perfectly well that they could never have been, and never have had, in Great Britain what they are and what they possess in Queensland. . . . It is a community in which the highest positions and honours are open to him or his children; a land where comfort and true enjoyment of life are possible to all, and where riches and honour are impossible to none.

To stop immigration to Queensland would be to withhold, without sufficient cause, the helping hand by means of which most of the inhabitants of the colony have been delivered from the hopeless toil and ever-imminent possibility of poverty in the old land.

An Immigrant Arrives, 1883

George Lansbury arrived with his family in Brisbane in 1883. This was a time of "boom" in the colony, and the inducements for Lansbury to come had been many. But he was greeted by a most distressing sight at the immigrants' lodgings; and he found employment very hard to obtain. Once a migrant arrived,
he or she was left stranded. Lansbury soon returned to Britain where he later became a prominent Labour politician.


I remember an enthusiast saying we had reached the land where the wicked ceased from troubling. These lovely surroundings gave us an impression that we had reached a land of milk and honey.

As we went round the bend of the river, however, and came in sight of the town itself, the houses became more closely packed together, the streets, which we could see quite easily from the ship, looked ugly and squalid, and the first glimpse of a friend's face on shore sent our hearts into our boots. There was something so pathetic and far-away in the faces of the people, the kind of wretchedness which disappointment stamps on the faces of those whose hearts are sick and whose hopes are gone.

We landed in the afternoon and were marched to the Immigrant's Home. Why the place was ever called a home passes my comprehension. At that time I had never seen the inside of a British workhouse, and could not draw a comparison. I know now, however, that I would much rather have been put with my children and wife into an ordinary British workhouse than into this beastly Immigrants' Home. It was filthy dirty, with absolutely no accommodation of any kind. We made up our minds to have a walk round and try to find accommodation elsewhere. This was not to be found. No hotel would take us. I had about £100 with me, so there was no money trouble. No one would look at us because of our children, in fact, during our whole stay in Australia it appeared to us that children were not wanted.

After sitting by the roadside and almost tossing-up whether to walk about all night or go back to the "Home" we finally decided to take our chance in the latter place. It is often said that English immigrants are a disgruntled, discontented lot. It is probable that conditions now are much better than forty years ago. I have, however, no hesitation in saying that had I been a person who took drink I would have gone out after seeing my wife in bed and got gloriously drunk. A good many men did this, and I don't wonder at it. There we sat with our children lying on the floor, while huge great rats ran about the place the whole night through. There was no pretence at making things decent. The man and women in charge were destitute of all decent feelings.
and looked upon us as cattle. If a child was ill it had to get better the best way possible.

We got through that night somehow, but next day, worn out as we were, we went around and found rooms where we could live. We took a place in what was called the Fortitude Valley. It was worthy of its name, and I think we also lived up to it. The place we took was a kind of "humpy" for which we were plundered to the tune of ten shillings a week. It literally swarmed with cockroaches and black-beetles. We had escaped from the rats, but I am not sure which were the worst — cockroaches, mosquitoes, flies, or rats. I started looking for work, which proved a wearisome, toilsome business. You will remember that we had come to Australia to get away from competition and to live a simpler life. As a matter of fact we had come into a very hell of competition. We did not understand what we should have understood had we not been a pair of dreamers: that people emigrate to make money, and in Brisbane every single thing was subordinated to that. I had letters of recommendation to clergymen, to the bishop, and to one or two business men. The poor bishop was a very decent sort indeed. His name was Bishop Hale. He was the predecessor of Bishop Webber, who went out from London accompanied by Manly Power, whom I afterwards met as Rector of Bow. When I went to interest him he was kindness itself, but that was all. He could not help me.

Factory Conditions

Brisbane (and Queensland) did not attract much heavy industry but by the 1890s many small factories and workshops did exist. Most were engaged in the elementary processing of raw materials. The government set up a royal commission in 1891 to inquire into factory conditions; the following is a sample of its findings.

Evidence given to Royal Commission on Shops, Factories and Workshops, QVP 2 (1891):1304.

The Federal Cigar Factory (Messrs. A. Gross and Co.), Elizabeth Street, Brisbane.

The workshop is situated on the upper floor, measures 76 feet 6
inches x 32 feet x 12 feet 4 inches, and there is an average of twenty-five male and female hands employed. The room is well lighted by means of seven glass windows. The floors are swept daily and washed once a week.

The sanitary arrangements are good.

*The Virginia Tobacco Factory, Charlotte Street, Brisbane.*

The workshop measures 50 feet x 52 feet x 15 feet, and is engrained with filthy and greasy matter from which smells of a most offensive character exude. There are thirty-two male and female workers, but the place is so overcrowded with trade appliances that there is not even an ordinary free passage for the persons employed. The available space for the workers is absurdly small, and the air is not pure.

There is one closet for the males and one for the females, both being of very small dimensions, and situated too closely together.

The closet for the girls is also used as a cloakroom, which is exceedingly objectionable.

There is a urinal which is not supplied with water, and is connected by a pipe to a drain. The smells from the urinations and otherwise are most offensive. One of the female workers is employed all day in close proximity to this abomination.

The factory is never washed.

There is no apparatus to extinguish fire . . .

*Messrs. Marchant and Co.'s Hop-beer Factory, Bowen Street, Brisbane.*

Forty-four men and girls are employed, and the provision made for their accommodation is most ample. The factory is well lighted by means of glass windows, and well ventilated. The drainage is very perfect. There is only one closet for the men and one for the girls, but an extra closet is being provided for the girls; and the sanitary arrangements generally are under alteration. There are eighteen stalls for horses, and the manure is removed three times every week.

Apparatus is provided to extinguish fire, and a local fire brigade, consisting of eight of the workmen, is regularly drilled and periodically “turned out”.
F. W. Butterworth's Bakery, Amelia Street, Brisbane.
The bakehouse and store are in the back yard, are connected with each other by an inside communication, are altogether devoid of flooring, and are very dirty and not ventilated.
  Drainage is fairly good.
  One closet only is provided for the use of the workmen and the family.

Mrs. Bragg's Bakery, Ann Street, Brisbane.
The bakehouse is in the back yard, is very small and dirty, is not ventilated, and three horses are stabled in close proximity to it.
  A closet (of very small dimensions) is placed in the stables, and one of the men sleeps in a room immediately above, access to which is obtained by a very steep and very dirty staircase.
  Drainage defective.
  Yard accommodation very limited.

Women at Work

Women and girls provided the "factory fodder" in the towns. They were the victims of the "sweat shops" in the textile industry; they worked long hours as shop assistants. Children, too, were heartlessly exploited.

William Lane, in Boomerang, January 1888.

The position of the working women in the cities of this colony, and more particularly in the capital, is becoming worse and worse every year as the struggle for existence deepens around us and as grinding avarice is thus enabled to take more and more advantage of those who must live. They are becoming herded into stifling workshops and ill-ventilated attics; they are dragged back to work late in hot summer nights; and they are forced to stand from morning to night behind the counters of the large emporiums that are the boast of the great towns. They are 'sweated' by clothing factories and boot factories; they are housed, when servant girls, in disgraceful kennels; they are used in this fair Australian land, well nigh as badly as they are used in the modern Babylon of Wealth and Want. . . . And the child-
ren too are being dragged into the slave-house of toil; little ones who should be at school or at play are working in factories and shops, and the law, instead of rescuing them, stands by to ply the whip on their backs if they revolt.

Bush Life

Working conditions for the pastoral workers were not much better than for the factory workers in the towns. A journalist on a visit to the Gulf country in 1901 noted the low wages and poor living conditions.

_Bulletin, 20 July 1901, 15._

"Trotter": Out from Normanton, in the Gulf country, I visited recently five stations in succession. In every case the manager was a bachelor, and on some stations of from 300 to 500 sq. miles he's the only white man on the place. Niggers do all the station work, while the dusky damsels do the housework, &c. The cook at the first place was a Malay; at the second a Chow; at the third a Jap; and at the other two, Chows. Rouseabouts in this country average 4s. or 5s. a week all the year round, and two-thirds of their time they are looking for work. Wages are next to nothing, considering the conditions under which the men live. Manager gets £150 a year; bookkeeper (also boundary-rider), £75; overseer, £75; stockman, £60. And you pay 20 per cent more than "inside" for the common necessaries of life — potatoes, 35s. a cwt., 5s. for a pumpkin, 1s. a loaf, 10s. a shirt, and 1s. a nip. On some stations, as soon as the sun goes down they draw a mosquito curtain all round the table, placing heavy weights on it to keep it down. In a few minutes this is black with grasshoppers, flying bugs, moths, beetles, sand flies, ants and mosquitoes. God help the man who travels this country without a net! My visit was in winter (May) — what must the summer be like? At the break of day the flies make an appearance, and you knock them off you in handfuls. Horses and cattle suffer frightfully from sore eyes; so do the majority of people, especially children. The white ant literally devours everything bar iron. A pair of boots which I incautiously left by the root of a
tree for a day and a night, I discovered in the form of an ant-heap and nothing left but the nails, eyes and part of the heels.

Reputation of German Immigrants

Next to the British, the Germans were the most favoured immigrants. They settled on the land and become productive "colonizers", and they adapted easily to British ways.

The Week, 23 December 1876, 745.

Any one who has been resident in this part of the colony during the last fourteen or sixteen years knows full well, and will readily admit, that the Germans, with few exceptions, make excellent colonists. Our arrangements for German immigration have always been defective; sufficient care has not been exercised in the selection; the arrangements for conveying German emigrants
from the port of departure to Queensland have been so unsatisfactory that the people have been over-crowded, half-starved, and numbers killed off by typhoid fever and other diseases incident to want of cleanliness, sufficient breathing space, and an adequate supply of wholesome food. But with all these drawbacks the Germans who have been landed here have 'shaken down', in a remarkably short time into good, sturdy, plodding, self-reliant settlers, occupying our waste lands and making them yield not only a subsistence, but something more. In other words, they have taken up land in ridiculously small quantities at first, and by sheer industry and economy have made the land keep them while they cleared and brought the whole of it into cultivation, and then have increased the area of their selections until now, on the Logan, the Albert, and other places in East and West Moreton, and the Downs, those who started with nothing except stout hearts and hearty bodies are in very comfortable circumstances. This is carrying out the true idea of colonization. It is 'settling' the country in the truest and best sense of the term. Next to the Germans the Irish have proved the best settler as far as 'reclaiming the wilderness' is concerned, and we have sufficient British feeling to strongly wish to see this colony settled mainly by native born British subjects. . . . Not the least agreeable feature in connection therewith is the remarkably short time it takes a German, after getting a farm of his own here, to develop into a true and genuine British subject.

European Immigration

There was general satisfaction with the sort of migrant who arrived from Germany and Scandinavia. They settled readily on the land and became small farmers, which was the government's objective. Numbers of British migrants used Queensland's free passage system to get to Sydney or Melbourne.


J. R. Dickson: He [Dickson] should like very much to see the experiment tried of large areas being set apart especially for agricultural immigrants. . . .

He hoped to see immigrants arrive with some capital, by which
they could settle down with benefit to themselves and advantage to the country. Too little attention, he believed, had been paid during the last three years to endeavouring to obtain immigrants from the Continent of Europe. . . .

... They [the people of Queensland] found German and Scandinavian immigrants to be amongst the most bona fide settlers. There was not much necessity for penal enactment against them for leaving the colony; once they came they settled and remained fixed to the soil and, so far as his observation went, they were the most industrious and useful class of settlers. While improving their position they were content to make steady progress without attempting those great leaps to fortune which some of their own countrymen endeavoured to make, not satisfied with small accumulation.

The Italian Wave, 1920s

In the early 1920s there was a large and sudden influx of Italians into Queensland. Most went to the north, where Italians were already established, there to find jobs and homes, and eventually to buy sugar farms. The immigration
Hundreds of thousands of migrants came to Australia after the Second World War; this southern Italian couple were pictured aboard the *Castel Felice* in 1952. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

wave was partly due to the quota system the United States had recently imposed on immigration, which shut the US door on many prospective Italian emigrants. Some of these people were anxious to escape the growing Fascist movement at home.

*BC*, 1 April 1924, 17.

Letter to the editor,

**THE NORDIC RACE**

Sir, — Some anthropologists are asking whether the Nordic race, which has given mankind its highest civilisation, is being bred
out, even in England. . . . Does there not arise here a responsibility on the part of America, Australia, New Zealand, Canada — lands still overwhelmingly Nordic — to keep pure the long-skulled race strains that have given mankind its nearest approach, since Pericles’ time, to a Golden Age. America, appreciating its blunders, is unsparingly restricting Alpine (Bavarian, Austrian, Polish), also Mediterranean (Portuguese, Italian, Greek) immigration. Such breed like rabbits, crowding out the Nordic with his higher living standard. . . . Will Britain’s dominions in the Southern Hemisphere take what America rejects, or will they patiently build of their population from Nordic sources, that the Australia, the New Zealand of to-morrow, may accelerate civilisation’s progress out of such a splendid Nordic population?

C. M. Goethe,
President,
Immigration Study Commission of America,
Sacramento, California.
March 1.

Italians in North Queensland

Almost immediately, racial hostility was shown towards the Italian immigrants by Australians of British background, who regarded the newcomers as threatening their livelihoods. A royal commission investigated the problem.


During the past six months foreigners have been arriving in the sugar districts in North Queensland in such numbers that it is obvious that they cannot all be employed in the sugar industry, in which there is already an over-production, and a consequent limitation of the area to be cultivated and a limitation of necessary labour. While possibly sufficient labour has been waiting for months in the districts in the hope of obtaining work in the crushing season, the arrival of hundreds of Southern Europeans, unable to speak the English language, with very little money,
and looking for employment, is creating an anti-foreign feeling which may lead to serious trouble in the near future.

Immediate trouble is averted by the fact that in most cases these new arrivals disappear into the country, and for the time being are living in the barracks on the farms. Where necessary they are supplied with food by their countrymen. Large numbers of them have relatives who have been in the country for some time.

There is no doubt that in return for food and shelter these men
do odd jobs about the farm and hope to obtain more profitable employment in the district at a later date.

If aliens continue to flock into the sugar districts in search of employment, the practice of permitting them to work for food is likely to increase; the standard of living will be reduced, and the effect socially and economically will be unfavourable to the workers already there, be they British or foreign. It is obvious that the greater the numbers arriving the more aggravated will be the evil.

One witness gave evidence that he had visited twenty (20) farms in the Tully area a few days before the arrival of the Commission, and on these farms there were a hundred foreigners employed — a large proportion of whom were new chums — and eighteen British. . . .

It is contended by many unionists that the farmer gives preference to these late arrivals with the hope of exploiting their ignorance of the English language and the conditions of the Sugar Field and Sugar Mill Workers' and Cooks' (State) Award.

In many instances contracts have been entered into by foreigners for the clearing of scrub land for cultivation on a promise that payment for the work shall be made from the proceeds of the first crop, perhaps in the following year. While the work is being carried on the employees receive food and shelter only, and in the event of the crop being a failure would probably have to go without payment for the work performed. . . .

Complaints are numerous, and ample evidence has been furnished to show that this provision of the award is often not observed, the principal offenders being foreigners. It is stated that foreigners frequently work on Sundays, and that they often commence before 6 a.m. and work till late at night. . . .

On the whole the British gangs in Queensland head the list against all others, and the next best would be men from the North of Italy. It is worth noting that these latter hailed originally from the cool mountains of Piedmont and Lombardy and are much superior to Southern Italians and the Mediterranean races generally. There is sufficient evidence to show that many of the new arrivals are of the latter type here referred to. Their behaviour in the trains in crowding out the carriages and jostling women and children is adding to the objection to foreigners generally, and their standard of living obviously is very low. According to the evidence of one witness the principal offenders in this respect are Maltese, Sicilians, and Greeks.
Maltese are permitted to enter Australia at the rate of 1,200 per annum, and many of them come to North Queensland. They are hard-working and honest, but most uneducated, and their standard of living is inferior to that of the British or Italian.

In December, 1891, the first shipload of Italian agricultural labourers arrived in Queensland, numbering in all 335. Of these, 266 landed in Townsville — 153 being for Ayr and 113 for the Herbert River.

With the exception of twenty-six married couples and six single women all were classed as single men. The ages of the men mostly ranged from twenty-two years to forty-five years.

The majority of these immigrants entered the sugar industry as cane-cutters and subsequently became cane farmers. They have made their homes and reared families in North Queensland, and have no desire to return to Italy, except perhaps to visit the place as the land of their birth.

The general opinion is that the Northern Italian is a very desirable class of immigrant. He is thrifty and industrious, law abiding, and honest in his business transactions. Those arriving in the past have generally been trained agriculturists, many of whom have become successful farmers.

Unfortunately the majority of the new arrivals in Queensland appear to be from the South, many of them being Sicilians. The Southern Italian is more inclined to form groups and less likely to be assimilated into the population of the State. The increasing number of Southern Italians arriving in the United States was one of the factors that led to immigration restriction in that country.

During recent years, particularly since the year 1921, different types and more various races have arrived in ever-increasing numbers — Sicilians, Greeks, Maltese, Jugo-Slavs, Albanians, Russians — who have mostly congregated in the sugar districts of North Queensland. It is certain that the growing animosity against all foreigners is due to the different and inferior types arriving as well as to the fact that more are entering the sugar industry than can be readily absorbed.

When more foreigners than can be absorbed crowd into any one industry in any district and remain there the result is bound to be a lower standard of living generally for the worker, and to bring about industrial conditions to which the Australian would strongly object.
Hostility Towards “Alien” Migrants

Through the 1920s unemployment was a persistent problem for the Australian workforce. At the same time the federal government was seeking immigrants, especially from Britain, and Italians were also arriving, bound for the sugar areas of north Queensland. This aroused the hostility of many workers, and the AWU in particular. The following outburst was sparked by the release of statistics showing that southern European migration for January to September 1927 was three times greater than for the same period the previous year.

Worker, 16 November 1927, 14.

Because of the alarming influx of alien migrants into Australia representatives of the political and industrial wings of the Australian Labor Party suggested to the Prime Minister [Bruce] that steps should be taken to keep southern Europeans out of this country. Bruce replied, refusing to hold up alien migration and said that delicate international questions would be raised if any drastic action were taken in the direction suggested by the A.L.P., particularly as the southern Europeans were not assisted or encouraged to come here, but paid their own fares.

The reply is not a convincing one. The suggestion of ‘interna-

Queensland has always depended upon its primary produce; here, carcasses at South Brisbane in 1915 are ready for export. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
tional questions' being raised sounds too much like a bogey with which to frighten nervous people.

What 'international questions' can be raised? And who is going to raise them? Can Greece, Turkey, Jugoslavia, or any of the other Mediterranean countries afford to dictate to the Commonwealth on the question of immigration? The Italian Dictator is not likely to make trouble; he has already intimated that he does not wish his compatriots to leave their own country.

The majority, if not all of the Southern Europeans coming to Australia get work almost as soon as they land. In all-too-many cases they are taking the jobs of the Australian workers. The latter are being left to starve, while the foreigners are being kept going in constant work. The whole thing is fast becoming a grave scandal.

The suggestion of 'international questions' being raised if any attempt is made to hold back the stream of foreigners is pure bunkum. If the Federal Government had half the backbone it claims to possess it would take swift action to lock out the foreigners until work was provided for our own unemployed and for the migrants we are encouraging to come from Great Britain.

Unemployment

Unemployment was to be a persistent problem for the government through the twenties and thirties. Labor first introduced a relief measure in 1919, but this was thrown out by the Legislative Council. In 1922 an unemployment insurance measure was passed, following the British pattern; it was in advance of any such relief measures elsewhere in Australia.


The object of this Bill is to provide means whereby workers will be insured against periods of unemployment. Payments will be made to prevent people become destitute during periods of unemployment over which they have no control. All workers who come within the ambit of the Arbitration Court will become insured persons — that is to say, any male or female over eighteen years of age working under the conditions of an Arbitration
Court award will become insured persons under this measure. The State, the employers, and the employees will each be levied upon to provide a fund from which benefits will be available.

In a country such as Queensland, where employment is to be very large extent of a seasonal nature, men are unemployed during certain periods of the year—a fact over which they have no control. It cannot be considered a desirable thing that men, who through no fault of their own are unemployed should become destitute as a result.

Nobody can be blind to the fact that in the community there are a certain number of men who do not desire to work. They are not confined to any class in the community. Hon. members oppose often regard the unemployable as belonging only to the working class; but one can point out in the wealthy, the better dressed, and the better fed section of the community men who never do any useful work from one year's end to the other. They draw in idleness sustenance from industry and society—a condition of things which is permitted under the existing social system. Any social legislation of this character cannot afford to ignore the problem of men who do not desire to work, because many people, some of whom are supporters of hon. members opposite, think that the great end in life is to live on somebody else's labour. That is one of the causes of the economic evil which exists in the community—that a number of men, most of whom are supporters of hon. members opposite, desire to live upon the labour of others. Such persons will not receive the advantages of this measure.

I notice that in this morning's Courier it is described as “The Loafer's Paradise Bill.” I unhesitatingly hurl that lie back in the teeth of anyone who uses that opprobrious epithet against the genuine workers of this State, and the men who will get the benefits of this Bill. Men who are desirous of obtaining work in order to maintain themselves and their families in decency and comfort should not be insulted in that way. I know what it is to be unemployed.
The Depression Looms

By 1929 the early stages of the Great Depression were beginning to be felt. Usual government practice at that time was to cut back on expenditure and try to balance the budget. Forgan Smith, leader of the Labor Opposition, condemned the Moore government for this approach, arguing that it would only make matters worse. When Forgan Smith came to power in 1932 he embarked upon an expansive public works programme, which included the Somerset Dam on the Brisbane River, and the Story Bridge, Brisbane.


Unemployment is too serious a matter to be dealt with in this way. . . . Every investigator of the difficulties I am dealing with draws attention to the fact that periodically depression overtakes every country. That is an undoubted fact. Whatever may be the causes, or whatever may be the remedy, we realise that in Australia at present we are in one of those depressions. The view I take is this — that in its move to curtail public expenditure and to curtail public borrowing the Loan Council has not paid due regard to these periods of depression. What I consider to be the proper policy of public finance is that a Government and those in authority should carry out public works to a greater extent during periods of depression than during periods of prosperity. That is to say, stock should be taken of a nation’s resources, public works should be projected some period ahead, and Government should curtail their expenditure when trade is buoyant and employment plentiful, but during periods of depression in ordinary industries, in the interest of maintaining the equilibrium of the State and in the interests of stability, expenditure by Governments should be increased so that the unemployment resulting from depression in other avenues may be minimised and public development not be arrested. On the other hand, the policy carried out by Governments at present is one of depressing the general public. On every hand the public have been told that Australia is in for a bad time. Governments have curtailed their expenditure. Every Government has been asked, and practically forced, to curtail expenditure. The repercussion on industry by that line of activity has made the existing difficulties increasingly acute. However, be that as it may, the point I wish to emphasise is that, unhappily, unemployment exists in Queensland at the present time. The Government were
On the Road

Many unemployed men, especially single ones, were constantly on the move to get rations. Some "humped the bluey" and others "jumped the rattler", travelling hundreds of miles in search of work, food, relief.

The practice of "jumping the rattler", which has become so prevalent during the past few years, due to the depressed economic conditions, is the cause of considerable anxiety to the Railway management. The danger involved is evidenced by the fact that during the year five train-jumpers were killed when attempting to join or leave trains. Apart from this very serious aspect of the matter, great inconvenience and loss is occasioned the Department as the result of pilferage and damage to goods due to the activities of these men, of whom 2,794 were found travelling in wagons during the twelve months ended June, 1933. This number, no doubt, represents but a small percentage of those who actually travelled under these conditions.

The majority of train-jumpers are men who, through no fault of their own, are out of employment, and, under ordinary circumstances, are respectable members of society, but this means of travelling is also used by some who can well afford to pay their fares.

Under "The Vagrants, Gaming, and Other Offences Act of 1931," provision is made for a penalty not exceeding £20 in addition to the payment of the proper fare, or imprisonment for six months, or both penalty and imprisonment, but in the majority of instances magistrates impose lenient penalties, being influenced, no doubt, by the fact that a large number of the men are of good character. Unfortunately, such penalties do not serve their object in acting as a deterrent, and, although every endeavour is being made by the Railway Department, in co-operation with the police, to minimise the practice, these endeavours to a large ex-
tent are rendered futile by the leniency shown by some magis­
trates when dealing with offenders.

Unemployment Camps

Unemployed people, especially single men around the main cities such as
Brisbane, gathered in various barracks where the bare necessities of sustenance
were obtainable.

C-M, 14 May 1936, 16.

Police officers generally are not in favour of the proposal to
shift the unemployed from their camps in various council parks
and accommodate them in Mt. Coot-tha Park.

The principle objection raised by the people is that if all the
unemployed were housed together in Mt. Coot-tha Park there
would be a grave danger of their becoming so well organised
that they would be able to hold demonstration on such a large
scale that they would seriously inconvenience the government
and possibly become unmanageable with the few police in the
area.

Home for the homeless: a Brisbane camp for the unemployed during the 1930s depres­
sion. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
The present lack of extensively organised demonstrations, it is stated, has been due to the unemployed camps being spread over many suburbs making it impossible for organisers to obtain the greatest results.

One police officer said yesterday that it was well known that, although the majority of the unemployed were decent, honest men, there was a fair sprinkling of men with criminal records in their ranks. Placing all the unemployed together would enable these men to meet and without much interference discuss plans for crimes.

Mt. Coot-tha Park, said another officer, was a considerable distance from any police station, and, although lonely, was frequented by women and young children. . . . It was suggested that if the authorities decided to go on with the project, tents should be provided for all the men to avoid the erection of unsightly shacks and that there should be at least one police officer always on duty at the camp. The distribution of relief pay could also be made at the camp.

Cairns Riot, 1932

The Depression of the early 1930s created much unemployment, especially in the cities and towns. The government adopted various relief measures, but general dissatisfaction prevailed. One of the most serious incidents arose in Cairns in 1932 when the council and local citizens ejected unemployed men who had been camping in a public reserve.

Daily Mail, 18 July 1932, 7.

80 Injured in Cairns Riot

Knives and Bomb Used

600 Involved in Free Fight

Townsmen Eject Unemployed

Police Attacked: Citizens Aid Them

Cairns, Sunday — Scenes of bloodshed were witnessed this
morning, when a crowd of 500 townsmen forcibly ejected more than 100 defiant unemployed campers from Parramatta Park during a riot, which lasted more than 10 minutes.

A bomb was thrown, but failed to explode.

About 80 persons, including townspeople, police, and unemployed, were injured, and several were taken to hospital in a serious condition.

The unemployed were given 24 hours to leave the city, the Mayor indicating that he was prepared to take further action if they did not do so.

Three men, all unemployed, were arrested, and two others are in hospital under police guard.

Stones, bottles, and lumps of iron flew through the air. Clubs with barbed wire bound about the top, fire-iron bars, sticks with razors inserted in the tops, cane knives, tent pegs, and sticks clashed with the batons, poles, and shovels yielded by the citizens, who, in their excitement, seized armaments similar to those of the unemployed.

A big scatter was caused when one unemployed threw a homemade gelignite bomb into the advancing crowd; but the fuse had failed to ignite.

For a few minutes the fighting was desperate, the unemployed putting up a stubborn resistance. Then the weight of numbers and a flank attack completely disorganised their ranks, and the majority fled. Many were left strewn on the ground. Blood flowed freely, and the crowd, incensed, chased the flying campers for a mile until they ran for the bush.

A crowd of nearly 1000 citizens had gathered at the entrance gates shortly before 10 a.m., when the Mayor (Ald. W. H. Collins), from the roof of one of the stalls, warned the townspeople of the threats of the campers on the reserve, and advised the people to go carefully. [The campers] were given the option of leaving the grounds quietly, but were adamant. One of the unemployed sprang to the rails of the cattle pen and shouted an appeal to ‘fellow-workers, to keep out of trouble and let somebody else, including the boss element, do the fighting’.

His answer was an angry murmur from the townspeople, to which he replied, ‘All right! We’ve got nothing to lose; You have everything. We’ll blow a few of you to hell’ [and then the bomb was thrown].
Unemployment and Women

During the First World War many women moved into jobs formerly performed by men who were now serving with the armed forces overseas. In the Depression, when many men, married as well as single, were thrown out of work, women were criticized for working. In fact, the women suffered heavier rates of unemployment in the Depression than the men.

When the war broke out, I well remember how some smartly-dressed girls and women distributed white feathers to any unfortunate males they met in civilian clothes. They did this because they understood their homes were in danger, and to stave off disaster the men threw up their jobs and donned khaki. Then, under the guise of patriotism, these women proceeded to annex the jobs the men vacated.

To-day quite as many homes are in danger — probably to a greater degree than in 1914. This is due to the vast army of unemployed heads of families — and the unfortunate spectacle of thousands of youths facing a hopeless future. Meanwhile, the smart modern young lady merrily plies her powder puff and draws her £2 to £3 per week, regardless of the consequences. Surely something can be done to bring home to these young women their selfish disregard of their brothers' well-being.

Labour and Immigration, 1940s

After the Second World War the Commonwealth government instituted a large-scale scheme of immigration from Britain and Europe. Because in Queensland there was a strong preference shown for people from the British Isles, many European refugees who came to Australia tended to bypass Queensland. Furthermore, the Queensland Labor government was still thinking within its rural promotion framework, wanting people to go to inland areas. Mt Isa was one such area and numbers of migrants did go there to work in the copper mine. The government also proposed other schemes of rural development, such as the Burdekin scheme and the Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme. Many of the new arrivals in Australia were city-based people who
needed to acquire jobs quickly and were not attracted by work in country areas. They were readily drafted into the rapidly expanding secondary industries concentrated in Sydney and Melbourne. This vital developmental phase in the southern states was much less marked in Queensland.


We are taking into the Commonwealth migrants at the rate of 200,000 a year. If there is no developmental work in operation in the various States — and this applies not only to Queensland but to other States — is it not obvious that these 200,000 migrants a year will crowd into the capital cities and further inflate them? There is no encouragement for people to take jobs in the capital cities and if no developmental work was being carried out in the country the effect would be to congregate hundreds of thousands in the capital cities and in a year or two we should reach the stage when the capital cities could not employ them. That would be the opportunity for Liberal members opposite, including the Hon. member for Kedron — because he used the phrase, 'a pool of unemployment'. They believe that a

Since the 1960s there has been some expansion of secondary industry in Queensland; here naval patrol boats are fitted out at a shipworks in Cairns. Photograph courtesy Premier's Department, Brisbane.
pool of unemployment is essential for the development of industry. It means masses of hungry unemployed men for the sake of their industries. Let me say that whilst this Government are in office that position will not arise if we can stop it. We will open up works in the country — in the North, the Centre and the West — with the view of taking a big proportion of the migrants out into new callings and occupations where they will not become a pool of unemployment in the city, and by working in the country on projects established there they will become encouraged to become primary producers and go onto the land instead of cluttering up the labour market.


We will open up works in the country . . . with the view of taking a big proportion of the migrants out into new callings and occupations where they will not become a pool of unemployed in the city, and by working in the country on projects established there they will be encouraged to become primary producers and go on to the land instead of cluttering up the labour market.

Since 1945 Australia has been inundated by migrants. Especially through the fifties and sixties hundreds of thousands of people left war-ravaged Europe to try their luck on this continent. Queensland, however, tended to miss much of this intake. There was slowness and hesitancy on the part of the state governments and trade unions to take other than British stock. There was also the direction of government economic policy concentrating largely upon rural development and not so much on the build-up of secondary industry. Consequently the great proportion of these “new Australians” went to the south-east corner of Australia, to the industrialized cities of Sydney and Melbourne (and, to some extent, Adelaide). Here, expanding factories in newer industries, such as motor vehicle manufacturing and “white goods” assembly, could easily sop up the migrant workforce, which was often unskilled and poorly educated. This lag in immigration in Queensland’s case has affected the nature of economic development in the state, so that the manufacturing sector is relatively weak in comparison with other states. Most attention goes to primary industries and, in particular, the extractive industries. Since the later 1970s, however, Queensland has participated in the reception of refugees from war-torn Vietnam.
The changing face of Brisbane: the little old corner shop belongs to the days (as late as the sixties) when Brisbane was just a big country town. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
Social Improvements: 1860s to 1980s
Establishing Schools

Because of the high costs involved the state moved only slowly into providing educational facilities, even at the elementary (or primary) level. Churches established the first schools in the 1840s, soon to be joined by private academies. Public pressure led the Queensland government of 1860 to provide a state stream of elementary schools; but the state did not offer full establishment costs. The local community was meant to “subscribe” by providing some of the capital costs: the philosophy of self-help was strong. The government attended to running costs and the balance of capital expenditure. Because Queensland was so large and the population so small and scattered, there were still many inadequacies in the state structure. Apart from the “vested” state schools, as above, there were provisional schools where the population was so small that only makeshift buildings could be provided, along with an unqualified teacher. In many rural areas no formal education was offered at all: there were not even itinerant teachers until 1900. The following extract shows that even around Brisbane in the late 1860s educational facilities were often quite primitive.


As a general rule, the Board do not grant aid towards the estab­
lishment of a Primary School unless an average attendance of
thirty pupils can be guaranteed. The extent of the aid usually
afforded is an amount equal to twice the sum raised by local
contributions . . .

It will be necessary to select a suitable school site, which
should be central to the majority of subscribers, easily accessible
in all seasons, and (in rural districts) within a reasonable dis­tance of wood and water . . .

The local patrons should next submit to the Board a plan and
specification of the proposed school buildings, or, if there be a
difficulty in preparing one locally, they may apply for such plan
and specification to the Board, who will not consider any plan
suitable in which a less width is assigned to the school room than
sixteen feet, when the school is small, eighteen feet when the
attendance is expected to exceed fifty, and twenty feet in a
larger school. In calculating the size of the room, an allowance
of about ten square feet should be made for each child in average
attendance.

The teachers’ residence should contain four, and must not, in
any case, contain less than two decent rooms, and a kitchen.
Provision must also be made for the necessary out-buildings, and for supplying water. The Board will supply a free stock of books, maps, and other school requisites.

In the majority of cases, local committees have raised, by subscription, one-third of the first cost of the school buildings. This has been done in most of the townships, and in some of the rural districts where the population has settled down comparatively close together, as at Eagle Farm, German Station, Bulimba, Oxley Creek, Warrill Creek, &c., and in all these places excellent schools have been established, and are now conducted by trained certified teachers. . . .

There are cases, again, where the settlers are too few, too far apart, or too recently established in their new homes to be able to comply with the regulation in regard to the average attendance, or the contribution to the cost of school building. In such places the people sometimes contrive, by their united labor, to erect a rough structure, which, for a time, may serve either as a place of worship or a school-house; and, if they succeed in obtaining the services of a person moderately competent as an instructor, the Board may recognise the school provisionally, and grant a small stipend to the teacher, till the time comes when the residents are in a position to contribute their quota of the cost of founding a permanent vested school.

Five of these Provisional Schools were in existence in the course of the year, viz., at Boggo, Eight-mile Plains, Seven-mile Creek, Logan, and Cooper’s Plains.

There is a still more scattered condition of the population than any here described, viz., of families employed on stations in the remote interior, and of settlers who live too far apart to be able to support even a provisional school.

To bring instruction within the reach of children in these last-mentioned circumstances, is a task which has yet to be accomplished.

The plan of sending through the remote districts itinerating teachers, each of whom shall visit two or sometimes three small groups of school population daily, has been proposed elsewhere, but has not been attempted in this colony.
In 1875 the Queensland government, following the Victorian example, legislated that primary education should be free, secular and compulsory. This legislation was a triumph for the "Liberal" politicians who wanted to provide a national system of education not controlled by the churches, where the ideas of liberalism and rationalism could be inculcated. It was believed that through a compulsory national system social problems such as juvenile delinquency could be eliminated.

There can be no doubt that it is an immense advance in legislation. It recognizes and embodies under legislative enactment, the three great principles which we have contended for throughout, and those principles we believe to be consistent with enlightened freedom and with the law of progress. Primary education in this colony will henceforth be free, secular and compulsory. Free, that is to say, the doors of our public schools will be open to all alike, without fee or favor; secular, that is to say, conscience of none will be constrained, and compulsory, because, being free, the State has itself accepted the responsibility which some neglectful parents do unhappily refuse to recognise. When, then, these principles have been distinctly accepted, it is a matter of comparative indifference that a few denominational non-vested schools should be allowed to run on for a few years longer. They will continue to do their work under inspection.

There are two classes of parents for whom stringent legislation on this matter is needed, the apathetic, careless of anything but self-indulgence and freedom from worry; and the brutally selfish, who barter their children's future welfare for the pittance they drive them to earn in the present. The State has a proprietary right in its future citizens, and must take steps to assert it, or accept the responsibility of fostering a social substratum of ignorance, poverty, and crime. There are also, of course, the un-
The little one teacher school — this one was at The Gap, Brisbane, but it could be anywhere; the spartan interior of a schoolroom at Drayton suggests the "sit up straight and pay attention" discipline of education in the early part of the century. Reprinted from QVP, vol. 3 (1912).

happy waifs and strays of the community, the outlook of whose life is bleak indeed, unless they are seized with a gentle violence and forced for their own good to participate in intellectual training.
Catholic Education

Catholics were opposed to the state system of secular education and a fierce debate raged through the 1860s and 1870s. Archbishop Vaughan in Sydney urged Catholics to provide their own system, even if the state would not help. The following excerpt of a speech delivered by a Catholic mother points to dissatisfaction with many current philosophical ideas — secularism (irreligion), spiritualism, materialism. Rather, adherence to the true faith was urged — this could only be achieved through a catholic education.

Public lecture delivered by Mrs Constable, *Australian*, 1 November 1879, 1272. (The *Australian* was a Catholic weekly newspaper published in Brisbane.)

The question of the day is, without a doubt, the Educational Question. This battle will not alone have to be fought in New South Wales; inch by inch it will have to be fought out in every colony in Australia! Why even in Charters Towers its excitement has penetrated. I overheard two gentlemen there the other day, in the opposite room to mine, discussing the Archbishop and his pastorals most freely...

I cannot go so far as to say, that all children attending the public schools are rough, rude, and irreligious, because I was brought up in America — the country *par excellence* of public schools; and I cannot admit that the children there compare unfavourably with the children of any other English-speaking land; but the danger which I, as a mother see, in this public school system is this — irreligion of one kind or another is stalking through the land. Three men nearly out of every four you meet, will scoff at belief in the Bible. They will begin to talk to you of the wondrous mysteries of Spiritualism — that horrible Spiritualism! I say horrible because I conceive any belief to be horrible in the extreme which rejects the divinity of our Saviour; or they will talk to you learnedly of the philosophical facts of Materialism. They will accept any new fangled belief, you see, rather than the old-old faith which their Saviour founded, and for which His apostles died. The very air is impregnated with danger to faith and morals; and it therefore behoves all Catholic parents to preserve their little ones from its contamination.

The old faith, which is the same to-day as it was when those very apostles lived and taught it, must be infused into the innermost being of our children. Catholic parents cannot supply food for their children's minds and leave their souls famishing. They
are bound, as good Catholics, to remove their children — wherever it be possible — from those infidel schools where the name of God is tabooed, and where Christ’s teaching is vetoed. They must endeavour, at any personal sacrifice, to establish schools in which their little ones can be taught a sound, thorough Catholic education, so that when man’s folly and wickedness, and his so-called philosophy shall have swept all reverence from the land, the Catholics may remain firm and true, and faithful — aye

“Faithful found amongst the faithless —
Faithful only they.”

And powerful enough to overcome infidelity, and keep on high the symbol of Christianity. Therefore, let Catholics prepare for the contest. Let them help their Archbishop by their influence and example. Let them help him, when the time comes, at the ballot box. Let Catholic mothers help him by their obedience to his commands.

A Sectarian Argument

Although Catholics opposed the State system of education, most Anglicans and Protestants gave their support to it. Among some of the more evangelical, however, there was disquiet about the trends of life that were arising from a secular education — about the extent of materialism, irreligion, even general lack of caring. These feelings of concern come to the fore in the Bible in State Schools League (1910).

A Protestant statement against the secular system in W. O. Lilley, Reminiscences of Life in Brisbane (Brisbane, 1913), 32.

What kind of a nation are we rearing? Clever, doubtless; smart and keen, but without much conscience, and GODLESS. The consciousness of God is not awakened in them, the religious faculties from which a sense of duty springs are allowed to remain dormant; and, growing up in this callous condition, they are very unlikely to be moral and religious in their mature years. Can we wonder that the young colonial does not care for religion; that he regards it as of no importance; that he does not love to attend the churches, and appears to have little sensitive-
ness towards the saving and solemn verities of life? We have made him a 'secularist' by excluding the teachings of our religion from our schools. He lives for this world, and he does not believe in another. All that makes life worth living to the spiritual manhood is foolishness to him. In this we are only reaping the results of the wrong we have inflicted, and it is to be feared that the consequences will be more and more disastrous as time goes on. We are raising up a people who will be secular in principle, sensual in habit, and without God in the world. If it is said that much of the indifference and carelessness of religion among the young arises from climatic conditions and in circumstances in which they are placed in this new country: then all the more should we train them in religion, all the more do they need the counteracting influence of Bible teaching. The battle for the future is not over curiously-articulated creeds, but over no-religion and religion, Belial and Christ, Atheism and God!

A Catholic Altercation

Sectarian feelings ran high among certain sections of the community, and altercations were not unusual between Catholic and Protestant supporters. In the occasion described here by a Protestant minister, a former Catholic priest was about to give a lecture to a gathering of Protestants.

Lilley, Reminiscences, 166-67.

But with all this attempt to disparage the coming lecturer as false and unreliable, there was evidently much fear of him and his attacks upon the Church, in the Catholic priesthood, and steps were taken to prevent his lectures being given. His first lecture was to have been given in the Protestant Hall, and a large and respectable audience assembled to hear it. A good array of Protestant ministers and prominent citizens were there. I took my seat near the platform, in company with the Rev. Hugh Jones, of Wharf Street Congregational Church, and his wife, and awaited the commencement of the proceedings. We could hear a loud hum, as of a gathering crowd outside, but we little suspected what was going to happen. Suddenly, without any warning, large stones began to crash through the windows, and
fell with the fragments of broken glass among the audience. A wild panic ensued, and many made a rush for the doors. The screams of those who were hurt, the loud and angry protests against the outrage, women being hustled out in a half-fainting condition, occasional scuffles between sympathisers with the mob outside and those who were supporters of the lecturer, made a noisy turbulent scene almost indescribable. A few took refuge along the walls, between the windows; one blind man pitifully stood there till he was kindly helped and got out by a courageous pressman. I and one or two others climbed on the platform, as it seemed protected with screens, and the windows at the back of the hall had not yet been bombarbed.

Mr. Slattery [a former priest] came forward to try and silence the uproar, and those of us who had reached the platform rallied round him, and expressed our regret at what was taking place. Already one miscreant had made an assault on him, and a hand-to-hand struggle took place, which, however, soon ended by his assaulter being knocked over and thrown from the rostrum to the floor.

The Commissioner of Police was also there, and I appealed to him to attempt to stop the outrages of the mob outside, but he was probably at his wits' end, and said that nothing more could be done.

Very soon, too, the stones began to crash through the back windows, and the platform was no longer a sheltered place, and our only course was to leave the hall; and so, running the gauntlet of the falling stones, I got safely out of the building. Outside, along the front, on the curb of the pavement, stood a solid line of policemen, doing nothing to quell the disturbance. I was so excited that I went to them and demanded of them why they stood there in that way, while such outrages were being committed? Why they did not go and arrest the stone-throwers? "Oh," said one with a grin and an Irish brogue, "we have seen nothing."

I was letting loose my indignation in rather incautious terms, when some friend — I do not remember who it was — took me by the arm, and tried to get me away, saying that I would get my head smashed if I didn't move on. I went along the street towards the Ann street corner, and as I stood a moment, I saw a well-known Protestant gentleman struck by one of the crowd, and his hat knocked off; and I am not altogether sorry that I forgot myself sufficiently to give the fellow who did it a hard
crack on his arm with my walking-stick, which, however, he took with unexpected meekness.

I wended my way home after that. I had seen enough of Roman Catholic doings for once, and I could not help thinking what an evil power it might become if it gained the ascendancy among us; that it could hound on a mob to silence free speech, wreck property, injure respectable citizens, and control the action of the police so as to prevent them from doing their duty. Surely a power to be watched and kept within bounds!

Secondary Education

A royal commission in 1874 investigated educational neglect in Queensland; out of its report arose the 1875 legislation. It also proposed that a state system of free secondary education be provided. Hitherto, independent grammar schools had been allowed and so a private secondary school network had slowly grown up, run mainly by the churches. Griffith, a Liberal, dissented from the commission’s report on secondary education, arguing that the state did not need to establish its own system but should merely provide scholarship assistance towards payment of fees for those clever students who had the talents to attend grammar schools. This philosophy tended to prevail with the government over successive decades, so that the state took only a minor role in secondary education, thereby allowing the emergence of a narrow, educated elite.


FREE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS. We dissent from the recommendations of the Commission that the system of free education should be extended beyond the primary schools, and that no fee should hereafter be charged for admission to any higher educational institutions established by the State.

It appears to us that the true ground upon which the State may be called upon to provide elementary education for all classes of children is, that it is for the advantage of the State that all its citizens should receive such instruction as will enable them intelligently to perform their duties in after life, and that such advantage being common to the whole community, and the opportunity of receiving instructions being, so far as practicable,
afforded to all, the revenues of the State may properly be applied for the purpose.

But the same reasons are not applicable in the case of secondary education, which partakes somewhat of the character of a luxury, and cannot, under any circumstances, be brought within the reach of more than a limited number of children residing in or near large centres of population, and which moreover does not seem to us to be in itself so necessary or highly advantageous to the welfare of the whole community that the State should be called upon to do more than assist those whose parents or friends are prepared to take some part of the expense upon themselves, or who have shown, by their proficiency in the primary schools, that they are deserving of further education as a reward of merit.

We think, on the other hand, that free education should, in every instance, be confined to the subjects which fall properly under the category of elementary instruction — limits which, as it appears to us, have already been sometimes exceeded.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION. For the reasons above stated, we think that technical instruction in the primary schools should be limited to elementary instruction in mechanical science.

UNIVERSITY. We also dissent from the recommendations of the Commission that a University should be founded immediately.

S. W. GRIFFITH
CHAS. PRENTICE.

Educational Justice

The Catholic education system kept expanding during the nineteenth century. This was paid for by parishioners, and it was a costly burden upon Catholic families. The situation was partly relieved in 1900 when provision was made that scholarships awarded by the state to pay education fees could not be used in Catholic secondary schools and not only private grammar schools, as was previously the case. The "secular" principles of 1875 were being chipped away.
State aid for religious schools has been an issue of hot debate through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the following letter of complaint indicates.

Fr Andrew Horan (Catholic priest of Warwick), Letter to Editor, BC, 30 December 1898.

[Roman Catholics] are taxed by law to the extent of about £50,000 a year for education, but no Catholic school in the colony gets a penny from the Treasury. The Catholics are now educating 11,200 children, for which they are entitled to £4 per head, or a total of £44,000 per year, at the State school rate, and yet Catholic schools for all this work do not receive a cent from the state. . . . No scholarships are allowed to be taken out in Catholic schools. No boy educated in the Christian Brothers' schools can get a grammar school scholarship or become a State school teacher. Yet the Brothers conduct six colleges or schools in Queensland, having an aggregate school-roll of 1100 boys, everyone of whom is under the disabilities here mentioned. And why? Because they are educated in Catholic schools, where their parents pay for them according to the dictates of conscience. Scholarships should be open to every Queensland boy and girl who wins them by examination, whether they study in a State school, a Catholic school, a Protestant school, or under a gum tree. Knowledge should be the test to get them, wherever that knowledge is obtained. Do our Protestant fellow-citizens, so good and kind to Catholics in very many ways, know what terrible wrongs they inflict on Catholics by the Education Act? Is the Government aware of it? Above all, is the Labour Party aware of it? because that party proclaims aloud that it was born to give the worker fair pay for his labour, and to do justice to all white people, irrespective of class or creed. . . . It must be remembered that Catholics, in asking State aid for their schools, only demand some of their own money, they being taxed like Protestants for education. The latter get the whole of that tax and the former none of it. Catholics are not against the present system of State education, but want the benefits extended to their schools, the refusal of which is a horrible injustice.
Debate on Secondary Education

The elitism of the limited secondary schooling that was offered is revealed in the following document from a debate in parliament in 1928. In the grammar schools there was a "class" distinction between the paying pupils and those who by virtue of talent had won a scholarship (and usually came from poorer homes). This led Labor governments to extend the scholarship system by making it more readily available. Even so, Labor did not give a high priority to secondary education.

QPD 152 (1928): 1412, 1416, 1417.

MR. D. WEIR (Maryborough) . . . To my mind, tradition in the grammar schools is pure snobbery, and that is why hon. members opposite desire to keep it up. I suffered from this tradition in 1893, when I entered the grammar schools under the old order of the competitive system of grammar school scholarships. We scholarship boys had to eat our lunch in a different part of the paddock from the part occupied by the "pure merinos" who were paying pupils. In those days twenty-five boys and fourteen

In 1908 the Kidston government brought in workers' dwellings legislation to make it easier for workers to purchase their own homes. Standard house models were offered. Many of these "Queenslanders" have now been lovingly restored. Reprinted from QVP, vol. 3 (1912).
Lifesavers demonstrate resuscitation techniques at Kirra Beach in 1922. Reprinted from Queenslander, 11 November 1922.

girls in the whole of the State earned their scholarships, and the rest were able to pay. We were the exiles of society, and were there really on sufferance. I have lived to see the day when the grammar schools harbour 2,000 State children, who get there by virtue of their intelligence, and not by virtue of the bank balances of their fathers, and that is what is breaking down tradition. . . .

MR. H. M. RUSSELL (Toombul). . . We want to see our boys and girls take full advantage of secondary education. I certainly endorse the statement by the principal of the Central Technical College that the stability of the nation depends on an educated democracy, and in this instance I am in agreement with the hon. member for Maryborough that it seems a pity that all these boys and girls should pass the scholarship examination and then, owing to economic pressure, as he puts it — which is simply dire necessity — they are prevented from proceeding on their secondary course. The Government would be well advised to curtail expenditure in some other direction, and devote some of the money so saved towards the education of these clever boys and girls so that they will have the full advantage of the very fine educational system and will be allowed to go not only through the secondary course, but, if possible, go further and take a course at the university. I consider that the greater the education
the less danger there will be of this democracy being assailed by
the enemies of society. . . .
Mr. H. L. Hartley (Fitzroy) . . . If you look at the origin of
grammar schools you will see that they were established for the
privileged class — for the wealthy class — and most of the pupils
who attended them in those days were sons or daughters of well-
to-do merchants, manufacturers, or squatters. The pupil from
outside those classes who came from the State schools was
regarded as an interloper. . . .
We have so changed the educational system that the majority
of the children now attending the grammar schools are State
scholarship winners, for whom the State is paying.

Protestant Attitude to State Aid

The issue of state aid for church schools arose in Queensland last century when
the Catholic Church persisted in creating its own school system. It arose again
in the 1930s when there were friendly links between the Catholic Church and
the Labor government. The Protestant Labour Party emerged to combat this
Catholic influence and it won one seat in the 1938 election. It argued for the
state secular system.

C-M, 10 June 1937, 16.

The organisation of Roman Catholicism is in part a church, and
in part a political State . . . and in the realm of education claims
supreme jurisdiction. On the other hand it belongs to the traditions
of liberty which Protestantism has created to provide
security for Roman Catholic institutions and freedom of utter-
ance to Roman Catholic propagandists in this country.
For that they have cause to be thankful, but now they demand
money — money for the upkeep of their institutions and the
furtherance of their propaganda. Liberty to teach and preach is
not enough. . . .
To grant the demand of the Roman Catholic authorities would
(1) increase taxation;
(2) diminish efficiency in education;
(3) increase divisions and misunderstandings;
(4) foster sectarian bitterness;
allow one-fifth of the community to impose its will on the other four-fifths;
(6) surrender the sovereignty of the State to an extra-national institution functioning within the State.

That this meeting affirms that the present system of State education free, secular and compulsory, with provision for religious instruction by representatives of all denominations, is both efficient and fair, and produces a high type of moral character indispensible to good citizenship.

[The Protestant Labour Party was created in 1937, partly on this issue.]

Catholic Action

By 1946 a distinct opposition existed between the Catholic Church and the Australian Communist Party. In the following article from a communist newspaper the church was attacked for its infiltration of the labour movement in the form of The Movement. The forces of the right and the left were shaping up.


Catholic Actionists, in a document they never dreamt would fall into democratic hands, admit their sponsorship of union-splitting and breakaways, of anti-labor sticker campaigns and political work under the cloak of the A.L.P. and other organisations.

This sensational document has been published by the Communist Party in a pamphlet, ‘Catholic Action At Work’.

Those who read this sixpenny pamphlet will understand, if they do not understand already, that the RC hierarchy has been behind many of the disquietening moves within and without trade unions and, to some extent, the Australian Labor Party.

The pamphlet is in no way an attack on the religious beliefs of Catholic workers. But it is, definitely and strongly, an attack on those members of the RC Church who seek, under the cloak of religion, to weaken the unions to which the Catholic worker looks for protection of his hard-won wages and conditions against the never-ceasing attacks by the employers.

Catholic Action never expected news of this plotting to reach
the workers, it sought to divide; it always wanted to remain under cover.

Because of this need to hide religious affiliation, the report points out, it was decided to call the Catholic Action organisation working within the unions and other bodies 'The Movement'. . . 'They are', says the report, 'already working as organised groups in factories, in unions, in branches of economic and social organisations, in community centres, in Boys’ Clubs (non-Catholic), in adult education organisations'.

Catholic Action’s object is not just to smash militant unionism to aid the employers . . . ‘but that of spreading every kind of Catholic idea’.

The RC hierarchy is not sparing the expense in the aid it provides to Big Business, the ‘Liberal Party’, the Sane Democracy League and the monopolist press in the war on trade unionism.

. . .

The pamphlet, ‘Catholic Action At Work’, is a MUST for all Australian democrats who want to keep this country clear of Franco-fascism, who want to keep their unions strong and united and advance to a better order in the Australian tradition.

Brisbane

Urban development came slowly to Brisbane. Until the 1970s the city was always regarded as the ugly duckling of the Australian capitals. Being a river port, it developed very much as a warehouse town dependent upon decisions made in the south. The aristocratic Harold Finch-Hatton visited in the early 1880s, and was not impressed with the comforts on offer.


The great want of Brisbane is a really good hotel. There is a population of over thirty thousand residents, besides a considerable floating population of travellers on their way up and down the coast, and squatters down from the country for a few days at a time on business. This is just the sort of population to make hotel-keeping pay. And yet in all the numerous hotels in Brisbane there is not one that can fairly be ranked as third rate.

The attendance and the food are both very bad, and the bed-
Crossing rivers was always a problem in the young colony of Queensland; there was no bridge across the Brisbane River until 1865 when a temporary wooden bridge was opened (top); of Brisbane's nine bridges in the 1980s, the Gateway (bottom) is the most recent (1986). Top photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane; bottom photograph courtesy Premier's Department, Brisbane.

rooms wretchedly small and stuffy. The summer nights in Brisbane are often very hot, and sleep is out of the question in a wooden box no bigger than the cabin of a steamer, so constructed as to allow the snoring of anyone within twenty-five yards to be perfectly audible, but with the worst possible provision for ventilation from the outer air.

There is no doubt that anyone who put up a really first-rate hotel in Brisbane, and ran it upon sound principles, would soon make an enormous fortune. In the meantime, however, the want of hotels in Brisbane is greatly made up for by the hospitality of the people who live there. For several miles up and down the
river, the northern bank is dotted with the country houses of those who have business in the town.

Many of these houses are delightfully situated, with lovely gardens sloping down to the river. The cool shade of these gardens is a heavenly change from the blinding glare and dust in the town. Bamboos, orange trees, lime trees, bananas, and other fruit trees abound, and their dark green foliage is illuminated by the masses of gorgeous colouring from the Boganvillia and other creepers which grow here in perfection.

Brisbane possesses a fair club, and supports a theatre; which is visited by a succession of travelling companies. The chief recreations of the inhabitants are standing on the wharf to see the steamers arrive and depart, or going for a walk with the mosquitoes in the Botanical Gardens.

The most entertaining thing I ever saw in Brisbane was a small detachment of the Salvation Army. They were parading the streets in search of truth, and I had the curiosity to go up and examine them closely. Their soul-saving apparatus consisted only of four blasphemous hymn-books, a cracked concertina, and a very faded banner that I think had once seen better days in the form of a kite.

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The Etiquette of Drinking

Visitors to Queensland found the hard drinking habits hard to take. In the nineteenth century it was not unusual to hear of a man "going mad through the drink".


Brandy and whisky are the favourite drinks, and the amount a man consumes in the twenty-four hours by this habit of "nipping", without ever getting quite drunk, is surprising.

No habitué of a Queensland town who wishes to find a business man ever goes to look for him first in his office. If he knows the run of the town, he will start the reverse way round the various public-houses, and if he fails to run the man he is
looking for to ground, he will then go to his office, in hopes of catching him before he starts round for another series of drinks.

At whatever hour of the day a man meets another whom he has not seen for say twelve hours, etiquette requires that he shall incontinently invite him to come and drink. This is a custom that pervades every class in the colony, and cannot be departed from without something more than a breach of good manners.

Now, there is no harm whatever in inviting a man to have a drink. The invitation would seem to be prompted by nothing but a feeling of generous hospitality, and as such there is nothing to be said against it. But it assumes a different aspect when a refusal on the part of the man invited is regarded as little short of an insult. And yet such is the case. No matter whether a man is thirsty or not, no matter if he has just swallowed a drink, a refusal to swallow another cannot be tolerated for a moment. A more insane custom cannot be conceived; and there is no doubt that numbers of men who have naturally no taste for drinking acquire the habit, and entirely ruin their health, from reluctance to give offence by refusing to drink when invited.

All through Australia, in every class, it is not considered good form for a man to drink by himself. Very few even of the most hopeless drunkards ever do so. The consequence is, that when a man feels inclined for a drink he immediately looks out for someone to drink with him.

Attitudes Towards Lunatics, Drunkards, the Destitute

One of the strongest philosophies in Queensland has been the idea that it was a place for development, for opportunities to be seized, for success, for progress. Those who could not succeed, for whatever reason, tended to be overlooked, ignored, shunned or isolated. The drunk, the poor, the elderly, the destitute, the handicapped, the deranged, and so on, were pushed aside and left to moulder; they were often “incarcerated” in reception houses and other “benevolent institutes”. Such was the nature of philanthropy and social welfare in
the nineteenth century; even in the twentieth century the adulation of success persists and the disadvantaged tend to be ignored.

Dr Blundall, in evidence to Royal Commission on the Asylum . . . QVP (1877):1131.

583. But what was your opinion of the general management [of Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum] at that time — did you see much room for improvement? The management, I think, was very fair with the appliances at command. The only objection that I made in my report was, that the refractory ward for females was on a scale of a past age altogether. In the other female wards they were quiet enough, but here they were like so many wild animals; their places were like dens; you could smell them from a distance. Every morning you would see them washed out with buckets of water, and at night the patients went into those places. One or two of them were open cages, and in daytime some of the patients used to remove their clothes and shout and rage — and altogether it was a thing opposed to the proceedings in asylums of the present day. That I believe, has been remedied since. It struck me also, with reference to the management, that a most important fact was the absence of employment for the patients. It was scarcely initiated at that time; there was a little grubbing of trees going on, nothing more.

584. Did you see nothing about the men's wards or yards at that time that requires attention? Yes; there was one particular ward full of men; they were closely packed on the first floor, and locked and bolted in, and if you had to visit them, the noise of this great bolt and lock used to disturb all the people in the ward. I spoke of that at the time. It was exactly like what you would have in a prison....

By the Hon. J. Mullen: I suppose the place has been altogether changed since you were there? The very fact of these new buildings and alterations would remedy a great many of those defects.

589. And the airing yards have been increased very much — they were very small? Yes; at that time the gates were opened, and they were driven in just like you would drive a horse or a lot of sheep; and they had nothing to do but lounge about and stand in the sun.

[Dr Blundall was briefly Superintendent of Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum about 1874.]
Mortality and Children

The adjustment of Europeans to subtropical and tropical conditions was a slow process, especially in health matters. New approaches had to be adopted for coping with unfamiliar urban conditions; for example, sanitation was an obvious problem in a hot, wet environment. Responsibility for such public health issues, however, was something that politicians, both state and local, sought to avoid. In the following document both the Queensland parliament and the Brisbane City Council sought to make the other responsible. The Central Board of Health was urging the Brisbane municipality to set up a local board of health (using local funds) but the latter replied that the Queensland government should pay.

Dr K. I. O'Doherty et al., Letter to Editor, BC, 31 July 1873, 3.

The following startling facts came to light from a study of the tables of mortality of the five years, commencing with the year 1867 and terminating with 1872.

In 1867, the entire number of deaths in the colony are set down at 1945. Of them, no less than 469 occurred in Brisbane from causes preventable by propery sanitary measures; and of this number no less than two hundred and ninety-four were children under five years of age. . . . Again, in 1871, five years later, we find the same proportions almost exactly maintained, the total deaths in the colony amounting to 1985, of which 466 occurred in Brisbane from similar causes, 250 of them being children under five years of age. Such a rate of mortality, especially amongst children of tender age, although lamentable to think of in a young colony, of which the children may well be considered the life blood, is in no way to be wondered at if we take the trouble to walk through the streets at night, and inhale for hours the foul atmosphere such children are doomed to breathe. The Central Board of Health, on learning the above facts, did not hesitate to recommend the Government to proclaim the city under the operation of the Act, with a view to checking this ruinous mortality. The Government, however, hesitated to act without further warrant, which they received in the form of a memorial signed by every duly qualified medical man practising in Brisbane urging the immediate necessity of sanitary reform. . . .

The Government, as a matter of course, no longer hesitated, and, as your readers are aware, proclaimed the Municipality
under the operation of the Act. The municipal body, seemingly unaware of everything that the Parliament, the Government, and the Central Board of Health have been doing, refuse to do their part in the good work — on the plea that it is of more importance to spend the citizens' money in repairing the back streets — than in taking measures to save the lives of our little ones, or protect the city from the ravages certain to result from the appearance of any formidable plague, which may at any moment be imported amongst us by our emigrant ships. It [must be] made plain to them that in doing so they are upholding a system which necessarily entails a wholesale slaughter of our children, and imminent danger as well to their own precious lives.

**Smallpox**

Queensland, with its active immigration policy, could easily be visited by foreign diseases. Various quarantine measures were introduced to limit or prevent the introduction of new diseases. In 1883 a smallpox scare arose when the Duke of Westminster put into Moreton Bay with some passengers and the ship's surgeon infected. Local doctors were recommending a local campaign of vaccination.

*BC, 31 August 1883, 4.*

But if the colony has escaped infection, it is by a sheer stroke of good luck, for no attempt even was made to recover and retain the Rockhampton passengers. The fault which originally exposed us to the danger lay not, as we supposed, with the health officer at Rockhampton, but with the department. The rule, we find, is that a steamer arriving at a Northern port is there inspected, and then passes down as a coasting steamer with no further visits from health officers. This provision is manifestly inadequate. The first and most rigorous inspection should take place at Thursday Island, where there is not even at present a competent health officer. . . . Now, we repeat, the colony owes to sheer accident its escape from a serious and widespread outbreak of smallpox. There is good reason to complain of the manner in which the authorities charged with the preservation of the public
health perform their duties. When a “scare” sets in, they display prodigious energy; but when it abates they seem to go comfortably to sleep. This colony is peculiarly liable to infection. Steamers constantly touch here which have touched at ports in Asia or the Indian Archipelago, where virulent smallpox, cholera, and other deadly and contagious diseases are rife, and yet we have good reason to fear that the health inspection in most, if not in all cases, is performed in a very careless and perfunctory manner. It could hardly be otherwise. There is a constant and not unnatural resistance by shipowners and agents to inspection which might entail on them the costly delay of quarantine. . . . It is not merely in the precautions to keep out the disease that the authorities are chargeable with carelessness, but also in the equally important precautions to minimise its effects should it unfortunately break out. The value of vaccination is universally admitted by intelligent men. If ever any scientific fact was established by an overwhelming body of testimony it is the efficacy of vaccination as a safeguard against smallpox. . . . If vaccination were universal in this community, the outbreak of smallpox here would be a no more serious affair than a common epidemic of measles.

Public Health

In 1884 the Liberal government introduced a Health Act, but in practice it did not effectively solve the dispute between central (governmental) and local (municipal) responsibility for health matters.


Queensland is now one of the most unhealthy colonies of the Australian group. The death-rate is higher in Queensland now than in any other of the Australian colonies. I know — and it has frequently been pointed out by the Registrar-General — that the high death-rate in Queensland is largely attributable to the great mortality amongst Polynesians. For some years now a very proper distinction has been made in calculating the death-rate, and the death-rate amongst Polynesians and Chinese has been calculated separately. But even when this distinction is
made, the death-rate here has been higher than in other colonies. I hold this is not attributable in any way to any peculiarity of climate, or any other natural cause; but that it is to be ascribed exclusively to the fact that, presuming upon the known healthiness of Australia, and of this part of it in particular, we have allowed our large towns to grow up without any thorough system of drainage and sewerage, and without proper sanitary arrangements. . . . I believe we should have a system of national sewerage through all the towns of the colony. That will cost something like a million of money, but it will be money well expended. . . . We have no thorough system of drainage in this town, and it will cost a great deal of money to initiate one. Another matter which has had a great deal of consideration and attention in England, is that of carrying refuse matter into rivers. If the refuse matter is carried into the river here it will be brought back by the tide, and we shall have pestiferous matter floating on the river all day long. . . .
I believe if we had sanitary arrangements in the large towns equal to that of the other colonies we should have a lower death-rate than in many of the colonies of Australia; and to bear that out I will read a few figures which go to prove what I say. The death-rate in the whole colony, in 1882, exclusive of Polynesians, was only 13.94. It was very low that year, but the death-rate that same year in the suburbs of this city of Brisbane was 26.64.

Sanitation

The disposal of nightsoil was a problem in Brisbane — until the 1960s and 1970s when Lord Mayor Clem Jones embarked upon a vigorous program to sewer the suburbs. The use of night carts was a source of public annoyance and nuisance; as well, the sanitary depot polluted Enoggera Creek and created conditions favourable for typhoid fever.

BC, 15 December 1883, 5.

Dr. Canaan next drew attention to what he considered the abominable manner in which the present style of emptying the closets at night was carried out by the nightmen. Speaking for his own neighbourhood, he asserted that the residents were robbed of fully two hours sleep nightly by the horrible noise created, in the first place, by the ponderous night-carts, and by the noisy conduct of the men in carrying out this work. He commented strongly on the slovenly manner in which the work was carried out, and feelingly referred to the frightful smells from the uncovered night-cart and the unclean buckets passed to and fro by men under the very bedroom windows. . . . He wondered how long this sort of thing was going to last.

Cholera

Throughout the nineteenth century the community was plagued by fears of cholera being introduced from overseas, as the following dramatic exhortation indicates.
The cholera is here!
Or, if it isn't here, it soon will be.
The cholera is here!
Right here in Australia — in Queensland.
Down here in Brisbane, up there in Cooktown, back in Too-woomba.
The cholera is here!
Good God! Do you know what that means? Can you conceive the presence of such a scourge? Have you the least idea of what the "cholera" is?
The cholera is here!
Ay! Right here. Men fall in the streets and women by the roadside. The strong go down like grain before the reaper. The weak die off as cattle die in the drought.
The cholera is here! . . .

Do we want to escape?
Well, I do, rather; don't you? and you? and you?
Do we want to escape?
Then, why do we sit here like dotards, when it is time to be up and doing? What is Sammy [Samuel Griffith] about that he doesn't set the sanitary machinery of the colony in motion, or step down and out to give place to a man that will. . . .
Do we want to escape?
Then let us go through the country with a new broom, scour out every city, mop out every town, scrub out every village, and holey-stone every house. Dig a hole in the field and bury the muck-heap, cart away the stinking filth that rots in many an alley-way, take the Chinese by the nape of the neck and, if they won't live like Christians, bounce them bag and baggage.
Do we want to escape?
Then let us get clean, and stay clean ourselves, and let the municipal and colonial Governments attend to our surroundings. The country from end to end is reeking with unwholesomeness, is crying to heaven for the very plague that we shall cry to heaven to guard us against.
Do we want to escape?
I think so, as I've said before, and the way is as plain as a pike-staff. Faith is all right, but works count also. . . . The dirty town that goes to church won't stand half as good a chance when
As a result of the fatal epidemic of influenza in 1919, the border with New South Wales was closed and a quarantine camp established at Wallangarra. Photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

the cholera is around as the clean town that doesn't. The plague without dirt is like fire without anything to burn, and when it strikes us we should have things fixed so that it dies out for want of fuel.
Do you want to escape?

**Free Hospital System**

Through the 1930s and 1940s the Labor government was extending various health benefits to all members of the community. Through federal–state cooperation, free hospitalization came into effect by legislation passed in 1945.


T. Foley, Minister for Health: The Queensland Government have decided already that when the Commonwealth hospital-benefits scheme that I have just outlined and the pharmaceutical-benefits scheme of the Commonwealth become operative, a free
out-patient service will be rendered throughout Queensland. This means that we shall have a free service for public-ward accommodation and a free out-patient service for all people in the State at every hospital in the State. This will mean that so far as the in-patients are concerned, the cost to the State Government will be approximately £1,000,000 or more a year. The average cost of treating in-patients in Queensland is about 18s. a day and the State will be responsible for the balance of 12s. Under the free out-patients scheme, the Commonwealth will contribute £38,000 a year, at the rate of 3s. per out-patient, and the State's liability will be £60,643 a year, but it is worth it to give this service to our people.

Under this scheme there will be a free hospital service in public hospitals except in cases where intermediate or private accommodation is requested. Hon. members will realise the added advantage and the extent of the service that will be rendered to the State when they consider that we also provide such things as a maternal and child welfare service.

We have established baby clinics, to which a mother may take her child for advice. We have school nurses visiting our schools, detecting any physical defects in the children and recommending to parents that they be attended to immediately. If we add to these services our free cancer service and many other services that are already in operation in this State, we can say that we have reached a stage where the changes we have made may be described as revolutionary.

I can look back to the days when I was a lad in North Queensland. When you entered hospital you were questioned by the secretary or the matron to ascertain whether you could pay the charges. If you indicated that you were not in a position to do so what was known as a pauper's ticket was placed at the head of your bed, for the world to see. Public opinion eventually developed to such an extent that in these days no hospital authority would dare do that, yet that practice existed when I was a lad in Charters Towers. It existed in many other places throughout the North and, I believe, in many other parts of the State.

We have gradually reached the point where we have passed from the old voluntary system to a system of control by hospital boards. When we have what is known as the regional system, in which medical specialists will be available and our base hospitals will be built up to such a standard that the average person will get in our country districts the same treatment as the people in
the city, we shall be able to say that we have got even beyond the revolutionary changes that have taken place during the lifetime of any man here today.

Those changes have been brought about mainly by Federal and State Labour policy and nothing else. They have been embodied in the platform and policy both of the Federal Labour Party and the State Labour Party over a period of years, purely as the result of the desires of the individual members of the party trans-
lated into concrete proposals at its various triennial conventions, which agreed from time to time that it should be the duty of its representatives in Parliament, when circumstances permitted, to give these free hospital services and free treatment to the people in the case of sickness. We have now reached that point, as the result of co-operation between the Commonwealth Labour Government and the various State Governments.

**Water Transportation**

Over the past two centuries transportation has changed emphasis from water passage to conveyance by rail, motor vehicles and now aircraft and spacecraft. In the first part of the nineteenth century, with the British people steeped in the tradition of the Royal Navy and possessed of an easy familiarity with sailing ships, it is not surprising that the inhabitants of Moreton Bay in the 1840s thought implicitly in terms of using waterways rather than overland routes. So Brisbane was linked to Sydney by sea; and as settlers began to move to the new lands to the west and north they readily used small vessels (and barges) to ply the coastal sea-lanes and rivers. First of all, Ipswich was effectively linked to Brisbane by river transport — for the conveyance of produce, passengers and mails. And in the 1840s, improvements in marine technology — the use of steam power in vessels — heralded the speedier linking of Brisbane with more distant parts. The following account relates to the first use of a steam vessel on the Brisbane River, going to Redbank (near Ipswich).

Stephen Simpson, Acting Administrator, to E. D. Thomson, Colonial Secretary, 1 July 1842, Colonial Secretary, Letters Received from Moreton Bay, microfilm A2, reel 12, frame 766-67, JOL.

Captain Cape of the Sovereign Steamer and Captain Chambers of the Edwards [a schooner] have each made an attempt to take their vessels up to Redbank: they proceeded about 7 miles up the River without meeting with any impediment. The steamer however then set upon a rock not previously known of. The Captain returned to the Settlement without running into further trouble. Captain Chambers also finding that there were greater difficulties than he anticipated, that it would require more time than he had previously contemplated, returned without effecting his purpose. Captain Chambers and Mr Petrie examined with more accuracy the difficulties of the water passage — and found
Styles of shipping in the nineteenth century ranged from small coastal vessels such as the *Walrus*, in the Logan River (top); to the *Glenfalloch*, at anchor in the Brisbane River, 1882 (bottom). Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
that there is sufficient depth at high water for vessels drawing some 7 feet and that in the narrowest part it may be about 60 feet wide. Captain Chambers therefore seems to think that though it may answer for Steamers to proceed to Redbank it cannot for Sailing Vessels, which would have to depend almost entirely upon the Tide and would require from twelve to fourteen days to effect the passage from the Settlement to Redbank and back again.

A Road from the Downs

The squatters who flocked to the Darling Downs in the 1840s urgently needed a serviceable route to the coast so that their produce (mainly wool) could be easily marketed. The alternative was the long haul to Maitland, Port Macquarie or the Clarence River. Various gaps in the Main Divide were tried; and at the eastern end of the route a battle developed as to whether Brisbane or Ipswich should become the port for the pastoralists.

Moreton Bay Courier, 10 April 1847, 2.

The discovery of a good practicable road for wool-teams from the south end of the Darling Downs to the head of the navigation at Ipswich, which would obviate the necessity for sending the drays by the present circuitous and difficult route over Hodgson’s Gap, has long been a desideratum with the stockholders in that part of the district. We have now the pleasure of announcing that a stockman named Henry Alphan, in the service of Messrs. Leslie of Canning Downs, has found an excellent road over the Main Range, about two and a half miles to the southward of Cunningham’s Gap.

The new line of road comes down on Reynolds’ Creek over a very fine leading ridge, and is only two miles longer than the present one through Cunningham’s Gap. There is only one ‘pinch’ on the range, and a scrub about three-quarters of a mile wide, which is not dense, and can be easily cut through at very little cost. We understand that this slight obstruction is to be cleared away immediately, to allow drays to pass; it is entirely free from rocks and gullies.

It is impossible to overrate the importance of the discovery to
the interests of the inhabitants of this district — as there is very little doubt but that the squatters in the northern part of New England, the Severn, and other places, will avail themselves of the projected line, and send their teams to Moreton Bay instead of to Port Macquarie and the Clarence. Before the next wool season, the survey of the Bay will have been completed, the chart and sailing directions published, when we shall probably have vessels in the Bay loading direct for England.

Road Hazards

Most roads were poor bush tracks in the nineteenth century. It was not until 1878–79 that Queensland was covered by local government authorities, but even then the local councils were so short of funds that little could be done to improve roads and bridges. The following accounts indicate that even relatively prosperous areas such as the Darling Downs suffered from poor communications.

N. Bartley, *Opals and Agates* (Brisbane, 1892), 117-18.

The next day [the year was 1854] I had to tackle the scrub on “Spicer’s Peak” Gap. This road, cut through a dense vine scrub, had been at one time paved with thick pine logs — a “corduroy” road in fact — and, while it lasted, all was well. But, the place was naturally almost a bottomless morass, full of springs; the logs had rotted in the middle, and the sound ends tilted up in all directions; a lovely chevaux de frise. It was an awful place for horse, bullock, or vehicle of any kind, to face, the tilted logs adding to the pitfalls of the boogy ground. A dense wall of scrub on each hand prevented escape, or evasion of the ordeal. A man on foot could, by treading on the roots of the trees, get along, but a saddle horse, or a bullock team, could not do this.

Nothing but huge, tall, dark-foliaged trees, stag-horn ferns, tangled creepers, and soft, black, bottomless morass, in the road, was to be seen. In I went, leading my horse, and dodged from log to log, and tree root to tree root, my horse sinking to his knees at every step; at last, when I trusted, for a moment, to the earth, in I went up to the hips. I prized myself out by clasp-
ing a log with each hand, and resumed my road more carefully. I had a great “clean up” at Fassifern after it. There is a legend of a man’s head and hat sticking up out of the mud at this spot, and he said to a rescuer who came along, “When you have picked me out, remember my horse is down below.”


The road from Brisbane to the diggings [at Gympie] is described to us by a traveller who recently passed that way as something frightful — to footmen and horsemen a fearful journey — drays all but impassable. All sorts of schemes have to be resorted to, to drag the laden drays up the steeps, but the lowering them down again is the more difficult feat. Ropes run round trees have to be attached to the drays, and hand over hand the drays lowered, whilst men bear a hand with guy ropes to prevent the whole toppling down some siding. Notwithstanding all precautions, a good many horses have been lost. Nobody that has been once, we are assured, will make the journey again. They will be fools to attempt it, when there is a splendid road of fifty odd miles to this port [Maryborough].

Getting the Mails Through, 1880s

By the 1880s flourishing ports were scattered along the Queensland coast, serving their respective hinterlands. Coastal steamers had established regular services to places such as Maryborough, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Keppel Bay, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville, Cairns, Port Douglas, Cooktown, Thursday Island, Normanton, and Burketown, and small branch steamers called at intermediate ports. Apart from the more established route to London via Sydney and the south, the Queensland government now opened its own direct route via Torres Strait, which also assisted the development of northern parts. Land communications had improved considerably with the spread of rail and coach routes; communications were greatly facilitated by the construction of tele-
graph lines across the colony. The postmaster-general reported on the situation in 1887.

Report of the Post and Telegraph Department of Queensland for the Year 1887, QVP 1 (1888):1009, 1019, 1021, 1022, 1033.

The average time occupied in the transmission of mails from London to Brisbane via Torres Strait was 43 days 11 hours . . . and from Brisbane to London 45 days 12 hours. . . .

Historical road transport: a rough ride in a mail coach and a tram ride along East Street, Rockhampton. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
As to Coastal Queensland mails tenders were accordingly in­
vited for the services as at present, with the following alterna­
tives, — a bi-weekly service between Brisbane and Cooktown; a
weekly service between Cooktown and Normanton, and between
Normanton and Burketown, a service once a fortnight and once
a week.

The offer of the Australasian United Steam Navigation Co.
has been accepted at £15,900 per annum for a weekly service
between Brisbane, Cooktown, Thursday Island, Normanton,
and Burketown; for a monthly service to meet the English mails
between Brisbane and Cooktown; and for a monthly service be­
tween Maryborough and Keppel Bay in connection with the
English mails. . . .

The railway line to Sydney via Armidale was, with the excep­
tion of the Hawkesbury Bridge, opened on the 15th January last,
and all mails are now sent by the overland route, excepting on
Saturdays when, if practicable, they are sent by steamer.

The mails are conveyed across the Hawkesbury River by
steamer at present, but it is expected that the bridge will be com­
pleted within two years.

The railway from Melbourne to Adelaide was opened about
January 1887, and English mails are now conveyed overland
between Queensland and South Australia.

A train leaves Brisbane daily except Saturday at 7 p.m., and is
timed to reach Sydney on the second morning after at 7.30
O’clock New South Wales time; the journey thus occupying 36
hours 30 minutes. . . .

The trip from Brisbane to Adelaide is thus performed in 87
hours 10 minutes, including a detention in Sydney of 9 hours 45
minutes, and in Melbourne of 4 hours 49 minutes.

The extent of mail lines to Queensland’s inland on 31st
December 1887 was 25,779¼ miles, as follows:-

By railway 1,773 (miles)
By coach  6,026
By horse  17,980¼

As to telegraph connections in the North the most important
work carried out was the completion of the Cape York Exten­
sion. Communication through to Thursday Island was establish­
ed on the 25th August, 1887. This line has worked very well
since its opening, the principal interruptions having been caused
by blacks. There is no police protection between Moreton and
Mein, where the natives are the boldest, and I am afraid, unless
a police station is formed on or about the Batavia river, we shall be much troubled by the aboriginals, more particularly during the wet weather.

The interruptions, though exceeding in number those of the previous year, have been on the whole of shorter duration. A hurricane on the 17th February last at and north of Mackay did considerable damage to the lines above that station, and the heavy accompanying rains rendered the repairs more difficult to effect. The causes of other interruptions were much the same as those in the Southern and Western Districts, with the exception of the trouble given by blacks, which is confined to the far north. White ants, too, are much more troublesome in those districts than in the South.

Transcontinental Railway

Thomas McIlwraith had a grand vision of building a transcontinental railway from Charleville in the south through the western interior to the Gulf of Carpentaria. By 1883 he was ready to implement his scheme, looking to a private company to build the line in return for grants of land. Such a bold venture attracted much criticism, especially from the Liberals, who argued that Queenslanders would be losing their birthright. The following document is a criticism given by Griffith, the Liberal leader.

S. W. Griffith, *A Speech Delivered at the Town Hall, Brisbane on Tuesday, May 8 1883* (Brisbane, 1883), 9-11.

I now come again to the transcontinental railway. . . . [Government lines] are either already constructed or about to be at public expense. They reach out to Charleville on the Southern line, a point near Isisford on the Central, and Hughenden on the Northern line. These lines are about 200 miles apart, and every bit of the country as far as 100 miles in from those points will be within 100 miles of railway communication — sufficiently near to enable it to be thoroughly developed and the colony to get the full benefit of it. Now, the proposal is, when we have got those lines constructed, to make another line to divert the traffic from ours and take it to another port. That is what the scheme is. The distance from Brisbane to Charleville is about 500 miles; from
there to the Gulf is said to be about 800. . . . The line would be worked on purely commercial principles, and the result of putting the line into the hands of any private company would be simply handing over to rival railway proprietors the very trade we have gone to so much expense and trouble and which we have pledged the resources of the colony so deeply to secure. . . . We are not going to spend all our resources in trying to develop that interior and ultimately derive profit from our lines and then hand those profits over to the first adventurers who come here and ask us for them. (Applause). . . .

But what are the terms proposed? That we should give as a bonus to the company who are making and keeping the line 11,000,000 acres of land in nice little lots of seventy-seven square miles each. (Hear, hear, and laughter). The land is to be taken along the railway where it is good — that is up to the Gulf watershed, until we get to the Flinders and other rivers about there; and where it is bad they are to be allowed to take it on the Batavia River, which is said to be one of the most magnificent agricultural rivers in Australia. . . . The total area of land alienated up to the present time is less than 6,000,000 acres and it is proposed to give away nearly twice that quantity. Just think what a power they would be in the State! . . .

I object to allowing the line getting into the hands of a foreign company, not only because it would establish a rival line and a rival port, but also because it would result in the alienation of immense areas of land; and I object to the aggregation of large landed estates, especially in the hands of corporations. (Applause). . . . We are told that the line will develop the country. I have pointed out that it will do nothing of the kind. Then it is said it will settle an agricultural population on the land. The people who tell you that know as well as I do that it won't do anything of the sort.

[McIlwraith's plan did not go ahead. At the turn of the century the government did approve certain private railway lines — notably to mining areas in the north such as Chillagoe. Later in the 1960s and 1970s the government arranged with private mining companies for the building of new lines to the new coalfields in the Bowen Basin. The dream of a transcontinental railway line still exists — espoused by Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and Lang Hancock of Western Australia.]
Railway to Condamine

The nineteenth century was the age of railways. Starting in 1863 the government began building railways — firstly, west from Ipswich. Soon, extensions were being mooted, from Toowoomba to Warwick, to Dalby and beyond. There was much pastoral freight that could be carried. Also it was important that the produce of south-western Queensland be tied to the Brisbane market rather than to Sydney and Melbourne.

Mr. Miles, on rising to move the resolutions standing in his name with reference to the advantage of a further extension of the railway, said he could not advocate them on the ground that the land in the neighborhood of Condamine township was agricultural; and he freely confessed that he could not bring forward the same arguments in their favor, in that respect, as were so strongly urged on behalf of the Warwick extension, the other day — that it was to benefit a large agricultural interest there. However, he thought he should be in a position to point out to honourable members that if the south-western districts could not produce wheat, they could produce tallow and hides, which he thought were, perhaps, something more substantial. There was a very large number of cattle in that locality. He believed he was justified in saying that, at the very lowest calculation, if the line of railway were carried out, the export of tallow and hides would amount to £50,000 or £60,000 a year; and, he believed, that would be considered as equivalent to wheat, which had been so much talked about on the other line. Over and above that, the line would give facilities for conveying the fat wethers from the interior to supply the residents of the city of Brisbane and other places with meat; and would thereby place the settlers of those distant districts in the same position as the men of the Darling Downs, who were much nearer to the market now. He thought, further, that a large carrying trade might be expected on the line for those districts. But those were not the only grounds on which he advocated the extension of the railway to Condamine; the chief ground was to secure the western trade — the trade of Maranoa and Warrego, which now, in a great measure, was passing from the Maranoa, over the border, into New South Wales; and from Warrego, by way of Fort Bourke, into Victoria. This was an object not to be lost sight of by the House. He believed
that, at this time, there were about 900,000 sheep in those two districts; and from the character of the country — as they had heard it described by the honourable member for the Warrego a few evenings ago — he was justified in saying that they might look forward to having, in three years more, 3,000,000 of sheep.

He maintained that if railways were to have a fair trial, it was necessary that they should be extended into the interior. He believed he was justified in stating that not a single sixpence had ever been expended on the road between Dalby and Condamine; and this was the time to come forward to prevent the Government throwing away thousands of pounds in bog-holes. It had been asserted in the House, time after time, that the cheapest system of roads was a system of railways, and this was the time for the House to assert the principle that no money should be thrown away in making and repairing roads.

Branch Lines

"Priming the parish pump" has been the regular occupation of politicians. This was often expressed in the form of obtaining government funding to build a branch railway line. The example here, relating to Beaudesert, is just one of the many local lines that were being sought last century and this. The untapped productive potential of the area was always pointed to: if only a railway could be built to realize it. There were two very busy periods of branch-line construction in the 1880s and around 1910, with the government borrowing extensively for this purpose. The branch lines were always tied in with policies of land subdivision and closer settlement. Up until the 1920s, railways were seen as better agents of development than roads. In sheer economic terms, however, branch lines seldom paid their way; but governments were always sensitive to complaints about differential freight charges, as the following document shows.


Re Branch Line to Beaudesert

Mr Persse: It was in order that this rich agricultural district might be brought into communication with capital that he [the speaker (and similarly throughout)] asked for a line of railway.
On the railways, sleeping cars were a luxury in 1912; in the same year the rail line to Booyal, near Childers was opened. Top photo reprinted from *QVP*, vol. 3 (1912); bottom photograph held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

There were settled in this district between 5,000 and 6,000 inhabitants, and the amount of cultivation, with their proportion to the rest of the colony, was extremely large. The country was well watered and rich in the best of land, good timber, large coalfields, and minerals of different sorts. The district, with all these advantages, had been granted less facilities for competing with other districts than had been granted to any other portion of Queensland. People residing on the Darling Downs and else-
where could bring their produce to market at a cheaper rate than could the people only 40 or 50 miles from Brisbane. At present it would cost the people in the Logan district to get their produce to market from £3 10s. to £4 per ton, whereas on the Southern and Western line they could get it to market for from 3s. to 4s. per ton for the same distance. Why this district should have been so much ignored was a mystery to him. . . .

He felt confident that if the railway was constructed the amount of land that would be taken up there would be increased year by year. There were at present half-a-million acres of land unalienated by the Crown. There were over half-a-million acres of land belonging to the Crown, and this land was situated principally at the heads of the Logan and Albert rivers. On Maroon Run, at the principal head of the Logan, there were over 100 square miles; and at Tamrookum Run, adjoining, there were something like 77 square miles. At Telemom Run, also adjoining these, there were 60 square miles. All this was Government land which, if a railway was made to the Upper Logan, would be taken up by people, as it was land of the very best nature, principally scrub land containing the most valuable timbers in the colony — cedar, beech, pine, tulip, yellow-wood, and other woods, which at present could not be brought down owing to the distance they were from water carriage. After all this valuable timber was taken off these lands they would be put under crop at once. . . . There were there between 5,000 and 6,000 people, mostly the sort of people who make the very bone and sinews of any country, and they would cultivate treble the amount of land if they could get their produce to market. It would be cheaper and better for the State to construct a railway of an inexpensive character than to go on everlastingly patching up roads year after year. . . . In his district they had both produce and population, and this line, if constructed, would be a feeder of the trunk lines. They, in fact, wanted more branch lines. He would be one who would support the Premier if he were to go in for a loan of five millions in order to increase the trunk lines and make more branch lines. The State was well able to afford it, and would be able to bear a much heavier burden than it had at present. They should go in for a greater debt, construct more railways, and enable this and other districts which were deficient in water carriage in every way to bring out their many resources.

Minister for Works, J. M. Macrossan: There had never been a
railway advocated in the House the advocates of which did not maintain that it would pay; and they certainly had not found the railways to pay yet in the way that the hon. member stated. Directly, they did not pay; they might pay indirectly. Probably this one, if made, would be amongst the non-paying ones.

A politician felt it his duty to obtain local public works for his electorate. The building of a branch railway line became a highly desirable objective, especially in the mid 1880s when the Griffith government was embarking upon a widespread phase of railway construction. A line from Rockhampton to Emu Park was mooted, but B. D. Morehead objected, alleging that the government had given scant regard to profitability, in contrast to the case of the Brisbane—Southport line.

QPR 46 (1885):590.

Mr. Morehead . . . contended that the line from Brisbane to Southport was not simply a railway to a watering-place, and he did not think that the arguments of the hon. member for Mackay would hold for a moment. He did not think that in the present state of their finances they should be called upon to vote a large sum of money for a railway which was eminently one of luxury. He would willingly vote a sum of money for a railway to Port Alma, which would be a paying one and benefit the whole colony; but the people of Rockhampton would not have that, because they thought it would affect the value of city properties. They thought the holders of land in Rockhampton would be prejudicially affected by taking the railway down to one of the finest ports in Australia. He did not think that city properties there would deteriorate in value; he thought, on the contrary, the railway would enhance its value. They were now asked to vote a sum of money simply to provide a luxury for the people of Rockhampton, and the taxpayers of the colony would have to pay it. He, as the representative of an outside district, protested against any such charge being made on the revenue of the colony. Where would it end? Rockhampton would next want a branch line to Yeppoon, and the argument then would be: Brisbane had three watering places, why should not Rockhampton have two? The present was not a time when they should be asked to lavish money on luxuries. They would have enough to do to look after their necessities in years to come if the present state of affairs continued. There was no necessity for the railway having been
brought forward as it had been, and he hoped the Minister for Works would not take steps immediately to construct that railway. Having regard for the highly critical state of the colony at the present time — and no one knew the straits it was in better than the Minister for Works — why should they be asked to ‘chuck’ away £120,000 on a railway for the sybarites of Rockhampton? As to saying that it would be a paying line, he denied that that railway would pay for many years to come. . . . The broad grounds of his objection were that the present was no time to waste money that they had borrowed in undertakings which would not be remunerative. He said that if they were to waste their money in that way the time would come when it would be pointed out against them that, instead of using the money which had been lent to them in developing their resources, they were wasting it in that frivolous way by constructing railways to watering-places from towns that were not of the first importance even in Queensland.

The Problems of Rail Network Operation

The following excerpts from the report of the Commission of Railways for 1895-96 show the problems encountered in trying to run a successful rail network. Weather played havoc with produce as well as capital equipment. Primary production was variable from year to year, but generally the short (agricultural) lines tended to do badly, while the long (pastoral) lines kept the whole system afloat. Although the department might benefit by opening up links with the south-west (Cunnamulla) it had to carry “dead” lines elsewhere, such as the Cooktown-Laura railway which started too late to tap the wealth of the Palmer goldfields. Tourist and recreation potential was seen in the Cleveland line — but that factor did not work so well in the case of the Southport branch.


Live stock traffic must be credited with a very large proportion of the total increase [in income], but it must not be overlooked that the expenditure involved in the carriage of this class of traffic leaves but a very small margin of profit; and it is chiefly on this account that the expenditure resulting from the large in-
crease in the train mileage during the year appears so dispropor-
tionate to the revenue derived therefrom. . . .

The receipts from wool traffic generally show a decided
shrinkage, but this is largely due to a decrease in production. I
am glad to say that we are likely this year to secure a larger share
of the wool clip from the south-western portion of the colony
than we have ever had before; and when the Cunnamulla exten-
sion has been completed, I anticipate a large increase to our
receipts from pastoral holdings in the Southern Division, the
traffic to and from which has hitherto been subject to keen com-
petition on the part of the New South Wales Commissioners.

The reductions in the rates for agricultural produce which
came into operation on 1st June, 1895, have not increased the
volume of traffic to the extent expected — in fact, there is a
decrease in tonnage comparing 1895–96 with 1894–95, but the
falling-off can be fully accounted for by the exceptionally dry
season which prevailed in the southern portion of the colony
during the latter part of 1895, and which resulted in almost the
entire failure of the wheat crop. . . .

Had the season of 1895 been a favourable one for the agricul-
tural industry nearly the whole of the produce [horse fodder]
which appears in this return as having been imported into the
colony would have been produced and carried over the Railway
Lines in the Southern Division. . . .

The earnings on the Brisbane to Charleville Line have increas-
ed by £8,080, while the expenditure has advanced by £10,966,
giving a net revenue for the year of £141,696, as against
£144,582 for the preceding twelve months. The interest on the
capital invested consequently shows a slight decrease, the
figures for the year being £3 3s. 10d. per cent., as against £3 6s.
for last year. . . .

The Fassifern branch, which last year paid 4s. 5d on the
capital cost, this year failed to pay working expenses. The
deficit, however, is only £82.

The line from Brisbane Valley Junction to Esk shows a loss in
the year's working of £2,220 as against £1,098 for the preceding
twelve months. This, however, is not the result of a decrease in
the volume of traffic, but is almost entirely due to increased
maintenance expenditure consequent upon heavy renewals along
the line, and flood damages.

The Crow's Nest branch, although still unable to pay working
expenses, shows a slight improvement, and only drew £682 from revenue funds as against £1,173 for the preceding year.

The Pittsworth branch also discloses a loss for the year of £247, almost entirely due to an increase in the maintenance expenditure rendered necessary in renovating station buildings.

The revenue on the Killarney branch has fallen off to the extent of £534, the excess of working expenses over revenue being £1,376 as against £755 for the previous year.

In connection with these and other branch lines into agricultural areas I may state that the loss of revenue during the year is attributable to the reduction in the rates for farm produce and to the short production previously referred to, and it may not be out of place here to observe that it is somewhat unfair to gauge the success of a branch line by its sectional earnings only. . . .

The line from South Brisbane to Southport, which last year paid 5d. per cent. towards the capital cost, has this year failed to pay working expenses, and shows a loss of £1,597. I am sorry to say that the traffic prospects on this line are not encouraging. The competition from small steamers and sailing craft which is encountered at many points along the route preclude the possibility of obtaining an adequate return from goods traffic, while the distance of Southport from the city militates against it being used to any very great extent as a watering-place by other than those who can afford to reside there temporarily.

The Nerang branch is in a slightly worse position than last year, the excess of expenditure over earnings being £519 as against £466 for 1894-5. This short section should not, however, be dealt with separately, as it is at the present time, to all intents and purposes, a part of the Southport line, and is worked with the same rolling-stock. The reopening of the sugar mills in the Logan district, the re-planting of cane on the Coomera and Pimpama waters, and the erection of the central mill on Nerang Creek, just completed, will within the next few years tend to increase the receipts; but as the traffic will be of low class the extra expenditure in providing for it will not admit of any great addition to the net revenue from either the Southport or Nerang lines.

The Beaudesert line has for the first time since its opening paid working expenses, and returns 9s. 4d. per cent. on the cost of construction. This result is entirely due to the increase in the timber traffic, which, unfortunately, cannot be regarded as per-
manent. There are, however, large areas of rich land towards
the terminus which in time must add to the traffic returns.

The Cleveland line has again failed to pay working expenses,
but the amount chargeable against revenue funds is only £428,
as compared with £733 for the preceding twelve months. This
line is, unfortunately, handicapped by a very heavy capital ex­
penditure (£255,787). I am satisfied, however, that the receipts
will steadily improve. The foreshores of the Bay skirted by the
line are rapidly coming into popular favour as watering-places,
and being readily accessible from the city a large suburban
population may in time be looked for along the entire route,
more particularly that portion of it from Wynnum onwards.

The revenue on the line from Brisbane to Gympie (including
Sandgate and Racecourse branches) shows an increase for the
year of £5,175 but the expenditure has increased by £8,879, con­
sequently the percentage of net revenue to capital only shows £1
18s 1d. per cent., as against £2 3s. 11d. for the year 1894–5. The
section from Gympie to Maryborough, however, exhibits im­
provement . . .

[The Central] line again shows a very large increase in the
receipts, the amount earned over the previous year's revenue be­
ing £24,938. This, however, has not been accomplished without
a substantial increase in the expenditure, which is in excess of
that for the previous twelve months by a sum of £16,500. The
receipts from live stock traffic show an increase of upwards of
£20,000, but the passenger traffic has not expanded in the same
proportion as it has done on the Southern lines, the receipts
under this head being only £759 in excess of those of the
previous year, while the revenue derived from the carriage of
wool has fallen off by over £11,000.

The percentage of net receipts upon the capital invested is £5
1s. 6d., as against £4 16s. 7d. for the year 1894–5, or, exclusive
of the branches, £6 4s. 7d., as against £5 17s. 6d. for the previous
twelve months . . .

The revenue from the Northern Railway shows an expansion
to the extent of £15,955, but this is almost neutralised by an in­
crease in the year's expenditure of £15,826, consequent upon
flood damages and the large number of live stock trucked to the
meat works at Townsville and Alligator Creek, which involved a
heavy drain upon Traffic and Locomotive funds. The percentage
of net earnings to capital invested has fallen from £8 13s. 7d. in
1894–5 to £8 6s. for the year under review . . .
The revenue prospects of the [Cooktown] railway are most discouraging, as the gold-fields to the westward of the terminus have for years past been in a languishing condition; and until there is some revival in the mining industry in the districts which have hitherto been served by the line, there can be no increase in the traffic, as the absence of agricultural or even fair grazing land along the entire length of the line precludes the possibility of ever obtaining any revenue from close settlement.

**Turn of the Century Road Travel**

These two extracts illustrate the difficulty of road travel in the early decades of twentieth century: the first, going from the Monto district over the range to Many Peaks; the second carrying gold from the Mt Cannindah mine to Many Peaks.


Times were pretty tough; he told me that his week’s holiday every year was sitting on the German wagon going to Mount Perry for stores for himself and his neighbours. Also he used to take his German wagon with four Clydesdale horses over to Many Peaks, down the Blue Pinch. It was so steep that no vehicle, wagon, buggy, car could go up or down it without help. They used to cut sapling drags and tie them on the back of a cart for going down. There were stacks of timber left at the bottom, but the top was pretty well cut. To get back up my father used to arrange to have a draught horse harnessed at the top of the range and pull the vehicle up. Teams coming up would unyoke and hitch onto the front of another team so that there would be two lots of horses to pull up the wagon; then they would do the same for the other wagon.


They did not have very good means of getting it away at the time but Davey Myles came to the rescue with fifteen packhorses.
He would get the miners to put the ore into bags holding 100 lbs each. With the pack-horses, Davey nearly had a camel team and he would put 100 lb on each side of the pack-horses and take it down to the foot of the range. They could not get up to the top of the range at that time with a wagon.

Davey made a good few shillings out of carting it to the bottom of the range — it was about two miles — and then he would load the ore on to his own wagons for which he had a driver and take it into Many Peaks where it was put on to the train.

The Motor Car

At the beginning of this century improvements in technology were beginning to break down the isolation of Queensland. In the early 1900s the motor car was just beginning to find a place on the roads.

The Postal Department has just had a trial of the motor-car to test its utility in the collection of mails. The department approached the question in the first instance with a view to using the motors in the drought-stricken districts; but though there does not appear much prospect at present of adopting them for that service, the report on the machine used in mail collection was fairly favourable. It was ascertained that a trial was taking place in New South Wales.

Despite this hesitant start motor transportation quickly found a niche. The government continued to favour the use of railways but the bullock and horse teams soon gave way to motor vehicles. At the same time roads were quite inadequate: where they existed they were badly formed, being rough, stony or dusty in dry weather and boggy traps in wet weather. Furthermore there was no comprehensive or national plan of roads; small local government authorities with meagre finances had to do the best job possible, which meant that they could only imperfectly tackle some of the main trouble spots in more populous
In the age of motors, Cobb & Co. updates its fleet with a Cadillac and a “bikie gang” gathers at Kenmore in about 1938. Photographs held by John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
areas without any concern to link up with other centres. In introducing relevant legislation, W. N. Gillies, secretary for agriculture, offered this rationale.

*QPD* 133 (1919-20), 1812, 1816-20.

We are very fond of talking about railways and roads being built before settlement. We have never been able to do that. If we cannot do it, we should endeavour to follow after settlement and give the first settler the benefit of a decent road as soon as possible, in order that he might get some enjoyment out of it during his lifetime. . . .

Anyone who has lived in the bush can realise that the appalling isolation of the bush can be broken up by constructing good roads and thus making it possible for the people who cannot afford motor-cars to drive into town in their sulkies or other vehicles, and at the same time bring their produce in at a lower cost. I cannot imagine anything which will do more to encourage production and at the same time reduce the cost of living, than a proper system of highways as feeders to our railways. . . .

We can assist the railways to pay by building feeders, not by throwing out short lines of railway which cannot be expected to pay. The better plan is to build properly graded, properly formed, solid roads, to enable motorists to drive on those roads, and bring the people and the produce to the railway. . . .

The present Commissioner for Railways, Mr Davidson, says on Page 47 of his report, under the heading of "Roads" —

"I am not overlooking the fact that good roads may be as costly to construct as light railroads. The latter, however, cannot be built up to every farmer's door, and, even if they could, there are other costs to be considered besides that of the track, viz., stations, sidings, rolling-stock, staff, etc. . . .

"The country road motor would be a tremendous help to the farmer, because by giving him a chance to market his products promptly and without inconvenience to him, it would encourage him to produce more. . . .

"It must be remembered, too, that many of our branch lines do not pay even working expenses, so that, in addition to the charge for interest on cost of construction, there is a further loss — this would not occur with roads."

It has been suggested that the first instalment of our war indemnity — £40,000,000 — might very well be invested in the
building of highways. The arguments are twofold; firstly, because the Commonwealth have to deliver the mails to all the outposts in the Commonwealth, and secondly, they have to deal with the questions of defence, and the roads are very important from the point of view of defence, although I hope they will never be required for that purpose in Australia. . . .

If the people have not got facilities for settling on the land, and of making a living, they are not going to come to Queensland and settle. If we want the people to develop the land and make the best use of it, we must give them transport facilities. In Queensland we have the soil and we have the rainfall. One other essential which I regard as of equal importance as that of main roads is the question of water conservation. If we can conserve water and give the people an adequate supply for irrigation — where irrigation can be carried out — and better transport facilities, I can see an era of prosperity in this State which was never dreamed of before. . . .

I think that, generally speaking, the policy I have outlined in this Bill will be acceptable; will be popular with the people of Queensland; will do much to overcome the isolation of the bush; will do much to bring land into effective use; will do a great deal to reduce the cost of living; will do something towards preventing a general influx of people from the country to the towns; and will do a great service to the people of Queensland.

Mr Taylor: Anyone who has travelled throughout our own State knows perfectly well that the condition of our roads, speaking by and large, is simply deplorable. We have no main arteries at all which can be designated as main roads in the proper acceptation of the term, and if we are going to provide for the future progress and development of our State, this Bill has not been introduced too soon. . . . The idea of a road board being constituted as the Minister has stated, apart from the local authorities, is a very good one. The local authorities have done splendid work in the past, and no doubt, they will continue to do splendid work, but I am convinced that in the sparsely populated areas their operations are so circumscribed, and the amount of revenue they derive from the taxpayer is of such a limited nature, that it is quite impossible for them to carry out the work which is necessary in any particular year. I venture to say that quite a large amount of revenue — I would not like to say it is wasted — could be used to better advantage if the work was taken from the local authorities and directed by a road
board as is proposed under this Bill. The fact that an engineer is to occupy a seat on the board is one that will commend itself to every hon. member of this Chamber. . . .

Motor traffic will have to be utilised more largely than at the present in order to assist the farmer. We should develop that traffic and see that it becomes a feeder to our railways in moving the produce from the farm or the orchard to the railway station as quickly as possible and in good order and condition. . . .

I have always held the opinion that the people in the country districts and scattered areas have to contribute more largely than they should to the comfort and convenience of the people in the city. I do not think it is fair. I think the people in the country are deserving of every possible consideration which this Government can give them. If, by constructing these highways, they can make the conditions of life for the man and woman on the land better than they are at present time, I think it is their duty to see that the scheme is rapidly pushed ahead.

After one year of operation the Chairman of the Main Roads Board made the following observations on road conditions.


With the exception of one or two roads constructed some twenty years ago and roads constructed under Acts of the early sixties, very little attempt has been made to construct roads on a systematic plan, and even where such roads have been constructed, the efforts of the Local Authority to maintain them have, in many instances, been ill-directed. Examples of these old roads exist in the old Gympie and Maryborough road and in the Brisbane–Warwick road.

These roads have rough pitched Telford or corduroy foundations — that is, a foundation of spalls wedged together or of timber logs which originally was capped with broken metal but is now worn away — with the result that traffic will not use the rough foundation. Where the surface has been replaced the metal has been crowned up so high that vehicles side skid badly. Local Authorities have, in many instances, completely neglected to maintain through roads; bridges have been allowed to tumble down and have not been replaced. The reason for this neglect is obviously, in most cases, that no rate revenue is derivable from
the adjoining lands, and the Councils have not felt it their duty to maintain roads for traffic whose origin is outside their area, but other cases exist where the road has been superseded by a railway. When such roads become "Main" this state of things will be remedied...

No real attempt in the past has been made to locate roads on scientific principles, the result being that numerous deviations are now necessary.

The pioneer surveyors must not, however, be too severely criticised on that account, as funds were seldom available for constructing the road on its proper location. The primary consideration of the surveyor was to locate an accessible road which would have a level cross section (irrespective of longitudinal grade) thus, for the time being, obviating any expenditure other than for grubbing and clearing...

The final result has been the spending of large sums of money on roads having grades of 1 in 10. Such grades are the cause of continued heavy maintenance charges, and most severely limit the loads. Metalling quickly disappears on them owing to the heavy tearing action of wheels and horses' hoofs, combined with the rush of water during heavy rains...

The black soils of the Darling Downs present conditions after rain which could hardly be worse. The soil when wet has an exceedingly low bearing strength and is particularly sticky. Most of the roads are almost impassable after rain...

The existing roads leading to Tambourine, Beechmont, Maleny, Montville, and other rich fruitgrowing or dairying districts are all badly constructed on steep grades, whilst in North Queensland the great dairying and timber areas are almost roadless.

**Air Services**

The name QANTAS heralds the significance of air travel to Queensland. The vast distances of the inland were so easily conquered once "man could fly".
The following account briefly outlines the founding of what is now Australia's international carrier.

BC, 25 April 1931, 12.

The now famous firm of "Qantas" — short title for the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services, Ltd. — has undoubtedly laid the foundations of commercial aviation in Queensland. It has now completed over 1,500,000 miles flown. The formation of the company dates from the winter of 1920, when Messrs Fergus M'Master and A. N. Templeton, Western Queensland pastoralists and P. J. M'Ginness and Hudson Fysh, late A.F.C. pilots, met at the Gresham Hotel, in Brisbane and discussed preliminary arrangements. By the end of the year the company had been duly incorporated, and the capital consisted of but £6850. Much encouraging support was obtained during the initial year's work, and by the end of the year the directors, headed by Mr Fergus M'Master, had been so successful in the direction of securing a subsidy for the Charleville-Cloncurry route that the capital of the company was increased to £31,620, and a tender submitted for the operation of the new route. On November 2, 1922, the new service was commenced, the flying plant consisting of three two-passenger Armstrong Whitworth machines and one DH4, all old war stock, but suitable for trying out the entirely unknown possibilities of regular air travel and transport in the West. Within a short time these machines were
superseded by three-passenger DH50 machines. As the success of the original line of 577 miles was proved, the service was pushed out from Cloncurry to Camooweal, on the border of North Australia, a distance of 248 miles, and from Cloncurry to Normanton, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, a distance of 215 miles. The logical completion of the original Charleville–Cloncurry airway at its south-eastern end came into being on April 17, 1929, when the Charleville–Brisbane extension of 444 miles commenced operations, eight-passenger DH61 aircraft being employed. After declaring no dividend for six years, the company paid its first dividend of 6 per cent for the year ended June 30, 1928. A similar dividend was paid for the year ended June 30, 1929, and for the year ended June 30, 1930, a dividend of 7 per cent has been declared. Until recently Queensland Air Navigation, Ltd., conducted an air mail service between Brisbane and Townsville. This route has now been taken over by Qantas.

The inter-state air mail service is carried by Australian National Airways, Ltd. The company was formed in 1929, but did not come into active operation until January 1, 1930. Its managing directors are Air-Commodore Kingsford Smith and Flight-Lieutenant C. T. P. Ulm. A Sydney–Brisbane service, daily each way, was instituted, and then the service was extended to Sydney–Melbourne daily each day.

Aircraft gave Queenslanders rapid contact with the rest of the world. There was great jubilation when the first air mail service to London was inaugurated in 1931.

On Saturday last [25 April] the first Imperial air mail service reached Australia; and on the same day the first air mail service left Brisbane for London. It has been a period of wonderful aerial development. It is only twenty years since Louis Bleriot astonished the world by flying across the English Channel; and only eleven years have elapsed since Sir Ross Smith and Sir Keith Smith, two young Australians, flew from England to Darwin in 28 days. Now we are talking of a regular aerial mail service between London and Australia, taking 10 days. Even that time will be reduced in a few years.

The first direct Australia to England air mail service left Archerfield [Brisbane] aerodrome at 6.10 O'clock on Saturday
Brisbane in the mid 1980s, highlighting the Roma Street railyards and the loop of the Brisbane River enclosing the high-rise office blocks of the central business district. Photograph courtesy Premier's Department, Brisbane.
morning in the Qantas airline Apollo, piloted by Mr R. B. Tapp. The plane carried 19 bags of air mail, comprising 25,761 letters, Queensland's share being 3914 letters, and when additional bags were picked up at Longreach and Camooweal later in the day the Queensland total exceeded 4000 letters. In addition to the mails a wireless set was carried for installation in Air-Commodore Kingsford-Smith's plane, the Southern Cross, for use in his flight from Darwin to Akyab with the mail. One passenger was carried from Brisbane, but he left the 'plane at Longreach.

Queensland for much of this century has suffered aspects of educational neglect. In comparative terms most Queensland governments have not spent as much per head of population on education as the other states. Nevertheless levels of basic literacy remain high. Where most neglect occurred was in secondary and tertiary levels of education. Labor governments tended to give this low priority and it was not until the 1950s that the backlog was appreciated. Since then there has been a crash programme to expand educational facilities; but the attempt to catch up has generally been at the expense of quality. Queensland today is still suffering from this shortfall. Education was not favoured but Labor governments tended to emphasize health care; one of the most notable achievements was the establishment of a system of free hospital care (devised between 1936 and 1945 by Ned Hanlon, with the support of the federal government). This approach towards health care remains today, alongside Commonwealth initiatives such as Medicare.

As the twentieth century has progressed, rapid improvements in technology have been made to improve the means of communication around this vast state. Today there is an extensive road system, for which responsibility is shared between the Main Roads Department and local authorities. Since 1923 the federal government has been helping with funds. Roads in the far west received a great boost with the inauguration of the federal beef roads scheme in the 1960s. The Queensland rail network now comprises over 10,000 kilometres, with the government now giving attention to electrification of lines. Air services crisscross the state from the Gulf and Channel countries through to international links. The state possesses three international airports — at Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns. Through radio broadcasting (since 1921) and television transmission (since 1959) everyone in Queensland can become part of the global village. Today, thanks to satellite technology, school lessons, international news, and opera from Covent Garden can be beamed to isolated cattle stations in the Gulf.
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