THE PROFITS OF BOOM: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CLONCURRY COPPER FIELD

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The Cloncurry region is likely to have the same impression on a modern visitor as it had on the inveterate traveller A.C.C. Lock, who in 1949, despaired having reached "the end of the world". The relentless heat and windswept dust which rolled across the desolate red earth remained a lasting memory. Today pastoral activities preoccupy local residents: but sixty years ago the Cloncurry region boasted the largest copperfield in Australia. Over seven thousand people lived amid the din of mining machinery, the piercing whistles of brightly lit ore trains and the calescence of smelter furnaces at night. Between 1910 and 1920 mining companies operating on the Cloncurry field commanded the attention of both the London and Melbourne stock exchanges. But like most boom fields, it surrendered to adversity and the mining camps of the region were abandoned. Only the scarred topography and rusting scrap iron unable to be salvaged now remains as testimony to the heyday of the Cloncurry copper empire.

Three large companies dominated mining and smelting activities: Mount Elliott Limited, Hampden–Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited, and the less glamorous Mount Cuthbert No Liability. Their output was sold to Germany initially, and, after the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, through the Australian government for processing in British armament factories. No sooner was the armistice signed than the Imperial government released its hold on the copper market with almost devastating consequences for most major copper producing centres. Copper prices plummeted and did not recover until another holocaust in Europe created new demands for copper. By then, only a few gougers worked the mines on tribute, struggling to earn a living. The history of the copper enterprises in north-west Queensland has not been the subject of research, with one exception. In 1960, Geoffrey Blainey compiled an account in the early chapters of his Mines in the Spinifex:
The Story of Mount Isa Mines. This paper, while covering many of the aspects already investigated by Blainey, elaborates on the vicissitudes of the companies, the manoeuvrings of the management and the role of the labour force. Moreover, it illustrates weaknesses in company organisation and financing, and miscalculations in strategy which have characterised many Australian mining enterprises.

Far from being a recent find, the lodes of the Cloncurry copper field were first discovered by the irascible Ernest Henry in 1867. Henry named his claim the Great Australia mine, and after failing to raise sufficient capital to develop the ore bodies decided to undertake the task himself with the assistance of a group of Cousin Jacks whom he recruited personally in England. Only a few parcels of ore were mined before want of capital, lack of smelting facilities and high transport costs forced the mine's closure. In 1884, after discovering extensive ore bodies at Argylla and Mount Oxide to the north-west, Henry sold the Great Australia to a Glasgow syndicate, the Cloncurry Copper Mining and Smelting Company, whose principals had received a favourable geologist's report from J.R. Robertson, later of Mount Lyell fame. The company erected smelters at Cloncurry, engaged nearly two hundred men, but was forced to abandon smelting and close down the mine in 1889 after producing only four hundred tons of copper. It was fully a decade before interest was revived in the region by a rise in world copper prices and the activities of a group of Melbourne-based promoters.

In 1897 world prices for copper increased dramatically as the nineties "were going out in wars and rumours of wars". By 1899, copper was fetching over £75 per ton, the highest price for over a decade. The renewed interest in base metals was reflected in the clamour for Mount Lyell shares which accounted for a substantial proportion of transactions on the Melbourne Stock Exchange. A.R. Hall, historian of the Melbourne Stock Exchange, asserts that the Tasmanian
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mines gave a speculative impetus to the mining sector: "Mount Lyell's maiden dividend at the rate of over 23 per cent on its paid up capital provided the main stimulus". This opened up "considerable opportunities for mining company promoters and for speculative dealers in mining shares". New regions were unlocked, the most notable being the Chillagoe district in far north Queensland. Spearheading the development of new mines was a coterie of men labelled by Blainey - "The Magnates": William Knox, William Jamieson, William Orr, J.S. Reid, Herman Schlapp, W.L. Baillieu, Harvey Patterson and H.F.C. Keats, who had made their fortunes at Broken Hill and then Mount Lyell, were connected with nearly every new enterprise in the base metal industry. Blainey insists they were "entrepreneurs rather than capitalists"; "their main contribution was not large sums of capital but small sums which they invested in the first years when the risk of failure was high". Not only did they make "some of the most courageous and sensible decisions in the history of Australian business" but they had a capacity for inspiring confidence among investors.

In the same year Mount Lyell was exciting Melbourne investors, three of these men - Orr, Schlapp and Knox - turned their attention to the lodes in the Cloncurry region, and acquired properties at Hampden, forty miles south of Cloncurry. Outlaying only small amounts of capital, they financed systematic exploration of the ore deposits and preliminary development, stock piling the bulk of the ores extracted and transporting small parcels with high metal contents to southern smelters. Almost simultaneously a property to the south of Hampden, known as Mount Elliott, was acquired by John Moffat, the enterprising Scot who pioneered tin and silver-lead mining in the Herberton district. Both the Hampden and Mount Elliott concerns showed shrewd judgment and patience, conscious of the experience of the Cloncurry Copper Mining and Smelting Company two decades beforehand: "Their directors refused to imitate the folly of the Great Australia in erecting smelters before the ore reserves
had been proved; instead they slowly developed the ore-bodies and waited for those favourable conditions which the field had not yet achieved. The "favourable conditions" comprised lower transport costs, the availability of speculative capital, and stable metal prices.

Transport costs had been the major obstacle for Henry and later the Cloncurry Copper Mining and Smelting Company. The closest port was Normanton, over two hundred miles to the north and outlet for the Croydon gold field. To the east lay Townsville, nearly five hundred miles distant. A railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria had long been the dream of pastoralists and gougers in north-west Queensland, but for over two decades hopes were continuously deferred. The McIlwraith government proposed a transcontinental railway from the Gulf to Roma to be financed by British capital in return for land grants in 1883, only to be defeated by Griffith and his supporters at the polls that same year. Hostile to any form of land grant railway, the new government proposed instead a state-constructed line to Normanton. Plans for the Cloncurry-Normanton section were adopted by the parliament in 1886, but before construction was commenced, appropriations were transferred to a line from Normanton to Croydon, where gold yields had returned remarkable results since the field's discovery the previous year. Four years later, parliament again appropriated funds for the Cloncurry-Normanton line, and rails and fastenings were unloaded at the Gulf port. Again the line was never constructed: a financial crisis culminating in the collapse of the Queensland National Bank torpedoed the project. Cloncurry still relied on the Cobb and Co. service from Richmond, and the irregular but costly haulage of private teamsters and camel trains. The Cloncurry-Normanton railway project was resurrected in 1901: enabling legislation for its construction by private enterprise was passed, but the syndicate delayed until 1906 when their £100,000 deposit was declared forfeit by the Morgan government.
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government finally decided to proceed with a railway to the north west. This connected Cloncurry to Richmond, thus giving the region access to the port of Townsville 250 miles more distant than Normanton. However, it was purely a cost factor which determined the matter as the Richmond-Cloncurry link required only 170 miles of new line and less expensive infrastructure. No doubt, the state also considered the additional advantage of substantially greater freight returns from mineral haulages over the longer distance. The first train from Richmond was welcomed by Cloncurry residents in December 1908, signalling an end to the isolation and prohibitive transport costs of teamsters which had impeded the unlocking of the field's mineral wealth.14

By the time the communication problems were overcome, capital was readily available, as British investors had turned to Australian mining after disillusioning experiences with foreign railway projects, banks and financial houses. The substantial dividends yielded by Mount Lyell, Mount Morgan, Broken Hill and Western Australian gold mines spurred speculation in Australian mining scrip. New mining company listings on the Melbourne stock exchange between 1896 and 1900 were almost double those for the preceding five years, and the trend was sustained during the first decade of the twentieth century as a result of British capital inflow. "While other forms of British investment in Australia languished", comments Hall, "there was a relatively large flow into mining."15 Promoters and mine managers competed for British money to open up new fields, and in some cases, to reopen abandoned mines. Many of these new mining companies failed partly because promoters tended to splurge working capital on expensive machinery, rarely assessing ore reserves with any degree of thoroughness, and partly because investors sought immediate returns on their outlays once mining was commenced. Geoffrey Blainey succinctly relates the pattern:
Optimistic directors, spurred on by dividend-hungry shareholders, gambled on making enough to finance further exploration or pay a dividend. This practice was accentuated by the system of time payment of shares which characterized the "No Liability" mining company. If the mine took too long to pay, many shareholders tended to forfeit their shares rather than pay more calls to the old company.

Further, Blainey claims that forfeitures were "infectious" but a company "which refused to erect machinery might be left with few shareholders who collectively were too poor to finance the high cost of mining difficult terrain." Consequently, many mines were prematurely abandoned after the surface lodes were exhausted, earning for some Australian promoters notoriety for dubious financial practices. On the other hand, the more financially conservative British investors sought mining debentures, the most secure form of investment. The practice of underwriting new developments by debenture issues became increasingly appealing: these were fixed interest securities, attracting specified rates of interest and the repayment of the principal at maturity date, raised against the assets of the company. By 1914, many Australian mining ventures were British controlled as a result of under-writing capital expansion in London.

Copper prices steadily increased to over £100 a ton by 1906. With the railway link to the field due to be completed within two years, the mine owners at Cloncurry decided that "favourable conditions" now existed, and floated their properties into public companies which were registered on both the Australian and London stock exchanges. The Hampden mines were floated in March 1906 to tap speculative capital. Registered in Victoria as Hampden–Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited, the new company acquired the mines held by Orr, Knox and Schlapp for one half of its registered share capital of 200,000 £1 shares. Of the remaining 100,000 shares, 25,000 were earmarked for
subscribers in Australia, 25,000 were issued to British investors, and the balance was held in reserve. The flotation attracted widespread interest: 57,523 applications were received for the Australian allotment and over 40,000 applications were lodged with London brokers. Soon after, the Hampden company greatly enhanced its assets by acquiring the promising Duchess deposits in return for 15,000 of its reserve shares and a £15,000 cash settlement, thus reducing working capital to £35,000. The Mount Elliott properties were floated in Melbourne the same year, but within a few months British investors managed to take over the venture by forming Mount Elliott Limited, registered in London and Victoria in June 1907. The new company had a share capital of £750,000 divided into 150,000 shares of £5 each, of which 120,000 were issued as fully paid in exchange for its colonial predecessor's certificates, and the balance was placed in reserve. The new company fired the imagination of British speculators and, within only months, they were paying more than fifty percent above par for shares in an enterprise which had produced little more than test parcels of ore.

Even before the rail link from Richmond reached Cloncurry, the Hampden and Mount Elliott companies concluded an agreement with the state government to extend the railway to Mount Elliott via Hampden, a distance of seventy-four miles to the south of Cloncurry. The government agreed to construct the line and to pay half its estimated cost of £200,000, the other half to be furnished by the Mount Elliott and Hampden companies in the proportion of sixty percent and forty percent respectively. It was a shrewd arrangement for the companies as the line would ensure cheap transport for incoming fuel and equipment for their projected smelters and for outgoing copper. Notwithstanding, the under-secretary for mines commented in his annual report for 1908 that "any dogmatic pronouncement as to its future is even now premature".
Whatever the reasons for the under-secretary's comment on the region's prospects, the companies' financial structure probably concerned him as the state's major copper enterprise, the Chillagoe company, was experiencing financial difficulties. A leading characteristic of mining company promotion at the time was the allocation of substantial equity to purchase mining properties, one which had implications for a company's financial viability. By earmarking excessive equity as a purchase price at the outset, a company was heavily over-capitalising and leaving insufficient amounts for working capital. In such cases observes Hall, "it was not long before further capital had to be raised or the company reconstructed. Either of which processes usually meant that the capital of the mine concerned was increased". Hall claims, however, that the mining promoting company flourished by continual reconstruction. Both the Hampden and Mount Elliott companies were obliged to reconstruct to fund their development programmes. The Hampden company, with a working capital of only £35,000 following the purchase of the Duchess mine, reconstructed in July 1909 by increasing its capitalisation and concluding arrangements for a debenture issue to finance its smelters. The Mount Elliott company with eighty percent of its nominal capital in the hands of the vendors of the mines was struggling to cover its infrastructure costs. It issued the bulk of its reserve shares in a financial reorganisation in late 1909.

The mines to the north-west and west of Cloncurry - Palmtree, Dugald, Mount Cuthbert, Mount Oxide, Crusader, Dobbyn, Eclipse, Argylla and Sunset - were not developed with the same sense of urgency. The ore-bodies were rich, but there was no immediate prospect of railway extensions to reduce overheads. As the under-secretary for mines commented in 1909, "the mines in the western and north-western sections of the field... notwithstanding their intrinsic worth, cannot hope to become profitable until railway communication with Cloncurry or one of the Gulf ports has been established".
Indeed the high costs of transport directly contributed to the failure of the Queensland Exploration Company which reopened the Great Australia mine in 1907, but which accumulated considerable debts to 1909 and abandoned operations. In this case, premature expenditure of large sums of capital prior to the completion of the Richmond-Cloncurry railway created liquidity problems for the company. A two years delay in operations would have obviated the transport problems which absorbed large amounts of the company's capital.25

The most important company to the north-west was Mount Cuthbert No Liability. Registered in Victoria in 1907, with an authorised capital of £240,000, this company reconstructed two years later to finance further exploration of its reserves, although there was no prospect of large scale operations in the immediate future.26

Meanwhile to the south of Cloncurry, the field was a hive of activity. There was a dramatic increase in population as the Mount Elliott smelters approached completion.27 The vigour with which the company pursued its master plan can be attributed to the energy of its general manager, William Corbould, one of the outstanding men in Australian mining history. Corbould was forty-two years of age when he arrived at Mount Elliott. Born in Victoria, the son of a Ballarat tailor, he had graduated from the Ballarat School of Mines with a certificate in practical chemistry. In 1885, he secured employment with a Silverton company and later managed the venture. He also worked at the Central Broken Hill Silver Mine before departing for the United States in 1890. On his return to Australia, Corbould worked at Mount Morgan and Burraga (N.S.W.) when he gained a knowledge of copper. Thus his career before coming to Mount Elliott was relatively unspectacular, but his unconventional notions and driving force soon demonstrated his worth. Corbould remained at Mount Elliott as Managing Director of the enterprise until 1922. Within twelve months of his resignation he was to engineer the flotation of Mount Isa Mines Limited which confirmed his abilities and reputation.28
The mount Elliott smelters were operational by August 1910, and produced nearly £130,000 worth of copper in the remaining months of the year. Over the following three years, the Mount Elliott works treated 126,822 tons of ore, and returned to the company's shareholders successive annual dividends of £147,518, £165,957.10.0, and £110,638.10.0: in total £424,000. The Hampden company under Erle Huntley's management had a less spectacular beginning. Its furnaces were not blown in until March 1911. In the same three years, the Hampden smelters treated 85,266 tons of ore, and returned to its shareholders the first dividend of £140,000 in 1913. Shares in the companies were attractive propositions for investors, particularly overseas, as the local mining warden noted:

That this important centre has attracted the eyes of the mining world is evidenced by the fact that English and French investors now hold nearly all the shares in the Mount Elliott Limited, and are large shareholders in the Hampden-Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited, thus showing a growing confidence in the copper resources of this district which is admitted to be the richest copper belt in Australia.

The enterprise of the Mount Elliott and Hampden companies was readily praised in official circles. Before 1910, no mine had yielded a profit; but within only a matter of months the township of Selwyn with over 1,000 inhabitants had been constructed near the Mount Elliott mine, while at Hampden, hundreds of workers were engaged drawing wages considerably higher than most awards in the state. The railway and the tramway networks constructed by the companies contributed to the rapid expansion of output and mining activity. "These results are entirely due to railway communications", commented the warden, "a factor that has also largely added to the wealth of the pastoral industry in the southern section of the field". But the sudden burst of development was marred by two problems not uncommon to most new mining fields: disease and frequent accident. Poor sanitation was blamed for a
severe outbreak of typhoid at Malbon and Hampden in 1911, which provoked the warden to recommend "the installation of the closet-pan system - a system that should be insisted on in all camps of any size". In 1911, 109 separate accidents were reported but only one death and six serious injuries resulted. In 1912, the accident rate increased alarmingly: 150 persons were injured in 147 separate accidents; 13 were killed and 45 were absent from work for more than a fortnight. Both management and union representatives became more safety conscious, but accidents at the smelters remained high.

The production values of the two companies and the dividends declared and forecast by their directors were misleading in terms of the field's prospects. Mount Elliott seemed to be the more profitable but, as early as 1912, Corbould expressed concern over reserves of high grade ore. The directors authorised him to negotiate with the Hampden company for an amalgamation of interests which would overcome the fierce rivalry between the companies, ensure a more balanced development of the field, and rationalise capital overheads. But the Hampden company was lukewarm. Unhampered by London-based directors and shareholders clamouring for greater dividends, it had consolidated its prospects in 1911 by acquiring many promising mines in the region, enlarging its smelter and erecting a new converter plant. The breakdown of the amalgamation negotiations was signalled by the renewal of competition between the two companies to purchase additional mines, and the surprising manoeuvre by the Hampden company in placing an additional 50,000 shares at £2.10.0 each with investors to buy the rich Macgregor mines for £108,750 and to finance a railway link with the Duchess mine. The Mount Elliott company responded by either securing options on or purchasing outright the Hampden South Consols, the Trafalgar, the Floradora, the King's Cross, the King Solomon, the Danube and the Revenue mines to bolster its reserves.
The failure of the amalgamation overtures and a fire in the Consols in 1913 made Corbould even more determined to provide a long term solution to problems of ore shortages. In late 1913, after conferring in London with the company's directors, he announced that negotiations with the Hampden company would be resumed, not for an amalgamation, but to consider a joint venture to develop the struggling northern and north-western sections of the field which still awaited a railway from Cloncurry. Corbould and Huntley inspected a number of properties north of Cloncurry, but the proposal again came to nothing. Instead, Mount Elliott Limited pursued the project alone. In early 1914, it floated the Dobbyn and Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited with a nominal capital of £400,000 in £1 shares. The parent company retained 190,000 of the 300,000 actually issued with a two year option on the reserve balance. The new company lost little time acquiring the properties of the Queensland Exploration Company and Queensland Copper Freeholds Limited, a move which secured the Great Australia, the Argylla, the Dobbyn and other freehold mines, substantially boosting Mount Elliott's ore reserves when the lodes at its principal mine were virtually exhausted.

Thus on the eve of the outbreak of the war, the Cloncurry field was in the hands of Mount Elliott Limited, Hampden-Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited and three other companies - Mount Cuthbert No Liability, Corella Copper Mines No Liability and the small but profitable St. Mungo Copper Mines Limited, none of which had the advantage of railway facilities.

The Cloncurry companies experienced intermittent industrial unrest which proved almost as costly to smelting campaigns as shortages of high grade ores. From the outset, the two major companies had grappled with labour disputes culminating in a major confrontation
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over contract and piecework rates in 1913. Rankling disharmony climaxd in July that year when the Hampden company locked out its employees for alleged breach of contracts; Mount Elliott followed suit. Labour parliamentarians, particularly William McCormack, the former general secretary of the Amalgamated Worker's Association, bitterly attacked the companies' actions, claiming that not only was the union justified in its opposition to labour contracts and piece work but also the workers were the scapegoats in a sinister and calculated manoeuvre by management "to rig the share market". He alleged that the Hampden company had been unable to produce copper at cost estimates promised to shareholders, and urged the Denham government to invoke the Industrial Peace Act against the companies. Fully aware that his urgings would receive little sympathy from a government which had introduced the Act to discourage strikes in the wake of the 1912 general strike, McCormack at least was assured of strong support from local unionists, one of whom complained to the Cloncurry Advocate that the companies were "the first in this state to declare industrial warfare" as a consequence of "the erratic ways" of "grasping individuals" who influenced management policy. To resolve the dispute which, according to the Cloncurry Advocate, was causing considerable hardship and jeopardising the field's reputation among investors, Mr. Justice McNaughton convened a compulsory conference at which an agreement was concluded. In his annual report, the warden observed that the settlement "has since been loyally observed by both parties to the dispute". This was largely due to the influence and authority exercised by the A.W.A. organiser, Jack Dash, who had unionised the field in 1910 and subsequently held a tight rein on his members to avoid wild-cat strikes potentially damaging to the union's bargaining position.

The outbreak of war in Europe forced the Hampden company to breach the 1913 agreement. In order to continue operations after the dislocation of world metal markets, the company found it necessary
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"to make an arrangement by which their employees agreed to accept half wages and take the balance when the copper won should be sold". Though threatened at one time by a further decline in copper prices, the agreement survived until market quotations advanced to £60 per ton which made it possible to restore award wages.  

The first world war conferred four years of prosperity on the Cloncurry district, although the northern and north-western sections of the field remained handicapped by inadequate transport. The marketing difficulties created by the outbreak of war - the bulk of Cloncurry copper had been contracted to German manufacturers - were overcome with the demand from the Imperial government for munitions. Prices for copper (and lead) soared, from a high of £66 per ton in 1914 to £153 per ton in 1916. Copper producers were able to mine and treat medium grade and blended ores at a handsome profit. On the Cloncurry field, two additional smelters were erected to take advantage of war-time conditions. West from Cloncurry the Corella Copper Company No Liability was active for nearly four years. Formed in October 1912 with a modest share capital of £12,500, this small company acquired properties within easy access of the Hampden company's Macgregor mines which were linked by a light railway to Hampden. The company erected a small aging smelter at its mines and between May 1915 and June 1917 processed nearly 24,000 tons of ore before the lodes were abandoned and the company liquidated.  

To the north-west of Cloncurry, attention focused on the Mount Cuthbert company whose mines included Mount Cuthbert, Kalkadoon, Mighty Atom, Orphan and Little Wonder. Since 1909, the company had been plagued by financial difficulties. Reconstruction to erase a deficit of £15,000 in 1912 provided only temporary relief. When the state government allocated funds to construct a railway in two stages from Cloncurry to Mount Cuthbert, the company's directors formalised plans for the erection of smelters. Although the railway reached the
Dugald River in 1913, the second stage was not completed until late 1915, retarding the development of the company's mines and necessitating a £70,000 debenture issue and further financial reconstruction to provide the £100,000 required to implement its plans. Meanwhile, the Mount Elliott company agreed to smelt Mount Cuthbert ores on tribute, and for nearly two years the added cost of rail haulage to Mount Elliott absorbed substantial sums which the Mount Cuthbert company could ill-afford. The Mount Cuthbert furnaces were blown in during the early months of 1917, and in the initial smelting campaign treated over 25,000 tons of copper ore. Had not labour disputes curtailed operations over the following two years, the company probably would have discharged its debts.

The Hampden company paid handsome dividends during the war years, 1915-18: £40,000, £140,000, £52,500 and £35,000, making a total disbursement of £437,500 since commencing operations. Its smelters treated over a quarter of a million tons of ore in this period, averaging over 70,000 tons annually. Huntley, the general manager, pursued a policy of extending light railways to the company's mines to ensure sustained ore supplies and reduce transport costs. The Hampden company was fortunate that all of its mines were in the southern section of the field, in contrast to the Mount Elliott company whose most promising mines were over a hundred miles to the north of the smelters. The problem of transport was not the only matter which concerned Corbould and the Mount Elliott directors. The exhaustion of high and medium grade ores in the Consols and the parent mine at Selwyn deprived the company of profits from war time copper prices. Anxious to regain its position of paramountcy on the field, the company allocated substantial sums for development work at its northern mines, the enlargement of the smelters and the erection of a refining works at Bowen to process blister copper. In 1917 when its treatment works were remodelled, a new wave of industrial unrest restricted operations. In fact, all companies on the field
were affected by strikes, adding to the persistent problems of lack of water, shortages of skilled labour and scarcity of fuels.50

Industrial dislocation, exacerbated by the influx of I.W.W. workers (or Wobblies), was a constant worry for company managers.51 Even the A.W.U., the established union on the field, was concerned that several long-standing unionists who had enlisted in the armed forces were being replaced by militants unaccustomed to A.W.U. methods. In fact, all major mining ventures throughout Australia were experiencing labour difficulties, and companies were compelled to employ men less skilled in mining and smelting practices. When the A.W.U. northern district organiser visited the Cloncurry field in mid-1917 he noted with alarm that his union was losing credit with many workers:

We get an award, and there is no one to see that the award is carried out. If it is not carried out the men have to use direct action to get what they are legally entitled to, and that is what is giving the I.W.W. a strong hold in this and other districts.52

The Cloncurry Advocate estimated that there were nearly 100 I.W.W. activists on the field, and claimed that the A.W.U., smarting from the attacks of I.W.W. local leaders who labelled it "a bosses' union", was demanding a show of union tickets by workers under A.W.U. awards. One area severely disaffected by I.W.W. activists was Mount Cuthbert, although in 1917 they were out-maneuved in a dispute over contract work when the A.W.U. negotiated a settlement. The Cloncurry Advocate subsequently counselled unionists to be wary of I.W.W. agitators:

The I.W.W. has been trying to bring off a strike here for some time, but found that it had bumped up against something very solid and instead of meeting with success it had met with defeat. If every other centre does the same as Mt. Cuthbert, Stewart, Donovan and the rest of the I.W.W. will pass out of existence, and will not be able to boast of having gained control of the industries of the west.53
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Increased award wages in the latter part of the year averted more strike activity, although in October 1917 the Mount Elliott smelters closed down for several months after men refused to work until a new furnace had been reduced in size from 28 to 18 feet on grounds of safety.

The following year again witnessed a spate of industrial stoppages. In January 1918 operations were halted at Mount Cuthbert when workers struck in support of unionists engaged by the management but subsequently laid off when insufficient work was available at the smelters. The A.W.U. demanded successfully that the company reimburse the redundant workers their fares and expenses to Townsville. Nine months later, the same unionists supported woodcutters and carters who refused to handle a contractor's firewood. In this instance, the Premier, E.G. Theodore, who was in Cloncurry, intervened and effected a settlement. The Duchess mine was closed for most of the year as miners refused to work under the mine manager, Evans. At Mount Elliott, a strike was called over the dismissal of an engine driver, Heyfron. In the following December, Mount Elliott workers complained of victimisation of a dismissed crane driver: Corbould responded to their demands for his re-instatement by closing down the smelters until the new year. The last major strike on the field occurred at Mount Cuthbert in November 1919, again over the dismissal of a unionist who refused to obey a foreman's instructions. In this case, the men soon capitulated, aware that the tenuous state of the metal market could cost them their jobs permanently. The degree of industrial disharmony in the region was summed up several years later by John Mullan, the Labour member for the district, in a letter to Corbould who was then at Mount Isa:
Matters seem to be progressing satisfactorily at Mount Isa. There is a fine body of men working there. There is, of course, a sprinkling of Communists, but not sufficient to create industrial unrest. When I think of the difficulties with the I.W.W. who were at Mt. Elliott and other places, I fully realize how you were handicapped in those days.57

As Blainey comments, "most people in the Cloncurry copper belt counted 1918 a wonderful year".58 The Mount Elliott smelters treated 77,452 tons of ore, Hampden 75,301 tons and Mount Cuthbert 36,466 tons; the total output was valued at £1,373,927.6.6 and but for industrial stoppages it might have amounted to £1.5 million. Mining authorities and Queensland legislators had forecast that world copper prices would be sustained at a high level for years to come.59 However, prices slumped as wartime demands ceased, plunging the mining industry into a recession. From December 1918 when the Imperial government released controls on the copper market, prices depreciated from £112 per ton to £75 per ton in April 1919, little more than the cost of realisation for Cloncurry producers. The Hampden and Mount Cuthbert companies postponed their smelting programmes for the year: they resumed short campaigns in September and October respectively. In contrast, Mount Elliott management conducted a brief campaign in the first quarter of 1919 smelting some 20,000 tons of ore and returning £85,405 worth of copper. This company was less concerned with profits than with efficiency of operations, as the campaign was staged to prove to the directors and a group of visiting American engineers and metallurgists that medium grade ores treated on a large-scale could still yield good results. Nevertheless, 1919 was a year best forgotten by the Cloncurry companies as the total value of output was £1 million less than for 1918.60
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A temporary rally in world copper prices in 1920 afforded little relief: copper quotations dropped from £122 per ton in February to £72 per ton in December. Cloncurry producers were hampered by local conditions as well. Capital investment had diminished when dividends ceased. With the exhaustion of high yield surface ores, realisation costs escalated. More important, overheads rose when the Commonwealth government imposed tariffs on mining machinery and when workers insisted on maintaining high wage levels. The crucial factor was the shipping strikes of 1920 which held up supplies of coke, explosives and machinery parts on the one hand, and denied access to overseas markets on the other hand. Indeed, the under-secretary's forecast that the outlook for 1921 "was not encouraging" was an understatement. 

1920 heralded the demise of the Cloncurry field. The Mount Elliott company which had suspended smelting in March 1919 confined itself to development work at Mount Oxide, and concentrated on raising additional capital to finance the treatment of low grade sulphide ores. It turned to New York financiers through the U.S. firm of Hayden Stone and Company. The smelter superintendent visited the United States to study new treatment processes, but died abroad, almost simultaneously with the decision of Hayden Stone and Company not to renew their option to raise capital on the company's behalf, as their efforts had been handicapped by the exchange rate. The Hampden company, now relying solely on the Trekelano mine for copper ores, and the Mount Cuthbert company, burdened by liquidity problems, were forced to halt operations when the Commonwealth Bank withdrew the wartime arrangements of advancing funds on copper awaiting export.

Closure of the smelters had an immediate impact on the population of the region. Most mining and smelting workers collected their possessions and departed for Townsville and to southern capital cities: those who remained turned to the state government for relief.
Whereas prior to 1919 the state commitment to the mining industry in north-west Queensland was limited to railway construction, advances on roads, bridges, water supply and mining machinery under the 1906 Act, and the setting up of a government assay office at Cloncurry, the Theodore government introduced several expedient measures to alleviate hardships created by the companies' suspension of operations. In 1919, the Cloncurry assay office advanced to miners assistance at a rate of 30 shillings per week for single men and 40 shillings per week for married men on their undertaking to refund such amounts from the proceeds of ores sold to the state. In 1921, the scope of assistance was expanded by a guarantee of a minimum price of £75 per ton for ores sold to the Chillagoe state smelters. Rail concessions on ores freighted to Chillagoe were also introduced to encourage gougers and tribute parties to remain at Cloncurry. While benefiting individual miners, these schemes provided little incentive for the companies which alone had the capacity to resurrect the field. It was not until 1929, in one of the last actions of the McCormack administration, that a royal commission into the mining industry was set up to seek solutions and recommend government initiatives. By then it was too late: Cloncurry's fate was determined.

During the 1920's, the Mount Elliott company repeatedly attempted to revive the Cloncurry field. While the local mining warden was describing 1921 as a year of "stagnation", Corbould was in London trying to raise £360,000 for a new treatment plant and a railway to Mount Oxide. He failed and resigned. For many local workers who were observing the Hampden company dismantling some of its smelting plant and machinery for shipment to its mines in Papua, this dashed all hopes of the field's revival. However, the Mount Elliott company remained optimistic, but three factors were prerequisite to resuming operations: a rise in the price of copper to a minimum of £85 per ton; an amalgamation or at least a joint venture with Hampden Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited to treat ores at a centrally located
smelter; and additional capital to finance new work. A survey of the estimated reserves and the financial position of the two companies revealed that they were in desperate straits. Mount Elliott Limited claimed reserves of 1.876 million tons of ore with an estimated copper yield of 4.3 percent; the Hampden company's totalled 135,000 tons, 42,000 of which assayed at 10 percent and the balance at 3.1 percent, and an additional 70,000 tons in fluxes. Thus the combined reserves were sufficient to support a large mining concern, but extra working capital was necessary. The Mount Elliott company's assets were valued at £42,569 and it was out of debt, despite a loss of £15,842 for 1922, after placing 120,000 participating priority shares out of an issue of half a million. The Hampden company claimed liquid assets of £27,057 and £97,730 in shares in other companies. Neither company was viable separately, and a rationalisation of interests was the only hope. Consequently, negotiations on amalgamation were held, although the geographical separation of the two boards of directors delayed any prompt agreement. No sooner was a draft scheme for amalgamation on the equity basis of Mount Elliott 65 percent and Hampden 35 percent approved in principle than the Mount Elliott company announced that it had acquired through Brandeis, Goldschmidt and Company, Melbourne, the Mount Cuthbert properties for an undisclosed sum, certainly much less than the valuation of half a million pounds placed on the Mount Cuthbert assets. This move strengthened Mount Elliott's position, as the company's ore reserves were effectively increased by 193,500 tons assaying 4¼ to 7½ percent copper, almost double that of the Hampden reserves. Further, it effectively isolated the Hampden company in the southern section of the field where ore bodies were almost exhausted (only the Trekelano mine was considered valuable), and gave the Mount Elliott company a monopoly on the northern section, where alone sizable reserves remained. Soon after, negotiations were broken off, coming as a shock even to the chairman of the Hampden company, William Orr, who detected perfidy in Mount Elliott's strategy. It can be suggested that it was a calculated manoeuvre designed to force the Hampden company out of the
region. The suggestion is evidenced by the Hampden company's decision, conscious that even limited operations would prove uneconomic, to offer its assets for sale by tender in 1926, and by Mount Elliott's acquisition of its properties, with the exception of Trekelano, soon after. The Hampden company was struck from the share register in 1928. For its part, Mount Elliott Limited, which had strived so hard to secure a monopoly over the field's mines since 1912, ironically never produced another ton of copper for two reasons: depressed copper prices continued for another decade; and the company was unable to overcome financial difficulties.

The acquisition of the Mount Cuthbert properties impinged on Mount Elliott's capital reserves, but not as much as the costly gamble of constructing a metallurgical plant at Cloncurry to treat ores by an electro-chemical process in 1926. Although completed the works were never commissioned as the London directors ordered their closure when expectations of improved world copper prices failed to materialise. In 1929, the directors increased the company's capital by issuing 800,000 preferred ordinary shares at 10 shillings each to finance the recommencement of operations in 1930. The offer to subscribers was accompanied by a statement on negotiations with the Queensland government for a road for motor traffic from Dobbyn to Mount Oxide, and special rail freight rates, in addition to pledges of support for a petition to the Commonwealth government seeking exemptions from duties on machinery imports. In early 1930, the company's annual meeting was informed that plans for reopening the mines and treatment works had been deferred indefinitely on the new general manager's advice, partly because the state and Commonwealth governments refused to grant concessions, and partly because of continuing low world copper prices. The capital which the company raised was used to acquire a substantial interest in the South American Copper Company Limited in Venezuela.
The few gougers remaining on the Cloncurry field turned to Mount Isa Mines Limited to restore their hopes, but the new company was concentrating on lead production and was experiencing its own financial difficulties. It was not until the outbreak of war in the Pacific that copper mining revived. With plant acquired from Mount Elliott's three smelters on the Cloncurry field for a sum of £2,300, Mount Isa converted to treating copper ores from its own deposits and the Cloncurry mines then worked on tribute arrangements with Mount Elliott by parties of gougers. Between 1943 and 1946 copper valued at nearly £3.5 million was produced. When Mount Isa reverted to lead production in 1946, and the state smelters at Chillagoe were auctioned, the Cloncurry mines closed again. Mount Elliott Limited was finally liquidated in 1953.

In retrospect, the collapse of the Cloncurry copper empire can be attributed to a number of factors. Clearly the unpredictable movements in world metal prices were important and beyond the control of the companies. Labour disputes also cost the companies dearly, but nearly all mining enterprises in Australia were afflicted by labour problems during the war years. However, there were flaws in management strategies from the outset. First, Mount Elliott's decision in 1908 to construct its smelters at Selwyn was shortsighted. L.C. Ball's 1908 geological survey disclosed that the copper deposits were located over an area of several hundred square miles to the north, west and south of Cloncurry. By locating its smelters at the southern end of the field near the Mount Elliott deposits, the company was confining the ambit of its operations. Had it sited the smelters at Cloncurry it would have been able to draw on ore supplied from mines to the north and west of the town to supplement ores from the Mount Elliott mine once the rich surface lodes were exhausted. By 1913 the cost of freighting ores from its northern properties offset the profits from the Consols mine which had been acquired to sustain smelting operations.
Second, the rivalry between Mount Elliott Limited and the Hampden company and their failure to amalgamate in 1912 not only proved expensive for both companies, but also contributed to the haphazard development of the field. Corbould foresaw the folly of competition but the Hampden company, having acquired the Duchess, Trekelano and Answer mines in the southern section of the field, was confident that it had secured sufficient reserves to assure its future. When Mount Elliott retaliated by purchasing the Consols and a number of other mines north-west of Cloncurry, the Hampden company outlayed over £100,000 for the Macgregor group to consolidate its ascendency. In short, the rush by both companies to acquire additional freehold properties at inflated prices greatly reduced their working capital and overcapitalised mines which still required substantial expenditure to tap the lodes. Had Corbould's amalgamation proposals received more intensive scrutiny by the Hampden directors, who no doubt rejected the scheme on the grounds of imminent dividends, considerable unnecessary expenditure would have been avoided. Even the under-secretary for mines commented: "Combinations may, no doubt, be prejudicial to the interests of the community, but where, as in the present instance, they make for efficiency and economy, they deserve all the encouragement that can be extended to them". Third, both companies erred in declaring sizable dividends in the early stages of operations. Had dividends been more moderate and portion of the profits transferred to a capital reserve fund, the companies could have financed exploration and new machinery at the mines, and transport facilities and new treatment plant for the smelters, when high grade ores were depleted, rather than seeking additional funds through reconstructing the companies periodically. Once dividends ceased, it was more difficult to raise further working capital from disheartened investors. Fourth, the failure of the companies to adopt new treatment methods directly contributed to higher realisation costs, ultimately influencing the closure of the smelters on the Cloncurry field. The companies relied on conventional methods of ore dressing by gravity mills, and smelting.
by blast furnaces. Treatment of ores assaying less than ten percent copper content was a dubious economic proposition. Copper flotation, which had been successfully used in the United States since 1912, achieved a recovery rate twenty percent higher than gravity concentration. In fact, Blainey claims the success of the flotation method of treatment was a major factor in the recession of metal prices in the 1920's. In 1917, Corbould acquired a small flotation mill from the Great Fitzroy mine. The experiments conducted at Mount Elliott were inconclusive, and the mill was closed down. By the early 1920's there were very few copper producers not employing flotation treatment plants, and it was not surprising that the under-secretary for mines commented in 1926 that the depression in the base metal industry in Queensland was "due primarily to obsolescence of plant and methods of treatment".

It was not until the 1950's that Mount Isa Mines reinstated the reputation of the north-western Queensland mineral fields as the country's leading copper producer. However, it was during the 1920's that its management made several decisions vital to the field's future development. Ironically the decisions were William Corbould's. He founded Mount Isa Mines Limited in 1924, and was its first managing director. He appointed a geologist as general manager to test the ore reserves over an extensive area; he directed the search for capital and after several setbacks secured the support of London financiers; and he negotiated the extension of a railway from Duchess to Mount Isa, even though a number of the cabinet ministers who approved its construction were later accused of trafficking in Mount Isa shares. Further, Corbould endeavoured to test new treatment methods, and from his lead, the company maintained a tradition of consciousness of metallurgical innovations. In 1937 when the enterprise yielded a profit, no dividends were declared, and over the succeeding decade all profits were reinvested in the company's future. In many respects, Mount Isa Mines avoided the pitfalls which had brought down the Cloncurry copper giants.
## Tonnages of Ore Treated: 1910-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mount Elliott</th>
<th>Hampden</th>
<th>Mount Cuthbert</th>
<th>Corella</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>16,585</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>41,922</td>
<td>17,211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>54,531</td>
<td>22,465</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>30,369</td>
<td>55,590</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>18,757</td>
<td>60,836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>4,232</td>
<td>69,708</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>7,761</td>
<td>72,372</td>
<td>8,887*</td>
<td>13,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>16,679</td>
<td>76,135</td>
<td>25,562</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>77,452</td>
<td>75,301</td>
<td>36,466</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>19,796</td>
<td>23,250</td>
<td>11,287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
<td>69,598</td>
<td>33,096</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*T treated by Mount Elliott smelters by agreement prior to furnace completion at Mount Cuthbert.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mount Elliott Ltd</th>
<th>Hampden-Cloncurry Copper Mines, Ltd.</th>
<th>St. Mungo Copper Mines Ltd.</th>
<th>Corella Copper Co. N.L.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>147,518. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>3,000. 0. 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>165,957.10. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>4,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>110,638.10. 0</td>
<td>140,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>1,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>40,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>5,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>5,000. 0. 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
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<td>140,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>1,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>52,500. 0. 0</td>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>35,000. 0. 0</td>
<td>1,000. 0. 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above listed companies were the only ones to declare dividends for the period.

REFERENCES

1. A.C. Lock, *People We Met*, Townsville 1950, pp.200, 214. Lock recalled the countryside as "scorched plains, bearded liberally with turpentine bush, spinifex and ant hills, alternated with brown grey hills, covered with stunted gum, beefwood, bloodwood and gidgee".


4. Henry and later the Glasgow syndicate were inspired by the success of the Peak Downs mine. Located near Clermont, the mine produced over 100,000 tons of copper before closing down in 1883. "The Peak Downs company paid dividends of £215,000 on a paid capital of £33,334, but got into financial difficulties in 1878 through declaring a dividend of £100,000 on copper that had not been sold, a severe fall in the price of copper intervening between the declaration of the dividend and the sale of copper stocks on which the dividend had been declared". *Queensland Government Mining Journal*, 51 (June 1950), p.530.


7. Knox, a former bank clerk and later Federal member for Kooyong, was at various times a director of Mt. Lyell Mining and Railway Co., Chillagoe Railway and Mines Limited, Broken Hill Proprietary Co., Hampden Cloncurry Copper Mines Limited, and numerous other companies. Jamieson, a mining surveyor, became the first general manager of B.H.P. and a director from 1906-1926, a director of Mt. Lyell and many other base metal mining companies. Baillieu, a Victorian Legislative Councillor, was probably one of Australia's best known investors with interests in mining, railways, breweries and manufacturing. Patterson, a former grazier, was one of the original syndicate which developed Broken Hill, and whose mining interests in other companies were very considerable. Orr, Keats and Schlapp were also connected with Broken Hill, Mount Lyell, Cloncurry and Chillagoe companies at various stages; while J.S. Reid, a journalist, built the profitable Silverton Tramway, and floated the Emu Bay Railway Company and Chillagoe Railway and Mines Limited.


11. Burketown, also on the Gulf, had diminished in importance after the ocean cable from Java was diverted to Darwin.


14. Ball pointed out that the railway conferred substantial savings on mineral cartage. Previously it cost an average £8 per ton to transport ores from the mines to Richmond and then 17/6 per ton to Townsville by rail. Now, miners would pay an average £2/10/- per ton to haul ores from the mines to Cloncurry and then £1/4/6 per ton to Townsville by rail. Thus miners would reduce transport costs by over £5 per ton on ores. Ibid., p.233.


18. Ibid., 8 (January 1907), p.2. The directors of the Hampden company were men with considerable reputations for successful management, and included Baillieu, Keats, Schlapp, Orr and Patterson.

19. Ibid., 8 (July 1907), p.327.


22. Floated by Chillagoe Proprietary Limited in 1898, Chillagoe Railway and Mines Limited was compelled to reconstruct in 1902 and 1905 (and again in 1913) as it was unable to meet its financial obligations, including debenture commitments, from the earnings of its operations. Between 1898 and 1914, the company lost nearly £2 million.


25. Ibid., p.51.


27. The population increased from 2,246 to 2,872 in only twelve months. The estimates included approximately 150 Chinese engaged in market gardening.


29. For details, see Annual Report of Under-Secretary for Mines, 1911, pp.55-6; 1912, pp.55-6; 1913, p.63.

30. Ibid., 1912, p.49.

31. Ibid., 1911, p.51.

32. Ibid., p.55.

33. Ibid., 1912, p.56.

34. "The operations of this company are assuming large dimensions, and with the developments that are taking place at Hampden, the Duchess, Trekelano, Mount Mascotte, and Scalper mines, together with the enlargement of the smelting plant, and the erection of a new converter plant, indicate that this company will be the leading mining company on this field at no distant date". Ibid., 1911, p.53.


39. St. Mungo Copper Mines Limited was a very small but highly profitable company operating south of Duchess. Its ores were treated by the Hampden company and over seven years returned £15,000 in dividends to its shareholders. In the far north west of the field, the Mount Oxide mine was held by a British company, Mount Oxide Mines Limited, formed in mid-1912. It had a close connection with Mount Elliott Limited and was absorbed by that company soon after the outbreak of the war.

40. The Labour member for Flinders, John May, whose electorate encompassed the region, read the dismissal ultimatum into Hansard on 24 June 1913, and tabled a "Notice to Contractors", authorised by Erle Huntley, general manager of Hampden Cloncurry Copper Mines Ltd., which read: "Herewith I enclose a notice to employees, from which you will note that it is the intention of this company to close all our works and mines on the 5th June next providing the terms of the agreement mentioned are not adhered to by the Amalgamated Workers' Association. You will therefore cease to forward supplies to this company until further notice". Q.P.D., CXIV, p.117.

41. Ibid., pp.255-7.

42. Ibid., p.117.


44. Dash commanded respect among the workers who rarely disputed his judgment. For example, in May 1911 when McCormack, general secretary for the union, wrote that he would "be pleased if you could keep your chaps quiet out in Elliott until we have had settlement in the sugar as any disturbance in our mining districts will greatly weaken our chance of bettering the sugar workers lot", Dash maintained an industrially peaceful area for several months. See author's Ph.D. thesis, "The Public Life of William McCormack, '1907-32", James Cook University of North Queensland, 1973, p.62. Corbould paid testimony to Dash in his reminiscences, claiming that after Dash's departure from the field, there was a marked deterioration in industrial relations. W. Corbould, "The Life of Alias Jimmy", MS3191-2, Mitchell Library, p.372.


46. For details, see: Ibid., 1917, p.64.

47. Ibid., 1915, p.60. The Queensland Government Mining Journal recorded the company's difficulties in December 1912: "It is no secret that the directors have had to fight very hard to get their railway begun....It is well known that...[they] intend to use every effort to maintain the independence of the property so far
as possible. The problem they have ahead certainly is finance. Still, if they go on opening up ore as they are doing, there ought to be no real difficulty in raising any additional capital they may require". 13 (December 1912), p.596.

48. The government announced its intention to extend the railway to Mount Oxide, via Dobbyn, in 1916, but the project was abandoned on the recommendation of the Public Works Commission.

49. In May 1916, Mount Elliott Limited increased its capital by the issue of 100,000 shares of £5 each to finance its development programme and upgrading of the smelters. Queensland Government Mining Journal, 17 (August 1916), pp.364-5.

50. The companies pressed the state government to open up the Bowen coalfield, but the railway to Bowen was not completed until after the war.


52. Worker, 16 August 1917. I am grateful to D.W. Hunt, History Department, James Cook University for use of his research notes on militant labour organisations in North Queensland.


54. Annual Report of Under-Secretary for Mines, 1917, p.64. The strikers objections were hardly justifiable.

55. Ibid., 1918, pp.61-62. Opponents of the Labour government attempted to raise the spectre of a serious IWW threat to industry in the north-west during the 1918 session of parliament. For example on 13 June 1918, Theodore rejected a call from E.W. Swayne, the member for Mirani, to "take steps as are essential to prevent the total destruction of our mining undertakings through the action of IWWism and perhaps enemy influence". Q.P.D. CXXIX, p.265.

56. Ibid., 1919, p.57.


59. For example, E.G. Theodore, the Queensland Treasurer, gave evidence to the Select Committee on the government purchase of the Chillagoe Company's assets, claiming: "When the war is over, high prices will be maintained probably for years, but I do not think they will be maintained at £130 a ton, but they will be maintained at £90 a ton probably for years after the war is over". He quoted the Mining and Engineering World (Chicago) issue of 22 July 1916 which predicted continuing high copper prices because of "an accumulation of postponed work". Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1916-17, Vol. 3, p.402.


61. Ibid., 1920, pp.1, 9, 56.

62. Ibid., pp.57-60.

63. In 1918, the state advanced loans in aid of deep sinking totalling £12,393; £8,297 to prospectors; £1,838 for roads and bridges on mining fields; and £5,424 under the Mining Machinery Advances Act. Annual Report of Under-Secretary for Mines, 1918, p.1; ibid., 1919, p.56.

64. Ibid., 1921, p.48.

65. For details of the recommendations, see "Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Mining Industry of Queensland, Q.P.P., 1930, I.


67. Ibid., 1923, p.52.

68. Mount Cuthbert had raised £56,000 from shareholders in 1919, and attempted a further reconstruction in 1922 but a combination of annual losses, continuing low metal prices, and debenture commitments forced the company's directors to offer its assets for sale. Ibid., 1923, p.52; 1924, p.52.


71. Blainey asserts that the company "had infringed a foreign patent", but no mention of this reason for closing down the plant can be located in official sources, which persist that the cost factor influenced the decision. There is however mention of planned modifications to the Cloncurry plant in 1928.

73. Ibid., 3 (February 1930), p.44.
76. Annual Report of Under-Secretary for Mines, 1926, p.1. Mount Lyell, the only copper mine in Australia to work through 1922, owed its salvation to the adoption of the flotation process.
TOWNSHIP OF SELWYN.

TERMINUS OF THE CLONCURRY-MOUNT ELLIOTT RAILWAY.

ON THE WAY TO THE HAMPDEN AND MOUNT ELLIOTT COPPER MINES.

RAILWAY BRIDGE OVER THE CLONCURRY RIVER, ONE MILE AND A-HALF FROM CLONCURRY.