

1917-18-19.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA.

REPORT

OF

THE ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING 30TH JUNE, 1918.

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SETTLEMENT OF RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Should there be any members of our Australian Army, who on their return are desirous of settling on land in the Territory, I can recommend no more suitable area than that on the East Alligator River, in the vicinity of Oenpelli. The soil is good, we know that marketable butter can be produced, and pigs grown with the minimum of trouble, while crops of various kinds can be readily cultivated.

He would be a poor sort of pioneer who could not make good, and a worse one who would feel despondent for long with as neighbours two such cheery and capable optimists as Mr. and Mrs. Cahill, who pioneered the district when the nearest neighbour was many days' journey away. They would act as guides and counsellors to newcomers. It is necessary, however, for many reasons, that only married men accompanied by their wives should be allowed to take up land in that district, and it is equally necessary that man and woman should be possessed of the true pioneering spirit without which there is no hope of success.

FREEZING WORKS.

Early in the year a dispute occurred between the Company and the Queensland Branch of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union regarding the rate of wages for the ensuing season, which eventually reached a deadlock, and it was decided not to open for the season. Ultimately, negotiations were resumed, and resulted in an agreement. But six valuable weeks were lost, and instead of 40,000 to 50,000 bullocks being treated before the drying of stock route waters precluded the travelling of cattle, only 29,011 could be handled. The small output meant a serious loss to the Company and to the Railways. The cattle treated all belonged to the Northern Agency group of stations and Victoria River Station, none offering from private stations.

From information to hand, it is clear that private station owners, even within 100 or 200 miles of the rail-head, find it pays better to overland their cattle to Queensland or even South Australia, where they arrive as stores, than to sell to the local Company because of the high costs of treatment here compared with Queensland. Unless some change occurs the Works will, therefore, not prove the stimulus to pastoral settlement that was anticipated.

ABORIGINES.

The new Ordinance has met with some disapproval, but when its provisions are generally understood I venture to think that the bulk of the community will commend its provisions, especially those dealing with the employment of natives in town areas, where some discipline will in future be exercised over the native employee. The "combo" and his sympathizers naturally resent the drastic penalties for habitualling consorting with the aboriginal female, and keeping her as a mistress.

The native servant is exceptionally well treated in Darwin because of the scarcity. The wage is usually from 5s. to 10s. per week with food, clothing, and tobacco. It is not a subject for remark to see an aboriginal party drive to the picture show in a motor car. Were such his only dissipation, there could be no objection, but, unfortunately, grog, and even opium, are obtainable from certain whites as well as Chinese, and rarely will the native be induced to inform. Having little knowledge of the value of money, he is easily persuaded to pay whatever he has for what may take his fancy at the moment.

The Darwin Compound, with its Hospital and School, under the charge of Superintendent McDonald and Mrs. McDonald, continues a valuable institution, both the authority and influence of Mr. McDonald being recognised by white and aboriginal alike as conducive to good in the community.

Protector Cahill and Oenpelli Station are becoming of greater usefulness to the native population, and more and more "myall" aborigines come there from districts far afield for treatment and inter-communication.

The establishment of the Daly Farm as an aboriginal station should also prove of value in time to come.

Some improvements are being effected at the Alice Springs Compound and School, where Mrs. Standley continues her valuable work.

It is unfortunate that Undoolya blocks in the Macdonnell Ranges were not stocked by the Government, and utilized as an aboriginal station, as I recommended in 1913. By now the station would have shown a handsome profit, one that owing to the increased value of stock would have itself provided for all expenses connected with aboriginal protection.

LIQUOR DEPARTMENT.

The business as a whole is still conducted at a profit, although the Victoria Hotel, chiefly reserved for travellers and visitors, and has no public bar, shows a serious loss. The Pine Creek Hotel is now also conducted at a loss since the rail-head was transferred to Katherine. The Club Hotel alone is able to make ends meet in the boarding part of the business. So far the Supervisor's anticipations of last year have not been realized.

"OENPELLI" ABORIGINAL STATION, EAST ALLIGATOR RIVER.

REPORT BY THE MANAGER AND PROTECTOR, P. CAHILL.

Stock.

Horses and Cattle.—The horses have not done nearly so well this year as other years. The long wet season was against the stock doing so well as usual. The continuous rain during January and February (about 50 days) kept me from dipping, thus giving the tick and buffalo fly a big hold on the cattle and horses, and the stock suffered accordingly. As soon as the ground hardened, I had the cattle and horses mustered, dipped, and the flies (buffalo) burned off the stock, as they stood in the drip yards, after passing through the dip bath. The increase may seem disappointing, but if you remember the cows were timed to start dropping about 1st June, and up to date the calvings have been very good.

Pigs.—The pigs are getting rather wild, as the natives do a lot of killing among them, scaring them at every chance. I have had two under arrest, and pointed out to them that the pigs were the property of the Government, and that something would happen to the next native that was caught pig killing. I anticipate some difficulty in stopping the killing, but think I can stop it before very long.

Goats.—The goats also did very badly during the continuous rain, and a number of them died.

Snakes during the very wet season were very numerous, so I gave a reward for every poisonous snake killed—three sticks of tobacco for every poisonous snake killed in the paddocks, and two sticks for each snake killed outside the paddocks. The small reward induces the natives to kill the snakes that otherwise would be given a wide berth, over a hundred snakes being paid for during the year. Often a native comes and says, "Cow dead. Snake been bite him," and I at once send out, and if the cow is not too far gone the skin and flesh is saved. Natives think nothing of eating an animal that has been snake bitten, always providing that the flesh is fresh.

Dingoes are a curse here, and poisoning them is difficult on account of the pigs. I generally put poisoned fat into tins that the pigs cannot get their snouts into, and nail or wire the tins on trees or sticks near the pads where the dingo is likely to come along. Boys are sent out to drag a trail with something stinking, and then plant near and shoot the dingo as he comes along. A few are got at times.

Natives.

The station hands and their families seem very contented, and all disputes are referred to me. Wife beating at the camps is almost a thing of the past. I have had great trouble in preventing wife beating, and am now sure that the preventing of this practice was the main cause of the Romula poisoning case. At first the whole of the male natives were under the impression that their women were to be their bosses, but a little explaining soon showed them their error. The mode is thus—should a woman become sulky or jealous, the husband, instead of knocking her down with a stick (and then having to fight her relations), brings his wife up before me. Very often I can fix the matter at once. At other times I have to let the husband take a piece of leather, and give her a few strokes. Very often the dispute is settled on the way from the camp to the station. The men now see the matter in its proper light, and often in the camp when a *lùbra* is out for a fight, a voice will call out, "Take her up to the boss," and she is quiet at once. As a sequel to the above, there has not been one fight with clubs or spears this year. The women have a bit of a scrap among themselves now and again, but it soon ends.

The outside natives come into the station very frequently, and become very friendly with the station hands and any other tribes that may be near the station. In past years this never occurred, only on occasions when a ceremonial corroboree was on. As I am writing this, a crowd of about 60 natives from between the Liverpool and Goyder Rivers have just arrived. These meetings between the wild bush natives and the station hands have a very beneficial effect on the bush natives. They can see how the station hands are treated and fed, and I think that has a better effect upon them than anything else in civilizing them.

Work on Station.

Butter.—Butter-making was carried on in an experimental way during the latter end of 1917, nearly half-a-ton being sent to Darwin, and good reports were received from the consumers. It is being continued this year.

Fencing.—The large paddock was burned in several places and renewed. A wire-netting enclosure for the calves was erected, and all other fences were repaired.

Buildings.—The native dwelling house was re-roofed with bark. The goat house (50 feet x 40 feet) was repaired, and new roof put on. Our large stringybark house was re-roofed and repaired. The butter factory was extended, 50 feet x 9 feet was added to it, and a half side was enclosed with iron. An engine house was also added. A 4 h.p. boiler and foundations for same was put in place.

A bath and dressing house for the native milkman was erected, and a detention house with double walls for native prisoners.

A shelter shed for calves, and two gates, were made.

A trench 400 yards x 6 feet x 18 inches was cut across a plain so that a crossing to the landing could be made by punt instead of walking through water for a great distance. This canal will again be worked at, deepened, and lengthened as soon as I am able to spare time for inspecting the work.

Food, &c.

Maize.—There has been a small quantity of maize grown for home use.

Vegetables.—Sweet potatoes were grown for natives' food, and a kitchen garden was well stocked with vegetables for both whites and natives. As far as possible, foodstuffs are grown to feed the natives.

Beef.—Buffalo beef is mostly used for the natives.

Fish and Game.—A large supply of wild goose eggs are gathered yearly and used as food on the station. The number of eggs collected this year was far less than in 1917. The number collected this year was 11,200, and last year 22,000.

Tobacco.—Economy is practised in every way as far as possible. A large quantity of native tobacco is used, because all casual labour is paid for with tobacco principally.

(Signed)

P. CAHILL.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINES.

Mr. H. E. Carey.

With your permission, I have delayed submitting my Report for 1917-18 until now, when I am relinquishing the position of Chief Protector of Aborigines.

During my absence on leave, from October to February last, Mr. W. G. Stretton, S.M., kindly acted as Chief Protector, but as nothing of moment occurred during that period, and reports are to be kept brief for economy's sake, he does not submit a separate report for that period.

Owing to the need for strict economy, the scope of the Department's work has been necessarily restricted. Its two establishments, viz., Kahlin and Oenpelli, have been maintained with the same officers in charge. Reports from Protector Cahill (Oenpelli) and Protector MacDonald (Kahlin) are submitted herewith. Mrs. MacDonald is the teacher at Kahlin School, and extracts from a report upon the school by Mr. V. Lampe, Headmaster of Darwin School, is also submitted.

"The numbers at Alice Springs, where the scholars are principally half-castes from the Compound, and at Kahlin Compound School are about the same as before."

"Visits of inspection paid to Paraparap, Pine Creek, and the Kahlin Compound Schools, and specimens of the work from Alice Springs, show that despite the difficulties in dealing with mixed nationalities, a good standard of efficiency is being maintained."

At Oenpelli, industrial education of the natives is receiving special attention, and I submit Mr. Cahill's report, which shows that some progress is being done. During this (1918) dry season, 59 boxes of butter have been shipped from Oenpelli and sold in Darwin at the standard price of 1s. 8d. per pound.

The station has now 62 cattle on the way to Darwin, from which the gaol, Kahlin Aboriginal Compound, and the Leper Station will be supplied. The cost of meat for the gaol and Kahlin Compound at local retail rates being about £11 10s. per week, the saving by using cattle fattened on the Oenpelli Station will be very considerable, and show, with the butter sold, a substantial set-off against the expenses of running the station. Protector Cahill has been ably assisted by Mrs. Cahill and by his son, Mr. T. Cahill, who is an assistant protector.

At Kahlin, apart from the school for the children there is not much opportunity for education, as very few natives, except those in private employ or aged and decrepit, reside there permanently. As a "home" for the working aboriginal, with a hospital for the sick, and as a place where even the most uncivilized "myall" can learn immediately that working means payment therefor, I submit Kahlin has been and is entirely justified. The Government Medical Officer has kindly supplied the following notes upon the work at the clinic there.

Now the new Ordinance is passed, the usefulness of Kahlin should be more apparent to both European and aboriginal.

Under this Ordinance, future employers of aboriginal labour will have to provide suitable quarters for them, which to a good many will mean a considerable outlay, probably more than they will feel justified. Even if such premises exist, the difficulty of keeping the aboriginal from loneliness, especially when working hours are over, and yet of preventing him or her from the contamination of evil companions, still exists. While there is a place like the Kahlin, where the natives have much liberty, but can be kept from turning this into license; where the Protector can see they have satisfactory quarters and no unsatisfactory companion (at least of other races than their own); where they can indulge in many tribal customs and social habits, the difficulty for both employer and employee is considerably lessened. Under the new Ordinance, too, it will be possible to make such places as Kahlin and Oenpelli more reformatory. Up till now, a native or half-caste could please himself or herself about remaining in an institution or not. Under the new Ordinance, if instructed accordingly by the Chief Protector, a native must remain in such institution until given permission to leave. This will prove of much service in treatment of venereal disease.

The Ordinance No. 9, of 1918, to which I have referred, has been under consideration for nearly three years, and I am satisfied any successor will find it will help him to deal with this most intangible and very real problem of the aborigines. In drafting it, I took, with your permission, the unprecedented step (so far as this Territory is concerned) of submitting the subject for direct discussion at a public meeting. Apart from missionaries and one pastoralist, not a single suggestion was received from any member of the public.

During the past four years criticism of the Department has been plentiful, but, as stated above, when the same critics are to suggest a better way of dealing with the natives, they are singularly silent.

The Inspector of Police has kindly furnished me with the following particulars of offences that natives have been charged with from 1st July, 1917, to 30th September, 1918:—

Under the Police Act—

Offence	Number of Cases.
Drunkenness	10
Unlawful possession	19
Larceny	15
Escape custody	1
Assault	3
Murder	3
Insulting behaviour	1
Disturbing the public peace	1
Total cases	53
Total down	53
Aboriginal Ordinance—	
Prohibited area	59
Inducing leave reserve	1
Disobey orders	1
Leaving Institution without permission	1
Total number cases	115

The most serious of these is the murder by natives of Mr. Macdonald, at Auvergne, in the Victoria River District, and the attack upon the police by the murderers, which resulted in seven of the latter being killed. The tragedy appears to have been one of the inexplicable happenings. The victim was an inoffensive man, the usual "woman" difficulty does not appear to have had any share in the crime. The police and their helpers did splendid work in trying to arrest the murderers, in country and at a time when tracing them was most hazardous, but as this has been made the subject of a separate report to the Minister, I need not refer to it more fully here. The stern measures found necessary, although very regrettable, will probably effect more good than if the murderers had been arrested, brought to trial, and even executed in Darwin.

The relations of the Department with the various Missions continue to be most satisfactory. While on leave, I had the opportunity of discussing matters with the executive officers of the Anglican and Methodist Missions, and found them satisfied that the Department was only too willing to assist them. A new agreement has been made with the Anglican Mission, whereby half-castes from certain districts will be sent to the Mission as wards of the State, which will pay for their upkeep. The Hermansburg Lutheran Mission was the subject of a special inquiry made by me while I was on leave. The question of subsidizing a mission officered by enemy aliens and the method of distributing the income earned by the Mission were inquired into, and it was decided to withhold the subsidy in the meantime. It is satisfactory to report that inquiry showed that income was being used for mission work only, and certain rules in regard to its application are now under consideration.

In conclusion, I should like to express my thanks to Protectors Cahill and McDonald for their loyal and whole-hearted assistance; and (once more) to the Inspector of Police and his staff for the help they have so willingly afforded.

H. E. CAREY,
Chief Protector of Aborigines.

Darwin,
30th September, 1918.

KAHLIN NATIVE COMPOUND.

REPORT BY THE SUPERINTENDENT, MR. R. MACDONALD.

Industries.

At the Compound industrial operations have been carried on as steadily as a fluctuating supply of labour made it possible.

The aborigines, of course, preferring to avail themselves where opportunity offered of the paid employment outside.

All the buildings were attended to and painted, including the Government stables. All the horses at the Government stables were shod during the year.

The Darwin Pound, opposite the Compound, was grubbed, and partly cleared of stones.

The old Court House at Burrundie was removed and re-erected in the Compound.

The roads and footpaths in the vicinity of the Compound were cleared of noxious weeds and undergrowth, and the Compound supplied with firewood.

Government Stables.

On 1st November, 1917, the Government stables, with 7 horses, 2 ponies, 2 buggies, 2 buckboards, a spring cart, and a tip-dray were handed over to me to be worked by the aborigines, and up to the present, as far as I am aware, without complaint.

Population.

The average population for the year within the Compound was 235, including half-castes, who have increased by six.

Ration Expenses.

The average cost per meal for half-cast children, inmates of the Kahlin Clinic, old and infirm natives, and aboriginal staff working in Compound, amounted to 5d. per head per meal.

Health.

At the Compound Hospital regular daily treatment is supplied by the Chief Health Officer to inmates and visitors, and to my knowledge the health of the Compound has improved. Cases appear occasionally where natives conceal sickness, and prefer to adopt native cures, with the result that in the majority of cases they aggravate the trouble.

Discipline.

The discipline is good, the aboriginal is taking more kindly to it than in previous years, but there are a number who will overstep if given the opportunity, and it is with strict and impartial discipline only that satisfactory results can be obtained.

Blankets.

Blankets were distributed amongst the old and infirm, inmates of the hospital, half-caste children, and old visitors.

DISTRICT OF DARWIN.

Labour Conditions.

The demand for aboriginal labour has far exceeded the supply available, and as a consequence higher rates of wages than ever previously received have been readily paid by employers.

Crime.

The principal offences committed by natives are as follows:—(1) Drunkenness, (2) use of opium, (3) being found on prohibited areas; and those offences can at all times be traced to outside influences, but on account of the hostility of the aboriginal as a witness very little can be done in the way of securing convictions.

R. MACDONALD,
Protector of Aborigines.