

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, 1908.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S REPORT on the NORTHERN TERRITORY for the YEAR 1908.

Northern Territory of South Australia : Office of the Government Resident,
Palmerston, March 8th, 1909.

Sir—I have the honor to place before you the report upon the affairs of the Northern Territory for the year 1908.

POPULATION.

Statistics regarding population are collected and recorded by the Sub-Collector of Customs. With the exception of the arrivals and departures oversea and the record of births and deaths, the statistics of increase or decrease are of an approximate estimate only. To Mr. Stretton I am indebted for a copy of figures for 1908. They show a total population on December 31st (exclusive of aborigines) of 2,963, as compared with 3,166, the figures for 1907, or a decrease in population of 203. The excess of departures over arrivals and deaths over births account for a decrease in Europeans of 29 and in the Chinese of 219. The number of Japanese has increased by six, and of other nationalities by 34. The excess of departures over arrivals of Chinese amounted to no less than 184. The main contributing causes for this exodus were, I believe, firstly, the low prevailing prices for baser metals, which caused a serious decline in mining activity; and, secondly, to the demand arising in a neighboring State for coolie labor in agriculture of a sub-tropical character at rates which tempted scores of Chinese from this Territory. Whatever may be the cause, we can ill afford the loss of over 6 per cent. of population in 12 months, nor the loss of revenue and producing power which must necessarily follow.

The question of population cannot, however, be adequately discussed by a mere analysis of such figures as the foregoing and of the causes contributing to them. The question of to-day is not that of checking the loss of population caused by the departure of a few score of Chinese coolies—important though it is in itself—but the paramount national need for the early introduction of many thousands of Europeans to people this Territory, whose present insignificant population tends but to emphasise its emptiness. This urgent need can best be accomplished by a system of steady and continuous immigration, limited only by the means at the disposal of the controlling power, and directed towards land settlement. I have on previous occasions expressed the opinion that preparations should be made ahead for such a system by the classification of land, choice of suitable localities for settlement, by the provision of advances to enable settlers to work their holdings, and for grants of free and assisted passages to immigrants. I beg respectfully to repeat those recommendations, and to reaffirm my belief that in closer pastoral settlement, combined with agriculture (*i.e.*, mixed farming), lies the best channel into which to direct and encourage the energies of future settlers. It is for this industry that the land is most suited; by it settlers will more speedily than by any other be enabled to support themselves; it is more congenial to Europeans than pure tropical agriculture, and more likely than the latter to entice and hold an immigrant population and to ensure greater health and virility in its descendants.

AGRICULTURE AND MIXED FARMING.

It is pleasant to be able to announce the awakening of a practical interest in land settlement of a closer nature during the past few years, and particularly in the year under review. The figures are yet very insignificant

Exports show a serious falling off. The Customs figures represent the decrease at £104,693, towards which the decrease in cattle is stated to be £63,462, though as pointed out in last year's report the cattle exports for that year were overstated by about £44,500, which would materially reduce the comparative decrease for the past year. The decreases in exports of metals account for no less than £42,490. This shrinkage in metal output is almost entirely attributable to the inactivity in mining for copper and wolfram owing to the low prices obtainable, and is by no means indicative of a lessening of productive power.

PUBLIC WORKS AND ROADS.

Among the chief works completed last year were the erection of the Playford Courthouse, new wards and quarters at the Palmerston Hospital, and a police station at Timber Creek.

Twelve miles of new track were cut from the Edith River (a new crossing) to the 12-mile on the Pine Creek to Katherine Road at a cost of £220. The new track is considerably shorter than the original road, which was reported as beyond repair except at immoderate cost. The Katherine crossing, which has been a continual source of expense, received special attention at considerable cost, in spite of which, and of the light wet season we are experiencing, it again requires some repair.

ABORIGINES.

The condition of affairs regarding aborigines remains unchanged, unless it be perhaps that those natives who are frequenters of settlements have become even more disinclined for work, and prone to indulge in the evils to which for many years they have been exposed without check or guidance.

It is perhaps impossible to frame a law which would meet with general approval, because views upon the aboriginal question are widely divergent. That this is so, however, I submit is no answer to the demand which common humanity makes for protective legislation. For economic reasons, too, ordinary prudence calls for the preservation of a people who have done much to aid, and comparatively little to obstruct, pioneering in this country, and who under a reasonable law will be of material assistance in furthering schemes for future settlement.

Instances still occur of unauthorised removal of aborigines from the Territory into other States. Action is taken locally when possible to prevent this practice, if the fact is known, and only recently I have felt compelled to ask that action might be taken by the Hon. the Minister with the authorities of another State, with a view to securing their good offices in returning a young half-caste woman impudently enticed out of the Territory from a good temporary home. We have no law to meet such a case as this, and should the self-constituted guardian of the girl (for she is little more) oppose her return, such opposition can only be met, if at all, by the operation of the Aborigines Act of the State to which she has been removed. Such a position of dependence upon the laws of other States is undesirable.

A change has been made in the office of Protector of Aborigines. It was filled for many years past by the Government Medical Officer for the time being. At a time of temporary strain upon the present Government Medical Officer in his medical duties he was relieved of the work involved by his other offices of District Registrar of Births, &c., and of Protector of Aborigines. Sub-Inspector Waters was appointed to the former office and Mr. W. G. Stretton was appointed Protector.

The Protector's report is in Appendices (page 48).

A mission station was formed during the year at the Roper River. The Rev. J. F. G. Huthnance, who is in charge of the mission, was appointed a Sub-Protector of Aborigines. Mr. Huthnance's report has not yet reached me.

PUBLIC HEALTH—HOSPITAL.

The annual report of the Government Medical Officer will be found in Appendices (page 47).

Dr. Strangman notes an improvement in the health of the public on the preceding year. Notwithstanding this improvement, however, there was a greater strain upon the hospital staff. The average daily number of patients in 1907 was 17.58, and in 1908 rose to 25.4. In 1907 the lowest and highest number of patients were 10 and 24 respectively, whilst in 1908 they were 19 and 33.

The Matron left in December, and the Acting Matron, who took her place, died under unusually sad circumstances a few weeks later.

Much needed extra accommodation has been provided by erecting an additional building, which was removed from Yam Creek.

A pleasing feature in the Medical Officer's report is the account of the successful use of prophylactic measures against malaria previously existing at the Daly River smelter. It was deemed wise to make the treatment compulsory so far as Government employes were concerned, but I am pleased to state that the officers and men of the smelter most willingly seconded the efforts made in their behalf by submitting cheerfully to the regime prescribed. Some of the residents of the Daly unconnected with the smelter also joined in the campaign against malaria with advantages to themselves.

Beri Beri.—Two cases of the dry form, one of the wet, and two of the fulminating were admitted to hospital. This compares favorably with 30 cases last year.

Cases of dengue and simple continued fever were common during the dry season. No cause could be found for the existence of the latter.

ANTIMALARIAL PROPHYLAXIS.

During 1907 malaria assumed such a serious form at the Daly smelter, that almost every employé was invalided to Palmerston for treatment; and the death rate ran so high from this cause, that the institution of prophylactic measures became an urgent necessity. With the assistance of the Government Resident, who personally went to the Daly to institute the regime, a system of petolage, camp hygiene, and chinization was started and made compulsory amongst the Government employés, with the gratifying result that no case of malaria has since appeared amongst the Government employés, although the natives and outsiders suffer as badly as before. The whole experiment cost under £5.

I have, &c.,

CECIL L. STRANGMAN, Government Medical Officer.

His Honor Mr. Justice Herbert, Government Resident, Palmerston.

ABORIGINES.

Office of the Protector of Aborigines, Port Darwin, January 14th, 1909.

Sir—I have the honor to forward this my first report as Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory.

On my appointment I received instructions from you that the natives should be warned as to keeping their camps clean. I at once visited all the camps within the boundary of the township, and pointed out to the natives that their camps must be kept clean, otherwise they would be sent out of the township.

It was gratifying after a few days to find that the natives had taken the warning seriously, and a great improvement was made manifest. It is only fair to the natives to point out that King's Camp is surrounded by heaps of rubbish shunted there from the township before the advent of a district council.

However, the natives have burnt all they could of this rubbish. Notwithstanding all this I am still impressed with the idea of establishing a permanent camping ground for the natives outside the boundary of the township. This would not destroy the peaceful understanding that is so necessary should exist between the white settlers and the natives. The natives would be far better out of the township, those only who are employed to be allowed within the boundaries of the township.

Civilization with the aborigine is not always a success, and those who are employed on stations away back from populated centres are much healthier in appearance than those hanging about towns.

I have opened a register of the aboriginal half-castes, showing age, sex, and extraction. Up to date I have registered 48 males and 51 females, ages ranging from 1 to 25 years, and of the following extractions:—Europeans, 76; Chinese, 12; Malays, 4; Cingalese, 3; Philipinos, 3; French Creole, 1. I estimate that I have registered two-thirds of the total number of half-castes in the Northern Territory. I estimate that total to be 150—not shown in any estimates of population.

With regard to the population of the aborigines in the Northern Territory, there have been several estimates formed of the numerical strength of the natives, and those I have seen are, in my opinion, over estimated.

When stationed at Borroloola from 1888 to 1904, I took great interest in the native folklore, and with regard to the number of individuals comprising each tribe. I could find no tribe with more than 80 souls, and those were the tribe least known to civilization, and this I find obtains in other localities. There is a small tribe on the South Alligator River whose habitat is near to Caparigo, the late mission station, the full strength of this tribe is 22, and the whole tribe are now in Port Darwin and vicinity.

At this time of the year many of the river tribes meet in Port Darwin. I shall endeavor to obtain a list of the names of each tribe, with its numerical strength, and in the meantime I estimate the native population to be as follows:—

	Area. Square Miles.	Natives Numbers.
Coast natives from Victoria River on the west to Robinson River on the east ..	20,000 ..	5,600
Up-river tribes and intervening country	30,000 ..	4,600
Inland tribes from Newcastle Waters to southern boundary	473,000 ..	3,000
Melville Island	2,400 ..	400
Total	525,400	13,600

By far the greater number of natives are located within the coastal area.

The up-river tribes are fairly numerous, more particularly on the head waters of the Victoria, Fitzmaurice, Daly, Adelaide, Alligators, Goyder, Roper, Limmen, McArthur, and Robinson rivers. The tribes inhabiting the interior are few and far between.

The natives on our northern seaboard have for a great number of years been associated with a low class of Malay visiting our coast annually trepang fishing. This long intercourse has added a certain cunning to an already treacherous character of our natives, and which has led up to a greater number of crimes than on any other part of the north coast.

The natives and Malays were always bitter enemies in consequence of the latter taking away the native women, but the Malays being armed with rifles could always maintain the upper hand. In former years the natives gathered trepang for the Malays, and were paid in rice and a spirit named arrac, distilled from rice. This harsh treatment of our north coast natives has rendered it difficult to instil peaceful ideas into the minds of these natives, and is a strong reason why the Malay should be kept off our coast altogether. It is to be hoped that a better feeling will be established between the settlers and natives, which, I am sure, with a little tact, can be speedily accomplished.

I have opened at the E. S. & A. Bank an aboriginal trust account, and have standing to credit of that account the sum of £21 10s. 9d. One native, George Ingaroo shows a great inclination to save money, and has for years been dealing in horses. There is a sum of about £30 owing to him, and I hope to get most of it in during the next few weeks.

During my visit to the Roper River I visited the mission station, and was pleased to find them located on a nice spot on the left bank of the river some 70 miles from the mouth. The rev. gentleman in charge is enthusiastic, and will no doubt do a lot of good. I have, &c.,

W. G. STRETTON, Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory.

GAOL AND LABOR PRISON.

Palmerston Gaol and Labor Prison, Fannie Bay, January 9th, 1909.

Sir—I have the honor to submit my report for the year ended December 31st, 1908.

Returns showing the number of prisoners brought to prison and discharged, the amount of the prisoners' earnings, and a return showing the different diseases prisoners were suffering from while in prison, also the number in each case treated by the Medical Officer (attached herewith).

Sixty-one prisoners were brought to prison and 47 were discharged, the average number per day being 23.5, 31 was the maximum and 14 the minimum imprisoned at one time during the year.

The health of the prisoners has been good, with the exception of those suffering from chronic diseases amongst the Chinese prisoners, brought about by unclean living and excessive use of opium. One death occurred during the year, an aboriginal native from the Roper district, who, with four other aboriginal native prisoners, were admitted to prison on April 11th, all of them were suffering from influenza. The prisoner who died was also suffering from heart disease, and died on the 30th of May. Inquest held; verdict, died from heart disease.

Two prisoners were tried at the last Circuit Court for wilful murder, one was found not guilty and discharged, one was found guilty and was sentenced to death.

The conduct of the prisoners has been fairly satisfactory. During the year nine offences were committed and were dealt with by the Deputy Sheriff and visiting Justices. Chinese prisoners were the offenders in each case, and mostly for smoking at unauthorised hours. The usual sentences being solitary confinement on bread and water for periods of from two days to one week.

During the latter part of the year no less than 10 Chinamen have been brought to prison under sentences from 9 to 12 months with hard labor for supplying opium to aborigines. These prisoners are a most objectionable class for hard labor; when admitted they are in such emaciated condition that it is weeks, even when under medical treatment, before they are able to work.

During the year all the available prisoners have been employed at the experimental gardens, their work being principally clearing land for sisal hemp, rice, and other cereals.

The prison buildings are in fairly good order, the walls around the prison have been enlarged and made more secure, a good deal of labor and expense being incurred therein. The work was done by the prisoners, supervised by a skilled carpenter and myself.

A new scale of rations for aboriginal native prisoners came into force in June last, previously they were only getting half the quantity of meat and potatoes which the European prisoners were getting and without rice. They are now on the same scale as Europeans, they look healthier in condition and work much harder and are more contented.

One guard was appointed temporarily to watch over the prisoner sentenced to death at last circuit court, and is still retained on that duty.

The usual painting and limewashing was done to the prison buildings and the officers' quarters during year, and all are in fairly good order. The roofs of the guards' quarters have been found to be leaking, and I would respectfully suggest that same be repaired next dry season.

The health of all the officials has been good, and all have worked amicably together.

Return of Prisoners in the Palmerston Gaol and Labor Prison for the Year ended December 31st, 1908.

Offences.	Number in Gaol, December 31st, 1907.	Number in Gaol, December 31st, 1908.	Brought to Gaol during the Year.	Discharged during the Year.
Murder	4	4	2	2
Manslaughter	4	4	1	1
Attempt to murder	1	1	—	—
Assault, felonious	—	—	1	—
Assault, common	—	—	4	4
Larceny	1	1	7	7
Unlawful possession	—	—	1	1
Gambling	—	2	4	4
Resisting the police	—	1	3	2
Reckless discharge firearms	—	—	1	1
Idle and disorderly	—	—	3	3
Drunkenness	—	—	2	2
Selling opium to aborigines	3	13	14	4
Selling liquor to aborigines	—	1	7	7
Breach of Customs Act	1	1	8	8
Breach of Immigration Act	—	—	3	3
	14	28	61	47