

**THE IMPACT OF ‘DOOMED RACE’ ASSUMPTIONS
IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF QUEENSLAND’S
INDIGENOUS POPULATION BY THE
CHIEF PROTECTORS OF ABORIGINALS
FROM 1897 TO 1942**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how the perception of Aborigines becoming a ‘doomed race’ in Australia manifested itself and became embedded in the beliefs of white society during the decades between 1850 and 1870. Social anthropologists who engaged in scientific study and scrutiny of Aboriginal communities contributed to the erroneous belief. Their studies suggested that the physical evolution and ‘retarded development’ of a race with genetic links to ‘Stone Age’ beings could not continue to survive within the advancing culture of the white race. The anthropological determination of Aborigines as a doomed race gained further currency with the scientific understandings supporting white superiority. Consequently, the ‘doomed race’ theory became the dominant paradigm to emerge from previously explored social, anthropological and early settler society.

After 1897, the ‘doomed race’ theory, so embedded in the belief system of whites, contributed significantly to the pervasive ideologies that formed the racist, protectionist policies framed by the nation’s Colonial Governments. Even though challenges to the ‘doomed race’ theory appeared in the late 1930s, it continued to be a subterfuge for Australian State and Federal Governments to maintain a paternalistic administration over Australia’s Indigenous population. The parsimony displayed in the allocation of funding and lack of available resources contributed significantly to the slow and methodical destruction of the culture and society of Aborigines. Aborigines became wards of State Governments and each government’s Chief Protector of Aborigines supervised their every move.

The thesis investigates how Queensland’s first Aborigines’ protection act, the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (the Act), evolved to become law in 1897. Chief Protectors of Aborigines, appointed by the Government of the day to administer the Act, gained extraordinary powers to act and make decisions on behalf of successive governments with little interest in Aboriginal affairs. Amendments to the Act between 1897 and 1939 reflected the respective Chief Protectors’ personal agendas and attitudes towards Aborigines. Research outcomes show conclusively that the ‘doomed race’ theory became a means of masking the racism existing in society against the Indigenous people and allowed

governments to remove and dispossess Aborigines of their traditional lands without recompense or questions from whites seeking to capitalise on the economic fortunes unoccupied land offered.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been submitted previously to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference and acknowledgement is made.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many of the primary source documents retrieved in the research process contain a vast array of derogatory and racist terms to categorise and describe Indigenous people. The inclusion of such language and terminology cited in this Thesis serves to provide accurate records of events and comply with the conventions of research and writing papers of a historical nature.

In no way is the use of any of these terms intended to cause offence but its inclusion demonstrates the extent to which racial prejudice was the accepted social norm of white society in the era researched.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of Australian Aborigines becoming a doomed race manifested itself during the decades between 1850 and 1890. Scientific and anthropological studies argued that their 'primitiveness' retarded their social transition to the 'more advanced' culture of whites. The theories became firmly established in the beliefs of the white population. As Edmund Foxcroft wrote in 1941, 'the natives are generally looked upon as a primitive race of lowly intelligence, for whom little or nothing can be done'.¹ John William Bleakley, justifying his Government's paternal policies, wrote in his annual report for 1938 that:

experience has shown that without paternal guidance in very few cases can these people withstand the social evils of civilisation. ... One important difficulty requiring earnest consideration is how to relieve them from the retarding influences of the aboriginal association without unduly exposing them to the dangers above mentioned.²

Assumptions promulgated by social scientists took root in white society's beliefs. The affirmation of Aborigines being a doomed race shaped Aboriginal policy nationally until the late 1930s. As Russell McGregor states:

For the greater part of the past two hundred years, white Australians believed the Indigenous inhabitants doomed to extinction Even as it declined, the doomed race theory cast a long shadow over the newly emerging proposals for securing an Aboriginal future.³

Jean Woolmington was also emphatic that during this period, 'it was generally accepted that the Australian Aborigines were a dying race ...'.⁴

Anthropological conclusions in the decades between 1850 and 1890 stated that 'Aborigines, believed to be living representatives of primitive man, would be exterminated by the progress of civilisation'.⁵ M.M. Bennett,⁶ prefaced his writing in

¹ Edmund J. B. Foxcroft, *Australian Native Policy: Its History, Especially in Victoria*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1941, p. 11.

² Queensland State Archives, ID 336812, 336018, File No. A/58640, Bleakley, Annual Report for 1938, p. 22.

³ Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880 – 1939*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1997, Preface, p. ix.

⁴ Jean Woolmington, *Aborigines in Colonial Society: 1788 – 1850. From 'Noble Savage' to 'Rural Pest'*, North Melbourne, Victoria, Cassell Australia Ltd., 1973, Introduction, p. ix.

⁵ McGregor, 1997, pp. 14–22.

1930 with reference to Dr Ramsay Smith's statement of concern for the future of Aborigines appearing in the Commonwealth Year Book for 1909(p.158):

The problem of what to do with the race, the most interesting at present on earth, and the least deserving to be exterminated by us, and the most wronged at our hands, is not a difficult one to solve, were a solution really desired.

Significantly, governments and bureaucracies failed to make any positive changes to remedy the situation existing in 1909. The policies of protectionism, introduced to preserve the remnants of a supposedly dying race, continued to marginalise the Indigenous population, sustain racial intolerance and accelerate the destruction of Indigenous society. Katherine Ellinghaus contends that Australian policy-makers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries framed their policies and planned for the eventual disappearance of Aboriginal people, by the latter not adopting

white ways of earning a living and their incorporation into the nation's economy ... it was to be a two stage process, firstly, the 'doomed race' theory posited that people of full descent would soon 'die out'; and secondly, it was believed Aboriginal physical characteristics, and it was hoped, Aboriginality itself, would disappear altogether through biological absorption.⁷

Charles Rowley argued that in comparison to the white population, Aborigines were in the minority and were 'rapidly being exterminated', making it easy for whites to dismiss questions surrounding the future of Aborigines by asserting that there would not be one, as they were dying out.⁸ Ramsay Smith's concerns, in 1909, received corroboration 30 years later, in 1939, when Foxcroft referred to the comment by Australian anthropologist, William Stanner, that:

Australian native policy is a curious mixture of high intention and laudable objectives; almost unbelievably mean finance; an incredibly bad local administration, and an obstinate concentration on lines of policy which 150 years of experience have made suspect.⁹

The conflict between Stanner and the bureaucracy centred on the assumption, covertly ascribed to by the Government, that Aborigines would become extinct; an

⁶ M. M. Bennett, *The Australian Aboriginal as a Human Being*, 52 Bedford Street, W.C. 2, London, Alston Rivers Ltd., 1930, Preface to Contents Index; Foxcroft, 1941, p.154.

⁷ Katherine Ellinghaus. 'Absorbing the 'Aboriginal problem': controlling interracial marriage in Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 27, 2003, p. 186.

⁸ C. D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Canberra, ACT, Australian National University Press, 1970, p. 124.

⁹ Foxcroft, 1941, p. 155.

assumption that prevailed until recently through most of Australia's history.¹⁰ Governments responded to predications of a doomed race through the adoption of paternalist policies exhibiting extremes of parsimony in allocating sustainable funding to departments and agencies designated to administer Aboriginal affairs. The response of Australia's Governments bore a similarity to the experiences of Indigenous races in the United States of America. As Maureen Konkle writes, 'Paternalism was the mode of liberal imperialism, and professions of benevolence and sympathy primarily reinforced the point ... of moral superiority and legitimacy'.¹¹ Stanner's work as an anthropologist, and his close association with Indigenous clans in the north-west of Western Australia, made him critical of the prevailing attitudes based around the belief that Aborigines as a race were doomed. Further, both Federal and State Government agencies did little to refute such proclamations from social anthropologists who had been party to studies of Aborigines. Criticising Government inaction in 1938, Stanner succinctly stated that:

The extinction of the Aborigines is only inevitable if we allow it to be so. We have not yet at any time in our history in any part of the continent made a resolute and intelligent attempt to do what we say is our intention.¹²

Demonising Aborigines as primitive and barbarian enhanced the belief that they would eventually become extinct. Additionally, states Anna Haebich, 'the spreading dogma of Social Darwinism added a terrible, inexorable evolutionary dynamic. Aborigines were not only incapable of change, they were doomed to extinction'.¹³ This encouraged intrusive scientific incursion into the fields of social anthropology. Consequently,

White reconstruction anthropology (and some ethnocentric history) has provided a mental straitjacket for whites and blacks: a physical prototype, head-banded, bearded, loin-clothed, sometimes ochred, one foot up, a clutch of spears, ready to hunt or exhibiting eternal, mystical vigilance.¹⁴

¹⁰ Richard J. Perry, '*...From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems*', Austin, USA, University of Texas Press, 1996, p. 236.

¹¹ Maureen Konkle, 'Indigenous Ownership and the Emergence of U. S. Liberal Imperialism', *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (Summer) 2008. p. 305.

¹² W. E. H. Stanner, '*The Dreaming & Other Essays*', Collingwood, Vic. Black Inc., Agenda, 2009, p.145.

¹³ Anna Haebich, '*Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800 – 2000*', Freemantle, WA. Arts Centre Press, 2000, p. 70.

¹⁴ Colin Tatz '*Race Politics in Australia: Aborigines, Politics and Law*', Armidale, N.S.W., University of New England, 1979, p. 86.

Stanner gained little comfort on the future of Aborigines from proposals submitted by the Chief Protectors of Aborigines for Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory at the National Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities convened in Canberra in April 1937. Western Australian Commissioner of Native Affairs Augustus Neville raised his State's concern over the consequences of a 'population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth' and advocated a national biological absorption policy as the best method to save welfare expenditure and purify the white race. It was possible to avoid the calamity he described if the Commonwealth followed the absorption policy operating in his state. Adoption of Western Australia's practice meant that Australia would eventually be able to forget 'there ever were any Aborigines in Australia'.¹⁵

Chief Protector for the Northern Territory, Dr Cecil Cook, feared that moral and physical protection of Aborigines in the Northern Territory would see the population of the black race multiply 'at a rate far in excess of that of the whites'. His solution was to leave Aborigines alone and they would 'die out'. The problem for Government then was 'dealing with those pangs of conscience which must attend the passing of a neglected race'.¹⁶ John William Bleakley, Queensland's Chief Protector, emphasised the need for protection and control to prevent Aborigines from becoming a menace to the white race. Bleakley considered imperative the intervention of Government, given Aborigines' 'low social conditions, and their susceptibility to disease and illness, which, in a white community we are better able to control'.¹⁷ Bleakley embraced policies to preserve the purity of the white race and prevent miscegenation. One of the peculiarities of the 'doomed race' theory was the implied condition that only Aboriginal people of full descent would die out, leaving authorities like Bleakley vexed with the problem of what to do with Aborigines born from interracial relationships.

Three decades earlier, during the debate over the 1901 Immigration Restriction Bill, John Watson, the first national leader of the Australian Labour Party (ALP) declared: 'the objection I have to the mixing of these coloured people with the white

¹⁵ Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937. Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1937, p. 11.

¹⁶ Aboriginal Welfare, 1937, p. 14.

¹⁷ Aboriginal Welfare, 1937, p. 18.

people of Australia ... lies in the main in the possibility and probability of racial contamination'.¹⁸ The most critical agency of Aborigines was the Government. Ros Kidd, referencing Foucault's work, maintains:

that he argues correctly that the field of government agency and influence is so complex there is inevitable non-conformity in the range of programs, diversity in their objectives, contrasting 'expert' opinions and conflicting power agendas; that being the case, government operations as a whole are by their very nature congenitally failing.¹⁹

The decline in the Aboriginal population from the impact of white settlement sustained the belief of the white population and its Government administrators in the inevitable extinction of the Aboriginal race. By the 1890s, these assumptions, firmly embedded in the beliefs of the majority of whites, had spawned their own reality. For colonial administrators, the problem needed fixing. Survival of Aborigines was more uncertain, driven by scientific interpretations surrounding the 'inferiority' of Aborigines. White Australians considered them the victims of evolution and doomed to extinction. Subscribers to the tenets of a 'doomed race' theory supported policies adopted by governments to manage the threat to white society from the 'Aboriginal problem'. At issue, for the Government's administrators, was the question of how to deal with an identified racial group whose demise, predicated scientifically and reinforced by the theories of evolution that assumed the superiority of the white race, was unquestioned. At the turn of the twentieth century, 'beliefs about Aborigines' were increasingly shaped 'by a combination of race theories, powerful economic and political interests and white fears and desires for the new century'.²⁰

The first chapter of this thesis, an overview of the decades between 1840 and 1900, is an enumeration of the themes and agencies central to the early settlement of Queensland and considers the underpinning social theories of early anthropologists who contributed to assumptions of the 'doomed race'. Important in the chapter are the roles of the first settlers, the Native Police, the missionaries and the Government. Dominating the era between 1850 and 1900 was the dispossession of Aboriginal lands by early settlers whose actions, framed in religious and ethnocentric beliefs,

¹⁸ Neville Meaney, 'The End of "White Australia" and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945 – 1990', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (n.d) p. 174.

¹⁹ Ros Kidd 'Held to Account: governments and Indigenous interests', Paper presented at Queensland University of Technology. August 2006, p. 1.

²⁰ Haebich, 2000, p. 132.

places the superior white races over the barbarity of the cultures, religions and practices of the inferior other.

Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the role of Queensland's Colonial Government leading to the legislation and operation of *The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* introduced in the last three months of 1897, and the protectors appointed to administer the new legislation. The decades from 1895 to 1914 provide insight into the problems confronting the first chief protectors, William Parry-Okenden, Walter Roth, Archibald Meston and Richard Howard. Cohorts of influential white pastoralists, who relegated Aborigines to little more than a cheap source of expendable labour, made the tasks of protectors difficult. Political instability and frequent changes of Government give a further dimension to the non-cohesive administration of the act.

Chapter 4 is devoted to an analysis and study of the state's longest serving Chief Protector, John William Bleakley. Assuming the Chief Protector's office in 1914, Bleakley remained until 1942, when he retired.

Enforcement of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* created incalculable strains on those given responsibility for its administration. The Home Secretary, Horace Tozer, structured an organisation that 'constituted every petty session district in the colony a district [protectorate] for the purpose of the Act'.²¹ Senior police officers in each of the protectorates established became the district protectors reporting to the Government's Chief Protector. With future population increases and the declaration of new petty session districts, the list of district protectors grew to 75 by 1935, with Government Aboriginal reserves at Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Palm Island. The Government reserves complimented 13 mission settlements on the east coast and Cape of North Queensland. The network of reserves and missions allowed the chief protector(s) to carry out Government policies and maintain control of the detribalised Aborigines in the State. The structure created its own administrative problems. Correspondence generated by the Chief Protector's office each year was voluminous and demanding, the Chief

²¹ Protection of Aboriginals (1898, January 6) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld: 1864–1933), pp. 4-5; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page549272>

Protector advising in 1908 that ‘correspondence totalled 6,320 letters - 3,240 inward and 3,080 outward’.²²

This thesis argues that the doomed race theory was a subterfuge to disguise the Queensland Government’s real intent to dispossess the State’s Aborigines of their lands. The Government’s paternalism toward Aborigines masked the covert strategies in policies to facilitate the decline of the Aboriginal population through the implementation of protection and segregation. Their actions were confirmed by Bleakley in 1957 when he wrote that Aborigines ‘were regarded as incurable nomads and a doomed race, therefore, it was considered that expenditure for their preservation would only be wasted’.²³

²² Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1909, First Session of the Eighteenth Parliament, Vol. 11, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for Year ended 31st December, 1908, p 1026.

²³ J. W. Bleakley, *The Aborigines of Australia: their habits-their assimilation*, Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1961, p. 320.

CHAPTER 1: 1800 TO 1900: PRELUDE TO LEGISLATING FOR AN ABORIGINAL PROTECTORATE SYSTEM IN QUEENSLAND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During 1895 and 1896, Queensland's Colonial Government engaged Archibald Meston and Police Commissioner William Parry-Okenden to undertake an extensive survey and review of the colony's perceived Aboriginal problem. The Government was anxious to find a lasting solution to the 40 years of protracted and often brutal confrontation between Europeans and Aborigines on the four rapidly expanding frontiers of the new colony.¹ Supporting the surveys were a raft of recommendations for the development of future Aboriginal policies that would not only bring to an end the covert killings and dispersal² of Indigenous people, but would also protect and preserve the remaining remnants of what was assumed to be a 'dying race'. Notwithstanding the failure of the protectorate system in New South Wales,³ Victoria and South Australia,⁴ a board of Commissioners was appointed by the Colonial Government in 1874 to enquire into a petition from a number of residents 'in the District of Mackay, relative to the employment and protection of the Aboriginal inhabitants of that District'. The Commission's report, acknowledging the tone of letters received from petitioners, stated:

Many of these papers have been prepared with much care by persons well acquainted with the Aborigines, and anxious for their welfare, and contain much authentic and interesting information of a race the great majority of whom, whatever may be done to improve their condition, there is too much reason to fear, are doomed to early extinction.⁵

¹ Noel Loos, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal – European relations on the North Queensland frontier 1861 – 1897*, Canberra, A.C.T., Australian National University Press, 1982, p. xviii. Loos saw Queensland differently to the other colonies by virtue of the four frontiers that were developing simultaneously. They were pastoral, mining, fishing and forestry.

² The term Dispersal became a euphemism for the operations of the Native Police Force against Aborigines. Dispersals carried out by native police and vigilante groups of Europeans were indiscriminate in the killing of large numbers of Indigenous people. Dispersals were retaliatory actions to punish natives for attacks on Europeans. They frequently occurred without the authority of the government.

³ Foxcroft, 1941, pp. 59, 63, 76.

⁴ David Hollinsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia*, Katoomba, N.S.W., Social Science Press, 1998, p.85; Rowley, 1970, p. 81.

⁵ Report of the Commissioners on the Aborigines of Queensland, Legislative Assembly, 1874, James C. Beal, Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane, p. 1.

In response to the Commission's recommendation that 'Protectors of Aborigines be appointed for specified districts of the colony', a protectorate was established at Mackay in 1875. A local grazier and businessman, George Bridgeman, a major employer of Indigenous labour in the district, donated land to provide a settlement and was appointed the local protector. In 1876, the Government appointed a bench of five Commissioners to inquire into and report on the conditions of Aborigines and the operation of reserves at Mackay, Durundur, Bribie Island, Townsville and Bowen. By 1878, the Mackay protectorate had ceased operations and the remaining centres had not developed beyond recommendations made by the 1874 enquiry.⁶

While Bridgeman's humanitarian efforts were acknowledged by the 1874 commission, his suggestions, with earlier recommendations from Dr Henry Challinor for a 'system of Aboriginal protectorates' were eventually dismissed by the 'disunited and politically impotent' Macalister Government.⁷ Successive Governments, indifferent to the plight of Aborigines, made no further moves to re-establish a Government-controlled protectorate system for Queensland until the last decade of the nineteenth century, as 'racism, bolstered by scientific and religious certainty, enjoyed almost unchallenged respectability'.⁸

The idea of protectors, put forward in 1838, followed the trial and sentencing of vigilante whites responsible for the Myall Creek massacre in New South Wales. The Colonial Secretary in London wrote to Governor George Gipps advising that Aborigines were entitled to the full protection of the law as citizens of the British Empire.⁹ The appointment of official protectors followed a Parliamentary Select Committee of the British House of Commons Report in 1837 that criticised the way

⁶ Report of Aborigines Commissioners Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command, 1878, Queensland. James C. Beal, Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane, 12th December, 1877. pp 1 – 3.

⁷ Ross Fitzgerald, *From The Dreaming To 1915: A History Of Queensland*, St Lucia, Qld. University of Queensland Press, 1982, pp. 210-211.

⁸ Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland*, Port Melbourne, Vic., Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 130.

⁹ *Australia on Trial: Massacre at Myall Creek*. Screen Australia in Association with Film Victoria. Produced by December Films Pty. Ltd. And Essential Media and Entertainment Pty. Ltd., Developed and produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2011, Screened ABC – TV 1, 19/04/2012.

Australian Aborigines had been treated. Under the model proposed by British authorities a Chief Protector was to be assigned:

with the task of looking after the interests of the Aborigines. In that way a well meaning but nonetheless authoritarian and paternalistic system began which spread to other colonies. It meant, in effect, that whites controlled the lives of the Aborigines and restricted their freedom. . . .¹⁰

Gipps's attempt to institute a protectorate within guidelines suggested by the Colonial Secretary's office became ineffectual after the decision to allocate the duties of the newly appointed protectors to the established duties of the colony's Crown Land Commissioners.¹¹ Such appointments were likely to create a conflict of interests for the Crown Land Commissioners, who were also the protectors of Aborigines in their districts. The conflict of roles became particularly problematic in the western pastoral areas of New South Wales where 'Commissioners of Crown Lands' were not only the 'nominal protectors of Aborigines' but also, as the owners of large flocks and herds, 'presided indulgently over the process of [their] extermination'.¹²

The attempt to establish a protectorate in the colony of Port Phillip also failed. Writing to Gipps in 1842, Lord Stanley conveyed that he could not conceal 'that the failure of the system of Protectors has been, at least, as complete as that of the missions'.¹³ Six years later, the Superintendent of Port Phillip, Charles Joseph La Trobe, was to advise the New South Wales Colonial Secretary; 'The Protectorate, as I had occasion to state officially eighteen months ago, has totally failed to effect any of the higher and more important objects aimed at in its formation'.¹⁴

In Queensland, the most vocal critics of protectorates for Aborigines were influential pastoralists. Exercising significant power within Government, they acquired pastoral leases to extensive tracts of prime agricultural lands taken from the Aborigines. There was no doubt that pastoralists were uneasy with moves to establish

¹⁰ John N. Moloney, *Australia, Our Heritage*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005, p. 101.

¹¹ Kent, 2006, p. 33.

¹² E. G. Docker, *Simply Human Beings*, Brisbane, Jacaranda Press Pty. Ltd., 1964, p.106.

¹³ Woolmington, 1973, p119 Citing from Correspondence, Lord Stanley to Governor Gipps, 20 December 1842.

¹⁴ Woolmington, 1973, p.124. Citing Correspondence La Trobe to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary dated 18 November 1848.

a protectorate. It entailed dramatic shifts in Government policies ‘coupled with vast discretionary powers vested in Protectors’, all of which created uncertainty in the more populated areas concerning the powers of the protectorate’s administrators.¹⁵ Any system that deprived squatters and pastoralists of access to cheap Aboriginal labour would hamper plans for developing Queensland’s vast pastoral frontiers.

Queensland’s parliament released a select committee report in 1861 that recommended the establishment of Aboriginal protectorates in areas where Aborigines were most populous and at risk to harm from Native Police and Europeans. Squatters vented their disapproval and primary objection against the report by arguing that it was wrong that ‘their officials be paid out of those precious Colonial revenues to which the squatters were contributing so much’. This they considered was ‘a final insult to the council which was already demanding a freer hand in how the colony’s money should be spent’.¹⁶

The squatters were a dominant force in the colony and it was ‘an unhappy ministry that did not give due weight to their representations or which belittled their claims to be the chosen of the earth’.¹⁷ Further,

there was a basic contradiction between the duties of Protectors and the situation in law. How, for instance, was the Protector to work effectively to save Aboriginal property while the land itself, the very basis of the social order, could be legally settled and its complete use made over to a white settler?¹⁸

The attitude of settlers and lack of co-operation with protectors compounded problems that colonial officials had to contend with while trying to establish the early protectorates. Protector James Dredge, recounting his experiences in the Port Phillip district, wrote to Dr Bunting at the Colonial office that:

his efforts were met with poor encouragement in the work, either from the settlers, generally speaking, or from the colonial government; and a third source of trouble was the attitude of the press who were not beyond urging settlers to

¹⁵ Regina Ganter, ‘Living an Immoral Life – ‘Coloured’ Women and the Paternalistic State’, *Hecate*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1998, Academic Research Library, p. 36.

¹⁶ Judith Wright, ‘*The Cry For The Dead*’, Perth, API Network, Curtin University of Technology, 2004, p. 51.

¹⁷ Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, ‘*Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859 – 1919) Years*’, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1931, p. 193.

¹⁸ Rowley, 1970, p. 56.

take into their own hands the administration of justice to be meted out to troublesome Aborigines.¹⁹

Concerns expressed by Dredge in 1839 exemplified themselves 25 years later in a letter to the editor of the *Argus* in Melbourne:

I will not trouble you with the stale reflections that we have deprived those people of their hunting- grounds, &c. I am aware there are paid protectors and Government grants, the benefits of which do not seem apparent in my colonial experience ... I would humbly suggest some effort should be made by the philanthropic and humane to remedy this grave evil at our own doors. Surely some control would house all the aborigines in the neighbourhood of the city, and check the persecution these poor people now endure from the ignorant and the profane ... *Spectator*. St. Kilda. May 31.²⁰

Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859 failed to stem the problems of bringing Aborigines and white civilisation together. Characterising the efforts of well-intentioned people's endeavours to civilise and convert Aborigines, Professor Frederic Wood Jones declared bluntly that 'no solution will ever be found for the problem of the uncontaminated native save that of preserving him from contamination'.²¹ By analogy, Aborigines were 'absolutely unfitted to cope with the demands of our civilisation' and "once contact has been made with our alien culture" [they were] "inevitably doomed to death".²² Underpinned by these perceptions, contact between whites and Indigenous peoples on the new frontiers of the resource rich, but economically disadvantaged colony were manifested with increasing incidents of violent repression by whites against Aborigines, as the Queensland frontiers expanded.

For administrators, Queensland's settlement was undeniably the most difficult of all the colonies:

It was the only colony where pastoral, mining, maritime and plantation frontiers were advancing simultaneously and all this occurred as Western racist theories,

¹⁹ Foxcroft, 1941, p 65. Citing documents from the Public Library, Victoria. Mss, Colonial Sec. Dept. In-letters, Dredge, Mss., Dredge to Dr Bunting, 20 April 1839.

²⁰ Aboriginal Protection (1864, June 2) *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 – 1954) p. 7, Retrieved March 30, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5749305>

²¹ Russell McGregor, 'The Aboriginal Reserves Debate of the Inter-War Years', *Journal of Royal Historical Society of Queensland* (1998), Vol. 15, No. 11, May 1995, p. 546, Citing F. W. Jones.

²² *ibid*, 1995, p. 546.

grouped around polygenism and social Darwinism, were peaking in their certitude and influence.²³

The new colony was a composite white population of elitist squattocracy, merchants, settler immigrants, miners, convicts who had obtained their tickets of leave, and southern settlers seeking to claim an excision of the vast pastoral lands and mineral riches that Queensland offered. The pillage of natural resources from the colony met with resistance from Aborigines fighting against forceful dispossession of the land that was the cornerstone of their society and culture.

Condemnation of the treatment of Aborigines and their rapidly diminishing numbers led to mounting scrutiny and international concern for their future. The Government could no longer ignore the 'Aboriginal problem', which had ignited the irreconcilable humanitarian, xenophobic and labour concerns of the white community, particularly as protectors would be required to act in the interests of Aborigines who had few legal and civil rights.²⁴ Certainly, increasing mortality rates and a diminishing population of Aborigines added some credibility to the predictors of extinction that the 'doomed race' idea was more than statistical information extrapolated from demographic data. Primarily, it was 'an expectation rounded on a dichotomy well entrenched in the Western intellectual tradition: between progress and primitivity, civilisation and savagery'. Further, 'in the latter half of the nineteenth century evolutionary theory reinforced the already established notion that in the grand scheme of human progress those who had failed to advance would be swept aside'.²⁵ Aborigines, living remnants of a very primitive race, they believed, faced extinction as civilisation progressed. The 'fatalism of the doomed race concept was gradually superseded by a belief that the decline of the Aborigines could be averted if appropriate steps were taken' to protect them.²⁶

Increasing contact between whites and Indigenous people fuelled the fallacies of a 'doomed race' paradigm that emerged from the annals of early settler society,

²³ Raymond Evans, 'Across the Queensland Frontier', in Bain Attwood & S. G. Foster (Eds), 'Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience', Canberra, A.C.T., National Museum of Australia, 2003, p. 70.

²⁴ Regina Ganter and Ros Kidd, 'The Powers of Protectors: Conflicts Surrounding Queensland's 1897 Aboriginal Legislation', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 101, October 1993, p. 542.

²⁵ McGregor, 1995, pp. 545-546.

²⁶ *ibid*, 1995, p. 546.

Native Police, missionaries and Government. The extinction of the Aboriginal race, as embedded in the imagination of these agencies and the vast majority of the white Australian population after 1859, exerted a ‘dominating influence over Aboriginal policy and administration’ for the next 70 years.²⁷ The response of each of the agencies, as actors in the perpetuation of the ‘doomed race’ theory, varied according to the purpose and charter of each and their relationship with Aborigines.

Collectively, though, each accepted that:

Aborigines were seen as part of a dying culture and ones duty was to protect them from the whites, to make their last days as comfortable as possible. However, the image of the dying Aborigine did not generate any particular protection policies. Since Aborigines were doomed there was no way of deciding between competing policies other than the macabre rationale that one policy might hasten extinction faster than another policy.²⁸

Appropriate policy and treatment of the ‘Aboriginal problem’ became more pressing and politically sensitive by the last decade of the nineteenth century, when ‘Aborigines either seemed to be perpetuating themselves or to be taking rather a long time to disappear. Something more than the dying Aboriginal theory was needed’.²⁹ Legislating Queensland’s *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*³⁰ signalled the Government’s intent. However, the protectorate established by the Act was ‘only one manifestation of a policy that sought to shield the aboriginal by direct government intervention’.³¹ In essence, the Act would provide a paternalistic solution of controlled protectionism to remedy the veiled assumptions of Aborigines as a dying race.

1.2 PERPETUATING ASSUMPTIONS OF A DYING RACE

1.2.1 Early Settler Theories: White Superiority, Government Indifference

Early settler claims to traditional Aboriginal lands developed and took root from the prevailing religious and ethnocentric beliefs that posited the superiority of white races over the barbarity of the cultures, religions and practices of the inferior

²⁷ *ibid*, 1995, p. 545.

²⁸ Mark Francis, ‘Social Darwinism and the Construction of Institutionalised Racism in Australia’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, Graeme Turner (ed), No. 50/51, 1996, p. 98.

²⁹ *ibid*, 1996, p. 98.

³⁰ Hereafter referred to as *The Act*.

³¹ Docker, 1964, p. 107.

other. First colonisers argued that settlement and taking possession of new lands under imperial expansion was not so much a historical process, as it was an unfolding of God's will. As Jakobus Vorster states, 'the right to land ownership was founded on the belief that all land belongs to God and that he appoints humankind to be stewards of his property, man only has temporal rights'.³² By dispossessing Aborigines of the land settlers 'were doing no more than acting out their preordained role in the great global drama of colonisation'.³³ Observing this, the editor of the *Moreton Bay Free Press* wrote, on the 29th January 1852, that 'the result of all colonisation seemed to show that when a country inhabited by savages falls in the progress of civilisation to be occupied by a superior race, the fate of its original inhabitants was from that moment sealed'.³⁴ Six years later sentiments towards Aborigines had changed little. 'Your race is doomed' a correspondent to the *Moreton Bay Free Press* declared in a rhetorical address to Aborigines.³⁵

Many settlers believed they were ordained to take possession of newly colonised lands. Ownership of land was not only 'crucial to the settlers' vision of the new society, but the 'lands had to be preserved for whites'.³⁶ British settlers arrived to colonise the new continent, imbued with ideas of progress and development. They firmly believed that it 'clearly was not the Creator's intention when he caused "this great continent" to rise from the seas that it should remain "an unproductive wilderness"'. In addition, 'the British people took possession ... under the Divine authority, by which man was commanded to go forth and people, and till the land'.³⁷ Settlers and squatters pushed the boundaries of the pastoral frontier into vast areas of seemingly unoccupied lands convinced that 'God, International Law and science were on their side'.³⁸ As Lake and Reynolds argued, it was extremely difficult to

³² Jacobus M. Vorster, 'The Ethics of Land Restitution', *Journal of Religious Ethics*; Dec 2006, Vol. 34 Issue 4, p. 690.

³³ Henry Reynolds, 'An Indelible Stain? : the question of genocide in Australia's history'. Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 2001, p. 142, Citing *Moreton Bay Free Press* 29 Jan 1852.

³⁴ *ibid*, 2001, p. 142.

³⁵ *ibid*, 2001, p. 142, Citing letter from T... on 30 November 1858 to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Free Press* addressing the Aborigines of the colony.

³⁶ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, 'Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality', Australia, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 180.

³⁷ Fitzgerald, 1982, p. 95.

³⁸ Dawn May, 'Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from white Settlement to the Present', Oakleigh, Melbourne, Vic. Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 24.

dislodge the English conviction of racial superiority driving the settlers.³⁹ More concerning was the ‘general hardening of white attitudes towards Aborigines as both “subhuman” and predestined towards “extinction” ’.⁴⁰ Where they encountered resistance there was moral justification to use force against Aborigines to fulfil God’s will. Settlers defended their actions of dispossessing Aborigines from their lands with frequent reference to biblical text. All too often, the obstacle that Indigenous people presented to the occupation of the land shaped the fragile relationship that had developed between Aborigines and white settlers.⁴¹ Europeans, confronted with widespread resistance from Aborigines, ‘labelled blacks as treacherous and untrustworthy, with the corollary that physical force was often viewed as a necessary part of the ‘civilising’ processes.’⁴²

White settlement led to deliberate and unprovoked conflict with tribal Aborigines seeking to reclaim traditional lands taken from them by European brutality and dispersals. In Queensland, frontier hostility between whites and Aborigines resonated with local journalists who spoke with ‘the unrelenting language of a war front. We have seized their country by the right of might and by the right of might the whites will continue to possess it’, promised the *Moreton Bay Courier* in 1847.⁴³ This call from the *Moreton Bay Courier* reflected prior concerns of the ethnologist, James Pritchard, when, in 1839, he ‘sounded the tocsin about “the extinction of human races” in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*: ‘Wherever Europeans have settled, their arrival has been the harbinger of extermination to the native tribes’ he stated.⁴⁴

³⁹ Lake and Reynolds, 2008, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Raymond Evans, “Pigmentia”, Racial Fears and White Australia’ in A. Dirk Moses (Ed), ‘*Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*’, New York, Berghahn Books, 2004, p. 104; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders: Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*. St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, (3rd. Ed), 1975, pp. 67 – 84.

⁴¹ May, 1994, p. 11.

⁴² *ibid*, p. 45.

⁴³ Evans, 2007, p. 70.

⁴⁴ A. Dirk Moses, (Ed) ‘*Genocide and Settler Society Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*’, New York, Berghahn Books, 2004, p. 5.

1.2.2 Social Anthropologists

During the 1860s and 1870s, complex and fragile race relationships in the new colony were continually eroded by social anthropologists, their reports suggesting that Aborigines were doomed to extinction by virtue of their primitive being. They premised their conclusions on loosely construed social Darwinism theories,⁴⁵ advanced by new scientific analogies associated with the progress of mankind during the age of enlightenment. In an age when the superiority of the white race dominated dialogue and the survival of humanity, the evolutionary sciences of both social Darwinism and social anthropology underpinned theories of “the survival of the fittest” which seemed to explain ‘what many white Australians already believed; that some races were better than others, and the weaker ones fade away’.⁴⁶ Increasingly, discussion on the inevitability of racial extinction appeared regularly in scientific literature ‘as a bald statement of fact, unaccompanied by any explanation of how or why it would occur’.⁴⁷

In their attempts to explain the mechanisms of extinction and the physical process of ‘dying out’, anthropologists offered reasons that were, at best, perfunctory. They tended to follow Darwin’s theories by citing blame for the Aborigines’ impending doom on ‘disease, drugs and the demoralisation that followed the vices of civilization’.⁴⁸ There is stark truism in the argument by Mark Francis that,

The language of scientific racialism – and social Darwinism was not the most common of these – were reservoirs from which officials and politicians could snatch phrases to apply to, and extend upon, already functioning bureaucratic practices.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Social Darwinism was influential from the 1850s until the 1940s nationally. In Queensland the theory underpinned the new Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act 1939-1965 which replaced the Act of 1897 See also Fitzgerald, 1984, p. 509; Haebich, 2000, p. 170-171, 173; Loos, 1982, p. 182; Henry Reynolds, ‘*North of Capricorn*’, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2003, p. 34; Henry Reynolds, ‘*Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*’ St Leonards, NSW. Allen & Unwin Pty. Ltd., 1989, p. 193; Debbie Rodan, ‘*Testimony, Narrative and a Lived Life*’, Balayi: Culture, Law and Colonialism – Vol. 1, No. 1, 2000, p. 12 footnote 17, retrieved from URL on 27/10/12 <file://C:\WINDOWS\Desktop\Balayi%20Culture,%20Law%20and%20Colonialism.htm>

⁴⁶ Francis, 1996, p. 91; Quoting Richard Broome in ‘*Aboriginal Australians*’, Second Edition, St Leonards, 1994, p. 94.

⁴⁷ McGregor, 1997, p. 56.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 1997, p. 52.

⁴⁹ Francis, 1996, p. 102.

The belief in evolution and scientific racism cast an ominous cloud on the future of the 'dark race'. The fate of Aborigines, decreed in the laws of evolution, stipulated that the outward progress of white Australia would result in the 'nigger' disappearing. Evolutionary theory had replaced divine decree and precipitated the doom of all Indigenous dark races to extinction for the future survival and interests of western civilisation.⁵⁰ Seemingly, the extinction of Aborigines would occur 'through a ruthless but 'natural' struggle ... which no human agency could prevent'.⁵¹ Of more concern, 'the spreading dogma of social Darwinism added a terrible, inexorable evolutionary dynamic. Aborigines were not only incapable of change, they were doomed to extinction'.⁵² The concomitant rise of theories relating to Darwinism introduced a new dehumanising element to Aborigines' future. With activities of brutal dispossession at a peak in the better watered districts of the eastern parts of the continent in the 1830s, social Darwinist views became more prevalent as settlers acquiesced that the 'Indigenous survivors were not really people at all'.⁵³

As Aborigines were under the legal control of the State, Colony or Territory, it was necessary in each case for anthropologists and other researchers to obtain permission from relevant authorities to engage with, observe and document material about Indigenous people. Written material, before release in the public arena, became subject to censoring in all cases by chief protectors of Aborigines or relevant departments. Clearly, the censoring process became regulatory following national and international condemnation of the policies governments pursued in their treatment of the Indigenous population. Governments put in place controls intended to curtail the release of sensitive racial extinction reports from anthropologists to the public. Humanitarian individuals, Aboriginal Protection League organisations and church missionary societies, quick to take up the predictions by anthropologists of a race doomed to extinction, condemned the governments of the day for not intervening in the process. With mounting criticism and scrutiny, the Federal

⁵⁰ Wright, 2004, p. 289.

⁵¹ Haebich, 2000, p. 132.

⁵² *ibid*, p. 70.

⁵³ Jan Kociumbas 'Genocide and Modernity in Colonial Australia 1788 – 1850' in A. Dirk Moses (Ed) *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2004, p. 96.

Government resorted to exerting pressure on anthropologists to desist from causing problems with authorities at local, State or Colonial levels by threats to curtail further research funding.⁵⁴ Anthropologist, Ralph Piddington, learnt that a ‘career in anthropology in Australia required a cautious silence about what was often witnessed, read or heard’.⁵⁵

1.2.3 Native Police: Law and Order

In the annals of Queensland’s early history, the role of the native police became thematic in the frontier conflict and the dispersal of Aborigines. Assembled in 1859, the native police operated as a counter insurgency force to protect the ultimate supremacy of whites as they encroached upon Aboriginal lands.⁵⁶ The brutality they displayed in dispensing ‘justice’ to Aborigines added to the perception that parliamentarians had abdicated responsibility for the law and passed it to the Commissioner of Police. The newly created Native Police Force operated under charter of the Colonial Government. Working as a paramilitary-style strike force its actions against Aborigines legitimised widespread frontier violence.⁵⁷

Composed of individual units of Indigenous police recruits under the command of a white officer, the force functioned to provide armed protection to settlers ‘advancing into Aboriginal territory’.⁵⁸ Aborigines engaged as native police troopers were either incarcerated felons or recruits from New South Wales or Victoria. The bureaucracy met the demands by the colonies’ settlers for protection and safety, but chose to devolve itself from the actions of the force. The native police, responding to settler requests, dispersed ‘troublesome blacks’ on the frontier and oversaw the safety of isolated communities. When questioned about their actions, native police officers claimed ‘their orders are to “disperse” blacks wherever they find them, and that as they are a semi-military body, they are justified in putting the military

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Gray, ‘A Cautious Silence: The Politics of Australian Anthropology’, Canberra, ACT., Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007, p. 77.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 2007, p. 113.

⁵⁶ Evans, Saunders; Cronin, 1975, p. 55.

⁵⁷ May, 1994, p. 27.

⁵⁸ Mark Finnane and Jonothan Richards, ‘You’ll get nothing out of it?’ The inquest, Police and Aboriginal Deaths in Colonial Queensland’ in *Journal of Australian Historical Studies*, No. 123, 2004, p. 92.

interpretation on the word, and to kill all they can, and scatter the rest'.⁵⁹ With no apparent accountability, atrocities committed by units of the Native Police Force were rarely documented,⁶⁰ a situation that absolved Government officials and bureaucrats from responsibility for acts perpetrated against Aborigines by the units of the force operating throughout the Colony.⁶¹

In Queensland, 'the Native Police played a major role in the dispossession of Aboriginal people from their land, the almost complete destruction of Aboriginal law, and the disintegration of Aboriginal families'.⁶² Europeans demanded protection by the law as a right. Aboriginal resistance was one aspect of this. There was an expectation that Aborigines should be pacified, regardless of the cost in Aboriginal lives.⁶³ Fighting to protect families and tribal lands forced Aborigines into open conflict with Europeans intent on destroying their social structure and dispossessing them of their lands.⁶⁴ The operation of the Native Police Force in Queensland, between 1850 and the first decade of the 1900s, proved destructive to Aborigines with indiscriminate dispersals and killings. 'If progress meant the formation of extermination squads to eradicate Aborigines hindering settlers making good ... that was what would have to be done'.⁶⁵ The flawed belief of demonising Aborigines as barbaric, Stone Age relics provided reason enough for many to justify the retaliatory killings and dispersals orchestrated by white settlers and the native police alike.

Increasing concern in 1861 over the role of the native police in the community brought a response from the Government. The *Select Committee on the Native Police Force and the Conditions of Aborigines in General* inquiry proved to be no more

⁵⁹ QSA, Loose File, Commission Inquiry Report presented to both houses of Parliament, *Alleged Outrages Committed on the Aborigines in Queensland by the Native Mounted Police* 1875, Queensland. Transcript of Documents and Letters pertaining to allegations as presented to Parliament. Excerpt from letter dated February 4, 1874 from Mr A. L. McDougall concerning atrocities on his station, 40 miles from the Burdekin (North Queensland) p. 4.

⁶⁰ Joanne Scott, Ross Laurie, Bronwyn Stevens, Patrick Weller, *The Engine Room of Government: The Queensland Premiers Department 1859 – 2001*, St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 2001, p. 37; citing Evans, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, pp. 60-61.

⁶¹ Reynolds, 2001, p. 114.

⁶² Jonathan Richards, *The Secret War: A true history of Queensland's native police*, St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 2008, p. 5.

⁶³ Loos, 1982, p. 82.

⁶⁴ Bill Rosser, *Up Rode the Troopers: The Black Police in Queensland*, St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 1990, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, 1982, p. 114.

than a public relations exercise by the Government, to assure its constituents that the Native Police Force was delivering justice. Findings from the inquiry concluded with a predictable outcome, condoning the operational role of the Force in the governance of Aborigines. The inquiry Chairman, Robert Mackenzie, reported that the inquiry could find no reason to change the operational structure or function of the Native Police Force claiming that any change ‘would destroy its efficiency’ and any attempts to disband the force suddenly would, ‘as on previous occasion, lead to disastrous results’.⁶⁶

As Rosser contends, in exonerating actions of the native police, the report revealed what little concern Government had for preserving Aboriginal society.⁶⁷ In 1874, the Queensland Government faced further investigation into activities of the Native Police Force. A command by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon, for parliament to investigate allegations of outrages against Aborigines in Queensland by the native police, appeared in the colony’s southern newspapers. The inquiry report, *Alleged Outrages Committed on the Aborigines in Queensland by the Native Mounted Police*, presented to parliament in 1875, answered the accusatory articles and correspondence relating to Queensland, forwarded to Carnarvon by Joseph Cooper. The allegations, by pastoralists, Charles Heydon and A.L McDougall, were vigorously denied by Government representatives and police called before the inquiry.⁶⁸ J. W. Chesson, the London secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, reviewed transcripts of the inquiry and conveyed his concerns on the findings to Carnarvon, stating, ‘Your Lordship is aware that it has been repeatedly alleged by respectable and apparently trustworthy persons, that this force, under the pretence of preserving order, is really engaged in exterminating the aborigines’.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Queensland Legislative Assembly 1861, Native Police Force. Report from the Select Committee and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally (Part 1) Printed by Order of the Legislative Assembly, 17 July 1861. pp. 2, 4.

⁶⁷ Rosser, 1990, p. 203.

⁶⁸ QSA, Loose File, A Report on the Alleged Outrages Committed on the Aborigines in Queensland by the Native Mounted Police (Despatches Respecting), Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command, 1875, Queensland, James C. Beal, Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane. pp. 1-8.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 1875, p. 7.

1.2.4 Missionaries

The history of early settlement was intertwined with the activities of missionaries and religious people who arrived with the first settlers, determined to ‘Christianise’ Aborigines and free them from the ‘bonds that secured them to their own culture and traditions’.⁷⁰ They fervently set about working collaboratively with authorities in setting up missions amongst Aborigines. However, the early enthusiasm and zeal exhibited by missionaries soon turned to despair with the limited success in their endeavours to Christianise and civilise. Frustratingly, resolute attempts by missionaries continued to produce negligible results. Settlers were aware of the failure. Regardless of what measures missionaries tried, ‘they believed the Aborigines were dying out. They were a ‘doomed race’’.⁷¹

By the early 1840s, missionary efforts had clearly failed or faced impending failure. Missionaries and Aborigines became embroiled in conflict as Aborigines, trying to maintain their law, fought against attempts to instil their children with the Christian doctrine. Missionaries ‘attempted to split the generations and wreck the traditional pattern of socialisation in order to save the soul of the child’.⁷² Colin Tatz, more succinct in his evaluation of the ambiguity of religious institutions attempting to Christianise Indigenous people, states:

The religious attitude is one of “civilizing” the blacks, in converting them to Christianity of very diverse forms, in turning them into neat, clean, tidy, literate, moderate and disciplined citizens. The Christian virtues are stressed at all times, yet, whenever the Indigenous people display those virtues – care of children, special care of their aged, extended family reciprocity, warm kinship in all things – organised religion deplores their apparent animalistic instincts.⁷³

Weighed with the helplessness of their tasks, the Wellington Valley (N.S.W.) mission was abandoned, the Passionist missionaries were making little headway at Stradbroke Island (Queensland) and in Port Phillip, the Wesleyans were realising just how hopeless their task was.⁷⁴ At the Mapoon Mission in North Queensland, the Moravian missionary, Nicholas Hey, expressed his concern that Aborigines, inflicted

⁷⁰ Reynolds, 2001, p. 156.

⁷¹ Loos, 1982, p. 24; Cited from Minutes of Evidence, 1861, V & P., pp.10, 11, 18, 42, 44.

⁷² Rowley, 1970, p. 102; Woolmington, 1973, p. 97; Evans, 2007, p 69; Wright, 2004. p. 54.

⁷³ Colin M. Tatz, ‘*Four Kinds of Dominion: Comparative Race Politics in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa*’, An Inaugural Public Lecture delivered in Armidale, New South Wales, on 17th July, 1972. p. 17.

⁷⁴ Woolmington, 1973, p. 103.

with consumption and other diseases, were a dying race.⁷⁵ Considering the declining number of Aborigines on mission stations and relatively few converts to Christianity, missionaries readily attributed blame for their limited success on the exceptional primitiveness of a people destined to vanish.⁷⁶

The evangelical ambitions of many missionaries during the first five decades of the 1800s floundered in their attempts to impart the doctrines of Christianity to Aborigines, while attempting to civilise them. In their fervour to evangelise and 'save' Aborigines, it is plausible that 'dying' became the metaphorical term of the revivalist to indicate failure of the religious to redeem the souls of Aborigines. Such terminology would resonate with the extremes of religiosity inherent in new settler communities, as failing to attain salvation was akin to dying in purgatory. Other missionaries, anxious to prepare 'a doomed race of Heathens for Heaven', continued to alienate themselves and their institutions from Indigenous groups by their verbal assault on the social norms and culture of Aboriginal people.⁷⁷ During hearings of the *1860 Select Committee on Church Interaction with Aborigines* in South Australia, the Bishop of Adelaide commented:

... I do not think it inadvisable to Christianise them; for I would rather they died as Christians than drag out a miserable existence as heathens. I believe that the race will disappear either way ...⁷⁸

By the early 1860s, dispersals had destroyed most Aboriginal resistance to white intruders. However, the churches, which had for so long ignored the Aboriginal people, executed the final destructive process with their introduced ethnocentric 'good works' practices in attempts to Christianise the remnants of the race. The process became little more than an ill-conceived experiment with predominantly Victorian prudishness and religiosity about it.⁷⁹ Increasingly, missionaries and religious orders refrained from openly condemning the behaviour of settlers and authorities towards Aborigines. This was particularly evident from those

⁷⁵ Regina Ganter, 'Letters From Mapoon: Colonising Aboriginal Gender' in *Journal of Historical Studies*, No. 113, 1999, p. 274.

⁷⁶ Kociumbas, 2004, p. 95.

⁷⁷ Evans, 2007, p. 139.

⁷⁸ Bruce Elder, *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788*, (3rd Ed), Sydney, New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty. Ltd., 1988, p. 260; Citing from South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1860

⁷⁹ *ibid*, 1988, pp. 13-14.

missions dependent on token Government funding to sustain their activities with the Indigenous population. The complex relations that missionaries had with the authorities of State and the various mission societies emerged whenever complaints were registered that referred to anthropologists *per se* or in reports generated about abuses on mission stations.⁸⁰ Reserves and missions became, in the white man's eye, not only safe havens to which Aborigines could be converged, preserved and institutionalised, but also cheap labour pools for white communities.

1.2.5 Conclusion

Grounded in the moral and religious values of settlers, the covert law and order operations of the Native Police Force and the limited success of missionaries and Governments, the belief of a 'dying Aboriginal race' became firmly embedded in the minds of the white population. The dominant cultural belief in white superiority and the alleged 'primitiveness' of Aborigines became the generational platform that constructed Aborigines as a 'dying' race facing extinction. Infused with Darwinian theories constructed from scientific observations and social anthropological research from the early 1860s, the 'doomed race' theory became a subterfuge for whites to justify their continued brutal treatment and dispersal of Aborigines.

British institutional racialism, based on class, entrenched itself in the new colony and became dominated by racial exclusion, based on the superiority of whiteness. While class distinction was to remain and continue to define the social strata of the upper class, the middle class pursued the ideals of a more egalitarian society. The Indigenous population were excluded from this. The institutions dividing people by class in Britain became the institutions that divided Europeans and Indigenous communities in the new colonies. The beliefs and assumptions of the white minority, grounded in the culture of the early frontier agencies, continued to be a systemic problem for all governments. Faced with increasing International condemnation over the treatment of its Indigenous people, Colonial, State and Federal Governments reluctantly introduced a raft of national Aboriginal Protection Acts between 1897 and 1916 to preserve and protect the remnants of the 'dying race'.

⁸⁰ Gray, 2007, p. 78.

CHAPTER 2: THE 1897 ACT AND ITS FIRST CHIEF PROTECTOR

2.1 THE ACT OF 1897

The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, drafted by the Colonial Government in the last three months of 1897, determined the fate of Aboriginal people in Queensland for most of the twentieth century.¹ The debates in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council in Committee reflected the fixed attitudes towards Aborigines embedded in the minds of different members and many of their constituents. The Act was to be all-encompassing, giving unprecedented power and control of Aboriginal lives to white authorities.² As *The Queenslander* explained in May 1897, before the introduction of the bill, ‘this is the first bill, it need scarcely be said, that has really grappled with the wants of the aborigines. Everything done hitherto has been meagre and fragmentary, and for the most part inefficient’.³

The foundation for a parliamentary act relating to the future management of the colony’s Aborigines began in 1895 when Home Secretary Horace Tozer, requested Archibald Meston ‘to prepare and furnish ... a practical plan for the improvement and preservation of the aboriginals’.⁴ In mid 1896, following the presentation of Meston’s 37-page document, Tozer and Sir Hugh Nelson appointed Meston as a ‘special Commissioner’, under the Queensland Government, to investigate the condition of Aborigines working on the mission stations in Cape York Peninsula and to establish friendly relations with them.⁵ Following Meston’s return from North Queensland, Tozer reviewed the report submitted and then sent Police Commissioner William Parry-Okenden, north to investigate and recommend remedies to rectify the

¹ QLA V & Ps., 12th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1898, Vol.1, Acts Passed During Session of 1897, p 408

² Subsequent amendments to the Act in 1899, 1901, 1928, 1934, 1939 and 1946 progressively strengthened the power that it bestowed on protectors. Conditions for Aborigines became more oppressive and restrictive as their rights became increasingly subject to white control.

³ The Blacks (1897, May 1) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld. : 1866 – 1939) p. 9-10; Retrieved 1 July 1, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article24465370>

⁴ Ethnology: Dr. Roth and His Work Study of the Queensland Aboriginal (1899, September 16) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld: 1866–1939) pp. 559-560. Retrieved 2 July 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22560643>

⁵ *ibid.*

abuses that Meston had described.⁶ Although the reports of both Meston and Parry-Okenden expressed concern with Aboriginal welfare, they also revealed the ideological differences in the attitudes of both men to Aborigines.⁷ Meston, lauding the “vitality and expertise” of the northern Aborigines, argued that ‘the “treachery” of blacks was a “mischievous delusion” and excused “cases of Aboriginal retaliation” as “merely acts of justly deserved retribution” ’.⁸ His recommendation to abolish the native police brought sharp rebuke in George Hislop’s letter to *The Queenslander*, claiming that ‘the idea of abolishing the native police in the North should not be entertained for a moment. Experience has shown that no savage race can be safely dealt with without the exhibition of an awe-inspiring force’.⁹ This was in sharp contrast to Parry-Okenden’s insistence on retention of the native police and his ‘characterisation of remote tribes as powerful, treacherous, and cunning “savages” ’. He insisted that, “demonstrations of strength (of a character they will respect) are a necessary prologue to gaining an influence over them for good”’.¹⁰ Parry-Okenden recognised long-term problems if the Government acted too quickly to introduce legislation and stated in his report that:

anything like such careful or exhaustive inquiry into this subject, and the number of others necessarily dovetailed with it, as would justify any person in making recommendations for, or laying down with ‘cocksure’ finality, a resolution to one of the most difficult problems which the British race has had to grapple with in every country opened to its colonising operations, would require more like the space of two years than two months.¹¹

Reporting to parliament on 23 November 1897, Home Secretary Tozer informed the House of Assembly that he had utilised relevant information and recommendations from the reports of Meston and Parry-Okenden in the proposed ‘special legislation’.¹² The reports formed the basis of content for debate concerning

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p. 540.

⁸ Kidd, 1997, p. 43.

⁹ *Ethnology The Case of the Aboriginal (1897, July 24) The Queenslander (Brisbane, Qld. : 1866 – 1939) pp. 23-24*, Retrieved 1 July, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article24468169>

¹⁰ Kidd, 1997, p. 43.

¹¹ Queensland State Archives Loose File. Reports including Annual Reports 1882 to 1905. Report by William Parry-Okenden to the Home Secretary, Horace Tozer, on the North Queensland Aborigines and the Native Police with Appendices. Government Printer, William Street, Brisbane, 1897, p. 14.

¹² *The Queenslander*, 1899, pp. 559, 560.

the bill.¹³ The Government maintained its rigid notions of parsimony and paternalism during debate, arguing that the bill, if passed, would provide a more protective and humane environment to accommodate the possible extinction of the race, given the dramatic rate that they were dying out at in many localities. Some members, however, continued to refer to Aborigines during debate in the derogatory vernacular of ‘niggers’ and ‘darkies’ and argued against increased funding to improve the lot of Aborigines in society.¹⁴ Home Secretary Tozer, presenting his bill to the House of Assembly, emphasised parliament’s desire to ameliorate ‘the position of the blacks’, while appeasing critics of the Government’s lack of policy relating to the future of Aborigines. Further, he hoped that:

The result of this legislation will be to show the civilised world that however black may be the page of history in Queensland on account of the past, there is a bright page to be written, and that bright page will be written by the legislature in a determined effort to ameliorate the condition of the aboriginals.¹⁵

Giving unqualified support to the bill in the Legislative Council, William Lambert responded:

If some of our Colonial Secretaries had had a pluck to introduce such a Bill years ago, it would have been a good thing for the aborigines and for those who take an interest in them; but none of them had the pluck, or thought it his duty to bring in such a measure.¹⁶

Robert Smith was even more succinct with his comments supporting the bill:

Of course, we know that drink, opium and disease have been the great means of almost effacing the aboriginals from the colony, and when the history of Queensland comes to be written the one black spot in it will be the manner in which the blacks have been dealt with in years past.¹⁷

After listening to the Member for Fassifern, George Thorn, recount some of the atrocities committed on Aborigines in his electorate over the years, Thomas Finney, the Member for Toowong, apologetically declared:

¹³ Official Record of the Debates of the Legislative Council and of the Legislative Assembly during the Second Session of the Twelfth Parliament Comprising the Period from the Fifteenth of June to the Sixteenth of December, A. D. 1897. Vol. LXXVII. Pp. 1538-1549, 1626-1633, 1759, 1887-1889, 1909-1911, 1949, 2002.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 1897, pp. 1541-2.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 1897, p. 1888.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 1897, p. 1545; Included in comments from R. H. Smith, Esquire (Bowen) Second Reading of the Bill debate.

I feel that there is a slur on Queensland that will remain forever. No matter what we do we can never wipe out that slur, and to know that white men behaved in such a cruel, brutal, murdering manner towards a lot of poor wretches that had no opportunity of protecting themselves makes one feel ashamed.¹⁸

On 15 December 1897, the Legislative Assembly learnt that the bill had received royal assent.¹⁹ Advising this, Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, communicated to the parliament, ‘I note with satisfaction the evident desire of the Queensland Government and Parliament, shown by the Act No. 17, to make better provision for the welfare of the aboriginal inhabitants of the colony’.²⁰ The Act became law on 1 January 1898. Following enactment of the legislation in Queensland, Home Secretary Tozer appointed Parry-Okenden as Chief Protector assisted by Roth as Northern Protector (reporting to Parry-Okenden), and Meston as Southern Protector, reporting directly to the Home Secretary.²¹

As Ganter and Kidd explain, the complexity of the Act, drafted from the reports of Meston and Parry-Okenden, ‘gave wide discretionary powers to the chief protectors, providing an opportunity for the pursuit of private agendas, to the detriment of Aboriginal interests’.²² However, these discretionary powers invoked hostility and despair amongst Aboriginal communities throughout Queensland. In 1897, Tozer did little to ease the concerns of Aborigines when he asserted that:

Wisdom and constraint would, of course, inevitably be in the hands of the protectors appointed under this Act ... these were to be the senior police officers in each district and mission superintendents. ... The fate of Aborigines throughout Queensland was, without appeal, mainly in the hands of part time white administrators.²³

¹⁸ *ibid*, 1897, p. 1546.

¹⁹ *ibid*, 1897, p. 2002.

²⁰ Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, Twelfth Parliament, Third Session, 1898. Vol. 1, Acts Passed During Session of 1897, Despatches Conveying Her Majesty’s Assent to The Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of Queensland, p. 408.

²¹ Protection of Aborigines (1898, January 6), *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld: 1864 – 1933).p. 5. Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page549272>. In the article the writer, acknowledges that Parry-Okenden, as ‘head of the police and with jurisdiction over the police officers, must be regarded as the supreme protector of aboriginals in the colony’. Initially appointed as Principal Protector he is referred to incorrectly at intervals by titles of Chief Protector, Principal Protector or, as in this article, Supreme Protector.

²² Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p. 536.

²³ Loos, 1982, p. 179. Citing from QPD of lxxviii (1897) pp. 1629-30, Home Sec., In committee; p1626, Home Sec., in committee; Bill Thorpe (2004) *Remembering the Forgotten : a History of Deebing Creek Aboriginal Mission in Queensland 1887 – 1915*, Henley Beach, South Australia, Seaview Press, p. 27.

Clearly, as Mark Copland elaborates, the Act implied that ‘almost every aspect of Aboriginal people’s lives could be controlled by the government’.²⁴ With implications of the legislation considered in relation to ‘the protection and control of Aborigines in Queensland, it seems clear that the legislators first saw themselves as belatedly doing their duty by the people they had dispossessed’.²⁵ This was a conviction also expressed by Tozer with his nominal admission ‘that there is a duty owing by the white races to the black races’.²⁶

The Act vested the Colonial Government with the power to remedy what they perceived as ‘the Aboriginal problem’.²⁷ Governments were also responding, albeit in a perfunctory manner, to the concerns of respected international humanitarian organisations, such as the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aboriginal Protection League, over the treatment of Aborigines.²⁸ Both organisations were openly critical of the governance of the Indigenous populations in all of the newly occupied British territories. Responding to increasing community and international concerns, Queensland became the first of the colonies and territories to enact specific protective legislation to manage and control its Indigenous population.

Claiming to provide better protection and care of all Aboriginal inhabitants of the colony, the new Act contained 33 principal clauses giving unprecedented power and authority to the protectors. Eleven of the Act’s 32 clauses dealt specifically with penalties for supplying opium to Aborigines, while the remaining clauses dealt primarily with restrictions and controls that were to be imposed on the Aboriginal population.²⁹ Considering the extraordinary levels of power that the protectors received, ‘no system was put in place for regulating their activities or preventing

²⁴ Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Background Paper. ‘*Stolen Wages—An Opportunity for Justice?*’ Compiled by Dr. Mark Copland, Printed and published by Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, North Sydney, N.S.W. nd. p.3.

²⁵ Loos, 1982, pp. 180-181.

²⁶ Parliamentary Debates, 1897, p. 1538.

²⁷ David Pollard, ‘*Give & Take : The Losing Partnership in Aboriginal Poverty*’, Sydney, N.S.W., Hale & Ironmonger, 1988, p. 39, 41 Elder, 1988, p. 259, p. 294; Gray, 2007, p. 34; Moses, 2004, p. 33; Stephen Gray ‘*The Protectors, a journey through whitefella past*’, Crows Nest, NSW. Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp. 256/7.

²⁸ Lake and Reynolds, 2008, p. 124.

²⁹ QSA: SRS 1296/1/33; Copy of the Bill to make Provision for the better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal and Half-caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to make more effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium; Retrieved from <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item.asp?dID=67>, n.d.

abuse of their authority'.³⁰ Ganter and Kidd argued that, while the Government promoted the Act as 'the "final solution" to the "Aboriginal problem"', it was in fact catering for a range of diverse interests and opinions about Aborigines'.³¹ More importantly, it sanctioned the existing practices of removing Aboriginal people from towns by force. Dusk to dawn curfews³² in the late 1880s and the early 1890s saw 'the beginning of more concerted efforts of this kind to address the "problem" of Aboriginal people in civilised space'.³³

The protection of Aborigines, as stated in the Act, related strongly to dominant attitudes embedded in the actions of white authorities. Rowley believed that it primarily 'involved isolation that conformed to white settler prejudice'.³⁴ Further to that, it spawned a more regressive paternalism and encouraged parsimony at all levels of Government.

2.2 WILLIAM PARRY-OKENDEN, FIRST CHIEF PROTECTOR, 1898 TO 1904

On 1 January 1898, William Parry-Okenden, the Commissioner of Police, became the colony's first senior protector of Aborigines. Supporting him to administer the Act were two other protectors with equal responsibility, Walter Roth and Archibald Meston. Roth, an ethnologist, became the designated Northern Protector and Meston, a former Government minister and vocal critic of the Native Police Force, became the Southern Protector. Commending Roth's appointment to the North, a journalist from *The Queenslander* stated that:

Unless a strong will was placed at the head of affairs the natives would most probably die out, as they have done and are doing in the Southern colonies. A man possessing in the highest degree this attribute has been found in Dr Roth, who has the condition of the blacks fully at heart.³⁵

³⁰ Tony Austin, *Never Trust a Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911 – 1939*, Darwin, Northern Territory University Press, 1997, p. 4.

³¹ Ganter and Kidd, 1993. p. 536.

³² Reynolds, 2003, p. 32; *ibid*, citing N. Loos, 'Aboriginal – European Relations in North Queensland, 1861 -97', Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, James Cook University, Townsville, 1976, p. 433.

³³ S. M. Babige., Family Affairs, An historical anthropology of state practice and Aboriginal agency in a rural town, North Queensland. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Western Australia, June 2004. pp. 55-61.

³⁴ Rowley, 1970, p. 239.

³⁵ *The Queenslander*, 1899, pp. 559, 560.

Several Members of Parliament were more cautious of Meston's appointment. Matthew Battersby, the Member for Moreton, had declared in the debates that 'the Bill was a Meston Bill, and it was a fool of a Bill'.³⁶

Parry-Okenden, a career public servant, joined the Queensland Public Service in 1870. Before joining, he had worked for 10 years in a variety of rural vocations. This followed three years as an articled clerk to a Melbourne solicitor. Leaving a promising law career in 1860, he followed his parents to Queensland, where he gained valuable experience working with his father on rural properties at Gayndah, Dalby, Cunnamulla and Charleville. He became familiar with the social structure and culture of local Aboriginal tribes and was conversant in several local dialects. He experienced an impressive rise through the bureaucratic ranks after joining the public service. He received career promotions through his valued contribution to several boards of enquiry. W. Kinnaird Rose, a fellow board member, described Parry-Okenden as 'a regular specimen of the cornstalk ... spare of flesh, but hard as nails, as active as a kangaroo, and the best horseman and whip I have ever met ... his companionship was a never failing delight'. His contribution to resolving problems of Government with external organisations was recognised in July 1895, when he was appointed as Commissioner of Police, 'a post unsought but loyally accepted'.³⁷

As Commissioner of Police, with responsibility over both the native police and the state police, Parry-Okenden encountered personal difficulty in fully supporting the protection of all Aborigines in accordance with the Act. Contrary to the opposing views expressed by Meston and Roth, he considered the 'Aboriginal problem' as being a matter of 'inefficient suppression of illegal behaviour', and advocated a continuation of the status quo 'with refinements of that suppression ... because "wild uncivilized blacks" still needed control and punishment'.³⁸ Parry-Okenden proposed a conciliatory approach in dealing with Aborigines. Submitting his first report to parliament in 1898, he advised in instructing Roth, and the various protectors under his direction:

³⁶ Debates of the Legislative Assembly, 1897, p. 1630.

³⁷ Michael D. de B. Collins Persse, 'Parry- Okenden, William Edward (1840-1926)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 147-148, retrieved from URL <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110151b.htm> on 3/03/2010

³⁸ Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p. 539.

To work the Act in a conciliatory and generous spirit, causing as little friction as possible, to resort to its drastic provisions only where necessary to put down abuse and wrong-doing, and in all cases where the blacks are kindly treated and their well-being assured not to disturb the status quo.³⁹

Later in the report, he expressed his concern that ‘a large amount of misconception also existed when the Act first came into operation as to its intended administration’ as there was ‘a wide-spread belief being prevalent, even among many of the blacks themselves, that they were to be collected from all directions and forcibly placed upon “reserves”’.⁴⁰ Parry-Okenden, aware of the Government’s covert intent to eventually segregate and institutionalise Aborigines on reserves and missions, sought to re-assure Aboriginal leaders and communities that there would be no forced separations and that the status quo would remain. However, his efforts became difficult with Meston’s implementation of the policy in the South and its encouragement in the North by Roth.

While he worked collaboratively with Roth, his involvement as a senior protector was restricted to supervisory and administrative control. The new Act imposed additional administrative demands on his time and resources. Parry-Okenden alluded to this matter in his annual report to parliament when he advised that ‘a large share of the administration of “*The Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, (1897)*” is done through the police department.’⁴¹ Initially, Roth reported directly to Parry-Okenden and Meston reported to the Home Secretary. However, the increased workload imposed on Parry-Okenden necessitated a review of the reporting function. During sittings of the third session of parliament in 1899, the House of Assembly repealed clause 2 of the regulations under the Act, and an amendment advised that ‘the Northern and Southern Protectors were answerable to the Minister’.⁴² The reorganisation allowed Parry-Okenden to carry out a thorough review of the operation of the police force

³⁹ The Northern Aborigines, Report by Mr. Parry-Okenden, No. 1.(1898, November 12) *The Queenslander*,(Brisbane, Qld. : 1866 – 1939), p. 918, Retrieved 2 July 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20853255>; Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 12th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1898, Vol.4, Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, p. 499.

⁴⁰ The Northern Aborigines, *The Queenslander*, 1898, p. 918.

⁴¹ Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings, 12th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1898, Vol. 1, Report of the Commissioner for Police for the Year 1897, p. 633.

⁴² Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings, 13th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1899, Vol. 5, Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1899, Appendix C, p. 595.

and prepare briefs for a Royal Commission to ‘Inquire into the Constitution, Administration, and Working of the Police Department’.⁴³ The Commission convened on 1 August 1899 and sat until 13 November of that year. The evidence disclosed at the inquiry revealed that Parry-Okenden’s involvement with the administration of the Aboriginal Protection Act was minimal. Documentation submitted to the inquiry advised that he had only been able to spend 34 days in the previous year with Dr Roth on matters relating to Aborigines.⁴⁴

Acting on the Royal Commission’s findings the police department adopted the inquiry’s recommendations and implemented organisational changes restructuring the department. Under the new structure, Parry-Okenden relinquished his administrative responsibilities as a senior protector of Aborigines to devote his time to running the police department. Roth reported to parliament in July 1900 that, due to changed circumstances and the ever-increasing duties of ‘Mr Parry-Okenden as Police Commissioner, the administration of the Act in the Northern districts of the colony has accordingly devolved upon himself’.⁴⁵ Parry-Okenden maintained a titular role until 1904, when he relinquished the senior protector’s position ‘to concentrate on the considerable problems that confronted him in his final months as Police Commissioner’.⁴⁶ Roth advised the parliament in his report for the year 1904 that:

The offices of the Northern and Southern Protectorates have been abolished and the working of the Aborigines Acts and Regulations placed under a Chief Protector for the whole State. ... I had the honour of being appointed the first Chief Protector of Aborigines.⁴⁷

⁴³ Queensland Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings, 13th Parliament, 2nd Session, 1899, Vol. 4, Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Constitution, Administration, and Working of the Police Department, pp. 137-691.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 1899, Appendix 10, p. 691.

⁴⁵ Queensland Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings 13th Parliament, 3rd Session, 1899, Vol. 5, Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines. p. 581.

⁴⁶ Steve Mullins, ‘Internal Colonialism, Communism, Institutionalised Racism, Progressive Reform, Clash of Administrative Cultures, or all of the above: motivations for social control in Torres Strait, 1897–1911’, [E-Journal]; *Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, published 03-03-1997, p. 3. Retrieved 17/03/2010 from URL <http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/mullins.htm> :citing W. Ross Johnston, ‘The Long Blue Line: a history of the Queensland Police, Brisbane, 1992, pp. 103 - 107.

⁴⁷ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1904, Vol.1, p. 772.

Notification confirming Roth's appointment as Chief Protector appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 2 April 1904. Parry-Okenden officially retired from the Queensland Public Service in February 1905. Until then, he continued to oversee the implementation of reforms to the police service, particularly in the deployment and progressive winding down of the Native Police Force.

Parry-Okenden's primary concern was stopping the indiscriminate killing of Queensland Aborigines by native police units. Mindful of widespread criticism directed at the native police, he deliberately set about restructuring the organisation to make it more accountable for its actions. He documented his intentions to remedy errors of the past within the service in the comprehensive report submitted to Tozer prior to the introduction of the Aboriginal protection bill to parliament. Acknowledging the urgent need for reform of the native police service, Parry-Okenden reportedly advised his superiors:

I entirely condemn the native police system, as I found it working, as unsuitable to present conditions, and that I propose a complete change ... because it is unfortunately true that grave wrongs have occasionally been done in the past. It is not for a moment to be inferred that I in any way join in the wholesale implications against the force, that I know are not justified.⁴⁸

Parry-Okenden, unlike Meston and Roth, saw protection and preservation of Aborigines not in policies of segregation and separation, but, more decisively, in policies of policing and implementation of law and order by regular police officers. He had no delusions about the enormity of his task to ensure that through the proper administration and enforcement of the Act the deplorable living conditions that Aborigines endured would be ameliorated. The task he believed was achievable if police, acting as local protectors, continued to administer regulations of the Act with authority and fairness to Aborigines.

⁴⁸ North Queensland Aborigines and Native Police, (1897, April 16), *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld. : 1864 – 1933) p. 6; Retrieved 1 July, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3649161>

CHAPTER 3: THE PROTECTORS, 1897 TO 1914

3.1 THE DUOPOLY 1897 TO 1903

Home Secretary Tozer, recognising the enormity of the task to administer the new Act, established a three-man protectorate for Queensland. He divided the state into two administrative areas, one to the north and the other to the south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Administration in the North and Torres Strait was to be by a Principal Protector and Senior Protector. A Senior Protector appointed to work in the South of the state would complement the northern appointments. However, a successful outcome for the new organisation depended on appointing personnel able to demonstrate a social and cultural understanding of Aboriginal society.

The colony's Principal Protector of Aborigines, William Parry-Okenden, took office on 1 January 1898. The Home Secretary's office also confirmed the appointment of two senior protectors to support Parry-Okenden. Archibald Meston became the colony's Southern Protector and Walter Roth its Northern Protector. Both appointments received favourable support from the colony's press, with *The Queenslander* suggesting that 'there were found in Mr Meston and Dr Roth two men who were in every way eminently suited Both gentlemen have an Australian reputation for their energy and their knowledge of blacks and their habits and customs'.¹ The white communities in North Queensland received Roth's appointment favourably. In comparison, Meston's appointment met with some reservation, particularly in the North, where he had moved to in December 1882, taking a position as editor of the *Cairns Chronicle*.² Tozer, a former parliamentary colleague and ally of Meston, had recommended his appointment as Southern Protector. Unfortunately, not all of Tozer's parliamentary colleagues shared a favourable opinion of Meston. Speaking at the second reading of a bill amending the Act in 1899, Thomas Givens, Labour Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), argued that Meston was not one of the better selections as a protector. He stated:

¹ Ethnology, *The Queenslander 1899*, p. 559.

² Cheryl Taylor, 'Prologue to Protectorship : Archibald Meston's Public Life in Far North Queensland, 1882–1888', *Journal of Royal Historical Society of Queensland*(1988), Vol. 18, No. 11, July 2004, p. 478.

Mr Meston got up a troupe of aboriginals to carry them round as a sort of wild west show – something after the style of the Buffalo Bill shows – and newspaper reports have led me to believe that he left that unfortunate troupe stranded outside the colony from which he took them.³

Givens reminded the House of Assembly that ‘one of the very things we desire to protect aboriginals from is people who will take them from their homes and leave them stranded far away subject to any evil that may befall them’. Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr D. T. Keogh, MLA, who claimed that ‘Mr Meston is the wrong man to do anything of this kind; I have known him for years’.⁴ In comparison, Roth was a highly regarded academic and ethnologist, who had established his credentials working as the Government Medical Officer in the North, while continuing his ethnological research and studies amongst Aboriginal tribes. During his locum work and activities amongst the far northern tribal Aborigines, he had frequent contact with Parry-Okenden. This association led to Parry-Okenden recommending Roth’s appointment as the senior Northern Protector to Tozer.⁵

Unfortunately, the likelihood of Meston and Roth working together cohesively was problematic. Both displayed very ‘different discursive approaches to Aborigines. Roth with accuracy of description and Meston with rhetorical embellishment’, a trait, no doubt, acquired in his earlier career as the parliamentary Member for Rosewood and as a journalist in Cairns.⁶ Meston’s garrulous outbursts and provocative journalism generated resentment in the North. The irreverence and disdain that Cairns people held towards him appeared in correspondence to the local press in 1866, when a writer, under the pseudonym of Ali Baba, wrote:

And his career as a legislator has been pronounced often enough as the biggest farce in Queensland history. ... With a style modelled on that of “Ancient Pistol” which can never condescend to call a spade a spade he has few equals in the art of simple bathos. Words, words, mountains of chaff without a grain of seed, for it is remarkable how the trick succeeds with a master hand in the art of verbiage, who can always count on the ignorance of a majority of his readers.⁷

³ Mr. Givens on the “Aboriginal Protection and Sale of Opium Bill” (1899, October 12) *Morning Post* (Cairns, Qld.: 1897-1907) p. 3. Retrieved July 1, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42939846>

⁴ *ibid.*, 1899, p. 3.

⁵ Protector of Aborigines (1905, July 19) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864-1933) p. 6, Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19315597>

⁶ Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p. 543.

⁷ Correspondence: Egotism in Excelsis (1886, April 8), *Cairns Post* (Qld. : 1884 – 1893).p. 2, Retrieved 16 July, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39431986>

While Roth displayed strong traits of paternalism in his relationships and reports about Aborigines, Meston patronised and exploited them for his own gains. During the five years that they shared responsibility for Queensland's Aborigines, each had to 'temper his ideology with the exigencies of administrative practice ... their commitment to Aboriginal welfare was overshadowed by personal battles ...'.⁸ Eventually, the administration of the two became characterised, not only by their antagonism with each other, but also by Meston's conflict with Government agencies and, equally, by the growing public resistance in the North to Roth.⁹ In 1904, the Government reorganised the administration of Aborigines and created an office of Chief Protector of Aboriginals, reporting directly to the Home Secretary. Roth became Chief Protector for the state, replacing Parry-Okenden, and Meston's position became redundant.

3.2 WALTER EDMUND ROTH, NORTHERN PROTECTOR (1897 TO 1904), CHIEF PROTECTOR (1904 TO 1906).

Walter Roth's promotion from senior protector in the North to Chief Protector for Queensland recognised his prior knowledge of Aborigines gained from his scientific studies of Indigenous society and his work amongst remote Aboriginal communities as a medical practitioner. He embraced the opportunity, afforded to him by the Government, to work towards ameliorating the oppressive conditions that Aborigines experienced because of their colour and primitive existence. While in office, he endeavoured to combat the exploitation of Aboriginal labour by white employers. This generated a schism in his relationship with major industry employers, which led to his resignation in 1906.

Roth arrived in Australia in late 1887. His credentials included qualifications as a physician and anthropologist. He taught at Brisbane Grammar School and Brisbane Technical College in 1869, before taking up a position as first director of the South Australian School of Mines and Industries (1889 to 1890). Following a move to Sydney in 1890, he obtained employment as assistant master at Sydney Grammar School, before returning to London in 1891 to complete his medical training. He

⁸ Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p. 543.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 547.

returned to Sydney midway through 1892 and worked as a medical locum for his brother prior to moving to north-west Queensland in 1894 and establishing a medical practice. The Colonial Government appointed him as the Government Medical Officer based at Normanton during 1896 and 1897. Roth displayed a keen interest in Aboriginal anthropology. His primary interest and dedication though was in the discipline of ethnography. His recording of the culture of Aborigines came from his observations and interaction with native tribes. He became one of the foremost experts on the subject and quickly gained international recognition for his studies and writing on the Aborigines of northern Queensland.¹⁰

Roth's appointment as Northern Protector in 1898 represented 'a new form of "Aboriginal expertise", combining professional training in science and medicine with amateur anthropological observation'.¹¹ However, 'expertise based on personal proximity to Aborigines was increasingly downplayed outside the forum of parliamentary debates'.¹² As *The Queenslander* reported in 1899:

The present Act is the first on the Queensland Statute Book to protect the aboriginals and if it fails in its object to improve and preserve the race, the failure is not likely to be credited to the want of sympathy of the Home Secretary or the ability of his officers.¹³

Continuing its praise and due recognition of Roth's attributes, the paper generously acclaimed, 'Dr Roth is specially to be commended for his enthusiasm, combining as he does the perceptions of a keen observer of life and the logic of a distinctly scientific man'.¹⁴ During his interview with the paper's reporter, Roth provided a brief historical background to settlement in the North and the conflict on the frontier between Aborigines and the white settlers. He surmised that, because of the increasing conflict,

¹⁰ Barrie Reynolds, 'Roth, Walter Edmund (1861 – 1933)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 463-464, Online Edition, retrieved 25/02/09 from : <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110471b.htm>

¹¹ Haebich, 2000, p. 294.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Ethnology, *The Queenslander*, 1899, pp. 559, 560; Protection of Aborigines, (1899, September 9), *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 3. Retrieved 2 July 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3701254>

¹⁴ Ethnology, *The Queenslander*, 1899, pp. 559-560.

“dispersions” became a regular thing, and it soon grew apparent that unless a strong will was placed at the head of affairs the natives would most probably die out, as they have done and are doing in the Southern colonies.¹⁵

Acknowledging that Roth was a prodigious and energetic worker during the 12 months that he had been Northern Protector, the reporter was resolute in his praise that ‘only a tremendous enthusiast could have accomplished it, and then only if he combined with his passion for work a mind of strictly scientific leanings’.¹⁶ Although accolades for the work of the protectors registered in several of the Brisbane and regional newspapers, it did not detract from the fact that, generally, until the turn of the nineteenth century, Governments of Queensland ‘had little interest in the Aborigines once they ceased to threaten life, property and progresses’.¹⁷ The Act gave the State the power it needed to determine the future of Queensland’s Indigenous communities. Perhaps more to the point was the widespread assumption that Aborigines were destined to die out anyway, regardless of human agency.¹⁸ Erroneous reporting in newspapers continued to fuel this widely held assumption. Advocates of the proposed racist ‘White Australia Policy’ eagerly embraced the ‘doomed race’ assumptions. Alluding to the future of Aborigines in a definitively racist article, the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated:

More than half the aboriginal population of New South Wales now consists of half-castes. True there are only a few thousands of them, and they are a dying race: but, if we are not misinformed, it is the pureblooded blacks who are dying out, while the number of half-castes is slightly increasing. ... Turning next to Queensland, we find that the aboriginal population is a larger factor than it has ever been in the other colonies. ... Their fate will no doubt will be similar to that of their fellows in New South Wales. The purebloods will decrease in numbers, and there will be a gradual process of mixing till in time they are absorbed in the white population.¹⁹

Roth’s primary concern, differing to the newspaper assumptions and based on scientific analogy, was preservation of the race by segregation from whites. Being able to gather the surviving Aborigines into special compounds, where they were protected from any further depredations, appeared justified to those contemporaries

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Reynolds, 2001, p. 116.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 2001, p. 116.

¹⁹ White Australia The Coloured Aliens Difficulty, A Grave National Danger The Only Remedy (1898, June 9) *Sydney Morning Herald*. (NSW: 1842-1954) p 5. Retrieved 2 July, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28250980>

and politicians who ‘unanimously passed the Bill’ that it was ‘a necessary human “solution” to a “problem” which was universally held to be insoluble’.²⁰

Although Roth reluctantly accepted fatalistic assumptions of a ‘doomed race’ his ‘humanitarian’ solution aimed to “preserve” Aborigines by keeping whites and ‘blacks’ apart. This was hardly novel; official and unofficial segregation ‘had been practised in Queensland for many years previously’.²¹ Unlike Parry-Okenden, Roth indicated his increasing support for the policy of removals of Aborigines to reserves and missions, for the ‘disappearance of the Aborigines everywhere demanded that they be removed completely from the perils of the white way of living’. Moreover, ‘on closed reserves, they could die out in comparative peace, unvitiated by white ways’.²²

Roth’s report to parliament in 1901 requested consideration for granting more land to segregate Aborigines from the whites. Ultimately, ‘if the blacks continue to be dispossessed of their hunting grounds and sources of water supply by their lands being rented for grazing rights ... bloodshed and retribution will be certain to ensue,’ he warned.²³ In 1902, in a report, he expressed genuine concern for the future and welfare of Aborigines, advising that statistics and reports for the annual blanket distribution indicated and bore ‘silent testimony to the terrible rate at which the native must be disappearing’.²⁴ He was also alarmed at inaction by authorities against perpetrators of unlawful acts against Aborigines, particularly in areas where he and others visited infrequently.²⁵

The greatest obstacle to Roth’s administration was breaking down the entrenched practices by employers of labour exploitation and sexual relations against

²⁰ William Thorpe, ‘Archibald Meston and Aboriginal Legislation in Colonial Queensland’ *Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 82 April 1984, p. 52, Citing S. Welborn, ‘Politicians and Aborigines in Queensland and Western Australia 1897-1907’, *Studies in Western Australian History*, Vol. 2. 1978.

²¹ Bill Thorpe, ‘Remembering the forgotten: a history of the Deebing Creek Aboriginal Mission in Queensland 1887 – 1915’, Henley Beach, South Australia, Seaview Press, 2004, p. 52.

²² Wright, 2004, p. 289.

²³ Queensland Votes and Proceedings of the Thirteenth Parliament, Fourth Session, Vol.4, Part 2 1901 Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1900, p. 1334.

²⁴ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1902, First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament, Vol.1, Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1901, p. 1133.

²⁵ *ibid*, 1902, p. 1141.

Aboriginal women and children, a situation that had become synonymous with employers in the North. Aborigines, a ‘significant resource to employers in a range of industries ... were generally paid in kind rather than wages’.²⁶ Debatable as it was, women, particularly ‘half- caste’ women and children, became the primary targets under Roth’s policy of ‘protection’. His understanding and enforcement of ‘protection’ had close links to the prevalent ideas of ‘moral danger’ to which Aboriginal women and girls were exposed.²⁷ His trepidation for women and children contrasted with his lack of concern for family units. As well as exposing the overt racism and paternalistic attitudes that existed, it also reflected his commitment to the protection of children and opposition to child labour.²⁸ Roth recorded his obvious concerns with Aboriginal labour recruitment on the mainland in his annual reports, noting that while ‘the public continue to apply to the police to recruit black labour for them; steps are being taken to stop this practice’.²⁹

Onerous as the task was, Roth decided to regulate Aboriginal employment, particularly the exploitation of women and children in the pastoral and fishing industries. In August 1903, he wrote to William J. Scott, the Under Secretary of Lands, regarding the behaviour of acting Sergeant Whelan of the Palmer native police camp. As it had become a matter for senior police, he advised that

all correspondence he forwarded to Police Inspector Marrett of Cairns on 29.7.3 seeking to have Whelan stopped from crossing into territory outside his jurisdiction where he abducted and took away against their will 4 boys (recruiting for the Native Police) and two women.³⁰

His reports revealed the systemic problems in the recruitment of Indigenous workers in the pearl shell and beche-de-mer fishing industries. Isolated by location, an extensive coastline and lack of resources available to police, employers recruited Aborigines without permits or protection from exploitation.³¹ Roth ‘encountered “extraordinary opposition” from local employers’, who argued that the Government

²⁶ Haebich, 2000, p. 304.

²⁷ Babige, 2004, p. 86.

²⁸ Haebich, 2000, p. 295, citing *Courier Mail*, Brisbane, 31.5.1904

²⁹ QV & Ps, 1901, p. 1329.

³⁰ Queensland State Archives, ID 336532, Series 18090, Correspondence. File A/58783, Letter 11th August 1903, Roth to Under Secretary for Lands.

³¹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers 1903, Second Session of the Fourteenth Parliament, Vol. 11, Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1902, p. 456.

‘was endeavouring to smash long-established relations with Aboriginal workers and to intervene as a third party to regulate Aboriginal employment’.³² More confronting was the fact that ‘the “deep north” was also a place of entrenched racism with strict racial barriers and codes of silence about local discriminatory practices’.³³ Roth generated umbrage and opposition from his detractors for his open criticism of the silence protecting established covert practices that employers engaged in when employing Aborigines.³⁴ Police Inspector Hugh Galbraith, in his annual report to Roth in 1902, raised his concerns at the practice of settlers providing young Aboriginal boys and girls from camps to town residents. ‘In due time’ he wrote,

the child arrives – how the children are separated from their parents, is a subject of conjecture and surmise. Most people will tell you that the child is better off with Europeans – in my opinion, the contention is absurd – most of the children will bolt (if old enough and the distance not too great) and then they are termed ungrateful by their owners. This practice has been going on for years.³⁵

Commenting on the respectability of prominent citizens involved in the trafficking of Aborigines, Roth reported that ‘a large number of individuals have an idea that they can trade an aboriginal as they would a horse or bullock. Some of these people are good Church-goers’.³⁶ In correspondence to the Under Secretary for Lands, relating to Bowman Bros., the owners of Rutland Plains Station, Roth expressed concern at their abuses and breaches of the Act against Aborigines. Although Frank Bowman was served prior warnings by Cairns police inspector Galbraith, about the practice of ‘trucking in children’ to be forced into station labour, Roth could not hide his exasperation that Bowman was a Justice of the Peace and community identity with no qualms about flouting the law in relation to the treatment of Aborigines.³⁷

Roth’s report to parliament stated his intent to remove ‘half-caste’ and other mixed-blood children from the hands of private employers. He believed that ‘if unremoved, the ‘half-caste’ children were likely to be exploited, especially in the

³² Haebich, 2000, p. 304.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 305.

³⁵ QSA, ID 292571, Files A/44680; A/44679, Series 9041, Correspondence Received. Document CR 107/3, Galbraith’s Report to Roth, 1902.

³⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1904, Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament, Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1903, p. 871.

³⁷ QSA, ID 336532, Series 18090, Correspondence. File A/58783.

maritime and pastoral industries, by unscrupulous employers'.³⁸ Girls, employed without wages and finding they were pregnant, had to look after themselves as best they could. He regretted having to report employers hiding behind the fourth section of the Act that originally excluded 'half-castes' as Aborigines.³⁹

Ignoring attempts to discredit him, Roth rigidly applied the Protection Legislation by removing Aborigines to segregated reserves away from contact with settler society; his actions regularly compromised 'by the need for exploitable labour, illicit sexual relations, and by resistance from those subjected to such repressive laws'.⁴⁰ Roth's diligence to his work and administration of the Act alienated him from many of the pastoralists and business owners in North Queensland who were reliant on the labour of Aborigines. His annual report referred to the recurring trouble that he had experienced with breaches of the Act, advising that many of his activities in 1904 stalled, following the deliberate resistance to his instructions that all wages for female Aboriginal employees 'be paid directly' into bank accounts with local protectors as trustees. Further concerns related to the continual abuse by employers of child labour as many employers ignored the 1901 amendment to the Act with a noticeable increase in the physical and sexual abuse of child workers, particularly girls.⁴¹ In the same report, Roth advised the parliament that:

The offices of the Northern and Southern Protectorates ... are abolished and the working of the Aborigines Act and Regulations placed under a Chief Protector for the whole State ... I had the honour of being appointed the first Chief Protector of Aborigines. (*Government Gazette*, 2.4.1904)⁴²

Roth's report also notified parliament that he would be absent in Western Australia in 1905 to report on the condition of the natives in that state.⁴³

³⁸ Robert Manne, 'Aboriginal Child Removal and the Question of Genocide, 1900-1940' in A. Dirk Moses, (Ed) *Genocide and Settler Society Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2004, pp. 221-222.

³⁹ QLA V & Ps, 1901, Vol.4, Part 2, pp. 1335-1336; The Fourth section, originally excluding 'half-castes' as Aborigines was subsequently amended and became part of The Act as amended in 1901.

⁴⁰ Hollinsworth, 1998, p. 109.

⁴¹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Third Session of the Fifteenth Parliament, Vol.1. Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1904, p. 751.

⁴² *ibid*, 1905, p. 772.

⁴³ *ibid.*; See also Treatment of Australian Aborigines (1905, June 10) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 47. Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20794258>

Several prominent North Queensland citizens engaged in a vindictive campaign in 1905 to discredit Roth, protesting that he was ‘incompetent, negligent and deliberately obstructive’.⁴⁴ Attacks on Roth, initiated by the Member for Cook, John Hargreaves, gained impetus at a public meeting in Cooktown. The *North Queensland Register* reported that the principal resolution put was:

That this meeting of citizens and rate-payers of Cooktown strongly protests against the reappointment of Dr. Roth as Chief Protector of Aborigines, on the ground that the Act can be more efficiently and economically worked by the Police Department, whose officers are more capable of judging local requirements and conditions.⁴⁵

On 18 September 1905, Scott, the Under Secretary for Public Lands, reported to parliament that he had travelled to Cooktown and concluded his investigation into the circumstances surrounding the public meeting and accusations levelled against Roth. Scott advised:

I came to know ... that there is a strong element in Cooktown favourable to Dr. Roth and his work, and that I had encountered the whole strength of the antagonistic opinion!⁴⁶

Replying to the accusations against him, Roth reported:

I am well aware that the general opposition to my administration, and to myself personally, is mainly due to my interference with what has for many years past been considered a vested interest in the flesh and blood of the native.⁴⁷

The vendetta against Roth continued while his agitators, with vested business interests, sought ways to circumvent the Act and employ the cheap labour of Aborigines. Amongst offenders were Members of Parliament, John Hargreaves (Cooktown), James Forsyth (Carpentaria), Robert Philp (Premier, 1899-1903; 1907-1908, partner in Burns Philp) and local merchants with business interests affected by the Act in relation to the employment and payment of wages to Aborigines. Roth

⁴⁴ Ganter and Kidd, 1993, p.548.

⁴⁵ Aboriginal Protectorship Objection to Dr. Roth.(1905, July 15) *The Queenslander*(Brisbane, Qld. : 1866 - 1939) p. 40, Retrieved July 25, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20795511>; From our Point of View. Dr. Roth’s Reappointment,(1905, July 17) *Morning Post* (Cairns, Qld. : 1897 – 1907) p. 2, Retrieved July 25, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article44413095>; Telegrams, (1905, July 17)*The North Queensland Register* (Townsville, Qld. : 1892 – 1905) p. 18, Retrieved July 25, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article85485847>

⁴⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1905, Third Session of the Fifteenth Parliament, Vol.1, Reports by the Under Secretary for Public Lands and Dr. Roth Re Complaints against Dr. Roth, Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 777.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 1905, p. 779.

disclosed his awareness of the antipathy towards him by the bureaucracy in correspondence to a teacher seeking his help to obtain a position in one of the Torres Strait schools. He advised the writer that there were no vacancies and ‘for your own peace and comfort, I would advise you not to mention my name in Cairns to anyone. I am afraid that, with both political parties, I am but as a red rag to a bull’.⁴⁸ Roth’s position became untenable after a vituperative newspaper and parliamentary campaign and he formally tendered his resignation on 10 May 1906, citing ill health.⁴⁹ Notifying parliament in his last annual report, he stated, ‘my resignation has been accepted as from 10th June, 1906, on completion of ten years service under the Queensland Government’.⁵⁰ After resigning from the department, Roth left Queensland and worked for a short time as a Government medical officer and stipendiary magistrate in Western Australia, before severing his ties with Australia late in 1906 to take up an appointment as protector of Indians in British Guiana.

3.3 ARCHIBALD MESTON, SOUTHERN PROTECTOR (1897 TO 1903)

Meston’s appointment as the senior Southern Protector met with guarded reservation by members of Premier Hugh Nelson’s 1897 ministry, particularly those who had an earlier association with him when he was a Member of Parliament. Meston had not endeared himself to the public or parliament, with his self-proclaimed expertise and writings on Aborigines doing little to improve the tenuous relationships that emerged between himself, the bureaucracy, parliamentary colleagues and the white communities of North Queensland. Cynicism of colleagues and the public marred his efforts and methods to ameliorate Aborigines during the short term he served as Southern Protector.

Archibald Meston had emigrated from Scotland to Australia with his parents in 1859. After disembarking in Sydney, the family moved to Ulmarra on the Clarence River in northern New South Wales. There, he learnt the rudiments of farming from

⁴⁸ Queensland State Archives, ID 10809/2, File No. 755/1906: Letter from Roth to John Craig dated 20 April 1906.

⁴⁹ Ganter & Kidd, 1993, p. 549.

⁵⁰ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1906, Fourth Session of the Fifteenth Parliament, Vol. 2, Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year 1905, p. 944.

his father. Following his nineteenth birthday, he spent six months travelling extensively through Queensland before returning to Sydney. He married in Sydney and returned with his wife to the Clarence River district for a short time. In 1874, he moved to Queensland to manage the Pearlwell plantation on the Brisbane River of Dr John Waugh, a prominent Brisbane naturopath. He relinquished this position in December 1875, becoming the editor of the *Ipswich Observer* until 1881, when the office moved to Brisbane as the *Daily Observer* and *East Moreton Advocate*. From November 1878 to July 1882 Meston represented Rosewood in the Queensland Legislative Assembly (QLA), where he served two years as the party whip. Moving to North Queensland, he edited the *Townsville Herald* from February to August 1881. In November of that year he was declared bankrupt. He remained bankrupt until discharged in 1885, by which time he had moved to Cairns. There, he managed the sugar cane plantation of Horace Brinsmead & Co., on the Barron River until 1889. He had an interest in exploration, a pastime that brought him into contact with Aborigines and allowed him to study their customs, habits and languages. He wrote articles about early Queensland, as well as Indigenous people and their culture. His writings were very readable, although overstated with rhetoric.⁵¹

Meston's deliberate attempts to establish himself as an authority on Aborigines provoked less than flattering responses from North Queensland residents. In a journal article, *Prologue to Protectorship: Archibald Meston's Public Life in Far North Queensland, 1882–1888*, Cheryl Taylor suggests that:

The prolonged frustration of Meston's political hopes during his northern residence helps to explain his construction of himself as an expert on Aborigines. ... He had clearly decided to exploit opportunities for security and advancement in the field of race relations, which was rejected by most of his fellow politicians as taxing and second-rate.⁵²

Further:

Meston's declarations of involvement in the field in which he later claimed to be an expert were otherwise confined to a conventional adoption of Aboriginal

⁵¹ S.E. Stephens. Meston, Archibald (1851-1924) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.npn. Retrieved on July 30, 2012 from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/meston-archibald-4191/text6741>; Cheryl Taylor, 2003, p. 478. Taylor indicates that Meston was also the editor of the *Toowoomba Chronicle* between 1875 and 1880.

⁵² Taylor, 2003, p. 479.

names, based on an interest acquired as a child on his father's farm near Ulmarra in Northern New South Wales.⁵³

Meston's writings and public addresses exposed his contradictory views on the fate of Aborigines. Haebich contends that 'although he did not entirely discount the 'doomed race theory', he nevertheless criticised it as a subterfuge used by the strong to explain away crimes against the weak'.⁵⁴ Yet, in an article for the *Brisbane Courier* in 1891, he wrote of the probability 'In twenty more years there will likely not be a soul left of all the Moreton Bay tribes Around us day by day a race is rapidly vanishing in annihilation'. Further, 'a whole people are perishing before our eyes, and no power of princes, philosophy, or Christianity can arrest their proudly gloomy progress towards a certain and utter destruction'. In an emotional appeal to readers, he wrote:

Is there not something unspeakably solemn in this awful drama of the last death scenes of the Australian races? ... the shadowy forms and naked feet of a doomed race marching swiftly and softly by us to where the dark ocean of oblivion ruthlessly swallows them all?⁵⁵

Ten years later, a columnist in *Queensland Figaro* wrote, 'When Queensland was first occupied the total population of aboriginals was at least 200,000 – now it is about 25,000; and Archibald Meston places the period of their total extermination at about 50 years ahead'.⁵⁶

Although Meston maintained contact with several of his parliamentary associates, his affiliations and writings continued to provoke attacks from others on his credibility in advocating reform of Aboriginal management. His lack of support shown by past associates remained a legacy from his term in parliament, where he 'remained singularly unmoved and even hostile to suggestions that the State should spend money on Aboriginal welfare'.⁵⁷ Writing to the *Brisbane Courier*, John Smith, questioning Meston's insinuations that the Myalls instigated attacks on white settlers in the Mulgrave, commented:

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 480.

⁵⁴ Haebich, 2000, p. 139.

⁵⁵ Bribie Island (1891, September 21) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 3: Retrieved August 10, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3531223>

⁵⁶ "Fear God; Speak Evil of none; Stick to the Truth; and never be done" Facts, Fads, Feats and Fancies *Queensland Figaro*, 17 October 1901, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Thorpe, 1984, p. 58. Cites Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 1879 Vol. 30, p. 1619.

there are men about who make no scruple in saying that they think no more of shooting a black than of shooting a dog. Meston's bloodthirsty way of writing about reprisals gives people a strong right to include him in that category.⁵⁸

Referring to Meston as the "Calder" of Queensland, for exposing the ignorance of certain writers on Australian subjects in the London press, the *Launceston Examiner* quoted from an article recently written to the *Courier* by Meston:

Civilising the blacks became a hopeless task in the face of the mutual uncompromising hostility between them and the whites ... the history of the early blacks can advantageously be consigned to the same speedy and merciful oblivion that ought to hide forever the convict period of this colony. ... With unutterable thoughts does the man of human sympathies and ardent sensibilities glance back along that dismal vista strewn with the wreckage of a dying race.⁵⁹

Meston proved to be an opportunist in his exploitation of Aborigines. Even though he remained unwavering in advocating that Aborigines lived their lives out segregated from the whites, he was not averse to using them for exhibits from which he received financial rewards. Assembling a troupe of Aborigines together in 1891, Meston started his "Wild Australia" show, with noticeable parallels to the American 'Wild West' shows of "Buffalo Bill" Cody and "Wild Bill" Hickock. Featuring frontier life and the American Indians, Cody's circus-like show, founded in 1883, toured the country to portray the conquering of the American West. The show toured Great Britain in 1887 and, in 1889, made an extensive tour through Europe. Meston had similar ideas in mind. The *Launceston Examiner* reported that, following several exhibitions, displays and lectures of Aborigines in Brisbane, Meston intended 'to gather a troupe of wild blacks and take them to the World's Fair at Chicago ...'. The *Examiner* added, 'He anticipates little trouble in managing the darkies, because he is selecting those who have not been contaminated by association with the whites'. The newspaper reporter thought that the idea was a novel one, worthy of success.⁶⁰ Despite the rhetoric and show casing locally, the venture ceased in 1893 when Meston severed ties with his business partner. A lengthy protracted civil court case followed. Aborigines of the troupe, left stranded in Sydney, were repatriated to Queensland after Meston had 'undertaken to repay the Government as soon as

⁵⁸ A. Meston V. Myalls (1885, January 19) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864-1933) p. 6: Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3438288>

⁵⁹ Our Queensland Letter (1890, October 25) *Launceston Examiner* (Tas.: 1842-1899) p. 7: Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39557825>

⁶⁰ A Wild North Show (1891, December 14) *Launceston Examiner* (Tas. 1842 – 1899) p. 3: Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39584027>

possible the cost of returning the aboriginals, so that the expense to the State will only be temporary'.⁶¹ The incident confirmed Meston's assumptions that he was beyond reproach by flouting the law when taking Aborigines from the 'Wild Australia' show out of Queensland. Questioned in parliament about Meston's actions, Tozer confessed that, when Aborigines from Queensland were taken out of the colony, 'no consent was asked for or given'.⁶²

Undeterred by the collapse of his 'Wild Australia' show, Meston continued to champion the Aboriginal cause in his writings and letters to the press. As one newspaper columnist reported, 'Mr. Meston spared neither trouble nor expense in his efforts "to lighten the last of the weary way" of the doomed race'.⁶³ Evaluating the contents of a brochure entitled *A Scheme for the Protection and Preservation of the Queensland Aborigines*, a writer for *The Queenslander*, affirmed several of Meston's claims, but ridiculed others, suggesting that 'it appears to us that Mr. Meston's scheme errs through-out in over-elaborateness and rigidity'.⁶⁴ Later, George Hislop of "Wyalla", Bloomfield River, challenged the factuality of Meston's special commission report that investigated the condition of Aborigines in the North. In a lengthy letter to *The Queenslander*, he criticised many aspects of the report, with claims that:

the whole journey seems to have been far too hurried. This district he simply rushed through, and had not even time for a cursory inspection of it. ... He allowed himself no time for accurate inquiry, careful investigation, and personal observation; hence the numerous errors into which he has fallen.⁶⁵

Later, Hislop ventures to suggest that 'the "special commissioner" must have been bilious when he made his hurried inspection of the Bloomfield, otherwise he never would have penned statements so inconsistent with fact'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Wild Australia (1893, July 18) *Warwick Argus* (St. Lucia, Qld.:1879 – 1901) p. 2: Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article76643456>

⁶² Parliament (1893, July 5) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 7: Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3562402>

⁶³ The Coming Naval Battle (1905, April 15) *Warwick Examiner and Times* (St. Lucia, Qld.: 1867 – 1919) p. 7: Retrieved August 8, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article82248047>

⁶⁴ The Case of the Aborigines (1895, May 11) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.:1866 - 1939) p. 885: Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article21631777>

⁶⁵ Ethnology The Case of the Aboriginal, *The Queenslander*, 1897, pp. 23-4.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

The antagonism towards Meston and his suitability as a protector of Aborigines emerged in the parliamentary debates on the Aboriginal Protection Bill. Tozer maintained his support for Meston. Ignoring the concerns of his parliamentary peers, Tozer appointed Meston as the Southern Protector of Aborigines, under the new Act. Prior to his appointment as Southern Protector, Meston, acting on Tozer's request, had been removing 'troublesome' Aborigines from Maryborough to a new Government reserve on Fraser Island. Detailing events surrounding the removal, and the Fraser Island Reserve, a writer in the *Brisbane Courier* intimated that:

Most of us are familiar with the spectacle of those human pariahs, the town blacks. The vices of civilisation all found fruitful soil in them, and produced their bitter fruit - its virtues were unknown. ... Thus were the aboriginals a misery to themselves and a danger to the community, and all efforts to help them seemed unavailing. Paraphrasing the words of England laureate, we said. The race is dying, let it die – adding, mentally, and the sooner the better.⁶⁷

Meston's report to Tozer, in May 1897, in relation to the matter advised:

I have to report this new aboriginal settlement in a most satisfactory condition. In addition to the original fifty-one brought down from Maryborough on the 24th February there are twenty-two others who have come of their own accord, making a total of seventy-three on the 1st May.⁶⁸

Concluding, Meston advised that the 'position of superintendent has entailed a good deal of anxiety and worry, and some unpleasant work. I am specially pleased with the manner in which the duties have been discharged'.⁶⁹

It is plausible that the anxiety over the appointment as Superintendent to which Meston referred related to the issue of the appointee, Harold Meston, his son. Similar concerns unravelled in November 1899, when the Executive Council appointed Meston's wife as a protector in the southern districts. Announcing the appointment, the council reported:

It is understood that the necessity for the appointment has arisen in consequence of a considerable number of women for whose protection the Act was designed being either employed in or near Brisbane, or passing through the metropolis on their way to other districts ... The establishment of a home for half-caste and aboriginal women is, we understand, in contemplation, and this, if adopted, will

⁶⁷ The Poor Blacks (1899, April 22) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864-1933) p. 4; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3692359>

⁶⁸ White Cliffs Aboriginal Station (1897, May 17) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 6; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3650996>

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

entail a great deal of work, particularly if the women are to be trained to usefulness.⁷⁰

While Roth gave total commitment to implementing the Act and working with the different agencies in the North, Meston continued to inject his presence into matters somewhat alienated from his role as protector. In October 1899, the police Commissioner questioned him at some length over reasons for his criticism of police investigating the Gatton murder case.⁷¹ Meston and two Aboriginal trackers had been at the crime scene following a request of the police. Later that year, when the Colonial Office sought volunteers for the Boer War, the *Morning Post* reported that:

Mr. Archibald Meston has submitted an offer to the Government to organise and lead a force of 50 expert bushmen, who will be good riders and crack shots, to act as guerrilla fighters and scouts in the Transvaal. The offer has been referred to the Defence Force authorities.⁷²

Unlike Roth, Meston considered administration and report writing to be tedious and unnecessary tasks. He spent considerable time at the request of the Home Secretary exhibiting Aborigines at civil and civic functions and providing Aboriginal men from reserves as black trackers to assist police in apprehending criminal felons.⁷³ The frequency of these actions contributed to his aggrandisement and self-promotion as a leading authority on Aborigines.⁷⁴ His first brief report to parliament appeared in the Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1902 and included advice that:

removals in the Southern division began with the 51 blacks sent to start the aboriginal station at Fraser's Island on February 24th, 1897. Since then I have sent 165 blacks to Fraser Island from South, Central, North and West Queensland. A number of girls and women, requiring a year of special

⁷⁰ Purity of Elections (1899, November 11) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 940; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22562247>

⁷¹ The Police Commission (1899, October 18) *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA.: 1889 – 1931) p. 5; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article29517985>; Police Commission (1899, October 18) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.:1864 – 1933) p. 6; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3703725>

⁷² The Federal Force for the Cape (1899, December 21) *Morning Post* (Cairns, Qld.: 1897 – 1907) p. 6; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42940643>

⁷³ Trackers From Queensland (1900, July 26) *The West Australian* (Perth, WA.: 1879 -1954) p. 5; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23840663>: The trackers referred to in the press were sent to Gilgandra in the Central West of NSW to assist police in the pursuit of the Governor Bros., murder suspects of Mrs. Mawbey.

⁷⁴ The Commonwealth (1901, January 10) *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW.: 1842 – 1954) p. 5; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14344257>; Aborigines at Play (1903, October 5) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 2; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19244770>

discipline, have been sent from time to time to the Magdalen Asylum at Woolloowin – an excellent institution.⁷⁵

Continuing, he confirmed the removal of 410 Aborigines, ‘for special reasons from their old environment, and taken under the direct care and control of the Department’.⁷⁶ Aborigines removed for ‘special reasons’ included those ‘whose removal was earnestly desired by the local residents’.⁷⁷ Significantly, the most comprehensive part of his report related to the displays and activities that he organised for Aborigines to perform at civic functions. This included taking a troupe to Sydney ‘at the request of the New South Wales Premier to reproduce the landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay’.⁷⁸ Concluding his report, Meston informed parliament that ‘during the coming year it will be necessary to remove a considerable number of aboriginals to the reserves’.⁷⁹

Meston’s promotion of himself in matters outside of Aboriginal affairs impaired his ability to administer the Act in the manner prescribed. He displayed little regard for procedures relating to the management of Aborigines and constantly operated outside of the authority of his employers. His annual reports, when submitted, were bereft of relevant detail. His administration lacked accountability for funds expended. Meston’s enigmatic, and often controversial, career as the Southern Protector reflected the theories of Aboriginal control and management that he subscribed to in his dissertation about the Queensland Aborigines.⁸⁰ It also exposed the oscillating views that he expressed about the doomed race theory.⁸¹ Following a reorganisation of the Civil Service in December 1903, an announcement in the newspapers advised that Meston’s services as the ‘Protector of Aboriginals for the Southern division, [had been] dispensed with’.⁸²

⁷⁵ Queensland Parliamentary Papers 1902, First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament, Vol. 1. Report of the Southern Protector of Aboriginals, p. 1175.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1176.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1178.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1180.

⁸⁰ Archibald Meston. ‘*Queensland Aborigines: Proposed System for their Improvement and Preservation*’, Addressed to the Honourable Horace Tozer, Colonial Secretary of Queensland. Edmund Gregory, Government Printer, Brisbane, 1895. Pp. 1-35.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, 1895, pp. 3, 6, 12, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27.

⁸² Queensland (1903, December 11) *Morning Post* (Cairns, Qld.: 1897 – 1907) p. 5; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42956620>; Queensland (December 10, 1903) *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842 – 1954) p. 3; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from

After terminating his services as the Southern Protector, the Government employed Meston, in the first three months of 1904, to lead a scientific expedition to the Bellenden – Ker ranges, north of Cairns, to conduct a study of the natural resources of the area.⁸³ In 1907, he attempted to re-enter politics as the candidate for Cook in North Queensland. However, his attempt to gain pre-selection for the Ministerialist party failed. The Kidston Government appointed him as acting Director of the Sydney branch of the Queensland Government's Tourist Bureau for three weeks in September 1909. Following the resignation of the incumbent director of the Bureau in November 1909, Meston became the new director. After retiring from the Civil Service, he returned to Brisbane, applying unsuccessfully for the vacant Chief Protector's position in 1914. In the following years, he became a vocal critic of the Government, claiming that the Aboriginal Department had become 'a swollen bureaucracy growing on funds that should have been funding Aboriginal welfare'.⁸⁴ While he became an outspoken critic of the Department and wrote extensively on the impact of white management on Aborigines, Meston was not averse to boasting to his audience that 'he ran his department almost single handedly for the first three months of its existence to save moneys'.⁸⁵ The idiosyncrasies and flamboyancy that defined Meston's career became a self- fulfilling prophecy when an article, penned by one of his critics to the *Cairns Post* in 1886, stated:

no man ever entered Parliament more threadbare, bereft of ordinary judgement, modesty and common sense. Sheer impudence can do much in colonial society where a man is taken off hand at his own valuation, but the cat gets out of the bag sooner or later, and [Meston's] career as a legislator has been pronounced often enough as the biggest farce in Queensland history As a public man and as a journalist there is nothing to find but flabbiness, incoherence, extreme shallowness, and a general atmosphere of murkiness.⁸⁶

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14585545>; Queensland Civil Service (December 10, 1903) *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Qld.: 1878 – 1954) p. 5; Retrieved July 31, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article52998632>

⁸³ Exploration of Bellenden-Ker (January 12, 1904) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 4; Retrieved July 16, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19260321>

⁸⁴ William Thorpe, 'Archibald Meston and Aboriginal Legislation in Colonial Queensland'. *Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 82 (April), 1984, p. 64.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 64.

⁸⁶ *Cairns Post*, 1886, p. 2.

3.4 RICHARD BARON HOWARD, ACTING CHIEF PROTECTOR 1904, CHIEF PROTECTOR 1906 TO 1914

Richard Howard became the first career public servant appointed to the office of Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland. His early years in the pastoral industry, association with Indigenous workers and subsequent career with the Government contributed to his understanding of Aboriginal society and culture. Although he ensured that the Government's policies prescribed for Aborigines under the Act were enforced, he held strong beliefs about segregating Aborigines from the wider white community. Amelioration for Aborigines, he believed, was achievable by education and social integration in white society. He questioned the policies of his Government that were based on the assumption of the 'imminent doom' of Aborigines. Howard's fear was that the Aboriginal population faced annihilation from the racist policies that segregated them from whites.

Howard succeeded Roth as Chief Protector of Aboriginals in 1906. He had previous experience in the role from his term as acting Chief Protector when Roth chaired the Western Australian Commission of Inquiry in early 1904. Born at Portland, Victoria, in 1848, Howard received his early education at the Church of England Grammar School, St. Kilda. He left school at the age of 12, following the death of his father, and became articled to a prominent Melbourne barrister, to advance his studies for a career in law. However, at the age of 15, and with only his final examinations to pass, he abandoned his studies following serious injuries that he sustained in a steeplechase fall. In 1864, he left Victoria and moved to Queensland, travelling extensively throughout the colony and obtaining work where he could. His skills as a bushman and equestrian were widely recognised. He held various positions from bullock driving to station management. Howard's began his career with the Government in 1881, inaugurating Queensland's first census with the introduction of a card system. He oversaw each subsequent census until 1901, after which he became Registrar General for Queensland and a member of the Land Court. An appointment as an inspector for the State Agricultural Bank, based at Roma,

followed. While stationed at Roma he also acted as the district protector of
Aboriginals.⁸⁷ Howard's promotion to succeed Roth took effect from 1 July 1906.⁸⁸

North Queensland traders and business owners, instrumental in orchestrating
Roth's downfall, were relieved at Howard's appointment. An article in *The Western
Champion* on 7 September 1907 expressed confidence in the new Chief Protector
and agreed with his appraisal 'that it is our bounden duty to attempt to raise the
aboriginals to a higher social plane'. Further, while he was prepared to give credit to
the churches, the results in their mission work had not reflected the selfdenial and
earnestness of those involved.⁸⁹ The paper resonated strongly with Howard's
reservations regarding the segregation of Aborigines, reflecting from his past
experience that:

The idea of completely isolating them from Europeans is not desirable, as it is
found that where they have intercourse with the right class of whites they
become more quickly civilised, learn to be clean in their habits, more obedient
and useful, and are apt pupils in following out the modes of living of the
superior race.⁹⁰

While his ideas may have been a panacea to employer groups looking for any
opportunity to circumvent the restrictive employment laws synonymous with the Act,
mission authorities expressed concern that he appeared to be less committed to the
protection of Aborigines and their interests than his predecessors were.⁹¹ Their
anxiety most likely evolved from Howard's questions about sustained Government
paternalism towards Aborigines and the pursuit of policies that he felt would widen
the schism between the races. Howard indicated that his reservations over the
policies of protectionism and segregation, ruthlessly pursued by Roth and Meston,
came from his long and amicable experience with Aborigines in western Queensland.

⁸⁷ An Enterprising Career (1938, August 18) *Portland Guardian* (Vic.: 1876 – 1953) p. 5; Retrieved
August 17, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64279969> ; Kidd, 1997, p. 59.

⁸⁸ Queensland Parliamentary Papers 1907, First Session of the Sixteenth Parliament, Vol. 11, Annual
Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1906, p. 1263.

⁸⁹ Our Aboriginal Bretheren (1907, September 7) *The Western Champion and General Advertiser for
the Central-Western Districts* (Barcaldine, Qld.: 1892 -1922) p. 5; Retrieved September 15, 2012 from
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article76577876>

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 1907, p. 5; Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1907, p. 1263; Kidd, 1997, p. 59 (citing extracts
from Howard's Annual Report to Parliament, 1906)

⁹¹ Kidd, 1997, pp. 59-60.

Irrespective of the steps being taken, which would most likely result in ‘the preservation and uplifting of a fast disappearing race’, it had become evident to Howard ‘that there was a passive resistance to every attempt at the social elevation of these people [by whites], and a rapid, visible, and gloomy progress towards their ultimate annihilation’.⁹² His report the following year questioned the effect that the Government’s paternal approach was having on the capability of Aborigines to retain their ability to look after themselves. Howard believed that the paternalism of Government was counterproductive. His primary concern lay in disabusing, from the mind of the Aborigines, the idea instilled in them by thoughtlessness and ignorant whites, that, the Government had a role to play as a kindly fairy godparent; one that Aborigines could look to for the necessities and comforts of life without assisting themselves.⁹³ Reverend Hey, in his report for the year, again expressed concern at the death rate amongst Aborigines at Mapoon Mission and of his unwavering belief that it ‘is a clear indication of the disappearance of the race’.⁹⁴ In his report from Weipa Mission, Reverend Edward Brown confirmed how the attitudes of some missionaries had changed little over the past half century. Like many of his peers, he resigned himself to the fact that ‘in our dealings with the blacks we are always aware of our great duty – the lifting up of the black race to a higher standard of life; I may say from the animal life to the human life’.⁹⁵

Despite the vast area of the state and the distances separating the communities of Queensland, Howard spent from three to five months each year away from Brisbane, travelling the north and north-west areas of the state and Torres Strait territories, attending to Aboriginal affairs and meeting with local protectors, missionaries and reserve Superintendents. The inspections afforded him the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of Government policy and to resolve local issues. The annual inspections and engagement with communities and district protectors became the catalyst to redefining his perceptions towards the protection and preservation of the Aboriginal population. Reporting about his 1908 inspection to Mornington Island and subsequent request for appointment of a suitable officer to

⁹² Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1907, p. 1264.

⁹³ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1908, Second Session of the Seventeenth Parliament, Vol.111, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1907, p. 932.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p. 944.

⁹⁵ *ibid*.

ensure that the inhabitants remained in their natural state, he reflected about how unjust and inhumane it became ‘to passively allow these people to gradually drift into the vices of the white man, which means disease, death and annihilation’.⁹⁶ More significantly, it became evident as the tour of inspection progressed, that Howard would relent from his reluctance to move Aborigines when he recommended that some of the elderly at Croydon be ‘deported to one or other of the settlements’ for economical reasons.⁹⁷ He also used the report to vent his continuing concerns at the level of Government intervention in providing the necessities that helped to strip Aborigines of their ability to acquire economic independence. Tersely re-stating his view, he wrote:

The opinion has always been held by me that hitherto in the case of the aborigines much spoon feeding has been practised, and the tendency has been to encourage pauperism rather than to remove it, to make these people less self reliant and more dependent upon the State, and the charitable section of the community.⁹⁸

Howard had a responsibility to respond promptly to any incidents with Aborigines on Government reserves or mission settlements. The Government’s interest was foremost to mitigate any possible bad publicity that it could suffer if any of its officials were involved. In August 1909, Howard became an observer at a Mapoon Mission inquiry convened to investigate 32 charges of ‘alleged cruelty to natives and mismanagement of the mission by the superintendent, the Rev. Nicholas Hey’, by a former employee, Michael Baltzer.⁹⁹ Representatives of the press attended the inquiry. At a brief, prior to leaving for the inquiry, the Government informed journalists ‘that the inquiry was to be in every way open’. However, while en route to Mapoon, ‘a stipulation was made that the evidence given was not to be published until the approval of the Home Secretary was obtained’. Following the inquiry, John Appel, the Home Secretary, relented and authorised publication of the report remarking ‘that any suppression would not be desirable’.¹⁰⁰ Although a full report of the inquiry proceedings appeared in the paper, there was no disclosure of the

⁹⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1909, First Session of the Eighteenth Parliament, Vol. 11, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1908. p. 973.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p. 974.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 975.

⁹⁹ Sensation at a Mission, Serious Allegation of Cruelty, Official Inquiry at Mapoon. (1909, August 17) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 5, Retrieved October 10, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19577313>

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*.

findings; presumably, the paper's editor suggested, as 'Mapoon is not under State control, but is a mission conducted by the Presbyterians and subsidised by the State'.¹⁰¹

Following inspection of the Thursday Island communities in 1909, Howard reported that the 'solution of the aboriginal problem' retarding economic sustainability of the Islanders and mainland coastal communities lay in the establishment of a cash generating copra industry.¹⁰² He had visited several copra plantations on his inspections in North Queensland and the islands of the Torres Straits to acquaint himself with the industry and to ascertain its long-term viability as a profitable industry for isolated communities. Unfortunately, the industry collapsed while investigating its feasibility and no further action eventuated. Later, the report advised that there had been an appreciable decrease in most areas of 'our two greatest evils', the supply of liquor and opium to Aborigines.¹⁰³ Establishing a general store at Barambah proved to be a profitable venture. It provided encouraging returns to the Government while reducing the extent of total funding appropriated to the reserve by treasury. Howard commended the benefits of such ventures and recommended the establishment of similar outlets on other missions and reserves.¹⁰⁴

Howard's real concern for Aborigines, and the apparent lack of concern by Government, appeared in his annual report for 1910. He reminded parliament that he had, in previous reports, repeatedly pointed out the 'necessity – in fact, the duty – of making some effective provisions for our native race. It is heart breaking, deplorable, and unchristian-like to see these simple people made the victims of European greed and vice'.¹⁰⁵ Further, 'it is not uncommon to hear intelligent people speak of the aborigines as a race which within a few years is certain to become extinct'.¹⁰⁶ The press, alert to opportunities for reporting the conditions that Aborigines had to contend with, seized on Howard's 1910 report to highlight the claims made about the

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1910, Second Session of the Eighteenth Parliament, Vol. 111. Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1909. p. 961.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 969.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 978.

¹⁰⁵ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1911, Third Session of the Eighteenth Parliament, Vol. 111, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1910. p. 1305.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1306.

poor management of Yarrabah Mission and subsequent counter claims by Brisbane's Anglican Archbishop, Dr. St. Clair G. Donaldson. Howard had reported that:

there can be no two opinions ... as to the woeful mismanagement ... There is, in my opinion, an air of indolence and sweet do nothing pervading the whole place. No real effort has been made to produce even the medicine or the food required to feed the inmates.¹⁰⁷

Refuting Howard's claims, Donaldson believed that the problem resulted from a lack of understanding of the cultural habitat and disposition of the 'native' combined with the inadequate grant received from the Government each year, submitting that 'the government, and not the mission, ought to pay, if payment is needed, for feeding and clothing the blacks'.¹⁰⁸

The plight and future of Aborigines deeply concerned him. Recalling international situations and histories of conquered races, he believed that facts of history would suggest that:

It is at least possible those persons are mistaken who regard the extinction of the aborigines as a painful certainty; also, there may be some faults in our method of treatment, which, perhaps, are the cause of such lamentable consequences.¹⁰⁹

The tone of Howard's reports reflected his anguish at the belief, embedded in white society, that Aborigines were doomed, giving cause for him to remark; 'I sincerely trust some determined and organised effort will be made to save this simple race from utter extinction'.¹¹⁰ Home Secretary Appel accompanied Howard during part of his 1911 annual inspection in the North.¹¹¹ Apart from resolving a number of Aboriginal matters with district protectors, the presence of the Home Secretary and his wife in the North became little more than a ministerial public relations exercise. On a more significant note though, Howard's annual reports mirrored the changes in his attitude towards the management policies for Aborigines. From his initial appointment as Chief Protector in 1906, Howard displayed a strong aversion to the idea of segregation. However, his latter experiences and observations while on

¹⁰⁷ The Yarrabah Mission (1910, October 27) *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 – 1954) p. 6; Retrieved October 16, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla/news-article53196904>

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1911, p. 1306.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1307.

¹¹¹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1912, First Session of the Nineteenth Parliament, Vol. 111, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1911. p. 993.

annual inspections created sufficient doubt in his mind for him to concede that ‘had the system of segregating the aborigines of this State on reserves under Government control been carried out years ago, we would still have many of the tribes with us that have now become extinct’.¹¹²

Sceptics of the Act continued to use the press to remind readers of the inadequacy of Government policies to ameliorate the condition of Aborigines and save the race from extinction. Evidence of this appeared in a letter to the editor of *The Queenslander* in 1911:

the question of the Queensland aboriginal, whose condition today I maintain is infinitely worse in many respects than it was prior to the introduction of the Aboriginal Act of 1897 ... and as a natural consequence the black man is fast disappearing from his once happy hunting grounds.¹¹³

Further:

The reading of our Chief Protector’s and his various officers’ reports would certainly convey the impression that we were the most humane and philanthropic people at present existing upon this mundane sphere. Alas! A glance behind the scenes would reveal the fact that everything in connection with aboriginal matters and administration is not by any means what it appears.¹¹⁴

Similarly, news headlines, such as “The Native Problem”, “Australian Aborigines: The Protection of a Doomed Race” and “Treatment of Aborigines: Allegations against Queensland”, strengthened the belief in white society that Aborigines would eventually disappear.¹¹⁵ The media critics of Queensland’s treatment of its Aborigines drew a quick refutation from Home Secretary Appel, when responding to a claim in an article that the Reverend C. E. Leroy had stated, ‘As to Queensland, the treatment meted out to the blacks in that State had been the worst of all’.¹¹⁶ Undoubtedly, Howard’s latest experience gave him cause to accept

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 996.

¹¹³ The Aborigines (1911, May 6) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 12; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article21917333>

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ The Native Problem (1913, September 18) *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW: 1842 – 1954) p 8.; Retrieved August 8, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15451204> ; Australian Aborigines. The Protection of a Doomed Race (1912, February 5) *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW: 1888 – 1954) p. 5; Retrieved July 23, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article45181888> ; Treatment of Aborigines: Allegations Against Queensland (1912, September 7) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 38; Retrieved July 22, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23323521>

¹¹⁶ *The Queenslander*, 1912, p. 38.

some truth in Leroy's statement. In August 1913, during a surprise visit to Barambah and inspection of the hospital, Howard found 'the whole interior of the building far from clean. In fact the place appeared to me not to have been properly cleaned up for some time'. Incensed by what had confronted him, Howard, on his return to Brisbane, wrote to Under Secretary Appel detailing these and other matters. Of the medical staff, he wrote:

As a matter of fact I was impressed with the idea that both the Medical officer and the nurse exhibited a blameworthy lack of interest in the welfare of these sick people ... It is of course obvious that, at an Institution of the nature of Barambah, where many old and sick aborigines are taken in the death rate is sure to be heavy, but I find numbers of young and apparently strong people have recently passed away, and the death rate considerably augmented.

Further, 'this matter has been the cause of a good deal of worry to myself and although hesitating to bring the matter under your notice, I feel it my bounden duty to do so'.¹¹⁷

Despite concerted attempts by the Government and its Chief Protector to ameliorate the condition of Aborigines, the national press remained determined to adjudge the 'native problem' as society's inability to halt the progression of the race to extinction. A *Sydney Morning Herald* article stated in 1913 that:

our trouble is not that the indigenous population is increasing with alarming rapidity, but that it is surely and by no means slowly dying out In the more settled regions he has almost died out, and an inevitable process is but slightly delayed by various reservations where he is kept from the temptations which he is so unfitted to resist.¹¹⁸

Howard's final report as Chief Protector focused on the inevitable demise of Aborigines and the need for more appropriate and immediate intervention by the Government. His appeal to parliament reiterated concerns expressed in earlier reports that the Government needed to give priority to the long neglected matter of more appropriate methods of management to ensure survival of the Aboriginal race. He saw such action as imperative. 'As everyone is aware, the aboriginal races are slowly dying out', he stated.¹¹⁹ The report also alluded to another ongoing concern of his,

¹¹⁷ Queensland State Archives, ID 336209, File A/69584, Correspondence. Letter under Seal 01454, 13 Feb 1914, Howard to the Under Secretary

¹¹⁸ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1913, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1914. Third Session of the Nineteenth Parliament, Vol. 111. Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year 1913, p. 1015.

the ‘rescue and care of the young women and children’, a process that ‘has now become a special feature of our work – in fact, I might say is regarded as the most important part of it’.¹²⁰ However, the intent behind the process indicated the racist motive and notions of white superiority of such action, with Howard explaining:

After having provided for their safe passage through the shoals of that period between childhood and womanhood, opportunity can then be given them to legitimately obey the call of nature, which is always so strong in them, by selecting mates from among their own people and thus keep the race clean.¹²¹

Although Howard officially retired in 1914, he had been devolving many responsibilities to his second in charge, John Bleakley, since 1912. Unlike his predecessors, Howard’s approach to Aboriginal management and protection centred on controlled integration and promoting skills that would make Aboriginal workers more employable as domestics and pastoral workers. He became acting Chief Protector for a short time in 1904 while Roth headed the Western Australian inquiry into Aboriginal affairs and received promotion to Chief Protector when Roth resigned in 1906. Decisions and recommendations that Howard made to parliament during his term of office reflected strongly on how his lived experiences in rural Queensland influenced his own ideas of enhancing Aboriginal lives within the constraints of the Act that he had been commissioned to enforce.

Despite the individual efforts of Roth, Meston and Howard to administer the Act, all became victims of an unforgiving press, a society divided on the assumption of Aborigines as doomed, and the instability of a parliament that continued to evolve and change representatives after minimum terms in office.¹²² Frequent changes in Government ministries since 1897 meant that responsibility for Aboriginal affairs, initially administered by the Home Secretary, transferred for a short period in 1903 to the Secretary of Public Lands before returning in 1905 to the administration of the Home Secretary. The political turbulence and changes that inevitably came with such

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1023.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Queensland’s Parliament experienced ten changes of Premiers and new ministries between 1897 and 1914. These changes often necessitated frequent and disruptive re-organisation of Departments and portfolios of Ministers. Hugh Nelson (1893 – 98), T.J. Burns (1898), J.R. Dickson (189 - 99), A. Dawson (1899), R. Philp (1899 – 1903 & 1907 – 08), A Morgan (1903 – 06), W. Kidston 1906 – 07 & 1908 – 11), D. Denham (1911 – 15). Retrieved from <http://www.qld.gov.au/about/about-queensland/history/premiers>

moves often meant that priority given to Aboriginal affairs diminished and the protectors had to interact with a Civil Service oligarchy that had either little knowledge of Aborigines or conversely, little interest in Aborigines. Although the management and control of Aborigines adopted by the three protectors revealed differing ideologies, they each committed to whatever action they perceived as necessary in order to preserve and protect Aborigines under the prescribed authority of the Act.

CHAPTER 4: JOHN WILLIAM BLEAKLEY: ADMINISTRATOR OF INDIGENOUS POLICIES; QUEENSLAND'S CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINALS, 1914 TO 1939; DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AFFAIRS, 1939 TO 1942

John William Bleakley became Queensland's longest serving Chief Protector of Aboriginals following his appointment in February 1914. In office, he contributed significantly to framing policy amending the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)*. By the late 1920s, he had achieved national recognition for his experience as an administrator of Aboriginal affairs. Although competent and sometimes compassionate in his role, he adopted a rigid attitude of paternalism towards Aborigines. His fervent obsession with strict racial segregation reinforced and legitimised a racial divide between societies of white and black.

Bleakley was born in Manchester, England, during his parents' visit to that country in 1879. The family later returned to Ipswich and his father's employment as a boilermaker at the Government railway workshops. Bleakley received his education at the North Ipswich Boys' State School and Newtown State School.¹ He worked in the Post and Telegraph office at Esk for a short time after he left school until he was eligible to take the entrance exam for the Civil Service.² However, his 1896 application to sit for the entrance examination proved unsuccessful. The interviewing officer noted on his records that 'he was an average student'. Bleakley received a favourable character reference from F. R. Newton, the Clerk in Holy Orders at Saint Agnes Anglican Church, Esk, certifying that he was of 'good moral character, and of industrious habits'.³ Failing his initial attempt to join the Civil Service, Bleakley resigned from the Esk Post and Telegraph Office and returned to Ipswich to work for George Wilson, principal of G. H. Wilson and Co., a general merchant and shipping agent. He again applied unsuccessfully to sit for the Civil Service examination scheduled for May 1898. Undeterred by his latest failure, he

¹ Care of Aboriginals (1914, February 7) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864-1933). P. 11; Retrieved July 2 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article19963558> Newtown State School was renamed Silkstone State School and built at a new location with the foundation stone being laid on 15 May 1915.

² Raymond Evans, 'Bleakley, John William (1879 – 1957)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, Retrieved September 3, 2012 from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bleakley-john-william-5272/text8887>

³ QSA Staff Files, J.W.Bleakley / Item ID 934278/Docs.2466 /269, 2623/22, 582/20, No. 4470. 01, Doc. 6651/20 Dated 1 April 01.

reapplied in December 1899. His final application proved successful, with notice requiring him to sit for the Public Service entrance exam in January 1900.⁴ In August 1900, the Undersecretary to the Home Secretary's office, William Ryder, advised Bleakley 'of his appointment to the Public Service Board on probation as a clerk in the Home Secretary's office at an allowance of £50 per annum'.⁵ He completed his probationary service in March 1901, with the 'recommendation of permanent appointment and an increase in his salary'.⁶ A formal letter to the Public Service Board confirmed the action taken by the Home Secretary's Department.⁷ Twelve months later, Bleakley transferred to Thursday Island as a clerk in the Marine Department. In August 1905, after three years in the marine office, he received promotion to the position of Shipping Master. A month later, he married Catherine Grisewood at All Souls' Quetta Memorial Anglican Cathedral, Thursday Island.⁸

The tropical climate of Far North Queensland led to continuing health problems for Bleakley and his family, causing him to request a return to Brisbane. He rejected the Home Secretary's Department's offer of a re-location to Charters Towers on an increased salary, telegramming his superiors in Brisbane, 'Doctor advises change cooler climate Brisbane necessary account failing health charters towers unsuitable'.⁹ The Home Secretary's Department reluctantly granted his request in September 1907 and appointed him to a clerical position in the office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines.¹⁰ Despite protracted efforts and negotiations during the next three years, attempts by the Home Secretary's Department and Public Service Board to have Bleakley agree to a return to Thursday Island failed. The Department could not agree to conditions stipulated by Bleakley; neither could the underlying health concerns that caused his transfer back to Brisbane be resolved. Further, he wanted to stay in Brisbane out of concern for the welfare of his wife and

⁴ QSA, ID 934278, Bleakley Staff Files.

⁵ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/Doc. 2623/22.

⁶ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/Doc.582/20: No. 4470. 01.

⁷ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/Doc.6651/20

⁸ Bleakley married Catherine Grisewood at All Souls' Quetta Memorial Cathedral, Thursday Island, on 19 September 1905. Service conducted by Rev. J. Jones., B.A.(See Advertisements – Marriage (1900, October 6) *The Brisbane Courier*, p. 16.

⁹ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/Doc.3778/49, 10 April 07.

¹⁰ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/ Doc. 3778/49, 10 April 07; Doc. 6105, Telegram 12 April 07; Doc. 49; Doc. 4772 dated 23 Sept 07.

the opportunity of future schooling for his two children.¹¹ Bleakley remained the senior clerk in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs until April 1911 when promoted to the position of Deputy Chief Protector. On the occasions that the Chief Protector absented himself from Brisbane to inspect the reserves and missions, Bleakley managed the office, deputising for Howard at local functions and writing up the Department's annual reports for parliament.

Recruitment for a suitable replacement for the Chief Protector's position occurred following Howard's retirement at the end of 1913. Applicants for the position, advertised in January 1914 and aspired to by Bleakley, were subject to the interview and selection processes of the Public Service Board. From the large number of applications submitted, the candidates short-listed for the position were Meston and Bleakley. Following their respective panel interviews, Meston's application included a file note stating:

If knowledge of the aboriginals, their habits and customs were the only matters to be considered, I think Mr Meston would be the most suitable; so far as administration is concerned, I think he would be the least suitable. I understand that when he was previously in the Department as a Protector he was a most difficult officer to control. He knew no rules or regulations and was not expeditious in the conduct of business.

Bleakley's application indicated a more favourable assessment by the panel, which noted on his records:

J. W. Bleakley, has been connected with the Department for some time, practically in charge of it during the last three years. He did his work very satisfactorily. He has had experience of the settlements in Torres Straits. I think under present circumstances, he is the most suitable man for the position ...¹²

A further note attached to Bleakley's file suggested that the recommendation for his appointment was a safe option and just reward for prior service that he had rendered to the Home Secretary's Department. His appointment and promotion appeared in the *Government Gazette* notices of 6 February 1914, together with notification of related statutory positions that he would assume as Chief Protector.¹³ An editorial with details of the appointment appeared in the *Brisbane Courier* the following day. Coinciding with the announcement of Bleakley as Chief Protector, Home Secretary

¹¹ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/Letter/Public Service Board Seal, dated 19 Jan, 10. Ref. 106.

¹² *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/ Note to file W.G. 3.2.14.

¹³ *ibid.* Bleakley Staff Files/6219/ Doc.49 – Government Gazette Notices, 6th February, 1914.

Appel announced the appointment of Thomas Loose, an unsuccessful candidate for the Chief Protector's position, as the Deputy Chief Protector. Loose's appointment helped to ease the administrative and management problems of the sub-department of Aboriginals. Appel explained that:

the sub-department is growing rapidly, and in the past the Minister has been at a great disadvantage owing to the frequent absences of the Chief Protector, who did all the travelling for the office. This entailed a great deal of time, so that when matters cropped up, as they did frequently, where it was necessary for the Minister and his officer to confer, these questions had to be stood over until the latter's return.¹⁴

Attempts by Government or its agencies to shift responsibility for the conditions that Aborigines endured inevitably found forum in newspaper articles. A month after Bleakley became Chief Protector, an article about the 'Doomed Blacks' appeared in the *Northern Miner*. The writer, highly critical of the Federal Government's policy of leaving alone matters concerning Aborigines, concluded with Baldwin Spencer's comments that

There is no other practicable policy but that of segregation in large reserves, if the aboriginals are to be preserved, and if any serious effort is to be made for their betterment. I see only two alternatives, either rapid degradation and extermination, or the formation of large reserves, with freedom therein from intercourse with whites and Asiatics.¹⁵

Bleakley could take some comfort from the article with the knowledge that the views expressed by Spencer were consistent with his own. After assuming office, Bleakley readily complied with the manner of annual reporting that his predecessors had implemented. Although relying on annual reports from the district protectors reporting to him, he also gathered information from his own periodic inspections to districts and territories under the ambit of his control. As an avid photographer and collector of Aboriginal artefacts, Bleakley frequently addressed community groups and institutional conferences where he extolled the beneficence of Government in its treatment of Aborigines.¹⁶ He also sought to make parliament aware of 'the very great importance of doing everything possible to collect and preserve the fast

¹⁴ Care of Aboriginals, *Brisbane Courier*, 1914, p. 11.

¹⁵ Doomed Blacks (1914, March 24) *The Northern Miner* (Charters Towers, Qld.: 1874 – 1954) p. 6; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article79179799>

¹⁶ Brisbane Diary: Caught in Action (1938, October 25) *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1933 – 1954) p. 6; Retrieved December 10, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article38727891>

disappearing relics of the native races of our portion of the continent'.¹⁷ The ambiguity in Bleakley's statement caused doubt as to whether the relics referred to were the primitive tools, weapons and adornments of Aborigines or the actual Aboriginal people. For the 'doomed race' protagonists, the statement supported their belief that only by the segregation of Aborigines on reserves could they die out peacefully and leave whites free from genetic contamination.

As Chief Protector, Bleakley canvassed many of the issues and concerns previously addressed by his predecessors. The matter of disparity of wages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers concerned him. Unable to offer any immediate solutions, he urged local protectors to be more vigilant 'in enforcing the provisions of the Acts as to employment'.¹⁸ Maintaining the practices of former chief protectors, Bleakley issued 43 marriage permits in 1914 allowing

aboriginal and half-caste women to marry men of other races, the circumstances of each case being first carefully enquired into in the interests of the women. ... Twenty-one of these marriages were to Pacific Islanders ... eleven half-castes married Europeans, and three Chinese half-castes were allowed to marry Chinese, the remainder being mostly crossbreds who desired to mate with other coloured aliens.

He further advised:

a few quadroon infants of half-caste women, are quartered at orphan homes at a higher rate, it being undesirable that they should be brought up in the atmosphere of an aboriginal institution.¹⁹

A challenge to the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)* and its implications for Aboriginal women who married outside of their race led to a case before the State full court in 1914. Known as the 'Rigg Case', it vindicated the action of the Chief Protector and the Government in exercising control over the working status of all Aboriginal women who married non-Aboriginals. In its decision, the Full Court ruled that the jurisdiction of the protector had precedent over the legal status of the woman's husband and deemed that:

¹⁷ Queensland Parliamentary Papers, Session of 1915–1916. Vol.3. Part 2, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1914, p. 1679.

¹⁸ QPP, 1915-1916, p. 1680.

¹⁹ QPP, 1915-1916, p. 1684.

if a white man marries an aboriginal, she is not his solely. The Protector of
Aboriginals has a say in the matter as well, all because of the section of the Act
quoted by the Chief Justice. She still remains an aboriginal.²⁰

The removal of Aborigines by order of the Minister, for disciplinary reasons or
for their relief and protection, saw 380 men, women and children re-located in 1916
to various Government settlements and church missions. Bleakley, unsympathetic to
the outcries of concerned citizens over the practice, refuted protestations with his
claim that ‘reports from the reserves show that invariably they discover long-lost
relatives, more or less distant, and quickly settle down in the new home’.²¹ Those
removed included 127 women and 52 children at risk ‘from the unhealthy
surroundings of camps and towns’.²² Under Bleakley’s protectorate, control of
Aboriginal people and removal of women and children became increasingly
systematic. As Robert van Krieken states:

the legislation enabling this was introduced in relatively weak form between
1886 and 1909 in all Australian states, strengthened around 1915, and further
reinforced in the 1930s, by which time, in legal terms, the state had become the
custodial parents of virtually all Aboriginal children.²³

Bleakley believed in promoting the reserves as a communal sanctuary for
Aborigines removed from their tribal lands. The retail stores at Barambah, Taroom
and Hull River had ‘fully justified their existence, being not only a great convenience
to the inmates, but a means of helping to reduce the temptation to waste their
earnings in gambling, opium, or drink’.²⁴ Further, profits generated by the stores
offset and reduced the Treasury’s fiscal commitment to the funding of Indigenous
people. Major infrastructure projects and free labour at both Taroom and Barambah
proved cost effective for the Treasury. A sawmill constructed at Barambah provided
work for men on the reserve and supplied the dressed timber necessary to enable
more appropriate administrative buildings to be built at both Taroom and Barambah.
Bleakley advised that, on both of these reserves, ‘the administrative and native

²⁰ The Rigg Case (1914, June 8) *Cairns Post* (Qld.: 1909 – 1954) p. 4; Retrieved September 9, 2012
from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42888790>

²¹ Annual Report of The Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the Year 1916, Brisbane, Government
Printer.1917, C.A. 57 – 1917. p. 6.

²² *ibid*, 1917, p. 7.

²³ Robert van Krieken, ‘Rethinking Cultural Genocide: Child Removal and Settler – Colonial State
Formation’, *Oceania*, Vol. 75, Iss. 2; 2004, p. 127, Citing from Haebich, 1988, p. 350.

²⁴ Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 1917, p. 11.

quarters are being laid out in proper village plan ... it is hoped by this means to deal with many of the problems of health and morality'.²⁵

In 1916, Queensland had an estimated Aboriginal population of 16,700 and expended £27,244 on them.²⁶ Irrespective of outcomes, the press published editorials criticising the roles of the Home Affairs Department and Chief Protector. 'Observer', writing to the editor of the *Northern Miner* in 1916, considered that:

The time seems ripe for shedding a little of the cold, analytical light of publicity on the doings of the administration of the Aborigines Protection Department ... our aborigine is rapidly becoming extinct, and his end is not being made any the easier by the endeavours of the Aborigines Protection Department ...

The Chief Protector has exhibited the symptoms of having a settled policy. What is needed at the head of the Department is a man with a sufficient backbone and strength of character to strike out a line for himself, and who will not be swayed by missionaries – some of them Germans, by the way – and others; a man who will not be content with letting things rip.²⁷

Concluding his letter, 'Observer' wondered 'whether the Aborigines Protection Department under its present head has not reached the limit of futility'.²⁸

Bleakley conceded that problems existed in ascertaining the accuracy of records in relation to Aboriginal marriages and births. This frequently occurred because:

the majority of the women and girls in the camps, particularly in less civilised districts, mate with men of their own nationality, in accordance with tribal customs, and no record can be kept of these marriages or of the children born, as aboriginal children are not registered.²⁹

He estimated the Aboriginal population for the year to be 16,600, slightly less than his previous year's estimate. Consequently, the Government deducted nearly £4,000 from the budget allocation for Aboriginal Queenslanders.³⁰

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ Correspondence: Aboriginal Protection, (1916, October 4) *The Northern Miner* (Charters Towers, Qld.: 1874 – 1954) p. 3; retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article80370973>

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Year 1917, Brisbane, Government Printer, 1918, C A. 53-1918. p. 4.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 11.

Bleakley's annual reports to parliament varied little from year to year. They conveyed a picture of efficiency in management and administration, despite limited funding and increased demands for welfare assistance by Indigenous people. The annual reports and the activities of cabinet ministers regularly featured in the state's newspapers. Regional and city newspapers became a fertile forum for a cynical public intent on questioning the accuracy of the reports, particularly when many contributors to 'Letters to the Editor' columns reported callous or unfeeling treatment of Aborigines. Addressing his letter to the editor of the *Post and Herald* in North Queensland, 'Saxon' directed his criticism at the discriminatory treatment given by protectorate and Government representatives to Aborigines on missions and those still in tribal communities. 'Saxon' commented:

The sooner some radical change is made the better, as an Act that unduly favors one section of aboriginals, and leaves the other in a state of hunger and disease, is surely wanting.

The "mission" feeling seems only to extend to those parts of Queensland where the almighty dollar can be pursued to some extent, while the parts where the poverty stricken nigger lives never feel the tread of missionary, governor, or other officials of high minds.³¹

The manner in which Queensland's newspapers engaged its readers with articles and forums for debate on the provocative issues surrounding the assumed fate of Aborigines provided readers with an array of scientific, racist theories supported by numerous local examples. Rarely did the Government enter into any of the debates or issues playing out in the newspapers. Often, incidents involving the Government's administration of Aborigines escaped scrutiny from the public, with the obscure placement of related articles in the press. Demonstrating this, a column appearing in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* advised that:

an enquiry into the administration of affairs at the Barambah aboriginal settlement, in the Burnett district, was commenced this morning at the settlement by Mr Bracewell, Police Magistrate. The inquiry mostly has reference to the administration and differences between the manager and staff.³²

Chesterman and Galligan claim that the 'exclusion [of Aborigines] was achieved incrementally, through legislative restrictions on their exercise of civic

³¹ The Aboriginal Question (1915, April 22) *Cairns Post* (Qld.: 1909 – 1954) p. 2; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42925942>

³² Queensland News (1918, November 15) *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Qld.: 1878 – 1954) p. 7; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article53858683>; Bleakley made no reference to this incident in the reports he furnished to parliament.

rights, beginning with their being denied the Commonwealth franchise in 1902’.

Further, it became evident that:

for most early-twentieth-century white Australians, the awkwardness of this situation – whereby Aborigines were residents of the national territory but not members of the national community – was not particularly troubling since the problem was assumed to be temporary. Before long, no Aborigines would remain.³³

The pair was reiterating federation era beliefs expressed by Alfred Deakin, who declared, ‘in another century the probability is that Australia will be a White Continent with not a black or even dark skin amongst its inhabitants’.³⁴ Deakin continued, ‘positive steps had to be taken to safeguard White Australia against coloured aliens but not against coloured indigenes, for the latter were inevitably expiring to make way for an all-white nation’.³⁵ Expressing sentiments such as these provided fertile ground for Bleakley and the Government of the day to enforce its Aboriginal legislation with minimal public scrutiny.

Increasingly, the abuse of Indigenous labour came under the investigation of district protectors reporting to Bleakley. The immediate demand for labour intensified as industry and pastoralists faced critical labour shortages from white workers who had enlisted or been conscripted into the military for the Great War. Bleakley expressed concern that many employers of Indigenous workers in the pastoral industry during the war held too cheap an estimate on the value of their labour. He contended that this perception and treatment of Aboriginal workers conveyed the impression ‘that he [was] regarded more as a part of the stock or working plant than as a human being’.³⁶

Although Aborigines classified as ‘full bloods’ were denied the right to enlist for war service, Military authorities decided that ‘half-castes’ holding exemption

³³ Russell McGregor, ‘One People: Aboriginal Assimilation and the White Australia Ideal’. *History Australia*, Vol. 6, Iss.1, April 2009, p. 03. 9.

³⁴ McGregor, 2009, p. 03. 9, Citing Lack and Templeton, 1988, p. 11.

³⁵ McGregor, 2009, p. 03. 9.

³⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1919-1920, Second Session of the Twenty-First Parliament, Vol. 2, Reports upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary’s Department – Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December, 1918 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, p. 538.

certificates would be considered for active service.³⁷ Maintaining its policies of protection and control, Bleakley arranged for the military to direct all pay allotments of those deemed wards of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to his offices. Bleakley became trustee for the dependents of the enlisted men. Under his trusteeship, he allocated the wages paid and became the nominated executor for the men's wills.³⁸ Depending on the circumstances of families, the department deposited allotments for the enlisted men in trust accounts or dispersed funds at the Chief Protector's discretion.³⁹ Elaborating on the success of the Department's management of the financial affairs of 'half-caste' soldiers, Bleakley later advised that:

The arrangement between the military authorities and the Department for the control of the military pay of the half-caste soldiers during the war proved so successful that a similar arrangement was agreed to with regard to the custody of the war gratuity bonds.⁴⁰

Critical reports concerning Aboriginal health were recurrent. Although district protectors reported favourably on the status of Aboriginal health in their protectorates, mortality rates remained elevated. The death of 366 Aborigines during 1918, many from preventable illnesses, revealed the lack of medical resources available to Aborigines.⁴¹ Bleakley became skilful at both condemning and condoning the role of Government in the protection dispensed throughout the Indigenous population. He frequently pondered the question in statements he made. Referring to the functioning of Government reserves in 1918, he repeated his concern that 'the problem of what is to be the future of our aboriginals as a race will soon have to be seriously considered'. Further, 'it is also necessary ... that the resources, natural and financial, should be sufficient to allow unretarded industrial and economic progress, but the whole question depends on efficient and sympathetic control'.⁴²

³⁷ Federal Legislation written into the *Defence Act 1910* stipulated that persons of non-European origin or descent could not enlist in any of the Defence services. See also May, 1994, p. 147; Kidd, 1997, p. 74.

³⁸ Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the Year 1917, Brisbane, Government Printer, 1918, C A. 53-1918. p. 4.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1921, Second Session of the Twenty – Second Parliament, Vol. 2. Aboriginal Department – Information contained in Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the Year ended 31st December, 1920, p. 558.

⁴¹ QPPs, 1919 - 1920, p. 540.

⁴² *ibid.* p. 542.

Bleakley's statements exposed an inherent weakness in the administration of the Government and his department to institute appropriate policies to benefit the Aboriginal population. Implicating the inability of his administration to accept responsibility for the problem, Bleakley confirmed that a lack of funds hampered the social and physical improvements of Aboriginal communities. The impracticable situation, denied the native 'the opportunity of raising himself from the degrading environments of camp life' he stated.⁴³ Twenty-one years after legislation of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)* to protect and ameliorate Aborigines, the state's Chief Protector still talked of the serious need to address the problem of Aborigines' futures.

Bleakley's reports were often at odds with damning reports from visiting dignitaries and community representatives to different reserves and missions. Often, they exposed the appalling conditions that many Aborigines had to contend with under the guise of protection. Kidd recounts how a party of visiting officials to Barambah, in 1918, witnessed the state of underfed children and 'criticised the discontinuation of the daily hot meal of soup and bread ... there was no normal sanitation facilities on the reserve and skin disease was rampant'.⁴⁴ Bleakley made no response to these accusations, even though a medical officer regularly visited Barambah in 1918 to treat 407 patients in the reserve's hospital, in addition to a large number of outpatients. There were also 77 deaths recorded at the settlement.⁴⁵ The abnormally high rate of hospital admissions and the condemnatory report failed to generate any further investigation from the Government or its ministers.

Bleakley expedited his management tasks by circumventing public service processes. His autonomy was evident in 1919, when he appeared before the *Royal Commission appointed to Inquire and Report on Certain Matters relating to the Classification of Officers of the Public Service of Queensland*. When questioned 'is your work as Chief Protector subject to the general control of the Minister and the Under Secretary?' Bleakley indicated that 'they do not interfere or directly control the general administration'. However, he acknowledged that he was 'directly

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 543.

⁴⁴ Ros Kidd 'Black Lives, Government Lies', Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2000, p. 13.

⁴⁵ QPPs, 1919, pp. 542/543.

responsible to the Minister, through the Under Secretary, for the administration of the Department, the control of all institutions, district protectors, teachers, &c., remained with him', particularly as he had inaugurated all of the clerical and administrative systems in the department.⁴⁶

A widespread, pneumonic influenza pandemic broke out in Queensland in 1919. Bleakley, consequently, abandoned his proposed inspections of all Aboriginal reserves, missions and institutions to limit its spread amongst the state's Aborigines. Contagion in the North also restricted shipping and, thus, his access to communities in the Torres Strait. The severity of the outbreak took a serious toll on both the white and Indigenous population with 552 deaths recorded for the year. The death rates at Barambah in 1919 from the influenza pandemic were 'seven times greater than the rest of Australia'.⁴⁷ Bleakley noted, in 1920, following the cancellation of his trip, that there had been no inspections of the northern institutions and districts since 1916.⁴⁸ Complying with established practice, most of the matters reported came from the collective reports submitted to Bleakley each year by the 74 district protectors and designated staff at the various reserves, missions and institutions.

The issue of employment of Aboriginal labour by pastoralists, at the expense of white employees, invoked deep-seated racist sentiments. An editorial letter in the *Cairns Post* from M. Garvey berated the Government for allowing Aboriginal employment on pastoral stations in the North at the expense of returned service men. He stated,

While our present weak-kneed politicians, who boast so much about their policy for a White Australia, allow this state of affairs to exist, which, up to the present, they have failed to remedy, the longer white men and women who seek station work may remain unemployed, and gaze on the bucks in employment, who should, in justice, be taken in hand by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, and quartered at the mission stations or abo. settlements, to whose departments

⁴⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1919-1920. Second Session of the Twenty-First Parliament Vol.1, Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire and Report on Certain Matters Relating to the Classification of Officers of the Public Service of Queensland, Section 11, Minutes of Evidence, taken before the Commissioner, p. 585.

⁴⁷ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1920, First Session of the Twenty second Parliament, Vol. 2, Reports upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department – Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December 1919 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, p. 232; Evans, 2007, p. 172.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 1920, p. 229.

they belong ... The legislators, in remedying this grievance, have surely nothing to fear, as the blacks have no votes.⁴⁹

Media attacks on Government frugality concerning Aborigines appeared regularly. The *Queenslander* reported on a meeting convened in 1919 by the University Social Workers' League to discuss a 'comprehensive scheme for the care and development of the aborigines of Queensland'. The Governor, Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams, presided. Notable amongst those attending were the Roman Catholic Archbishop James Duhig and Bleakley. Opening the meeting, the Governor reminded his audience that, while the 'majority of big questions in the State were of more or less a political character, this important question was right outside politics, and should be kept free from politics'. He then went on to remind his audience that:

the policy of accepting, as the inevitable, that the black race must die out in Australia was not the right one. Not only from the humanitarian, but from the ethnological point of view, the aboriginal should be preserved.

T. Thatcher, Chairman of the executive of the Social Workers' League, then discussed his organisation and their reasons for putting the issue before the public. He suggested that, with the right tuition and sympathetic handling, Aborigines were 'capable of doing anything almost the white man could do'. Considering the examples presented, he stated 'the day had gone forever when any person could say, "Let the native die." The white man had not only neglected the black, but had degraded him'. Underpinning the scheme proposed by the league were four basic principles:

first, the absolute isolation of the native from the white race; secondly, religious co-operation among the different churches in their work for the aboriginal; thirdly, economic self-dependence for the native; and fourthly, Government finance.

At the conclusion of the various speeches, Anglican Archbishop Dr St Clair Donaldson summarised the points raised and advised those attending that 'the care of the aboriginal was a sacred trust laid upon us, which we had most grossly neglected in the past, and were most culpably neglecting now'. He conceded that:

They were up against the opinion of the average citizen, who looked upon the treatment of the aboriginal as a purely economic question. The average citizen forgot that these people were human beings with moral and spiritual instincts,

⁴⁹ Correspondence: Black Labour on Cattle Stations (1919, May 26) *Cairns Post* (Qld.: 1909 – 1954) p. 2; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40331744>

and the question, therefore, was not only economical but ethical. This the present system ignored, and the present system was an utter and hopeless failure The department was faithfully trying to work a bad system. The only sound principle was segregation.

Bleakley advised those assembled that:

the scheme interested him greatly, and he was much gratified by the representative nature of the gathering. The problem would have to be tackled earnestly and soon, if we did not want a record of treatment of the native of which we would be ashamed. Segregation, he thought, was absolutely essential.

The business of the meeting concluded when Duhig committed his church's support and seconded Donald's motion to adopt the scheme and the four principles embodied within it.⁵⁰ Two months after the public meeting, a deputation constituting representatives of the religious, educational, professional, commercial and industrial organisations met with Premier Thomas. J. Ryan and Home Secretary John Huxam, and put forward proposals adopted by the meeting for action by the Government. The delegation asked 'that legislation should be passed during the coming session of Parliament in the interests of the native race'. Sir David Hardie, a member of the delegation, stated 'it was recognised that the native races were dying out and that unless something was done for them they would become extinct'. Archbishop Donaldson believed that a 'more vigorous policy based on a more healthy public sentiment was required to replace previous Government administration based on the assumptions that the aboriginals were a dying race'. Other members of the delegation to speak included Archbishop Duhig, Mr. W. P. Tunley, Reverend Dr Henry Youngman, Mr A. Watson and Reverend John S. Needham. Premier Ryan informed the delegation that he 'was entirely in sympathy with the objects of the deputation' who satisfied him 'that public opinion would be behind anything done for the improvement of the native race'.⁵¹ He advised the delegates that he would discuss the

⁵⁰ Advisory Committee Appointed (1919, May 31) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) pp. 13, 14; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22373175>;

⁵¹ W. Ross Johnston and D. J. Murphy, 'Ryan, Thomas Joseph (Tom) (1876 – 1921)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, p. 3. Retrieved 2 March 2013 from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ryan-thomas-joseph-tom-8317/text14587> Johnston and Murphy claim in their composite Biography of Ryan that at the time of his leadership of the Labour party concern for the Aboriginal situation was almost zero.

scheme proposed with the 'Home Secretary and Minister for Lands with a view to embodying the substance of it'.⁵²

Another article from a different journalist appeared in the same newspaper. It focused on the condition of the State's Aborigines, and concerns over the inadequate delivery of resources and funds:

With only 17,000 natives in the State, the whole vote is equivalent to less than £2 a head. There is a Protector in Brisbane, with a small office staff; some 75 deputy protectors scattered about the State, 10 mission stations subsidised by the Government, and three aboriginal settlements; and all of these get some of the £30,000 vote, so that by the time each blackfellow has received his blanket and his shilling on King's birthday there can be little left to help the native to improve his condition of life. The amount represented by the vote is out of all proportion to the value received by the aboriginal, and is being continued from year to year with no permanent advantage to the blackfellow or the country.⁵³

The tone of the meeting portrayed by the writer revealed cynicism concerning the Government's desire to adopt changes that would reduce the levels of control that Bleakley exercised. While pledging token support to the scheme as being a viable plan to improve the condition of Aborigines, the writer lamented, 'it may be that the coloured races will die out in spite of every care, but it is now recognised that much well-meant effort in the past to benefit natives has been entirely wrong'.⁵⁴

Reserves became integral to the Government's containment of Aborigines. Removals and segregation were the cornerstones of Bleakley's administration and he applied them methodically and purposely to maintain white superiority. As Simone Gigliotti maintained, 'the policy of forcible removals was predicated on a policy of so called "good intentions" inseparable from a racist vision of the preferred and future composition of Australian society'.⁵⁵ Importantly, the establishment of

⁵² Care of the Aborigines: Legislation Promised Next Session (1919, July 30) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 7; Retrieved September 20, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20375787>

⁵³ Improving the Aboriginal (1919, May 31) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 20; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22372974>. The 75 deputy protectors referred to in the article were district protectors appointed to administer the Act. The Government ratified appointments on the recommendation of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, to whom they reported on all matters relating to Aboriginal affairs. District protectors were usually the most senior police officer residing within a protectorate.

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Simone Gigliotti, 'Unspeakable Past as Limit Events: the Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2003, p. 173.

reserves remained critical to the Government's plan for the protection and preservation of Aborigines and sanctioned earlier discussion that:

the fundamental principle of the aborigines betterment scheme brought forward last year was "complete segregation", and it is only under such conditions that any measures for the social betterment of the race can have any hope of success The native is very susceptible to all the physical and moral ills of our civilisation, and it is only by complete separation of the two races that we can save him from hopeless contamination and eventual extinction, as well as safeguard the purity of our own blood.

Further, said Bleakley, 'the alternative to segregation is their eventual absorption by the more numerous and more virile race, a prospect not to be viewed without some misgivings'.⁵⁶ Ross Fitzgerald, (citing Ray Evans), considers that such assumptions came from the commonly held belief that 'human evolution would almost "catch up" with the Aborigines first. Hence the predilection among almost all parliamentarians for placing the "doomed" or "dying race" on isolated settlements, missions and reserves'.⁵⁷

Reserves and missions segregated the races and allowed parliament to exercise its unrestricted control over Aboriginal lives. Parliamentarians de-centralised the 'Aboriginal problem' so that it became contained in manageable environments for State Governments that continued to relegate to Aboriginal affairs a low priority. After its election to power in 1915, the ALP 'did not hold a serious debate upon Aborigines until 1918, and did not return to the issue again until September 1921'.⁵⁸ The presumption of reserves as being social communities that provided all of the needs of Aborigines, seemingly exonerated politicians from any real responsibilities other than those already indicated. Evans, identifying the irony in the situation, states:

given the prevailing and almost exclusively held fatalism which existed concerning the extinction of the Aborigines, it is hard to see how stated concepts involving rejuvenation and social education could have been much more than high flown rhetoric.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ QPPs, 1920, p. 233.

⁵⁷ Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the Early 1980s A History of Queensland*, St Lucia, Qld. University of Queensland Press, 1984, p. 117; quoting Raymond Evans, 'Aborigines' in D. J. Murphy, R. B. Joyce and Colin A Hughes, *Labour in Power The Labour Party and Governments in Queensland 1915-57*, St Lucia, Queensland, Queensland University Press, 1980, pp. 332-3.

⁵⁸ Evans, 1980, p. 331; in Murphy, Joyce and Hughes, *Labour in Power*, 1980

⁵⁹ Evans, Saunders & Cronin, 1975, p. 119.

As communities on reserves developed, the Government benefited, primarily through the sponsored retail stores that Bleakley conceded had become ‘an indispensable part of settlement administration’, always able to prove their value in times of trouble.⁶⁰

The health problems that Aborigines suffered were a problem of their own making, the Aboriginal Protection Department asserted. Bleakley implied that ‘the native, by reason of his primitive habits and ideas of sanitation, is not only peculiarly susceptible to infection, but an active agent in the spread of germs’. This assumption added to white perceptions that segregation would put an end to the ‘contamination’ caused from the association of the races. It also strengthened Bleakley’s resolve to pursue his policies of segregation in order to minimise the financial burden on the State. Pre-empting the concern were recent figures showing ‘that nearly 60 per cent of the natives’ were unemployed. Additionally, Bleakley stated:

this problem has for long seriously exercised the minds of many of our scientists and noted ethnologists, and the emphatic opinion of these authorities, although their researches have been of primitive type, is that complete segregation and protection are essential if we would save these people from destruction. ... these people are quite incapable of holding their own, unaided or unsheltered, in the battle of life, and that any project having for its object the betterment of them as a race must have, for its first principle, complete segregation.⁶¹

Liberties taken by some employers with Aborigines working in the pastoral industries irked Bleakley. He complained of employers who ‘seem to believe that the aboriginal should be content with worse housing conditions than they would provide for their pet horse, motor car or prize cattle’.⁶² Answering critics of the Department’s policy in making compulsory deductions from a portion of an Aboriginal’s earnings for banking purposes, he advised:

The natives’ improvident disposition, and the ease with which he can be defrauded of his money, has made the first necessary. It would be a short sighted policy that yielded to the cry, often emanating from those interested in plucking him, that he should be given his money to spend as he likes. Experience has taught that the money often would quickly be lost at gambling, or foolishly spent, and prove of little benefit to himself or his family.⁶³

⁶⁰ QPPs, 1920, p. 234.

⁶¹ QPPs, 1921, p. 561.

⁶² Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1922, Third Session of the Twenty-Second Parliament, Vol. 2. Report upon the operations of the Sub Department of Aborigines for the Year ended 31 December 1921 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 471.

⁶³ *ibid.* p. 472.

Returning to the issue of Government reserves, he again expressed concern for the pressing need, over each succeeding year, for the adoption of a more definite scheme to provide for the large numbers of Aborigines in the state. They were ‘still aimlessly wandering, unprotected, living in destitution, and an easy prey to the unscrupulous’, he believed. The opening of more areas for Government reserves needed priority, Bleakley suggested, particularly if consensus of agreement by all dictated that ‘segregation from the contamination of the white man’s civilisation is the only hope of saving them’. Saving the race meant that they had to be civilised. The process of civilising was only achievable with the adoption of a comprehensive and generous policy of education that taught and assisted Aborigines to build up a civilisation of their own, he continued.⁶⁴ By their policies, Bleakley and his administration nurtured a public belief that, unless the Government intervened in the control and management of the Aboriginal population, they would be beyond saving as a race.

Bleakley regularly achieved substantial savings for the Government from the stringent controls that he applied to the earnings and accounts of Aborigines. Any payments in settlement of Workers’ Compensation claims went directly to the protector’s account, enabling him to control and disburse the money paid for the recipient’s benefit. Included in the 35 claims settled in 1922 were four fatalities resulting from work-related injuries.⁶⁵ The financial structures initiated by Bleakley, allowing for Government retention of prescribed levies, and deductions from Aboriginal wages and social security payments, enabled the Aboriginal Protection Department to redirect this money to other areas of Government where funding shortfalls were evident. The policy encouraged criticism of the Government’s action. The forced eviction, in the Torres Straits, of the Hammond Island tribe to Badu to live among their traditional enemies provoked the editor of the *Cairns Post* to write that:

The humane intentions of the Aboriginal Act seem to have been subjected to the personal convenience of their protector This one-time great tribe must much more rapidly pine away and become extinct by being removed bodily from their home.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 475.

⁶⁵ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1923, Vol. 1, First Session of the Twenty-Third Parliament, Report upon the Operations of the Sub Department of Aborigines for the Year ended 31st December, 1922 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 1068.

Further, the article brought into question the Government's reasons to resort to such inhumane treatment as the forcible eviction of Torres Strait Islanders from their homes, when its policies stated:

The Queensland Government compels the withholding of native earnings in the case of single men, to the extent of 85 per cent, married men 75 per cent, supposedly to enable the fullest provision being made for the benefit of the natives generally, but although nearly £200,000 has thus been accumulated, not one penny seems to have been spent, and while they possess this large amount of money belonging to the natives, their welfare generally, in the case of a dying tribe ... decidedly calls for the utilisation of such funds for their amelioration.⁶⁶

Although the newspaper acknowledged that authorities considered their policies to be in the best interests of the natives, the fact remained that, irrespective of help given by Government agencies, 'their existing deplorable condition, after 20 odd years of protective work and idle accumulation of the natives' earnings during that time, reveals a most remarkable ineptitude somewhere'.⁶⁷ Later, the significance of statements and claims by the paper became apparent in damning audits on Bleakley's department.

A public service audit, in 1922, disclosed inaccuracies in almost half of the deductions from Aboriginal wages. Although audit recommendations called for an appeal process for Aborigines against blatant discrepancies, no action eventuated. The auditors deplored the casual misuse of the money held in trust for Aborigines to meet other Government obligations.⁶⁸ The audit found that the property account and the provident fund, legally operating for the receipt and disbursement of unclaimed Aboriginal earnings, functioned 'as a suspense account to cover departmental costs, refunds, transfers and advances'. The Public Service Commissioner condemned these administrative malpractices in his report.⁶⁹ Irrespective of the audit reports, the Government could see no wrongdoing in pilfering the interest and savings of Aborigines to fund Government capital works' projects that were not going to benefit the Aboriginal population.

⁶⁶ Natives Evicted (1922, March 6) *Cairns Post* (Qld.: 1909 – 1954) p. 5; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40152331>

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Kidd, 2000, p 43, Cites from QSA / File A/ 69449, 7. 3. 24.

⁶⁹ Ros Kidd, 'You Can Trust Me – I'm With the Government' *Queensland Review*, Vol.1, 1994. p. 40, Citing QSA file, Record No. TR1227; 128 – 15. 3. 23 Report on the Office of The Chief Protector of Aborigines; Kidd, 2000, p. 43 – Cites QSA, File A/69449 7.3.24.

Bleakley's visits to the department's reserves and mission settlements became less frequent, influenced only by protocol that dictated that he should accompany ministers and titular heads on their visits to Aboriginal communities. Outside of this, he managed his department from Brisbane, reliant on the reports and correspondence submitted by district protectors, and reserve and mission stations' staff. Actions by the Home Secretary, responding directly to complaints, undermined Bleakley's authority. Often this response occurred without consulting the Chief Protector. In January 1922, an Aboriginal worker from Saxby Downs Station, Richmond, wrote a letter of complaint to Home Secretary William McCormack regarding the Richmond protectors' refusal to allow the worker to draw more than 10 shillings from his account for the 1921 Christmas holidays. Following correspondence between the local protector and Bleakley, the Home Secretary issued the directive, 'Chief Protector of Aborigines – The Minister desires no action on the case'.⁷⁰ Authorities regularly dismissed complaints from Aborigines, choosing to accept reports from local protectors as being more credible. Further evidence of this appeared in January 1923, when the Home Secretary received numerous letters of complaint from Aborigines at Taroom settlement against the nursing sister in charge of the hospital. Bleakley referred the complaints back to the settlement's Superintendent, requesting that the matter be handled at the settlement and to ensure that the rules of the hospital, regarding visiting times and medicine distribution hours, be impressed upon the inmates and obediently observed.⁷¹

Bleakley spent considerable time each year seeking to have his position reclassified to a higher grade (and salary). His application in 1922 sought a revision on the basis that the number of district protectors under his direction increased from 75 to 81, responding to increases in the Indigenous population administered by his office. The expenditure voted for his sub-department had increased from £30,298 per annum in 1921 to £47,478 per annum in 1922. Moreover, the volume of correspondence requiring his attention had similarly increased from 4,480 to 6,881 letters annually. On Government settlements, the number of Aboriginal inmates had increased and, with this, the work and worry of improving the settlement

⁷⁰ QSA. ID 336245, Series 18090 File A/58696, Complaints from Aborigines, Letter dated 25 Jan. 1922, Doc., Seal C1326.

⁷¹ QSA. ID 336536, Series 18090 File A/58696 Correspondence Files – Complaints from Aborigines and Departmental responses.

accommodation and developing the industrial branches to meet the needs of the inmates.⁷² Bleakley received a small salary increment, but his classification and grading remained unchanged. Despite his continuing claims, the Public Service Review Board remained resolute in its determination that Aboriginal affairs functioned as a sub-department of the Home Office and did not enjoy the same status as a department under ministerial control.

The Government's policy of removing Aborigines from one area to another sometimes met with resistance from the local white community. In communities that had co-existed peacefully, residents sometimes petitioned for the establishment locally of a reserve, with local newspapers garnering support from their subscribers. In 1922, residents of the town of Millaa Millaa, on the Atherton Tablelands of North Queensland, used the press to petition for the establishment of an Aboriginal reserve in the area. Contending that 'the march of time and civilisation has played havoc with the Aborigines of North Queensland as it has done with them in other parts of Australia', residents argued that a reserve for their use, and exempt from whites, would be beneficial for the future preservation of the scattered remnants of the tribes. Calling for urgent action, the community reiterated their belief that:

The race is rapidly dying out, and scarcely anything can save them, and it is the opinion of many responsible settlers, qualified to express an opinion, that they should be allowed to fade away into the oblivion from which they sprung, as far as possible untrammelled by official or religious restraint of which, wild children of the forest, they can never understand the meaning.⁷³

Bleakley was becoming increasingly defensive at questions raised by the Department of Health over sanitation conditions on reserves and missions. In 1923, he indicated a willingness to co-operate with the health department to improve the sanitation.⁷⁴ His comments drew a sharp rebuke from Dr Rafael Cilento, the State's Chief Medical Officer, who revealed that the state of health in Aboriginal communities had been a major concern to his Department since 1916. As Kidd asserts

⁷² QSA, ID 934278, Bleakley Staff File 6219. Copy of file letter dated 15 June 1922.

⁷³ Christy Palmerston. The Aborigines and Bora Grounds (December 22, 1922) *Cairns Post* (Qld.: 1909 – 1954) pp. 9, 10; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40181947>

⁷⁴ QPPs, 1923, p. 1069.

despite his knowledge of the critical links between effective sanitation, hookworm and chronic debilitation continued to address community priorities in economic, rather than in clinical terms. ... By the early 1920s state-wide campaigns by hookworm specialists were cataloguing the extreme pathological conditions on Aboriginal communities under departmental control.⁷⁵

The antagonism between Bleakley and Cilento became increasingly bitter, with Cilento continuing to criticise Bleakley's inaction. However, the provision of immediate and re-current health care for Aborigines had become a low priority for all State Governments. Heidi Zogbaum assessed that, in Queensland in particular, inadequate financial and medical resources contributed to the recurring parasitical infections and poor health in Aboriginal communities. Mortality rates amongst Aborigines remained high, while 'investment in Aboriginal health was regarded as an unnecessary cost, given that the race was believed to be doomed to extinction'.⁷⁶

At about this time, Bleakley began questioning the predicated extinction of the Aboriginal race. He stated:

A perusal of the statistics for the last two years, 1921 and 1922, discloses an interesting fact – that, contrary to the common belief, the natives are not dying out fast... This improved vitality is particularly noticeable on self-contained reserves, where the native is segregated from the evils to which, if the popular prophesy is to be fulfilled, their extinction will be due.⁷⁷

Bleakley continued to lay claim each year in his annual reports to parliament that the removal of Aborigines onto reserves and missions was beneficial to the longevity of the race and afforded the Government the best means to preserve and protect them from the contaminants of white society.

For 1922, the full extent of Government expenditure on the Queensland Aboriginal population of 17,000 (tribalised and de-tribalised) came to £41,318. The Government intended to make all of the reserves, missions and enterprises self-supporting as 'the collections throughout the State, including wages and earnings of aboriginals, stores trading, sales of produce of fishing vessels, settlements &c. was

⁷⁵ Kidd, 1997, pp. 91-92.

⁷⁶ Heidi Zogbaum, 'Herbert Basedow and the Removal of Aboriginal Children of Mixed Descent from their families'. *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 34, Issue 121, April 2003, p. 136.

⁷⁷ QPPs, 1923, p. 1071.

[as much as] £88,258'.⁷⁸ Bleakley rarely missed opportunities to shift the blame for the state of Queensland's Aborigines on factors outside of his administration. The *Brisbane Courier* included a preliminary notice (January 31, 1923) advertising a forthcoming lecture at which Bleakley would put forward his thoughts on 'what should be done with the aboriginal?' The newspaper editor believed that the topic had particular relevance to the Chief Protector's last annual report making 'a strong appeal for the emancipation of the large number of natives in this State who are in a destitute condition'.⁷⁹

Bleakley dealt with numerous recurring issues. In 1923, there were 28 injury claims from Aborigines, or their representatives, filed under the Workers' Compensation Act. These included fatalities to Aboriginal workers. In all cases, compensation payments went to Bleakley's office for apportioning before distribution to the claimants.⁸⁰ In the same year, Bleakley stated that, '136 natives were sent to reserves on the Minister's orders for reasons of discipline or for their own relief and protection'. There were 408 Aboriginal deaths recorded for the year and it became necessary, in response to adverse reports from district protectors, to remove 86 women and children to various settlements and missions for better care and protection.⁸¹ The number of removals increased by significant numbers after Bleakley became the Chief Protector in 1914. As Mark Copland states:

In 1913, the final year of Richard Howard's appointment, the number of removals was 193. This climbed to 343 in J. W. Bleakley's first year as CPA and climaxed at 562 in 1915. It may be aleatory to argue a relationship between the jump in numbers and the installation of Bleakley as Chief Protector, but once again the approach of Bleakley to Aboriginal affairs was in stark contrast to that of his predecessor[s]⁸²

Further to this:

the majority of removals occurred during the administration of J. W. Bleakley as CPA. ... 'There is much evidence for his obsession with racial purity and

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 1075.

⁷⁹ The Aboriginal (January 31, 1923) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p. 12; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20598938>

⁸⁰ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1924, Second Session of the Twenty-Third Parliament, Vol. 1. Report upon the Operations of the Sub Department of Aborigines for the Year ended 31st December 1923 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 978.

⁸¹ *ibid*, pp. 979-980.

⁸² Mark Copland, 2005. 'Calculating lives: the numbers and narratives forced removals in Queensland 1859 – 1972'. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane, Qld. p. 116.

concentration on “the ‘half-caste’ problem”... . Viewing the mixing of races as a disease, he vehemently opposed any notion of “racial absorption” .⁸³

Bleakley claimed that the most vexing problem for his administration remained the ‘half-caste’. ‘No matter how civilised the ‘half-caste’, he is rarely able to hold his own in the business or labour world’ he stated.⁸⁴ In order to combat the ‘half-caste’ evil,

it is essential that the gulf between the white and black race should be widened as far as possible. With this in view, the marriage of full-blood women to whites or aliens is rigidly tabooed, half-castes of aboriginal nature are encouraged to marry back, and the superior type are assisted to uplift themselves and mate with their own kind.⁸⁵

Parliamentarians condoned Bleakley’s reports, but others questioned his procedures and practices. Office audits and inspections of the Taroom and Barambah settlements, included in the 1923 report of the Public Service Commissioner, John Storey, indicated that the Chief Protector had not acted on recommendations that Storey had made to centralise and improve the record keeping of Aboriginal accounts.⁸⁶ A Governmental report from Barambah further disclosed that:

the settlement was inadequately staffed, ... it was not possible for the staff to effectively control the institution and at the same time undertake the supervision of productive and constructive work. When it is remembered that the State has constituted itself the protector of the aboriginal, and has taken upon itself the management of his affairs, it should be recognised that there is a definite obligation upon the State to do what it can to improve the general conditions of life for the aboriginals.⁸⁷

Damning reports such as these contradicted Bleakley’s annual reports to parliament of good management and efficiency.

The criticism continued. Opening a Missionary Exhibition and sale of work in November 1923, the Home Secretary, James Stopford, referred to society’s failings and that of Government when stating that:

⁸³ *ibid*, pp. 134-135.

⁸⁴ QPPs, 1924, p. 981.

⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 981.

⁸⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1923, First Session of the Twenty-third Parliament, Vol.1 Third Annual Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the Year ended 30th June 1923. p. 42.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 43.

The white man took up this country, deprived the blacks of their hunting grounds, and destroyed many of the animals which formed the chief article of their food supply. There are dark pages in our history of our treatment of the aborigines that are perhaps better not referred to at length ... whatever we do now, or in the future, can only be scant reparation for the neglect and omissions of the Governments in the earlier years after the constitution of this State, in 1859.⁸⁸

Responding to Stopford's address, Anglican Canon David Garland from Brisbane paid tribute to the beneficial work being done by the Aboriginal Protection Department, but stressed that more was needed 'not only because the aborigines were a dying race, but [because] they [were] owed reparation'.⁸⁹ Several weeks later, Stopford made his first official visit to the Government reserve at Barrambah. Also accompanying him were Under Secretary William Gall, Bleakley, and Thomas Mulcahy of the Home Office. Meston accompanied the group as an advisor to Stopford. An accompanying journalist wrote:

There are about 700 aboriginals at Barambah, of whom about 180 are children. It is these children, not so much the inmates of more mature years, who the Minister considers should be taken in hand, so as to make them thoroughly useful, not comparatively idle members of the settlement.⁹⁰

Reassurance of necessary action to ameliorate the condition of Aborigines embellished the rhetoric of the empty promises that parliamentarians made at official functions. As Anne Hickling-Hudson states, 'successive governments, notwithstanding their rhetoric, have quite simply failed to take the actions that would put an end to the acute disadvantages suffered by Indigenous peoples'.⁹¹

Bleakley reported that a census of the Indigenous and 'half-caste' population of Queensland in 1924 showed that there were '15,075 full bloods and 2,839 'half-castes' in the State'.⁹² The statistical breakdown into different age and group categories of the census noted 3,505 full blood Aboriginal children under the age of

⁸⁸ Mr. Stopford's Views (1923, November 10) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 19; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22649186>

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Care of the Natives (1923, November 24) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld.: 1866 – 1939) p. 15; Retrieved September 7, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22649605>

⁹¹ Anne Hickling-Hudson; Roberta Ahlquist, 'Contesting the Curriculum in the Schooling of Indigenous Children in Australia', *Comparative Education Review*, Feb. 2003, Vol. 47, No. 1, p. 68.

⁹² Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1925, Third Session of the Twenty-Third Parliament, Vol.1, Report upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department. Aboriginals Department – Information Contained in Report for Year Ended 31 December, 1924 by the Chief Protector for Aboriginals. p. 1089.

12 years, a figure hardly bearing out the common belief that Aborigines were dying out.⁹³ District protector's reports showed that health amongst Aborigines was good. However, such anomalous statements begged the question – 'by whose standards?' The method of reporting health issues raised serious concerns about the severity of outbreaks of contagions in reserves and missions.⁹⁴ Contrary to the implied views of Bleakley and the Department that Aborigines generally enjoyed good health, by 1924 the death rate on Palm Island amounted to more than 16% of the population at a time when the general Queensland death rate was less than 9%.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Bleakley claimed that 'under the improved conditions due to protection, the results show that the race need not decline'.⁹⁶ However, the 'improved conditions' Aborigines purportedly experienced lacked verification and proper documentation.

Bleakley's views on Indigenous people became very subjective. Responding to an enquiry from the Home Secretary, he wrote that 'the so called half-caste as commonly known, vary in breed from the threequarter aboriginal to the octoroon with almost as many different race mixture ... many of whom are little if any higher intellectually than the fullblood'.⁹⁷ He advised in his 1924 report that 107 'half-castes' had applied for exemption certificates from the Aboriginal Protection Acts. There were thirty-two certificates issued. Bleakley stated that preparation for many of the applications refused 'had been done by designing employers or made by natives of the flash type, quite unfit to be given their freedom'. Consequently,

the question of the future of the superior half-caste of European strain is one always calling for anxious thought. Exemption seldom suitably meets his case, for the blood is always an obstacle, and no matter how well educated or trained, he rarely is able to successfully combat influences against him.⁹⁸

A decade later, in 1935, the subjectivity that revealed Bleakley's prejudiced opinions against the 'half-caste' population emerged in a letter to A. W. Kelly from South Australia. Bleakley acknowledged the receipt of Kelly's letter 'asking for advice as

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 1925, p. 1091.

⁹⁵ Joanne Watson, *Palm Island: Through a Long Lens*, Canberra, A.C.T., Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010, p. 39.

⁹⁶ QPPs, 1925, p. 1095.

⁹⁷ QSA, ID 336000, Series 18090 Correspondence Files, letter 14 August 1935 Bleakely to Under Secretary.

⁹⁸ QPPs, 1925, p. 1092.

to the manner in which Queensland dealt with the half-caste question'.⁹⁹ In his concluding remarks within a lengthy reply, Bleakley stated:

Experience, however, has shown that the crossbreed, even the lighter type, is always at a disadvantage in competition with the white community; principally because of the latent blood influence and their lack of technical ability to hold their own in the industrial world. The tendency in the greater majority of them is to drift to the lower social ranks and swell the number of unemployed, often becoming a menace to the health and morals of the community.¹⁰⁰

Bleakley continued to manage his department from Brisbane, building his profile of efficiency from the reports that district protectors, reserve managers and mission superintendents forwarded. He replaced the practical approach taken by his predecessors with an authoritarian style of management, giving him the opportunity to select and implement processes and procedures to enhance perceptions of his own competency. Bleakley, utilising his self-promotion strategies, deflected blame and covered his shortcomings. Aboriginal affairs became peripheral to the Government's policies and of no real concern to the majority white community. As Rowley stated, 'the concentration on Western economics and the assumption that Aborigines presented only the temporary problem of a race doomed to disappear meant that ... legislation became a form of words to placate the outsider and the critic of government'.¹⁰¹

Explanations relating to the cause of health problems amongst Aborigines lacked substance. Despite the raft of illnesses, infections and mortality rates Aborigines had to contend with, local protectors submitted favourable health reports to the Department's administrators. In spite of recurring reports of communities infected with measles, scabies, influenza, malaria and tuberculosis coming to the notice of the Department and the Government each year, there were rarely intervention processes to provide the necessary treatment for the eradication of the pathogens and contagions that dramatically impaired Aboriginal health.

⁹⁹ QSA, ID 336005, Series 18090 –Correspondence Files. Letter 27 August 1935 Bleakley to A. W. Kelly, South Australia.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Rowley, 1970, p. 235; Rowley's comments were in reference to the Northern Territory but paralleled activities similar to Queensland on whose legislation the Act in the NT was based.

Inspector John Farrell from the Department of Public Instruction visited schools in the Torres Strait Islands and Cape York Peninsular in 1925 and conducted the usual examinations. Following on from his visit and reports, a revised syllabus, ‘more in keeping with native mentality and conditions of life, [was] drawn up ... mainly in the schools conducted by native teachers’.¹⁰² The revised curriculum focused on manual and domestic training. The limited options complied with Bleakley’s objective to make missions self supporting by developing cottage industries to produce saleable goods. Bleakley maintained that he would be able to reduce the level of Government funding by encouraging the ‘natives’ to support themselves. This policy proved to be counter-productive. Limiting the vocational skills taught to Aborigines reduced their work opportunities and any possibility of displacing the more ‘superior’ whites from the workforce.¹⁰³ Bleakley’s veiled racist attitude appears in his comment that:

little social improvement is possible where the native is constrained to live in the degraded condition of camp life on the outskirts of civilisation, or where he is in competition with superior races he is kept down as an outcast.¹⁰⁴

Bleakley desired that all Aborigines be in Government reserves or mission stations, where they could be controlled, made to conform, and achieve sufficient self-support to reduce the financial burden they placed on the State.

The national census figures for Aborigines in 1923 and 1925, although unreliable, were nevertheless of some value. In 1926, Bleakley’s Department, with the Registrar General and the Commonwealth Statistician, investigated variations in the 1924 census and found that only 43% of the returns were accurate. The remainder were only as correct as the nomadic condition of the people and ‘doubt as to breed’ made possible.¹⁰⁵ As the *Brisbane Courier* commented:

¹⁰² Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1926, First Session of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament, Vol. 1. Reports upon the operation of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary’s Department-Aboriginal Department. Information contained in Report for the Year Ended 31st December 1925 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, pp. 1018-1019.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, 1926, p. 1021.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 1926, p. 1023.

¹⁰⁵ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1927, Second Session of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament, Vol. 1. Reports upon the operation of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary’s Department – Aboriginal Department information contained in the Report for the Year Ended 31st December 1926 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, p. 1119.

Owing to the nomadic habits of the aboriginals, and to the fact of a large number still being outside the influence of Europeans, the task was an exceedingly difficult one. The figures obtained rested in some measure on estimates. It was evident that unless the efforts at counting these primitive people received the hearty and patient co-operation of State statisticians, protectors of aboriginals, and missionaries success was not attainable within a measurable future.¹⁰⁶

Regardless of the inaccuracies, as Evans maintains, during the 1920s ‘their imminent doom was widely forecast’.¹⁰⁷

Social improvement for girls on settlements intended to prepare them for domestic service and to equip them to be capable wives and housekeepers for the men of their communities.¹⁰⁸ They were encouraged to engage in juvenile recreational activities, particularly when regarded as just a child in many ways, ‘with the average child’s capacity for the mischief that is ever ready for idle hands’.¹⁰⁹ Believing that mission settlements provided the best avenue to achieving the aims sought by the department, Bleakley advised that ‘the greatest success is achieved with the generation born and brought up on, or, at least, transferred to the settlement while still at the plastic age’.¹¹⁰ He particularly encouraged ‘the settled, industrious life, and moulding the mind of the growing generation’.¹¹¹

The new Woorabinda reserve, to replace Taroom, opened in 1927. Although the Government had been engaged in discussions to close Taroom and open Woorabinda for four years, evidence reveals negligence, with a lack of planning, provisioning, and appointment of personnel to the new reserve. Kidd ascertains that, when more than 200 Aborigines from Taroom arrived at the site to take up residence in the winter of 1927, ‘there was no doctor available, no sanitation facilities, and no timber for houses’. Twelve months later, dormitory children ‘were still sleeping on

¹⁰⁶ Forward Step: Study of Aborigines (1927, March 23) *The Brisbane Courier* (Qld.: 1864 – 1933) p.16; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article21105707>.

¹⁰⁷ Evans, 2007, p. 170; Evans claimed that by the 1920s it was calculated that there were only some 15,700 ‘Aborigines and half-castes’ remaining in Queensland, or roughly 6 percent of their original numbers a century earlier.

¹⁰⁸ QPPs, 1927, p. 1124.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1127.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1928, Third Session of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament, Vol. 1, Report upon the Operations of the Sub-Department of Aborigines by the Chief Protector for the Year ended 31st December 1927. p. 944.

the ground in a bark and iron shed without mattresses or stretchers'. They used their hands as utensils to eat food as they were 'lacking cutlery, dishes or seating'. Because the waterholes had dried up, 'sanitation was ... "deplorable", influenza and gastric illnesses were rife. And this was a government institution for wards of the State'.¹¹² Correspondence between Herbert Colledge, the Woorabinda Superintendent, and Bleakley, in February 1928, indicated that conditions had not improved. Colledge was concerned at the pending visit from the Bishop of Rockhampton, suggesting that the visiting party

will have to be kept away from the premises as the dining arrangements are worse. We cannot get spoons enough for the girls and children ... the girls are temporarily housed at the back of the hospital in a half bark and half galvanised iron [shelter].¹¹³

Bleakley informed Colledge, 'there is no need to be ashamed of Woorabinda so why worry about the opinions of visitors'. Regarding Colledge's concern at the lack of beds for the girls, requiring them to sleep on a blanket on a damp floor, Bleakley enquired, 'Could the girls not make camp stretchers of saplings and flourbags as done in many bush homes ... until it is possible to provide better for them?'.¹¹⁴ Bleakley's department frequently failed to prioritise the urgency of situations reported by settlement superintendents. In April, Colledge expressed further concerns about Woorabinda when he advised

I have had a good deal of sickness to cope with and the sooner we can make arrangements for a Doctor the better. ... Some definite determined steps will have to be immediately made in erecting suitable lavatories at the camp ... I particularly request that immediate steps be taken in this all important and permanent improvement.¹¹⁵

In a further letter, dated May 15, he implored Bleakley

We here are without medical help or adequate treatment for the sick. Just now we are in the throes of a mild influenza outbreak Our sanitary arrangements are inefficient and will eventually cause a serious outbreak of disease.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Kidd, 2000, p. 13.

¹¹³ Queensland State Archives, ID 336741, Series 18090, Files 28/561, 28/3320, Letter Colledge to Bleakley dated 20/2/28, Doc. No. 01231 Woorabinda Correspondence Misc.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, Letter Bleakley to Colledge dated 23rd February 1928, Doc. 28/1231 Woorabinda Correspondence Misc.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, ID 336741, Series 18090 – Correspondence. Doc. Seal 2615, Colledge to Bleakley.

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, Doc. Seal 02676, May 15, 1927 Colledge to Bleakley.

In his monthly report for May, he wrote, 'I again wish to stress a warning that our sanitary arrangements are in a deplorable state and that immediate action will have to be taken re the erection of larger buildings and the disposal of everything'.¹¹⁷

Such appalling conditions, made known to Bleakley and the Government, were 'endlessly recorded on files emanating from various health officers as well as from their departmental reports'.¹¹⁸ Bleakley, keen to prevent any public scrutiny or fallout from the damaging reports, refused to allow local council sanitation and building inspectors access to the settlement files. Following a visit to Woorabinda settlement six years later, O'Leary's report to Bleakley indicated outstanding infrastructure and sanitary projects by the Government. He wrote that 'the records of this Department are rather indefinite as to the building programme now going on, for instance, lavatories approved at the urgent request of the Superintendent about the middle of last year have not yet been commenced'.¹¹⁹

The entrenched racist attitudes of whites towards Aborigines appeared regularly in the frequent reports emanating from the Office of the Chief Protector and other senior bureaucrats. On 3 October 1927, during sittings in Brisbane of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Child and Maternity Allowances, the institution of a new system of child endowment payments to supersede the Federal Government's existing maternity allowances received examination. The terms of reference addressed the general question 'of the institution of a system of Child Endowment or family allowances in Australia, with particular reference to its social and economic effects'.¹²⁰ Public Service Commissioner Storey considered the idea to be sound, with possibilities of evolving a new scheme to 'develop and maintain a White Australia'.¹²¹ The Royal Commission determined that the 'only recipients would be Indigenous 'half-caste' mothers with a predominant infusion of white blood'.¹²² A process similar to the existing practice in the distribution of maternity allowances

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, Colledge to Bleakley, Monthly Report May 1927, Doc. Seal 93048.

¹¹⁸ Kidd, 2000, p. 33

¹¹⁹ QSA, ID 336002, Series 18090, A/58633 Correspondence Files. Memorandum, 10/2/34 O'Leary to Bleakley.

¹²⁰ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1928, Third Session of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament. Vol. 1, Eighth Annual Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the Year ended 30th June 1928. pp. 14 – 15.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.*

was proposed. Bleakley intended to invoke his discretionary powers to approve applicants for payments. The allowances rarely went directly to claimants. The supporting institutions arranged with Bleakley's department for payments of family allowances into the operating accounts of the institutions, in order to offset the costs incurred by reserves and missions in pre-natal and antenatal care of new mothers. As Kidd states:

Aboriginal mothers with "a preponderance of white blood" had been eligible since 1912 for the Commonwealth maternity allowance. But records show that this cash bonus was routinely and unlawfully usurped since 1928 on missions and settlements, and used to cover clothing and medical expenses which were legally an institutional cost.¹²³

The crisis in Aboriginal health escaped scrutiny from parliament and the public each year, with the declaration by the Chief Protector, in 1928, that health remained 'generally satisfactory even with the usual epidemics of colds and influenza'. However, abnormally high numbers received treatment at the various settlement hospitals. At Barambah, 1,172 people received treatment as hospital outpatients, including 234 who needed hospitalisation for further treatment as in-patients. There were 10,553 hospital consultations on Palm Island, resulting in 285 patient admissions for ongoing treatment. Woorabinda, operational since late 1927, admitted 167 patients to its sparsely equipped hospital.¹²⁴ Settlement residents constantly suffered from inadequate medical or nursing support, causing the Superintendent of Woorabinda to claim, in 1928, that 'we get very rare visits from the Medical Officer. He had not been for 4 weeks ...'.¹²⁵

More perplexing for Bleakley was the difficulty in resolving the recurring problem he perceived of the place for the 'mixed race' in society. 'The cross-breed element' he maintained,

provides the most difficult part of the problem to deal with, as what they inherit of the superior intelligence and tastes of the whites is generally nullified by the retarding instincts of the blacks. In other words, they seldom make either a steady white or a contented black The policy is to check as far as possible the breeding of half-castes, by firmly discouraging miscegenation, and in

¹²³ Kidd, 1997, p. 166 Citing QSA TR254 1A/129:1, 19.8.43, O'Leary to Undersecretary.

¹²⁴ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1929, First Session of the Twenty-Fifth Parliament, Vol. 1, Report upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department. Aboriginal Department – information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December 1928 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 1214.

¹²⁵ QSA, ID 336742 Series 18090 – Correspondence Files; Letter Colledge to Bleakley, 4/2/29.

conformity with this, every effort is made to encourage the marriage of those now with us to people of their own race.¹²⁶

In 1929, Bleakley advised that he had absented himself from Queensland earlier that year, for six months, to inquire into and report upon the ‘condition and status of aboriginals and half-castes in the Territories of Central and North Australia for the Commonwealth Government’.¹²⁷ Specifically, his brief required him to make recommendations for the improvement of their conditions. Many of the suggestions he made to the Commonwealth Government mirrored the policies and administrative practices that he had instigated in Queensland.¹²⁸ The major obstacle confronting Bleakley, during his inquiry, related to the differing philosophies subscribed to between Aboriginal administrators in the northern and western States compared to Queensland’s policies to contain the ‘half-caste’ problem. While Bleakley pursued enforced segregation to control racial purity in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory encouraged biological absorption or miscegenation as a means of ‘breeding out the colour’ and achieving racial uniformity.

‘Administrators in Aboriginal departments in Australia were universally preoccupied with the ‘half-caste’ problem’ stated Tony Austin.¹²⁹ Further, the ‘fears engendered by eugenicists about the dangers of race mixing excited their concern ... bureaucratic thought tended to be given to ‘half-caste’ welfare than to that of the rest of the Aboriginal community’.¹³⁰ Despite favourable testimonials about Aborigines’ adaptation to white ways, they failed to quell ideas tenaciously adhered to, that Aborigines were beyond reclamation and doomed.¹³¹ Prime Minister Stanley Bruce and the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Aubrey Abbott, welcomed Bleakley’s report, but the Aborigines’ Protection League commented:

... we have thoughtlessly smashed up the corporate life of hundreds of tribes, disinheriting and demoralising the Aborigines. This is the main cause of the tremendous reduction of the Aboriginal population now fast approaching

¹²⁶ QPPs, 1929, p. 1215.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1222.

¹²⁸ For a full synopsis of Bleakley’s inquiry and recommendations refer to *The Aborigines and Half-castes – North and Central Australia*. J. W. Bleakley, Report with attachments. Government Printer, Canberra, 1931/32. pp. 1–63.

¹²⁹ Tony Austin, ‘Never Trust a Government Man – Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911 – 1939, Darwin, NT., Northern Territory University Press, 1992, p. 17.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³¹ Bleakley, 1961, p. 84.

extinction ... yet the whole tenor of this report, strongly backed by some of the missions, is that the Aboriginal is brainless and helpless and wants more protection and relief.¹³²

Regardless of the comments from the league, Abbott convened a conference of national community and civic leaders, in Melbourne on 13 April 1929, to discuss ‘the future of aborigines in Central and Northern Australia’. Bleakley’s report was central to the agenda of the proposed conference.¹³³

The following year, census results prompted Bleakley to comment, with some optimism, that ‘it is gratifying to see that the people are not dying out, but, under the Department’s care, are apparently holding their own’.¹³⁴ Although Bleakley considered the status of health amongst the Aboriginal population to be good, apart from minor outbreaks of colds and influenza strains, statistics from the reserves’ hospitals showed cause for concern. At Barambah, 1,256 patients received outpatient treatment, including 325 admitted to the hospital. On Palm Island, the resident medical officer conducted 15,812 outpatient consultations, including 321 patients admitted to the Island’s hospital for further treatment. Woorabinda, with a much smaller community, had 240 patient consultations by the visiting medical officer from Rockhampton. Twenty-seven of the patients seen by the medical officer were hospitalised.¹³⁵ The Barambah settlement became subject to investigation by the Public Service Commissioner during July, when the Home Secretary’s department referred papers to Storey relative to ‘certain complaints made in connection with the administration of the hospital’.¹³⁶ Following investigation, Dr David Junk, the

¹³² Aborigines’ Protection League, 1929 *Australian Aborigines: A statement by the Aborigines’ Protection League explaining its basic principles and proposals and discussing statements in the Public Press and recent reports and recommendations*, The League, Adelaide, 1929. p. 3.

¹³³ *Welfare of Aborigines: Melbourne Conference (1929, April 10)* *The West Australian* (Perth, WA: 1879 – 1954) p. 6; Retrieved July 23, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32271903>

¹³⁴ *Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1930, Second Session of the Twenty-Fifth Parliament, Vol. 1, Report upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary’s Department, Aboriginal Department – information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December 1929 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines.* p. 947.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, p. 950.

¹³⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1930, Tenth Annual Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the Year ended 30th June 1930.* p. 12.

visiting medical officer, tendered his formal resignation to the Public Service Commissioner.¹³⁷

There was a reluctance to invest funding for the long-term benefit of those classified as full bloods. Robert Manne maintains that, in the 1930s, ‘Aboriginal administrators, like most Australians, still believed that the full-blood Aborigine was unlikely to survive’. Further, ‘his demise had been predicated in the “doomed race” theory ... grounded, in part at least, in nineteenth century scientific thought’.¹³⁸ Bleakley’s opinion on the issue was chameleon-like, as his view oscillated. His criticism of many practices and policies in the Northern Territory remained questionable, considering that the overall well-being of Territory Aborigines was little better than those in Queensland. In a lengthy dissertation, written in 1930, Bleakley suggested transitional staging, wherein Aboriginal society could be conserved while attaining the living and social skills required to exist in a white society. Many of his points lauded the superiority of the white race and criticised the ‘natives’ due to their ‘primitiveness’. Bleakley considered that benevolent white control remained necessary, as he did not expect them ‘to sink their tribal prejudices and immediately adopt a form of life and government in many ways foreign to their old ideas’.¹³⁹ However, notwithstanding his recommendations, he agreed with the ‘generally accepted view that the extinction of the Australian Aborigine is inevitable’.¹⁴⁰

The demand for Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industries fluctuated from year to year, depending on seasonal conditions and employers’ economic returns. In comparison with previous years, 1930 showed a marked reduction in the number of Aborigines employed throughout the state. Pastoral industry employers attempted to meet the financial difficulties by suspending the Station Hands’ Award for Europeans. This action also allowed a comparative reduction in the Aboriginal wage. The Chief Protector’s report for 1930 suggested that the relief it afforded ‘probably

¹³⁷ QSA, ID 336209, Series 18090, Correspondence – File A/69584; Memorandum of Resignation from Junk to Story; Letter Undersecretary Gall to Public Service Commissioner advising no objection to Dr Junk’s resignation.

¹³⁸ Manne, 2004, p. 226.

¹³⁹ J. W. Bleakley, ‘Can our Aborigines be preserved’, *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 1. September 1930. p. 72.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 61.

served to keep employed a greater number of natives than would otherwise have been the case'.¹⁴¹

Problems of unsatisfactory conditions for young women and children in camp-life became endemic. With no management strategies in place, other than to continue the policy of removing those identified as being at risk, 39 women and 29 children were removed to settlements, and four women to mission stations to 'ensure their receiving proper care, protection and schooling' during 1930.¹⁴² Since the last census return, an increase of 20 in the half-caste population had occurred, and the department claimed that 'allowing for those born in wedlock, or where the parents were 'half-caste', it can be regarded as encouraging evidence that the Department's efforts to check miscegenation are proving effective'.¹⁴³

Bleakley provided a brief report on an incident at the Palm Island reserve on 3 February 1930, which resulted in an Aborigine shooting the Superintendent, Robert Curry.¹⁴⁴ Curry had gone on a murderous rampage, killing his two children and wounding the settlement's medical officer and his wife, before setting fire to numerous buildings and taking the Palm Island boat to Fantome Island. He returned to a terrified Palm Island community the following afternoon. When he landed, still armed and showing intent to continue his rampage, one of the reserve's residents, Peter Pryor, fired the fatal gunshot that killed Curry. Following a formal investigation, police incarcerated Pryor, on a charge of murder, until the trial in August. The trial ended abruptly, following evidence that the assistant superintendent, Thomas Hoffman, 'armed Pryor and another native and told them to shoot Curry when he landed'.¹⁴⁵ The incident left a lasting stain on the Moore Government, the Department and, particularly, Bleakley. Although the order to shoot Curry went to Pryor through Hoffman, there remained a strong belief that Bleakley

¹⁴¹ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1931, Third and Fourth Sessions of the Twenty-Fifth Parliament, Vol. 1, Report upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department. Aboriginal Department – Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December 1930 by the Chief Protector of Aborigines. p. 887.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 1931, p. 891.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 894.

¹⁴⁵ Palm Island Tragedy: Abrupt Ending to Trial of Men on Murder Charge (1930, August 14) *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW : 1888-1954) p. 4; Retrieved December 2, 2010 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article46578195>

had been party to a cover up that implicated Pryor. Further evidence emerged of the abuse that many residents suffered at the hands of Curry. However, any hopes of exposing the mistreatment and malpractice against inmates on Palm Island dissipated when:

the decision to hold secret enquiries, to settle with the official caution or reprimand in the face of apparent brutalities, to ignore the growing conflict on the reserve, and to present to the public the image of a glowing state of affairs were in this context actions of striking neglect.¹⁴⁶

Efforts in 1904 to combat fraudulent withdrawals from Aborigines' accounts by local protectors and employers resulted in the introduction of a thumbprint identity system.¹⁴⁷ However, this proved ineffective and abuse by local protectors in possession of the bankbooks of Aborigines continued. Victims' claims of account tampering were rarely, if ever, investigated. No provision was available 'for Aboriginal workers to sight either the "pocket money book" or their own savings passbook'.¹⁴⁸ A government auditor in 1964 confirmed that, at the time, there was insufficient evidence of any checks by the department to ensure that 'pocket money' due was received by the worker. They also failed to provide any checks to ensure 'that correct postings were made to individual native's accounts' by protectors in country areas.¹⁴⁹ The practice had become so systemic that the Department faced a further Public Service inquiry in 1932, at which Bleakley 'admitted he could not adequately control the dealings of the 95 country protectors'. Kidd states that, irrespective of measures put in place in 1904, the practice of 'pilfering from Aboriginal savings was common and invariably executed in small amounts on doctored receipts over long periods'.¹⁵⁰ As damaging as the reports were, the Government took no immediate action to institute checks that would put a stop to the practices. Again, Bleakley and his department avoided recrimination.

The Queensland Government faced international scrutiny over its management of Aborigines, when forced to defend accusations of ill treatment that appeared in London's *Daily Herald* in June 1933. On 12 June, under the heading 'Queensland

¹⁴⁶ Watson, 2010, p. 54.

¹⁴⁷ Kidd, 1994, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Kidd, 1994, pp. 39 – 40.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* Kidd, 1997, pp. 39 - 40. (Citing QSA Record TR254 IB/63 Audit Report 1963/64.)

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* Kidd, 1997, pp. 40 - 41. (Citing QSA Record 1227;129 9.11.32 – Report on the Inspection of the Office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, p. 24.)

Defends Chaining of Aboriginals’, the correspondent wrote, ‘The Queensland Government does not attempt to deny my revelations in the “*Daily Herald*” that Aborigines are forced into ‘chain gangs by State Troopers when transported from place to place’. A further article, on 20 June, headlined, ‘Queensland and Aborigines: Cruelty Denied before Report is Issued’ stated that ‘an official investigation is still taking place in Queensland into the allegations of ill treatment of Australian Aborigines’. An even more damaging article appeared on 22 June in *The British Australian and New Zealand* magazine under the heading ‘The Australian Aborigines. White Men Accused of Ill-Treating Them’. The Queensland acting Agent General in London, Leonard Pike, challenged the accuracy of the articles and was able to ascertain several inaccuracies in some of the statements and claims made. The origin of the claims could not be identified; however, it is plausible that the accusations came out of an investigative report by Bleakley in April 1933. This report related to scurrilous charges made by ‘Charles Nicol of Batavia River against Constables Theis and Neal, of Coen, of illtreating these aboriginals while being arrested and escorted on the way to Laura’.¹⁵¹

Queensland’s Home Office and its administrators of Aboriginal affairs became subject to further scrutiny, in 1933, when the Premier received a letter from the Prime Minister to ascertain the factuality of statements about Aborigines, which were attributed to Bleakley, in articles on ‘Arnhem Land blacks’ appearing in the London *Daily Herald* on 6 and 7 September 1933. Bleakley strongly denied any involvement stating,

I desire to say that I have not at any time made such statements to the correspondent of the above or any paper. I have always firmly declined since making the Inquiry and Report in 1928 and 1929 to give any statements to pressmen on matters concerning the administration of aboriginal matters in the Northern Territory.¹⁵²

During the parliamentary session in 1934, the Home Secretary, Edward (Ned) Hanlon, a Minister in the Smith Labour Government, introduced a number of

¹⁵¹ QSA, ID 716882, Series 4356, File A/69470 – Aboriginals – General (Ill-treatment of Aboriginals in North) Letters Acting Agent-General London to Queensland Premier dated 4 and 14 July 1933, Copies News articles *The British Australian and New Zealander* 22 June 1933, *Daily Herald* 12 June 1933 and 20 June 1933.

¹⁵² QSA, ID 336000, Series 18090 – Correspondence, File A/58632; Letter Prime Minister to Premier dated 4/12/33, Bleakley replies to Home Secretary 9/12/33 and 12/12/33.

amendments to the Aboriginals Protection Act. The amendments strengthened the Chief Protector's powers by providing him with total control over all aspects of Aboriginal life. Speaking to the amendments at the bill's first reading, Hanlon, focusing on the amendments in relation to Aborigines classified as 'half-castes', stated:

The pure blooded increase in our mainland aborigines is very slight, but the increase in the birth rate of half-castes is alarming to the authorities, and we are taking steps to punish any white man who consorts with aborigines for immoral purposes.¹⁵³

During the second reading of the bill, Hanlon advised the house that:

The other provisions of the Bill are designed to give the Chief Protector better control of half-castes. It is aimed particularly at taking control of all Asiatic and island people who are crossed with aborigines. Today, although we exercise a certain amount of control, legally we have not much power to do so. We are taking full power in this Bill to protect them, not only from white people but also from themselves.¹⁵⁴

Bleakley's annual report for 1934 confirmed the need for change in the existing system where,

for many years the effective protection of aboriginals and half-castes had been handicapped by an absence of the power which was necessary to meet the altered circumstances of the native wards of the State.

The amended legislation provides for greater control and supervision over the health and social conditions of the half-castes, the provision of a greater measure of protection for females, and extended supervision over the health conditions of coloured people.

Significantly,

the definition of "half-caste" in the 1897 Act has been repealed to provide for the care of all cross-breed elements of aboriginal or Pacific Island extraction who live or associate with aboriginals, or as aboriginals, or who, in the opinion of the Chief Protector, are in need of control and protection. A large proportion of that coloured population resident principally in North Queensland, who previously have not been regarded as wards of the Aboriginal Department, are now, unless specifically exempt from the provisions of the Act, covered by it.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Queensland Parliamentary Debates, Vol. CLXVI, 1934, (V. 166) p. 1555.

¹⁵⁴ QPDs, 1934, p 1687.

¹⁵⁵ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1935, Vol. 1, Reports upon the Operations of certain Sub – Departments of the Home Secretary's Department, Aboriginal Department – Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December, 1934 by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals. p. 976.

The 1934 amendments strengthened powers of the Chief Protector over Aborigines and removed any remaining Aboriginal rights from the original Act. The amendments in relation to ‘half-castes’ resolved an issue that had vexed Bleakley from the time he assumed office. As Evans states,

The presence of “half-castes” in ever-increasing numbers stood as living proof of the alarming discrepancy between a vaunted ideal of racial purity and the natural behaviour of mixed human populations. Their acknowledged existence mocked the cherished hope that impregnable racial barriers could be indefinitely maintained.¹⁵⁶

The amendments endorsed Bleakley’s proposals and replicated Hanlon’s thoughts that:

the half-caste problem ... is the outstanding problem of the Aboriginal Department, while one opposition member spoke gloomily of the production of “a mongrel race in this State”, and a second confided: it makes one apprehensive lest ultimately we shall be called upon to deal with a quadron problem. Any action the Home Secretary can take to retard the increase in the number of half-castes will meet with the approbation of all concerned.¹⁵⁷

Bleakley, in a succinct appraisal of the amendments, expressed his relief that:

The amending Act allows greater supervision over half-castes and that cross-breed element, which is now regarded as half-caste, than was possible under the repealed sections.

The provisions of the amending Act will allow regulations to be framed to adequately examine the circumstances and conditions of every half-caste, quadron, and cross-breed of aboriginal extraction in the State.¹⁵⁸

While the new amendments made the future of Aborigines even more uncertain, it was the racism and paternalism of white officials that gave more cause for concern. Following legislation of the amendments, the Under Secretary of the Home Office, William Gall, circulated a critical analysis memorandum, extending to six pages, under the heading ‘Aboriginal Protection Acts Queensland’, to parliamentary ministers and protectors. The Queensland Governor, Leslie Wilson, also received a copy of the document. The document, heavily imbued with racist overtones, and the costly impost on the Government through its protection of Aborigines, singled out the ‘half-castes’ as the major issue still confronting Government agencies. Its conclusion stated:

¹⁵⁶ Evans in Murphy, Joyce and Hughes, 1980, p. 337.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, 1980, p. 338; citing from Chief Protectors Reports in QPPs, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1928.

¹⁵⁸ QPPs, 1935, p. 982.

The mainlanders, including the half-caste, will, as I have previously pointed out, drift in to the missions or our settlements and be to a large extent a drain on consolidated Revenue. . . . Inferior races will have to go and, in my opinion, Governments, sooner or later, will have seriously to consider the question of sterilization of the half-caste.

Governor Wilson acknowledged Gall's memorandum and commented:

It is a most difficult question, and one to which it seems almost impossible to find any solution, except the one mentioned in the last paragraph of your memorandum, and I cannot believe that any Government would be brave enough to legislate in that direction.¹⁵⁹

Although Gall's suggestion never eventuated, it showed how deeply racist attitudes had become embedded in white society.

Bleakley and his department again had to respond to correspondence from the Governor, Leslie Wilson, following his visit to Cherbourg in mid 1934. The content and tone of the letter reiterated the existing paternal attitudes and prejudices firmly embedded in white society. Wilson wrote:

I was informed that many of the girls are sent out to stations or farms as help, and that 95 percent of them return to the settlement, either about to have a child, or who have had a child, the father of which is a white man However much one may deprecate the fact that white men become fathers of these halfcaste children, the blame must rest, to a very large extent, on the native girls, who, by temperament, and a desire to have a child by a white father, encourage white men in every way. . . . I feel that the Government must consider what is to be done. As years go on, if no change is made, the number of halfcastes must increase, which is obviously undesirable.

Referring to the education of Aborigines, Wilson commented, 'once they can read, write and do simple arithmetic that would seem all that is required'.¹⁶⁰ Bleakley responded in a lengthy reply defending his Department's handling to many of the matters raised by the Governor.

Dr Cilento, the newly appointed Director-General of Health and Medical Services, visited the settlements on Palm Island and Fantome Island during 1934.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ QSA, ID 267665, Series 6786 Gall Estrays , File A/8725; Memorandum from Gall for circulation, 7/ 8/34, Letter of Reply from Governor Wilson, August 13th, 1934.

¹⁶⁰ QSA, ID 336209, Series 18090, – Correspondence Files, Cherbourg – Miscellaneous. Letter Wilson to the Acting Premier dated 6 June 1934. Response letter from Bleakley to Under Secretary, Home Department dated 30 November 1934.

¹⁶¹ QPPs, 1935, pp. 979-980.

Cilento possessed invaluable information on Aboriginal health in Queensland, gathered during his term as the Director of tropical hygiene with the Commonwealth Health Department from 1928 to 1933. As the incumbent Director, he had made extensive inspections and reports concerning the health of Aborigines in Queensland's north.¹⁶² Despite Cilento's repeated requests for improved practices to promote the health and well-being of the Aboriginal population, as Kidd asserts, Bleakley chose to ignore them.¹⁶³

The result of Cilento's survey and subsequent report on the health of Queensland's Aborigines appeared in all major Australian newspapers. *The Advertiser* in South Australia reported that the 'health of aborigines in North Queensland are that the mainland natives are a poor and under-nourished group, and that only rapidly declining remnants remain'.¹⁶⁴ In a covering letter with the report to Hanlon, Cilento urged that:

the whole native question needed very careful and complete revision. At present much of the organisation, time and work, was obviously a mere beating of the air. The difference between the passive control and active development of the natives was poorly apprehended ... while the conditions in relation to the scattered natives near towns was in many respects open to grave criticism.

Reflecting on the impact of civilisation, Cilento expressed his concern that, in Aboriginal mainland groups,

where the aborigine was a hanger-on, or where white settlement had restricted him to some worthless area, or ravine, or creek bed, only rapidly declining tribal remnants remained, and these were a standing reflection upon the civilisation that permitted the conditions producing this situation.¹⁶⁵

Hanlon's recruitment and appointment of Cilento as the State Director General of Health and Medical Services increased tensions in the relationship between Bleakley and Cilento. It became more intense after 1935, when the amalgamation of the Health and Home Office departments gave Cilento inspectorial rights over Aboriginal health.

¹⁶² Kidd, 1997, p. 99.

¹⁶³ Kidd, 1997, p. 103.

¹⁶⁴ Natives of North Queensland : Dr. Cilento's Proposals For Improving Status (1933, April 13) *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA : 1931 – 1954) p. 18; Retrieved December 6, 2010 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41479218>

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

Letters of complaint from members of the Indigenous community often finished on file with no action instigated. A letter written by a female patient from the Brisbane General Hospital to a trusted friend revealed the vulnerability that Aboriginal women employed as domestics faced. Recounting her experience, the patient wrote of events on the Monday night before admission to hospital, when her employer:

insulted me, followed me into my room and requested me to put out the light and I told him to get out of it or I'll tell Sergeant Selby. He kept on worrying me and the dirty old Prowler said, ... I put a French Letter on myself so that you won't get in the family way ... I never told Mrs [name withheld] or Mrs Moses for he said if I told he'd shoot me.¹⁶⁶

Incidents of this nature were not isolated and appeared in regular correspondence to the Chief Protector. The most at risk were young Aboriginal girls, who Bleakley sent out from the Department's reserves and homes, on work agreements as house domestics. Girls employed in this manner and found to be in a pregnant state during their employment suffered an early return to the home or reserve from which they came. There was an expectation from employers that the Department would accede to their request for a replacement 'girl' without question. Writing to Bleakley about the matter of 'offences and discipline', the Cherbourg (Barambah) Superintendent, advising of an incident being resolved, indicated that:

Constable West has had two Settlement girls within the past 4 months. The first was returned as unsuitable, would not work or learn, also being pregnant ... I feel afraid that Constable West's wife does not know how to handle domestics and as girls are very scarce and can be placed in good homes I am refraining from sending him more domestics.¹⁶⁷

Although the department made some effort to identify the fathers of any children born from sexual abuse of the girls while employed, they had little success.

During the following 12 months, Bleakley invoked all of the amendments to the Act. Commending the 'beneficial effects' that the amendments delivered, he indicated that these had been widely appreciated, particularly 'to those sections which aimed at suppressing the immoral association of whites and other nationalities

¹⁶⁶ QSA, ID 336230, Series 18090 – Correspondence Files, A/69429, Complaints. Letter from patient documenting incident where employed as a domestic. (Identities of complainant, employer and wife erased by Archives because of sensitivity of document).

¹⁶⁷ QSA, ID 336965, File A/69467, Series 18090 – Correspondence Files, Memo Cherbourg Superintendent to Bleakley, Doc. 39/476.

with aboriginal, half-caste, and quadroon women'. Conceding that the extension of the powers contributed to 'considerable resentment' amongst different community groups, he did not defer from his objective that:

these regulations will explain every phase of aboriginal protection and control, and will enable all officers of the Department, and even intelligent aboriginals or half-castes, to make themselves conversant with or obtain guidance on the protection laws.¹⁶⁸

Bleakley's obsession to rectify the 'half-caste problem' had become a personal crusade, gathering intensity each year. His efforts included removals, controlled marriages and the placement of young women and children in supervised facilities. Bleakley, referring to the 'half-caste problem' as a factor central to the amendments, revealed that 'it is in the northern portion of the State, particularly the coastal towns that the conditions exist which made the wider amendments of the Act necessary'.

Further:

the association of Asiatics and Pacific Islanders with the aboriginal races had created in places a cross-breed element that had to be recognised as a danger to health and morals, thus making supervision a vital necessity.¹⁶⁹

Bleakley's contemporaries envied Queensland's management of Aboriginal affairs, with its cost efficiency in administration and a native population reportedly content with the 'efforts' being made by authorities to ameliorate their conditions. A report of his visit to Western Australia and meeting with his counterpart, Augustus Neville, in March 1935, appeared in the *West Australian* newspaper. Bleakley indicated that he and Neville had been in close touch for many years, as they sought ways of 'finding the best means of helping the superior type of crossbreeds to make a place for themselves in the community'. Referring to recent events in Queensland, Bleakley advised that they had in that State 'passed amendments to the existing Aborigines Protection Act which considerably extended the powers of the Aboriginal Protection Department in the way of checking moral abuses and protecting the native women from exploitation'.¹⁷⁰ He went on to commend the efficiencies that his department had established in setting up the different banking trusts and controls to

¹⁶⁸ Queensland Parliamentary Papers for 1936, Session of 1936, Vol. 1. Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the year ended 31st December 1935. p. 1024.

¹⁶⁹ QPPs, 1936, p. 1032.

¹⁷⁰ Native Problems : Progress in Queensland (1935, March 8) *The West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 – 1954) p. 18; Retrieved July 1, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32855218>

‘encourage’ Aborigines to save their wages. This ensured ‘a proportion of each person’s earnings being banked for him or her by mutual arrangement, and without hardship. This money was available even to the last pound for legitimate needs’.¹⁷¹ While Neville applauded Bleakley’s efforts and expressed a desire for a similar structure in Western Australia, he would not have been aware that an estimated 70% of the cost of administering the Department of Native Affairs in Queensland came from the wages of Aborigines that were collected and held in trust.¹⁷²

The action and behaviour of Australia’s governments, in respect to the treatment of Aborigines, continued to attract international attention. During Prime Minister Joseph Lyons’s visit to Britain in 1935, the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines’ Protection League in London was unsuccessful in obtaining a meeting with him to discuss Australia’s Aborigines. Consequently, a comprehensive letter, prepared and forwarded to Lyons, documented the league’s concerns. It stated:

A study of the reports of various Commissions and the correspondence demonstrates how urgent is the need, particularly in Western Australia and Queensland, for financial assistance in the great task of developing the aborigines ... we therefore venture to suggest the possibility of a grant of £1 for £1 from the Federal Exchequer to these two States. ... This procedure would remove the excuse so often advanced that these States cannot afford to spend more money upon their aborigines ...¹⁷³

Solutions to remedy the dual ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘half-caste’ problems became lost in the rhetoric of attempts by administrators to justify the actions of their departments in the raft of protectionist policies that controlled every aspect of Aboriginal life. A humanitarian approach towards Aborigines proved confronting when Federal Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, acknowledged in 1953 that he, and almost every other administrator in Aboriginal affairs, accepted ‘Aboriginal culture and its way of life, especially once it had encountered European civilisation’ as:

inherently flawed, fragile and basically worthless, producing only illness, disease, drunkenness, filth and degeneracy in the thousands of degraded and

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

¹⁷² Judy Thomson, (Ed) ‘*Reaching Back: Queensland Aboriginal People Recall Early Days at Yarrabah Mission*’. Canberra, A.C.T. Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989, p. 66; cites Barbara Lochley, *Queensland Native Policy 1897 – 1939*, Unpublished BA (Honours) Thesis, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 1957.

¹⁷³ Care of Aborigines: London Society’s Concern (1935, November 21) *The West Australian* (Perth, WA : 1879 – 1954) p. 20; Retrieved July 2, 2012 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32979046>

depressed people who crouch on rubbish heaps throughout the whole of this continent.¹⁷⁴

More significantly, the apathy and beliefs embedded in white society would be a constant barrier to the social and cultural integration of black and white communities. Hasluck gave substance to this claim when recounting factors influencing white attitudes. Talking of the transition from the 'primitive' nomad to a new life on the fringes of white society, he stated that Aborigines had:

come to give the appearance of being a dirty, hopeless, lazy people dwelling in crude huts, wearing shabby, cast off clothes. The general contempt for their capacity grew as they became less troublesome. Then sickness and disease started to reduce their numbers visibly. Out of these circumstances came a period in which the prevailing sentiment of the community was one of pity mingled with the despair of ever doing anything for them, a contempt for their capacity, and a belief that they were bound to die out.¹⁷⁵

Despite promoting separate development for Aborigines, and arguing that, as a race, they were 'doomed', Bleakley supported the establishment of schools on reserves and mission settlements and allowed many of the institutions' managers to appoint their own teachers with minimal or no qualifications. The schools were subject to assessment by Inspectors from the Department of Public Instruction, who also modified curricula to restrict the learning options available. Bleakley, in particular, had a fear that 'over-educating' Aborigines would threaten the superiority of the whites. The policy of the Department towards educating Aborigines came from the policies implemented by Queensland General Inspector of Education David Ewart, in 1903. Ewart and the Under Secretary for Education, John Anderson, embraced deep-seated Calvinistic doctrines that included strong overtones of moral narrow-mindedness and discrimination. Ewart, particularly, had little regard for Indigenous and Melanesian peoples and did not want their children attending 'white schools'. Defending his policy of exclusion, he claimed that the instruction in Queensland State Schools was of no use to children who were 'non-resident or nomadic, of inferior intellectual capacity, and barbarous in manners, morals and habits. What they need is teaching in religion, moral duty, decent behaviour, and

¹⁷⁴ Van Krieken, 2004, p. 141, cites Hasluck, 1953, p. 9. 'Native Welfare in Australia: Speeches and Addresses'.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Hasluck (1965) *The Problem of Administration*; in Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt (Eds) *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A. P. Elkin*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson Ltd. p. 443.

habits of perseverance in settled industry'.¹⁷⁶ Ross Fitzgerald suggests that paternalism became a determining factor in Aboriginal education policy when protectors like Roth took the view that 'no practically useful results can possibly accrue by teaching our mainland blacks composition, fractions, decimals or any other subjects that will in any way enable them to come into competition with Europeans'.¹⁷⁷ Aborigines only needed training in manual skills for employment, with boys as station hands in the pastoral industry and girls as domestics.

Ewart's ideas reflected the attitude of many landholders, who actively lobbied politicians to restrict educational opportunities for Indigenous children to basic stock handling and farm skills for males and domestic duties for females. Many communities protested strongly against Aborigines attending State Schools. In 1913, in a letter to the Under Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, the protector from Cairns wrote, 'four Aboriginal children attending Wrights Creek school and parents of white children strongly object'.¹⁷⁸ In a later letter, the district protector again wrote, 'four aboriginal children attending Wrights Creek school live in a camp with about 39 other aboriginals. Parents [white] sending children to school are afraid of abos carrying germs of disease from camp'.¹⁷⁹ For many whites, Ewart's policy of excluding Indigenous pupils from State schools, not only provided a cheap and continuous source of labour for whites, but also mitigated the possible risk of any resistance and activism developing from 'educated' Aborigines. Two decades later, Bleakley noted in his report about the Northern Territory that Aborigines received little or no education due to opposition from employer groups who believed 'education spoils them, making them cunning and cheeky'.¹⁸⁰ Bleakley's recommendations to the Commonwealth reflected a modelling of the paternalism and institutional racism that he had overseen in Queensland. His condescending attitude to education for Aboriginal children had changed little a decade after his report about the Northern Territory. In 1937, addressing the issue at the Canberra conference of

¹⁷⁶ Greg Logan and Tom Watson (1992) (Eds) '*Soldiers of the Service: Some early Queensland educators and their schools*'. Brisbane, History of Queensland Education Society, pp. 4, 29, 30.

¹⁷⁷ Fitzgerald, 1982, p. 219. Citing Reynolds: *Aborigines and Settlers*, p. 67 (quoting excerpts from W. E. Roth's report, QPP, 1904, Vol. 1, p. 86)

¹⁷⁸ QSA, Micro Z4039, A/58997, M2801, Register of Inwards Correspondence Doc. 747/891, Letter March 14, 1913 District Protector Cairns to Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, Doc. 891/1135, Letter April 2, 1913 District Protector Cairns to U/S Department of Public Instruction.

¹⁸⁰ Bleakley, 1929. p. 8.

Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities, he informed the gathering that, for the mixed breed children inhabiting camps in Queensland, compulsory State School education was available. However, he continued, ‘objections at times are raised by the parents of white children because of the alleged unhealthy tone of the camp home life’. When this occurred, and numbers justified it, the Department placated objections of the white community by establishing separate Aboriginal schools.¹⁸¹

Bleakley’s professional demise began in 1935. In a memorandum from the Public Service Commissioner’s department, dated 26 February 1935, concerning his latest application for a review of salary and job classification, a note attached by the reviewing officer declined the application, pending an investigation into allegations surrounding the competent administration of the Native Affairs Department. Further, the reviewing officer added that ‘the question of the classification be deferred until the inspection has been made’.¹⁸² Bleakley, unaware of a pending investigation, continued to manage and report about his Department.

In 1937, the first conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities took place in Canberra. Proceedings held over three days, from 21 to 23 April, were dominated by presentations and discussions relating to the administrative practices and policies of Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory; all of which were heavily populated with Aborigines. The topic at the forefront of the conference was the ‘half-caste’ issue confronting state authorities. Neville, speaking on the policies, informed the conference that Western Australia accepted the view that ‘ultimately the natives must be absorbed into the white population of Australia’.¹⁸³ He questioned the action of other States in creating institutions for Aboriginal welfare, claiming that this policy led to an ‘increasing native population’. In pursuing this policy he asked, ‘are we going to have a population of a 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there ever were any aborigines in Australia?’¹⁸⁴ Cecil Cook decried offering moral and physical protection to

¹⁸¹ Aboriginal Welfare Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937. Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1937. p. 8.

¹⁸² QSA, ID 934278, Staff Files A/ 6219 / Bleakley.

¹⁸³ Aboriginal Welfare Conference, 1937, p. 10.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p. 11.

Aborigines, fearing that such a policy would spell disaster for the Northern Territory, where the black population already numbered 19,000 and was multiplying ‘at a rate far in excess of that of the whites. If we leave them alone, they will die, and we shall have no problem, apart from dealing with those pangs of conscience which must attend the passing of a neglected race’.¹⁸⁵ Bleakley, unlike Neville and Cook, stated that there was no intention of Queensland relaxing its policies on promoting segregation and preventing miscegenation. Although the ‘half-caste’ problem demanded time, resources and efforts from the Government, policies administered for a quarter of a century ensured that ‘the marriage between whites and blacks has been rigidly restricted, and every encouragement has been given to marriage of crossbreed aboriginals amongst their own race’.¹⁸⁶ He continued, in relation to the full-blooded Aborigines, ‘like ourselves, they are entitled to retain their racial entity and racial pride. But it is evident that they cannot be left to work out their salvation without some benevolent supervision’. Consequently, ‘we have found it necessary, if we are to protect them, to keep them under constant supervision’.¹⁸⁷ Bleakley, after stating Queensland’s position and arguing strongly against the idea of biological absorption, dissented to the concluding conference resolution that stated:

This Conference believes that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end.¹⁸⁸

Media attacks on the treatment of Aborigines in Australia appeared in the English tabloid press. Articles criticising Government responses to the ‘Aboriginal problem’, under headings “Dying Races of Australia”, “Government Neglect of Aborigines”, “Australian Aborigines”, appeared in London’s *Times* newspapers on 25, 27, and 30 November and 2 December 1937. Bleakley received a letter from Leonard Pike, the Queensland Agent-General in London, on 6 January 1938, together with copies of the articles. All of the articles severely castigated State and Federal Governments for establishing policies that were taking Aborigines on a destructive path to extinction. ‘As you will see’, Pike advised Bleakley, ‘I have attempted to answer some of the criticisms, particularly those of Professor F. Wood

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p. 21.

Jones of Melbourne University, in my letter as published in today's issue of *The Times*'.¹⁸⁹

Eleven months after the Canberra conference, Bleakley forwarded a submission to Home Secretary Hanlon seeking favourable consideration to an extensive list of proposals to better ameliorate conditions for Aborigines in the state. He suggested that the review was necessary 'in view of the growing public interest in the aboriginal problem as a nation-wide question and the probability of an early conference between the Commonwealth and Northern States to frame a common policy'.¹⁹⁰ Offering nothing new, the interventions suggested by Bleakley appeared a complete re-hash of the existing policies and practices of the Aboriginal Protection Department. He castigated the Government for failing to provide adequate resources or funding to the institutions charged with the protection and betterment of Aborigines. Those who managed facilities, Bleakley stated,

were found to be labouring under great disability and discouragement, for lack of necessary financial and material means and the discouragement of having to work along for years without the advice and direction as to policy from either the Department or the Church.¹⁹¹

Such an admission was an indictment of the parsimony synonymous with Aboriginal affairs, and Bleakley's inability to provide unbiased and positive leadership for the Aboriginal population, free from racial prejudices. The conference Bleakley had referred to failed to eventuate and no further correspondence took place. However, in a separate indictment of the state of Aboriginal affairs nationally, the Royal Anthropological Institute in London, at the conclusion of a lengthy investigation of Aborigines and their governance in Australia, released in 1938 a critical seven page *Memorandum on the Condition of the Australian Aborigines*. In their concluding summary, the Institute stated:

It would seem therefore that "the Aboriginal problem" is in fact not one but a series of related problems. In each, however, five of the six factors outlined in this memorandum – food, health, working conditions, local administration, and

¹⁸⁹ QSA, ID 336010, Series 18090-Correspondence Files. Letter dated 2 December 1937 with attached copies of media articles from Agent-General Pike in London to Bleakley.

¹⁹⁰ QSA, ID 717209, Series 4356, Letter from Office of Chief Protector of Aborigines to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 25 May 1938.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

finance – are actively operating to the detriment of the aborigines in every State.¹⁹²

Bleakley's Department also received notification on 25 May 1938 that it would be subject to a further audit. A letter from the Auditor General advised Bleakley that:

as a result of the Audit Inspector's recent examination of the books and accounts of your office, it has come under my notice that there has been a number of investigations by the Police into certain aboriginal accounts, of which no advice has been received by me.¹⁹³

Further discrepancies located by the audit caused Bleakley to forward a memo to the acting Superintendent at Palm Island advising that:

the Audit Inspector who is now at this office has drawn attention to discrepancies between advices to the Protector at Townsville regarding visiting natives from your settlement and the amounts advanced to such natives.

The audit produced a substantial file, revealing discrepancies through non-recording and maladministration of Aborigines' accounts by the Palm Island bookkeeper, J. F. Bourke. Charges subsequently filed against Bourke by the Department of Health and Home Affairs recommended the recovery of monies misappropriated from Aborigines' accounts, where proof existed.¹⁹⁴

Still unaware of the investigation into his Department by Public Service Board Inspectors, Bleakley made further submissions, in November 1939, for an enhanced classification to reflect the organisational change of his title from Chief Protector of Aborigines to 'the position of Director of Native Affairs created in the Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act of 1939 recently passed by Parliament'.¹⁹⁵

In July 1941, the Public Service Commissioner advised the Under Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, Charles Chuter, that the 'Public Service Inspectors have completed their investigation of the Sub-Department of Native Affairs and have

¹⁹² QSA, ID 716217, Series 18090 – Correspondence Files. Memorandum on the Condition of the Australian Aborigine presented by the Royal Anthropological Institute.

¹⁹³ QSA, ID 336012, Series 18090. Correspondence – Administration – General Letter dated 25 May 1938 from Auditor General to Bleakley.

¹⁹⁴ QSA, ID 336816 Series 18090, Correspondence File. Memo Bleakley to Acting Superintendent, Palm Island dated 10 April 1941. Letter Home Secretary to Bleakley 22 January 1941, advising action taken by Home Secretary's Department.

¹⁹⁵ QSA, ID A/4290, File No. 19421, Letter from Bleakley to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, dated 9 November 1939.

furnished their report'.¹⁹⁶ Condemning Bleakley's administrative capacity, the report listed 12 serious points of inefficient and defective management, leading to failure in his duty of 'efficiently protecting the aboriginals'.¹⁹⁷ These were:

- (i) That the Department has to a very great extent failed in its duty of efficiently protecting the aboriginals;
- (ii) That this failure has largely resulted from the inefficiency and incapacity of the Director of Native Affairs as an administrator and organiser;
- (iii) That the Director was rarely able to answer any question without considerable hesitation and on many occasions the information which he did furnish was found (and admitted by him) to be incorrect;
- (iv) That his ignorance as to the inefficient practices in his office was found to be of long standing and was exhibited frequently;
- (v) That the correspondence and records system was defective;
- (vi) That even though Mr. Bleakley's attention was drawn six months ago to the hopeless muddle in the Records Section no improvement has been forthcoming;
- (vii) That there appeared to be a general atmosphere of laxity in the office
- (viii) That the Director has no disciplinary ability and has regularly allowed obvious cases of carelessness by officials to go unrebuked;
- (ix) That the Director has made representation that the staff be increased when in fact the staff was more than necessary for the effective performance of the work of the office;
- (x) That action was not taken to ensure that the most productive and effective results were obtained from the Accounts Section;
- (xi) That, indeed, there was no efficient internal check and work was being carried out which was valueless;
- (xii) That the Director has failed to make proper inquiries in connection with the disposal of bank balances concerning dead or missing aboriginals and their relatives.¹⁹⁸

The Commission panel was also critical of the lack of any improvement in the hopeless muddle existing in the record section, particularly as Bleakley received notice of the matter 'six months ago'. Considering the severity of the charges, the Chief Commissioner advised that Bleakley could no longer continue in his capacity as Director of Native Affairs. Although proving the charges of incompetence and inefficiency, the Public Service Board Commissioners circumvented processes prescribed under the Public Service Acts that allowed employees the right of reply and explanations for the charges laid. The Chief Commissioner, in defence of the

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*, Internal Minute Memo from Public Service Commissioner to the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, dated 29 July 1941.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*.

decision, advised that he preferred to think that Bleakley's incompetence and inefficiency arose from causes beyond his control. Accordingly, he invoked section 27(1) of the Public Service Acts, which gave power to the Governor in Council to acquiesce with his Commissioners' recommendations to call upon any officer, deemed unfit because of mental or bodily infirmity in discharging the duties of his office efficiently, to retire within a specified time from the Public Service. However, before submitting any recommendations, the Chief Commissioner exercised his prerogative to appoint a panel of medical practitioners to examine and report on the officer under investigation. Included on the nominated panel of three medical practitioners was Dr Cilento.¹⁹⁹

After receiving notice to present to the panel for a medical examination, Bleakley responded, but claimed that, in fairness to himself, he felt free to request 'that some other medical man be selected in place of Sir Raphael Cilento, Director-General of Health and Medical Services', whom he considered to be biased.²⁰⁰ Noting Bleakley's concerns, the Commissioner wrote to the Under Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, Charles Chuter. He advised that:

it is confidently expected that each of the members of the Board will give a fearless and unbiased report in the matter of the examination in question and I am therefore unable to vary the arrangements which have already been made and approved.²⁰¹

Following the medical assessment, the Commissioner advised appropriate personnel of the panel's report, that Bleakley was 'found to be suffering from a condition of nervous debility suggestive of cerebral arteriosclerosis to a degree rendering him unfit for any administrative responsibility in the Public Service'.²⁰² In view of the report, Bleakley's retirement on the grounds of ill health, was to take effect from 30 June 1942, after he had taken all of his outstanding sick leave. A further clause stipulated that failure by him to tender notice of his retirement would lead to dismissal. Bleakley was not to be informed of this unless it became necessary 'by

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, Letter from Bleakley to The Under Secretary, Dept. Health & Home Affairs, dated 31 July 1941.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, Minute Memo from Commissioner to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, dated 1 August 1941.

²⁰² *ibid.*, Minute Memo from Commissioner to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, dated 12 August 1941.

reason of his failure to tender notice of his retirement'.²⁰³ While the reports of the Public Service inspectors were damaging to Bleakley, they also veiled the systemic incompetence displayed by Government and politicians who had condoned his activities and that of his department for 28 years.²⁰⁴

Bleakley's removal from office realised the ambitions of his deputy, Cornelius O'Leary, who coveted the Chief Protector's position. The publicity surrounding the adverse reports from Cilento and the Public Service Commissioner, concerning Bleakley's management of Aboriginal affairs, raised concerns that he had become a political liability. Staff records indicated that Bleakley rarely took sick or recreational leave, yet the Government invoked section 27 of the Public Service Act to subject him to a medical examination that would lead to involuntary retirement. Hanlon, as Home Secretary and a long-time supporter of Bleakley, appeared unaware of the investigation. During a staff function in 1938, to mark Bleakley's 25 years of service, Hanlon was generous in praising Bleakley, presenting him with an inscribed gold cigarette case for his diligence and service.²⁰⁵ Despite protracted efforts by Bleakley to have extensions granted to his paid sick leave prior to his 'retirement', the Public Service Board made no further concessions and Bleakley was involuntarily retired from service. The career of Queensland's longest serving and most controversial Chief Protector of Aboriginals had ended.

Bleakley's patronising and neglectful treatment of Aborigines was at odds with the values that he displayed in his personal and religious life. After his return from Thursday Island in September 1907, Bleakley, together with his wife Catherine and children resided in Chelmer, one of Brisbane's most affluent suburbs. The family became actively involved in community and church organisations at Chelmer and Toowong. On a frequent basis, Catherine used the family home to host fund-raising functions for the proposed new Anglican Church at Chelmer, with her efforts regularly reported in the social gossip columns of Brisbane's newspapers. With 2 sons and 2 daughters, Bleakley and Catherine also involved themselves in various committees of clubs where their children were members. He served as Honorary

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ QSA / 6219 Staff Files/Item ID 934278.

²⁰⁵ Personal. (1939, February 7) *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (Qld: 1885 – 1954). p. 7.

Secretary of the Sherwood Boys Scouts during 1930. The *Courier-Mail* on 15 December 1934 noted that Bleakley played the role of Father Christmas at the annual break-up party of the St. Andrews Indooroopilly Sunday School at Chelmer. He also served as a vice-president of the Chelmer School of Arts Committee in 1939.²⁰⁶

As a committed Anglican, Bleakley was prepared to compromise the values of his church in his quest to retain the position, status, and authority he held as Chief Protector of Aborigines. His harsh treatment of Indigenous people exemplified his and the Government's belief that Aborigines, long regarded as a 'doomed race', should be segregated and maintained with minimal expense until the 'race' disappeared. Bleakley as Chief Protector expanded and over-saw a Department where district protectors and officials miss-managed and abused Aborigines. He however ignored the mistakes and corruption in his Department and instead devoted his attentions to seeking promotion through the re-classification and upgrading of his position. The Government could not ignore his negligence and his incompetence any longer when complaints from International and National organisations about Queensland's treatment of Aborigines increased. The Government responded with exhaustive audits of Bleakley's Department in 1938 and 1939. They revealed the extent of his miss-management and sealed his fate. The Government withheld from the press information about the investigation, findings, report and action taken by the Public Service Board. This saved Bleakley from public humiliation, and denied Queensland's Aborigines the empowerment that such knowledge could generate as well as protecting the Government politically. There had been little substance behind Chief Protector Bleakley's much publicised and highly regarded concern for Queensland's Aborigines; the respectability that Bleakley took with him into retirement was similarly undeserved.

²⁰⁶ Boy Scouts. (1930, October 16) *The Queenslander* (Brisbane, Qld. : 1866 - 1939). p. 57, Retrieved 2 February 2013 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23130052>
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CONCLUSION

Social anthropologists' scientific studies during the decades between 1850 and 1870 provided the catalyst for the growing belief of the white population that the Aboriginal race was doomed. The assumptions generated from these studies resonated with the Judean-Christian belief of the ordained superiority of the white race and underpinned the thinking and policy making of Colonial Governments throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Newspapers, keen to promote this view of Aborigines and their society, published articles, couched in vernacular terms of 'doomed race', extinction, Stone Age remnants, barbarians and savages. This suggested that the physical evolution and 'primitiveness' of a race with its genetic links to 'Stone Age' beings could not survive in the advanced culture of the evolutionary superior white race. Moreover, as Ramsland states, 'failure by the Colonial government to evolve a decent policy towards Indigenous people based on mutual respect' had fuelled this mis-understanding.¹ Governments, influenced by white communities, introduced racist policies of segregation and protection to avoid 'contamination' of the white race through miscegenation. The assumption that Aborigines faced inevitable extinction fulfilled a growing belief among whites that their doom was a natural progression in the process of evolution.

This thesis identifies the practices adopted by white settlers, Governments and the covert Native Police Force in dispossessing Aborigines of their lands. Queensland's chief protectors believed that Aborigines, deemed inferior to the whites, were doomed to extinction, unless segregated. Aboriginal deaths from conflicts became headlines when they perpetrated the violence. Incidents of Aborigines killed in dispersals by native police rarely made news headlines. To protect the covert operations of the Native Police Force units, there were few reports published of activities resulting in Aboriginal deaths at the hands of Europeans. Governments chose, instead, to suggest that the major factor in the rapid decline in the Aboriginal population between 1840 and 1900 was the race moving towards inevitable extinction. Administrators seldom advanced causes. The total number of

¹ Ramsland, John (2009) *The Rainbow Beach Man*, Melbourne, Brolga Publishing Pty Ltd, p. 3.

Aboriginal deaths from contact with Europeans in Queensland will always be difficult to determine. There were no records kept of Aboriginal births and deaths until the latter half of the 1920s. White society continued to believe that the declining population confirmed the predications of the social anthropologists that the Aboriginal race was doomed. Most missionaries, dejected by their overwhelming failure to 'Christianise and civilise' Aborigines, were silent about the Government's inaction to stem atrocities inflicted during this time. Denied success in their evangelical outreach, Sydney's Anglican Bishop, William Broughton, had to concede that 'after an intercourse of nearly half a century with a Christian people, these hapless human beings continue to this day in their original benighted and degraded state'². Numerous missionaries suggested that Aborigines were too primitive to save or civilise. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, many missionary organisations, indebted for paltry funding from the Government, changed their focus from 'civilising and saving' to providing settlements of refuge from white aggression and offered a modicum of welfare services, including health and basic education for Aboriginal children. Arrangements of this nature absolved the Government from future financial responsibility for the total upkeep of Aborigines on mission settlements.

The *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* determined the fate and future of Aborigines in Queensland from 1897. Introduced to parliament by the Home Secretary, Horace Tozer, the Act gave substance to the proposals establishing Government protocols and plans of action to manage the colony's 'Aboriginal problem'. The intent of the Act, and the clauses embodying it, came from the recommendations of the Police Commissioner, William Parry-Okenden, and special commissioner, Archibald Meston, following their investigations in 1895 and 1896 into the state of Aborigines in the colony. The concerns expressed by Parry-Okenden, about the timing and introduction of the Act, were ignored by Tozer. For the sake of political expediency, Tozer made the Act enforceable from 1 January 1898. Taking an 'ad hoc' approach, he appointed a chief protector and two senior protectors to administer the Act through a network of district protectorates and local protectors once the Act had been legislated.

² Amanda Barry, (2008), 'Equal to Children of European Origin' Educability and the Civilising Mission in early Colonial Australia, *History Australia*, 5, (2), Aug., p. 41. 7.

The political instability and succession of chief protectors between 1897 and 1914 confirmed Parry-Okenden's reservations expressed in relation to hastily introducing the Act. During that time, Queensland became a State and was subject to 10 ministries and 10 different Premiers. Regulating the new Aboriginal Protection Act had a low priority in the business of Government, and its introduction and interpretation became the responsibility of a succession of four chief protectors, two senior protectors and district protectors in each of the designated petty session districts within Queensland. Exacerbating the strained relationships between Aborigines and district protectors was the requirement that the senior police officer in each petty session district should become the local Aboriginal protector. The status of Aborigines was under constant threat from racial prejudice and the influences of pastoralists, as they continued to utilise Government assistance to dispossess Aborigines of large tracts of prime pastoral lands that were subsequently converted to perpetual leases. Those Aborigines segregated from white communities on Government reserves and mission settlements lost their cultural identity and had no right to citizenship. They became wards of a State that controlled every aspect of their lives.

The succession of chief protectors appointed by the Government after 1897 held differing viewpoints about the administration and management of Aborigines. Parry-Okenden, Roth, Meston and Bleakley all subscribed to policies of segregation as the means of 'preserving' the Aboriginal race. Howard, however, was a reluctant administrator and dissented to many of the policies enshrined in the Act, believing that Aborigines, equal as human beings, deserved to be free from the impediment of Governments, where they could successfully integrate with white society. Amendments to the Act by chief protectors, in 1901 by Roth and in 1934 and 1939 by Bleakley, increased their powers to exercise absolute control over Aboriginal lives.

Government attitudes towards Aborigines after 1897 exhibited consistent traits of paternalism. These traits reflected the perceptions of early settlers and Colonial Government bureaucrats before 1900, who believed that the characteristics of Aborigines limited their intellectual capacity to that of a child. Linked to the dissemination of social anthropology reports, Aborigines remained in a Stone Age

time warp and would eventually become extinct, they argued. A new wave of social anthropologists attempted to dispel earlier findings and debunk doomed race fallacies between 1890 and 1920. However, the Federal Government thwarted their attempts, with a threat to withdraw funding to establish a Chair of Anthropology at Sydney University unless the fraternity adopted what William Stanner referred to as 'the great Australian silence' and desisted from releasing new findings to the public. Following this, anthropologists were required to apply to state protectors for access to Indigenous communities. Access was conditional on the basis that all future reports that were compiled from studies undertaken within Indigenous communities were unavailable for release until censored by the respective state's Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

The success of the protectors between 1897 and 1914 evolved around their interpretation of the Act and the clauses creating a regulatory body of institutionalised racism. Attempts to enforce the new legislation met with strong resistance from employer groups in North Queensland, who had come to rely on the cheap labour that Aborigines provided. Further, the chief protectors had to contend with a lack of ministerial support due to governmental instability and frequent changes to the ministry. When Bleakley assumed office in 1914, to commence his 28 years of service as the state's Chief Protector, stability had returned to politics.

Bleakley embarked on a planned programme of segregation and removals to solve the state's 'Aboriginal problem'. His task became easier through the support of white communities who condoned Government action to remove Aborigines from the shantytowns that sprung up on their town boundaries. The belief that Aborigines faced extinction, embedded in the minds of the white population in the years between 1850 and 1870, continued to find root and strength within the nation's print media, with articles couched in terminologies of 'doomed race', 'extinction' and 'relics of the past'. Paternalism, providing a humane measure of relief to the 'natives' in their final journey towards extinction, was seen by the white community as a generous governmental policy directive that Bleakley and his Aboriginal Protection Department administered. During the inter-war years, Bleakley stated that his aim as Chief Protector of the Queensland Aboriginal Department was to 'preserve the

“purity of our blood” against “the half-caste evil,” adding that this was “the outstanding problem of the Aboriginal Department’’.³

Under Bleakley’s control, the Queensland Aboriginal Protector’s Department became the envy of all State Governments, expending considerably more than other States on its Indigenous population, with a minimal drain on the financial resources of the state. Not disclosed or evident, though, was the systems that Bleakley had instituted to achieve the admirable results. Money deducted by the Government from income derived by Indigenous workers provided funds for Government capital works and the construction of buildings on the three Government reserves.

The financial conglomerate that Bleakley had established began to unravel following several critical audits of his Department in the 1930s. The Government, to maintain credibility and distance itself from the critical reports of Bleakley’s management over many years, had a Public Service Board panel declare him medically unfit to continue work. They orchestrated his retirement from the Public Service in 1942.

This thesis substantiates McGregor’s claim that the doomed race theory was a subterfuge for Queensland’s Governments, between 1897 and 1942 to manipulate and control the Indigenous population with the racist policies of segregation, protection and removal.

The highly publicised ‘benevolence’ of the Queensland Government towards the state’s Aborigines failed to dispel its intention to destroy Aboriginal society and culture. The subterfuge continued until the late 1930s, with newspapers perpetuating this assumption through media articles about the doomed race and the predicated extinction of Aborigines. Concepts of a doomed race spawned its own reality in the minds of many Australians, who accepted, without question, the Government’s appalling attitudes towards and treatment of Aborigines.

³ Raymond Evans, 1982. Don’t you remember Black Alice, Sam Holt? Aboriginal Women in Queensland History, *Hecate*, 8, (2), 7-21; Murphy and Joyce, 1980, p. 338.

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