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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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REPORT

OF THE

ACTING ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

YEAR 1911.

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busy time looking into the questions of shipping of cattle, railway extension, and water supply on the overland route. The latter two matters necessitating a journey to south of Powell's Creek. His engineering skill has been often of much service, and he has already proved himself a very capable officer.

Mr. Kellaway, the Superintendent of Public Buildings, arrived in June. He found the buildings in a somewhat unsatisfactory state, and has been pushing on with renovations and the erection of new structures. Carpenters' and paint shops, and timber racks have been put upon a triangular piece of land formed by portions of Sections 183 and 194, Town of Darwin. As a large portion of the land is occupied by a water-course, the land available for building shops is very limited. Work in this department is increasing rapidly and it will soon be found necessary to increase the available area either by covering the water-course or acquiring an additional section of land. The latter will be by far the cheaper method. Mr. Kellaway's department will be kept very busy for a long time. He has suffered greatly from a lack of steady and competent workmen. Some have been sent from South, and more will be required in the near future. Provision is being made by the Honorable the Minister for quarters for officers and men. These are urgently required. Men will not be content to remain here unless quarters are provided, and married men, especially, must be considered. At present there are several mechanics here whose wives and families are separated from them, thus necessitating great expense and much dissatisfaction. In this department, trouble has arisen over the number of hours for a week's work. Forty-eight hours has been and still is the requisite, but in some places in the Commonwealth forty-four is the standard. The hours during which work is to be performed will also have to be considered. It is very questionable whether the present system of working in the middle of the day during the most trying period of the year should be maintained. I hope that the men will themselves go into the matter and form some definite policy thereon.

The Government propose, I understand, to shortly appoint a Director of Lands. In all probability, until such appointment is made, no details of the policy of the Government in regard to tenure of lands will be available. The present want of system has been so frequently discussed in previous annual reports and otherwise, that it is needless to say more than that no advance can be made in land settlement until some definite terms are established.

Mining shows signs of re-awakening interest. The wide area of mineral country here demands attention, and sooner or later the mining people will be wondering why the industry has been so neglected and cold-shouldered by them. Truly, the past mismanagement of some of the large concerns has afforded a very bitter pill to investors. The remedy for such enormous losses is to be found in pursuing a policy of mining, rather than in expending the bulk of the capital in machinery which developments do not for the time justify. It is worth noting, that with all the primitiveness of methods employed, the handful of miners have won minerals according to the returns filed from 1904 to end of 1911 to the value of approximately £1,500,000. There can be no doubt that a much greater value was won than the returns record.

Aborigines have received a good deal of attention during the year. The chief provisions of the Act passed in December, 1910, by the South Australian Legislature, came into force on the 7th June, 1911. Dr. Basedow was appointed Chief Protector thereunder and arrived at Darwin with two Medical Inspectors—Drs. Burston and Holmes, and Inspectors Beckett and Kelly. Before the Department had well got into harness, Dr. Basedow resigned and left the Territory on 30th August. Meanwhile, Dr. Burston and Mr. Beckett had departed for Roper River, and Dr. Holmes and Mr. Kelly for Timber Creek, each with instructions to form depôts at their respective destinations. The resignation of Dr. Basedow caused a stoppage of the work. Professor W. Baldwin Spencer, of the Melbourne University, was appointed Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines. He did not arrive until 15th January of this year. It can be assumed that he will try to improve the conditions of the aboriginal natives and to overcome much of the antagonism that certainly exists to the Act, and that he will succeed in creating a useful department. The Roman Catholic Mission has established a home and school at their location on Bathurst Island, under the Rev. Monseigneur Gsell, and is carrying on a vigorous attempt to teach the natives manliness and generally to so educate them as to make them useful people. So far as I can judge this mission is already successfully established.

Mr. Barry, who is connected with the Plymouth Brethren, has a small establishment at Darwin, where some eight or ten young aborigines find a home. I do not see how this institution can fulfil the requirements of educational establishment for natives, unless some provision is made for teaching them to work.

The Anglican Mission at the Roper has passed through its initial difficulties, and I understand the Church authorities are satisfied with the progress made. No report from it has reached me for the past year.

In connexion with missions, difficulties will arise at some time by reason of a natural rivalry between them unless some scheme can be devised for what may be called zones of influence. There also must sooner or later be considered the establishment of Government schools and farms and other educational institutions, and it will be regrettable if the result should be any clashing of interests, or if it will be possible for aborigines to transfer themselves from one institution to another. It is first important that aborigines should be taught that if they would eat they must work. It will also be advisable to provide some system of subsidy in assistance to be given to the various missions. Some difficult problems await solution by Professor Spencer and his staff.

The Public schools have maintained their efficiency. Mr. James Stewart, who came towards the close of 1910, to take charge of the Darwin school has raised the standard of education, and has obtained an increase of scholars. The school house is unfortunately attacked by white ants, and considerable trouble has been taken from time to time to try to clear out these pests. In the near future, I feel sure it will be necessary to build another school. Much has been done during the year to make the present building and its fittings comfortable and convenient. The teacher's residence is poor and old. It costs a good deal to keep these old buildings habitable. The house at present occupied by the harbor-master, and almost adjoining the present teacher's residence should as soon as possible be allotted to the teacher, in which case Mr. Stewart's small cottage could be utilized for infant class rooms and other purposes. It is really too poor for the teacher's quarters. It is true that at present the Customs Officer's quarters can hardly be spared. At the same time an effort should be made to provide other quarters for this officer so as to keep the school lands entirely for school residence.

There are now several carpenters in Darwin who are capable of giving instructions to elder scholars in the use of tools. A carpentering class would be of great utility, and, when possible, it and a plumbing class should be instituted at the school. I strongly recommend that as early as possible arrangements be made to provide a couple of carpenter's benches and some tools and the services of some competent teacher be employed to give instructions an hour or two a week.

The Pine Creek teacher, Mrs. Niemann, having well earned and taken a holiday, Mrs. Carruth, from Brock's Creek school has taken temporary charge, a *locum tenens*, Miss Smith, meanwhile takes charge of Brock's Creek school. In a short time, the teacher's residence at Pine Creek will be ready, and I hope it will not be long before a school house is erected so that the school may be held in a suitable building. Brock's Creek school attendance is smaller than ever, because mining operations in the neighbourhood have practically stopped. Should there be any re-opening of the mining industry at Brock's Creek, the present ant-eaten and altogether wretched building should be replaced. Indeed the timbers are in such a condition that in a short time it will be unsafe to hold the school there. Temporary repairs have from time to time been effected to keep the building together. When the new school house is erected it would be convenient to place it within the township as being nearer to the mining area, and at the same time doing away with the necessity for the children to cross the railway yards.

In May, a Supreme Court of the Northern Territory was established by ordinance, and I was appointed Judge thereof. Although there have been only a few actions during the remaining seven months of the year, it has proved a great boon to litigants, and also a great advantage to the public in its probate and appellate jurisdictions. Fortunately the number of criminal cases have been few. One criminal case involved considerable expense. The accused was arrested at Alice Springs, and after serving a term of imprisonment there, was committed for trial and was brought here to answer several charges of horse-stealing. Witnesses had to be brought from Adelaide and from Brunette Downs. In future, it will be advisable to consider Circuit Courts in