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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

NORTHERN TERRITORY.

REPORT OF THE ACTING
ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1926.

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The installation of a wireless station at Wave Hill was completed. On 13th October, 1925, the Administrator received a radio from there which read—"Greetings from the first users of the first Australian Inland Wireless Station." Previous to the establishment of this station it took about three weeks to get a message through from Wave Hill to Darwin.

Two minutes' silence at 11 a.m. on Armistice Day was fully respected at Darwin. Several wreaths were placed at the foot of the Soldiers' Monument, where a number of residents congregated.

Empire Day was commemorated in the usual manner, addresses suited to the occasion being delivered to children at the different schools, who afterwards enjoyed themselves at sports and picnics arranged for them.

The election in December, 1925, of a Member to represent the Territory in the Federal Parliament passed off quietly and resulted in Mr. H. G. Nelson retaining the seat.

The Bronze Medal and Certificate of the Australian Branch of the Royal Humane Society was awarded to Master Boyne Litchfield, a Territory-born lad, for gallantry in saving the life of his younger brother.

EDUCATION.

A return furnished by the Head Teacher shows that the number of children in the Territory who were instructed during the year was 309. The average attendance was 229.

Though the attendance was to some extent adversely affected by epidemics of fever of a mild nature, the total average of all schools was the highest on record.

The reports furnished by the Head Teacher and Mr. Clement Fox, Inspector of Schools, were of a satisfactory nature.

The result of the examination for the Government Scholarship to a Queensland Secondary School was satisfactory. Of the four candidates presented, two passed the necessary examination.

ABORIGINALS.

The Chief Protector reports that the health of the aborigines generally has been satisfactory, but he urges that, as cases of granuloma, venereal disease, and leprosy are still at large, periodical medical inspections be made throughout the Territory.

He also refers to the usual issue of rations and blankets to old and infirm aborigines and also to a decrease in prosecutions for breaches of the Aborigines Ordinance.

An interesting report on the Kahlin Compound and Half-Caste Home, Darwin, is furnished by the Superintendent. The average number of inmates at the two institutions was 86, and at the Compound Clinic, 30, the majority of patients being from country districts.

The Superintendent points out that work of a useful nature was carried out by the girls at the Half-Caste Home, numbering about 20, who, out of £63 worth of dress material, made articles to the value of £207.

On 1st July, 1925, the Aboriginal Trust Fund showed a balance of £1,770 16s. 5d. The receipts during the year were £1,417 11s. 1d. and withdrawals £1,590 19s. 3d., leaving a balance of £1,597 8s. 3d.

This fund is constituted by charging 5s. for a licence to employ aborigines, 2s. 6d. for each agreement entered into for the employment of an aboriginal, and 2s. per week for each aboriginal employed. All moneys in the fund that remain unclaimed for a period of six years revert to revenue.

The Aboriginal Mission Stations in the Northern portion of the Territory are the Church of England Mission Stations at Roper River, Groote Island, and Oenpelli; the Methodist Mission Stations at Millingimbi (Crocodile Island) and Goulburn Island; and the Roman Catholic Mission Station at Bathurst Island. Of these, the Oenpelli Station was opened during the year, the Government handing over to the Mission 500 head of mixed cattle, 480 goats, and sufficient horses to run the station.

From inquiries made, it has been ascertained that the average number of aboriginal and half-caste children fully supported by the Missions during the year was:—Roper River 30, Groote Island 40 (all half-castes), Millingimbi 64, Goulburn Island 45, and Bathurst Island 50 (including four half-castes). The average number of aboriginal adults fully supported was given as 40 at the Roper River and Groote Island Mission, 258 at Millingimbi and Goulburn Island, and 30 at Bathurst Island. In a letter dated 6th April, 1926, the Superintendent of the Oenpelli Mission Station reported that the Station was fully supporting 60 aborigines, including children who were attending school.

The men and women on these Missions are undoubtedly making every effort possible for the betterment of the aboriginals, and it is hoped that their self-denying labours will be amply rewarded.

With the exception of the Mission at the Roper River, all are situated in favorable localities, far distant from the outskirts of civilization, and where the aboriginals, having a strain of Malay (Macassar) in them, are more virile than pure-bred aboriginals inland.

A Mission Station at Port Keats would be very beneficial to the aboriginals in that district, as there are no Missions westerly from Darwin.

There are estimated to be approximately 10,000 aboriginals living in the coastal belt, and about the same number in other portions of the Territory.

BOTANIC GARDENS.

The Curator reports improvements carried out in connexion with the reclamation of the swamp lands of the gardens, and by the erection of a shade house and cyclone fencing.

Particulars are given of economic and ornamental plants raised in the nursery for distribution to the public and for planting out in the gardens.

He expresses the opinion that para grass would be a valuable asset for dairy work, if planted on low-lying ground very late in the dry season, and mentions the success obtained by planting 5 acres in the gardens with this fodder.

AGRICULTURE.

The Superintendent reports that the cotton crops of the previous three years were ginned by a 40-saw Dobson and Barlow gin that gave every satisfaction. In May last 42 bales (average weight, 200 lbs. of ginned cotton) were shipped to Liverpool.

The area under cotton cultivation was 40 acres, of which 10 acres were unproductive. The yield was just under 2 tons of seed cotton, which was less than that of the previous year, the decrease being due to the fact that there were fewer growers and that a smaller acreage was under crop.

The cotton seed distributed for planting was of the pure Acala variety; the quality of cotton produced was maintained and in some respects improved.

The growers complained of difficulty in obtaining labour for picking, which takes place at the time of the year when aboriginals can obtain an abundance of bush food.

The area under peanut cultivation was 180 acres, including 30 acres that were unproductive. The production was 35 tons of peanuts, valued at approximately £1,250.

The Australian market was unstable. Prices as low as 3d. per lb. were taken in Brisbane as against that for last year's crop, which averaged 9½d. per lb. for shelled and 7d. per lb. for unshelled nuts.

As there is an import duty of 4d. per lb. on peanuts, this slump in prices is undoubtedly due to the Australian production exceeding the demand, which is exceedingly small.

The cotton and peanut crops in the Territory are graded and sold by the Agricultural Department, the proceeds being paid to the individual growers.

The other crops grown were fruit and vegetables for local consumption.

The number of agricultural settlers remaining on the land is given as fourteen. The area cultivated by them is approximately 300 acres.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The report furnished by the Chief Health Officer fully describes the work carried out in the interests of health at Darwin and in the country districts, and is accompanied by tables giving vital statistics for the year.

There was no infectious disease among the European population, whose death rate per thousand was 10.2, and corrected for accidents, 7.1, being about the same as in the previous year.

The death rate among the coloured population was 41 per thousand, the highest so far known. This is mainly attributable to the old Chinese here rapidly dying out through senility and tuberculosis.

The report refers to my visit to the Lazaret, accompanied by the Mayor of Darwin; and I support the Chief Health Officer's statement that the adverse criticisms about the building and site are uncalled for.

I record with pleasure the important repairs and improvements that have been effected to the school buildings at Darwin, Parap and Pine Creek. At Darwin, the residence and schoolhouse have both shared in the work done, which has been on a somewhat big scale. A new play-shed has been erected at Parap. The teacher here deserves credit for her efforts to improve the appearance of the school surroundings. A few young trees have been planted in the Darwin grounds, whose appearance, however, still leaves much to be desired.

A large proportion of the pupils in the Darwin school belong to the Chinese race. They not only attend the Government school with commendable regularity, but nearly every afternoon most of them go to another school maintained by Chinese residents and conducted by a Chinese teacher.

I visited this school and gathered from the teacher that its principal aims are to foster a love of all that is good in the Chinese race, and to give the pupils such a knowledge of the Chinese language as will enable them to use it intelligently in business and general correspondence conducted with the land of their ancestors.

CLEMENT L. FOX,

Inspector of Schools.

REPORT ON KAHLIN COMPOUND, AND HALF-CASTE HOME, DARWIN.

I beg to submit the following report in connexion with the supervision of the Kahlin Compound, Half-caste Home and Government Stables for the period 1st July, 1925, to 30th June, 1926.

The number of aboriginals who visited the Compound during the year was 486. The average number of inmates at the Compound and Half-caste Home for the year was 86; this included aboriginal staff, patients in the clinic, old and infirm, and others such as those put on during the wet season to clear weeds, &c. The number of aboriginal patients admitted to the Compound Clinic was 82 males and 39 females; 84 males and 41 females were discharged, the average number per day being 30. On the 30th June, there were in the Clinic 8 males and 12 females. Most of the patients have come from up country.

The cost per head per day for food for the inmates of the Half-caste Home and Compound was 8d.

During the year efforts have been made to keep down expenses in every possible way. In many instances bullocks injured in the course of loading cattle boats have been brought to the Compound, and the meat cured to save purchasing supplies from the local butcher. The saving effected in this manner amounted to £33 10s. 10d. It was found necessary to dispense with the services of the Chinese gardener, Lim Quay, and engage a more experienced man in his place. Since then a marked improvement has taken place in the garden and a greater amount of vegetables has been grown, thereby resulting in a considerable saving in flour. The value of the produce consumed at the Half-caste Home, at the Compound, and by old and infirm aboriginals, is charged in with the rations issued, and the total credited together with sales to the public. The total income from all industries at the Compound and Half-caste Home was £721 19s. 7d., and the expenditure £1,609 10s. 8d., showing a loss of £887 11s. 1d. Out of dress material, costing £63, the half-caste girls at the home made articles to the value of £207 5s. 6d. A proportion of the articles made up was used by the girls for clothing, the balance being used at the Compound or sent to country districts to be distributed amongst old and infirm aboriginals. Laundry work brought in £16 14s. 2d., but this work ceased owing to the fact that many of the experienced girls left the Home to be married, and others were sent out to employment.

The health of the inmates of the Home on the whole has been good.

The buildings of the Compound have been painted with lime wash, necessary repairs being effected by Compound labour. The Clinic is in a bad state of repair and needs rebuilding.

Three heifers were purchased in June and placed in the Beach Paddock, but it will be some time before they can be used to supply milk. There are seven horses at the Government stables, but two of them are not fit for work through old age.

HAROLD S. GILES,

Superintendent.

REPORT ON ROPER RIVER AND GROOTE EYLANDT MISSION STATIONS.

Groote Eylandt Mission Station,

via Katherine, Northern Territory,

2nd July, 1926.

I beg to present my Report on work among the aboriginals at Roper River and Groote Eylandt, carried on by the Church Missionary Society during the year ending 30th June, 1926.

The work which was commenced in 1908 has continued without cessation ever since, and increasing numbers of aboriginals come yearly under our influence.

There are now two separate stations under our care, the one at the Roper being almost entirely peopled with full-blooded blacks, while the other at Groote Eylandt deals with the half-castes. The staff at each Station consisted of two men and two women and the Superintendent, who spends his time between them.

Some 50 people, nearly all children, are on the roll at the Roper, and 45 at Groote Eylandt, all of whom are fed, clothed and taught daily in various forms of education, and these people carry on the work usually done on stock stations and farms. In addition to those living on the station we receive visits from hundreds of others who come for various reasons—often for medical treatment or for purposes of barter.

There are many black children and half-castes living around us who are too young to work on cattle stations, or ought not to do so, who might with much advantage to themselves and to the Northern Territory be sent here for a few years for free schooling, at least until they are 12 or 14 years of age. The half-castes at Groote Eylandt have the advantage of complete segregation from the blacks, and are helped to take their place among white people, living and working only with whites, so that there is no need to send them to Sydney for education when the Church has already provided facilities for their education in the Northern Territory.

At each Station, school is carried on under the direction of an experienced teacher, but the actual teaching is being done as far as possible by teachers trained at the Mission. The usual programme in school consists generally of reading, writing, and arithmetic, with ample geography. Divine service is held daily, and everyone on the Station is expected to attend.

A very large percentage of the people we come in contact with need medical attention. At the Roper some 2,095 cases were treated, while at Groote Eylandt the number of dressings for the year was 6,599. It has become the recognized custom for white people to come to us when they need treatment or medicine, and we have been able to render much help in this direction. We were privileged to have visits from Drs. Leighton Jones and Cook, who were able to materially assist the work by much helpful advice and instruction.

Upon some of our people, both at Roper and Groote, being pronounced lepers, steps were taken to isolate them as far as possible, and they have since been under the treatment prescribed by Dr. Cook with beneficial results. This is the first time a doctor has visited the station for 13 years, and if we could depend on, say, an annual visit from such a man as Dr. Leighton Jones, it would greatly increase the efficiency of the work now being done.

At neither station has the garden flourished as it did last year. The season has been abnormally dry, and at the Roper the irrigation plant was laid up for repairs for two months; but at Groote Eylandt we have managed to feed the people on vegetables every day of the year.

The cattle, goats, and horses, are in good condition, for there is plenty of dry feed and there have been no serious losses among them this year.

No mails have yet been delivered to us at Groote Eylandt, although we have been promised them time and again, and the boat passes within sight. We hope this will be rectified when the boat commences to run again.

H. E. WARREN,

Superintendent and Hon. Protector of Aborigines.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND CURATOR, BOTANIC GARDENS, DARWIN.

I returned from leave and furlough on 14th December, 1925, having been absent for 13 months. The first half of the year which this report covers had, therefore, elapsed before I resumed duties. During this period, Mr. M. C. Goode, who came from Queensland, efficiently relieved me in my duties as Superintendent of Agriculture and Curator of the Botanic Gardens, and also as Inspector of Plant Diseases.

BOTANIC GARDENS.

Improvements had been carried on during my absence. The shade house on the lawn had been rebuilt and remodelled, and some planting had been done with very good results. Since my return, the general work of the Gardens has been vigorously carried on; the few employees in the Gardens have worked hard; and much development has taken place. The new cyclone fence, which was only half completed last year, has been now finished from the lower Parap road on the east side of the gardens to the railway fence on the southern boundary.

I have re-established a vegetable garden—nothing in this line having been attempted during my absence—and English cabbages, carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, and other vegetables have been produced. These are supplied mostly to the Hospital. I am endeavouring to obtain from Ceylon some vegetables for introduction here, including curry stuffs, &c. Some of the best varieties of sweet potatoes are being grown for distribution amongst settlers and others.

A small plot of land is being fallowed with a view to manurial experiment in the growing of peanuts.

Fruits.—I have planted some mangoes obtained from the Philippine Islands called Carabao—a very large and superior fruit, which will doubtless flourish in this country, where mangoes grow so well. The plants of the Avocado Pear which were planted in the gardens before I went on leave have perished, and I am obtaining some varieties which I consider should stand a better chance in the Territory than those previously tried. There are a great many varieties of this fruit, and no definite conclusion can be reached until all of them have been tested. I, personally, am sanguine as to the result.

Improvements.—The main work in this direction has been to reclaim the swamp land between the Gardens and the Parap-road. A large area has been levelled and brought above flood level, but with limited labour it will be several years before this work can be completed. In the meantime, the idea controlling the work has been to continue draining the land and filling up depressions where stagnant water might exist, and so minimize the mosquito nuisance.

Dairy Experiment.—In April, some young cows were obtained from Mataranka, and the milk supply for the Hospital will, I hope, be again established. A rick of hay and some ensilage has been put down to help in the feeding. The grass used for the feeding of these cows is entirely *Panicum barbinode* (Para grass). The paddocks (about 5 acres) were planted mostly ten years ago, and some of the area much earlier by Mr. Nicholas Holtze, who also built the silo which is now being used. There is no doubt that Para grass is a very valuable asset for dairy work on the coast of the Territory, its chief value being in its ability to produce green fodder when planted on low lying land very late in the dry season. I have seen a paddock in the Gardens 10 inches high in August with fresh green grass.

Nursery.—Large quantities of plants of economic and ornamental value are being raised in the shade house, for planting in the Gardens and for distribution. Amongst the economic plants are shade trees, fruit trees, soursops, custard apples, mangoes, carambola, &c.,

*The Chaulmoogra plants (*Taraktogenos kurzii*),* have been potted up, and arrangements have been made with Mr. Sargent, of Stapleton, to plant an acre of these trees on the banks of the creek on his property as an experiment. The result of the experiment will be watched with much interest, but I, personally, am somewhat sceptical as to the success of the trees here, owing to the long dry season. It is, however, very well worth while to try and grow this valuable medicinal tree. Some specimens are also being planted in the Gardens.

AGRICULTURE.

Cotton.—On my return, most of the seed cotton of three past seasons was yet to be ginned. Three bales of an average of 200 lb. had been ginned and baled. In May, I shipped to Liverpool 42 bales of an average weight of 200 lb. of ginned cotton. A report by experts will be made on this cotton through the agency of the British Cotton Growing Association at Manchester, but it has not arrived in time for publication in this Report.