

Rejection Of Bill Was A Disappointment

MR. MIDDLETON'S REPORT

THE news that the Legislative Council had not passed the Bill to amend the Native Administration Act, 1905-1947, must have had a profound effect on West Australian Aborigines, Native Affairs Commissioner S. G. Middleton said in the department's annual report.

It may not have been the pinnacle of legislative architecture, but it contained many urgently-needed amendments, the report said. "The loss of these amendments was a bitter blow to the natives and to our administration of their affairs."

"They had read and heard of the promised new deal that they were to receive through legislative direction, and the news that the Bill had not been passed must have had a profound effect on them."

Missions

Mr. Middleton said the most pleasing of recent developments was the accelerated habilitation of the missions through bigger subsidies, grants-in-aid to cover capital expenditure, and technical help from other departments.

The Education, Health and Public Works Departments had contributed considerably towards the improvement of facilities for the education, health and accommodation of Aboriginal children.

Native Staffs

Seven people of part Aboriginal descent were employed in clerical and welfare duties in the field, and four more were doing clerical work at Head Office.

In general principles their wages and working conditions were in line with those of other public servants. Their work was satisfactory in every way, and the practice of employing people of Aboriginal heritage to replace white staff in the department was being extended at every opportunity.

Settlements

It had long been felt desirable that the department should be relieved of responsibility for the administration and management of pastoral and agricultural properties, Mr. Middleton said, mainly because it had found that such responsibilities had seriously hampered the functions of the department's welfare officers stationed on these properties.

Accordingly, the department had relinquished its administrative responsibilities on several stations and settlements.

The report makes special mention of the Moola Bulla settlement. The department had found this an administrative bugbear, said Mr. Middleton, and had asked the Government to relieve it of the responsibility.

Cabinet had agreed to do this, and it had directed that Moola Bulla be closed.

Sites had been selected, and the department was considering proposing the establishment of an institution near Hall's Creek for children and a rationing depot for aged adults some distance away.

Employment

In most of Western Aus-

tralia the native population was limited to part-time employment at current wages for the mixed-bloods of the south and permanent employment on stations for little better than pocket-money and keep for full-bloods.

But there was evidence of slight improvement, said Mr. Middleton. From no wages at all up to 1949 many Aboriginal stockmen were now receiving 10/- to a few pounds a week and keep for themselves and their dependants on northern stations.

In the south the number of mixed-bloods receiving the basic wage (and sometimes more) seemed to be increasing.

But by and large the Aborigines were still a sub-standard section of the community, living in substandard conditions, dressed in raiments of civilisation; mere caricatures of white men in many cases, bearing a cross of apathy and neglect obvious in their bearing, attitude and appearance, said Mr. Middleton.

Education

Mr. Middleton said natives in this State were enjoying better education opportunities. The gateway to primary, secondary and even tertiary education was now wide open to them through Government and mission schools, through hostels for young people at high and technical schools, and through the free university.

There was a marked increase in the number of children of both sexes who qualified during the year for admission to secondary schools, and several were studying for their Leaving Certificates.

They had every prospect of success.

Compulsory education was enforced, and some parents who wilfully kept their children from school had to be dealt with.

But most native parents were eager to give their children a good primary education and were keen on secondary education — particularly as the department usually bore the cost.

Health

Mr. Middleton said the medical treatment of Aborigines was most satisfactory, largely because of the Health Department's fight against colour prejudice in the hospitals.

Non-government hospitals and medical staffs could not be made to observe colour equality, but with a few isolated exceptions they conformed with Health Department policy.

Housing

Most natives considered that integration with white people in private housing would do a lot to solve racial tension problems, Mr. Middleton said.

Natives wanted better housing and were under no illusions. They saw ahead a long uphill pull.

As most of them saw it, better housing meant better opportunities for them and their children.

Government recognition of Aborigines' right to a share in the Government's housing scheme had met with a mixed reception, but generally the public reaction was most encouraging.

Three workers' houses had been allotted to Aborigines at York. The occupants had clearly shown they could keep the houses in a satisfactory condition.

Newspaper

One of the most significant features of the self-emancipatory trend of native activities in the State during the year was the successful inauguration of the "Westralian Aborigine," Mr. Middleton said.

Katanning Work

The Katanning Native Welfare Committee's first annual report was a record of an outstanding contribution, said Mr. Middleton.

The Katanning report showed that people supplying natives with strong drink were one of the committee's biggest headaches.

Incidentally, the committee asks people not to throw away old garments, but to give them to the committee to sell to raise funds for cottages for Aborigines.

Conclusion

Here is Mr. Middleton's conclusion:

"Thus it will be seen that progress may be reported.

"The trace elements of common sense, justice and the tacit acknowledgment of the dignity and worth of natives as members of the human race are being more liberally sprinkled on the hitherto barren soil of apathy, neglect and colour prejudice with healthy results.

"The State fortunately cannot now implement any policy other than that of assimilation, which it has endorsed at the national and international level.

"Dispersed throughout the State in family groups living on the stations and the outskirts of our cities and towns as members in, but seldom of, our white communities, natives cannot now be segre-

HIS DANCING IS A LEGEND



Frank Mippy, of Narrogin, is well-known throughout the South as one of W.A.'s keenest dancers. He never misses a dance at Narrogin, and often goes to York and Perth for Coolbaroo dances. He is a lively figure on the dance floor even though his teenage years are a long way behind him now. He is seen here dancing with Mrs. Ester Kelly, of Williams.

gated on any grand scale; and the sensible way to remove the social weeds they unfortunately represent in so many cases at the moment is the obvious one that is being followed.

"The solution to what has

always been regarded as "The Native Problem" in this State is, consequently, only a matter of time — and, of course, money."

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High Praise To Missions Given By Annual Report

NATIVE Affairs Department Central District Officer B. A. McLarty praised the work of the missions in his section of the department's annual report for 1953-54.

Mr. McLarty said he did not wish to single out any mission or missionary for special mention, but felt he would like to take the opportunity of expressing his appreciation of the work of Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Schenk, of the United Aboriginal Mission at Mt. Margaret.

"The mission itself stands as a tangible memorial to their work; but the real acknowledgement is to be found in the hundreds of natives who have benefited from their association with these two great-hearted people," he said.

Reserves

Mr. McLarty called attention to complaints from Aborigines about life on reserves — more particularly in the Murchison sub-district. Many had asked to be helped find housing or camping space away from the reserves.

A common complaint was that police, health authorities, local authorities, etc., would not leave the reserve-dwellers in peace. Mr. McLarty said usually these people's visits were justified, but they were too often brusque and arrogant, showing lack of consideration for Aborigines as human beings.

Another complaint was that living on reserves barred natives from receiving unemployment benefits.

People Friendly, Law Hostile

On public relations, Mr. McLarty quoted a report by the Assistant District Officer, Eastern Goldfields sub-district:

"The general attitude of the goldfields townspeople is one of genuine sympathy for bush natives and less advanced workers, and friendly equality for the assimilated caste natives. Discriminatory

legislation has the effect of quelling this friendly attitude and has often been the cause of embarrassment to both white and coloured."

The officer had reported the case of a country cricket match in which one team fielded five Aborigines. After the match came the usual round of social drinks in the local hall — and the usual awkward, painful silence when everybody realised that some of the cricketers would not be able to join in.

By contrast to the official discrimination, Mr. McLarty cited many cases in which the ordinary people showed a desire to break down colour barriers.

One instance was a public subscription that raised over £60 for the tracker Pom-pom who led the party that tracked down a New Australian who had been lost in the bush for eleven days in April.

"It was a surprise to me to learn that not long after

this feat the Police Department apparently decided that the retention of a tracker at this station was unnecessary, as Pom-pom's services were dispensed with," he added.

Illness

Health surveys of the Murchison and Eastern Goldfields sub-districts showed a serious incidence of influenza — sometimes fatal.

Poor sanitary conditions led to a considerable amount of gastro-enteritis.

Scabies was also common, especially among children.

Another common complaint caused by poor living conditions was deafness, mainly among children. Touring doctors found dozens of children with perforated eardrums.

Most of the illness was found among outback Aborigines and station employees. Aborigines in the missions were much healthier.

Employment Plan

Mr. McLarty said a survey of native employment in the metropolitan area had led to a practical system of arranging employment.

Prospective inmates of McDonald and Alvan House would be tested by vocational guidance officers attached to the Education Department, and on their findings and recommendations would depend the type of education (whether technical or commercial) the inmate will receive.

When it is time for the inmate to leave school, wel-

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Held Over

THERE are still big sections of the Native Affairs Department's report that we have not published. For space reasons we cannot do full justice to them in the one issue.

These reports include a report by Southern District Officer C. R. Wright Webster, and also reports on Department hostels (Alvan House and McDonald House).

They will be published in the next issue.

LATE NEWS: As the Westralian Aborigine went to press it was learnt that the Northern Mining and Development Co. is in serious danger of having to dissolve.

fare officers will consult the Commonwealth Employment service to find suitable employment as recommended by guidance officers.

A tabulated index of avenues of employment for Aborigines in the metropolitan area has been prepared, and when the office is not able to arrange employment the native will be referred to the Commonwealth Employment Service.

Mr. McLarty noted that metropolitan employers were generally much more fussy about education than about colour.

In the Murchison sub-district, it was now harder to obtain jobs. Mr. McLarty advised natives not to try migrating from job to job because of the low chance of re-employment.

In the Eastern Goldfields sub-district, wages were better in the towns than on the stations. Town workers received the basic wage or more, and competed keenly with white workers.

A Dirty Trick

Some employers were unscrupulous, Mr. McLarty said. They offered good wages and keep, then provided poor food and no pay. The victims usually did not realise this until it was too late, and then accepted it as their lot. Often they spoke poor English, and could give only vague details to the patrol officers.

Hence, if the employers were tracked down they could put over a good story.

Woodcutters were the most frequent victims of this trick. The Forestry Department had promised to help stamp the practice out.

Otherwise, said Mr. McLarty, employment conditions were reasonably satisfactory compared with white people's conditions.

Housing

The worst housing shortage was in the Murchison sub-district, said Mr. McLarty.

In the Eastern Goldfields, there was little need for extra housing except perhaps at Southern Cross and Esperance.

The Housing Commission was doing a lot to alleviate the position.

Welfare Centre

Mr. McLarty referred again to the urgent need for a native recreation and welfare centre in Perth. The executive members of the New Coolbaroo League had, to his knowledge, been the only people to act in this matter. They had been engaged in an unremitting, but so far unsuccessful, search for suitable premises.

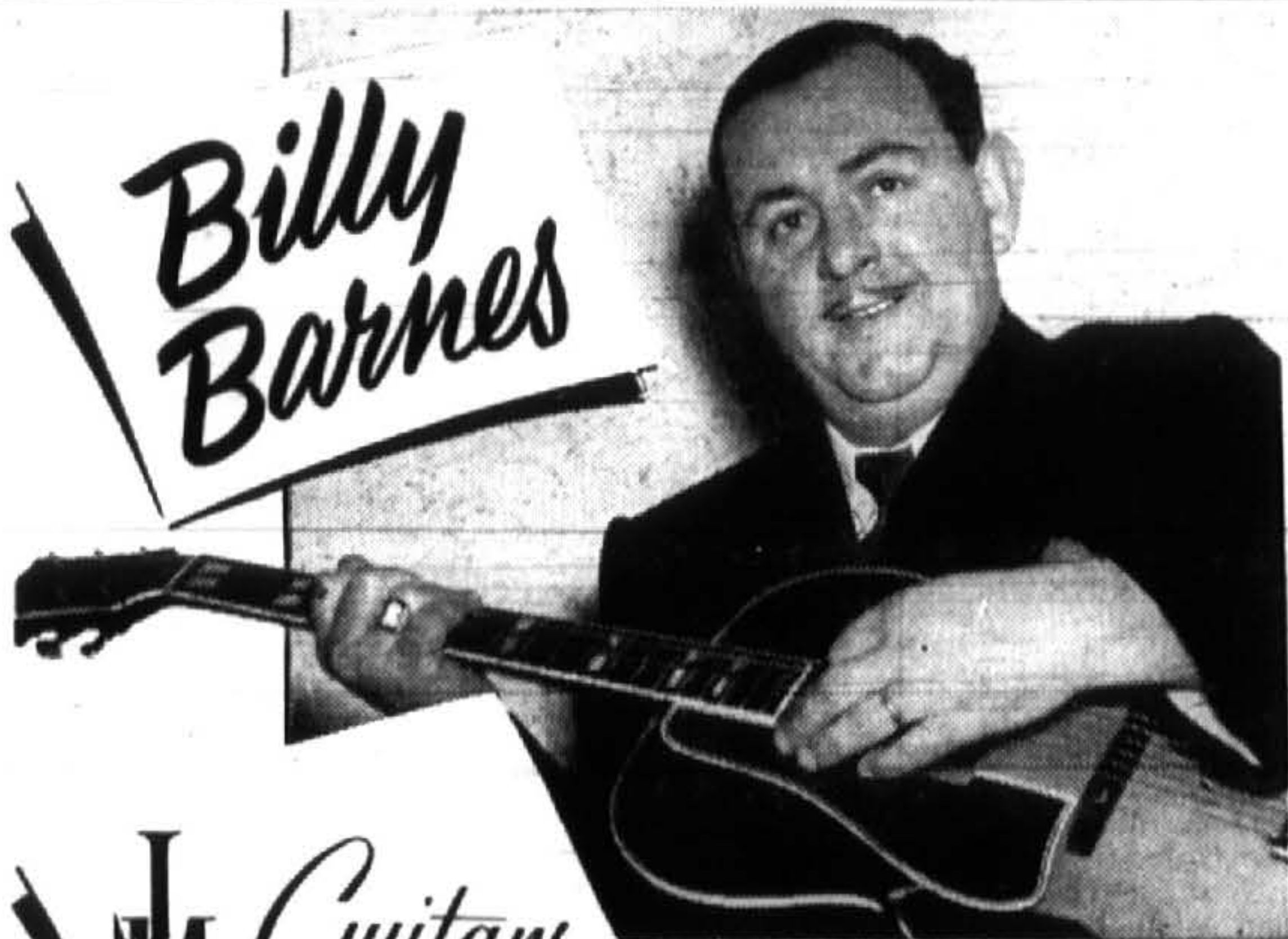


Mr. Charlie A. Pell (above) has been nominated for the position of general secretary of the W.A. Locomotive Engine Drivers', Firemen's and Cleaners' Union.

Mr. Pell is the only fireman nominated. The others are engine drivers.

If he is elected he will be the first Aborigine ever to be a secretary of this union.

He has been a delegate for the union on the Australian Labour Party, and on the Labour Day Committee. He is a steward for East Perth.



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Jeers Gave Way To Admiration

THE seriousness of trachoma, particularly among Aboriginal children, was generally recognised now, North-West District Officer F. E. Gare said in the Native Affairs Department's annual report.

About a year ago, many people thought noted eye specialist Dr. Ida Mann was exaggerating when, after a survey, she stressed the danger and prevalence of this disease, said Mr. Gare.

Since then most people had come to admire Dr. Mann's zeal, and the way she and the Health Department had tackled the problem.

Influenza had caused several deaths during the year — mainly among old people.

Missions

Carnarvon: Mr. Gare said the progress made by the Carnarvon mission since it was established seven years ago was remarkable. Not the least of its achievements had been the changed attitude of the average citizen of the district to the education of the children.

Trachoma was more prevalent than it should be, and the mission needed better drainage to keep hygiene up to the mark.

Jigalong: The absence of dormitories for the children was making it possible that people would drift away from Jigalong Mission, Mr. Gare said.

The mission had applied for funds to install an adequate water supply, and this would justify a bigger building programme.

The fortitude of the mission's small staff was admirable, and it justified the granting of more funds.

Reserves

The department had obtained money to improve reserves in the district, Mr. Gare said.

Treasury approval for conveniences for the use of outpatients attending the Port Hedland native hospital had been granted, though on a reduced scale.

Similarly, funds had been available for some time for work on the Onslow reserve.

The department was carrying out minor improvements on the Carnarvon reserve.

At Roebourne a big improvement had taken place over the past year. A windmill now filled a 2000-gallon tank, which in turn was connected to an ablution block with laundry space and a septic system lavatory.

Recently the prohibition against Aborigines using the "12-Mile" forestry reserve near Port Hedland had been cancelled, and it was hoped it would soon be gazetted as a native reserve.

Education

Mr. Gare said institutes on the lines of the mission at Carnarvon appeared to be the most effective way of providing education because of the scattered nature of the population.

The gap was at Yandyarra Station, owned by the Northern Mining and Development Co. The Education Department was hesitant to send teachers to the station because the future of the company seemed to be in doubt.

Education facilities were still not satisfactory in the district. But some progress had been made.

Unemployment

The report indicated that Aborigines did not have much bargaining power on the Roebourne Tableland, but were considerably better off in the Pilbara district.

In the Pilbara district, wages were poor (with notable exceptions) and living accommodation was not provided, Mr. Gare said.

White residents (many of them employers of Aboriginal labour) objected strenuously to the proposal to open a school for native children at Roebourne.

Mr. Gare said it was probable that when the Roebourne school opened there would be an influx into the town. This would mean worse unemployment and wage cuts in the town itself.

"Even now it is hard to credit how some families subsist on the wages paid," he said.

A suitable institution at Cossack would allow children to study there while their parents worked where they liked, he added.



Homework for the McDonald House boys is no burden — they are keen to get on in the world. Pictured studying are, from left to right, Don Clinch, Ted Penny, Howard Thomas, Phillip Prosser and John Nannup. When they are not studying the boys play football, badminton, basketball, tennis and a host of other sport.

Yandyarra

The Northern Development and Mining Co. (managed by Mr. Don McLeod — editor) employed 360 Aborigines in the Pilbara district, but it had previously employed 600, Mr. Gare said.

It appeared to be in financial difficulties and its future seemed uncertain. The company could no longer buy enough food, tobacco and other necessities.

A sister from the Health Department surveying the district for trachoma had reported that the children and old people at Yandyarra were healthier than anywhere else she had seen.

It seemed likely then, said Mr. Gare, that producers would tend to drift away before non-producers, leaving the establishment in a serious position.

Many who had left the station had continued mining on their own account — some at Moolyella and others at Nullagine. The situation was being watched closely.

Prejudice

The Assistant District Officer, Pilbara, had commented scathingly on the narrow and prejudiced attitude of the average white resident at Roebourne, said Mr. Gare.

He had contrasted it with Port Hedland, where the natives were treated as equals and there was little exploitation.

In no other town was bias as in Roebourne.

More and more Aborigines were being granted certificates of citizenship rights or exemption. The artificial line that present legislation drew between these people and those without certificates was to be deplored.

Mr. Gare concluded that the year ahead threw out a challenge. There had been some small gains in the past year, but there was still a lot to be done.

To England

MISS DELYS NASH, of the typing staff of Head Office, Native Affairs Department, will be accompanying her sister Miss Wendy Nash to England, where Wendy is to further her musical studies.

Things Are Improving A Little Up North

THE lot of the Aborigine on the North was improving, Northern District Officer J. Beharell said in the Native Affairs Department's annual report.

Teachers and others were tackling their responsibility creditably under the enlightened policy of the Education Department.

The pearl shell industry provided a steady avenue of employment at Broome.

Kimberley employers were being forced to realise that if they did not treat their employees better the Aboriginal population would dwindle so much that the employers would no longer be able to find native labour.

Natives did not like the "book credit" method of

paying wages. They wanted cash, Mr. Beharell said.

There had been some improvement in accommodation, but very little in diet.

"One often hears the worn-out excuse that natives will not eat some of our foods, said Mr. Beharell.

But it was essential that Aborigines be educated in this way, for the foods they obtained in their natural state were no longer available to them, and a balanced diet was essential if they were to survive.

Rosemary Can Take It

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD Rosemary Cameron, of Yalgoo, will be spending some time in Geraldton.

A Native Affairs Department officer visited Yalgoo recently and found that Rosemary's teeth were very bad. Immediate arrangements were made for her to go to Geraldton and see a dentist.

The dentist said she would have to stay six months for

prolonged treatment. Rosemary is now staying at Broughton Lodge with Sister Isabella, who is looking after five other Aborigine schoolchildren.

Rosemary is an orphan, but her grandparents, Jimmy and Phoebe Ryan of Yalgoo, have adopted her. She is having a great time at Geraldton, but she is looking forward to going home at the end of the year.

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A Short Story by LEE ROBINSON

Albert had a very bad habit of dropping around to the hotel about 6 o'clock in the morning for a little chat. My room was right on the street and he used to knock on the window before he came in—so he was sure I was awake by the time he walked around to the door.

Every time he came he went through the same routine. He took off his hat and smoothed his hair back, then sat on the spare bed and dangled his hat between his huge knees and cocked his head on one side and said what he had to say. It usually wasn't anything important. It was just that six o'clock was the time he liked to chat.

He came in one Saturday morning and sat on the bed and dangled the hat and said: "I think I should get some bullets."

"What for?" I asked him. I was still half asleep. I was trying to get a bit of rest in the Alice before I went out to the Plenty River country, and these six o'clock sessions were getting me down.

"To shoot kangaroos," he said. "There's a lot around this time of the year."

"Haven't you got any at all?"

"Any kangaroos?"

"Bullets."

"I got a little bit," he said, "but not enough for long. You know my gun. I need a lot of bullets."

I knew his gun all right. He used it like a machine-gun. He liked to sit up on the back of a truck, preferably in a little armchair, and try to knock kangaroos on the run. Considering it had no sights he didn't do too badly either. He could get away more bullets to the minute with a bolt action than any other man I know. He seemed to use his first shot as a marker to line up on.

"Do you know where you can get any twenty-twos?" I asked him. "Have they got any at the stores?"

"All the stores got them. Mobs of them," he said, "but they mightn't sell them to me."

"Why not?"

"They make a difficulty selling them to Aborigines."

"All right," I said. "We'll go down after breakfast. You come back about eight o'clock."

"Maybe I can wait here," he said. "I could look at some books."

I got up and dressed and gave him a copy of *Life* to look at while I was away and left an opened packet of cigarettes on the dressing table where he couldn't resist them. When I came back he was puffing his head off and halfway through the book. He must have spent ten minutes on every page. Much as he wanted the bullets he didn't like leaving the *Life* unfinished, so I told him he could take it with him and we started off down the road for the nearest store.

He pushed the magazine inside his tight-fitting blazer and stuck his huge beautiful hands in his tiny pockets and walked along with the smoke from the cigarette curling up and burning his eyes until he could hardly see. He was a big man and always made me feel almost non-existent walking beside him. He was around the six foot mark somewhere and according to the Post Office scales weighted just over twenty stone. If he had been a white man he would have been a Guards officer or a hotel doorman. Or maybe he would have been a millionaire. I don't know.

We got to the store and a little sandy man who was arranging racks of pots and tin dishes gave us a sidelong, questioning look. He walked right past Albert and came up to me.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Have you any twenty-two long bullets?"

"I have," he said. "Have you got a permit?"

"This was a new one on me. I didn't think anybody needed a permit for anything in Alice Springs."

"The bullets are for my friend," I told the sandy-haired man. "He probably has a permit."

"Yes," Albert told him. "I got one down at my camp."

"Well down at your camp's no good to me." The storeman started to walk away. "You'll have to bring it here before you get any bullets."

I said to Albert: "Come on. Let's go and get it."

It was half a mile down to Albert's camp. Just out of town he had his gear parked in the back of a churchyard, packed up under a new tarpaulin. He fished out a leather bag from among the bits and pieces and rummaged in it until he found two pieces of paper.

"I got 'em," he said.

"You sure you've got the right one?"

"I've got two," he said. "We'll take them both," and he pushed them into his pocket without showing them to me.

Back at the store the sandy-haired little man took a long time to decide whether he would serve us or not. Eventually he came over and said to Albert: "Show us the permit."

Albert handed him the first slip of paper he drew from his pocket without saying a word and the little man took one glance at it and handed it back.

"That's only an authority to say you can own a shotgun," he said. "That's no good to me."

Albert folded up the paper and put it away in another pocket, then took out the other slip and without a word handed it over. The little man hardly unrolled it before handing it back.

"That says you can own a twenty-two calibre rifle," he said. "You're just wasting my time."

Albert looked at me. He was finished. He obviously disliked the little man but he didn't know how to show it and still get his bullets.

"If the permits he has are no good," I asked the little man, "where does he get a permit that is?"

"From the police," he said. "A permit authorising him to buy bullets, and he'll need a good excuse to get it." And he walked off again to straighten his tin dishes.

The policeman knew Albert. And better still he knew the score with the permits. "Five hundred bullets," he said. "Any time." He wrote on a slip of paper, then looked up at Albert. "I can never spell your name," he said. "How does it go?"

Albert spelled it out for him slowly. "N-a-m-a-t-j-i-r-a."

"That's it," the policeman said, drying the permit. "Albert Namatjira. How's the painting going?"

Albert said: "Good," and tucking the permit into his top pocket he started to leave. As we got to the door the policeman called out: "I read in the paper that you're earning two thousand quid a year. Is that right?"

"Might be a little bit more than that, or little bit less," Albert told him and we set out for the store again.

Sandy hair looked at us as though we were excellent professional nuisances. Nobody said anything as Albert unfolded the new permit and handed it over. The storeman read this one carefully and when he got to the name he looked up excitedly. "Albert Namatjira," he said. "Are you Albert Namatjira?"

Albert said: "Yes."

"Are you the man who paints those wonderful watercolours? Are you the great artist?" He must have been reading the same papers as the policeman. Two thousand a year was not to be sneezed at.

Albert said: "Is the permit all right for the bullets?"

"Of course," the little man said. "Of course. Well, I am pleased to meet you. Albert Namatjira. Well, I am pleased," and he changed the permit over to his left hand and stuck out the other to shake hands. He was almost drooling at the mouth and he looked a bit silly standing there with his hand stuck out. Albert didn't appear to notice it but looked right past him at the shelves behind the counter and said: "Can we have the bullets please?"

"Of course, of course," the little man said. "What is it? Five hundred. Long you said, didn't you?" And he busied himself behind the counter with paper and string needlessly wrapping them up.

Outside in the street I said: "Well, you got the bullets. I think I'll go back to bed."

Albert pushed the packet into his pocket with the permits for shotgun and rifle and tucked the *Life* into a

better position under his blazer. "I think I'll go to bed too," he said. "Some things make me sick."

And he went off down the street proud and erect.

Editorial

A Few Are Throwing A Spanner In The Works

THE Native Affairs Department's annual report is a story of unrelenting struggle by public-spirited people for a decent deal for the natives of this State.

THERE have been important gains, especially in the field of education and in the fight against colour prejudice.

BUT much more can be done, and it is not the fault of the staff of the department that it is not being done. Nor is it the fault of the mission staffs, most of whom make big sacrifices to help ease the hardships that are inflicted on the Aborigines.

IT is clear from the report that a small handful of people in high places want colour prejudice and discrimination to continue, and are hamstringing the department and the missions in their work.

DISTINCTION must be drawn here between the misguided prejudice of a large number of people who are honest but ignorant, and the deliberate fostering of prejudice by a few who know exactly what they are doing.

IT is these few people who are the main enemies of the Aborigines of Western Australia. And that doesn't mean they are the allies of the white people.

FAR from it! The same group in the Legislative Council that blocked the Bill to grant Aborigines a little more justice also fights consistently, from a privileged position, against measures to help the white people. Their antics every time legislation is introduced to control evictions, preposterous rents and soaring prices, and to enforce proper wages, shows them up as enemies of the vast majority of the people irrespective of colour.

THIS group and their allies outside Parliament don't number very many. Their power lies in the position they are allowed at present to hold.

IT is up to all of us to fight harder than ever against the racial prejudice that divides the people in the face of these enemies, and to try to understand that many of W.A.'s ordinary white people are prejudiced, not through any malice, but through the ignorance encouraged by a few. It is always more constructive to win ignorant people than to scorn them.

"WESTRALIAN ABORIGINE" congratulates the Native Affairs Department and the majority of mission staffs on their achievements, and wishes them every success in the future.

Appointment

Mr. H. A. JONES, former Clerk-in-Charge at the Native Affairs Department, has been appointed Industrial Officer in the Department of Labour. He had been seconded to that department earlier. From all reports Mr. Jones is doing well in his new position.

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