

THE PROGRESS OF WHITE SETTLEMENT IN THE
ALICE SPRINGS DISTRICT AND ITS EFFECTS
UPON THE ABORIGINAL INHABITANTS, 1860 - 1894

PART I

by

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WARNING

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Please be aware that this thesis may contain sensitive information, including names and images of people who have passed away and which may sadden and distress some Indigenous people.

C O N T E N T S

	Tables	ii
	Plates	iii
	Maps	v
	Summary	vi
	Acknowledgements	ix
	Declaration	xi
	Introduction	xii
1	Aborigines and Environment	1
2	The South Australian Background	73
3	The Overland Telegraph and Exploration, 1870 - 1875	189
4	The Pastoral Frontier, 1872 - 1894	281
5	Missionary Enterprise, 1875 - 1894	459
6	'Rubies', Gold and the First Township	547
	Conclusion	592
	Appendices	596
	Bibliography	628

T A B L E S

1	Aboriginal Population	26
2	Aranda Subsection Names	54
3	German Immigrants into South Australia, 1836 - 1900	157
4	Telegraph Construction Parties	193
5	Country held under Application and Lease, January 1877	292
6	Hermannsburg Mission: Revenue from Livestock, 1880 - 1893	487
7	Hermannsburg Mission: Revenue from Livestock, 1888 - 1893	488
8	Hermannsburg Mission: Revenue 1880 - 1893	491
9	Hermannsburg Mission: Expenditure 1880 - 1893	493

P L A T E S

		Following Page
1	Mt. Sonder, MacDonnell Ranges	12
2	Running Waters, Finke River	12
3	'Type of Aranda Native, Eastern MacDonnell Ranges'	22
4	'Sacred Ceremony of the Emu Totem, Unngwatja'	66
5	Finke River, Horseshoe Bend	98
6	Stuarts Hole, Hugh River	98
7	E.M. Bagot	191
8	The Junction	203
9	The Alice Spring	203
10	Kraegen's Grave	215
11	The Start of Warburton's Expedition	215
12	Alice Springs Telegraph Station	238
13	Charlotte Waters Telegraph Station and Staff	238
14	'Natives Burning the Grass on our March'	244
15	'Attack of Natives near Mt. Hay'	246
16	Barrow Creek Telegraph Station	268

17	Barrow Creek Telegraph Station	268
18	'Old' Owen Springs	301
19	Plaque to the Memory of Pioneers of the Finke	301
20	Glen Helen Homestead	356
21	Glen Helen Stationhands	356
22	Mounted Constables Wurmbbrand and Willshire and the Native Police	426
23	F.J. Gillen and Aborigines at Hermannsburg Mission	440
24	Aranda Camp at Alice Springs	440
25	Theodor Harms	463
26	G.A. Heidenreich	463
27	W.F. Schwarz, L. Schulze, and A.H. Kempe	463
28	C.T.F. Strehlow	544
29	First Missionaries' Residence at Hermannsburg	544
30	Ruby Gap (Glen Annie)	553
31	Scene at the Star of the North Well	553
32	The Horn Expedition	569
33	Horseshoe Bend Mail Station and 'Eating House'	569
34	The Town of Stuart	580
35	The Stuart Arms Hotel	580
36	Central Australian Prospector and Dryblower	586

M A P S

		Following Page
I	Boundaries of Aboriginal Tribes and Communities	21
II	Routes of J. McD. Stuart, 1860 - 1861	97
III	Routes of Ernest Giles, 1872 - 1874	223
IV	Route of P.E. Warburton, 1873	225
V	Route of W.C. Gosse, 1873	227
VI	Route of W.H. Tietkens, 1889	370
VII	Route of the Horn Expedition, 1894	570
VIII	Historical Map of the Alice Springs District, 1860 - 1910	<u>[Appended]</u>

S U M M A R Y

Since this thesis is intended to be a general history only some of its more important findings can be summarized here. The history of Central Australia is bound up with that of South Australia. South Australia demanded the annexation of the Northern Territory because of ambitions stemming from her unique origins and the desire of influential men of capital to invest or speculate in supposedly rich northern lands. Similarly, her ambition to construct a line of telegraph through the Territory stemmed from notions of aggrandizement and an ardent belief in progress.

At the time of the annexation South Australia anticipated that settlement would be achieved by an inexpensive pastoral penetration via the Centre, but directly after it she attempted colonization via the sea and a detailed Wakefieldian scheme. Nevertheless, and in spite of drought and depression, the first enduring pastoral runs in the Territory were formed in the Centre: the construction of the overland telegraph during a favourable season and an expanding agricultural frontier induced South Australian capitalist squatters to invest heavily in that country in the seventies and led to further exploration; and the power of the land to deceive and other factors led to even heavier investment in the eighties. Drought and depression

brought about the collapse of this sort of pastoral enterprise in the nineties and the Alice Springs District became the preserve of the 'small' squatter, who came into being and subsisted by adapting his morals and economy to the exigencies of his environment.

In 1877, for reasons too complicated to outline here, the Hermannsburg Mission Institute of Hannover, in conjunction with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia (ELSA) and with the support of the South Australian Government, founded a Mission to Aborigines on the upper Finke River. The missionaries came close to realizing their ideal of a self-supporting Mission, but physical exhaustion and disillusionment impelled them to abandon their posts in 1889 - 1891, and in 1894, owing to a doctrinal dispute with ELSA, the Institute sold the Mission.

A chance discovery of 'rubies' in 1885 led to the virtual exclusion of Chinese from the Centre and the discovery of gold and mica east-north-east of Alice Springs. The 'rubies' proved to be garnets, the goldfield gave vain promise of vast wealth, and nothing short of a railway and a large inflow of capital could have made mica pay in the nineteenth century; but garnets, gold and mica stimulated the 'new' pastoral industry, led to the establishment of the Centre's first township and did more to place the country on the map for the Australian public than anything since the construction of the overland telegraph. In many

respects the history of European settlement in Central Australia is a story of achievement in the face of tremendous odds.

Most Aboriginal communities in the Centre reacted to settlement first with 'fear and avoidance', then by making 'tentative approaches', then by offering resistance, and finally by becoming 'intelligent exploiters'. Curiosity and acquisitiveness were important motives of those who made tentative approaches, and in at least one area intelligent exploitation was based on acquisitiveness rather than on 'the necessity for adaptation'. Where geographical and other factors delayed the process of 'pacification' Aborigines sometimes adopted a policy of 'intelligent resistance', but neither ~~resistance~~ nor intelligent resistance occurred where Europeans implemented a careful policy of conciliation from the outset and made no rapid inroads into indigenous supplies of food and water.

Some Europeans came to the Centre intending, or with instructions to adopt, a policy of conciliation, but most probably came also with a set of attitudes incompatible with the effective implementation of such a policy. These attitudes were strengthened in the course of contact, so that when Aborigines threatened, or seemed to threaten, life and property, most Europeans, already beset by feelings of

insecurity in a marginal land and in the absence of opposition from the public and authorities in the south, did not hesitate to resort to force. The chief exceptions to this rule were the missionaries, who came into the country with a rather different set of attitudes; but in the course of contact their contempt for Aboriginal culture increased, they abandoned their policy of assimilation after segregation, their faith in the capacity of Aborigines for eternal salvation was shaken, and they resorted to force (of a more restrained kind) in an effort to hold their small flock of converts together.

By 1894 most Aborigines and Europeans in the occupied Centre had adopted mutual policies of intelligent exploitation and the rule of British law and a 'protectorate' had been established. European settlement had meanwhile radically affected the numbers (except on Hermannsburg Mission), local organization, economy, and material culture of the Aborigines. It had^{had}/a much slighter impact on most other aspects of Aboriginal life, but it had paved the way for sweeping changes shortly after 1894.

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D E C L A R A T I O N

This thesis is based on research conducted by myself during the tenure of a Commonwealth Post-Graduate Scholarship at the University of Adelaide. It contains no material that has been accepted from me for the award of any other degree or diploma or, to the best of my knowledge and except where due reference is made, that has been published or written by another person.

INTRODUCTION

Truly the fate of the pioneer is either a feast or a famine.

——— Anon., Report from Arltunga
Port Augusta Despatch,
August 9th 1895

It would help in arguing back from the present to the past if we had fairly accurate accounts of the European penetration of Australia, paying attention to the development of pastoral properties in the outback ... and to accounts of missionary penetration and histories of the development of administration It was, of course, a task of wider interest as part of the history of Australia; but perhaps it should go on record that Aboriginal studies is one field with a positive interest in the detailed historical record of the white penetration of Australia.

——— J.A. Barnes, 1961
Australian Aboriginal Studies: A
Symposium of Papers Presented at
the 1961 Research Conference

The history of European settlement in the Northern Territory has long been regarded as a 'long tale of woe'¹ in a land of moderate or even great potential. When a detailed history of the Territory comes to be written it may well be found that this view requires modification; it certainly requires to be modified before it can justly

1. A.G. Price, The History and Problems of the Northern Territory, Australia (Macrossan Lectures, Adelaide, 1930), p.2.

be held in respect of the southern part of the Northern Territory, for the history of European settlement in Central Australia is in many respects a story of achievement in the face of tremendous odds, of achievement where achievement now seems to have been impossible. Perhaps in no other region of Australia were the obstacles to settlement so great: immense and difficult sand-and-stone distances to sea-ports and a fickle and deceitful countryside, a countryside rich and inviting one moment then suddenly poor and treacherous: a countryside capable of inspiring almost incredible hope and confidence in men, only to cheat them of their expectations and break them or reduce their lives to the mere rhythm of its moods. Many enterprises undertaken by Europeans in this country in the nineteenth century ended in failure, but an overland telegraph was triumphantly constructed from Port Augusta to Port Darwin, explorer, pastoralist and missionary had their palmy days, forty or fifty miners gouged a living from a goldfield that eventually was proved to contain little gold, and foundations were laid for a flourishing modern mission and pastoral industry. Nor is the record of the way in which Aborigines met Europeans (and vice versa) unimpressive by standards set elsewhere in Australia. Divided as they were by vast differences in outlook and interest they came into bloody collision in most areas, but

where Aborigines were treated in conciliatory fashion from the outset they quickly made 'external' adaptations to the forces of progress, and geographical and other factors enabled many of them to survive the impact of settlement with much of their culture intact. By 1894 most Aborigines and Europeans in the occupied Centre had learnt how to live to their mutual advantage.

The Alice Springs District is a modern pastoral division of the Northern Territory, 220,000 square miles in area: that part of the Territory lying south of the twentieth parallel, except where the Barkly Tableland protrudes in the north-east.^{1a} It is a convenient unit of study in that, unlike the remainder of the Territory, it is a geographical appendage of South Australia and was, for the most part, administered directly from Adelaide during South Australia's tenure of the Territory; and 1860 - 1894 is a convenient period in that it commences with the appearance of the first European explorer and closes with important changes in the policy of the South Australian Government towards the Aborigines of the District and in the relations between the settlers and Aborigines and with the collapse and rebirth of pastoral and missionary enterprise. The term 'the Alice Springs District' was sometimes used in the nineteenth century to refer loosely to the southern part of the Territory, but I have chosen to

1a. See Map VIII (appended).

use it in the title of this thesis and elsewhere chiefly because (in its modern usage) it is the only precise term that has ever been employed in respect of that country.² For the sake of brevity and tradition (and often of euphony), however, I shall frequently use two vaguer terms, 'the Centre' and 'Central Australia', as being synonymous with 'the Alice Springs District' in its modern usage. The remainder of the Territory will be referred to as 'the Top End', for this term also has the blessing of tradition and the advantage of brevity.

Few serious historians have so far turned their attention to the history of the Centre during 1860 - 1894, though a number have worked, so to speak, on the borders of the country. The general South Australian background to settlement has been thoroughly, though incidentally, mapped by Douglas Pike (Paradise of Dissent³), and Hans Mincham's Story of the Flinders Ranges etches in some of the more immediate background. K.R. Bowes's unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Land Settlement in South Australia, 1857 - 1890) and D.W. Meinig's On the Margins of the Good Earth are indispensable

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2. Except in the case of 'Central Australia' during 1926-1929, which referred to a Territory of the Commonwealth that embraced all the country south of the twentieth parallel, including country in the north-east that is a geographical appendage of Queensland rather than of South Australia and that was not administered directly from Adelaide during 1863-1910.
 3. The full titles, together with the dates and places of publication (if any), of the studies mentioned in this paragraph may be consulted in the bibliography (appended).

for anyone who wants to understand why pastoral settlement occurred in Central Australia when it did, and a number of articles from the pen of G.W. Symes fill in some of the gaps left by more general accounts in the story of the pastoral occupation of northern South Australia and the early exploration of Central Australia. Bessie Threadgill's South Australian Land Exploration, 1856 - 1880 and Mona Stuart Webster's John McDouall Stuart also provide useful accounts of early exploration in the Centre as well as detailed expositions of the penetration of South Australian explorers towards that country, and E.C. Chapman's B.A. Honours thesis (The Exploration and Settlement of the Northern Territory) examines, among other things, the influence of exploration on the pattern of pastoral settlement in the Territory in the seventies and eighties. Another B.A. Honours thesis (W.L. Manser's Overland Telegraph) is the most useful of a number of accounts of the construction of a line of telegraph between Port Augusta and Port Darwin in the early seventies and of the events that led up to it. By far the most important study bearing on the progress of settlement is Ross Duncan's unpublished History of the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry, 1863 - 1910 which, apart from shedding much light on the development of the Centre's pastoral industry, provides a valuable account of the events that led to the annexation of

the Territory⁴ and a stimulating discussion of South Australia's stewardship of her dependency.⁵ P.A. Scherer (Venture of Faith) and F.J.H. Blaess (The Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia and Mission Work amongst the Australian Natives - an unpublished B.D. thesis) have done useful pioneering work on some aspects of missionary enterprise in the Centre. Blaess's thesis also provides indispensable 'background' information, as do C.A. Price's 'German Settlers in South Australia' and two Church histories: A. Brauer's Under the Southern Cross and Theodor Hebart's United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia. Of the three 'general histories' of the Territory that have been published A.G. Price's History and Problems of the Northern Territory deals almost exclusively with the Top End, C.L.A. Abbott's Australia's Frontier Province rarely penetrates to the period prior to 1910, and Ernestine Hill's brilliantly evocative The Territory contains mere snippets of unreliable information concerning the Centre. J. MacDonald Holmes's historical geography of a much larger area (Australia's Open North) contains little information and few suggestions concerning the history of the Centre in the nineteenth

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4. See also Ross Duncan, 'The Annexation of the Northern Territory to South Australia' in Hist. Studs. Aust. and N.Z., Vol. 6, No. 22 (May 1954), pp.135-49.
5. See also Ross Duncan, 'South Australia's Contribution to the Development of the Northern Territory Cattle Industry, 1863-1910' in ibid., Vol. 11, No. 43 (Octob. 1964), pp. 324-42.

century that may not be found in other studies. Finally, a few local historians, notably A.V. Purvis and P.D. Boerner, have been diligent in research, but many of their findings are as yet unpublished or unwritten.

Nothing of much value, apart from passing references in the works of Blaess, Scherer and T.G.H. Strehlow and earlier anthropologists, has been written concerning Aboriginal-white relations in the Centre during 1860 - 1894. By Australian standards, however, the South Australian background has been well worked. Kathleen Hassell (The Relations between the settlers and the aborigines in South Australia, 1836 - 1860 - an unpublished M.A. thesis) did useful pioneering work in 1927, but it has now been superseded in many respects by R.M. Gibbs's unpublished B.A. Honours thesis (Humanitarian Theories and the Aboriginal Inhabitants of South Australia to 1860)⁶ Fay Gale's Study of Assimilation: Part-Aborigines in South Australia and Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt's From Black to White in South Australia also afford useful background information. Of all writings on the history of Aboriginal-white relations in Australia (and they are few⁷) I found Paul Hasluck's Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia,

6. Gibbs has published a shorter version of this thesis ('Relations between the Aboriginal Inhabitants and the First South Australian Colonists') in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs., Vol. 61 (December 1960), pp.61-78.

7. For a fairly comprehensive survey of these writings see Marie Reay, 'The Background of Alien Impact' in Ronald M. and C.H. Berndt (Ed.), Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A.P.Elkin (Sydney, 1965) pp.

1829 - 1897 and A.P. Elkin's 'Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia' the most helpful methodological guides.⁸

This thesis is intended to be no more and no less than a general history of the Alice Springs District. It places more emphasis than most Australian regional histories on the relations between Aborigines and Europeans and the effects of one upon the other both because these subjects must on any view be regarded as important in the history of the District and because I believe that a properly balanced history of most Australian districts would require that they be treated more fully and seriously than they have been in the past.

The study of these subjects requires the skills of both the historian and the anthropologist. Unless the historian can arrive at a fairly full understanding of Aboriginal culture before European settlement occurred and unless, by doing the work of the anthropologist in the field (in the absence of acculturative studies by anthropologists), he can supplement the documentary evidence bearing on the reaction of Aborigines to settlement and the impact of settlement upon Aboriginal culture, his account must have serious shortcomings. I visited the Centre for several months

8. A survey of anthropological literature bearing on the pre-contact culture of Central Australian Aborigines is presented in Chapter One (below).

on a number of occasions partly in order to obviate some of these hazards⁹, but I soon came to realize that I had neither the time nor the necessary skill (I have no formal training as an anthropologist) to explore this course very effectively. I have therefore been compelled to rely heavily on documentary evidence. Fortunately, such evidence is fairly plentiful, at least when compared with that available for many other Australian regions, and, supplemented by data collected in the field, may perhaps entitle me to claim some accuracy for my conclusions.

My approach to the subject of the reaction of Europeans to contact with Aborigines scarcely requires explanation: I shall try to establish the attitudes towards Aborigines that Europeans brought with them to the Centre and to show how and why they changed and with what results. The reaction of Aborigines to Europeans will be examined chiefly in the light

9. The field excursions were made for a number of additional reasons: to visit old homesteads and obtain first-hand knowledge of geographical and climatic conditions; to locate additional documentary material; and to interview white 'old-timers'. All these avenues of information proved fruitful. I was frequently informed by European residents that it is impossible for anyone to write realistically and well about the Centre without spending a number of years living and working there. Certainly, the more familiar I became with the countryside and its inhabitants, the more easily I was able to enter upon the work of imaginatively reconstructing its past, and the more I came to understand aspects of its history that had hitherto only puzzled me.

of remarks made by A.P. Elkin in 1951¹⁰ concerning Aboriginal reaction in the whole of Australia. To Elkin the phases of Aboriginal reaction, insofar as they concern this study, were (in chronological order) 'tentative approach', 'incipient clash' or 'clash', and 'intelligent parasitism'. All these phases, I shall try to demonstrate, were present in Central Australia. 'Intelligent parasitism' will be referred to, however, as 'intelligent exploitation' - a term which I shall also employ to denote the European counterpart to this policy - on the grounds that the relationship established between Aborigines and Europeans during this phase of Aboriginal reaction was symbiotic rather than parasitic; and 'incipient clash' or 'clash' as 'incipient resistance' or 'resistance' as signifying an attitude taken or a policy adopted by Aborigines rather than a stage in the relations of Aborigines with Europeans and vice versa. I shall argue, moreover, that Elkin's assertions that 'the Aborigines' reaction to white intrusion [was] not a matter of curiosity, imitation and acquisition'¹¹ and that 'intelligent parasitism' was 'based on the necessity for adaptation'¹² are not wholly true of the Aborigines of Central

10. A.P. Elkin, 'Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia' in American Anthropologist, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar. 1951) pp. 164-86.

11. Ibid., p.165.

12. Ibid., p.169.

Australia.¹³ Finally, I shall advance evidence to suggest that two further phases of reaction may be identified in the Centre: a phase of marked 'fear and avoidance',¹⁴ which preceded the phase of tentative approach and was 'general', or almost so; and a phase of 'intelligent resistance', which followed the phase of resistance and preceded the phase of intelligent exploitation and was 'particular' in that it occurred only where geographical and other factors delayed the pacification of Aborigines.

The acculturative process in the Centre, as elsewhere in Australia, was largely one-sided. I shall try to demonstrate that European settlement, apart from occasioning considerable depopulation, produced radical changes in Aboriginal local organization, economy, and material culture, but that (though it established conditions that produced sweeping changes after 1894) it had no important effects on the social and political organization and the religious life of the Aborigines. The relatively large numbers of Aborigines who have survived the impact of settlement and the relatively large amount of available documentary evidence, together with an immense body of unpublished data collected by anthropologists, notably by T.G.H. Strehlow, will possibly enable

13. Cf. M.J. Meggitt, Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia (Sydney 1962) p.336; T.G.H. Strehlow, Dark and White Australians (Melbourne, 1957), p.12.

14. Elkin (art. cit., p.166) implicitly recognized this phase when discussing tentative approach in 1951: '... on first contact with definite settlement the Aborigines are usually shy and harmless.'

some anthropologist to make a detailed acculturative study in this area at some time in the future. I should be highly gratified if this thesis, by examining the impinging forces of the past and sketching a rough outline of the process of acculturation, helps in some small way to set the stage for such a study. No more than this has been attempted.

CHAPTER ONE

ABORIGINES AND ENVIRONMENT

... the pioneers did not know anything about average rainfall. The appearance of the land had to be their guide; and there can be no doubt that the appearance of the virgin vegetation can be a very unreliable and deceptive guide.

— Francis Ratcliffe, 1937.
Flying Fox and Drifting Sand.

You had to keep in the life flow of the country to survive.

— Katherine Susannah Prichard, 1929.
Coonardoo.

ENVIRONMENT

Central Australia is a large land of uniformities and yet of striking contrasts and sudden changes: a land of vast silent stands of green-grey mulgas, of red soils, crumbling rocks and direct sunlight, of desiccated water-courses and slowly shifting sandhills; but also of straw-coloured spinifex among the mulgas or dignified groups of mourning desert oaks and ironwoods, of bright greenness of gum leaves along the river beds and cool plunging gorges among the crumbling rocks, of sudden spring and gleefulness after rain.

According to the Aborigines who had occupied it probably for 10,000 years or more before Europeans first set foot in it in 1860, its present topographical features were created in the 'dreamtime' from a primeval formlessness - an earth waste and void like the Hebrew earth before Creation - by gigantic totemic ancestors whose wandering feet furrowed out rivers and whose poles laid upon the backs of mountains created chasms. According to Europeans, oceans, wind, rain, sun and bucklings in the earth's crust were the agents which shaped this mighty landscape: after a pavement of granite or gneiss and layers of quartzite, shale, slate and conglomerate were deposited by Cambrian and pre-Cambrian seas, elevated into mountains that stretched from the present MacDonnell Ranges to Adelaide and Tasmania, and brought low again by the power of wind, rain and sun; and after shallow Ordovician seas laid down thick deposits of sandstone just south of the present MacDonnell Ranges, the various rock formations were subjected to immense pressure from the north and south and less pressure from the east and west until the parallel ridges and domes of the MacDonnell and neighbouring ranges towered from ten to fifteen thousand feet towards the sky, and a second cycle of erosion set in. When the great bare mountains were level with the surrounding countryside, the vast plain of which they formed a part and which sprawled across the western third of Australia slowly began to rise.

And as fast as it rose rivers flowing from north to south cut channels into it and wind, water and sunlight eroded soils and softer rocks until the rugged mountains of today were left exposed.

This central complex of ranges - the MacDonnell, Krichauff, James, George Gill, Waterhouse, Fergusson, Harts, and Strangways Ranges - is (if human habitability be the criterion) by far the most important topographical feature of the Centre. From east to west it stretches for about 350 miles, and from north to south, with intermissions, for up to 60 miles. Though of no great height when compared with some other mountain systems of the world, in its own surroundings it is imposing. For the most part it rises abruptly 1,000 feet or more above the surrounding plain, and its highest peak is almost 5,000 feet. It is not so much its height or extent in itself, however, that makes it important, as its effect on the rainfall and water-supply of the Centre.¹ Because of the numerous passes created by ancient rivers, the ranges were no great obstacle to the penetration of the Centre by Europeans from the south and no obstacle at all to the functioning of the nomadic economy of the Aborigines; but without these ranges the land would have been as arid and

1. Cf. R.O. Slatyer, 'Climate of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O., Lands of the Alice Springs Area, Northern Territory, 1956-57; Land Research Series No. 6. (Melbourne, 1962) p.110.

uninhabitable as one would expect it to be from its latitude and inland position, and as inaccessible to Europeans of the 'palaeotechnic era' as Gibson's Desert.

There are five other rather less important mountain complexes in the Centre, the most important range or ranges in each being the Reynolds Range in the north-west, Fosters Range and Watt Range in the north, the Murchison and Davenport Ranges in the north and north-east, the Jervois Range in the north-east, and the Petermann Ranges in the south-west. European settlement was to penetrate to all but one of these by 1910: the Petermann Ranges alone were separated from practicable routes to the central ranges by too many waterless miles of sand, spinifex, and stunted acacias for their settlement to be attempted. Over a wide area of the plains that sprawl between these mountain systems, smaller ranges and weathered outcrops of rock - bluffs, silica-capped mesas, and large monoliths (of which Ayers Rock and Mount Olga are but the most spectacular and famous) - are to be seen at fairly frequent intervals, guardians of Aboriginal sacred sites and watering places, and oases to weary European explorers, but scarcely of importance for the history of European settlement in the Centre.

Most of the important rivers in Central Australia flow roughly south or north. As a result, access from the west or east was difficult for Europeans. Only two rivers, the

Hay and the Sandover, may be said to reach the Queensland border from the central ranges, but their channels become so dispersed and ill-defined, and it requires so exceptional a flood to carry their waters to the border, that neither proved a practicable route for Europeans. The only river to take a somewhat westerly course is the Lander, but it peters out in a desert far removed from country accessible to Europeans with stock in the nineteenth century. By far the most important river in the Centre is the Finke which, together with its numerous tributaries (the largest of which are the Hugh and the Palmer), drains the whole of the central mountain complex west of $133^{\circ} 40'$ E. longitude and meanders across more than 200 miles of country to the south-east before crossing the South Australian border on its way to the Macumba and Lake Eyre. Mighty in Cretaceous times the Finke, like other Central Australian rivers, now rarely flows throughout its whole length and may be said to flow even in its upper reaches only on an average of about once a year; but the water it stored beneath a protective covering of fine white sand made it a life-line for European settlers in a country with a low and irregular rainfall one thousand miles from any sea and shut off to east and west from other centres of European population. A series of springs and semi-permanent waterholes made the route from the south to the southern border of the Territory

practicable for Europeans with stock, and from there the Finke and Hugh provided the only routes to the central ranges. Access from the ranges to the north, or from the north to the ranges, was more difficult, but the northerly trend of the Woodforde, Hanson, and Taylor Creeks helped to make it possible.

As already indicated, the strategic importance of these rivers is, of course, largely the result of climatic conditions in the Centre. At Tennant Creek the average annual rainfall is 13.85 inches and south from there it decreases as the country becomes further removed from the influence of summer cyclones and low-pressure troughs extending southwards from the tropics: at Barrow Creek it is 11.45 inches, at Alice Springs 9.93 inches, and at Charlotte Waters 5.48 inches.² These figures can be very misleading, however, for the rainfall varies greatly from year to year. Thus in 1879 Alice Springs received 27 inches, and in the following year less than 6 inches; in 1920 it received 28.57 inches, in 1928 2.37 inches.³

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2. Commonwealth of Australia Meteorological Branch, Book of Normals - No. 1: Rainfall: Normal Monthly and Yearly Amounts of Rainfall and Number of Rain Days: Standard Period 30 years 1911-1940 (Canberra n.d.), pp.25,26,47. No figures are available for Charlotte Waters after 1937. The figure quoted is for the period 1874-1905 (see M.C.N.T.In 285/1906).
 3. Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, Results of Rainfall Observations made in South Australia and the Northern Territory 1839-1950 (Canberra n.d.), p.17.

Severe droughts have so far occurred about once in every generation, and lesser droughts more often. Vegetation is often so badly damaged during these dry periods that seasons of average or above-average rainfall which follow are seasons of famine. Furthermore, an extremely high rate of evaporation - it averages 95 inches at Alice Springs⁴ - often negatives the effect of rain. Over 75% of the average rainfall is received in the six summer months from October to March, and there are rarely good 'follow up' rains in the other months. This would not matter so much if most of the summer rains fell within the space of a month or a few weeks: they often fall in small quantities at a time, with the result that seedlings spring up only to wither in the hot sunny days which follow.⁵ A pastoralist, or an Aboriginal dependent on natural food resources, would be much better off then he is now if he were assured of an annual rainfall of 5 inches and could name the days on which it should fall.⁶ Needless

4. Slatyer, art.cit. in C.S.I.R.O., op. cit., p.120.

5. Slatyer (ibid pp.120-25) has estimated that only 2.79 periods of 'initial effective rainfall' (which he defines as a fall of rain that enables germination of annuals and re-growth of perennials to commence) and 2.07 periods of 'effective carryover rainfall' (a subsequent fall of rain that enables growth of vegetation to continue) can be expected at Tennant Creek. His estimates for Barrow Creek are 3.39 and 2.00 respectively, for Alice Springs 3.61 and 2.26, for Charlotte Waters 1.65 and 0.55.

6. Cf. Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand (Sydney, 1953), p.195.

to say, pioneering Europeans, to whom no statistics of average rainfall or of rates of evaporation were available, were often deceived by seeming conditions of bounty in the Centre.

In spite of the high summer temperatures - the average daily maximum at Alice Springs is 82.9°F. and for five months it exceeds 90°F.⁷ - most Central Australians agree that the climate is pleasant and healthy. Sometimes a hot northerly wind accompanied by dust makes living conditions in summer unpleasant, but the heat is usually very dry and by night the scorched earth, aided at times by a refreshing shower, cools so rapidly that the average minimum temperature for any month does not exceed 70°F. In winter there sometimes blows a biting easterly wind which can penetrate to the bones beneath the thickest of clothing, and sharp frosts often occur in and south of the central ranges; but usually the air is calm and clean and by day a lazy sun plays directly upon a warm earth. No one who has spent much time in the Centre will be surprised to learn that early European residents often claimed that its climate was the finest in Australia, some that it was the finest in the world.⁸

7. Country Women's Association (Alice Springs Branch), The Alice, A Story of the Town and District of Alice Springs, Northern Territory (Adel. 1960) p.25.

8. See, e.g. S.A.P.P. 19/1895, p.87; Port Augusta Despatch 12.11.1909, p.5; Adel. Observer 15.8.91, p.27; C.P.P. 76/22, p.238.

The highly irregular pattern of rainfall complicates the task of describing the water, agricultural and pastoral resources and flora and fauna of the Centre. Central Australia is a land of many moods, ranging from extreme parsimony to extreme prodigality. A visitor to the country today, a time of extreme drought, would see bare red sand or brown earth, withered trees, and little water or wild-life. In a time of extreme plenty waterholes would be overflowing, grass waving feet high, shrubs covered with blossoms, and the whole countryside teeming with wild-life. To describe both extremes would be inadequate, for most of the time truth lies somewhere between them. But to strike a balance between them would be to present an equally false picture. The truth is that the Centre is constantly changing and that an accurate description of it at any particular point in time is likely to be inaccurate at the next.

The task is further complicated by the fact that European settlement has produced changes in the Centre which cannot be accurately measured. It is likely that, because of sustained over-stocking, the land today is both less smiling in its happiest mood and more severe in its unhappiest mood than it was before Europeans occupied it. At least, that is the strong impression one gains from a comparison of accounts by early settlers and explorers and accounts by more recent visitors, including observations

made by the author himself; and it is the very definite opinion of most old settlers and Aborigines residing in the Centre today.⁹ A few facts can be established: for example, plains once covered with mulga or saltbush are now bare,¹⁰ certain floral species have become extinct,¹¹ and the average annual rainfall, measured over thirty-year periods, has decreased in places by up to one inch¹² (though whether or not this is due to European settlement cannot, of course, be known); but it is impossible to measure most changes with any precision. It would be dangerous to rely too heavily on early accounts by men in a hurry who often looked at things through spectacles of

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9. Information gleaned on field-work; cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (Sonderdruck aus Festschrift für Ad. E. Jensen) Munich 1964, p.747. This opinion was held by some settlers as early as 1891 (Report of the Pastoral Lands Commission, together with the Minutes of Proceedings, Evidence, and Appendices (S.A.P.P. 33/91) pp. 115, 121, 130, 148; Port Aug. Desp. 17.2.99, p.2).
 10. Information gleaned on field-work; F.J. Gillen, Camp Jottings: a Modest Record of our Doings Day by Day (handwritten, S.A.A. 3432) entry for 22.4.1901; cf. R.A. Perry, 'Present and Potential Land Use of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. pp. 261-62 (but he seems to have made no attempt to ascertain the 'original' condition of the Centre).
 11. G.M. Chippendale. 'Check List of Central Australian Plants' in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. 82 (1959) p.323.
 12. Cf. Commonwealth of Aust. Meteorol. Br., op. cit. pp.25,26,47 with M.C.N.T. In 285/1906.

hope or personal fame. And even if the 'original' condition of the Centre could be accurately known, it would be difficult to know which of its more recent conditions to compare it with.

Only a rough accuracy, therefore, can be claimed for the following descriptive passages, which refer to the Centre before it was occupied by Europeans. They should be read with the above warning in mind and a constant awareness that Central Australia is a land of change.

Central Australia preserves some of the little water the heavens allot it in a variety of ways: on the surface in claypans, rockholes, and depressions in creek-beds; beneath the sands of seemingly dry watercourses; and even further below the surface in subterranean basins of impervious rock from which it sometimes wells up to form springs. Sub-artesian water, which is present throughout most of the Alice Springs District, has been described as 'more than adequate for likely pastoral development';¹³ but only in a few places was it readily accessible to Aborigines and pioneering Europeans. In a limestone belt which stretches north-west from Woodgreen Station and Tea Tree Well towards the Victoria River

13. N.O. Jones and T. Quinlan 'An Outline of the Water Resources of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. p.155.

District¹⁴ and in limestone country in the south-west, particularly on Erldunda Station, it is available a few feet beneath the surface. In most other places it can be tapped only at a depth of 50-100 feet or more. The Great Artesian Basin¹⁵ takes in the inhospitable south-eastern corner of the Centre, but since Aborigines did not tap it and Europeans had not even ascertained its existence by 1895, it need not concern us here. On Erldunda Station subterranean waters rise to the surface at Col^olatta Springs, and springs combine with rockholes and waterholes in numerous creeks and gorges to make the western MacDonnells and the sandstone ranges south of them the best watered country in the Centre. The eastern MacDonnells and the other mountain systems are not so well watered, but in their choicer parts pioneering cattle-men were able to form runs without making extensive improvements. In the Finke River basin south of the ranges in the days before subterranean supplies

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14. See, e.g., Charles Chewings, 'A Journey from Barrow Creek to the Victoria River' in The Geographical Journal (London) Vol. 76 (July-Dec. 1930) pp.317-38.
15. Its north-western margin may be represented by a line drawn in a rough arc from a point a little to the east of Charlotte Waters to the point at which the Tropic of Capricorn intersects the Northern Territory - Queensland border. See 'Simpson Desert Expedition, 1939 - Scientific Reports: Introduction, Narrative, Physiography and Meteorology, by C.T. Madigan,' (Map appended) in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. 69(1) (1945) pp.118-39.

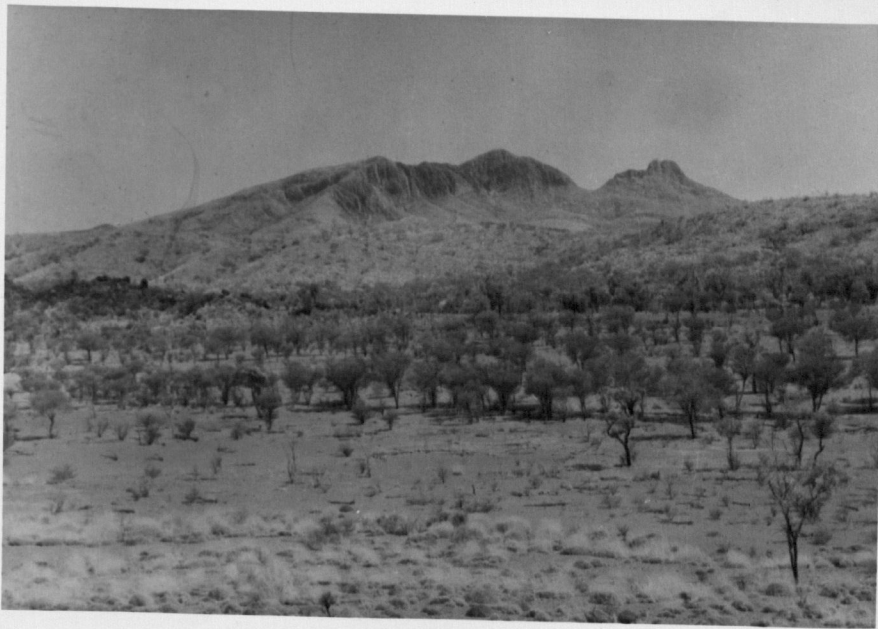


PLATE I

Mt. Sonder, MacDonnell Ranges



PLATE 2

Running Waters, Finke River

were tapped, the main sources of water supply were seasonal waterholes and soakages in creek beds. Water is available in soakages or soakage wells (which are holes dug in creek beds to tap water which seeps through the shallow alluvium of the beds and which, when they were dug by Aborigines, were referred to by Europeans as 'native wells') in most Central Australian creeks but nowhere last so long or occur so frequently as in the Finke (which Dr. Chewings once referred to as an 'underground river'¹⁶) and its major tributaries.¹⁷ Partly because rainfall undoubtedly decreases with distance east and west from the central ranges¹⁸ and partly because nature has failed to supply means for its storage, country removed from the ranges and the courses of the larger rivers is poorly watered and its exploitation by Europeans had to await the invention in the present century of more economical and efficient methods of tapping sub-artesian waters. Even today the more waterless and arid regions in the west, north-west, and south-east

16. The Adelaide Observer, 1882, Vol. 2, p.186.

17. The C.S.I.R.O. has located 139 natural surface waters in 'the settled country of the Alice Springs pastoral district' (144,000 square miles centering on Alice Springs). See R.A. Perry art. cit. in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. p.263 and accompanying map (C.S.I.R.O. Land Research Series No. 6: Pasture Lands of the Alice Springs Area).

18. No records for this country have been kept over the internationally recognized period of thirty years. Cf. Slatyer art. cit. in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. p.110.

(almost one-half of the Alice Springs District) are still unoccupied by Europeans. Occasional rockholes and clay-pans, however, made it possible for small groups of Aborigines to support themselves in most of this country.

Waters were sometimes as treacherous as mirages to the early settler, who had few ways of telling how long they might last. He did not know the likely annual rainfall nor could he tell how much water might be lost through seepage or evaporation. If he was lucky, a friendly Aboriginal might supply him with a hazy notion of when a water was likely to 'tumble down' in 'normal' circumstances, but he could only guess at its life-span if he put cattle on it. Explorers often judged waters to be permanent only to be proved wrong by the bitter experience of those who followed, and sometimes the cattleman himself made disastrously erroneous estimates. It took decades to establish that the only permanent surface waters in the Centre under the conditions of European settlement are Coolatta Springs and a few waterholes and springs on the middle Finke and in the MacDonnell, James and Davenport Ranges.

Most of the flora and fauna of this region is shared by other parts of inland Australia. The few new specimens discovered by explorers and early settlers, however, - the stately palm of Palm Valley (Livistonia Mariae), a unique species of the mop-haired grass-tree (Xanthorroea

Thorntonii), Stuart's beantree with its bright red flowers and seeds, the colourful Princess Alexandra parakeet, various pouched rodents, and so on - and travellers' reports of fertile havens in the ranges were sufficient to entice botanists and zoologists, whose chief interest everywhere at the time was in origins, into hoping that the Centre might still be supporting a rich flora and fauna of by-gone ages. In 1894 the Horn Scientific Expedition set out from Adelaide in the hope that it would 'find these central ranges of the continent an oasis in which had been preserved relics elsewhere lost of a more or less primitive fauna and flora' but was soon 'completely disillusioned'.¹⁹

The total number of known floral species in the Centre in 1946 was 683, in 1958 (including naturalized plants) 1101 - not a great number considering the size of the country.²⁰ On the whole the Centre is a land of acacia shrubs, of which the mulga is by far the most common, though the hardier mallee sometimes predominates in the more arid country. Rows of river-gums usually mark the course of creeks and the ghost-gum is sometimes to be seen gleaming on flats and flood-outs. In sandy country the melancholy ironwood is often met with, and among the sandhills the

19. W.B. Spencer (Ed.) Report on the Work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia, (London 1896) Part I, p.66.

20. G.M. Chippendale, art cit., pp.322-4; cf. R.A. Perry and M. Lazarides, 'Vegetation of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. p.208.

desert oak and spinifex, some varieties of which are edible for stock, are the most common form of vegetation. Patches of saltbush and bluebush are to be seen in the central ranges and in the country adjoining them; but the early settlers, who had scarcely learnt the value of these hardy perennials in South Australia proper and who did not yet know that edible acacia shrubs are one of the Centre's greatest pastoral assets, were mostly interested in grass. The Centre is poor in species of grass, but in the choicer areas there are sufficient species sufficiently prolific to form, together with wildflowers, succulents and other herbage, a lush carpet of greenery after rain. South of the MacDonnell Ranges perhaps the most valuable of these smaller plants are the parakeelyas (Calandrinia spp.) whose bright mauve flowers gladden the sandhills and whose juicy leaves enable livestock not only to survive but also to multiply and grow fat in waterless country. Another succulent, popularly known as 'munyeroo' (a species of Claytonia), which also has excellent fattening properties, grows along the banks of most Central Australian water-courses.²¹ The wild-life population of the Centre fluctuates largely in keeping with the seasons, making the

21. For a more detailed assessment of the pastures of the Centre see R.A. Perry 'Natural Pastures of the Alice Springs Area' and art. cit. in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. pp. 240-57, 260-2.

country a land of feast and famine for Aborigines. After rain all manner of bird and animal life seems to appear from nowhere, and one might see a hillside heaving with kangaroos or a green glade in morning or afternoon sunlight glinting with the wing-tips of budgerigars. But it is doubtful whether the scenes witnessed in a good season by men who constructed the overland telegraph - a flock of pigeons which covered two acres when it alighted feather to feather, seventy or eighty emus watering at a lagoon, or a large plain occupied by an army of jerboa-rats²² - will ever again be seen unless Europeans abandon the Centre.

The proliferation of vegetation and wild-life after rain often leads Europeans to believe that Central Australian soils are fabulously rich. All that the soil needs, they argue (believing their eyes), is water and it will 'grow anything'. Dam the gorges in the ranges or tap the sub-artesian basin and irrigate on a large scale and Central Australia would become a land of market gardens and farms.²³ In fact, however, the soils are generally

22. Diary of John Ross, Overland Telegraph Survey Expedition, 1870-1871 (S.A.A.34), entry for 19.9.1870; A.T. Woods, Report on Section D (of the Overland Telegraph), 18.10.72 (S.A.A.140/14). Cf. W.B. Spencer (Ed.) op.cit. Part I, p.144; A.C. Ashwin, 'From South Australia to Port Darwin with Sheep and Horses' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. Vol. 32 (1930-31) p.55.

23. Cf. C.T. Madigan, Central Australia, (O.U.P., 1936) p.104; Port Augusta Despatch, 15.6.1894; S.A.P.D. 18.7.1889, col. 276; Report of the Northern Territory Commission; Together with Minutes of Proceedings, Evidence, and Appendices (S.A.P.P. 19/1895) p.86; Adel. Advertiser 15.7.87.

poor.²⁴ That they produce a wilderness of greenery after rain is largely due to the fact that they lie fallow in most other seasons. When intensively cultivated they rapidly become exhausted.

The known mineral resources of the Centre are on the whole small. Where large deposits of a mineral exist they are, with one exception, as yet incapable of being economically exploited. The exception is Tennant Creek, where large deposits of gold and copper were so well camouflaged that they were not discovered until the 1930's. Geologists have ascertained the existence of millions of tons of low-grade copper ore in the south-west, but no attempt has yet been made to exploit it. Some copper has been mined in the Jervois Range, but the deposits there are small. Good quality mica exists in fairly large quantities (no accurate figures on the size of the reserves are available) in the Harts Range, but its exploitation has on the whole proved uneconomical, and, with the increasing substitution of synthetic materials for mica in industry, is likely to remain uneconomical. Small deposits of wolfram in the Davenport Ranges and near the Treuer Range have been tapped only at times when this mineral was in exceptional

24. G.A. Stewart and R.A. Perry 'Introduction and Summary Description of the Alice Springs Area' and W.H. Litchfield, 'Soils of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. pp.13, 185-207.

demand. An uninformed visitor to the Centre, however, might easily conclude that its mineral potential is great. Quartz gleams in many places in the central ranges and north of them, millions of specks of mica glint in the sunlight among the hills, and creekbeds are sometimes littered with stones of many hues and apparent value. To early Europeans, even the experts in geology among them, the Centre gave promise of vast exploitable mineral wealth. Time alone was able to prove the promise false.²⁵

Of all the new environments occupied by Europeans in the nineteenth century, then, Central Australia must have been one of the most bewildering. It was capable of tricking the newcomer into believing that bountiful seasons were normal, whereas in fact they were exceptional; that permanent waterholes were many, whereas in fact they were few; that its soils were rich, whereas in fact they were poor; that its mineral wealth was great, whereas in fact it was small. The deceitfulness and fickleness of the Central Australian environment has left an indelible imprint on the history of its settlement by Europeans. The hopes and fortunes of settlers fluctuated largely in keeping with it. It, ^{often} induced them to risk their all in a new country only to be mercilessly broken. But having

25. See Chapter 6 (below) and G.R. Ryan, 'The Mineral Deposits of the Alice Springs Area' in C.S.I.R.O. op. cit. pp. 147-9.

broken them, the Centre did not always loose the spell it had cast over them. The cattleman remembered a time when his stock had been 'mud-fat' and multiplying along the watercourses, the prospector saw again the numerous 'colours' he had washed in numerous gullies; both sometimes persevered. The Centre fascinated men, allowing none to know what it was really like and all to know only that it changed in time and space and that they had to adapt themselves to its whims if they wished to survive.

ABORIGINES

Introductory

Long before Europeans first invaded the land, Aborigines had evolved a way of life admirably suited to the Central Australian environment. Their attitude to nature was in striking contrast to that of the invaders: Europeans stood above nature, as it were, wrested a living from it, and hoped to control or change it to suit their needs; Aborigines regarded themselves as part of it, moved with it in its many moods, and entertained no hopes of changing it. Their religion was designed in part to ensure the status quo in nature, their social system to ensure their survival in these conditions. How they accomplished a nice adaptation to their environment is not known. It may be assumed, however, that it was the result of a long journey of trial and error in the quest for

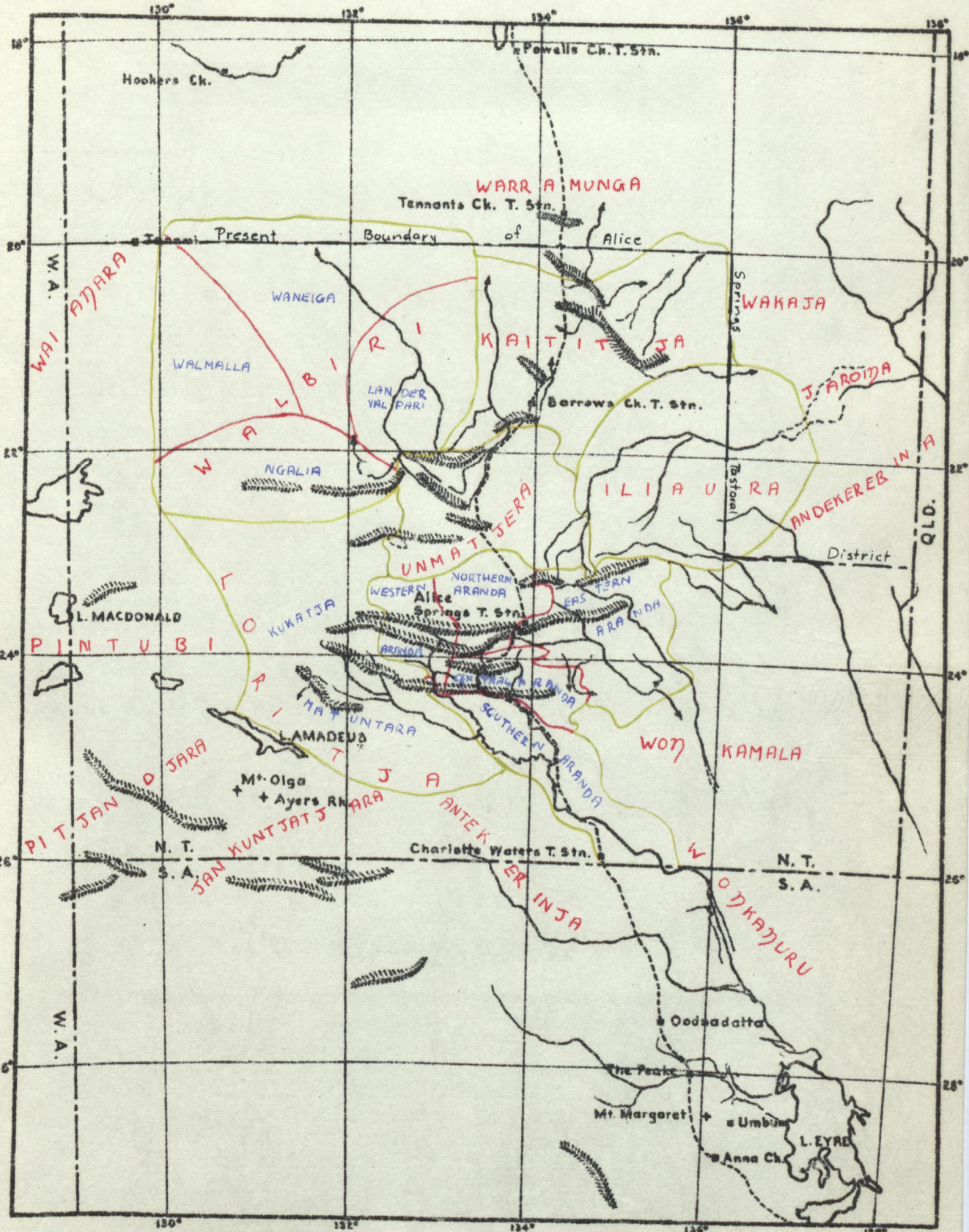
survival. Before the nineteenth century was out Aborigines were to see Europeans, with their immensely superior technology, themselves set out upon such a journey and abandon, temporarily, any hopes of mastering nature in the Centre.

There are seven Aboriginal tribes (Aranda, Unmatjera,²⁶ Loritja, Iliaura, Kaititja, Walbiri, and Wonkamala) whose territories lie wholly or almost wholly within the Alice Springs District. Since European settlement up to 1895 occurred only within the territories of the first five of these, this study will be little concerned with the Walbiri and Wonkamala or with the tribes the smaller parts of whose territories lie within the Centre. And because settlement

26. I refer to the Unmatjera as a 'tribe' with some misgivings. Strehlow regards the language spoken by the Unmatjera as a dialect of the Aranda language (Aranda Phonetics and Grammar, p.55) but elsewhere refers to the Unmatjera as a 'tribe'. (Aranda Traditions, p.53; cf. Norman B. Tindale, 'Distribution of Australian Aboriginal Tribes: A Field Summary' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. Vol.64 (1940) p.186). Meggitt (op. cit., p.40) refers to the Unmatjera as a tribe and notes that 'Some western and north-western Walbiri would question the description of the Yanmadjari [*i.e.*, Unmatjera] as a separate tribe, asserting instead that they are really a Walbiri community whose language has been contaminated by contact with the Aranda. But the Lander Walbiri, who probably know the Yanmadjari best, consider them to be a distinct tribe.' Unlike the Aranda, Loritja and Walbiri people the Unmatjera are not divided into communities. With the Unmatjera the tribe (if we are to call it such) is the community. And it is probable that this is also the case with the Iliaura and Kaititja.

I. MAP OF THE ALICE SPRINGS DISTRICT

Showing Approximate Boundaries of Aboriginal Tribes and Communities
Tribal boundaries ——— Community boundaries ———



After N.B. Tindale (1940), T.G.H. Strehlow (1947 & 1965), M.J. Meggitt (1962)

occurred chiefly within the territory of the Aranda, its chief concern will be with that tribe.

To describe the culture and social structure of each of these four tribes separately and adequately is an impossible task if only because space will not permit it here. A further reason is that little detailed information about the Unmatjera, Kaititja and Iliaura is available. Fortunately, their cultures, insofar as they are known, are similar in most important respects to those of the Aranda and Loritja, so that remarks concerning one are often true of the others.²⁷ The passages ~~that~~ follow, therefore, which are based chiefly upon studies of the Aranda, may be taken to apply (unless contrary indication is given) also to the Unmatjera, Loritja, Iliaura, and Kaititja. It must be emphasised, however, that this is a device adopted for convenience only: there are many differences between the tribes (only the most important of which are indicated) and between the communities and groups within each tribe.²⁸

The Aranda is fortunately one of the best known tribes in the Centre, perhaps in Australia.²⁹ Certainly, it has

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27. Cf. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, The Northern Tribes of Central Australia (London, 1904) pp.1-2.
28. See especially T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions (Melbourne, 1947) p.1 and Chapter 2 (passim).
29. Cf. ibid p.47; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Phonetics and Grammar (Oceania Monograph No. 7) p.55. Thanks to M.J. Meggitt's Desert People (Sydney, 1962) the Walbiri may now be said to rival the Aranda in this respect. Of the tribes beyond the Centre its closest rivals are the tribes of Arnhem Land (cf. M.J. Meggitt op. cit. p.xv).

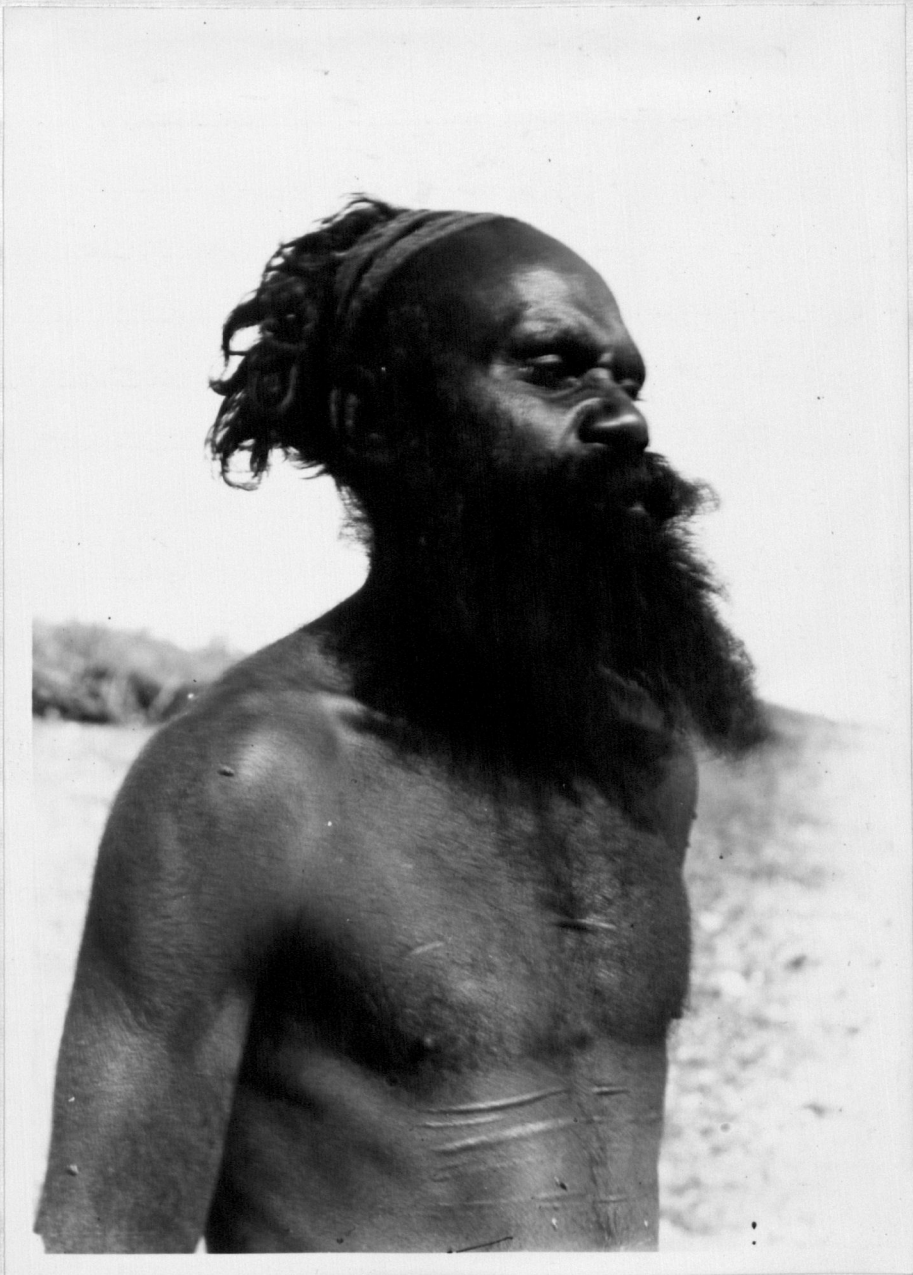


PLATE 3

'Type of Arunta Native, Eastern MacDonnell Ranges'

Photo: F.J. Gillen

By courtesy S. A. Museum

been longer studied than any other tribe in the Centre and than most others in Australia. This situation is due to the position occupied by the Aranda in relation to the advance of European settlement, to the decision in the seventies of Lutherans in South Australia to establish a mission near the headquarters of the Finke River, and to a chance meeting at Alice Springs in the nineties of a telegraph official interested in Aboriginal lore (F.J.Gillen) with a brilliant zoologist from Melbourne (Baldwin Spencer). From the 1870's to the present day the Aranda have been studied almost without interruption. Telegraph officials were the first observers in the field to commit their observations to paper.³⁰ Missionaries H. Kempe and L. Schulze made more systematic studies of the Western Aranda during 1877-91. From 1896 Spencer and Gillen, and then Spencer alone, published five books and numerous articles dealing with the Aranda and neighbouring tribes. Their work made the Aranda internationally famous, but attracted only one 'anthropologist' (E. Eylmann 1896-1898) to the field from overseas. Missionary Carl Strehlow made a systematic study of the Western Aranda and Loritja from 1895 to 1922, and his son, T.G.H. Strehlow, has been engaged in research into Aranda culture and society since

30. See George Taplin (Ed.), Manners, Customs, and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines (Adelaide, 1879) pp.89-92.

the early 1930's.³¹ All of these writers, however, (as M.J. Meggitt has put it) 'were chiefly concerned to describe Aboriginal cultures, in particular, totemic ritual and religious belief, rather than to analyse social organization and structure in any systematic fashion....As a result, the structure of Central Australian society is still imperfectly understood.'³² Strehlow insists that the great mass of unpublished data, particularly genealogical records, collected by himself and his father will lead to a fairly full understanding of Aranda social structure, but Meggitt is of the opinion that the sort of information required for such an understanding is unobtainable.³³ Whichever is the correct view, any attempt to give an account of Aranda social structure at present must have serious shortcomings.

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31. For a select list of the works of these authors, see the bibliography appended.
32. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit. pp.xv-xvi. Cf. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, The Social Organisation of Australian Tribes (Oceania Monograph No. 1, reprinted from Oceania April, June, Sept. & Dec. 1930) pp.74-77. T.G.H. Strehlow's 'Culture, Social Structure, and Environment in Aboriginal Central Australia' (in Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt (Ed.) Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A.P. Elkin (Sydney 1965) pp.121-45) appeared after this chapter had been written. I have, however, included some references to it in the pages which follow.
33. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Australian Aboriginal Studies: A Symposium of Papers Presented at the 1961 Research Conference (Melbourne, 1963) pp. 211-17, 225.

This situation, it could be argued, makes the task I have set myself in some respects an impossible one. I could only reply that more than nothing is known about Aranda social structure and that I consider it the historian's duty to make the utmost use of the information available to him: a tentative account of Aranda social structure and of the effects of European settlement upon it is better than none at all.

Population

The Aboriginal population of the Centre before the advent of Europeans can be only roughly estimated from accounts by early observers, from a comparison with estimates made for country approximately similar to the Centre and from the present population.³⁴ Using these methods Meggitt has estimated that the original Walbiri population was about 1,000 (1 person per 35 square miles) and the original Aranda population 'probably...fewer than 2,000' (1 person per 12-15 square miles).³⁵ It is probable that about two-fifths of the Centre is capable

34. In the case of the Aranda this situation will probably be greatly remedied when the genealogical records compiled by Strehlow become available. There were (inevitably) no adequate censuses of Central Australian Aborigines before 1895.

35. Op. cit., p.32.

of supporting the same number of Aborigines per square mile as Walbiri territory, that another two-fifths is equal to Aranda territory in this respect, and that the remaining one-fifth is capable of supporting no more than one person per 100 square miles. The original population of the Centre may therefore be deduced as follows:

Table 1: Aboriginal Population

Area	Area capable of supporting one Aboriginal	Total No. of Aborigines
88,000 sq. mls.	35 sq.mls.	2,514
88,000 sq.mls.	15 sq.mls.	5,867
44,000 sq.mls.	100 sq.mls.	440
220,000 sq.mls.		8,821

There a number of reasons, however, for supposing that this estimate is conservative. Meggitt found that the Walbiri population in 1954 was about 1,400³⁶ and the Register of Wards for 1957 lists 1,648 Walbiri.³⁷ If, therefore, the

36. Op. cit., p.31.

37. Northern Territory of Australia, Register of Wards (1957) in Northern Territory of Australia Government Gazette No. 19B (13th May, 1957). Anthropologists do not regard the Register as particularly accurate, but most would probably agree that it is sufficiently accurate for the purposes for which I use it here and in the following pages.

Walbiri numbered 1,000 before 1928, when their "splendid isolation"³⁸ came to an end, their numbers must have increased by 400-600 in less than thirty years. This is difficult to believe. Meggitt refers to 'the high birth-rate, improved diet and extended medical services'³⁹ which affected the Walbiri during the decade after World War II, but says nothing about the factors which adversely affected Walbiri population in the two preceding decades. Perhaps, as T.G.H. Strehlow has stated in another context, Meggitt's 'inadequate historical sources have led him to make insufficient allowance for...disruptive forces'.⁴⁰ Among the factors which Meggitt may not have allowed for are drought, disease, and punitive expeditions by Europeans.⁴¹ In the 1920's Europeans with cattle occupied the choicer parts of Walbiri territory and during one of the worst droughts in the Centre's history (1926-1929) and lesser droughts which followed, it is probable that the Walbiri survival rate was adversely affected by malnutrition. European diseases are

38. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Men without Leaders' (A review of M.J. Meggitt's Desert People) in Nation 12.1.1963 p.22. Cf. M.C. Hartwig The Coniston Killings (unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis, Adelaide 1960) p.11.

39. Op. cit. pp.31-32.

40. 'Men without Leaders', loc. cit., p.23.

41. Meggitt mentions the first and last of these factors at pp.24-25 in op. cit., but he does not relate them to his subsequent discussion of Walbiri population.

almost certain to have taken a toll on Walbiri population from about the turn of the century, when gold was discovered at the Granites, and especially from the early 1920's;⁴² and it is unlikely that the Walbiri escaped the smallpox epidemic which raged through the Centre in the 1860's or 1870's. Furthermore, upwards of 100 Walbiri were probably killed by European ^{punitive} expeditions after the slaying of Brookes at Cockatoo Creek in 1928 and by lesser expeditions in the 1930's.⁴³ It is doubtful, therefore, whether Walbiri population in 1954 or 1957 was much in excess of their population in 1928. A more realistic estimate of their original population would seem to be 1 person to every 25-30 square miles.

Similarly, Meggitt's estimate of the original Aranda population is probably conservative. Spencer in 1927 expressed the opinion that the Aranda numbered 'at least 2,000.'⁴⁴ in the 1890's. The early Hermannsburg missionaries estimated the original Western Aranda population to be 500 (1 person per 8 or fewer square miles) and there were

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42. Meggitt (personal communication since the above was written) has concluded from a perusal of some Walbiri genealogies that the toll was slight. Only further research can resolve this question.
43. M.C. Hartwig, op. cit. Chapter I (passim), p.79. Re the smallpox epidemic, see p.30 (below).
44. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, The Arunta: a Study of a Stone-Age People (London, 1927), p.1.

probably some Western Aranda in the north of the MacDonnell Ranges that they did not take into account.⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is probable that Meggitt underestimated the changes produced on the Central Australian environment by European settlement. Certainly, earlier observers (Spencer and Gillen and T.G.H. Strehlow, for example) have been much more liberal in their estimates of the capacity of Aranda territory to support Aborigines.⁴⁶

In 1957 there were some 4,656 Aborigines of Central Australian origin living in the Centre and some 447 living elsewhere in the Northern Territory, making a total of 5,103.⁴⁷ In view of the known heavy toll taken from 1870 to the 1940's by disease, malnutrition and an unbalanced

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45. H. Kempe, 'Die Mission in Central-Australien' in Hermannsburger Missionsblatt 11/80, p.200; The South Australian Register, 10.8.1901, p.9. T.G.H. Strehlow, (art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit., p.145) has suggested since I wrote the above that 1,000 sq. mls. of Aranda territory originally supported 'an... average of two hundred natives or even more' (1 person per 5 or fewer square miles).
46. Compare M.J. Meggitt op. cit., p.32; Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies op. cit., pp.248,254; T.G.H. Strehlow op. cit. pp.49-51, 59-61; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen op. cit. (1927) p.9. Cleland and Tindale stated in 1936 that the Southern Aranda numbered 600 in 1870 but omitted to say how they arrived at this figure (See J.B. Cleland and N.B. Tindale, 'The Natives of South Australia' in The Centenary History of South Australia (Adelaide 1936) p.23).
47. Northern Territory of Australia, Register of Wards (1957). The figures are inclusive of most part-Aborigines.

diet, shootings and possibly other factors on the populations of tribes whose territories were invaded by Europeans, it would be surprising if this figure represented more than half of the original population. An account of the operation of these factors until 1895 will be found in the pages which follow.⁴⁸ Here it is relevant to mention, however, a smallpox epidemic which, introduced at Port Jackson in 1789, swept through the Centre probably in the early 1870's or late 1860's. Evidence for this epidemic is scanty but convincing. Tietkens and Giles in 1873 found Aborigines in the Rawlinson Ranges bearing the marks of smallpox,⁴⁹ and Giles in a letter to Curr later alleged that he had met Aborigines pitted by the disease in almost every part of the continent in which he had travelled.⁵⁰ In 1891 L. Schulze of Hermannsburg Mission

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48. For some indication of their operation after 1895 see M.C.N.T. In 150/96, 137/97, 150/98, 110/99, 98/01, 155/02, 196/06, 60/09; Chap. 4, op. (below); S.A.P.P. 17/99, p.96; Spencer and Gillen op. cit. (1927) pp.7-8; T.G.H. Strehlow, Dark and White Australians (Melbourne 1957) p.32; —, art. cit. in R.M. & C.H. Berndt (Ed.) op. cit., p.145.
49. W.H. Tietkens, 'Smallpox and Australian Aborigines' in Transactions and Proceedings and Report of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. V (1881-2) pp.112-113.
50. Edward M. Curr, The Australian Race: Its Origins, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia and the Routes by which it Spread Itself over the Continent (4 volumes, Melbourne, 1886 and 1887) Vol. I, p.209.

wrote that scars on the faces of some Aborigines afforded evidence that smallpox had affected them some 16-18 years previously.⁵¹ Carl Strehlow, who arrived at Hermannsburg in 1894, wrote in 1915 that 'According to the Aborigines many men were laid low by this disease; on some of them the pock-marks are still to be seen.'⁵² In view of this statement and the absence of evidence to the contrary, there seems no reason to believe that the effects of the epidemic upon Central Australian Aborigines were insignificant or much less drastic than those recorded in other parts of Australia.⁵³ Another reason for believing that the figure 5,103 represents scarcely more than one half of the original population is that estimates as conservative as Meggitt's of the original populations of some individual tribes suggest that they were double or more

51. Rev. Louis Schulze, 'The Aborigines of the Upper and Middle Finke River: Their Habits and Customs, with Introductory Notes on the Physical and Natural History Features of the Country' in Transactions and Report of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. XIV, Part II (1891) p.218.

52. Carl Strehlow, Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1907-1920), Part IV(II) p.30. See also E. Eylmann, Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Südastralien (Berlin, 1908) p.440.

53. Re smallpox and Australian Aborigines generally see J. Burton Cleland, 'Disease Amongst the Australian Aborigines' in The Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Vol. XXXI No. 5, pp.54-55, 67; Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, op. cit. p.378.

than double the actual populations in 1957. Thus, if there was one Aranda per 12-15 square miles the Aranda originally numbered about 2,000; in 1957 they numbered 966. If there was one Loritja per 25 square miles the Loritja originally numbered over 1,000; in 1957 they numbered 418. The Kaititja numbered 245 in 1957 though they originally numbered probably 600; the Iliaura numbered 70 though their original numbers were probably 600-800.⁵⁴

It would seem, therefore, that the original Aboriginal population of the Centre was certainly no smaller than 8,000, that it was probably at least 10,000, and that it may have been larger.

The Tribe

The tribe is a loose concept amongst Central Australian Aborigines and not the most important organizational unit. The most precise definition which can be given for it is that it is a group of Aborigines who regard themselves as one people, who speak a language peculiar to themselves, who live in a well-defined territory and who know themselves, or are known, by a

54. Northern Territory of Australia, Register of Wards (1957).

distinct name.⁵⁵ Some anthropologists would add that its members have common customs, laws, rites and beliefs which often differ from those of neighbouring tribes, but in the Centre there is sometimes as much cultural variation within the tribe as among the tribes.⁵⁶

Though each tribe has its own peculiar language, most tribesmen are bi-lingual or multi-lingual and most Central Australian Aborigines can make themselves understood to one another - a fact which proved important for explorers and bushmen using guides or police using 'black-trackers'. The languages are adequate for the purposes of Aborigines uncontacted by Europeans and in the mouth of a skilled speaker capable of considerable subtlety and beauty of expression, but a virtual absence of abstract nouns, a plethora of concrete nouns, and a bewildering

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55. T.G.H. Strehlow, The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies (Melbourne, 1956), p.15; ———, Aranda Traditions, p.1 and Chapter 2 (passim); Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, The World of the First Australians: An Introduction to the Traditional Life of the Australian Aborigines (Chicago, 1964) pp.28, 34-39; J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines' in A.L. McLeod (Ed.), The Pattern of Australian Culture (New York, 1963), p.446; A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them (Sydney, 1961 - second edition) pp.24-44; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit. p. 242; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen op. cit. (1904) pp.10-13.
56. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, Chapter 2 (passim). Cf. Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., p.36.

wealth of verbal forms and inflexions⁵⁷ made the task of anyone trying to learn them difficult and ensured the early adoption of pidgin-English by settlers.

The fact that marriage usually takes place within the tribe and that all members of a tribe are related to one another by actual or implied genealogy is sometimes cited as a distinguishing feature of tribes; but, on the one hand, this is also largely true of the communities within the tribe, and, on the other, marriage sometimes takes place beyond the tribe and the classificatory kinship system extends beyond the borders of a tribe.⁵⁸

All the tribes are mildly ethnocentric. Every Aranda is proud to be a member of his tribe and adopts a patronizing attitude to members of other tribes. Though he knows little more than the names and approximate locations of outlying tribes he often imputes cannibalism, infanticide and other practices he deems disgusting to them - a habit which sometimes caused bushmen and explorers to ride out

57. See especially T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Phonetics and Grammar (Oceania Monograph No. 7) pp.56,62-64,105.

58. T.G.H. Strehlow, op. cit., pp.61-62; A.P. Elkin, op. cit., p.24; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., pp.37-38; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.56-57, 35-41, 83; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, op. cit., p.6.

from Aranda territory in needless trepidation.⁵⁹ Tribal ethnocentrism is offset, however, by ethnocentrism in the 'communities' within the tribes: it does not prevent the Northern Aranda, for example, from feeling superior to the Western and Southern Aranda.⁶⁰ More important than the mildness of tribal ethnocentrism for the history of the settlement of Central Australia by Europeans is the absence of a central political or military organization within the tribe.⁶¹ Had such organization existed, the history of European settlement in a country in which Aborigines always far outnumbered Europeans might have been rather different.

59. Ernest Giles, Australia Twice Traversed: The Romance of Exploration etc. (London, 1889) Vol. I, p.8; Louis Schulze, art. cit., p.234; W.B. Spencer, Wanderings in Wild Australia (London, 1928) p.203; Geo. Taplin (Ed.) op. cit., p.91; The South Australian Register, 10.8.1901, p.9. Cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, Dark and White Australians (Melbourne, 1957) p.6 (footnote). Though the Aborigines were no cannibals they did practise infanticide upon rare occasions (W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, The Native Tribes of Central Australia (London, 1899) pp.51-52).

60. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, p.52. Cf. ibid pp.72,74,82; M.J. Meggitt op. cit., p.49.

61. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, Chapter 2, passim; Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, op. cit., pp.248-9; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen op. cit., (1904) pp.20-21; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.242-5; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., p.38.

Because tribes are little more than linguistic units it is impossible to talk about 'inter-tribal relations'. Inter-tribal warfare does not exist, nor are there contacts between tribes as units on any other level. One may properly talk only about 'inter-community and inter-group relations'. Thus the Western Aranda are friendly towards the (Loritja) Matuntara (but not towards the Kukatja, another community of the Loritja), while most other Aranda communities regard the Loritja with hostility;⁶² and though relations between the Northern Aranda and Eastern Aranda are generally friendly, the members of the 'local group' at Ilbalintja in Northern Aranda territory regard the men of Ndolya [Undoolya Station] in Eastern Aranda territory 'as their hereditary enemies', and 'inter-group feuds [are] carried on in unbroken succession, fights and raids and reprisals following upon each other in wearisome monotony.'⁶³ Both tribal and community ethnocentrism are important for an understanding of the behaviour of police trackers and the 'boys' of European settlers towards other Aborigines.

62. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.52,62.

63. Ibid p.52. Cf. A.P. Elkin, op. cit., p.29; W.B.Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1899), p.489; Carl Strehlow, op. cit. Part IV(II) pp.24-25.

Local Organization

Anthropologists are unable to agree about the local organization of Central Australian Aborigines.⁶⁴ Some assert that the most important organizational unit is the 'community' (for example, the Western Aranda, Northern Aranda, and so on), others that it is the smaller 'local group' or 'horde' or 'clan'. Spencer and Gillen make only passing reference to local organization in their works, but it is clear that they regard the local group (or the 'local totemic group', as they sometimes call it) as the most important unit. Many of their statements concerning the local group are vague and even contradictory, but it appears that they ascribe the following characteristics to it: it owns a certain area of land (from one to about one hundred square miles), the boundaries of which are known; it is composed largely, but not entirely, of persons of one totem, from which it takes its name; the number of its members ranges from one to about forty and most of them belong to a pair of 'subsections' which stand in a father-son relationship to one another; its members spend most of their time,

64. Or, indeed, of Australian Aborigines. Two important articles which deal (among other things) with this subject (T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Culture, Social Structure and Environment in Aboriginal Central Australia' (loc. cit.) and W.E.H. Stanner, 'Aboriginal Territorial Organization: Estate, Range, Domain and Regime' in Oceania Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (Sept. 1965) appeared too late to be taken into account in the writing of this chapter.

though not all, on the land which they own; it has a headman with vague powers; and (by implication) it is independent and autonomous, managing its own affairs and acting as a unit in relation to other groups. These authors recognize the existence of the community, referring to it as a 'geographical group', but ascribe no important characteristics to it.⁶⁵ Carl Strehlow had even less to say about local organization: the local group is composed of members of one pair of sub-sections, its members own the country they occupy, and they are governed by a headman and the old men among them.⁶⁶

In 1910 G.C. Wheeler made a survey of the data available on the local organization of Australian Aborigines in general and concluded that the land-owning and most important unit among them is the local group.⁶⁷ In 1930 A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, having investigated the matter more thoroughly, came to a similar conclusion: the horde is 'the important local group throughout Australia'. Children

65. F.J. Gillen, 'The Natives of Central Australia' (1898) in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs., Vol. IV (1898-9 to 1900-01), pp.18-19; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, The Native Tribes of Central Australia (London, 1899) pp.8-11; _____, Across Australia (London, 1912) pp.198, 232, 233, 255, 256; _____, The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People (London, 1927) pp.8,9,62-65.

66. Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part IV(II) (1915) pp.1,2.

67. L.R. Hiatt, 'Local Organization Among the Australian Aborigines' in Oceania Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (June 1962) p.267.

belong to the same horde as their fathers and women usually marry outside, so that the membership of the horde at any moment consists of the males and unmarried females who are members by birth and the wives of male members. The horde owns a certain area of land with known boundaries, within which a number of totemic centres are usually to be found, and it is normally independent and autonomous, managing its own affairs and acting as a unit in relation to other hordes.⁶⁸

This account of local organization gained wide acceptance and was not questioned until quite recently. Meanwhile, T.G.H. Strehlow had begun working among the Aranda. Probably because he is not explicitly concerned with local organization, his account of it is somewhat confusing. He seems to recognize two units of local organization, the 'sub-group' (Western Aranda, Northern Aranda, and so on) and the 'local group', but the distinction between them is not always clear. In 1934 he wrote that 'every large Central Australian tribe...is split up into a great number of smaller groups and sub-groups, all [*my italics*] of which are almost independent, self-contained units'; and later, in a context which definitely

68. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, The Social Organization of Australian Tribes (Oceania Monograph No. 1, reprinted from Oceania April, June, Sept. & Dec. 1930) pp.4,5, 30; L.R. Hiatt, art. cit. p.267.

suggests that his words are meant to apply to both local groups and sub-groups, 'They are almost completely independent tribal units.'⁶⁹ But though in 1934 he did not draw a clear distinction between the local group and the sub-group, he supplied a fairly clear picture of the local group itself: 'The territories occupied by the various Aranda groups are accordingly divided up into a large number of smaller areas occupied by local totemic clans [i.e., local groups]. The centre of each district is the local pmara kutata, and its totem supplies a suitable name for the clan in question. Members of the clan belong almost entirely to two classes standing in a father-son relation to one another...The local totemic clan...is the powerful agent through whose efforts the myths, chants, ceremonies, and general traditions of each subdivision of an Aranda group are preserved...The leadership of the totemic clan is in the hands of the old men'.⁷⁰ In 1961, moreover, he did draw a clear distinction between the local group and the sub-group: 'They [the Aranda-speaking people] were divided into tribal subgroups, and those parts where there were consistent marriage relationships developed their own local dialects. But these subgroups - the

69. Aranda Traditions, pp.1,51. This book was written in 1934 and published in 1947.

70. Ibid, pp.142-5.

Western Aranda, the Northern Aranda and so on - still did not constitute single political units. They were split up again into section areas, each of which normally had two subsections which stood in father-son relation to one another; and these formed the local group which was, in fact, autonomous....all the religious practices were tied up with the whole organization of the local group, and with the local system of authority.'⁷¹ Strehlow clearly favours, for the most part, Spencer's and Gillen's and Radcliffe-Brown's interpretation of local organization. He has elsewhere made it clear, however, that in certain seasons the local groups comprising each sub-group wandered over the whole of the territory of the sub-group gathering food.⁷²

In 1950 A.P. Elkin questioned the universality in Australia of local organization as defined by Radcliffe-Brown.⁷³ In 1953-55 M.J. Meggitt carried out a detailed investigation into the social structure of the Walbiri people, the results of which were published in 1962.⁷⁴

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71. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, op. cit., p.249. Strehlow has elaborated this statement in art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit. He normally uses the terms 'kin-group class' or 'class' (for subsection') and 'njinana section' (for 'section'). Cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies (Melbourne, 1956) p.11.
72. Aranda Traditions, pp.49-62,71; Cf. L.R. Hiatt, art. cit., p.271.
73. L.R. Hiatt, art. cit., p.268.
74. Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia. Sydney, 1962.

He argued convincingly that many of the characteristics ascribed by Radcliffe-Brown and others to the local group can properly be ascribed only to the community among the Walbiri: 'Its membership was relatively stable within more or less permanent territorial boundaries; male members were generally born into the community, whereas many female members were recruited by marriage from other countries; it had a legitimate title to its domain or country, the resources of which it exploited (often co-operatively); it had custody of totemic sites within its territory;....it was in many respects the maximal political entity.'⁷⁵ Furthermore, he concluded that totemic sites ('small named countries') among the Walbiri 'were not the domains of patrilineal and patrilocal hordes. They were, and are still, foci of religious reference'.⁷⁶ By comparing these findings with 'incidental remarks in the early accounts [by Spencer and Gillen] of the Aranda and Warramunga' he concluded that, 'although the two peoples in some respects differed culturally from the Walbiri, all three societies were structurally similar'; and suggested that 'a detailed analysis of Walbiri society ...may provide reference points that will facilitate the placing of the central tribes in an over-all comparative framework.'⁷⁷ And at the 1961 Conference on Aboriginal

75. Ibid, p.51.

76. Ibid, p.64.

77. Ibid, p.xvi.

Studies in Canberra he suggested that 'Perhaps there was a confusion somewhere' in the work of Spencer and Gillen and T.G.H. Strehlow bearing on local organization among the Aranda 'between spiritual and ritual local references and residential arrangements': he 'could not see...how the people within the local group' as described by Spencer and Gillen 'could get all their sustenance from the limited territory to which they were supposed to confine themselves.'⁷⁸

L.R. Hiatt made a survey in 1962 of all available literature on local organization among Australian Aborigines and concluded that 'it is important to distinguish two kinds of relationship between people and land - ritual relationships and economic relationships' and that there was considerable evidence to suggest 'that the totemic sites of many patrilineal descent groups were not enclosed by territorial boundaries; that the usual common residence groups in many areas were communities that included up to twelve patrilineal descent groups; that the smaller food-gathering units commonly contained non-agnatic kinsmen; and that food-seekers moved freely over broad regions that included the totemic sites of many patrilineal descent groups.'⁷⁹

Neither Meggitt's nor Hiatt's attack on the traditional interpretation of local organization is entirely

78. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, op. cit., p. 254.

79. L.R. Hiatt, art. cit., p.284.

convincing as far as the Aranda is concerned. Meggitt's assertion that 'incidental remarks in the early accounts of the Aranda and Warramunga suggest that, although the two societies in some respects differed culturally from the Walbiri, all three societies were structurally similar' is not borne out by a close examination⁸⁰ of what Spencer and Gillen have to say about local organization. Furthermore, Meggitt's inability to believe the account of Spencer and Gillen evidently rests largely upon the assumption that Spencer and Gillen held that the people within a local group got 'all their sustenance' from the country which they owned, whereas in fact Spencer and Gillen (and T.G.H. Strehlow) held that the members of the local group sometimes hunted and gathered food in the territory of other local groups and that the concept of ownership of land was a complex one: the land 'owned' by the local group was also 'owned' by the community and the tribe at large.⁸¹ It may also rest partly upon an underestimation of the capacity of Aranda territory to support Aborigines.⁸² Perhaps Meggitt also failed to make sufficient allowance

80. See pp.37-38 (above).

81. F.J. Gillen, art. cit. (1898) p.19; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1912) pp.198, 232; ———, op. cit. (1927) pp. 7,8; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.49,50,61,62,71.

82. See above, p. 24 .

for changes produced in Walbiri local organization by contact with Europeans: 'Their traditional tribal organization', he wrote of the Walbiri in the preface to Desert People, 'survived relatively unaltered. Despite the occurrence of certain superficial cultural changes, the traditional social groupings within this tribe function today much as they did in the past.'⁸³ While this is doubtless true of most aspects of Walbiri organization, he himself acknowledged that the 'traditional local groupings of most Aboriginal tribes including the Walbiri changed quickly and radically under the impact of European settlement.'⁸⁴ Hiatt does not make it clear whether he intends his account of local organization to be regarded as true of the Aranda. One suspects that he does. Neither he, nor Meggitt, however, has conducted first-hand research into the local organization of the Aranda, and if Hiatt was thinking of Spencer and Gillen when he wrote that 'A field worker investigating an Aboriginal local organization that has ceased to function might make certain discoveries by questioning people who were once part of it ...Having discovered that a patrilineal descent group had an exclusive spiritual link with a "country", he might assume without further evidence that it had an exclusive material link with it',⁸⁵ he was obviously mistaken: Gillen

83. Desert People, p.xvi.

84. Ibid, p.46.

85. Art. cit., p.286.

arrived in the Centre in 1876⁸⁶ and Spencer began his researches in 1894 long before Aranda local organization had 'ceased to function.' The debate will undoubtedly continue. Meanwhile, the writer has little choice but to accept the views of Spencer and Gillen and the Strehlows. The following account is based largely on their writings.

Local Organization - The Community

The Aranda-speaking people are divided into five 'communities' or 'sub-groups': Southern, Central, Western, Eastern and Northern Aranda.⁸⁷ Members of these communities usually reside within a certain area of country, the boundaries of which are well known to them; but on the

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86. 'List of Civil Servants in office in or about 1876 giving a record of their service and salaries from the time of their first appointment', p.242. (S.A.A.1927).
87. In Aranda Traditions (p.70) Strehlow tentatively suggests that there are two Southern Aranda communities, one north of Old Crown Point Station and the other south of it and extending as far as Oodnadatta. 'The dialect spoken in this extreme southern part,' he writes, 'differs...markedly from that used by the men of Henbury, Idracowra, and Horseshoe Bend; and there is evidently a distinct break in social relationship between the two southern groups at Old Crown Point.' For evidence that Aranda is spoken as far south as Oodnadatta see W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927) p.1; E. Eylmann, op. cit. p.158. According to Spencer and Gillen (op. cit., 1927 p.62) the Aranda are divided into six 'geographical groups', there being two east of Alice Springs instead of one. Postscript: Strehlow (personal communication) has indicated since I wrote this reference that he is now definitely of the opinion that there are two Southern Aranda sub-groups (he does not use the term 'community'), and furthermore, that there are two Eastern Aranda sub-groups. Cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (loc. cit.) p.739, fn.18.

one hand, members of the local group within the communities usually reside within their own group territories and on the other, they sometimes spend several months or more as guests of a local group or local groups in other communities.⁸⁸ Marriage normally takes place within the community, but on its borders outside marriages are quite common. Women usually become members of their husbands' communities.⁸⁹ The cultures of the communities are basically the same, but there are some important differences. Members of the communities speak dialects which are essentially the same in structure but which display considerable variation in vocabulary and pronunciation.⁹⁰ Similarly, religious rites and ceremonies vary considerably upon a common theme.⁹¹ Where outlying communities are in contact with other tribes or communities of other tribes, these variations are most marked. Thus the Western Aranda have been influenced by the (Loritja) Matuntara, and the Kaititja and the Unmatjera by the Yalpari Walbiri.⁹² Unlike the Walbiri communities, the Aranda

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88. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.52,61,62,65; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1912) p.98. Cf. M.J. Meggitt op. cit., pp.40,52,54.
89. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.61-62. Cf. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.56-57.
90. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Phonetics and Grammar, passim; Aranda Traditions, pp.51-52, 67,81-82.
91. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, p.1 and passim; Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, op. cit., pp.249-50.
92. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.52,66-67, 154; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.40. Cf. W.B.Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1904) pp.11-20.

communities display a strong ethnocentrism.⁹³ Members of a community are proud of their dialect and religious ceremonies, and sometimes look with contempt upon those of neighbouring communities. 'We northern men are the only true Aranda that exist,'⁹⁴ Strehlow was told by an informant from the Burt Plain. Furthermore, they are usually hostile and suspicious towards visiting strangers, 'unless their visit has been undertaken in order to foster a closer friendship between the two respective groups which will lead to reciprocal material benefits.'⁹⁵ Relations between the communities, however, are on the whole peaceful; and where hostile relations exist, periods of truce are sometimes called, especially upon ceremonial occasions, and friendly visits during which the conduct of both visitors and hosts is regulated by a definite system of etiquette, are made.⁹⁶ Informal visits are sometimes paid to local groups beyond the community and even beyond the tribe, but only by men whom 'considerations of rank or of kinship' entitle to such hospitality.⁹⁷

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93. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.49; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.51-52, 69, 82-83; Olive Pink, 'The Land-owners of the Northern Division of the Aranda Tribe, Central Australia', Oceania, Vol. VI, No. 3 (March, 1936) pp.281-2.
94. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, p.52.
95. Ibid., p.41; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., p.279; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1904) pp.30-31.
96. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.52-53. Cf. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1899) p.32; —, The Northern Tribes of Central Australia (London, 1904), p.31; —, op. cit., (1912) p.198; —, op. cit. (1927) pp.505-509; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.52-58.
97. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.52-53, 61-66.

Local Organization - The Local Group

Each of the communities is divided in turn into 'local groups'.⁹⁸ Members of these groups usually reside in a certain area of land (ranging from about one to one hundred square miles in area), the boundaries of which are fixed by myth, of which they regard themselves as owners, and the resources of which they exploit co-operatively. This is not an 'impossible' arrangement; most Aranda territory is well-watered and abounding in game, and before Europeans arrived nature was more bountiful than it is now.⁹⁹ Furthermore, it was quite common for members of local groups to be invited into the country of other groups and to spend several months or more per year on such visits. According to T.G.H. Strehlow, Aborigines sought 'temporary asylum in the lands of their more fortunate neighbours' in times of severe drought, and were never refused.¹⁰⁰ Membership is by patrilineal descent, but

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98. Carl Strehlow (op. cit., Part IV(II) pp.2-3) lists nine such groups for the Western Aranda. In an incomplete list W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927) pp. 63-64 list seventy-three for the whole tribe. T.G.H. Strehlow (Aranda Traditions, map appended) has indicated the location of some of the totemic centres associated with each Aranda local group. Postscript: In art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt (Ed.) op. cit. p.137, T.G.H. Strehlow has indicated the boundaries of the Western Aranda local group territories or njinana section areas.
99. Cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt, op. cit. pp.131,133,142.
100. The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies, p.14. Cf. Aranda Traditions, p.62.

married women are recruited from other local groups. Thus members of a local group at any one time are the males and unmarried females who are members by birth and the wives of males. On rare occasions, however, a male transfers to the local group of his wife, but he is there afforded the status of a guest only. Most members belong to one or the other of a pair of subsections (a njinana section) which stand in a father-son relationship to one another, and they regard one of a number of sacred centres (totemic sites) which are to be found in their group territory as their 'pmara kutata' or 'everlasting home'; and from its totem the local group takes its name.¹⁰¹ Associated with each pmara kutata is a separate cycle of religious ceremonies which must be performed at that pmara kutata (and nowhere else) only by the initiated male members of the njinana section (who 'own' them and whom Strehlow refers to as the 'totemic clan'), though men from outside groups

101. T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.139-44; ———, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt (Ed.) op. cit., pp.135,136-40. Though Strehlow allows that a very few members of a local group may not belong to the njinana section to which all other members of the group belong, he clearly regards the 'local group' and the 'njinana section' to be so nearly identical as to render it unnecessary to draw any distinction between them. Cf. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) p.120. Unlike A.P. Elkin (op. cit., pp.85-89) and Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt (op. cit., pp.43-44), Strehlow does not distinguish between a 'territorial clan' and a 'social clan'. Membership of a njinana section, as of a local group, is by patrilineal descent.

are usually invited to assist in peripheral matters. All authority in the religious sphere is vested in a ceremonial chief and the old men of the group. Finally, the local group is in most respects the maximal political entity among the Aranda, and all political authority within it is in the last resort vested in the old men or elders.¹⁰²

Local Organization - The Family

The family is the only other unit of local organization. It consists of a man and a wife or several wives and their unmarried daughters and uninitiated sons. It provides shelter, when required, for its members and has important economic and educative functions which, however, are generalized beyond it to the local group by the operation of the kinship system. The ties between husband and wife are ideally permanent, and procreation and sexual satisfaction ideally take place within marriage. The allocation of young wives to old men and the operation of the levirate makes marriage a form of social insurance.¹⁰³

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102. See pp. 57-60, below. Re the local group generally, see F.J. Gillen, 'The Natives of Central Australia' (loc. cit.), pp. 18-19; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp. 8-15; ———, op. cit. (1904) pp. 20-31; ———, op. cit. (1912) pp. 198, 232, 233, 255, 256; ———, op. cit. (1927) pp. 8, 9, 62-65; Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part IV (II) pp. 1-2; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp. 1, 51, 139-44; ———, 'The Art of Circle, Line and Square', loc. cit., p. 56; ———, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit., pp. 135-41.
103. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927) pp. 15, 49; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp. 77, 79, 81, 82. Cf. A.P. Elkin op. cit., pp. 50-51.

The Kinship System

The family is part of an elaborate kinship system which embraces every member of a tribe and, indeed, every Aboriginal with whom another comes into contact. This is made possible by a classificatory system of kinship terminology. All relatives of an Aboriginal are divided into a number of different classes and one kinship term is applied to all relatives in each class. Aborigines who are not his relatives by blood are classified as his relatives - that is, they are allotted to a class and become 'fathers', 'mothers', 'brothers', and so on, to him. An Aboriginal is thus 'related' to every other Aboriginal he meets. Each class of relative is expected to observe a certain pattern of behaviour. In this way, the kinship system expresses and defines the important rights and duties of every Aboriginal in connexion with social, religious, and economic activity; in short, it regulates all aspects of Aboriginal life. Every Aboriginal knows his rights and duties in respect of every other Aboriginal he meets. And because of this, Aborigines who are uncontacted by other civilizations rarely find themselves in situations which demand that they plan their course of action.¹⁰⁴

104. T.G.H. Strehlow, The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies, p.13; ———, 'Men Without Leaders', loc. cit., p.23; J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines', loc. cit., p.449; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.82-84, 184 and Chapters VII-IX, passim; A.P. Elkin, op. cit., pp.52, 53, 54-58; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, op. cit., pp.11-15, 24-28; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1927) pp.41-61.

Apart from the various classes of relatives indicated by the kinship system 'certain statuses', to use Meggitt's words, are singled out 'as being especially significant' and are grouped 'in various ways to make subsidiary frameworks, or descent lines [patriline and matriline] that orient specific sorts of behaviour. These groupings are in turn aggregated to form more inclusive structural units, the moieties [patrimoieties, matrimoieties and endogamous moieties (alternate generation-levels)], which also channel behaviour in definite directions.'¹⁰⁵ Meggitt has presented a detailed analysis of the respective roles of the various moieties and descent lines in determining Walbiri social behaviour.¹⁰⁶ He concludes, for example, that the chief functions of the matriline and matrimoieties are to regulate marriage and to allocate roles at death, and that those of the patriline and patrimoieties are to regulate ritual behaviour and to allocate religious authority.¹⁰⁷ Nobody has yet done the same for the Aranda. Fortunately, a knowledge of these roles is not important for our present purposes. Just as the detailed working of the Walbiri kinship system was little affected by contact with Europeans by 1954,¹⁰⁸ so it is likely that the Aranda

105. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.188.

106. Ibid, Chapters XI and XII.

107. Ibid, pp.192-202,204,211-213.

108. Ibid, pp.xvi,190,331.

kinship system was little affected before 1895; there is certainly little evidence to suggest that it was. It is sufficient to know that the kinship system regulated every aspect of Aboriginal behaviour, of which our present knowledge is considerable.

Members of all communities or tribes in the Centre are further divided into eight subsections or four sections. The subsection system is an elaboration of the section system, and both systems were adopted relatively recently from the north-west, the section system first. By the time Europeans arrived, every community in the Centre except the Southern Aranda and the 'Loritja'-speaking communities had adopted the subsection system.¹⁰⁹

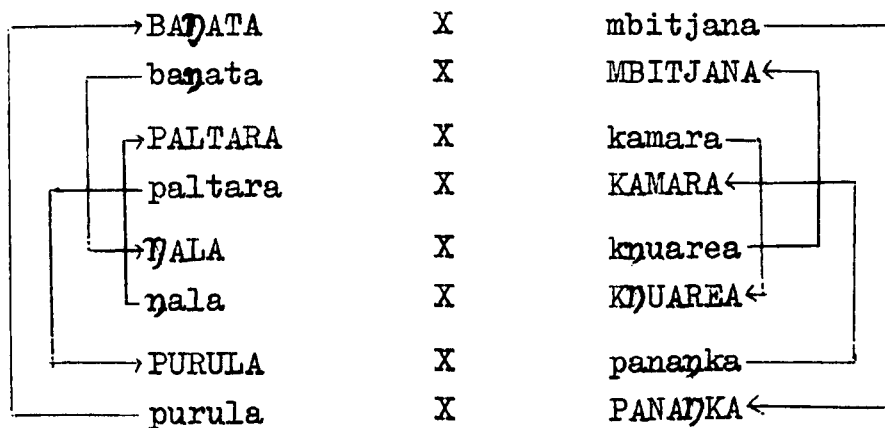
Table 2 : Aranda Subsection Names

UPPER CASE = male term;

lower case = female term;

X = preferred marriage;

arrow = maternal descent.



109. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) p.90; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.167-8; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, p.72; ———, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op.cit., pp.130,132,136.

(Table 2): After M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.165; T.G.H. Strehlow, op. cit., table appended; H.K. Fry, 'A Table Showing the Class Relations of the Aranda' in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, Vol.55 (1931) pp.12-19; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.69-73.

From Table 2 it would appear that sections and sub-sections regulate marriage and descent, but this is only superficially so. Both systems were superimposed on the kinship system and consequently are 'summar/ies/ of kin terms, rather than of modes of behaviour.'¹¹⁰

The only other important social groupings are age-grades and sex groups. Males pass through five important age-grades during their lives; childhood, during which they have few duties towards their parents or any other members of society; adolescence, during which they pass through the first of a series of initiation rites and begin to become fully social persons; early manhood and married life, during which they are introduced by stages to more of the secret life and grow in knowledge of the norms of the religious and kinship systems; eldership, during which

110. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.170. Cf. J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines', loc. cit., p.452; A.P. Elkin, op. cit., pp.92,100-1; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., p.69. Postscript: Strehlow (art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit. pp.134-35) regards them as 'terms of address'.

they take an active part in controlling life within their group; and old age, during which they are too old to play such a part. Females pass through about four important stages: childhood; early married life, which usually commences at puberty; later married life; and old age. J.H. Bell's words about Aboriginal women in general apply equally well to Aranda women: 'Aboriginal women are not the chattels or slaves that early anthropologists thought them to be. True, the society is male-dominated, but women are not without status. Women live in their husbands' local groups and improve their status in these groups by their food-gathering and childbearing roles. The successful food gatherer and mother of several children enjoys a high status. Old age greatly improves a woman's status because the Aborigines respect age irrespective of sex.'¹¹¹

The two sexes are dependent on each other for economic and biological purposes, but ~~are~~ mutually exclusive in the spheres of religious and political activity. All sacred ritual is regarded as secret and becomes known to and is performed by initiated males only. It is, however, 'performed by the men for the whole group (including the women) and not for themselves alone. In other words, the

111. J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines', loc. cit., p.450. Re age-grades generally, see A.P.Elkin, op.cit., pp.81-83. Cf. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1899) Appendix A; ———, op. cit., (1927) Appendix B; T.G.H. Strehlow, Nomads in No-Man's Land (Melbourne, 1960), p.8.

men assume responsibility for the group's religious life.¹¹²
Moreover, the women have their own secret myths and ritual dances from which males are excluded.¹¹³

Government

Here again anthropologists differ. Meggitt's conclusions about Walbiri government are worth citing at length:

[The Walbiri] did not have to make ad hoc plans for action; the norms of the religious and kinship systems constituted an enduring master-plan, which met most contingencies and to which there were few approved alternatives....Once a person was aware of [a] situation, he knew what to do about it. There was, therefore, little need for secular leaders in the community. Some men, better acquainted than others with certain rules, might be asked to expound them, but such requests chiefly concerned religious dogma and ritual behaviour. And it is only in this field that we observe an approximation to institutionalized leadership....Although the members of the community conceded some of their fellows the right to co-ordinate certain activities, the ascription of authority to particular men on particular occasions depended largely on considerations of kinship status and, by extension, of descent-line and moiety affiliation....[The] frequent variation in the extent of the authority that an individual exercised from one situation to another militated against the emergence of a class of permanent leaders of community enterprises, of men who could regularly and legitimately direct group behaviour in several fields of action....[A] system of age-grading embraces all the males over the age of about 12 years. But this did not produce a hierarchy of social classes or culminate in a gerontocracy; there was no solidary group of old men who wielded political

112. J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines', loc. cit. p.450.

113. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Religion in Aboriginal Australia' in Hemisphere (July 1963) p.7; ———, Aranda Traditions, p.93; ———, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (loc. cit.) pp.741-2; A.P. Elkin, op. cit., p.85.

power throughout the tribe. It is true that, within each community..., the old men made up a common interest group; but it was informally recruited and cut across by moiety and descent-line affiliations. In general, the group or clique possessed social prestige simply because its members had a longer, but not necessarily wider, experience, particularly in ritual matters, than did their juniors. Mere longevity, however, did not make these elders leaders of the community. Whatever de facto control they had over the actions of others simply derived from their ability to make suggestions based on first-hand knowledge of commonly recurring situations; people were bound to follow this advice only when it was couched as a statement of dreamtime rules. Not only were the old men unable to command the services of others, except on the basis of accepted kinship and ritual rights and privileges, they were also obliged to fulfil the corresponding duties.... In short, the community had no recognized political leaders, no formal hierarchy of government. People's behaviour in joint activities was initiated and guided largely by their own knowledge and acceptance of established norms.¹¹⁴

Meggitt has suggested that the same might also have been true of the Aranda and other Central Australian tribes.¹¹⁵

Most anthropologists who have written about the Aranda would probably go much of the way, if pressed, with this argument, but it is clear from their casual remarks on the subject that they disagree on a number of important points. While they would agree that the norms of the religious and kinship systems minimize the area of decision-making in Aranda society, that ascription of authority was often on a basis of kinship, and that the influence of the old men or elders was limited by the norms of the religious

114. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.247-250.

115. Ibid, p.xvi.

and kinship systems, they nevertheless insist that a council of old men or elders, presided over by a headman, who is primus inter pares, are the recognized political leaders within the local group; and that at inter-group and inter-community gatherings matters of common interest are decided in conference by the headmen and elders of the various local groups concerned. The part played by each elder depends on his age, degree of initiation, and knowledge. The headman is usually the oldest man in the local group, providing he is still in possession of all his faculties. These writers do not make it clear what functions the leaders perform, but they seem to imply that they are the ultimate decision-makers, where decisions have to be made, and the enforcers of the rules of religion and kinship, the enforcers of law.¹¹⁶

T.G.H. Strehlow has even gone so far as to suggest that among the Walbiri political leaders have been supplanted

116. F.J. Gillen, 'The Natives of Central Australia', loc. cit., pp.18,27; ———, Camp Jottings: A Modest Record of our doings day by day (18th March 1901 to 7th March 1903) (handwritten MS, four volumes, S.A.A.3432), entry for 8.4.1901; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.8,10,11,280; ———, op. cit. (1904) pp.20-25; ———, op. cit. (1927) pp.9-11, 443-5,454; Carl Strehlow, op.cit., Part IV(II), p.1; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.145-6, 163-171; ———, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit., p.142. Cf. J.H. Bell, 'The Culture of the Aborigines' loc. cit., p.448; A.P. Elkin, op. cit., pp.81-82; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., pp.281-2,292,303-5.

by white officials and that Meggitt was deceived by this situation.¹¹⁷ Whichever interpretation is more correct, it may safely be said that the old men exercise considerable authority within the local groups and that the undermining of this authority would produce considerable repercussions on most other aspects of Aboriginal life.

Law

Aborigines believe that there is an established and morally right order of behaviour for man, society and nature from which there should be no divergence - the law. To them, 'man, society and nature are interdependent components of one system, whose source is the dreamtime; all are, therefore, amenable to the law, which is co-eval with the system.'¹¹⁸ Because it originated in the dreamtime, the law is 'beyond critical questioning and conscious

117. 'Men Without Leaders', loc. cit., pp.22-23. Strehlow has suggested since the above was written (personal communication) that 'It was only when the European settlers interfered with the rights of aboriginal leaders to impose certain sanctions, and when men who had inflicted the death penalty on certain "tribal offenders" at the command of the acknowledged "tribal leaders" were apprehended by police officers and sentenced to long prison terms, that the aboriginal systems of law and order began to collapse everywhere. In modern days there are no Aranda headmen of authority left (and according to Meggitt, no Walbiri headmen either), because young men who wish to disobey the traditional norms of behaviour are protected by the "white man's law" from the old punishments.'

118. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., pp.251-2.

change.¹¹⁹ It is articulated through the religious and kinship systems and specifies the rights and duties of Aborigines, the manner in which they should fulfil their duties and the procedures to be followed if they omit to do so. The gravest offences defined by the law are sacrilege and unauthorized homicide. These are punishable by death. Most other serious offences involve sex: incest, cohabitation with certain kin, abduction of women, and fornication: and are punishable by wounding or battery.¹²⁰

Material Culture

The complex social structure of the Aborigines contrasts sharply with their material culture, which is but poorly developed. Spencer and Gillen and Carl Strehlow have given a full account of the material culture of the Aranda and neighbouring tribes.¹²¹ Here it is relevant to mention only a few details.

119. Ibid, p.251.

120. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927), p.9; T.G.H. Strehlow, 'The Art of Circle, Line and Square' in Ronald M. Berndt (Ed.) Australian Aboriginal Art (Sydney, 1964) p.45; Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part IV (II) pp.9-11; M.J. Meggitt op. cit., pp.251-9; Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, op. cit., pp.279-305.

121. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.567-614; op. cit. (1927) pp.14,16,23-27,510-50; Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part V.

Types of material possessions vary from community to community and from tribe to tribe, but any list would include wooden spears; spear-throwers, which are converted into chisels by fastening a piece of sharp stone on to one end; wooden shields; boomerangs, clubs and digging-sticks; stone axes, stone knives and stone adzes; wooden bowls (pitchis); grinding-stones; a few items of personal adornment, animal and vegetable; and sacred and magical objects of wood, stone, bone and bird-down. Animal sinews and the resin of spinifex are the most common binding materials. Large game is usually speared or boomeranged; small animals and reptiles are often dug from their hiding places or clubbed when they emerge from grass which has been set on fire. Emus are sometimes caught after having drunk from a waterhole 'poisoned' with the leaves of Duboisia Hopwoodii or having come close to an Aboriginal camouflaged and playing on their natural curiosity. Dwellings, which are built only when Aborigines decide to remain at one place for a considerable time or, in the absence of other shelter, during very inclement weather, are flimsy structures of the bark and branches of trees, reeds and grasses. Though there are no private property rights over land or water, most material possessions are regarded as personal property; but there are certain occasions upon which some articles must be lent, and on the whole, the Aborigines are a non-acquisitive people: their

desire to acquire certain European goods can perhaps be explained only in terms of the paucity of their material possessions. Apart from articles of adornment, which include forehead-bands, waist-bands, necklets, armlets and pubic tassels and aprons made from the bones, teeth, fur and tails of animals, human hair, the seeds of Stuart's bean-tree and other materials, the Aborigines go quite naked. Their only protection against cold is animal fat, which they often rub into their bodies, and fire. For ritual purposes the body is decorated with ochre, pipe-clay, blood and bird-down. Weapons are decorated with ochre or incised designs which are usually the same as symbols used in the secret religious life and which, therefore, enhance their power. The pictorial art of the Aborigines, both secular and sacred, is highly conventional, and though considerable skill is often required of the artist, there is no scope for creativeness or the expression of personality.¹²²

Economy

The material culture of the Aborigines is poorly developed partly because they are semi-nomadic food-gatherers and cannot cope with many material possessions.

122. See especially T.G.H. Strehlow, 'The Art of Circle, Line and Square', in Ronald M. Berndt (Ed.), Australian Aboriginal Art, pp.44-59.

In times of plenty and on ceremonial occasions (the latter often co-incide with the former) they might spend up to six months in one place, but in lean times they wander over the whole of their group territory and beyond it. As already indicated, the local group and the family are the important economic units. Economic activities are determined largely by sex and kinship. Labour is divided on a simple sexual basis: men manufacture weapons and hunt large game, ~~while~~ women gather vegetable foods and small game; and food is shared according to strict rules of kinship which specify not only with whom a hunter must share his catch, but also which parts of a particular animal he must give to each of his kin.¹²³ No attempt is made to grow crops or breed animals, ritual and magic being employed to maintain food-supplies. Needless to say, the Aborigines have developed great skill in hunting and food-gathering and have acquired a detailed and intimate knowledge of their physical environment and the ways of the wild-life which inhabits it. They eat almost every form of wild-life, but in most cases refrain from eating their own totem.¹²⁴ Their chief vegetable foods are the seeds of munyeroo and various grasses, a kind of yam (Ipomea and

123. See, e.g., W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.469-70; T.G.H. Strehlow, Nomads in No-Man's Land, pp.10-12.

124. T.G.H. Strehlow, op. cit., p.12; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit., (1899) pp.21-22,168; ———, op. cit. (1927) p.14.

Vigna spp.) and yelka (a small onion-shaped grass-root), and they eat the fruit, kernels of the seeds, blossoms and resin of a variety of trees. Their diet before the advent of Europeans was evidently balanced and adequate, for they were a healthy people among whom disease and illness were little known.¹²⁵ Most Aborigines like to chew the dried leaves of plants they call 'ingulba' (Nicotiana excelsior, Nicotiana Gossei and other species), crushed and mixed with a little ash, which produce a slightly intoxicating effect.¹²⁶ Where prized articles such as 'ingulba' or ochre are unobtainable in the country of a group or community, they are often traded from other countries. In addition, there is some economic specialization among the various groups; one group, for example, might make conventionally shaped boomerangs and trade them or other artefacts for beaked battle boomerangs, which another group specializes in manufacturing.¹²⁷

125. J. Burton Cleland, 'Disease Among the Australian Aborigines', loc. cit., p.58. Cf. T.G.H. Strehlow, art. cit. in R.M. and C.H. Berndt op. cit., p.145.

126. 'Ingulba' is now widely referred to in Central Australia as 'pituri', a term originally used only by the Aborigines who inhabited the upper Mulligan River in Western Queensland. It must not be confused with Duboisia Hopwoodii, which is used for poisoning emus, etc. See T. Harvey Johnston and J. Burton Cleland, 'The History of the Aboriginal Narcotic, Pituri', in Oceania, Vol. IV, No. 3 (March, 1934) pp.280-82.

127. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.28, 572,573,575,586-87,590,599,602-3,611. Re Aboriginal economy generally see also W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen op. cit. (1927) pp.15-21.

Religion

The Aranda and other Central Australian Aborigines believe that before time began supernatural beings (totemic ancestors or culture heroes) were sleeping beneath the bare and featureless crust of the earth. At the beginning of time the totemic ancestors arose from their slumbers and journeyed over the earth. As they wandered about they created most of the physical features of the present-day landscape, and some of them 'liberated the semi-embryonic masses of humanity' which had always existed partly-formed and 'joined together in their hundreds' on the surface of the earth, 'into the fulness of life, and then taught the separated individuals the most important things necessary for their survival as mature men and women.'¹²⁸ Exhausted at the end of their journeys, they either returned into the earth or changed themselves into trees, rocks and other natural objects. But they still continued and continue to exist, and their powers and actions directly affect contemporary society: the 'dreamtime', as it were, not only preceded the historical past and present but also continues in parallel with them. Each totemic ancestor was associated with a particular animal or plant. When he emerged from the earth and when he re-entered it,

128. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Personal Monototemism in a Poly-totemic Community' (loc. cit.) pp.727-8.



PLATE 4

'Sacred Ceremony of the Emu Totem, Unggwatja [in Southern Aranda territory]'

Photo: F.J. Gillen

By courtesy S. A. Museum

and as he moved about on the earth (he usually assumed human form, but was capable of transforming himself into the animal or plant with which he was associated) he left behind him 'a trail of "life"',¹²⁹ in the form of immaterial particles which became lodged in trees, rocks, water-holes and other natural features. These particles, which were called 'spirit children',¹³⁰ by Spencer and Gillen but which were probably more accurately characterized by Meggitt as 'impersonal and causally-effective entities',¹³¹ are capable of giving out 'life' to human beings and the animal or plant with which the totemic ancestor from whom they derive is associated. Thus, when a pregnant woman experiences the first bout of morning sickness, or feels the child which she knows was conceived by physical union quicken within her for the first time, or has a dream-vision of her future child at a spot where a kangaroo-ancestor has deposited some life-particles, the Aborigines believe that some of the 'life' of the ancestor has entered her womb and given her child a second and immortal 'life' or 'soul'; and the kangaroo becomes the child's totem. Similarly, the kangaroo-ancestor gives out 'life' to kangaroos. Every Aboriginal, therefore, believes that

129. Ibid, p.729.

130. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) p.125.

131. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.65. T.G.H. Strehlow (Aranda Traditions, p.17) referred to them as 'potential life-cells'.

he is, so to speak, a reincarnation of a totemic ancestor: that, while he receives a human body and a mortal 'life' or 'soul' from his human parents, he receives a second 'life' or immortal 'soul' from a totemic ancestor which determines his physical characteristics and personality and which, upon his death, will return to the spot at which it was first deposited and continue to give out life. Furthermore, he believes that by performing the appropriate sacred ceremonies instituted by the totemic ancestors he can summon winds and rain and facilitate the entry of life-particles into animals and plants, thus maintaining their supply or promoting their increase.¹³²

And so a common bond of life unites an Aboriginal with the animals of his totem, with his totemic ancestor and the 'dreamtime', and with the land in which he is born.

Each totemic-site 'belongs to' the members of a local group, the initiated male members of which (viz., the totemic clan) are the custodians of the sacred ceremonies and myths which are associated with it. All sacred ceremonies and myths, however, are graded for transmission 'in such a way that at any one time there were never more than two or three elderly men who acted as the guardians

132. See T.G.H. Strehlow, op. cit., pp.86-91; ———, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (loc. cit.) pp.727-33; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899) pp.123-5; ———^{small} (1927) pp.75-78; M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.221.

and final repositories of the complete body of sacred lore which was the property of any one of the major local totemic groups.¹³³ A lad begins to learn some of this sacred lore at the time of his initiation, which consists of four main stages: circumcision, sub-incision, the inkura festival, and a period of probation. The rites of circumcision and sub-incision, which a lad undergoes at pubescence, promote him physically into the ranks of the full-initiated men. By them he becomes a fully social person: they enable him to become a member of the totemic clan, to participate in marriage ceremonies, acquire a marriage-line and obtain wives. He undergoes ritual death and re-birth; the 'boy' dies, and is reborn a man. Furthermore, they give him his first glimpse into the secret religious life and he begins to learn some of the sacred lore associated with his totemic clan. A few years later, during the inkura festival, which lasts for several months, he undergoes further testing of physical strength and powers of endurance and is instructed more fully in the ceremonies, chants and myths of his clan. Further knowledge is revealed to him during the period of probation, and he proves his fitness to receive possession of his own personal tjurunga by having his thumb-nails torn off. The

133. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Religion in Aboriginal Australia', loc.cit., p.2; ———, 'Aranda Traditions', pp.42-45.

tjurunga, which is a sacred slab of stone or wood, symbolizes the bond of life between the young man and his totemic ancestor and is stored, together with the tjurunga of the other members of the local group, in a sacred cave which can be approached only on ceremonial occasions.¹³⁴

Women also 'own' tjurunga, but they are not allowed to see them. Similarly, they are excluded from knowledge of the sacred lore of the totemic clan and from participation in the performance of sacred ritual. On the other hand, women have their own magic rites, from which males are excluded; and they too pass through 'initiation' ceremonies, which involve rubbing of the breasts with fat and red ochre and vaginal introcision.¹³⁵

Throughout his life, the Aboriginal 'regard[s] himself as being in perpetual union with the world of eternity; he [feels] no need of waiting for a more perfect manner of existence in a new form of life after death. On the contrary, death [is] for him the great tragedy that dissolve[s] all ties between man and the world of eternity; for death mean[s] the destruction of

134. Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part IV(I) pp.10-43; T.G.H. Strehlow, Aranda Traditions, pp.96-119; ———, Nomads in No-Man's-Land, pp.9-12; W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927) Chapters IX,X,XI.

135. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1927) pp.99, 100,222; T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Religion in Aboriginal Australia', loc. cit., p.7; ———, Aranda Traditions, pp.93-94; ———, 'Personal Monototemism in a Poly-totemic Community' (loc. cit.) pp.741-42; Carl Strehlow, op. cit., Part IV(I) p.43; A.P.Elkin, op. cit., p.85.

the mortal body and the irrevocable separation of man's two souls.¹³⁶ Consequently, Aborigines are unable to view the death of relatives with philosophical detachment or resignation. Death sets in motion an elaborate sequence of activities - disposing of the corpse, mourning, holding inquests, and seeking revenge (the Aborigines do not believe in 'natural' deaths: all deaths are caused by some human agency, and have to be avenged) - which helps to close the ranks of the survivors. On the other hand, the Aboriginal is able to view his own death with considerable resignation. He believes that it annihilates his personality, and so does not fear a hell or an underworld of everlasting misery.¹³⁷

The totemic religion is thus a deeply satisfying personal religion which, for male Aborigines at least, leaves nothing in the visible universe unexplained. There is no room in it for the incorporation of doctrines of other religions. Aborigines are nevertheless tolerant of the beliefs of others. As indicated earlier, ritual and belief vary considerably upon a common theme from local

136. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Religion in Aboriginal Australia', loc. cit., p.6.

137. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1899), pp.476, 497-511; Carl Strehlow, op. cit. Part IV(II), pp. 15-25; T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (loc. cit.) pp.739-40.

group to local group. Aborigines have learned to tolerate and respect the beliefs of other Aborigines, and expect the compliment to be returned. They display the same attitudes to Europeans, and have similar expectations of them.¹³⁸

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138. T.G.H. Strehlow, 'Religion in Aboriginal Australia', p.8; ———, 'The Sustaining Ideals of Australian Aboriginal Societies', p.13; ———, 'Personal Monototemism in a Polytotemic Community' (loc.cit.), p.746; cf. A.P. Elkin, 'Reaction and Interaction: A Food-Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia' in American Anthropologist, Vol. 53 No. 1 (Jan. - March, 1951) p.164.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BACKGROUND

To successfully plant a young Colony, and to carry it on through its earliest struggles and difficulties, seems to require special qualities, physical, moral and intellectual, which are possessed in their highest form by the Anglo-Saxon people. It is a small matter to supplant the aboriginal inhabitants of a barbarous country and to secure possession of their land. The superiority which comes from civilization is soon acquired, and the feebler race bends before the stronger, as reeds bend to the sweep of the winds. The difficulties of successful colonization arise from very different causes than the mere conquest of native races. It is in battling with nature...that the real triumphs of an old people in a new land are seen.

———W. Marcus, 1876.

South Australia: Its History Resources and Productions

The history of Central Australia is inextricably bound up with that of South Australia. The first explorers (Sturt in 1845 and Stuart in 1860) to set foot in the land were sent out from South Australia. In 1863 the Centre was provisionally annexed to South Australia as portion of the 'Northern Territory', and it remained a dependency of that colony for forty-seven years. From 1870, when the construction of a telegraph line through the Centre was commenced and squatters prepared to occupy choice portions

of the MacDonnell Ranges, until World War II, its exploration and settlement was performed almost wholly by South Australians. Even to-day, some fifty-five years after South Australia gladly handed the Northern Territory over to the Commonwealth, it is not uncommon for South Australians to regard the Centre as a part of their own State; and the Centre's main industry is heavily dependent upon South Australian markets, tourists go on to Ayers Rock and the MacDonnells after whetting their appetites in the Flinders, and life in Alice Springs resembles in many ways life in a quiet Adelaide suburb. An understanding of the South Australian background is, therefore, important for an understanding of the history of European settlement in the Centre, and not least important for an understanding of its beginnings.

'South Australia', according to Douglas Pike,¹ 'was settled in 1836 by men whose professed ideals were civil liberty, social opportunity and equality for all religions', by men whom the fruits of the repeal of the Test Act and the Reform Bill of 1832 had left unsatisfied. Most of the leading settlers were middle-class townsmen and many were Dissenters. In so far as they could agree about goals

1. Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857 (London, 1957) p.3.

(for they were above all sturdy individualists) they wanted a self-dependent community free from domination by the Colonial Office or an aristocratic oligarchy, with free Churches and other institutions, free trade and a free press; and a respectable community which would reward industry, thrift and sobriety and enable a man to raise a family 'in sober, God-fearing righteousness and prosperity without danger of moral contamination'.² The beginnings of South Australia, therefore, bear 'the marks of evangelical religion, pragmatic radicalism and the bourgeois virtues of prudence, industry and respectability.'³

The Wakefield scheme for systematic colonization seemed admirably adapted for the realization of these ideals. From its fundamental principle of concentration of settlement (the principle 'that the alienation and settlement of land should be restricted to keep pace with the growth of colonial population'⁴) flowed the doctrines that land should be sold (after survey) at or above ^a fixed minimum price and the proceeds of its sale used to send out selected labourers of both sexes. 'With land and labour thus joined together, the virtues of concentrated settlement would operate automatically to attract the necessary capital. As a result,

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2. Department of Adult Education in the University of Sydney, Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 1 (May 24, 1965) p.6; Pike (op. cit.) pp.3,54,145,170,392.
 3. Deptmt. of Ad. Ed. in Univ. of Syd., op. cit., p.7.
 4. Pike, op. cit., p.52.

there would be great division of employment, greater production and greatest accumulation of wealth, the whole of the new social structure being suffused with the maximum human happiness.⁵ When, in 1830, the explorer Sturt traced the River Murray to its mouth near the Gulf of St. Vincent on the southern coast of Australia, the newly discovered country seemed an admirable place to put the theory into practice. Four years later an Act to establish South Australia as a province was obtained, but only at the expense of serious compromise: the theorists were denied full control over their experiment, authority being divided in an imprecise manner between the Colonial Office and a Board of Colonization Commissioners.⁶

The first settlers arrived in 1836. 'Prodded and protected by all the arts of the promoters, South Australia had at first an extraordinary flourish of artificial prosperity',⁷ but, owing to faulty administration, a burst of speculation in land and stores and 'lack of unity of purpose'⁸ among the colonists, the year 1840 brought financial collapse. Two years later the Wakefield experiment was terminated. South Australia was placed under the

5. Ibid, pp.52-53.

6. Ibid Chapt. III; D.W. Meinig, On the Margins of the Good Earth: The South Australian Wheat Frontier, 1869-1884 (London 1963) pp.10-11.

7. Pike, op. cit. p.169.

8. Ibid, pp.169-70.

direct control of the Colonial Office and one half of the land fund, previously reserved for immigration, was set aside for the administration of the colony.⁹ The voluntary principle in religion, communications and the enforcement of law and order had already been compromised and were to be further compromised in the years that followed.¹⁰ But though the utopian ideals of the colonists had been modified, they had not been forgotten. South Australians came to realize that henceforth 'civil and religious liberty would have to be fought for with the traditional weapons of petitions and legislative representation.'¹¹

Because of faulty administration, the mania for speculation, the emphasis placed upon the foundation of a model capital city, and the difficulties facing farmers in a new environment, agriculture got away to a slow start. In 1840 75% of adults and 84% of children were living within ten miles of Adelaide and only some 1,500 acres¹² were in crop. Land sales virtually came to a halt as reports from explorers suggested that all areas suitable

9. *Ibid*, pp.169,189.

10. *Ibid* Chaps. X-XII, XV.

11. *Ibid*, p.279.

12. 'Statistical Summary of South Australia from its foundation' (S.A.P.P. 1917 No. 3 Pt.vii) p.8. The figure quoted by Pike (*op. cit.* p.218) includes land in fallow and land sown with permanent grasses.

for agriculture had been purchased. Depression and Governor Grey's policy of retrenchment, however, soon forced settlers out of the city on to available land, and in 1843 the colony produced twice as much wheat as the colonists could consume. Unfortunately, partly because of poor shipping facilities the export of wheat was fairly unprofitable until the final repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849, and agriculture tended merely to keep pace with a rapidly expanding home market.¹³

The pastoral industry got away to a better start. The first livestock introduced to the colony were brought from Cape Colony and Van Diemens Land by ship, but meat was scarce in South Australia until enterprising drovers began to arrive overland from New South Wales with sheep and cattle in 1838. With grass abundant and free until 1842 - when the squatter was required to purchase an occupation or depasturing licence for a nominal fee, which entitled him to the use of two square miles of country adjacent to every eighty acre section he owned, and to pay an annual tax of 1d. per head of sheep and 6d. per head of cattle - adventurous young men (usually unmarried) who were fortunate enough to possess a little capital steadily pushed south-east and north of Adelaide with

13. Pike, op. cit. pp.177-9,180,218-20; Meinig, op. cit. pp.19-20.

flocks and herds. By 1843 they had penetrated to 100 miles north of Adelaide, by 1846 to 150 miles north. Meanwhile, however, explorers had convinced many that pastoral expansion must soon come to a halt.¹⁴

Edward John Eyre, an enterprising New South Welshman in his twenties, made two trips from Sydney to Adelaide with sheep and cattle in 1838 and 1839 and found himself in possession of a tidy sum of capital. In New South Wales at the time when explorers were trying to solve the mystery of the western rivers he had dreamed of an inland sea and a fertile Centre, and when Sturt finally solved the mystery in 1830 his dream did not dissipate. Supposing that a valley reported by Flinders in 1802 to run inland from the head of Spencer Gulf might lead to fertile highlands, he rode north of that gulf in 1839 until he sighted Lake Torrens and concluded that the Flinders Ranges might make a good 'stepping stone into the interior'.¹⁵ In the following year, subsidized by the Government and a committee of colonists, Eyre set out to plant a silken Union Jack

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14. Pike, op. cit. pp.218,300,324-5; Edwin Hodder, The History of South Australia from its Foundation to the Year of its Jubilee (2 Vols. London, 1893) Vol.2, pp.146,147,149; J.P. Stow, South Australia: Its History, Production, and Natural Resources (Adelaide 1884) p.142; William Marcus (Ed.) South Australia: Its History, Progress and Resources (London,1876) p.55; Hans Mincham, The Story of the Flinders Ranges (Adelaide, 1964) pp.42, 77-94; John Lewis, 'Our Early Pastoral Possessions and the Pioneers of Settlement in South Australia' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs., Vol. XVII (1915-16) pp.8-15.
15. Mincham, op. cit. p.29.

embroidered by the Misses Hindmarsh, Gawler and Conway on the Tropic of Capricorn in the vicinity of the 136th parallel¹⁶; rode up the eastern side of Lake Torrens to the present Lake Eyre; turned east to Mt. Hopeless and concluded that 'Lake Torrens' stretched from the present Lake Torrens to the present Lake Frome in a mighty 'horseshoe' which neither man nor beast could cross; retreated, and headed west to Albany searching in vain for a 'tract of country practicable to the north'.¹⁷ Upon his return to Adelaide he produced a very pessimistic report concerning the country in the north and convinced South Australians that no man could reach the Centre by going north or north-west.¹⁸ '...it is hard to imagine the sense of awe it inspired in the breasts of South Australian settlers,' wrote Ernest Favenc, from experience, of Eyre's 'horseshoe', 'who appeared to be cut off from the north by its gloomy and forbidding environs of salt and barrenness.'¹⁹ In 1844-46 Captain Charles Sturt, who had arrived in South Australia from New South Wales in 1838 to assume the post of Surveyor General,²⁰ tried to go around the eastern side of Eyre's 'horseshoe' to the Centre. He took a boat with

16. S.A.A. A807.

17. C.T. Madigan, Central Australia (O.U.P. 1936) p.17.

18. Concerning Eyre's journeys generally see ibid pp.14-17; Mincham, op. cit. pp.23-29.

19. The Explorers of Australia and their Lifework (London, 1908) p.135.

20. Pike, op. cit., p.236.

him to explore the expected inland sea but found only a sea of sand-waves to float it on at latitude 24°25'S. - just within the border of the present Northern Territory but 400 miles in a direct line from the Centre as later fixed by Stuart - and returned to Adelaide.²¹ Meanwhile, the 'Centre' had somewhere swallowed an expedition led by Ludwig Leichhardt and daring to attempt to solve its mystery. Many South Australians ceased to believe in an inland sea, most came to regard the interior as desert. Exploration to the north came to a halt.²²

It was unlikely, however, that South Australians would long be contented to be hemmed in by Eyre's 'horse-shoe'. In spite of the strength of its 'self-dependent'²³ party, South Australia was probably the most expansionist of the Australian colonies. In the 1860's it annexed 88,000 square miles of territory in the west and 523,000 square miles in the north, and for much of the latter half of the nineteenth century it conducted a running dispute with Victoria concerning territory in the east;²⁴ it dreamed of monopolizing Murray River trade, constructed an

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21. Madigan, op. cit., p.19; Mona Stuart Webster, John McDouall Stuart (M.U.P., 1958) pp.30-46.
 22. B. Threadgill, South Australian Land Exploration, 1856-1880 (Adelaide, 1922) p.3.
 23. Pike, op. cit. pp.193-5,304,324,331,481-3.
 24. Victorian Parliamentary Papers 92 and 92*/1874; S.A.P.P. 180/85,46/94,115/94,116/94,130A/94.

overland telegraph across the continent, and began constructing a railway alongside the telegraph which in 1910 it tried to bind the Commonwealth by statute to complete, and it virtually annexed Broken Hill. No-one has satisfactorily explained South Australian expansionism, nor is it the direct concern of this study to do so. It is perhaps worth suggesting, however, that it might be explained in terms of the uniqueness of South Australia's beginnings and the desire of South Australians to preserve their independence and to avoid homogeneity with other Australian colonies.²⁵ The men who argued that South Australia should annex territory, construct an overland telegraph or build a railway to Port Darwin were probably thinking not only of enhancing the prospects of themselves and of those they represented for money-making, but also of their colony's continuing glory: the larger South Australia became, the more powerful it would become; a 'Central State' stretching from ocean to ocean and trading its riches for the riches of the East would be in a position to dominate the Australian continent and preserve its own identity. Furthermore, because of their origins, South Australians were probably more ardent believers in material progress²⁶ and in the capacity of men to tame, and extract wealth from, a new environment than settlers in other colonies. And they seemed to believe that their promised land and (by a

25. Cf. Pike, op. cit., pp.495-7.

26. Cf. ibid, p.145.

faulty extension of already faulty reasoning) any territories it might annex could not but yield a variety of treasures in abundance.²⁷

By 1845, with steady progress in agriculture and grazing, South Australia had emerged from depression and was paying its way for the first time. The stage seemed set for a modest period of prosperity when the discovery of copper brought about spectacular progress.²⁸ For seven years after 1845 the total value of copper exported exceeded the combined value of wool and breadstuff exports.²⁹ The copper finds led to a burst of speculation, but bona fide settlers acquired most of the mines and 'the power of the self-dependent party increased with its wealth'.³⁰ In 1847 the immigration program was fully resumed and agriculture expanded to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.³¹ Furthermore, copper was largely responsible for 'the passing of control [over the South Australian economy] from speculators outside the colony to a small handful of colonists.'³² In 1851 there was an exodus of men and money when gold was discovered in

27. Cf. ibid p.442; Marcus (Ed.) op. cit. pp.18,86,88,121. For a discussion of South Australian optimism concerning the mineral potential of their colony and of the Northern Territory, see Chapter 6 (below).

28. Pike, op. cit. pp.300-1.

29. 'Statistical Summary of South Australia from its foundation' (loc. cit.) pp.10,12.

30. Pike, op. cit. p.304.

31. Ibid, pp.310,328-9.

32. Ibid, p.352.

Victoria, but in the following year Adelaide outbided Melbourne for Victorian gold and in fourteen months received over two million pounds worth of this precious metal.³³ The new wealth put more farmers on the land who created more wealth by exploiting the goldfields market.³⁴ Large numbers of South Australians who had been 'tutored in the ingenuities and rough life of the diggings'³⁵ were now more ready to face life on the frontier. 'The most convincing lesson of the golden years', according to Pike, 'was that South Australia's fortune was to be found not in anglicized Adelaide but in the exploitable resources of the wide open spaces.'³⁶

Gold and copper had mixed effects on the pastoral industry. Squatters suffered from a labour shortage³⁷ until copper helped to bring about the full resumption of immigration, and the number of cattle in the colony increased from 30,000 in 1845 to 100,000 in 1850 and the number of horses from 1,663 to 6,488 when the mines required working bullocks and horses.³⁸ But prices for cattle and horses soon ceased to be remunerative. Except in the very early years, sheep were always more profitable

33. Ibid, p.448.

34. Ibid, pp.451-3.

35. Ibid, p.460.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid, p.325.

38. Ibid; 'Statistical Summary of South Australia' (loc. cit.) p.12.

than cattle in South Australia, and cattle numbers remained stationary after 1850 until the stocking of rough dog country in the Flinders demanded that large animals prepare the way for sheep.³⁹ By 1853 the Flinders had been stocked as far as Mt. Serle, but until 1857 and further exploration the country to the north presented a closed door to pastoral expansion.⁴⁰ Wool growing was unprofitable in the late 1840's, but prices improved in the fifties and by 1857 were very good.⁴¹ Copper opened the ports of Wakefield (1849) and Augusta (1853) to the squatters and, by providing ballast for wool cargoes, made the export of wool less expensive.⁴² In the early fifties the exodus of men to the Victorian diggings produced a labour shortage, but it was eased when diggers began to return.⁴³ In 1851 pastoralists were given greater security of tenure (fourteen year leases), and cheaper grass (the tax on stock was abolished and a rent of £1, 15s. and 10s. per square mile, according to the class of country, substituted). The Wakefieldian assumption of

39. 'Statistical Summary of South Australia' (loc. cit.) p.12; J.D. Woods, The Province of South Australia (Adelaide, 1894) p.292.

40. K.R. Bowes, Land Settlement in South Australia, 1857-1890 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1963) p.174; Mincham, op. cit. Chaps. 6,7; G.W. Symes, 'The Exploration and Development of the Northern Part of South Australia between 1850 and 1869 and the Early Life of John Ross' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs., Vol.58 (December 1957), p.2. and map.

41. Pike, op. cit., pp.326-7.

42. Ibid, p.326.

43. Ibid, pp.453,456; Mincham, op. cit., p.102.

equality of land was thus unconsciously undermined, but wanton dispersion was held in check by a provision which required squatters to furnish a plan of a run upon application and to stock it, within three months, with sixteen great or one hundred small cattle.⁴⁴ Pastoralists well outside the hundreds were satisfied with these regulations, but those on the fringes of the farmers' frontier demanded a government guarantee that no declaration of hundreds should interfere with their runs. They forgot the challenge to their social superiority by those whom copper had made newly rich and the fact that they now produced only about one quarter of the colony's exportable produce.⁴⁵ Miners and farmers protested and the Governor refused their request.⁴⁶ In the years *that* followed, during which there was no spectacular increase in the value of mineral exports, pastoralists regained some of their importance as exporters, but until the late sixties they were generally excelled by farmers.⁴⁷ After the granting of responsible government in 1856, the squatters were made to pay increasingly dear for their grass until the great drought and a brief period when they made effective use of their position in parliament and

44. Bowes, op. cit., p.143; Mincham, op. cit., pp.50-51.

45. The proportions of total exports by declared value in 1851 were: wool 27%, breadstuffs 14%, minerals 57% ('Statistical Summary of South Australia', loc. cit.).

46. Pike, op. cit., p.327.

47. 'Statistical Summary of South Australia' (loc. cit.).

in society;⁴⁸ and after the great drought they were required to retreat inland whenever the farmers wanted more land.

'The squatter is...the pioneer of the agriculturist', wrote W. Marcus simply in 1876, 'When the land is wanted for agriculture he has to retire further into the interior.'⁴⁹

In view of the beginnings of South Australia, the position could scarcely have been otherwise. '...in South Australia', wrote D.W. Meinig, 'the farmer, not the stock man, was given priority of importance. Such a view obviously reflected the ideals of the founders in which the family-sized freehold farm and concentrated rural settlement were basic. In contrast, the grazing industry, speculative, dispersed, often absentee controlled, employing wage-labour, and holding land by lease rather than by title, was almost a contradiction of those ideals'.⁵⁰

Gold and copper also strengthened South Australia's claims for responsible government, which was duly granted in 1856. In politics the 1840's and 1850's were periods of moderate radicalism which produced a voluntary religious system, a democratic constitution with manhood suffrage in the lower house, a fairly wide property qualification in the upper house and vote by ballot, and the Torrens Title system of

48. Bowes, op. cit. pp.118,144-61, 192,202; Mincham, op. cit. p.162.

49. Marcus, op. cit. pp.55-6. Cf. Bowes, op. cit. pp.320,330; Gordon L. Buxton, South Australian Land Acts 1869-85 (unpublished B.A. Hons. thesis, Adelaide 1961), p.50.

50. Op. cit., pp.22-3.

land holding.⁵¹ But 'for' its makers the constitution was the end of the road.'⁵² Their dreams of civil and religious liberty had been fulfilled, they had their own government, the pick of the land, and cheap docile labour. 'Their popular rights were secure from despotism from without. From any tyrant majority within, their property was protected by a constitution which was, like any other law, unalterable without the consent of an upper house elected by the owners of property themselves.'⁵³ For nearly a century the Legislative Assembly, with electorates which heavily favoured the farmers (who had a proclivity for returning independents), was dominated by independents, and the forty-four years after 1856 saw forty-two ministries. Legislative Council electorates also favoured the farmers and elections for the Council aroused little interest. '... "Honourable" members,' according to Pike, '... might as well have been nominated.'⁵⁴ Leading colonists failed to lead. 'Land' proprietors regarded themselves as the proprietors of the province. They arranged electoral districts so that their timidity dominated its politics. In the long run their continued failure to govern was more disastrous than disenfranchisement. After its lusty youth, Adelaide became sedate, gentle and unenterprising.'⁵⁵ Except in the 1890's, which produced female

51. Pike, op. cit. pp.437,477-80,482.

52. Ibid, p.480.

53. Ibid,

54. Ibid, p.482.

55. Ibid, p.516.

suffrage and heavier and differential land tax and death duties,⁵⁶ 'no' new ideas disturbed the calm of orthodoxy as generation succeeded generation. The leading colonists had fought hard for the things they wanted, but when the struggle was over, they seemed to have exhausted their enterprise and lost the ability to lead.⁵⁷

Unenterprising in purely political and social issues leading colonists undoubtedly were, but not in matters concerning land and money and the power and glory of their 'province'. The year 1856 saw the beginnings of a movement in exploration and land speculation which was not to be checked until South Australia had extended her borders to the northern ocean and the advent of drought and depression.

Gold gave the initial stimulus to further exploration and pastoral settlement. Seeing that the precious metal had been discovered in so many places in California and the eastern colonies, South Australians could not believe that it would not be found in abundance in their own promised land.⁵⁸ One of the first acts of the House of Assembly was to vote £1,000 for searching the central highlands from end to end for gold.⁵⁹ B.H. Babbage was entrusted with the

56. Department of Adult Education in the University of Sydney, op. cit. p.7.

57. Pike, op. cit. p.516.

58. See Chapter 6 (below). Cf. Pike, op. cit. p.442.

59. Mincham, op. cit., p.53.

leadership of the party. His napping hammer struck no gold in the entire length of the Flinders, but it led him beyond the ranges to Blanchewater and other waterholes and an Aboriginal rumour that there was a passage through Eyre's 'horseshoe'. 'There is every reason to hope', the Register reported upon Babbage's return in December 1856, 'that vast tracts of fruitful country as yet untrodden by the white man, await the enterprise of the squatter and the farmer.'⁶⁰ In the following year G.W. Goyder, the deputy Surveyor General, was sent out to explore in the same direction after heavy rains. He reported 'Lake Torrens' to be full and many other good things. The press hinted that the 26th parallel was galling to South Australian enterprise⁶¹ and the Surveyor General, Captain Freeling, was hastily dispatched with a boat to explore the lake. He found only a mirage.

Let others have the Squatter's lease;
But never more for me;
I'd sooner ferry phantom boats
On Goyder's phantom sea.

wrote W.A. Horn with reference to the northern country some forty years later.⁶² It was not the last trick the inland was to play on South Australians, who refused to become

60. Quoted in ibid, p.55.

61. Threadgill, op. cit., p.7.

62. Bush Echoes and Ballads on a Warrigal Pegasus (London, 1901), 'Adieux of a Ruined Squatter'.

pessimistic about their northern country. 'We cannot suppose the mirage occupies the whole interior',⁶³ commented one Adelaide editor.

The only possible means of access to the interior now seemed to be via the western side of Lake Torrens. Excursions recently made to the north by settlers on Eyre Peninsula had suggested that such a route might be practicable. Press and public now demanded that the route be tried, and early in 1858 Babbage was sent out again, this time to explore and map the country between Lakes Torrens and Gairdner and then to push on to the north. Meticulously following his instructions, Babbage scarcely progressed beyond the settled districts in six months; the authorities in Adelaide became impatient and Major P.E. Warburton, Commissioner of Police, was sent out to relieve him. Babbage meanwhile proceeded to the present Lake Eyre South and beyond to a point near the 29th parallel, thus (unconsciously) discovering the land bridge between present Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens. Warburton sent him home the way he had come, reserving for himself the distinction of being the first to cross the land bridge and open a way to the north-west. In the following year Goyder was sent out to survey the new route and by sinking wells to make it practicable for stock. Meanwhile, A.C. Gregory had come

63. Quoted in Mincham, op. cit. p.63.

down the Strzlecki creek through the gap between Lakes Callabonna and Blanche to Adelaide in search of Leichhardt, thus exploding Eyre's 'horseshoe' theory in the north-east. The door to the interior had been forced, and Eyre's original theory that the Flinders Ranges would ^{as}act as a 'stepping stone to the interior' was shortly to be proved correct.⁶⁴

Webster asserts that the Adelaide Philosophical Society was the prime mover in northern exploration in the fifties.⁶⁵ There is undoubtedly some truth in this statement, but it would be more true to say that the desire of leading colonists both within and without the Society to speculate or invest in land was the prime mover. The House was not averse to voting money for exploration not only because of pressure from without or because pastoralists were fairly well represented in it, but also because many of the commercial men who formed the largest single group in Parliament loved to speculate in land.⁶⁶ One would accordingly expect considerable demand for the new country discovered by the explorers. And that is what happened. Within a few months of Goyder's reporting an inland lake, some 4,500,000 acres were applied for.⁶⁷ By 1858 the whole of

64. See generally ibid Chaps. 4,5; Threadgill, op. cit., Chap. 1; G.W. Symes, 'The Exploration and Development of the Northern Part of South Australia' loc. cit.

65. Op. cit., p.63.

66. Bowes, op. cit., p.119.

67. Ross Duncan, 'The Annexation of the Northern Territory to South Australia' in Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand, Vol. 6, No. 22 (May 1954) p.143.

the country in the Flinders Ranges and beyond to Blanche-water had been occupied, and in another year squatters had penetrated through the land bridge between Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens to Mount Margaret.⁶⁸ Cattle numbers in the colony, owing to the wise practice of placing large animals on untamed country, increased spectacularly from 173,483 in 1855 to 376,886 in 1859 - a figure which (since cattle were usually replaced by sheep after a few years) was not exceeded until the 1890's and never appreciably exceeded.⁶⁹ According to K.R. Bowes,⁷⁰ the interior lands were the concern of a minority - but an important and influential minority. There were young men new to pastoral pursuits, adventurous squatters who held land near the frontier, and, most important of all, financiers: 'The northward expansion was largely the product of those who were interested in the pastoral industry as a field for investment or speculation.'⁷¹ In 1858 a new Act provided that a fixed rental of 10s. per square mile should be charged for new leases and further undermined the Wakefieldian assumption of equality in land by providing for an annual assessment of 2d. per small and 1s. per great cattle on the carrying capacity of a lease. It also provided that a lessee could at any time surrender his fourteen-year lease and obtain a new one for five years

68. G.W. Symes, art. cit. pp.2-6; Mincham, op. cit. Chap.7.

69. 'Statistical Summary of South Australia' (loc. cit.).

70. Op. cit., pp.177-8.

71. Ibid, p.178.

without outside competition. The Act gratified an indignant community by forcing the squatters to pay more for their grass, but by improving the value of leases and giving greater security of tenure it stimulated speculation and investment. Regulations issued in 1863, which provided that pastoralists might obtain preferential rights to leases in 'waterless' country until such time as they located or provided water, had similar effects. Some men with capital sought profits by long-term development of their leases, others speculated. Some of the speculators specialized in exploring new country, taking up the best of it, and then selling it at a profit; others took out preferential rights to leases, searched for water, and then disposed of their rights. By the late fifties some of the men who were to pioneer the Centre's pastoral industry in the seventies had risen to affluence, and stock and stations were one of the major fields of investment in South Australia.⁷²

Among the speculators who specialized in exploring new country, leasing the best of it and then selling their rights were John and James Chambers and William Finke. John Chambers was a farmer and pastoralist, James had become a

72. Ibid., pp.144,175-180; J. Lewis, 'Our Early Pastoral Possessions and the Pioneers of Settlement in South Australia', Presidential Address in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Vol. XVII (1915-16), pp.54,56-60 (for names of prominent pastoralists).

wealthy horsedealer and mail-contractor. Finke had made a fortune by buying and selling Glenelg. In 1854 Finke and James Chambers hired John McDouall Stuart, a thirty-nine years old Scot who had arrived in South Australia in 1839 and taken to bush life and surveying work, to explore country in the northern Flinders Ranges. Stuart discovered many runs for his sponsors, which were sold at a profit, and found copper on John Chambers' Oratunga (later Moolooloo) Station. Chambers and Finke secured all rights to the lode and by clever puffing and a little development sold it in London at a handsome profit. In 1858 Finke sent Stuart out on the first of a series of expeditions which were to lead him to the centre of the continent and the northern ocean.⁷³ No one has satisfactorily explained Stuart's personal reasons for venturing six times into the wilderness and enduring untold hardship and suffering.⁷⁴ He had acquired a taste for exploring and an interest in the interior as draughtsman for Sturt in 1844-46. Like other explorers he dreamed of an inland sea and of a water called 'Wingillpin' which Aborigines told him lay to the north-west. He possessed tremendous strength of will and

73. Mona Stuart Webster, John McDouall Stuart (M.U.P. 1958) Chaps. 1,2,4,5; Douglas Pike, John McDouall Stuart (O.U.P., 1958) pp.5-10.

74. Cf. Douglas Pike, Review of Mona Stuart Webster, op. cit. in Hist. Studs. Vol.8, No.32 (May,1959) pp.437-8.

confidence, under God, in his own abilities, and did not like to be crossed or baffled by man or desert. Whatever his personal motivation might have been, however, the important point here is that he never would have ventured into the interior had he not been backed by Chambers and Finke, who never would have supported him had there not been rich rewards to reap from speculation in pastoral lands.

The story of Stuart's explorations has often been told,⁷⁵ and need not be repeated in detail here. In 1858, by going round Eyre's 'horseshoe' to the west, he discovered Chambers Creek,⁷⁶ which empties into present Lake Eyre South, and penetrated as far to the north-west as modern Coober Pedy. In the following year he was the first to exploit the land bridge discovered by Babbage and Warburton, exploring in a northerly direction to within about one hundred miles of the 26th parallel. He discovered some promising country and a number of springs and waterholes and boasted that he could go from his farthest point to Adelaide 'at any time of the year and in any sort of season.'⁷⁷ His report reawakened widespread interest

75. See especially Webster (op. cit.); Pike, John McDouall Stuart.

76. Renamed 'Stuarts Creek' by Babbage (Webster, op. cit., p.79). Throughout this thesis I have made a practice of indicating which of the physical features mentioned in connexion with the work of an explorer were discovered or named by him by underlining their names.

77. Pike, John McDouall Stuart, p.14.

in Adelaide in a route across the continent. Men were amazed to learn that 'good' country continued much further north than they had dreamed since the explorations of Eyre and Sturt. Governor MacDonnell talked of a telegraph line across the continent, and even took horse and visited 'Stuart's country'.⁷⁸ Graziers envisaged mobs of their horses and cattle trekking overland to the north coast for shipment to India and the East Indies. The Assembly voted £2,000 as a reward for the first explorer to cross to the northern ocean, and a Government expedition, which disintegrated within a month of leaving Clare, was despatched for the north coast.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Chambers⁸⁰ had stocked the Chambers Creek country with cattle, thus supplying Stuart with an even handier inland base than Oratunga. Late in 1859 and early in 1860 Stuart spent about six weeks surveying runs in the country surrounding Chambers Creek and

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78. Governor MacDonnell, Despatches to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Nos. 334,338,357,358 of 1859; Webster, op. cit. pp.89-90,96n.,115.
79. Webster, op. cit. pp.104,112; Governor MacDonnell, Despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 338 of 1859.
80. Stuart was granted a preferential right to a lease of the Chambers Creek country in 1860 and a lease in 1863 as a reward for his discoveries in 1859. All, or almost all, of the cattle with which it was stocked, however, belonged to John Chambers; and in 1864 Stuart transferred the lease to Chambers and A. Barker (Chambers' brother-in-law). The station was abandoned during the great drought. (See Webster, op. cit., pp. 82-86,91-95; 'Report of Commission Appointed...to Inquire into the State of the Runs Suffering from Drought' (S.A.P.P. 14/67,pp.11-12).



II. MAP OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
 Showing Route and Plan of Discovery
 by John McDouall Stuart
 1860-61
 Route of 1860 ———
 Route of 1861 - - -

west of Lake Eyre, some of which his sponsors sold to other pastoralists, who soon stocked them; and then prepared for a trip to the Centre and the Victoria River. 'We go out this time for 6 months,' wrote Kekwick, Stuart's second-in-command, 'first to solve the mystery of the Lake or inland sea. Secondly to fix the centre and plant a union jack there. Then if possible wait for rain to carry us to the N.W. coast [sic].'⁸¹

Stuart left Chambers Creek with two men and thirteen horses on 2nd March⁸² and a month later crossed the 26th parallel and discovered the Finke River. On 6th April he sighted Chambers Pillar, which from a distance appeared to be 'a locomotive engine with its funnel'; sixty-nine years were to elapse before a real locomotive passed by that isolated spot. Some two weeks later, after a difficult passage through the James and MacDonnell Ranges, the party arrived with clothes and flesh torn by the scrub and, though they supplemented their diet with munyeroo, with symptoms of scurvy showing on their gums, at a spot which Stuart had calculated to be the centre of the

81. W.D. Kekwick, Letter to his brother 8.2.1860 (S.A.A. 1397).

82. See entries made on this date and on dates mentioned hereafter in Stuart's Journals, March to September 1860 (S.A.A. 1398, photocopy of the original); November 1860 to October 1861 (original in Library of R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Adelaide; copy in S.A.P.P. 169/61); October 1861 to January 1863 (original in S.A.A.27, incomplete; copy in S.A.A.26, complete).



PLATE 5
Finke River, Horseshoe Bend



PLATE 6
Stuarts Hole, Hugh River

continent. On 23rd April Stuart and Kekwick ascended a nearby hill, which they named 'Mt. Sturt' but which was subsequently named 'Central Mount Stuart'⁸³ by the authorities in Adelaide, and left a cairn of stones, a Union Jack and a written record of their visit on its summit. From Central Mount Stuart the party headed north-west across from the Fisher Creek⁸⁴ towards the Victoria River, but were soon forced to retreat for want of water. 'On this/course', Stuart subsequently explained to Chambers, 'the horses were three days without a drop of water; and had I not been fortunate enough to drop in with a native well I should have lost nearly all of them.'⁸⁵ After surviving a fall from his horse and a severe attack of scurvy, during which he 'almost wish/ed/ that death would come',⁸⁶ Stuart pushed north to Attack Creek, where hostile Warramunga warriors forced him to abandon the attempt to reach the ocean. By October he was back in Adelaide, where the authorities, anxious to perpetuate the memory of themselves or their friends, changed many of the names he had bestowed on important natural features in the Centre. Though the Strangways Ministry came to office only in May 1860, the version of Stuart's

83. See S.A.A. A47, 1362/7; Webster, op. cit., pp.154-8.

84. Renamed 'Lander Creek' by Gosse in 1873.

85. Adel. Observer, 13.10.60, p.6.

86. Journal, entry for 16.5.60.

Journal published in Adelaide that year contained references to two of its members in the entries for 13th and 18th of April.⁸⁷ In November Stuart set out again for the northern coast with Government support and a party large enough to force its way past the Warramunga, but this time thick scrub and shortage of provisions prevented him from reaching his goal. His third attempt at crossing the continent was crowned with success in 1862. Scurvy and near blindness prostrated him, however, and he barely survived the return journey to Adelaide. Less than four years later he died.

According to Ross Duncan,⁸⁸ Stuart reported good country for pastoral purposes on the Hamilton and Stevenson creeks in northern South Australia, in the Finke River basin and in the central ranges, but poorer country deficient in permanent water north of the MacDonnell Ranges. Beyond Newcastle Waters the country improved and he reported some of it to be the finest country he had seen in Australia, with great pastoral and agricultural potential. He was not very optimistic, however, about the possibility of overlanding stock to these promising regions. His reports made it clear that any attempt to stock the future Northern Territory from the northern parts of South

87. S.A. Register, 11.12.60.

88. Art. cit. pp.139-40. Cf. Edward C. Chapman, The Exploration and Settlement of the Northern Territory (unpublished B.A. Hons. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1950) pp.21-32.

Australia would be beset with ~~the~~ most serious difficulties.⁸⁹

Duncan may have been influenced by after-knowledge in arriving at these conclusions: Stuart's opinion of the country was, in fact, probably much higher than he allows it to be. On the other hand, many of Stuart's contemporaries wanted to believe that the future Northern Territory was rich in potential, and the opinion they formed was higher yet than Stuart's own.⁹⁰ It is what Stuart's contemporaries thought Stuart's assessment of the country to be, not what a careful examination of his writings to-day reveals it to have been, that is important in any consideration of the attitudes of South Australians to the territory discovered by him.

Stuart was not a good judge of country. His first journey through the Centre took place during and after rain,⁹¹ and the extravagant comments he made upon that occasion were not offset in the minds of many South Australians by the less favourable comments he made during his other two journeys and the unfavourable report⁹² produced by his naturalist, F.G. Waterhouse, in 1863.

89. Dunca, art. cit. p.140.

90. Apart from the sources indicated below, see H.J.Scott, South Australia in 1887 (Adelaide, 1887) p.75.

91. See Stuart's Journal, March-September 1860, passim.

92. 'Report by Mr. F.G. Waterhouse on the Fauna and Flora, Natural History, and Physical Features of Australia, on the Line of J. McD. Stuart's Route across that Continent' (S.A.P.P. 125/1863).

'...the whole of the country that we have travelled through today, is the best for grass, that I have ever gone through I have nowhere seen its equal', wrote Stuart on 29th March 1860 of country in northern South Australia. Six days later he passed over a plain on the Finke River 'of as fine a country as any man would wish to see a beautiful red soil covered with grass....I have not passed through such splendid country since I have been in the colony.'⁹³ On the 7th April the country was 'as fine a grass country as one would wish to look at, it could be cut with a scythe', and in the MacDonnell Ranges he saw 'as fine a pastoral hill country as a man would wish to possess, grass to the top of the hills and an abundance of water through the whole of the ranges'.⁹⁴ Though less enthusiastic about the country north of the ranges, he was not unimpressed. His diary is sprinkled with phrases such as 'well grassed', 'beautifully grassed' and 'abundance of grass',⁹⁵ and he attributed scarcity of surface water to an abnormal season.⁹⁶ The impression his report made on South Australians was indicated by Hardman⁹⁷: 'The Centre of the continent was reached, and, instead of being an inhospitable desert or an inland sea, it was a splendid

93. Journal, entry for 4.4.1860.

94. Ibid, entry for 15.4.1860.

95. Ibid - e.g., entries for 16.4.60, 19.4.60, 20.4.60, 21.4.60, 22.4.60, 25.4.60, 26.4.60, 29.4.60, 22.5.60, 23.5.60.

96. Ibid, entries for 17 and 18.4.60.

97. William Hardman (Ed.) The Journals of John McDouall Stuart [etc.] (London, 1864) p.x.

grass country through which ran numerous watercourses.'

And the editor of The Observer wrote⁹⁸

At length "the mystery of the interior"...is solved. Enough is known to warrant us in making the assertion that the centre of this long impervious continent is neither a shallow sea nor a sterile desert. It is, on the contrary, an elevated region, on the whole fertile, and by no means destitute of water....the country is described as clothed most luxuriantly with native grasses..., including a new plant specially adapted to the sustenance of horses. It would seem, too, that Nature has not been unmindful of the prospective wants of civilized man in the far interior, having already planted there that essential concomitant of civilization - the potato [sic/].

On the occasions of Stuart's other two journeys across the continent the country was in much poorer shape, but the explorer seems to have been reluctant to detract from the favourable impression his first report had created. As an explorer he was not interested in discovering poor country, and perhaps he was in too great a hurry and at times too ill to bother to describe the Centre again. Had he made a deliberate appraisal of the country he might have arrived at a similar conclusion to that arrived at by Waterhouse:⁹⁹

'The general appearance of this arid country I think is that of one drying up from the evaporation exceeding the fall of water.' While a careful scrutiny of his diaries reveals that his opinion of the country had fallen, a goodly proportion of the direct comments he made on its potential

98. The Adelaide Observer 13.10.60, p.6.

99. Op. cit., p.27.

were favourable: he noted, for example, that water supplies in the MacDonnells were permanent¹⁰⁰ and recorded the opinion that the country at least as far as the middle Finke was 'passable at any season and at any time of the year...the feed and water [~~are~~] abundant every ten miles *and* less'.¹⁰¹ More misleading were some of the oral comments he made upon reaching the settled districts. '... *we* now gather', wrote the editor of the Register¹⁰² upon Stuart's return from his second unsuccessful attempt to cross the continent, 'that permanent water may be counted upon the whole distance from South Australia to some way beyond the farthest point of last year's expedition - water so reliable that Mr. Stuart would, even at this advanced period of the year, willingly start with 500 horses, and take them to the farthest stopping place made by him in the north-west....From this it will be seen how practicable is the very centre of what a short time since was called the "Australian Desert".' And upon Stuart's return from his successful attempt the Register¹⁰³ commented that 'there is no doubt that he has found a practicable highway across the continent', and published a telegram from a special correspondent at Kooringa stating that 'Mr. Stuart repeats

100. Journal, entry for 19.3.61.

101. Ibid, entry for 3.3.61.

102. 24.9.61.

103. 17.12.62.

that the route is quite practicable for stock....Mr. Stuart had little or no rain during the trip but was only one or two nights without water.' There can be small doubt that most of the South Australians interested in the future Northern Territory concluded from Stuart's reports that much of the Centre was good pastoral country, that much of the Top End was rich pastoral and agricultural country,¹⁰⁴ and that Stuart had discovered a route to this country practicable for livestock. They drew these conclusions (which were exaggerated rather than false) partly because they wanted to believe that good country lay to the north of their colony, and partly because of Stuart's misleading statements. If blame¹⁰⁵ is to be apportioned among South South Australians for annexing the Northern Territory, much of it must fall upon Stuart's head.

Within seven months of Stuart's return from the northern ocean the 'Northern Territory' was provisionally annexed to South Australia. British settlements had been founded on its northern coast at Melville Island, Raffles Bay and Port Essington between 1824 and 1849, but all had ended in failure. Ludwig Leichhardt had crossed from Jimba on the Darling Downs to Port Essington in 1845, and

104. See Stuart's Journal 28.6.62 and 24.7.62 for his extravagant comments on the country near and north of the Roper River.

105. Cf. Ross Duncan, art. cit. pp.143,148; ———, A History of the Northern Territory Pastoral Industry, 1863-1910 (Typescript, The University of New England, 1956), p.41.

in 1855-56 A.C. Gregory had travelled overland from the Victoria River to Moreton Bay. While searching for Bourke and Wills in 1861, W. Landsborough had discovered and named the eastern Barkly Plains and the Herbert (Georgina) River, and in 1862 John McKinlay, also searching for the lost explorers, had crossed the continent from Adelaide via Coopers Creek to the Gulf of Carpentaria. McKinlay demonstrated to Governor Daly and others 'the practicability of driving sheep and horned cattle across the Continent',¹⁰⁶ and claimed that any migration to northern Australia must come from northern South Australia or similar latitudes in New South Wales because the Queensland frontier was 'barely practicable to cross stock...with safety.'¹⁰⁷ When Stuart discovered a route across the continent to 'rich' northern country South Australians accordingly believed that McKinlay's route would provide them with a reliable alternative to it.

According to Ross Duncan¹⁰⁸ the motives prompting exploration and settlement in northern Australia during the period 1824-1862 stemmed from a desire to trade with East Asia and India and to secure a northern outlet for the produce, especially the pastoral produce, of the Australian

106. Despatch of Governor Daly to Sec. of State for the Colonies, No. 61 of 26.10.62. Cf. S.A.P.P. 11/64 p.1; M.C.N.T. In 62/69; Duncan, art. cit., p.139; J. MacDonald Holmes, Australia's Open North; A Study of Northern Australia bearing on the urgency of the times (Sydney, 1963) p.59.

107. Do to do, 26.11.62 (S.A.P.P. 37/63).

108. Art. cit., pp.135-41.

colonies; a need to discover fresh pastoral country for southern colonies regarded as limited in their growing capacity; and a hope that the northern coastal region might become a centre for tropical agriculture, especially since it was close to a large reservoir of coolie labour. He might have added that South Australia after 1859 was interested in finding a practicable route for an over-land telegraph line to meet a cable from India and to ensure the continuance of its monopoly of news from Europe.¹⁰⁹ Similar considerations lay behind proposals emanating from Queensland and from J.S. Wilson, the geologist of Gregory's expedition, for the settlement of the future Northern Territory.¹¹⁰ The result of these movements (including Stuart's expeditions) was, according to Duncan,¹¹¹ the accumulation of a considerable body of knowledge concerning the potential of northern Australia for pastoral and agricultural purposes: some good pastoral land existed, especially in the Victoria River district, on the eastern Barkly Tablelands and in parts of Central Australia, but only the Victoria River district had been described as suitable for sheep, and the overlanding of

109. See Despatches of Governor MacDonnell to Sec. of State for the Colonies, Nos. 276/1858, 334/59, 338/59, 358/59; Minute of the Executive Council, 20.1.59; Webster, op. cit. p.108; Threadgill, op. cit., p.43; John McDouall ~~Stuart~~ / Stuart, 'Journal of Australian Exploration' [April to July 1859] in Roy. Geog. Soc. (London) Journal, Vol. 31, p.83; Hardman (Ed.) op. cit. pp.xiv-xv.

110. Art. cit. pp.141-2.

111. Ibid., pp.140-1.

stock, especially sheep, from South Australia had been shown to be exceptionally difficult. The tropical coastal region, on the other hand, except for the upper reaches of the Roper and perhaps of the Adelaide, had been shown to be unsuitable for pastoral occupation but fairly suitable for agriculture. Again, he might have added¹¹² that this knowledge was accessible only to those who did not allow wishful thinking to cloud their judgement: a wishful thinker could easily acquire from the literature concerning the British settlements and the journals of the explorers visions of a land potentially studded with beef-cattle and sheep and waving with corn.

The question as to whether the arguments advanced by South Australia to support her request for the annexation of this territory were consistent with her subsequent policy has occasioned some controversy. In 1930, A.G. Price¹¹³ argued, in effect, that while the arguments South Australia put forward for the annexation of the Northern Territory clearly indicate that she anticipated that settlement would be concentrated in the northern tropical part, they just as clearly indicate that she expected that this would be achieved by an inexpensive squatting penetration from the

112. But cf. ibid p.148.

113. The History and Problems of the Northern Territory of South Australia (Adelaide, 1930) pp.11-12; cf. 'Report of the Board of Inquiry appointed to Inquire into the Land and Land Industries of the Northern Territory of Australia, 1937' (Payne-Fletcher Report, C.P.P. 4/1937) p.84.

south rather than by sea. But 'directly the colony gained the Territory she attempted colonization from the coast'; she went to work 'in all formality to found the new settlement by sea' and 'drew up a detailed and complicated scheme [of settlement] almost Wakefield in character'. By perpetrating this 'amazing volte face' - by abandoning 'the back door and financial safety for the ostentatious but risky gateway to the Asiatic east' - South Australia 'probably destroyed her faint hopes of success.' In 1954 Ross Duncan¹¹⁴ criticized Price for allegedly claiming that South Australia's concentration on the tropical part of the Northern Territory was inconsistent with the arguments which she had put forward in demanding its annexation; and in the same year F.G.G. Rose¹¹⁵ made a similar mistake when he criticized Price for allegedly arguing that South Australia originally intended to extend settlement gradually northwards, concentrating initially on what was to become the Alice Springs District. Rose did not elaborate his criticism, Duncan did. He demonstrated that South Australia's case for the annexation of territory beyond her northern border was on the whole grounded on the same considerations which prompted

114. Art. cit. See also Chap. 2 of Duncan's Hist. of the N.T. Pastoral Industry which differs slightly from the article.

115. 'The Pastoral Industry in the Northern Territory during the period of Commonwealth Administration, 1911-53' in Hist. Studs. Vol.6, No.22 (May,1954) p.151 n.1.

the British settlements, the explorations of Leichhardt, Gregory and Stuart, and the settlement schemes emanating from Queensland and Wilson, and concluded that her arguments are open to criticism not because they were inconsistent with the policy South Australia subsequently adopted but because they ignored much of the evidence previously assembled about the north by the British settlements and Australian explorers.¹¹⁶ South Australia is to be criticized, not for any change of front, but for being rash enough to claim the Northern Territory as a dependency.¹¹⁷ Price would agree that South Australia's choice of the locale for settlement was not inconsistent with her arguments. It was not any change in the choice of locale that he criticized, but a change in the choice of the direction from which, and the means by which, it should be exploited. The analysis of the evidence which follows suggests that his position is essentially correct.¹¹⁸ If his argument is to be criticized it ought rather to be criticized on the grounds that it is doubtful whether settlement via the back door was feasible in 1863, and if it was, whether it would have been any more successful (though it may have been less expensive) than settlement via the sea and a detailed scheme of colonization. In the

116. Art. cit., pp.143-9.

117. Op. cit., p.41.

118. This is not to imply that Duncan's belief that South Australia acted rashly in demanding the annexation of the Territory is mistaken. See p. 125 (below).

short run, at least, South Australia's change of front was perhaps fortunate: had she attempted to settle the Territory from the south in the sixties, her efforts could have met only disaster at the hands of the great drought.

Governor MacDonnell was the first to see the real possibility of an overland route across the continent from South Australia. Though he and his successor Daly were expansionists in their own right, they were to a large extent also the spokesmen of their Cabinets and of pressure groups, especially of the Pastoral Association, outside Parliament. In 1859, before South Australian explorers had penetrated beyond the northern boundary of their colony, MacDonnell urged, in a despatch¹¹⁹ to Newcastle which discussed the various routes for a telegraph connection with Australia, that the overland route be not overlooked. Such a route would assist the settlement and development of the country and would afford a cheaper and more easily repaired telegraph connection than any cable could. A camel post across the continent could be initiated, a prosperous commercial centre would probably be founded on the north coast, and horses could be travelled for shipment to India along the route so opened. In the following year MacDonnell repeated a request which he had made to Newcastle in 1859 that the 80,000 square miles of territory lying

119. Despatch 358/59; see also 276/58, 334/59, 338/59.

between the western border of South Australia and the eastern border of Western Australia ('No Man's Land') be annexed to South Australia, arguing that South Australia was entitled to it because her pastoral frontier was spreading in that direction; and suggested that since the track Stuart had just opened across the interior was 'almost certain to be much frequented ere long' - 'It is expected, among other things,' he wrote, 'that a trade with horses for India would gradually spring up by that route; for it appears that there is really no obstruction of serious character to traversing the continent from the northern portion of this Colony' - it might be desirable, if No Man's Land were annexed to South Australia, to annex to it at the same time the future Northern Territory. Police protection would soon be required on Stuart's route and no Government was in a better position to afford such protection than the South Australian.¹²⁰ No Man's Land was annexed to South Australia in July 1861, but Newcastle refused to extend the colony's boundaries to the northern ocean on the grounds that the territory in question was too removed from Adelaide and that the route to it had not been proved practicable.¹²¹ He saw no objection, however, to 'the

120. Despatch 438/60 (in S.A.P.P. 29/61).

121. Newcastle to MacDonnell, 26.2.61 (in ibid). Cf. minute on despatch 438/60 (quoted in Duncan, op. cit. p.35).

extension northwards of the...South Australian boundary, as the progress of settlement draws along with it the necessity of Government' and made provision for this eventuality in a Bill he had prepared for the extension of South Australia's western boundary.¹²² It is clear, then, that South Australia's case for the annexation of the future Northern Territory as stated by Governor MacDonnell was founded upon the assumption that the Territory would be occupied by South Australians using a land route and that South Australian pastoralists would play a major part in occupying it. It did not even occur to MacDonnell that it might be settled by sea and according to a complicated scheme of colonization.

In July 1862 the question of the fate of the future Northern Territory was raised again with Newcastle by Sir Charles Nicholson, ex-president of Queensland's Legislative Council. He argued that since the Territory would be 'speedily occupied' by Queensland squatters it was desirable that some local Government should have jurisdiction over it. The Territory should be either constituted a new colony or temporarily annexed to Queensland. He himself favoured the latter proposal, but only because it could be acted upon immediately.¹²³ Newcastle, predictably impressed with this argument, decided to advise the

122. Ibid.

123. Nicholson to Newcastle, July 1862 (in S.A.P.P. 37/1863).

Queen to extend South Australia's boundary to the Tropic of Capricorn and to annex the remainder of the territory concerned to Queensland, and asked the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners for their opinion.¹²⁴ The Commissioners recommended that Newcastle's suggestion be acted upon and drew attention to the vastness of the territory and the probability that it would one day be divided into at least two colonies, one centred on the Victoria River and the other on the Albert in Queensland.¹²⁵ In September, Newcastle despatched this correspondence to Daly and requested him to ascertain whether South Australia would be prepared to accept his proposed allocation of territory.¹²⁶

In South Australia the Pastoral Association moved first. On 19th November its Committee unanimously passed two resolutions claiming that the services rendered by South Australian explorers entitled the colony to 'a northern line of coast as an outlet for the disposal of its surplus stock' and requesting the British Government to extend South Australia's boundaries north to the ocean;¹²⁷ and on the following day its secretary formally requested the South Australian Government to exert every effort to

124. Sir F. Rogers to Col. Ld. and Emigration Cmmrs., 11.8.62; Newcastle to Daly, 21.9.62 (in ibid).

125. Emigration Commrs. to Rogers, 19.8.62 (in ibid).

126. Newcastle to Daly, 21.9.62 (in ibid).

127. Ibid, p.4.

place itself in a favourable position for the annexation of the territory in question.¹²⁸ Five days later the Executive Council met to consider the proposals of Nicholson and Newcastle and the recommendation of the Emigration Commissioners. It decided¹²⁹ that it had no objection to the extension of South Australia's northern boundary to the Tropic of Capricorn, but observed that 'from what little is known of this tract of country, it is probable that it will be one of the last portions of Australia to be occupied.' Both Duncan and Rose have interpreted this statement to mean that South Australia intended that settlement should be concentrated in the northern part of the future Northern Territory. It would probably be more true to say that she believed that settlement would of its own accord concentrate on the 'Top End': she planned to implement no scheme of colonization at this stage. Nevertheless, the Council made it clear that it believed that settlement would take place via a route through the Centre, rather than by sea, and that the Northern Territory would be occupied, in the first instance, by pastoralists. After expressing a belief that the Centre would one day become settled, the ports of South Australia acting as its 'natural outlets', it urged that the country north of it and centering

128. Hon. Sec. Pastl. Assn. to Chief Sec., 20.11.62 (in ibid).

129. See its minute, 25.11.62 (in ibid).

on the Victoria River be provisionally annexed to South Australia. Queensland squatters would take about twenty years to penetrate to the Victoria River country, but South Australian squatters would probably begin to occupy it within a few months of its annexation to their colony; South Australia being a dry colony, its squatters required additional territory to absorb the increase of their sheep and cattle. 'There is, therefore, every reason to believe', the minute continued, 'that the stockholders of South Australia would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of taking their stock to the Victoria River by the new route through the interior discovered by Mr. Stuart; and would occupy on their own account and with their own flocks and herds, country so far superior to any now known to be available in this Province.' Besides, the Victoria River was the best point for the shipment of South Australian horses to India and China and the settlements which would spring up along the overland route would facilitate the construction of a telegraph line across the continent. Since settlement in the Territory would (initially, at any rate) be chiefly pastoral, its government would be inexpensive and the South Australian Parliament would undoubtedly vote the necessary supplies. 'A Government Resident acting as Stipendiary Magistrate (as in the more remote parts of the Colony), a dozen mounted troopers, and a small survey

party, would probably be sufficient staff for the commencement of settlement.'

Daly immediately sent a copy of the Council's minute (and of the resolutions of the Pastoral Association) to Newcastle, and took the opportunity to inform him that there was 'a strong and general feeling' in the Colony that, because of the great work of its explorers and its geographical position, South Australia had 'a strong claim to an extension of territory to the Gulf of Carpentaria'; to urge that the occupation of the territory by South Australian squatters would very probably 'proceed with rapidity' if it was annexed to South Australia; and to remind him that McKinlay was of the opinion that the Queensland frontier was 'barely practicable' for stock.¹³⁰ After Stuart's return from the northern ocean in the following month, Daly promptly wrote to Newcastle to bolster South Australia's case by informing him of the 'results' of the expedition. '...a direct overland route,' he wrote, 'practicable for sheep and cattle, from the Colony of South Australia, to the northern coast of the continent' had 'now been ascertained to exist'. Stuart had distinctly informed him, he alleged, 'that it could be made a straight line for telegraph purposes, whilst no difficulty exists on the whole line, to prevent horses, cattle, or sheep, from being

130. Daly to Newcastle 26.11.62 (in ibid).

driven across". Furthermore, 'the real value' of the country 'for pastoral and other purposes' was 'now fully made known.' It would naturally be first occupied by pastoralists; South Australian stockholders had already applied for portions of it. But it had now been established that it was also suitable for agriculture - soil and climate were suitable and it was handy to the immense labour market of the East - and it was likely to develop a busy trade with the East Indies. Besides, South Australia was closer [*sic*] to the country in question than Queensland, and possessed an easier route to it; and the Queensland Government was of the same opinion as his own.¹³¹ One month later Daly sent applications to Newcastle from the South Australian firm of Levi and Watts for 2,000 square miles of country on the Victoria River as evidence of the demand in the colony for pastoral land and once more clearly indicated that he was of the opinion that the future Northern Territory would first be occupied by South Australian squatters moving north.¹³²

Queensland's Government, indeed, did not want the future Northern Territory. Having obtained additional territory on its western border in 1861, it was contented. In January 1863 it rejected Newcastle's offer on the grounds

131. Do to do 23.12.62 (in S.A.P.P.127/63).

132. Do to do 26.1.63 (in *ibid*). Cf Davenport in S.A.P.D. (L.C.) 28.11.65, col. 381. 'It was thought after Stuart's travels that the country would soon be taken up and settled; but the drought had thrown a veil over the whole matter.'

of distance and expense and urged that South Australia, which had less available pastoral country than Queensland, should be given control of the territory in question.¹³³ On 16th July 1863, the area north of the 26th parallel and lying between the 129th and 138th meridians was formally annexed to South Australia under the title of the 'Northern Territory'. It was a provisional annexation only, but the commission issued to Governor Jervois in 1877, which permanently constituted the office of Governor, included the Northern Territory, as did the constitution subsequently adopted by federal Australia, in its definition of South Australia; so that South Australia was entitled to regard the Territory as its own property to be disposed of as it thought fit.¹³⁴

Price's assertion that South Australia gained the Northern Territory 'on the grounds of an inexpensive squatting penetration' from the south thus seems essentially correct. The Pastoral Association, the Executive Council, Daly, and to lesser extent MacDonnell, all grounded their request for additional territory upon the needs of the pastoral industry: it needed either an outlet for its stock on the northern coast or more country to absorb the

133. Duncan, art. cit. p.143.

134. See S.A.P.P.s 127/63, 113/1883-4; M.C.N.T. In 397/1907. For a contrary view concerning South Australia's claims to the Northern Territory, see Travers Borrow, 'The Northern Territory of Australia and Federation' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. Vol. 57 (1955-56) pp.15-24.

increase of its flocks and herds, or both; all argued that the Territory would be occupied from the south; and all assumed that the occupation would be inexpensive for the State. Most other arguments used were subsidiary to this central one: an overland telegraph, an agricultural industry and trade with the East would materialize after, and largely as a result of, the pastoral occupation of the country; the argument concerning the geographical position of South Australia was linked with the pastoral argument; and the argument concerning the work of South Australia's explorers was used to bolster what was already considered to be a strong case. Duncan¹³⁵ has demonstrated that South Australia's arguments concerning the overland stock-route and the pastoral potential of the Territory were false or of doubtful validity, but this does not affect the question as to whether or not they were inconsistent with subsequent South Australian policy. Besides, the men who used them probably believed them to be valid. When, therefore, a few months after the annexation, a new South Australian Government drew up a detailed scheme designed to establish a metropolis on the coast surrounded by 160-acre farms and decided to implement it by sea, it may legitimately be said to have perpetrated a 'volte face', though perhaps not an amazing one. South Australia's change of

135. Art. cit., pp.147-8.

front is likely to appear much less surprising once its causes are understood, and further research into the politics and economics of the period is likely to reveal them. The Waterhouse Government, which was in office from 1861 to within a few days of the annexation, was largely pro-squatter and expansionist. The Ayers Government, which succeeded it after a brief interlude, contained an important anti-squatter element (it was subsequently defeated by the squatting influence on the issue of Goyder's valuations) and was probably fairly representative of the self-dependent party in South Australia.¹³⁶ If so, the decision of the Ayers Government to repeat the Wakefield experiment on the northern coast may well appear to be the logical outcome of its own beliefs and attitudes and of those of the men it represented.¹³⁷

The question as to whether or not South Australia's arguments for annexation were inconsistent with the policy she subsequently adopted has unfortunately tended to obscure a more important question: why did South Australia demand the annexation of the Northern Territory? Price draws no distinction between South Australia's stated reasons for feeling entitled to additional territory and the actual

136. Cf. K.R. Bowes, op. cit. pp.117-9, 154-60, 172.

137. A thesis being prepared for submission for the degree of M.A. in the University of Adelaide by J. Cross will no doubt settle this question. Cf. Pike, Paradise of Dissent pp.515-6.

causes which led her to ask for new country. Duncan¹³⁸ draws no sharp distinction, but seems to imply that the chief cause was 'the urgently felt need of pastoralists for more land.' In support he evidences the northern expansion of the South Australian pastoral industry in the late fifties, the increase in stock numbers, and the 'numerous' enquiries in 1862 for land in the future Northern Territory; and the pastoral argument used by South Australia seems to support his view. There are, however, a number of serious weaknesses in this argument. Northern pastoral expansion had almost come to a halt by 1860, so that in 1863 the pastoral frontier was still 150 miles from the 26th parallel and tens of thousands of square miles of country that was to be occupied in the seventies was not yet being grazed. Nor was the occupied north overcrowded. Cattle numbers actually declined both in the north and in South Australia as a whole after 1859, and most of the considerable increase in sheep took place in the established districts.¹³⁹ In 1863 the Northern Pastoral District carried only some 172,000 sheep; six years later it carried 591,000.¹⁴⁰ Enquiries in 1862 for land in the future

138. Art. cit. pp.143-4; cf. op. cit. p.28. On the other hand, he suggested in op. cit. (p.40) that 'the whole project may have been the work of irresponsible speculators.' Cf. Bowes, op. cit. p.180 n.18.

139. Statistical Summary of South Australia, p.12; Statistical Registers of South Australia, 1860 p.17; 1861 p.17; 1863 p.17; 1864 p.92.

140. Statistical Registers 1863 p.17; 1876 p.101.

Northern Territory were, in fact, few; and all but one (from the firm of Levi and Watts) were from interested people outside South Australia.¹⁴¹

K.R. Bowes¹⁴² pointed out most of these weaknesses in 1964 in a brief note on the question of the annexation of the Territory. He also argued that the arguments used by Governor Daly reflected the views of the capitalists in his Cabinet, 'some of whom were already planning to send sheep to the Northern Territory'; and concluded that

The mania for annexation was the result partly of an aggressiveness not uncommon in States recently constituted, partly of the current belief in the inevitable progress of man, and partly of the interest of investors.

His last point seems established on his own evidence and our present knowledge of the character of pastoral enterprise in the fifties and early sixties.¹⁴³ The other two points contribute little as they stand to an appreciation of the 'mania'. South Australia was not the only recently constituted State on the Australian mainland, nor did her colonists monopolize the belief in progress. If they were firmer believers in progress than most, and their State more aggressive, it was, as already suggested, because of their own origins and South Australia's unique beginnings.

141. S.A.P.P. 122/63.

142. Op. cit., p.180-1, n.18.

143. See pp. 92-94 (above). Much of the knowledge is owed directly to Bowes himself.

Even before the colony was established its founders had hoped to keep its northern boundary open¹⁴⁴ in order to ensure its future greatness but, fearing competition, members of Parliament with land for sale in America forced them to fix it first at the 20th parallel, then at the Tropic of Capricorn, and finally at the 26th parallel.¹⁴⁵ The hope did not die. South Australians dreamed of an over-land route to the Centre and beyond to a tropical Eden and the riches of the East. Eyre failed and Sturt failed, but when Stuart succeeded their imaginations overflowed with visions of South Australian greatness; and, ardent believers in progress, they did not hesitate to assume the task of taming an additional 500,000 square miles. South Australia demanded the annexation of the Northern Territory because influential men of capital desired to invest and speculate in supposedly richer northern lands, and because of ambitions stemming from her unique beginnings. She got it because no other colony wanted it.

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144. A.G. Price, op. cit. p.7.; Dora Howard, 'The English Activities on the North Coast of Australia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. Vol. XXXIII (1931-2) pp.152-3.
145. J. Cross, personal communication; R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. 1919-20, Vol. XXI pp.27-8.

Duncan's conclusion, however, that South Australia acted rashly in demanding the annexation of the Territory and 'in disregarding the proposals of the Emigration Commissioners in 1862 for the division of the Territory along the Tropic of Capricorn, allowing South Australia the southern portion' could scarcely be criticized. 'This smaller area', he wrote, 'her financial resources might have permitted her to develop. Moreover, it could legitimately have been developed to South Australia's advantage, since it is a geographical appendage of that state, and dependent on its markets and transport system'.¹⁴⁶ Soon after the annexation, the Ayers Government decided to establish (via the sea) a predominantly agricultural settlement of small landholders on the coast of the Territory. The Northern Territory Act of 1863 set out the conditions under which land might be sold and provided that settlement was to be financed by the proceeds. The administration of the dependency was placed in the hands of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, where it remained until 1873.¹⁴⁷ In March 1864 applications were invited for preliminary land orders, and soon 723 buyers had

146. Op. cit. p.469.

147. The Minister Controlling the Northern Territory, whether his official title be Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration (as in 1863-73), Minister of Justice and Education (1873-75), Minister of Agriculture and Education (1875-76-77), Minister of Education (1876, 1877-90), Minister of Education and the Northern Territory (1890-92), or Treasurer (1892-99), will hereafter be referred to as 'the Minister'.

purchased 243,840 acres. However, the survey expeditions sent out failed to agree on the site for a capital or to place the holders of land orders in possession of their land. When Goyder succeeded in 1869 it was too late: buyers brought suit against the South Australian Government and eventually won back 10% more than their investments. South Australia herself, of course, was prepared to bear none of the financial responsibility - the settlement was to have been self-supporting - and even charged Territory accounts with 10% commission on land sales and presented herself with a commission of £2,000 per annum from July 1864 for administering the dependency. As a result, the new settlement, instead of having a land fund to begin with, was saddled with a debt of £170,000. It is perhaps idle to speculate concerning the effect this had on the future of Central Australia. Had the surveyors succeeded in placing the holders of land orders in possession of their land, more funds might have subsequently been available for the administration and development of the Centre; but, owing to South Australian ignorance concerning the country and frequent changes of ministries, this was virtually impossible.¹⁴⁸

The pastoral industry got away to as bad a start as

148. See Duncan, *op. cit.* pp.122-7; Price *op. cit.* pp.12ff, 49; C.P.P. 4/1937 (Payne-Fletcher Report) p.84; C.L.A. Abbott, Australia's Frontier Province (Sydney, 1950) p.19.

agriculture. The regulations issued under the 1863 Act, and the absence of local administration until 1870 and of efficient local administration until the mid-seventies,¹⁴⁹ did not encourage it. In 1864 squatters were offered leases which could be resumed upon six months' notice, at ls. per square mile for four years, 2s. 6d. for the next five years and 5s. for a further five years. Applications and rents were to be received in Palmerston only and had to be accompanied by a declaration stating that the country applied for had been stocked with ten small or three great cattle per square mile.¹⁵⁰ In 1866 tenure was increased to twenty-five years and rent decreased to a peppercorn for seven years and increased to 10s. for the remaining years.¹⁵¹ And in 1871, in order 'to meet the wishes of almost the only person who had expressed a desire to settle in the Northern Territory',¹⁵² new regulations provided that the first applicant for a block of country was to have a preferential right to it and to be allowed twelve months within which to stock it.¹⁵³ By 1868 only 4,089 square miles had been applied for, by 1871 only 6,702 square miles. None of it was in the Centre and none was stocked.¹⁵⁴ In 1870 there were only about 150 head

149. Duncan, *op. cit.* p.144.

150. S.A.P.P.16/64.

151. S.A. Govt. Gazette, 1.11.66, pp.1107-8.

152. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 2.8.71, col.46.

153. S.A. Govt. Gazette, 20.7.71, pp.1071-2.

154. M.C.N.T. In 132/72, 393/74.

of livestock in the Territory, all introduced by sea and all belonging to the Government.¹⁵⁵ Queensland squatters occupied 4-5,000 square miles of the Herbert River country during 1866-68, but it was not then known that this country lay within the Northern Territory and drought and depression soon caused it to be abandoned.¹⁵⁶ Not until the late seventies did Queensland pastoralists re-enter the Territory; it was left to the South Australian Government in 1870-71 to overland the first stock into the Territory¹⁵⁷ and to South Australian squatters in 1872 to form, in the MacDonnell Ranges, the first enduring runs in the Northern Territory.¹⁵⁸

The great northern drought of 1864-66 sufficiently explains the failure of the South Australian pastoral frontier to reach the Centre, let alone penetrate through it to the Top End, until twelve years after Stuart first visited it and almost nine years after the Territory was claimed by South Australia on the grounds of an inexpensive squatting penetration.¹⁵⁹ During the year ended 30th September 1865 some 235,125 of 827,706 sheep, 28,850 of

155. Duncan, op. cit. p.55.

156. Ibid, pp.47-53.

157. See Chap. 3 (below).

158. See Chap. 4 (below).

159. See Report of Drought Commission (loc. cit.); Duncan, op. cit. pp.131-6; Buxton, op. cit. pp.6-7; Mincham, op. cit. pp.160-176; Bowes, op. cit. pp.182ff; N.A. Richardson, Pioneers of the North-West of South Australia, 1856-1914 (Adelaide, 1925) p.24.

53,555 cattle and 520 of 550 horses on 83 northern runs died, and most of the calves, lambs and foals born failed to survive.¹⁶⁰ Sheep numbers in South Australia dropped from 4,106,000 in 1864 to 3,729,000 in 1865.¹⁶¹ They took only two years to exceed their 1864 level, but it was cattle, not sheep, that were needed if the pastoral frontier was to expand after the drought. Partly owing to the drought and partly owing to the habit of replacing cattle with sheep on northern runs, cattle numbers fell from 204,892 in 1864 to 123,820 in 1866 and in the north their decline was even more catastrophic. Their numbers continued to decline until 1870 and did not reach their level of 1859 until 1891.¹⁶² By weakening or killing working bullocks the drought sent the cost of cartage soaring. Northern runs, never very profitable, became liabilities and some were abandoned. Banks and capitalists refused to back pastoral enterprise and the wave of pastoral speculation and investment crashed. The over-landing of stock for great distances became virtually impossible. Only one South Australian (R. Milner) tried to cross to the Northern Territory in the sixties, and he

160. Mincham, op. cit. pp.168-9; Buxton, op. cit.p.6.
161. Statistical Summary of South Australia, (loc. cit.)p.12.
162. Ibid; Statistical Registers of South Australia, 1863
p.17; 1864,p.92; 1865,p.77;1866,p.7; 1876,pp.101-2.

started before the onset of the drought and^{was} forced by it to halt.¹⁶³ Once again South Australians began to regard the inland as a desert. 'I have visited the deserts of Arabia and Egypt', J.H. Angas told the Drought Commission of 1867, 'but never saw anything to compare with the fearful appearance of desolation caused by the recent drought from Mount Remarkable northwards.'¹⁶⁴ Goyder visited the northern country in 1865 and drew a line on a map to indicate the southern limits of the drought. Goyder himself and most other South Australians came to regard the country north of this line as wholly unsuitable for agriculture.¹⁶⁵ The line thus gave northern squatters a sense of security and lessened any desire they might have had to retreat further into the wilderness.

Some of the difficulties of northern pastoralists were caused by Goyder's high valuations of their runs in 1864. These were prompted by the prosperity of squatters hitherto, and their height may be gauged from the fact that rent payable on leaseholds jumped from £2,700 in 1864 to £99,000 in the following year.¹⁶⁶ But the drought brought legislative relief. The anti-squatter feeling in the community

163. R. Milner, Reminiscences in The Evening Star (Dunedin) 24.8.1927. For an extract from these Reminiscences see S.A.A. A797/B3. See also Chap. 3 (below) pp.202-3.

164. Report of Drought Commission (loc. cit.) p.92.

165. Ibid, pp.3,113; Meinig, op. cit. pp.45-6.

166. Statistical Register of S.A., 1872 p.54.

having subsided, in 1866 the squatters used their influence in Parliament to gain extended tenure or remission of rent for leases in the interior. In the following year the Waste Lands Amendment Act increased tenure and decreased rent. In the more remote areas tenure was fixed at twenty-one years and rent at a maximum of 2s.6d. per square mile. The legislative incentives for pastoral occupation were thus greater in South Australia by 1867 than in the Northern Territory; and became even greater towards the end of the decade when compensation for improvements was increased and a substantial allowance made for fencing.¹⁶⁷ Another effect of the drought, according to Bowes, was that pastoralists came to see the advantage of large runs. 'The few owners of small runs that remained at the end of the drought were convinced that their future security lay in large blocks, while the large holders were the more determined to develop the country on a vast scale.'¹⁶⁸ This development was to have important consequences for the Centre.

With the return of good seasons and better prices the South Australian pastoral industry, aided in the north by the introduction of the camel, slowly recovered. During the drought some good country was discovered beyond the

167. S.A. Register 4.8.77; Bowes, op. cit., pp.118,172,192, 202; Duncan, op. cit., p.132.

168. Bowes, op. cit. p.40.

northernmost stations. A number of pastoralists took starving stock to the Neales and possibly to the Macumba, but the high cost of cartage forced them to retreat after the drought.¹⁶⁹ And when a less severe drought occurred in 1869 stock from at least one station were taken to the Macumba.¹⁷⁰ But no-one thought of establishing a permanent run in South Australia's extreme north or beyond until reports from men constructing the overland telegraph dispelled the notion that the Centre was a desert and squatters were forced to retreat before farmers who had ceased to believe in Goyder's line.¹⁷¹

Had South Australia not constructed the overland telegraph European settlement in the Centre would have occurred to lesser extent than it did, or perhaps would not have occurred at all, in the seventies. Like her desire to annex the Northern Territory, South Australia's ambition to construct the telegraph stemmed from notions of aggrandizement and an ardent belief in progress. Linked with these basic attitudes were hopes that the telegraph would open up the back country, a desire for direct and swift communication with her new settlement at Port Darwin and anxiety lest Queensland or any other colony deprive her

169. Report of Drought Commission (loc. cit.) pp.2-3,16,38-9.

170. See Chap. 3, p. 195 (below).

171. See Chaps. 3 & 4 below.

of the monopoly of news arriving from Europe. The overland telegraph was, in a sense, the logical result of these ambitions. South Australia's success in the race with the eastern colonies to gain a cable connexion, however, and her actual decision to construct, and her success in constructing the line, were made possible by an unlikely series of events which, had they been known, would have caused settlers in the Centre in the seventies so heavily dependent on the telegraph stations to bless Lady Luck.

As he was the first to realize that the dream of an overland route might come true, so Governor MacDonnell was the first to suggest that an overland telegraph should be carried from Port Augusta to the northern ocean. In 1858, soon after the myth of Eyre's 'horseshoe' had been exploded, he suggested that such a line should be built; and during the next few years, especially after Stuart's successes, he repeated his suggestion a number of times, each time more forcefully.¹⁷² Charles Todd, Superintendent of Post and Telegraphs, and others took up the refrain.¹⁷³ Both Todd and MacDonnell and his advisers, however, were

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172. Despatches to the Sec. of State for the Colonies, Nos. 276/1858, 334/1859, 338/1859, 358/1859; W.L. Manser, The Overland Telegraph (unpublished B.A. Hons. Thesis, Adelaide, 1961) pp.8-10.
173. Todd to Commissioner of Public Works 18.7.1859 (S.A.P.P. 127/59); Report on Ocean Telegraph Scheme 8.10.62 (S.A.P.P. 236/62); S.A. Register 28.1.63; Minute of Executive Council, 20.1.59; W. Hardman (Ed.) op. cit., pp.xiv-xv.

counting on inter-colonial co-operation and Imperial support. When Newcastle made it clear in 1861 that no aid could be expected from the mother country,¹⁷⁴ and an Intercolonial Conference in 1863 declined to discuss suggestions for an Anglo-Australian telegraph,¹⁷⁵ interest in the proposals lapsed.

The suggestions of MacDonnell and Todd were prompted partly by a number of proposals made in the late fifties by companies, or would-be promoters of companies, to land a cable on Australian shores. The real prospects of such a cable being landed, however, were remote. Since many technical problems involved in laying deep-sea cables had yet to be overcome and no cable had been laid east of Suez, the companies demanded heavy subsidies which were beyond the means of the Australian colonies. But by the late sixties many of the technical problems had been solved, a number of successful cables had been laid across the Atlantic and another was being laid from Aden to Bombay.¹⁷⁶ W. Gisborne, one of the promoters of the fifties, floated a company to land a cable on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in 1867 renewed his overtures to the Australian colonies.¹⁷⁷ And in 1869 (when, partly owing

174. S.A.P.P. 47/1861, p.5.

175. S.A.P.P. 44/1863, p.5.

176. S.A.P.P. 63/1870-71, p.40; Todd, 'The Overland Telegraph', (S.A.A. A194), p.19; S.A.P.P. 42/69-70.

177. S.A.P.P. 15/1868-9, pp.50-3.

to a letter by R.D. Ross, a South Australian, to the London Times,¹⁷⁸ promoters became convinced that a cable between India and Australia was likely to prove very remunerative) there was a proliferation of companies anxious to land a cable on Australian shores.¹⁷⁹ Some proposed to land it at various places in the west, others at various points on the northern coast; most meant business. A cable seemed certain to be landed in the near future. All that remained to be decided was where it would be landed and which colony would secure the connexion. Of all the colonies Queensland was by far the most favourably placed. She was telegraphically connected with Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide and by 1869 had pushed her land lines as far north as Cardwell,¹⁸⁰ 360 miles from Normanton and 430 miles from Burketown on the Gulf of Carpentaria, where a number of companies proposed to land a cable. South Australian lines, on the other hand, extended only to Port Augusta, almost 2,000 miles from the northern and much

178. Marcus (Ed.), op. cit. p.99; J.W. Bull, Early Experiences of Life in South Australia, and an Extended Colonial History (Adelaide, 1884) p.395.

179. See Manser, op. cit. Chap. 2; Frank Clune, The Overland Telegraph: The Story of a Great Australian Achievement and the Link between Adelaide and Port Darwin (Sydney) 1955 Chap. XIV; S.A.P.P.s. 41A/69-70, 118/69-70.

180. S.A.P.P. 41A/1869-70, p.2; cf. 63/70-1 p.66.

further from the western coast.¹⁸¹ When Queensland, having received an assurance of co-operation from New South Wales, began constructing a line from Cardwell towards the Gulf,¹⁸² South Australians decided that they must either co-operate with her and ensure that Port Darwin was connected to her network or, with the co-operation of other colonies, have a cable landed in the west and a land line constructed between Perth and Adelaide. Todd came out strongly in favour of the western line¹⁸³ and on 26th January 1870 the Assembly passed a resolution calling upon the Strangways Government to endeavour to secure the western connexion with the co-operation of Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.¹⁸⁴

So far all of the companies had demanded subsidies and none of the colonial Governments were sure that their offers were bona fide. When, therefore, the powerful British and Australian Telegraph Company (B.A.T. Co.) floated in London in January with C.W. Earle as managing director, offered to finance the laying of a cable from Singapore (whither the cable from Bombay had been carried) to Port Darwin and the building of a land line to Burke-

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181. Todd, 'Report on the Post Office, Telegraph and Observatory Departments, 1884' in S.A.P.P. 191/84, p.6. This report outlines the history of telegraphs in South Australia.
182. S.A.P.Ps. 63/70-71 (p.40), 41A/1869-70 (pp.1,4).
183. S.A.P.P. 118/69-70, pp.3,5.
184. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 26.1.70, col. 1479.

town, and placed orders with the experienced Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company (T.C.M. Co.) to manufacture and lay the cable and build the line,¹⁸⁵ the entire subject assumed a different complexion. Captain S. Osborne, managing director of the T.C.M. Co., immediately asked the Queensland and South Australian Governments for permission to land the cable and build the line and despatched his brother and agent, N. Osborne, to negotiate with them.¹⁸⁶

When news of these events reached Adelaide, Strangways made a rapid decision: he would try to outbid Queensland for the connexion and have a telegraph line constructed from Port Augusta to Port Darwin. After consultations with N. Osborne he convinced him and his colleagues of the practicability of his scheme, got Todd to write a report strongly advocating a south-north line, and had Governor Fergusson send a telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking him to tell the South Australian Agent General, F.S. Dutton, to tell Earle that South Australia would either guarantee the interest on, or construct, a south-north line if the B.A.T. Co. would substitute it for the projected Port Darwin-Burketown line.¹⁸⁷

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185. S.A. Treasury In 154/70, 163/70, 221/70; S.A.P.P. 24/70-71, p.1.
186. S.A.P.Ps. 24/70-71 (p.1), 63/70-71 (p.65).
187. S.A.P.P. 24/70-71, pp.1-3; S.A.A. 1/Al; S.A. Treasury In 340/70.

A week or so later (on 25th April) he had a telegram sent to Earle through the same channels stating that his Government had decided to submit a Bill to Parliament, when it re-assembled in May, to authorize it to construct the line itself.¹⁸⁸ The proposal seemed an attractive one to the B.A.T. Co. and was made to appear even more attractive by Dutton's cajolery. It would relieve the company of its liability to the T.C.M. Co. to erect 800 miles of land lines to Burketown - land lines being regarded as hazardous and expensive - and would probably result in a rebate from the T.C.M. Co.¹⁸⁹ On 6th May Earle informed Dutton of his company's decision: it would relinquish the Burketown line if South Australia guaranteed to construct a line to Port Darwin by 1st December 1872, maintain it thereafter, and charge rates not in excess of those obtaining in other colonies; and it would not enter into arrangements with other colonies pending negotiations with South Australia. Formal acceptance of the offer was to reach the company by 1st August 1870.¹⁹⁰ Before news of this offer reached Adelaide, however, the Strangways Government had fallen

188. S.A. Treasury In 462/70, 386/70.

189. Report of Extraordinary General Meeting of B.A.T. Co., 9.8.70 (in S.A. Treasury In 581/80); cf. S.A. Treasury In 382/70.

190. S.A. Treasury In 382/70; S.A.P.P. 38/70-71, p.1. The deadline was subsequently altered to 7.8.70.

and John Hart had formed a Cabinet hostile to the idea of an overland telegraph from Port Augusta to Port Darwin and to the suggestion that South Australia should build it alone.

Strangways made his decision between a dissolution of the House on 23rd February and the meeting of the new House on 27th May, at a time when he was lucky to be still in office. He had managed quite well, after coming to office in November 1868, until the opening of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament in July 1869. By September, however, the Government's road tax had been rejected, its land bill taken out of its hands, and its budget tossed out. It survived only because of the disorganized state of the opposition and by assuming the extravagant position of being amenable only to a direct vote of no confidence.¹⁹¹ In December the opposition organized, and a motion of no-confidence was tabled. It was twice postponed, however, when Strangways became ill, and the Government took advantage of the postponements and the Christmas recess to rally support. When it was finally put on 4th January 1870, it was lost by three votes.¹⁹² Towards the end of January the Government was

191. S.A. Register (Supplement) 1.3.70.

192. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 16.12.69, col. 1150; 21.12.69, col.1153; 4.1.70, cols. 1162-78; S.A. Register 5.1.70, 1.3.70 (Supplement).

'Four times floored within a fortnight, and twice in a single afternoon',¹⁹³ and a motion of no confidence was carried in the Legislative Council without a division.¹⁹⁴ Strangways hung on grimly, prolonging the session beyond its normal term in an effort to get the Assembly to grant him supplies; but in mid-February, after losing on a motion of adjournment and after the House had rejected the Government's revised tariff, he was finally defeated on a motion of no confidence.¹⁹⁵ In desperation he decided to turn to the people and, though motions were passed in both Houses (by a majority of nine in the Assembly and a majority of eight in the Council) requesting the Governor to dismiss him, managed to persuade the Governor to dissolve Parliament.¹⁹⁶ He was forced to resign on the first day on which the new Parliament met.¹⁹⁷

It is perhaps idle to speculate as to what would have happened had there been a change of ministry instead of a dissolution, but it is probable that no other Premier would have made Strangways' decision concerning the telegraph connexion. The ministry formed by Hart (who was one of the leaders of the opposition in the old Assembly) after the election was composed of members who had sat in the old

193. S.A. Register, 1.2.70.
194. S.A.P.D. (L.C.) 26.1.70, col. 1472.
195. S.A. Register (Supplement) 1.3.70.
196. Ibid.
197. Ibid.

Parliament and was, as we have seen, hostile to the idea of an overland telegraph. Furthermore, at least one member of Strangways' Cabinet did not favour an overland telegraph, and the decision to construct the line was very much Strangways' own.¹⁹⁸ And the old Assembly as a whole favoured a western line.¹⁹⁹ Had Hart or anyone else formed a ministry before Strangways' 'coup d'etat', the decision to construct the overland telegraph might never have been made.

Fergusson's first telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies fell into the hands of Under-Secretary Herbert, erstwhile Colonial Secretary of Queensland, who probably showed it to Queensland's Agent General (Douglas).²⁰⁰ His second telegram fell into the same hands, was delayed for ten days before being forwarded to Dutton and was certainly shown to Douglas who immediately swung into negotiation with the B.A.T. Co.²⁰¹ By early June he had extracted a promise from the company to lay the cable to Normanton if Queensland guaranteed 5% interest to the company on the additional cable. Both Queensland and New South Wales offered to guarantee the interest, but the company backed down.²⁰² Why it should

198. See S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 10.11.69 (cols. 826-7), 26.1.70 (col. 1476); S.A. Treasurer to Agent General, 1.3.70 (S.A.A. 634).

199. See p. 130 (above).

200. S.A. Treasury In 340/70.

201. Ibid, 462/70; cf. S.A.P.P. 63/70-71, p.66.

202. S.A.P.P. 63/70-71, p.67; S.A. Treasurer to Agent General, 189/70.

have backed down on a proposal it had itself made is not wholly clear. On the one hand the considerations which led it to 'accept' South Australia's offer in the first place still weighed heavily with it²⁰³ and it was sharply reminded by Dutton of its promise to South Australia. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that it entered into negotiations with Queensland merely in order to extract more favourable terms from South Australia.²⁰⁴ On the other hand, Queensland was in a much better position than South Australia to make a quick connexion with any cable landed. The company, however, was not in a position to land a cable until the end of 1871 and it probably considered that this would give South Australia ample time to construct a telegraph line across the continent.²⁰⁵

On the day after Hart formed his ministry on 30th May he announced that he favoured co-operation among the colonies and a land line from Port Darwin to a central station in the neighbourhood of Wentworth in New South Wales.²⁰⁶ On 4th June he informed the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania that South Australian delegates to the Inter-Colonial Conference to be

203. See p.138 (above) and reference 189.

204. S.A.P.P. 131/70-71, p.2; S.A. Treasury In 659/70, 755/70; S.A. Treasurer to Agent General, 224/70; Cabinet Minute on S.A. Treasury In 412/71.

205. Report of Extraordinary General Meeting of B.A.T. Co., 9.8.70 (in S.A. Treasury In 581/70).

206. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 31.5.70, col.75; cf. ibid, 10.11.69, col.827.

held later in the month would be instructed to solicit their co-operation.²⁰⁷ Two days later news of the B.A.T. Co's offer to relinquish the Burketown line reached Adelaide, and South Australia, since the mail would depart on 20th June and formal acceptance of the proposal had to reach London by 7th August, was left with two weeks within which to come to a decision.²⁰⁸ On 7th June Hart asked the House to approve his scheme; but an amendment to his motion, which called upon the Government to take immediate steps to construct a line of telegraph from Port Augusta to Port Darwin, was passed by thirteen votes.²⁰⁹

This change in the opinion of the House from favouring a western line to favouring a south-north line must be explained partly in terms of the attractiveness of the B.A.T. Co's offer and partly in terms of the April elections. Of 36 M.P.'s, 6 'ministerialists' and 6 members of the 'opposition' did not seek re-election. Of the 24 others, 6 'ministerialists' and 3 members of the 'opposition' were defeated.²¹⁰ The results thus represented both a defeat for the Government and a defeat for the House itself. The question of telegraphic connexion, however, does not appear to have been an

207. S.A.P.P. 63/70-71, p.16.

208. Ibid; cf. S.A. Treasury In 382/70.

209. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 7.6.70, cols. 118-29; Votes and Procs. of H. of A., No. 23/1870, p.5.

210. S.A. Register, 23.4.70.

important one. The vote was probably the electors' way of expressing their dissatisfaction with a Government and a House that achieved next to nothing in a lengthy session. The 21 new members who took their seats in May were determined to get things done.

On 8th June, the Government, rather than resign, decided to bow to the wishes of its predecessor and of the House, and obtained leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the construction of a line of telegraph from Port Augusta to Port Darwin.²¹¹ By 16th June the Bill had passed both Houses and had received the Governor's assent.²¹² Even at this stage, however, it was by no means certain that South Australia would gain the connexion. Since Hart still hoped for the co-operation of other colonies the Act provided only for the raising of a £120,000 loan and could not possibly be construed as a formal acceptance of the B.A.T. Co's offer.²¹³ On 18th July, after the Inter-Colonial Conference²¹⁴ had decided that it was inexpedient to consider the question of telegraphic connexion at a time when South Australia or Queensland was likely to solve it, Hart sent a telegram to Dutton authorizing him to bind the Government to complete the line by 1st January 1872, a

211. Cabinet minute on S.A. Treasury In 340/70; S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 8.6.70 (col.139), 10.6.70 (col.195), (L.C.) 14.6.70 (cols. 202-3).

212. Act No. 2 of 1870.

213. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 8.6.70, col.139; 10.6.70, col.187.

214. S.A.P.P. 63/70-71, p.6.

date suggested by the T.C.M. Co.²¹⁵ The telegram reached Dutton seven days ahead of the mail-steamer, which had broken down, but five days behind the deadline for a formal acceptance of the B.A.T. Co's offer. Earle, who wanted an Act authorizing the South Australian Government to enter into an agreement with his company, declined to regard the telegram as a formal acceptance of the company's offer and was annoyed to find that it mentioned a later date for completion of the line than the one he had originally insisted upon and nothing at all about the rates to be charged on the line.²¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Queensland Agent General, who had been instructed to leave no stone unturned in order to upset the understanding between South Australia and the company, had made several offers to Earle, who now threatened to let South Australia down. Only the diplomatic agility of Dutton saved the day for South Australia.²¹⁷ When the Act finally arrived, Earle was wholly unsatisfied with it, but Dutton managed to hold him to the understanding until energetic measures taken by South Australia to construct the line convinced him that she was acting in good faith.²¹⁸ Queensland gave up in the race, and

215. Ibid 131/70-71 (p.2);38/70-1 (p.1).

216. Ibid 131/70, pp.3-4.

217. Ibid, pp.4-5; S.A. Treasury In 657/70.

218. S.A. Treasury In 659/70,525/70,755/70; S.A. Treasurer to Ag. General, 191/70,198/70.

in October an Act²¹⁹ was passed by the South Australian Parliament authorizing an agreement,²²⁰ which was drawn up and signed by April of the following year. By that time, thanks partly to the good seasons in the north, the construction of the line was well under way.²²¹ Had the B.A.T. Co's offer arrived during another great drought South Australia might never have accepted it; had she accepted it during even a mild drought she might have been forced to abandon the line in the dry country north-west of the Flinders.

By sinking wells the men who constructed the over-land telegraph made Stuart's route more practicable for stock. The reports they sent south during a favourable season enticed the first pastoralists to the Centre. They explored much new country and their work led directly to the exploration of much more in the seventies, including the upper Finke basin, where a mission was established in 1877.²²² But for Strangways' powers of political survival, the election of twenty-one new members to the South Australian Assembly, Dutton's energy and ability,²²³ and the kindness of the seasons

219. No. 11 of 1870.

220. S.A. Treasury In 201/71; S.A. Treasurer to Agent General, 66/71, 132/71.

221. See Chap. 3 (below); also S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 10.6.70, col. 190; S.A. Treasurer to Agent General 198/70, 210/70.

222. See Chaps 3, 4, 5 (below).

223. Cf. S.A. Treasury In 386/70 (Minute by Gov. Fergusson, 4.7.70).

the prophecy of the Executive Council in 1862 that the Centre would be one of the last portions of Australia to be settled might, if areas uninhabitable for Europeans of the nineteenth century are excepted, very nearly have come true.

South Australia in 1857, according to Pike, was 'an atomistic society' which had 'failed to gain any sense of community.'²²⁴

The population was of predominantly British stock but it was pointless to assert 'we are all South Australians here' when obstacles were raised against the assimilation of Irish girls and Germans remained in exclusive settlements. Nostalgia for England irritated those who accepted a permanent colonial home. Loyalty changed its meaning as the colonial-born out-numbered their migrating parents. Friction developed between 'old colonists' and new arrivals, between bushmen and townsmen, between immigrants from neighbouring colonies and those from England.²²⁵

Nevertheless, as Pike himself has observed, most urban South Australians were agreed upon at least one important negative goal: they wanted to avoid homogeneity with the rest of the continent, to be and remain a 'province' distinct from the 'convict colonies'.²²⁶ They achieved their goal to a certain extent and to a greater extent believed that they achieved it. —————→

224. Pike, op. cit. p.495.

225. Ibid.

226. Ibid., pp.495-7.

Though possessing no community of interest in other respects, when confronted with the problem of preserving their 'unique heritage' they saw themselves as one people.

In Adelaide by 1857 a social pattern based less on position and even less on birth than on 'respectability' had emerged, and was to persist, with few modifications, for generations. The Governor had come to be 'grudgingly recognized as the head of society.'²²⁷ Next in rank to him was a 'recognized upper crust of gentry [or 'leading colonists'] and their wives', who numbered less than 300 in 1851 and who were mostly officials, professionals, gentlemen landowners and merchants.²²⁸ The gap between them and wage-earners was filled by a solid middle-class of 'shopkeepers and tradesmen'. There was, however, no rigid class system. Any colonist could acquire 'respectability' through thrift, temperance or abstinence, piety and ownership of land, though he was unlikely to attain the rank of 'leading colonist' unless he had arrived early and unlikely to remain in it if not supported by wealth.²²⁹

Among country-dwellers, who outnumbered townsmen until the present century, there were few social distinctions. In the agricultural areas farmers and labourers alike practised, as a rule, the 'middle-class virtues' of 'thrift, perseverance and lack of pretension...already

227. Ibid, p.499.

228. Ibid, p.500.

229. Ibid, pp.502,509-516.

enthroned in Adelaide.'²³⁰ In pastoral areas, however, it may be that manners and mores were different, resembling in some ways those which derived largely from convicts and pastoral workers in the eastern colonies.

There are still, according to Russel Ward, 'some real differences in outlook'²³¹ between South Australians, especially those living in Adelaide and the agricultural areas near it, and the inhabitants of other Australian States. These he attributes to the facts that no convicts were sent directly to South Australia, that 'relatively fewer penniless, unskilled laborers and many fewer Irish people' and 'relatively many more artisans and other respectable, industrious middle-class people, radical or liberal in politics and piously non-Conformist or evangelical Anglican in religion',²³² emigrated to South Australia, and that 'South Australia's agricultural economy gave working men a better chance of becoming their own masters by exercise of the thoroughly "un-Australian" qualities of sobriety and thrift.'²³³ On the other hand, he argues, almost from the moment of foundation 'the manners and mores reflected in the convicts' and pastoral workers' ballads (especially in New South Wales and Queensland) rapidly gained strength among the lower

230. Ibid, p.503.

231. The Australian Legend (O.U.P., 1958), p.6.

232. Australia (New Jersey, 1965), p.42.

233. The Australian Legend, p.183.

orders',²³⁴ especially among pastoral workers, in South Australia. This he attributes to the extreme mobility of pastoral workers in Australia, to the influence of runaway convicts and ex-convicts, and the probability that 'like conditions' in the pastoral areas of South Australia and the eastern colonies had 'like effects'.²³⁵

The truth concerning South Australia's pastoral north in 1870 may well lie somewhere between the two pictures painted by Ward. Though an apparent dearth of evidence makes this difficult to establish, it is necessary, since most of the men who pioneered the Centre probably came from the northern areas of South Australia, to attempt to draw some conclusions.

On the one hand, it is a mistake to assume that the influence of convicts and ex-convicts (and of returned South Australian diggers, who may be presumed to have imbibed some of the Australian ethos on the Victorian gold-fields) was mainly confined to pastoral areas. Many returning diggers took to farming, and ex-convicts taught farmers as well as pastoral workers much about the art of battling with a frontier environment.²³⁶ Furthermore, there was considerable movement between pastoral and agricultural areas, especially during and after the great drought;

234. Ibid, p.7.

235. Ibid, pp.7-8.

236. Pike op. cit., pp.284-5, 451-2, 460, 498.

and census figures for 1871 reveal that a greater proportion of South Australians who were born outside the Australian colonies (and who may therefore be presumed to have been less open to 'Australian' influences than native-born people) than of those who were born within the colonies were attracted to the pastoral districts.²³⁷ Some took to a pastoral way of life, moreover, partly in the hope of gaining respectability by acquiring land or the status of 'bushman' or 'pioneer'; and having gained it, they did their best to instil it into others. Those who succeeded made do at first with log huts, mutton and damper, but all probably hoped to emulate a station like Coonatto in the southern Flinders Ranges which in 1862, with its neat stone buildings, seemed like a small town to the English traveller William Jessop and afforded 'a dinner which the most fastidious Londoner could not despise.'²³⁸ Some of those who failed regarded themselves as partly compensated by their reputations as 'bushmen'. Though the prestige of the landless bushman in South Australia - unless he was an early arrival - was not nearly so great as in the eastern colonies,²³⁹ it increased as South Australians became convinced that their fortunes were to

237. S.A.P.P. 9/1872, p.130.

238. Mincham, op. cit., p.100.

239. Cf. Ward, The Australian Legend p.5; Pike, op. cit. pp.460, 502-3.

be won, if anywhere, in the interior, until almost equal to that of the 'pioneer' or 'early colonist'. '[It] is not my intention to place myself before you as an Explorer', began Stephen King, with humble pride, in a speech to leading colonists of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia in 1890, 'but merely as one of Stuart's companions and a Bushman, the latter title I think I have gained having spent many years in the Bush.' [sic].²⁴⁰

On the other hand, it is probable that many of the 'penniless, unskilled laborers' who did migrate to South Australia went to the pastoral frontier, and that convicts and ex-convicts, especially in the early forties, when immigration was at a standstill, did exert a powerful influence there. Frederick Hayward of Pekina Run in the southern Flinders described his shearers in 1847 as 'the offscouring of the colony, old lags or convicts, who had pitched on the furthest out station to avoid being followed by the police';²⁴¹ and he subsequently referred to 'the worthless scum of humanity that formed the majority of our men'.²⁴² Since 'undesirable' types tended to head for the

240. 'Notes for a Speech on Stuart's Expedition, 1861-2' in S.A.A. 143/6. Cf. Simpson Newland, Paving the Way: A Romance of the Australian Bush (London, 1913; first published 1893) p.517; D.J. Gordon, The Central State: South Australia: Its History, Progress and Resources pp.15-17, 214ff; The Centenary History of South Australia (Adelaide, 1936) pp.138-9.

241. Mincham, op. cit. p.85.

242. Ibid, p.93.

far north, respectable South Australians came to regard it (and later, the Centre) as a good place for 'undesirable' types to be. Many of the men who went north were unmarried, some could not read and more could not write.²⁴³ Some had an aversion for city life and middle-class values, and many of those who set out to 'make good', and failed, soon threw piety, thrift and temperance to the winds. In 1870 a South Australian Bush Mission with headquarters in Adelaide and the backing of wealthy citizens was opened at the suggestion of William M. Hugo who, having seen 'with pain' in 1866 'the debaucheries of bushmen when making their periodical visits to the city' had concluded that 'there was no class of the community more needing protection against themselves and friendly help.'²⁴⁴

Among the most respectable of South Australian citizens were the German Lutherans. In 1871 they numbered only some 15,000 or 8% of the European population.²⁴⁵ But already they had played an important role in the economic development of the colony, had been foremost in evangelizing the Aborigines, and were soon, in conjunction with the Hermannsburg Mission Institute in Hannover, to establish the first Christian mission in the Northern Territory and

243. S.A.P.Ps. 9/72 (pp.86,130), 73/77 (pp.4,13).
244. Hodder, op. cit. Vol. 2, p.38.
245. Marcus (Ed.) op. cit., p.328.

to become pioneers of its pastoral industry. A thoroughly conservative community, their missionary activity was heavily influenced by the past: by their ties with the home country and their own short history in a new environment.

George Fife Angas, founder of the company that delivered the infant colony and 'the real father of its religious liberties', had intended South Australia to be "a place of refuge for pious Dissenters from Great Britain",²⁴⁶ but the largest single group of pious Dissenters he persuaded to emigrate were over 400 German Lutherans headed by their pastor and spokesman in all things, August Kavel. Not that much persuasion was necessary. With all his craft, Friedrich Wilhelm III had been able, in his efforts to create a united Prussian State Church, neither to deceive nor sweetly to persuade Kavel and many another Altlutheraner pastor. Opposition, especially in the orthodox Lutheran eastern provinces, which had but recently been acquired by Prussia and whose churches had enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, was followed by persecution and a widespread desire to emigrate. When, therefore, in 1838 Angas offered £8,000 as passage money, Kavel leapt at the chance to lead his flock to a land of religious liberty. In 1841 he was followed by

246. Pike, op. cit., p.130.

Pastor Gotthard Daniel Fritzche and a contingent of more than 200 emigrants for similar reasons and from the same eastern provinces.²⁴⁷

Almost wholly rural in origin²⁴⁸ and of an independent spirit, the members of both Kavel's and Fritzche's congregations preferred to farm their own or rented land to working for English masters. The self-supporting settlements they founded - Klemzig, Hahndorf, Lobethal, Bethany (near Tanunda) - became the focal points of German Lutheranism in South Australia.²⁴⁹ Though religious motives were the dominant cause of emigration in the case of each of these groups, they were less conspicuous in earlier and later migrations. The sixty-nine²⁵⁰ (approximately) Germans who arrived before Kavel's group (to judge from the impression they created with the English settlers) scarcely had

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247. Ibid, pp.130-1; Th. Hebart, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (U.E.L.C.A.): Its History, Activities and Characteristics, 1838-1938 (Adelaide, 1938. Abridged English edition of the German original) pp.23-26,43; A. Brauer, Under the Southern Cross: History of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (Adelaide 1956) pp.3-7,13-18,53-66; A. Lodewyckx, Die Deutschen in Australien (Stuttgart,1932) pp.34-40,47-48; A.G. Price, Founders and Pioneers of South Australia (Adelaide, 1929) pp.197-204,217-8.
248. Brauer, op. cit. p.22; cf. C.A. Price, 'German Settlers in South Australia, 1838-1900' in Hist. Studs. Vol. 7, No. 28 (May 1957) p.443. I have accepted C.A. Price's definition (op. cit.,n.15) of 'rural', which includes village dwellers.
249. Brauer, op. cit. pp.40-49,71; Hebart, op. cit. pp.37-39, 43-44.
250. S.A.A. Research Note 55.

religion uppermost in their minds.²⁵¹ Later immigrants came for a variety of reasons: to better themselves materially, to escape political oppression (1,626,²⁵² the largest number in any year before the present century, arrived in 1849, most being refugees from the Forty-Eight Revolution), to join their relatives and friends.²⁵³ Nevertheless, while none came to escape religious persecution, for that had ended in 1840 with the death of Friedrich Wilhelm III, many came to escape the memory or the fear of it.²⁵⁴ There can be little doubt that most of the new arrivals were staunch Lutherans who joined one or other of the two (since 1846) Lutheran Synods in South Australia: thus by 1871 a total of 13,640 Germans had migrated to the colony, while 15,412²⁵⁵ designated themselves as Lutherans at the census in the same year.

Throughout the nineteenth century German immigrants were predominantly rural in origin, though the percentage of immigrants from urban areas showed a steady increase:

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251. Brauer, op. cit. p.38; A.G. Price, op.cit. (1929) p.203; Lodewyckx, op. cit. pp.33-34.
252. S.A.A. Res. Note 55.
253. Cf. Lodewyckx, op. cit. pp.49-50, Hebart, op. cit. pp.54-55.
254. Th. Hebart, Die Vereinigte Evangelisch=Lutherische Kirche in Australien (V.E.L.K.A.): Werden, Wirken und Wesen: Eine Zentenarschrift, 1838-1938 (Adelaide 1938) p.32; Brauer, op. cit. p.5; A.G. Price, op. cit. (1929) pp.216-7.
255. I.A. Harmstorf, Germans in the South Australian Parliament 1857-1901 (unpublished B.A. Hons. thesis, Adelaide, 1959) Appendix J; S.A.A. Res. Note 55.

Table 3 : German Immigrants into South Australia²⁵⁶

Origin	1836-47		1848-59		1860-71		1872-1900		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rural	2,142	80.6	7,331	75.3	850	68.2	2,807	60.0	13,130	} 69.4
									12,713	
Urban	515	19.4	2,405	24.7	397	31.8	1,872	40.0	5,189	} 30.6
									5,606	
Total	2,657	100	9,736	100	1,247	100	4,679	100	18,319	100

As was to be expected, most immigrants of rural origin took to rural occupations. And though, after the arrival of Kavel's and Fritzche's congregations, there were few further examples of block migrations of village or district communities, there is evidence that immigrants 'tended to gravitate together for reasons of cultural affinity: dialect, traditional customs, and so on'.²⁵⁷ This tendency was most marked among immigrants from Eastern Germany; almost two-fifths of those Germans who settled in the 'south German Area' of South Australia in the nineteenth century were

256. C.A. Price, art. cit. p.443 (for percentages); S.A.A. Res. Note 55 (for numbers). Price evidently worked from a set of figures differing slightly from S.A.A. Res. Note 55. The figures for rural and urban immigrants in each period have been deduced by taking the percentages supplied by Price for each period of the total number of immigrants indicated in S.A.A. Res. Note 55. When added they amount to 13,130 rural and 5,189 urban immigrants; but when deduced from Price's percentages for the whole period the figures are 12,713 and 5,606 respectively. Harmstorf, op. cit., Appendix seems inaccurate.

257. C.A. Price, art. cit. p.444.

Eastern Germans, while in the 'north German Area' the proportion was almost one half.²⁵⁸ The fact that these two Areas were the early strongholds of Lutheran confession-ism in South Australia was probably as important a cause of this tendency as the 'reasons of cultural affinity' mentioned by Price; but whatever the cause, the result was the establishment of enduring orthodox-Lutheran farming communities in fairly concentrated areas east and north of Adelaide. In 1871 10,494 of the 15,412 Lutherans in South Australia were resident in the electoral districts of Gumeracha, Mount Barker, and Onkaparinga (south German Area) and of Barossa and Light (north German Area).²⁵⁹

The members of these communities were thrifty and industrious but scarcely in a position to support any mission that was not largely self-supporting. Though they were least affected, because of the self-sufficiency of their settlements and the general shortage of garden produce, by the depression of the early forties, and though they were able to capitalize on the gold boom of the next decade, the fact that most had arrived with little or no capital and were charged exorbitant rents for land ensured their poverty for a generation.²⁶⁰

258. Ibid, p.445.

259. Harmstorf, op. cit., Appendix K.

260. J. Lyng, Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress (M.U.P. 1935) p.32; A.G. Price, op. cit. (1929) pp.214,216; Lodewyckx, op. cit. pp.67-8; Pike, Paradise of Dissent pp.209,452; Brauer, op. cit. pp.39,79.

Scanty economic resources and preoccupation with earning a living and settling in were alone sufficient to deter these early Lutherans from engaging in independent missionary activity for some time. But there were other factors operating: the smallness of the Lutheran population; a shortage of pastors and hence of missionaries; a rift,²⁶¹ never since healed, between Kavel and Fritzche in 1846 over matters of Church organization, interpretation of articles of the Augsburg Confession concerning Church-State relations, and above all, the doctrine of chiliasm; and the failure of Dresden missionaries in South Australia to achieve much success among the Aborigines. Consequently the high flames of missionary ardour that had been kindled among these people by the Pietist movement and other developments in Germany²⁶² and by their contacts with various missionary societies, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Mission

261. See Hebart, op. cit. (English edition) pp.49-53; Brauer, op. cit. pp.102-115. Since I wrote the above the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia have decided to unite.

262. See Gustav Warneck, A History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time (translated and edited by Georg Robson, London, 1901), pp.116-25.

Society of Dresden (later Leipzig),²⁶³ were somewhat dampened. Not until fuel was added from overseas did they lick out towards the Aborigines.

Two Dresden missionaries had arrived in South Australia in 1838 as a result of negotiations between Kavel, Angas and the South Australian Company and in 1840 were followed by two more. They engaged, successfully at first, it seemed, in mission work among the Aborigines in the vicinity of Adelaide, Port Lincoln and Encounter Bay, and by 1846 had published four pamphlets on Aboriginal dialects and customs. However, owing to the withdrawal of financial support by their sponsors and the inability or unwillingness of Lutheran congregations in South Australia to support them (they openly sided with Fritzche in his dispute with Kavel, while Fritzche himself until 1846 was in a delicate position in respect of support of missionaries who were openly hostile to Kavel), one by one they abandoned their work and by the mid-fifties had

263. Founded in 1819 as the Dresden Missionary Aid Society, in 1836 it became an independent missionary organization because of its aversion to Basel 'unionism'. In 1848 headquarters were removed to Leipzig. See Warneck, op. cit. pp.121-2; F.J.H. Blaess, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia, Inc., and Mission Work Amongst the Australian Natives in Connection with the Dresden (Leipzig) Lutheran Mission Society and The Hermannsburg Mission Institute, 1838-1900 (unpublished thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity to Concordia Seminary, St.Louis, Mo., U.S.A., 1941) pp.2-3; Brauer, op. cit. p.143.

all joined the South Australian Synod (Fritzche's congregations).²⁶⁴ Their importance lies more in their influence on subsequent events than in any immediate results they achieved. They helped to bring about a change from 'assimilation' to 'assimilation after segregation' in South Australian policy towards Aborigines; and their legacy for Lutheran mission policy was similar: an insistence that Aborigines must be concentrated on settlements away from the evil influences of other Aborigines and of dissolute whites.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, partly owing to their influence within the Lutheran Church, annual mission festivals were inaugurated in 1848 in both the South Australian Synod and the Langmeil-Lights Pass Synod (Kavel's congregations) and gifts were annually sent to the Leipzig Mission Society.²⁶⁶

It was this association with the Leipzig Mission Society that induced, in strange fashion, the two Lutheran Churches in South Australia to enter the Aboriginal mission field. The South Australian Synod took particular interest in the work of the Leipzig missionaries in India, and when it founded the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society of

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264. Blaess, op. cit. pp.3-17; Brauer, op. cit. pp.143-78; R.M. Gibbs, Humanitarian Theories and the Aboriginal Inhabitants of South Australia to 1860 (unpublished B.A. Hons. thesis, Adelaide, 1959) pp.85-89,93-96.
265. See pp.180-1 (below); also Gibbs, op. cit. pp.84,95-100.
266. Blaess, op. cit. pp.18-19.

South Australia in 1854 to support Lutheran missions in general, especially in India, it acted upon the suggestion of a Leipzig missionary. But already there had arisen a division among Leipzig missionaries in India, one side demanding a full-blooded attack on the caste-system and the other insisting on a policy of compromise. The latter got the upper hand, and missionaries J. Meischel and E. Appelt, on the losing side, resigned, sailed for South Australia in 1860 and 1861, and joined the sympathetic South Australian Synod.²⁶⁷

Soon Meischel was urging the South Australian Synod that, instead of sinfully supporting the 'caste-mission', it had a clear duty to take up the work of the earlier Dresden missionaries and preach the gospel to the heathen of its adopted country. The Church Council reacted favourably and put out feelers; resolutions were sent in from various congregations; a teacher volunteered for service. Then in September 1862 the Langmeil-Lights Pass Synod authorized its two remaining pastors (Auright and Rechner - Kavel had died in 1860) to approach the South Australian Synod with the proposal to unite for mission work in co-operation with Pastor Ludwig Harms, Director of the Hermannsburg Mission Institute, Hannover. John

267. Ibid, pp.19-21.

McDouall Stuart returned from his trip across the continent in January 1863, and Auricht and Rechner, in Adelaide on that festive occasion, thought of the two thousand miles of natives waiting in the north to be evangelized, paid a call on Meischel, unearthed a stirring appeal for mission work written by him thirteen months previously, and published it in their Church paper. When, therefore, the pastors of both Synods met at Blumberg in March 1863, they were in a mood for action. It was resolved to establish a joint mission and to ask ex-missionary Schuermann to take charge of it. Schuermann declined, and in August a further meeting decided to approach Harms of Hermannsburg for missionaries and to cease supporting Leipzig missions. In the excitement doctrinal and constitutional differences were forgotten until Meischel drew attention to them in 1864 and Harms declined to send missionaries for an undertaking that had anything to do with congregations (Auricht's and Rechner's) that were 'steeped up to the ears in chiliasm'.²⁶⁸ But the deaths of Kavel in 1860 and of Fritzsche soon after the Blumberg conference had removed a big obstacle to reconciliation. In June 1864 both Synods met to resolve their differences. A vague compromise was reached on the two chief causes of the 1846 rupture: the South Australian Synod allowed that chiliasm might be

268. Brauer, op. cit., p.224.

taught 'provided it does not degenerate into enthusiasm (Schwärmerei)', while the Langmeil-Lights Pass Synod retracted Kavel's 'Protestations' but reserved the right to protest in future against any passages of the Augsburg Confessions whereby the State could be given any rights to interfere in the work of the Church. The 'Confessional Union' established at this meeting was to maintain a precarious existence for scarcely a decade.²⁶⁹

Ludwig Harms, having noted the reconciliation and that "In New Holland (Australia) numerous native tribes have been discovered in the inland salt-lake districts",²⁷⁰ agreed to send missionaries, and died. His loyal brother and successor, Theodor Harms, more than honoured the commitment: pastors G.A. Heidenreich and C.G. Hellmuth were appointed to vacant parishes of the South Australian Synod, and by October 9th 1866 two Hermannsburg missionaries and a Hermannsburg Colonist were heading along the dusty road north of Tanunda to establish a mission on a Government grant of 100 square miles of sandhills near Lake Hope.²⁷¹

Hermannsburg Mission Institute was to provide missionaries for missions and pastors for the Lutheran Church in Australia for more than forty years.²⁷² Founded in 1849

269. See ibid, pp.213-6,223-4; Blaess, op. cit. pp.22-6; Hebart, op. cit. (English ed.) pp.74-5.

270. Blaess, op. cit. p.28; Brauer, op. cit. p.224.

271. Ibid, p.225; Blaess, op. cit. p.29.

272. Blaess, op. cit., appendix.

by Ludwig Harms, 'the popular pastor of a village congregation which underwent a revival through his ministry, at Hermannsburg',²⁷³ within twenty years it had, besides the mission in South Australia, thirty-seven stations in Southeast Africa, five in India, and a number of missionaries to European peoples in America and Greece.²⁷⁴ Each mission bore the impress of Harms's 'strong Lutheran confessional tendency' and of his 'kind of mediaeval missionary ideal that the Christianizing of nations could be accomplished most safely and most economically by the sending out of whole missionary colonies.'²⁷⁵ Colonisten were trained and sent to every mission to perform the 'external' work, and it was almost obligatory upon all personnel to marry or select a bride before embarking across the seas. Both the brothers Harms had an uncompromising attitude to all native customs that could not be reconciled with articles of their faith. While they regarded the heathen savage as a fellow creature capable of being saved and needing to be saved, they were scarcely influenced by any of the theories that attributed nobility of character to him. The savage, totally fallen from the image in which God had created him, was a miserable and degraded creature, and his religion the vast dark fortress of a very real and

273. Warneck, op. cit., p.124.

274. Hermannsburger Missionsblatt, 7/1869, p.119.

275. Warneck, op.cit., p.124.

powerful Satan. To tear down this fortress and replace it with a belief in man's sinfulness before a just God, in the existence of a life after death and a heaven and a hell to spend it in, and in the power of Jesus Christ's death to rid all men of sin and thus fit them for heaven, was the God-given duty of the Hermannsburg missionaries. Social salvation was relatively unimportant; for what was life here on earth but a miserable flutter in eternity? Education and conversion of native peoples into useful members of society were not ends in themselves, but rather means of furthering the one great aim of ensuring the future welfare of their souls through their conversion to the Lutheran faith.²⁷⁶

While similar beliefs were held by other Protestant missionaries of the mid-nineteenth century, few could have held them with such conviction and intensity. The brothers Harms and their missionaries were so absolutely sure that they possessed absolute truth about man and his relation to God that they astound a modern until he remembers that the brand of Lutheranism they practised derived from the backwater of confessional Lutheranism in Europe.²⁷⁷

Isolated in a small rural community, the people of Hermannsburg and many another village in Eastern and Central Germany

276. Hermannsburger Missionsblatt, 4/1867 pp.67-8 and 1865-95 passim.

277. Cf. Blaess, op. cit. p.2.

had preserved intact a theology first propounded in an age of intolerance. One critic, in twelve theses designed to ridicule the Lutheran position, was moved to assign to Th. Harms the prayer: 'Bless, good God, the mission, but only the Lutheran one';²⁷⁸ and Harms himself wrote: 'We want to have nothing to do with other teachings, we prefer to walk our way alone'.²⁷⁹ Thus it was that every emissary of the Hermannsburg Mission Institute went bravely among the savages utterly convinced of the truth of his message, never questioning his right to conduct a mission, and fortified by a paradoxical pride which told him that though he was not doing anything special in the eyes of a God who could easily dispense with his labours, yet was he chosen of God to perform a noble task.²⁸⁰

Not surprisingly, Hermannsburg theology fitted almost exactly into the pattern of South Australian Lutheranism. Only the most conservative Lutherans chose to leave the fatherland because of attempts to create a united State Church, and in the new circumstances, surrounded by an alien community and largely cut off from winds of doctrinal change, they naturally clung to as much of the old as they could. Not until the present century did one of the two Synods in South Australia show any signs of tolerance and compromise

278. Hermannsburger Missionsblatt, 8/69, p.152.

279. Ibid, 7/69 p.125.

280. Ibid, 2/67; 9/67, pp.175-6.

in relation to other creeds, while ELSA (The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia) remains to this day one of the most uncompromising and conservative Lutheran Churches in the world.

As they clung to their religion, so the Lutherans in South Australia clung to their German culture. According to Hebart²⁸¹ this was 'almost exclusively' due to the influence of the Churches. Certainly, Deutschtum was fostered in Church-school and pulpit. Hermannsburg missionaries were sent out with instructions to be German, Hermannsburgian, and Lutheran.²⁸² Children were encouraged to remain in the same districts as their parents, and tended to do so.²⁸³ Nor did the contrast between the 'piety and industry [of German settlers] and the intemperance and profligacy of some British labourers'²⁸⁴ increase desires to be assimilated. 'I often wonder', wrote Heidenreich in 1872 of 'respectable' South Australia, 'whether God is still in this Sodom and Gomorrah.'²⁸⁵ The further a German Lutheran moved into the outback, the more marked (probably with good reason)²⁸⁶ became this attitude to the world about

281. Quoted in C.A. Price, art. cit. p.448; cf. Die Australische Zeitung, 5.1.75.

282. Hermannsburger Missionsblatt, 9/67 p.177.

283. C.A. Price, art. cit. p.447.

284. Ebid, p.448.

285. G.A. Heidenreich to Th. Harms, 6.4.72 (copy of letter in possession of P.A. Scherer, Adelaide).

286. See pp.152-3 (above).

him. It was to be the source of not a little friction between missionaries and settlers in Central Australia. In the early days, however, the attitude simply did not get across the language barrier, while the industry and sobriety of the German settlers ensured that they were held in high regard by most members of the English-speaking community.²⁸⁷

Throughout the nineteenth century Lutherans were fortunate in having a number of German spokesmen in high places in the English-speaking world. Probably owing to the density of the German population in certain electoral districts,²⁸⁸ and certainly owing to the fact that the 1848 Revolution induced a number of politically conscious and ambitious Germans to migrate to South Australia, there was no time between 1870 and 1915 at which there was not at least one German in the South Australian Parliament. Outside of Parliament there were influential Germans such as Dr. Carl Muecke, editor, journalist, German Consul, and so on, and Dr. Ulrich Huebbe, solicitor and part-author of the Real Property Act. No members of the hard core of South Australian Lutheranism would have been able or willing to perform these functions.²⁸⁹

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287. Pike, Paradise of Dissent, p.209; Lodewyckx, op. cit., p.46; Brauer, op. cit. pp.74-75; Hebart, op. cit. (Eng. ed.) pp.47-48; A.G. Price, op. cit. (1929) pp.208-12.
288. Harmstorf, op. cit., appendices E and K.
289. Ibid, pp.1,29; Lodewyckx, op. cit. pp.221-3; Statistical Record of the Legislature, 1836-1955 (South Australia).

Because of hostile Aborigines and drought the mission established by the Confessional Union at Lake Killalpaninna failed to flourish, though Director Harms was able to note with satisfaction that the Dieri had heard 'the Word of Life and so [would] have no excuse on Judgement Day.'²⁹⁰ By 1874 the two missionaries and a third sent by Harms had withdrawn, the Colonisten alone remaining on the station.²⁹¹ Anxious concerning the heavy financial liability the mission had proved to be, the two Synods now considered whether they should ask Harms to assume full responsibility for the direction and financing of the station or shift it to a more favourable locality. Harms proved unwilling to assume full control; but when news reached him that the South Australian Government was prepared to grant the Lutheran Churches the use of 200 square miles of the country on the upper Finke River recently explored by Ernest Giles, he announced that any attempt to establish a new mission would receive his blessing, (provided that the South Australian Churches bore the full financial burden), but that he did not think it advisable to abandon Killalpaninna, which 'might one day serve as a half-way station'.²⁹²

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290. Hermannsburger Missionsblatt, 2/69, p.27.
291. Ibid, 10/67 p.221, 9/71 pp.187-91, 4/72 pp.61-64;
Blaess, op. cit. pp.29-33; Brauer, op. cit., pp.225-30;
Hebart, op. cit. (Engl ed.) pp.188-9.
292. Blaess, op. cit. pp.39-40. See also ibid pp.33,38;
P.A. Scherer, Venture of Faith: An Epic in Australian
Missionary History (Tanunda 1963) pp.1-3; Brauer, op.
cit. p.232; Arthur Groom, I Saw a Strange Land;
Journeys in Central Australia (Sydney, 1963. First
published 1950) p.24.

Little did Harms know that there was no chance, for the moment, that the old mission would serve as 'a half-way station' to the new: the Confessional Union had been dissolved. Further joint missionary endeavour was out of the question, and it was impossible for either of the tiny Synods to manage two stations alone.

The causes of the dissolution of the Confessional Union were many and complex. Established so that the two Synods might co-operate to run a mission, it naturally took some hard knocks when that mission failed to flourish. When the South Australian Synod appointed two of the disillusioned missionaries to vacant parishes, its partner felt genuinely aggrieved, if not envious: it was unable to demand a share in the spoils because of the anti-chiliasm of the Hermannsburg missionaries, and in any case it felt that they should have remained at their posts. Again, some members of the South Australian Synod wanted it to devote its small energies to training teachers and pastors for use within its own ranks, and to this suggestion the Langmeil-Lights Pass Synod, doubtless the more missionary-minded of the two, took exception. Furthermore, the South Australian Synod had withdrawn the liberty, agreed upon in 1864, to preach chiliasm; and in 1873 it began publishing its own Church paper. But chief among the causes was the amalgamation in August 1874 of the Langmeil-Lights Pass Synod and the

Tanunda-Lights Pass Synod to form the Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Synod of Australia and the entry of the new Synod into fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran General Synod in Victoria - a Synod which, according to the rigidly confessionalist South Australian Synod, was 'unionistic': it insisted that it had a right to call pastors from the Basel Mission Institute (long since condemned as unionistic by the South Australian Synod) and to admit members of other denominations to Holy Communion in an emergency.²⁹³

In the circumstances, it was decided that the Immanuel Synod should take over the old station, and the South Australian Synod (which now became ELSA) the new;²⁹⁴ and Harms undertook to provide the latter Synod with desperately needed pastors in addition to missionaries.²⁹⁵ Had he not done so - and, indeed, had the overland telegraph not been constructed, had Giles not reported favourably on the upper Finke country, had Lutherans and the South Australian Government alike not been committed to a policy of 'assimilation after segregation' - it is probable that the Aranda would not have heard of the Christian God (unless by way of curses) until the twentieth century. On the other hand,

293. Hebart, op. cit. (Germ. ed.) pp.151-7; Brauer, op.cit. pp.215-21.

294. Blaess, op. cit., p.41.

295. Brauer, op. cit., p.233.

had the Victorian Synod been a little less catholic and the South Australian Synod a little more so, or had the shortage of pastors within the various Synods been less acute, it is probable that all Lutheran Churches in Australia would have made the establishment of the new mission their joint concern and that the evangelization of the Aranda would have been much more thorough than it was.

Six days before it was decided that the South Australian Synod should establish a new mission, the son of a miner and the son of a baker had completed a course of instruction at Hermannsburg, Germany, that was to inform all their actions and sustain them amid much tribulation for some fifteen years as missionaries in the heart of Australia.²⁹⁶

The South Australian Government was prepared to grant missions the use of the people's grass in the interior partly because of the supposed abundance of that grass, partly because it was committed to a policy of assimilating Aborigines after segregating them in isolated areas, and partly because it had long since absolved itself from any direct responsibility for implementing that policy. In the remainder of this Chapter an attempt is made to sketch the

296. Der Lutherische Kirchenbote für Australien, 14.3.1928, p.19; The Australian Lutheran Vol. 8, No.11, p.83.

development of South Australian policy and attitudes towards Aborigines.

South Australia's foundation coincided with the full blooming of concern in the House of Commons and the Colonial Office for the welfare of native peoples. This was due partly to pressures emanating from the breakdown of native policies of 'attachment' in other Australian colonies, but chiefly to the growing influence of the evangelical and humanitarian movement. Having secured the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1833, this movement turned its attention to the indigenous peoples of the colonies. It secured, in 1834, an address from the House of Commons calling for measures for the protection, evangelization and civilization of native peoples; in 1835, the revocation of a vice-regal proposal to annex the tribal lands of troublesome Kaffir chiefs in the Queen Adelaide province in South Africa; in 1836, a Select Committee of the House of Commons headed by T. Fowell Buxton, prominent in the recent movement against slavery, with instructions to consider what measures should be taken for the implementation of the resolution of the House in 1834. And at about the same time the aims of the Colonial Office, with the appointment of Lord Glenelg as Secretary of State for the Colonies and of James Stephen as assistant under-secretary (and then permanent under-secretary), became virtually identical with

its own.²⁹⁷

The religious and humanitarian influence pressed for the adoption of four basic principles for the treatment of Aborigines in South Australia: measures were to be taken for their civilization and conversion to Christianity; they were to enjoy the full status and legal rights of British subjects; their physical well-being was to be ensured; and there was to be some recognition of their proprietary rights to land.²⁹⁸

The fourth principle was never adopted. The foundation Act of 1834 declared South Australian lands 'waste and unoccupied'. When Glenelg came to office in the following year he pressed for the appointment of a Protector with a veto over the sale of land, but the Board of Colonization Commissioners replied by declaring all lands open for sale.²⁹⁹ In the hope of turning Aborigines into settled agriculturalists Governor Gawler illegally set aside several sections of land for their use, and after such action was made legal by the Imperial Waste Lands Act of 1842 there was a steady trickle of reserves for

297. R. Gibbs, 'Relations between the Aboriginal Inhabitants and the First South Australian Colonists' in R.G.S.A., S.A. Br., Procs. Vol. 61 (December, 1960) pp.61-64; Paul Hasluck, Black Australians: A Summary of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897 (M.U.P. 1942) pp.45-56.

298. Gibbs, art. cit. pp.62,65,66,71; cf. Hasluck, op. cit. p.13.

299. Gibbs, art. cit. pp.63-65.

Aborigines.³⁰⁰ No Aborigines, however, took to farming and the practice arose, especially after the granting of self-government, of leasing reserves to Europeans. By 1860 forty-two reserves had been set aside, but all except seven of them were leased.³⁰¹ Thereafter, except in the 'Top End' of the Northern Territory, very few reserves were created and almost all of them were designed for the use of missionaries. By exercise of superior might, Europeans continued to encroach on tribal lands and no Aboriginal was ever paid any compensation for his loss.³⁰²

The first official act of Governor Hindmarsh upon landing at Glenelg in 1836 was to read a proclamation³⁰³ which, among other things, declared the Aborigines to be 'as much under the safeguard of the law as the Colonists themselves, and equally entitled to the privileges of British Subjects.' But, as in the case of Western Australia and other Australian colonies, '...the facts of the case made folly of the principle.'³⁰⁴ The Aborigines

300. Ibid, p.70; Fay Gale, A Study of Assimilation: Part-Aborigines in South Australia (Libraries Board of South Australia, 1964) pp.74-75.

301. Gale, op. cit., pp.90-91.

302. Gibbs, art. cit., pp.70-71.

303. Quoted in Gale, op. cit. pp.63-64.

304. Hasluck, op. cit. p.122 and ff. See also A.P. Elkin 'Aboriginal Evidence and Justice in Northern Australia' in Oceania, Vol. XVII No. 3 (1947) pp.173-210; J.V.W. Barry, G.W. Paton and G. Sawyer, An Introduction to the Criminal Law in Australia (London, 1948) Chap.I, Sect. H; Gibbs, art. cit. pp.66-9; Gale, op. cit. pp.87-88.

already had a law of their own and were wholly ignorant of the provisions and procedure of British law.

Beyond the frontiers of settlement no attempt was ever made to apply the law to Aborigines in their relations with one another. Within them, the attempt was rarely made and usually depended upon the extent to which the Aborigines concerned had been 'civilized'. This was due less to any feelings of respect for Aboriginal law than to a recognition on the part of the authorities of the immensity of the problems involved in applying British law. A greater attempt was inevitably made to render Aborigines amenable to the law and to give them access to legal remedies in their relations with Europeans. In 1844 an Ordinance³⁰⁵ altered the letter of the law to facilitate the admission of Aboriginal evidence in court, but at the same time Aboriginal evidence was denied equality with European evidence. Subsequent Ordinances³⁰⁶ provided for the admission of Aboriginal information and complaints and increased the weight of Aboriginal evidence until in 1849 equality was restored. These changes were largely to the advantage of the Aboriginal; others were less to his advantage. In 1853, owing to pressure from settlers impatient with the slowness of the processes of law, it

305. No. 8 of 1844.

306. Nos. 5 of 1846, 3 of 1848, 4 of 1849.

was provided³⁰⁷ that Aborigines might be summarily tried by two or more J.P.'s for offences not punishable by death and sentenced to a maximum of one year's imprisonment with hard labour. Further unequal treatment was accorded to Aborigines without any formal change in the letter of the law: Aborigines convicted of capital offences were sometimes hanged at the scene of their crime - a practice which fell into disuse as the Aborigines in South Australia were 'pacified', but which was to be revived ~~again~~ in the Northern Territory; and Aboriginal witnesses to crimes committed by Aborigines were often captured and forcibly detained. When clashes occurred in frontier regions the effort to apply the law was often not even made. Sometimes the authorities took an active part in 'punitive expeditions' which meted out 'justice' to Aborigines and made life and property safer on the frontier; more often they merely closed their eyes when settlers took the 'law' into their own hands.³⁰⁸ Because of the Aborigines' ignorance of legal procedure, the principle that they were equal to Europeans in civil relations was probably not even tested. Apart from the provision in 1853 for summary jurisdiction, the letter of the law in South Australia discriminated little against Aborigines. The few measures which did accord

307. Act 11 of 1853.

308. Gibbs, art. cit. p.67; Gale, op. cit. pp.85-87, 101-2; cf. Mincham, op. cit. pp.80-81, 88-90, 105-12, 211-13, 216-7.

unequal status to them were intended for their benefit: they were denied access to alcohol³⁰⁹ and exempted from the Act³¹⁰ providing for the registration of dogs, and Aboriginal children and 'half-castes' whose parents were dead or unknown were placed under the legal guardianship of the Protector of Aborigines.³¹¹ On the other hand, in some of the many areas in which they were accorded equal status with Europeans, their status was effectively made unequal by their background and by the negligence of Europeans: though legally entitled to vote, for example, they could not vote; and though education became compulsory for children between seven and thirteen in 1876, no-one compelled Aboriginal children.³¹²

The principle that the Aborigines should be Christianized and civilized was adopted in South Australia from the outset. Glenelg gave instructions that a Protector of Aborigines should be appointed and paid from colonial revenue,³¹³ and Hindmarsh in his proclamation³¹⁴ at Glenelg called upon the colonists to assist him 'to fulfil His Majesty's most gracious and benevolent intentions

309. Gale, *op. cit.* p.77; Act 22 of 1872.

310. Acts 6 of 1867 and 320 of 1884.

311. Ordinance 12 of 1844.

312. On some mission stations, however, education was virtually compulsory. Concerning the right of Aborigines to vote see, e.g., S.A.P.D. (L.C.) 1895, col.1216.

313. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p.140.

314. *Loc. cit.*

towards them [the Aborigines], by promoting their advancement in Civilisation, and ultimately,...their conversion to the Christian Faith.' For two years little was done, chiefly because no suitable person could be found for appointment as permanent Protector.³¹⁵ In 1838 such a person was found in Matthew Moorhouse. He was instructed,³¹⁶ among other things, to try to civilize and Christianize the Aborigines and to attend to their physical well-being. In the late thirties and early forties, a number of Government schools for Aborigines were established in Adelaide.³¹⁷ The Government thus assumed direct responsibility for the assimilation of Aborigines and seems to have believed that assimilation could be achieved fairly quickly and 'directly'. By 1849, however, those concerned with implementing the policy and interested colonists were disillusioned. The schools had failed to achieve any success and were soon to be closed, and the four Dresden missionaries brought out by Angas had abandoned their tasks. Men became convinced that assimilation could be achieved only after segregation. Aborigines must first be educated in institutions isolated from the influence of

315. Gale, op. cit. p.308; Pike, Paradise of Dissent, pp. 140-1.

316. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, upon "The Aborigines" together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix (1860) in S.A.P.P. 165/1860, Appendix, p.(i).

317. Gale, op. cit. pp.81-83.

dissolute Europeans and of uncivilized Aborigines.³¹⁸ Two such institutions (at Poonindie on Yorke Peninsula and at Point McLeay on Lake Alexandrina) were founded in the fifties by interested groups of colonists with Government support. In 1856 South Australians were granted responsible government and when Moorhouse resigned as Protector in the following year, no-one was appointed to replace him.³¹⁹ The policy of direct assimilation had failed and been abandoned. When a Select Committee³²⁰ of the Legislative Council recommended it in 1860 the Government became firmly committed to a policy of 'assimilation after segregation'; but it declined to play any direct part in the implementation of that policy and henceforth was content merely to aid and encourage missions.

Some attention was early paid to the physical well-being of Aborigines in South Australia. At first, flour, tea, sugar, tobacco and blankets were distributed occasionally, but 'feeding stations' or 'ration depots' were later established, chiefly at pastoral and police stations, for the regular distribution of food and clothing.³²¹ By 1850 there were nine such depots; by 1876, fifty-four,

318. Gibbs, art. cit. pp.72-74; Protector of Aborigines In 206/76; cf. Gale, op. cit. p.83-84.

319. Gale, op. cit. p.90.

320. Report of Select Committee of the L.C. upon "The Aborigines" loc. cit. p.6.

321. Gale, op. cit. pp.75-76.

most of the increase taking place as a result of a recommendation by the Select Committee of 1860.³²² Some of these depots, especially those in frontier areas, were set up in order to protect the settlers by assisting them to 'pacify' the Aborigines rather than to cater for the physical well-being of Aborigines.³²³ Others were instituted to relieve genuine distress, and sooner or later all depots came to fulfil this function. As a rule, only the aged and infirm were fed and clothed: the able-bodied were expected to fend for themselves. In the late sixties a Sub-Protector of Aborigines was appointed in Adelaide and another in the Far North. The duties of the Adelaide officer were in theory similar to those of Moorhouse (and in 1881 the title of 'Protector' was revived); in practice they chiefly involved the administration of ration depots, the channelling of aid to missions and the investigation of suspected cases of ill-treatment of Aborigines. When in 1873 a Protector was appointed in the Northern Territory, no reference was made in the instructions issued to him of the ideal of Christianizing and civilizing Aborigines. 324

322. Report of Select Committee of the L.C. upon "The Aborigines", loc. cit. p.2; Protector of Aborigines In 206/76.

323. Gale, op. cit. pp.75-76; Mincham, op. cit. pp.81,214.

324. M.C.N.T. Out 6.10.73.

The policy of the South Australian Government in 1870, therefore - and it was to continue virtually unaltered until 1911 - was a curious mixture based partly on the old religious and humanitarian ideals, partly on ideas which arose from the local contact situation. There had been no radical break with the past, only shifts in emphases. Whereas emphasis had been early placed chiefly on the Christianization and civilization of Aborigines, now it was placed chiefly on the protection of the physical well-being of those who had been 'pacified'. Once the Government had played a direct role in the implementation of a policy of direct assimilation; now it played an indirect role (via missions) in the implementation of a policy of indirect (via segregation) assimilation. Initially it had aimed at affording the Aborigines the full protection of British law; now, in frontier areas, it was prepared to allow or assist the 'pacification' of Aborigines.

Why did these changes occur? Partly because of disillusionment which followed the failure of the policy of direct assimilation, partly because of changes produced in public opinion by the experience of contact with Aborigines. The failure of the policy of direct assimilation itself must be explained partly in terms of the response made by Aborigines, and partly in terms of the effort made to implement it. This is no place to attempt such an

explanation, but it may be suggested that the policy was far too ambitious and unrealistic to have any chance of succeeding: the money and the knowledge required were lacking, and in any case civilization is not a suit of clothes which a primitive people can put on at will.³²⁵ Disillusionment inevitably followed failure, and the waning of Colonial Office concern³²⁶ for the welfare of native peoples did nothing to dispel it. But the failure to replace the old policy with a new active one was, as elsewhere in Australia, due chiefly to the emergence in South Australia of two basic attitudes towards Aborigines: the belief that Aborigines were doomed to extinction and 'contempt for their capacity and for their persons.'³²⁷ The former attitude was firmly established by 1860.³²⁸ It was based partly on wishful thinking: the extinction of Aborigines would be one solution to the tricky problem they posed; chiefly on evidence that many groups of Aborigines in Australia had died out by 1860 and ^{that} many groups in South Australia ^{were} ~~were~~ well on the way to extinction. It seemed to follow that all Aborigines would sooner or later disappear - an unwarranted generalization, but a compelling one at the

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325. Cf. Hasluck, op. cit. p.121; Gale, op. cit. p.72.
326. Gibbs, art. cit., p.75; Hasluck, op. cit. pp.59,62, 65,120.
327. Hasluck, op. cit. p.121.
328. Cf. Report of Select Committee on "The Aborigines" (loc.cit.) pp.1,5; Gale, op. cit. pp.61,92-3; The Adelaide Observer, 3.11.60.p.5.

time. Many South Australians could see little point in attempting to civilize and Christianize a doomed race. And because Aborigines were already extinct, but for the dimension of time, it did not seem to matter greatly if settlers and police on the frontier sometimes shot Aboriginal offenders.³²⁹

The second attitude was probably wholly due to local experience, though later in the century it was re-inforced by Darwinian ideas.³³⁰ As in Western Australia,³³¹ it probably derived chiefly from physical repugnance, social repugnance, exasperation, fear, and rivalry. Physical and social repugnance were immediate, but tended to increase as the period of contact lengthened. 'Those who have come into contact with civilisation are for the most part squalid, helpless and demoralized', wrote J.D. Woods,³³² the foremost advocate of a better deal for Aborigines, in 1879. 'The "noble savage", except in the Far North, where the waves of extermination have not yet rolled, is a mere dirty, whining, not over-honest mendicant, with as much of the white man's vice engrafted on him as his opportunities will allow him to accumulate.' Exasperation, fear and rivalry were keenest on the frontier and tended to disappear once

329. Cf. Madigan, op. cit. pp.255-57.

330. Cf. D.J. Mulvaney, 'The Australian Aborigines 1606-1929: Opinion and Field Work, Part II: 1859-1929 in Hist. Studs. Vol. 8, No. 31 (Nov. 1958) p.301.

331. Hasluck, op. cit. pp.167-78.

332. S.A. Register, 24.3.79.

the Aborigines had been pacified. Unfortunately, the frontier kept on expanding. At least until 1910 the urgent problems and dangers of first contact were continually being faced somewhere by South Australians. Rivalry for land, water-holes and women, and fear and exasperation, led to clashes and a widespread belief that Aborigines were treacherous and murderous.³³³ Though in some instances moved to pity by the plight of Aborigines in their own districts and though anxious lest the South Australian record for treatment of Aborigines be as bad as that in other colonies,³³⁴ the men in the city and agricultural areas who dominated politics were often too ardent believers in progress and the superiority of British culture to lift a finger to protect Aborigines who stood in the path of settlement in the interior. When, after Stuart had been driven back by the Warramunga in 1860, the Reynolds Government moved that £2,500 be provided to enable the explorer to lead a large party across the Centre and force his way to the coast, only one member of the House (R.D. Hanson) objected. One speaker to the motion trusted that 'if [Stuart] could not get to the opposite coast without killing a few of those wretched blacks,...he would not hesitate to do so.'³³⁵ Another felt that 'The question was one of the progress of

333. Cf. Hasluck, op. cit. pp.179 and ff.

334. Cf. S.A. Govt. Gazette 12.2.80, p.542 (Sub-Protector Hamilton to Commr. Crown Lands, 31.1.80); Gibbs, art. cit. p.75.

335. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 9.10.60, col. 1013.

civilization; a conflict with the native tribes sooner or later must come, and if it must come, let it come now.'³³⁶ And the editor of the Observer³³⁷ urged the Government to 'lose no time in placing such a party at Mr. Stuart's command as will enable him to push the exploration through the hostile tribe who alone prevented him from completing one of the greatest achievements of modern times' and expressed the conviction that the fact that 'the uncivilized wretches' ate the 'apples instead of the tubers' of Central Australia's 'potato' would reconcile Mr. Hanson 'to their extinction'.

Though most South Australians regarded the Aborigines as an obstacle to the progress of settlement, few doubted that the obstacle could easily be overcome. 'It is a small matter', wrote W. Marcus in 1876, 'to supplant the aboriginal inhabitants of a barbarous country and to secure possession of their land. The superiority which comes from civilization is soon acquired, and the feebler race bends before the stronger, as the reeds bend to the sweep of the winds. The difficulties of successful colonization arise from very different causes than the mere conquest of native races.'³³⁸ It was the battle with nature that would prove

336. Ibid, col. 1014.

337. 13.10.60, p.6.

338. W. Marcus (Ed.), op. cit. p.2. See also S.A.Register, 28.1.63 (Report of meeting of Adelaide Philosophical Society); S.A.P.D. (L.C.) 14.6.70 col. 207.

difficult to win; but Marcus and most other South Australians were convinced that they would triumph in that battle too, and grow rich from the spoils. It was in this mood that a few of the 180,000 South Australians invaded the Centre in the seventies. They found both the land and its people more difficult to tame, and the land less bountiful, than they had dreamed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE OVERLAND TELEGRAPH AND EXPLORATION, 1870 - 1875

I think it [the overland telegraph] has done a great deal to open up the interior of Australia.

——— Sir Charles Todd, 1878
(S.A.P.P. 44/78 p.36)

It had been well said that we did not really know what was in the centre of our island continent.

——— Hon. G.W. Cotton, 1883.
(S.A.P.D. (L.C.) 14.8.83
col. 753).

Having reluctantly decided on 8th June 1870 to construct a line of telegraph from Port Augusta to Port Darwin, the Hart Government lost little time in implementing its decision: the deadline, as then understood, for the completion of the work was 1st January 1872. Within a week, a Bill authorizing a loan of £120,000 had passed both Houses, within a month a party had been despatched to explore as far as the MacDonnell Ranges, and within four months the necessary men had been engaged, equipment bought and ordered, contracts let, and the first poles

planted two thousand miles apart at either side of the continent. The forces of civilization and progress had marshalled to invade the Centre and tame the land and its inhabitants. "Lords of lightning we;" quoted Todd after the work had been completed, as he concluded a speech to an enthusiastic audience which had heard him begin it with a creed of progress, "by land or wave, The mystic agent serves us as our slave."¹

The Government at first intended that the line should be constructed by a single contractor, and the tender of John Rounsevell,² famous whip and son of a Cornishman who operated one of the largest coaching and mail businesses in the colony, was accepted. Negotiations fell through, however, when the Government insisted on a strict time limit and penalties;³ and it was decided to construct the line in three sections: contracts were let for southern and northern sections to E.M. Bagot and the firm of Darwent and Dalwood respectively, and Government parties were organized to construct the central section.

This central section, which stretched for 626 miles from 27°S. to 19°30'S. latitude, from the lower Stevenson

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1. C. Todd, 'The Overland Telegraph' (Lecture delivered in Adelaide 28.7.73, S.A.A. A194) p.58.
 2. For biographical details, see R. Cockburn, Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia (Adelaide, 1925 and 1927) Vol. 2, p.202.
 3. S.A. Register 25.11.72; C. Todd, Report on the Post Office, Telegraph, and Observatory Departments, 1884 (S.A.P.P. 191/84) p.141.

River to the creek Stuart had named 'Tennant's' was divided into five further sections, numbered from A to E, and a construction party allotted to each. Todd threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of organizing men and materials. Some 231 tons of wire and 3,000 iron poles were ordered from London and 30,000 porcelain insulators from Berlin. A large warehouse in King William Street was leased as a depot for receiving supplies; several German wagons, the rear wheels of which could be extended or shortened at will, were specially constructed for carrying telegraph poles; some 170 horses, said to be the finest herd ever brought together in the colonies, were personally selected by the Commissioner of Police; and a contract was let to E.M. ('Ned') Bagot,⁴ brusque but picturesque son of an Irish captain of militia, stock and station agent, and manufacturer of meat extract, for carting stores and equipment at £26, £48, £75.10s., £102.10s., and £130.10s. per ton to sections A to E respectively.⁵

Applications for employment on the line were so numerous that a special bureau had to be opened to cope

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4. Bagot evidently let both this contract and the contract for the construction of the southern section of the line to John Rounsevell. See Cockburn, *op. cit.* Vol.2, pp.24, 202; *S.A. Register* 25.11.72. For biographical details concerning Bagot, see Cockburn, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.24; Davies, *Biographical Cuttings (S.A.A.)* Vol. 27, pp.126-45.
 5. See Todd, *Report 1884 (loc. cit.)* p.143; A.Giles, *Exploring in the 'Seventies*, p.38, C.Giles, 'The Adelaide and Port Darwin Telegraph Line: Some Reminiscences of its Construction' (S.A.A. A860/B9; from *The Public Service Review*, March 1894 to March 1895) pp.1-3.

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*Good like-
ness. Expression
well caught
Aug 7-1886*

HERRING & CO LITH

LATE E. M. BAGOT.

(From photograph taken by S. Solomon.)

"We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

PLATE 7

By courtesy S. A. Archives

with them. Probably most of the men selected were hardy bushmen who knew what it was like to work in a new country among 'wild' Aborigines. Some of them had been rendered jobless by drought and depression in the sixties. Many of the officers, however, were civil servants, some of whom had served under Finnis or Goyder, or both, in the Top End. But though most men joined the construction parties for want of a job or because of their job, many were no doubt lured inland by the prospect of adventure: when Alfred Giles, at any rate, arrived in Adelaide early in 1870 after craving on a northern sheep station for 'greater space and opportunities', he thought of 'walking the dull streets of Adelaide' and then of 'undiscovered wealth, of great rivers, of bold mountain peaks, canyons, and waterfalls, and of new minerals, animals, plants, and blossoming forests, and, not least, wild savages as yet untamed by association with the white race!'⁶; and offered to join the exploring party.

By late August, the task of selecting men and animals had been completed. They were allotted to the various sections as follows: (Table 4 - See P.193).

6. A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.6-8. See also S.A. Register, 25.11.72; C. Giles, art. cit. p.2; J.B. Richards, The Overland Telegraph: Its Early History (Adelaide, 1914), p.7.

Table 4 : Telegraph Construction Parties⁷

	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E
Overseer	R.R. Knuckey	G.R. McMinn	J. Beckwith	A.T. Woods	W. Harvey
Sub- Overseer	Chr. Giles	C. Musgrave	W.W. Mills	S. Jarvis	J.LeM.F. Roberts
Cadet	J.H. Aldridge	T. Bee	A.G. Burt	C.M. Bagot	A.Y. Forster
Men	20	18 (later 20)	20	24	24
Horses	35	35	37 (later 58)	35	34
Bullocks	41	41	41	53	53
Length of Section	120 mils.	142 mils.	131 mils.	125 mils.	108 mils.
Lat. of S. end of Section	27°	25°30'	24°	22°30'	21°

Woods⁸ was subsequently appointed Senior or Chief Officer of the parties and Harley Bacon,⁹ son of Lady Charlotte Bacon, (the then plump and colonial Ianthe to whom Byron

7. S.A.A. 140/23, 140/25, 140/44; Report by C. Todd on the Construction and Completion of the Adelaide and Port Darwin Line of Telegraph, 1.1.1873 (S.A.P.P. 29/73); Todd, Report 1884, (loc. cit.) p.143; Manser, op. cit., appendix.
8. Todd to Woods 26.11.70 (in S.A.A. 140/23).
9. The Adelaide Observer 20.3.80, p.472E; Frank Clune, op. cit. p.178; Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.64.

had dedicated Childe Harold), officer-in-charge of a central depot to be established north of the Peake.

On 29th August 1870 parties A, B and D, escorted by Todd and a party of gentlemen as far as Montefiore Hill, headed north under the leadership of Christopher Giles. Six days later they were followed by the remaining two parties.¹⁰

Meanwhile among the sandhills on the western edge of the Simpson Desert, the exploring party of five men and twenty-two horses under John Ross was struggling northwards in an effort to discover a more direct route to Tennant Creek than Stuart had. A strapping, bushy-bearded Highland Scot, Ross had emigrated to New South Wales in 1837 at the age of twenty and had immediately taken to stockwork. After managing a station on the Murrumbidgee for some time he had come overland with Charles Bonney to South Australia in 1839, and there, apart from a few years spent in Victoria and some droving trips up and down the Murray and Darling, he had remained. Working for one pastoralist after another, he had wandered as far afield as Port Lincoln in the west and the Finke River in the north. In 1869 he was appointed manager for Thomas Elder and Peter Waite of Umberatana

10. S.A.A. 140/25; Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.143; C. Giles, art. cit. p.9 (the date mentioned here is probably not correct).

Station and its 30,000 sheep in the northern Flinders. When a severe drought set in, he took the sheep some 300 miles north to the lower Macumba and formed a temporary station called Mannaria.¹¹ Late in the same year, after a huge flood had carried away the log huts he had erected, Ross took advantage of the favourable season and travelled north along Stuart's route, together with his eleven year old son, Alexander, and an Aboriginal, to the Stevenson and the Finke in the vicinity of Mt. Humphries, and returned via Crown Point. He immediately sent a long report to Peter Waite about the pastoral potential of the country examined, and pointed out 'what a favourable opportunity it would be for the construction of the overland telegraph line to Port Darwin'.¹² This and other letters of his were shown to Todd and Governor Fergusson, and it was probably at the instigation of these gentlemen that his employers called Ross south. In Adelaide, balding, lean and hardy, prejudiced against camels but a lover of horses, his eyes puckered and pinched from gazing into distances, he was interviewed by Todd and immediately signed

11. Also spelt 'Manaria', 'Manarinna'.

12. Alec Ross, Early Reminiscences in S.A. Register 31.7.28.

on as explorer for the overland telegraph.¹³ William Harvey, a middle-aged surveyor whose gentle disposition and somewhat delicate constitution were not designed for the bush, was told off as second-in-command. Ross himself selected three other men for the expedition. "Are you," he asked Alfred Giles, son of a Londoner but a bushman of long experience, "sound in mind and limb? Can you live on bandicoot and goanna?" Giles said that he had already done so. "Then you'll do," said Ross.¹⁴

On 7th July Ross received detailed written instructions¹⁵ from Todd. He was to explore the country north of Mt. Margaret Station and endeavour to determine the best route for the overland telegraph, his criteria being the availability of timber, water and suitable sites for stations and depots, the nature of the country for carting posts and sinking holes, and the degree to which the country was subject to inundations. He was further advised not to go east of the 136th meridian, and to try to eliminate the westward bulge of Stuart's route. In order to meet the advance construction

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13. See ibid in S.A. Register 31.7.28, 3.8.28; J.D. Somerville, John Ross (typescript, 1953 in S.A.A. 1362/5); ———, Notes on the Life of John Ross (S.A.A. 1362/7); S.A.A. D3738; S.A.A.Res. Note 242; N.T. Times 27.3.03 (obit.); G.W. Symes, 'John Ross - A Refutation and a Chronology' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br. Procs. Vol. 59 (Dec. 1959) pp.45-56; A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.18-19; Fergusson to Todd, 31.5.70 (S.A.A. 140/15).
14. A. Giles, 'Exploring in the 'Seventies', p.9.
15. Todd to Ross, 7.7.70 (in S.A.A.53).

parties, he was to return to Mt. Margaret by late September or mid-October.

Next day, Ross, Harvey, Giles and probably Tom Crispe, who had explored with McKinlay in the Northern Territory, left Adelaide. William Hearne, who had served under Ross at Mannaria, probably joined the party at Beltana or Government Gums. On 17th August they reached the deserted sheep camp on the lower Macumba, and ten days later, keeping east of Stuart's track, cut the Finke near Wilyunpa native wells. Ross then pushed on sixty miles north into the Simpson Desert, but lack of water and heavy sand compelled him to return. Recovering rapidly from an attack of lumbago, he travelled almost due north through dry country from the junction of the Goyder and the Finke until he cut Phillipson Creek and the Todd River. North of the Todd rose the rugged Edith Ranges.¹⁶ Following the Todd east in an effort to find a way through the ranges, the explorer presently discovered a large creek which he named after Alfred Giles. But this honour did not prevent Giles's early enthusiasm from waning as the party skirmished about along the creek and in the dry ranges during the next few days in an unsuccessful attempt to find a practicable route to the north. '...if this is a taste of the interior', he recorded

16. Subsequently named Fergusson Ranges.

in his diary, 'I never wish to see it again.'¹⁷ Beaten, and his time running out, Ross decided to return on 17th September. Striking west along the foot of the ranges, he cut the Hugh and followed it down to its junction with the Finke, where he discovered a fine lagoon of water which was to prove important for the work of constructing the telegraph. On 19th October, after living on cold water and damper for some days, and with some of his men ill, he arrived at the Peake via a route well to the west of Stuart's. There he received a letter from Todd, who had hastened to Umbum Station to hurry the construction parties on their way, requesting him to call on him as soon as possible. At Umbum he completed his journal and made a written report to Todd. Harvey prepared a map of the route of the expedition, and Todd went carefully over it, marking waters and stands of timber.¹⁸

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17. Alfred Giles, Diary: The Overland Telegraph Exploring Expedition (S.A.A.626) entry for 18.9.70.
18. See Todd, Diary 1870 (1) (S.A.A. 119), entries for 22.10.70 and 25.10.70: ———, Diary 1870 (2) (S.A.A. 119), entry for 5.11.70; Diary of John Ross, Overland Telegraph Survey Expedition, 1870-71 (S.A.A. 34), entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; A. Giles, Diary: The Overland Telegraph Exploring Expedition, entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; W. Harvey, Map Showing the Route Travelled by Overland and Telegraph Exploring Party etc. (S.A.A. C364).

The results of the expedition satisfied neither Todd nor the officers of the construction parties.¹⁹ Neither its outwards nor its homeward route, except where the latter coincided with the Hugh and the Finke, already traversed by Stuart, were suitable for a telegraph line; and it had failed to find a way over the central ranges, which now loomed as a great obstacle to the work. To make matters worse, Ross himself declared the difficulties ^{ahead} to be 'almost insurmountable'.²⁰ Todd's immediate reaction was that it was 'unfortunate' that Ross did not make in towards the MacDonnell Ranges,²¹ but for this he had himself to blame: the explorer followed his instructions rigidly. Ross had, however, demonstrated that he was not the sort of explorer the job required, and Todd must have temporarily regretted that the Government had not accepted John McKinlay's offer²² to determine the route for £1,000 and the free use for twenty-five years of Bathurst and Melville Islands. Though hardy and capable of living off the country and returning safely to his starting point, Ross was lacking in enterprise and often, as his diaries and the map compiled by Harvey show, was completely bushed as to his real position: thus, when

19. Todd to Treasurer, 22.3.71 (in S.A.A. 140/28); Woods, Journal, entry for 17.12.70; J.B. Richards, op. cit., pp.11-12.

20. C. Giles, art. cit. p.7.

21. Todd, Diary 1870 (1), entry for 22.10.70.

22. A.R. Cameron, The Story of the Overland Telegraph (typescript, 11.10.1932, in S.A.Pub. Lib.) p.11; S.A.P.P. 36/1870-71.

he struck the Giles Creek he thought it might have been the Hugh, which was some seventy miles away in a direct line.²³ Nevertheless, when the haste of the expedition is taken into account, his achievement seems no mean one: in little more than three months he had travelled some 1,500 miles in a dry season, had discovered the important Todd River and the Fergusson Ranges, and had brought his party back safely within the time prescribed by Todd.

Retained as explorer in spite of his failure, Ross spent the next few weeks 'jerking' beef and mending packs in preparation for another start. Meanwhile, all the construction parties with their teams, together with Bagot's 100 camels in charge of Afghans and loaded with flour and wire, had arrived at the Peake. Todd went to work at a furious pace. He set up a supply depot and placed storekeeper Blood in charge. Each of his officers he furnished with detailed instructions and advice concerning their general responsibilities, the daily rations and morality of their men, the keeping of the Sabbath, the treatment of Aborigines, and the construction of the line itself. To boost the morale of the men he announced a general increase in wages from 3s. to 4s. a day. He

23. A. Giles, Diary, entry for 15.9.1870. Compare Harvey's Map Showing the Route Travelled by Overland Telegraph Exploring Party under the Leadership of John Ross' (loc. cit.) with the Diary of Ross.

consigned to Harley Bacon 1,933 sheep that had been purchased from stations to the south, many of which were to become the first sheep overlanded into the Northern Territory,²⁴ decreeing that party A should have 240, B 290, C 370, D 450, E 550, and Bacon and his assistants 33 for the trip, and that those remaining when they arrived at Section C should be taken north by Connor of Section E.²⁵ Ross he despatched to attempt to find a pass between the Fergusson and Strangways Ranges²⁶ and to explore as far as Mounts Mann and Gwynne in the vicinity of modern Barrow Creek; and he appointed a council, consisting of Woods (who was given the casting vote), McMinn, Ross, and Harvey,

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24. A. Giles, (The First Pastoral Settlement in the Northern Territory /handwritten MS, n.d., S.A.A. 1082/ p.3 and Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.115), and Chapman (op. cit., p.69) are in error when they claim that Milner overlanded the first sheep from South Australia into the Territory. A report in C.P.P. 1920-1, III, p.1717 that livestock were first brought into the MacDonnell Ranges from South Australia in ca. 1866 is corroborated by no source known to me.
25. See Todd, Diary 1870(1) entries for 2.11.70, 3.11.70; _____, Diary 1870(2), entries for 14.11.70, 16.11.70, 17.11.70, 23.11.70; Todd to Treasurer, 22.3.71 (in S.A.A. 140/28); C. Giles, art. cit. p.25; A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.38-39; Todd, Instructions to Overseers in Charge of Works (in S.A.A. 140/23).
26. Though the wording of this directive was not the result of a slip of the pen, which at first sight it appears to have been (for the Strangways Range lies north of the Fergusson Range and it was a pass between the MacDonnell and the Fergusson Ranges that was eventually discovered) it was unfortunately vague. What Todd really wanted was a practicable route around the western end of the Fergusson Range and then around the eastern end of the Strangways Range more or less in a direct line ~~in~~ the vicinity of modern Barrow Creek. He was still hopeful of eliminating the westward bulge of Stuart's route.

to determine the route of the line north from the Hugh upon the return of the explorer.²⁷ In order that the construction parties might proceed north before Ross returned, he sent the veteran explorer Babbage, who soon retired to supervise the construction of Bagot's section of the line, together with Woods and a party of six men, to look out a road ahead.²⁸ By the end of November all construction parties had left the Peake with some twenty-four tons of rations, which were calculated to last each party some twenty-one to twenty-six weeks and in addition to provide Ross's party with meals for fourteen weeks after it had returned.²⁹ When Beckwith became so ill shortly after leaving the Peake that he fell from his horse, Todd promptly advised him to return to Adelaide and placed Mills in charge of Section C under the supervision of Woods and McMinn.³⁰

On 26th November Todd himself started for Adelaide. At Strangways Springs he met Ralph Milner and a party of eight men (including his brother John Milner and A.C.Ashwin) heading north with 4,300 sheep, 160 horses, 150 goats, 17 working bullocks and provisions for twelve months stowed

27. Todd to Ross, 15.11.70 (in S.A.A. 140/23).

28. Todd, Diary 1870 (2), entries for 11.11.70, 15.11.70; A.T. Woods, Journal (in Todd Papers, S.A.A. 140/14), entry for 17.11.70; S.A.A. 1362/6.

29. Todd, Diary 1870 (2), entries for 19.11.70, 21.11.70, 22.11.70 and note (n.d., n.p.). Contractors subsequently took up some 23 tons of rations for the parties. See also Woods, Journal, entry for 17.11.70; Todd to Treasurer, 22.3.71 (S.A.A. 140/28).

30. Todd, Diary 1870(2), entries for 22.11.70, 24.11.70, 25.11.70; S.A.A. 140/23.

aboard five wheeled vehicles. Milner, who was born in Westmoreland in 1825, had started in 1863, in the belief that he would reap a £1,000 reward from the South Australian Government, to go overland via McKinlay's route with sheep, cattle, and horses to the Northern Territory. The great drought, however, had set in and stranded his expedition at Lake Killalpaninna on Coopers Creek. The Moravian and Lutheran missionaries came and went, but Milner stuck it out, and, in a vain effort to find a practicable route for his stock, became the first European to cross Stuart's stony desert to the Herbert River, a feat which he twice performed. When news came to him in September 1870 of the good season in the north of South Australia, he decided to get to the Northern Territory by following the telegraph construction parties. By the time those parties had crossed the South Australian border, Milner was on the Neales.³¹

Meanwhile, Ross had reached the latitude of Mounts Mann and Gwynne. He had travelled swiftly, for Todd had instructed him to meet the construction parties at Alice

31. See Todd, Diary 1870(2), entries for 26.11.70, 29.11.70; A.C. Ashwin, 'From South Australia to Port Darwin with Sheep and Horses' in R.G.S.A., S.A.Br., Procs. Vol.32 (1930-31) pp.47-93; Ralph Milner/Reminiscences/ in The Evening Star (Dunedin) 24.8.1927; R. Duncan, op. cit., p.61; M.C.N.T.Out, Deering to Milner, 8.1.74; F.H. Bauer, 'Sheep-Raising in Northern Australia; A Historical Review' in Alan Barnard (Ed.) The Simple Fleece: Studies in the Australian Wool Industry (Melbourne, 1963), pp.463-5.

Creek within eleven weeks and then explore north to the Roper by April and return with Harvey in time for the commencement of work on Section E. Early in December he reached the Junction³², where he discovered two or three more splendid waterholes. To protect his balding head from the fierce summer sun, he wore a huge bunch of emu feathers over a white puggaree over a red Turkish shawl over a stiff felt hat, but 7th December was the hottest day he ever felt because he foolishly bared his white legs while washing his clothes in a waterhole on the Hugh. On 13th he sighted the Fergusson Range and on the following day discovered the scenic Ross River. This led him through the Fergusson Range to a range he named in honour of Treasurer John Hart. Having with difficulty crossed the Harts Range, he entered upon a vast mulga plain, followed the Waite River downstream and then struck across to the vicinity of modern Barrow Creek. There, to the surprise of everyone else, Harvey produced a bottle of rum and the party drank to the New Year. Turning south-west, Ross cut the Hanson on 3rd January and camped at the base of Central Mount Stuart; and on the following day ascended the mount and recovered the bottle and message Stuart had planted on

32. This was the popular abbreviation for 'the junction of the Finke and Hugh Rivers'. The locality was also referred to as 'Old Depot' after a depot had been established there and abandoned by the construction parties.



PLATE 8
The Junction

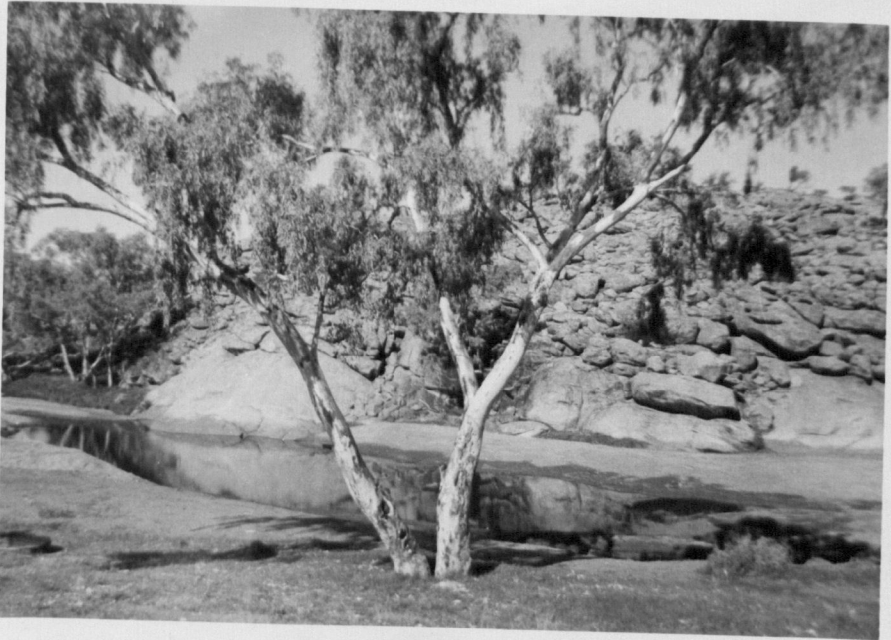


PLATE 9
The Alice Spring

its summit in 1860. From there he returned to Alice Creek via Stuart's route, as instructed. Arriving at Alice Creek, he was greatly disappointed to find no-one there: 'and we have nothing to eat', he noted in his diary, '...however as long as our horses will last we shall not die of want.'³³ The horses were spared when, on the following day (25th January), he picked up the tracks of Woods, who had recently paid a visit to Alice Creek, and followed them to the Junction.³⁴

During his absence, Ross now learnt, the construction parties had managed to open up a road from the south. Late in December, Woods, Knuckey, McMinn and parties, pushing north from the Stevenson east of Stuart's track, came upon dozens of springs and pools nestling in a large subsidence in the stony tableland and containing millions of gallons of fresh water and much feathered game. These they named the Edith Springs, subsequently called Dalhousie, in honour of Lady Fergusson.³⁵ After going north to Opossum Water-hole the parties split up, Knuckey and McMinn visiting Wilyunpa native wells and then cutting across to the Coglin and north-west to Crown Point and Marchant Springs,

33. Entry for 24.1.71.

34. See Woods, Journal, entry for 26.1.71; Todd, Diary 1870(1), entry for 5.11.70; Ross, Diary, entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; A. Giles, Diary, entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; Todd to Ross 15.11.70 (in S.A.A. 140/23).

35. C. Giles, art. cit., p.12; A. Giles, Diary, entry for 16.2.71; J.B. Richards, op. cit. pp.11-13.

Woods apparently keeping a little to the west of them and coming on more slowly, pausing to dig soakages and fashion tarpaulin and wooden troughing on the Goyder for the sheep. Convinced that the route they had come by was insufficiently watered, Knuckey and McMinn headed south again in search of water; and were on the point of abandoning their search when the flight of bronze-winged pigeons led them to a fine water-hole on the Coglin. Worn out, but overjoyed, they made "'beggars on the coals"' ('Johnnie' cakes), and Knuckey waxed poetical:

The greatest enjoyment under the sun
Is to sit by the fire till the beggars are done.³⁶

Having eaten the beggars, they filled their pannicans with water and solemnly named their discovery Charlotte Waters after Lady Charlotte Bacon; and Knuckey decided to make it his headquarters and the site for a telegraph station on Section A.³⁷ As Woods later remarked, Charlotte Waters and Dalhousie Springs were 'two important discoveries, as regards the permanent practicability of the road.'³⁸

Christopher Giles immediately formed a camp at Charlotte Waters and set his men to work cutting timber and erecting shelter for the party's provisions, while Knuckey went on

36. Quoted in J.B. Richards, op. cit., p.15.

37. See J.B. Richards, op. cit., pp.13-15 (account supplied by R.R. Knuckey); Woods, Journal, entries for 20.12.70ff; C. Giles, art. cit., p.16; McMinn, Diary, entry for 4.1.71.

38. Woods, Journal, entry for 20.1.71.

to survey his Section and determine its northern limit. And on 15th January McMinn set his men to work on Section B. By 4th February, the remaining parties and Bagot's 100 camels and contract teams had all arrived at the Junction, where Woods decided to establish a central depot.³⁹

But the immediate prospect of the expedition was not bright. The country on the whole had been found to be dry and difficult; the contractor's cameleers and teamsters had arrived behind schedule and had used some of the construction parties' rations on the road;⁴⁰ pleuro-pneumonia^{had} carried off a number of bullocks and a general outbreak of the disease was feared;⁴¹ above all, John Ross had again failed to determine a practicable route to the north and the teams and parties of Sections C, D, and E were compelled to halt until a track should be found through the central ranges. In a petulant mood on 9th February, Woods wrote to Todd for more rations and told him plainly that there was now no longer any room for hope that the work would be completed to meet the deadline.⁴²

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39. See Woods, Journal, entries for 30.1.71, 3.2.71, 4.2.71; Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.62-63; ———, Diary, entry for 4.2.71; C. Giles, art. cit., pp.16ff; J.B. Richards, op. cit., p.15.
40. Woods, Journal, entries for 27.1.71, 30.1.71, 10.2.71, (draft of report to Todd).
41. Woods, Journal, entry for 8.2.71, 9.2.71 (draft of report to Todd); ———, Report to Todd, 8.2.71 (S.A.A. 140/14): Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.63; ———, Diary, entry for 3.2.70.
42. Woods, Journal, entry for 9.2.71 (draft of report to Todd); See also ibid, entry for 30.1.71.

Immediately upon his arrival at the Junction Ross reported, in Woods's words, 'that his outward and homeward routes discovered two tracks that we can not go',⁴³ though he unaccountably expressed the opinion in his diary⁴⁴ that the telegraph should be constructed via the Phillipson and Giles Creeks, Harts Range, and the Waite River. McMinn and Woods immediately consulted and decided to explore the road themselves 'as we have had to do hitherto';⁴⁵ for there was no time to be lost: the deadline was now only eleven months away and three parties had no immediate prospect of reaching their Sections. Ross had failed again partly because of his 'blind obedience to instructions':⁴⁶ because of his instructions he declined to follow up the Todd,⁴⁷ which would have led him through present Heavitree Gap to Alice Springs, and returned via Stuart's route, which was already known to be impracticable for teams; and partly because of his necessary haste: he had travelled some 1,000 miles in little more than two months. The contrast between the opinion recorded in his diary as to the practicability of the eastern route and his statements to Woods immediately upon his return reflect but poorly on his judgement and temperament, as do his failure to see that his party was

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43. Ibid., entry for 26.1.71.
44. Entries for 23.12.70, 3.1.71.
45. Woods, Journal, entry for 26.1.71.
46. Ibid. Cf. Manser, op. cit., p.55.
47. Ross, Diary, entry for 19.12.70.

adequately provisioned,⁴⁸ and his change of front less than a week after his return: 'The country which was represented as being so difficult for us to get over', Woods reported in his diary, 'and which was suggested should be rounded by a very circuitous route, is now to be easily overcome or avoided by a shorter cut. Everything is now couleur-de-rose.'⁴⁹ The upshot was that Harvey, who had suffered much because of the shortage of rations, refused to serve under Ross again, and Ross, after making desperate attempts through Alfred Giles to secure the services of Christopher Giles of Section A, was left without a surveyor for his trip to the Roper.⁵⁰

When Alfred Giles reached Charlotte Waters early in February to attempt to secure the services of his brother Christopher, he soon found himself stranded by floodwaters and a vast bog of a countryside.⁵¹ Milner, who by this time was north of the Coglin, spent two weeks on the southern bank of the Finke with his sheep and eventually had to swim them across.⁵² A.C. Ashwin spent a memorable

48. Woods, Journal, entry for 28.1.71.

49. Entry for 1.2.71.

50. Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.63-66; ———, Diary, entries for 4.2.71ff; Woods, Journal, entry for 3.2.71.

51. Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.64-65; ———, Diary, entries 10.2.71ff.; C. Giles, art. cit., pp.26-27.

52. A.C. Ashwin, art. cit., pp.52-55.

night on a log just above water level.⁵³ All along the Finke and the Hugh it rained, and it rained in the MacDonnells and beyond them. Within a few weeks the bare redness of the countryside was transformed into something resembling a new wheatfield. This rain, and the rains that followed it during the remainder of the year and in 1872, though they caused temporary delays and flies and mosquitoes to breed in millions and many of the men to take ill, must be regarded as the turning of the tide in the fortunes of the telegraph enterprise and indeed in those of the Centre itself.⁵⁴ Not for a generation was the country to be favoured by such seasons again. Until it rained the construction parties were struggling; had they struck a season as dry, for example, as 1862 or 1881, it is extremely probable that they would not have completed the work in time, and possible that they would have had to abandon it at least temporarily. Now that it had rained, the supply lines from the south were ensured, and the only big problem remaining in the north was to find a way over the MacDonnell Ranges.

This Mills and McMinn with light parties had set out from the Junction on 8th February to do. Leaving their drays on the Alice Creek on the following day, they separated,

53. Ibid, p.53. Concerning the extent and nature of the rains, see also, for example, Woods, Journal, entry for 13.2.71; McMinn, Diary, entries for 16.2.71, 18.2.71, 20.2.71; S.A.P.P. 34/87, p.7; C. Giles, art. cit., p.9; John Lewis, op. cit., p.64.

54. See pp. 232-5 (below).

Mills travelling up the Hugh and McMinn keeping further to the east. On 15th February, McMinn rounded the eastern end of the Waterhouse Range and sighted the MacDonnells and 'the possibility of a road on a bearing of 18°'.⁵⁵ Heading in that direction, he passed through Temple Bar Gap on the 18th and sighted Simpsons Gap.⁵⁶ Here heavy rain overtook him and he was unable to move for three days; and when he did move on the fourth day it took him over four hours to cover the six miles to Simpsons Gap. On 23rd February he climbed most of the way up the eastern bluff of the gap: 'from where I am', he noted in his diary, 'the hills appear fragmentary to the east, in which direction I can see a long way, I should think for 30 miles....If these are in the MacDonnell Ranges I can see no difficulty in getting about in an easterly direction [sic]'.⁵⁷ The next few days McMinn spent skirmishing to the west; why he did not go east is a mystery. On 27th he met Mills and party, who had been laid up by the rain for five days and who 'supposed they were travelling in the Waterhouse range'.⁵⁸ Since they were running short of rations both men decided to return, and on 6th March reached

55. McMinn, Diary, entry for 16.2.71.

56. McMinn did not refer to the gap by name in the written entries in his Diary, but on p.190 there is a sketch entitled 'Simsons Gap'. When or by whom the name was altered to 'Simpsons Gap' is unknown.

57. McMinn, Diary, entry for 23.2.71.

58. Ibid, entry for 27.2.71.

the Junction. According to Alfred Giles, McMinn reported 'having found a road through on the eastern side' which he considered 'would require considerable work before drays could pass safely through.'⁵⁹

It is clear, as G.W. Symes⁶⁰ has pointed out, that all that now remained to be done in order to find a practicable route was 'to follow the tracks of McMinn to the Simpson's Gap area, go eastwards and through to the Strangways Range'. W.W. Mills of Section C was obviously the man for this job.

With one man and an Aboriginal, Mills started from the Junction on 7th March; and on the same day Ross and party set out for the Roper. Four days later, Mills, travelling with his light party over known territory more rapidly than Ross, reached the MacDonnell Ranges and, in his own words, 'was successful in finding a pass, about 30 miles East of Stuart's track, with numerous waterholes & springs, the principal of which is The Alice Spring, which I had the honor of naming after Mrs. Todd [sic]';⁶¹ and pushed north to the Strangways Range across the Everard Plain.⁶² Ross and party, following McMinn's tracks, reached the MacDonnell

59. Alfred Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies p.68; ———, Diary, entry for 6.3.71. See also McMinn, Diary, entries for 8.2.71ff; Mills, Report to Todd, 12.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/47); Major-General G.W. Symes, 'Exploring in the MacDonnell Ranges, 1870-1872' in R.G.S.A., S.A. Br., Procs. Vol. 61 (1959-60), pp.42-44.

60. Art. cit., p.45.

61. Mills, Report to Todd, 12.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/47).

62. To-day usually known as the Burt Plain.

Ranges on 16th March; and on 18th, having cut what was undoubtedly the Todd, they followed it up until, when they were a mile or so north of the Alice Spring and six miles south of Bond Springs⁶³, they ascended a small hill and 'were not a little surprised to see 3 horsemen and two pk [~~pack-~~] horses coming over the summit of the hill in whom we recognized as Mr. Mills with one man and a blackfellow returning from the Strangways Range...it was certainly a most extraordinary meeting in so remote a part of the world as this...a few minutes chat and each party was again on its way going opposite directions [~~sic~~].'⁶⁴ By 19th March Mills was back with his men, who had followed his tracks to a spot just north of the Waterhouse Range, and a month later Ross had passed along Stuart's track beyond the limits of Section E. The road to the north lay open.⁶⁵

Upon the return of Mills, Alice Springs was adopted as a site for a depot and the first telegraph station north of Charlotte Waters. Mills immediately set his men to work on Section C, and there began a great movement of men and supplies north from the Junction to Alice Springs and beyond to Sections D and E. Meanwhile, owing to an outbreak of illness among the men after the rains and complaints by Woods and others concerning the inadequate medical supplies,

63. Named subsequently.

64. A. Giles, Diary, entry for 18.3.71.

65. See p. 211a.

REFERENCE:

65. There has been some controversy concerning who discovered the Alice Springs. In my opinion the work of Major-General G.W. Symes has clearly demonstrated that the honour belongs with Mills, whose task was admittedly made easy by McMinn. Since Symes wrote on the subject some additional evidence has been discovered. In 1901 F.J. Gillen, a widely respected 'old-timer' who resided in the Centre from 1876 to 1898, recorded the opinion that 'Alice Springs was discovered and named after the late Lady Todd by Mr. W.W. Mills' [Camp Jottings, entry for 22.4.1901]; and in 1907 Mills again made the claim for himself [M.C.N.T. In 55/1907]. John Ross, whom A.V. Purvis claims discovered the Springs, never made the claim for himself; nor did his son, Alexander, who spent a considerable time in the Centre and published reminiscences (loc. cit.) in 1928, or Alfred Giles, make it for him. Whether or not Mills was the first to sight Heavitree Gap (which became the southern thoroughfare to the telegraph station and the town that grew up near it) is a moot point, but it is probable that he was and that it was named after his old school in Devon. See W.W. Mills, Report to Todd, 12.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/47); A. Giles, Diary, entries for 7.3.71, 18.3.71 and passim; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.70; R.G.S.A., S.A. Br., The Penetration of the MacDonnell Ranges with Respect to the Discovery and Naming of the Alice Springs (Romeo typescript, April 1957); Major-General G.W. Symes, 'Exploring in the MacDonnell Ranges' (loc. cit.) pp.45-47; J.D. Sommerville, Papers re John Ross and Alice Springs (S.A.A. D.4506); A.C. Ashwin, art. cit. p.56; F. Clune (op. cit.) pp.194-5; J.D. Sommerville, John Ross (S.A.A. 1362/5); A.V. Purvis, 'The Township named Stuart, now Alice Springs: a History of Early Settlement within the Central McDonnell Ranges, Central Australia [sic]' (in R.G.S.A., S.A. Br., Procs. Vol. 47 (1946) p.55).

Todd had despatched Dr. Frederick Emil Renner, a refugee from Jena in 1848, to act as physician to the parties. Having practised for ten years in Wentworth, New South Wales, he was well fitted for the work. On 29th April Renner arrived at the Junction, where his first task was to attend to an 'Afghan' who had been bitten by a snake. When he arrived at the Jay, he found Milner camped there waiting for his ewes to lamb and for Ashwin to fetch a package of revolvers and cartridges, which had not arrived as expected and which were considered indispensable for the road ahead because of the bad reputation of Aborigines there. Arriving at Alice Springs on 16th May, Renner left for Sections D and E ten days later.⁶⁶ Woods and party had arrived on Section D on 28th April, and Harvey reached his Section a month later.⁶⁷ Work was proceeding apace on the more southerly Sections, and, since the central section of the line was regarded as more difficult to construct⁶⁸ than either the northern or the southern section, it seemed that the whole line would be completed in time to meet the deadline.

But then, late in July, Todd learnt that W. McMinn,

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66. Dr. Frederick Emil Renner, Diary (S.A.A. 1303), entries for 29.4.71, 13.5.71, 16.5.71, 26.5.71; J.B. Cleland, 'The First Fifty-Two Names in the Medical Register of South Australia' (S.A.A. A.883; reprinted from Med. Jl. Aust. 29.10.1938, pp.732ff.), p.6; A.C. Ashwin, art.cit. p.56.
67. S.A.A. 140/25.
68. See S.A.P.D. 21.2.72, col. 2844; Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) pp.141,144; J.B. Richards, op. cit., p.18.

supervisor on behalf of the Government of construction in the Top End, had terminated Darwent and Dalwood's contract owing to delays occasioned chiefly by the Wet just ended.⁶⁹ By the first mail he sent a letter to Woods informing him of this catastrophe and asking him to send parties north to the rescue as soon as they could be spared, and instructions to Harvey to push north of Section E erecting ten poles to the mile for the time being instead of the usual twenty. At the same time he sent a large supply of rations, for it was now certain that the parties would have to remain in the north much longer than originally expected.⁷⁰ Upon receiving Todd's instructions, the parties swung to work with increased vigour. By 30th September Section A was completed, and Knuckey, abandoning a scheme he and McMinn had hatched to follow the Finke to its mouth, sped north with a party of volunteers and eventually reached the Roper. Six weeks later Sections B and D were completed. McMinn moved his whole camp to Alice Springs to work on Section C, while Mills and some of his men went north to assist Harvey. Section E was finished by the end of November, the last thirty-four miles having ten poles to the miles. And by 29th December Section C was complete and the erection of substantial stone telegraph stations

69. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.144; Manser, op. cit. p.62f.

70. Todd, 'The Overland Telegraph' (lecture delivered in Adelaide 28.7.73, in S.A.A. A194), p.30.

at Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs and, to less extent, at Barrow Creek, which Woods had chosen as the site for a third station, and at Tennant Creek, where a temporary station was being built, was well advanced.⁷¹

The station-masters intended for these stations (J.W. Johnston, C.W.I. Kraegen, J.F. Mueller, and R.C. Watson), and some of the operators, had started north in September under the experienced leadership of R.P. Boucaut, hitherto supervisor of the southern 250 miles of Bagot's contract.⁷² At Finnis Springs they were joined by 'Nosey' Jones, the second hawker to follow the construction parties into the Centre. On 2nd December they reached Charlotte Waters, where Johnston remained as station-master. Anxious to reach their stations before the line was opened, Mueller, Watson and Kraegen pushed on ahead of Boucaut two days later in extremely hot weather. Boucaut left Charlotte Waters on the 7th, and on the 11th met Tom Bee 'on his way to Town',⁷³ with a party of men from Section C who had had to be dispensed with because of a shortage of rations. Arriving

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71. S.A.A. 140/25, 140/44, 140/46, 140/47; J.B. Richards, The Overland Telegraph: Its Early History (Adelaide, 1914) pp.17-18; Todd, Report 1873 (loc. cit.). There are some discrepancies in these sources concerning the dates at which the various Sections were completed.
72. Boucaut left Adelaide with E. Flint and E.J. Harris (operators) only; the station masters joined him somewhere in the north.
73. E.J. Harris, Diary Kept during a journey from Adelaide to Alice Springs MacDonnell Ranges 1871 (S.A.A. A861/B9), entry for 11.12.71.

at the Junction on 16th he was surprised to find Mueller and Watson 'very seedy' after missing the track to the north, 'major-mitchelling' for some days without water, and drinking the blood of a horse. Kraegen, he learnt, was still somewhere out in the mulga. Strongest of the three, he had pushed ahead of Mueller and Watson when they had realized they were lost, and had not been seen since. His bones were buried where they were found - the first of many laid bare by thirst in the Centre - on a scrappy, scraggy gravel and mulga rise close to the telegraph line on modern Maryvale Station, only several miles from water.⁷⁴

The depleted party of operators and station-masters arrived at Alice Springs only just in time for the opening of the line to Adelaide. On 3rd of January 1872, the wire strung by Bagot on ten poles to the mile in the north of his Section was joined to the wire strung by Knuckey and his men, and telegraphic communication between the Centre and civilization was established.⁷⁵ A few days later, as if to celebrate the occasion, the Todd 'came down tearing and roaring, presenting quite a grand sight';⁷⁶ but the

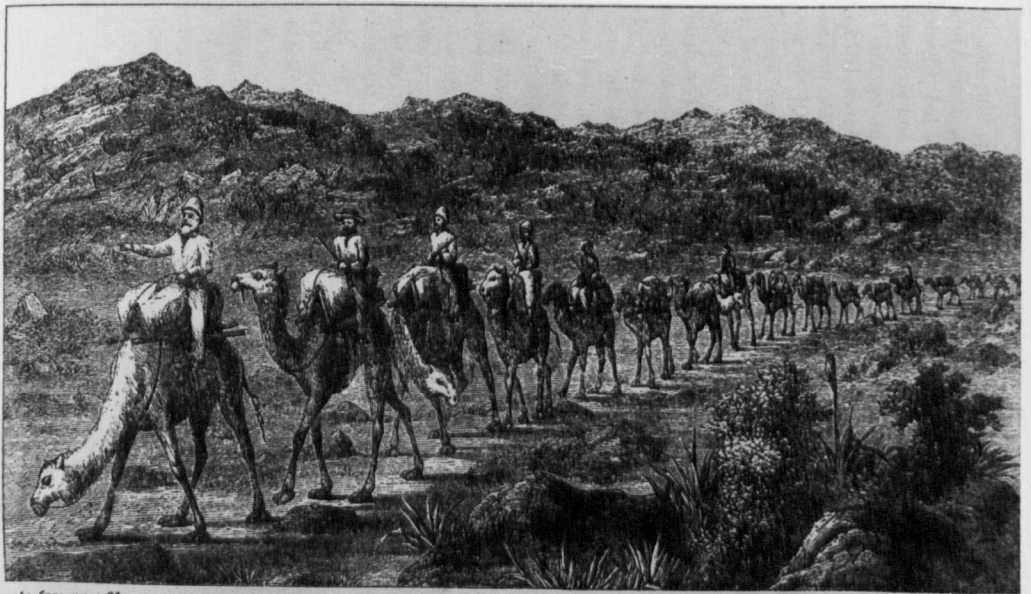
74. See ibid, entries for 15.9.71, 24.10.71, 2.12.71, 4.12.71, 7.12.71, 16.12.71, 20.12.71; Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) pp.150-1; —, Lecture 1873 (loc. cit.) pp.34-35; S.A. Register 2.4.75, p.6.

75. McMinn, Diary, entries for 28.12.71, 3.1.72; Todd, Report 1873, (loc. cit.) p.1; —, Report 1884, (loc. cit.) p.142; E.J. Harris, Diary, entry for 28.12.71.

76. McMinn, Diary, entry for 19.1.72.



PLATE 10
Kraegen's Grave



to face page 95

The Start of Warburton's Expedition.

PLATE 11

From R.G.S.A., S.A.Br.,
Proceedings, 1885-1886.

first message the line carried told of the death of Kraegen and it was not long before the Finke in an ugly mood swept the line away at Marchants Springs.⁷⁷

The break in the line was soon temporarily repaired, however, and McMinn subsequently erected strong masts to carry the line high over the river.⁷⁸ There now remained to the construction parties in the Centre only the task of completing the telegraph stations, delivering the sheep remaining at the Junction to Sections C, D, and E, and going north to the aid of the Government parties in the Top End.

The cable having been landed and the deadline having expired, Todd arrived in the Top End in January 1872 personally to supervise the construction of the line, while Agent General Dutton performed verbal gymnastics in London to stave off the demands of the B.A.T. Co.⁷⁹ By June the line from Port Darwin had been completed as far as Daly Waters, and Todd began a tour of inspection across the continent.⁸⁰ The idea of an estafette or horse-express service to bridge the gap between Daly Waters and Tennant Creek had been mooted

77. Todd, Lecture 1873 (loc. cit.) pp.33-34; [C. Todd], Report by C. Todd on the Construction and Completion of the Adelaide and Port Darwin Line of Telegraph, 1.1.1873 (S.A.P.P. 29/1873) p.2.

78. McMinn, Diary, entries for 21.8.72ff.; Todd, Notebook, entries at Alice Springs for 28.8.72ff.; ———, Report 1873 (loc. cit.) p.2.

79. See Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.144; Treasurer to Agent General, 3.1.72 (S.A.A. 634).

80. Todd to Agent General, 24.6.72 (S.A.A. 140/39); Todd, Report, 1884 (loc. cit.) p.145.

in Adelaide as early as December of the previous year, but it had had to be shelved for lack of horses. Now, early in June, John Lewis, who was on his way to inspect some pastoral leases he held on Coburg Peninsula, arrived with twenty-five horses he was willing to hire out (five swift camels sent by Elder arrived too late), and R.P. Boucaut was detailed to organize the service.⁸¹ Few messages had been carried across the narrowing gap, however, when the cable broke in the Arafura Sea and South Australia was given a welcome respite from the demands of the B.A.T. Co.⁸²

On 22nd August Todd reached Tea Tree Well, sunk in the previous year by Woods and party, and, while Dr. Renner (who had tirelessly travelled up and down the line) vainly tried at Powells Creek to calculate how many miles of telegraph one man constructed in one week if 110 men constructed 600 miles in forty-two weeks, 'spoke' to Alice Springs and found that the wires had been joined near Frews Ironstone Ponds at 1.00 p.m. Blue with cold, he sat by the well receiving messages of congratulation until nearly twelve midnight and for hours next morning. On 21st October the

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81. R.P. Boucaut, Miscellaneous Papers relative to the Construction of the Overland Telegraph 1872 (S.A.A. 729), passim; S.W. Herbert, Reminiscences of Life in the Northern Territory during the construction of the Overland Telegraph, Aug. 1870 to Nov. 1872 (S.A.A. 996), p.142; Todd, Notebook, entries for 1.8.72, 3.8.72, 7.8.72, 8.8.72; S.A. Register 7.9.72 (Supplement) p.11; John Lewis, Fought and Won (Adelaide, 1922) pp.60, 63, 82-83.
82. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.145; J. Lewis, op.cit. p.90.

cable was restored and on the following day the first telegram from England was received in Adelaide. A few days later Todd entered that city a popular hero.⁸³

That the central section of the line was completed before either the northern or the southern section must be attributed chiefly to the fortunate season and Todd's organizational ability. But perhaps the spirit in which the men in the Government parties went about their work also contributed to this result. '...only ten years ago I might as well have been in the middle of the moon as here for all the means there were of getting written news from or to the place', wrote one of the men of Barrow Creek in 1872, and asked 'whether South Australia is not advancing in giant strides towards the development of its vast Northern Territory - in the march of civilization and in the enlargement of the knowledge of the country.'⁸⁴ Perhaps the men who worked in the Government parties were more conscious than the men working for the private contractors that they were striking a blow for progress and the glory

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83. See note in Census Register of the Northern Territory (C.A.O., unnumbered); Todd Notebook, entries for 22.8.72, 23.8.72; —, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.145; Dr. Frederick Emil Renner, Diaries and Rough Diaries (S.A.A. 1303), passim; —, Rough Diary 25.2.72 - 2.8.72, undated entry on last page.
84. S.A. Register, 4.11.72 (Supplement). Cf. Address to Charles Todd by the men at Barrow Creek Telegraph Station /1872/ (S.A.A. 140/33); S.A. Register 25.11.72.

of South Australia. Very few gave their officers occasion to dismiss them, and when strikes became the order of the day Alfred Giles remembered with pride 'those splendid fellows of the seventies' who did not jib at their tasks.⁸⁵

It was not that they did not have plenty to jib at. Their work was strenuous and the discipline imposed on them by Todd and his officers sometimes severe. Those who might have found pleasure in alcohol must have envied teamsters like Frost who arrived in Alice Springs in April 1872 with all hands drunk for their camps were virtually dry.⁸⁶ Their diet was monotonous and sometimes inadequate.⁸⁷ Illnesses afflicted them, especially after the rains, when food was almost invariably black with flies before it reached their mouths.⁸⁸ Medical supplies were scarce,⁸⁹ and skilled medical attention scarcer. Before Renner arrived (and he could not be everywhere) the attention bestowed on the sick was crude. When one of his men became violently ill in December 1870, Woods, feeling 'feeble-minded and foolish'

85. A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., p.121. Cf. A.R. Cameron, 'The Story of the Overland Telegraph' (lecture to South Australian Postal Inst. Lecture Soc., Oct. 1932) p.52.

86. McMinn, Diary, p.135. See also Todd, Instructions to Overseers in Charge of Works, 30.9.70 (in S.A.A. 140/23).

87. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 21.2.72, col. 2845; Woods, Journal, entries for 10.2.71 (draft of letter to Todd), 30.1.71.

88. See, e.g. A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.66-68; ———, Diary, entries for 24.2.71ff.; Todd, Notebook, entry for 26.7.62; Woods, Journal, entries for 6-8.12.70, 24.1.71; McMinn, Diary, entries for 25.1.71, 26.1.71, 1.3.71, 29.7.71, 24.9.71; C. Giles, art. cit. p.27; S.A.A. 140/23, 140/44.

89. Woods, Journal, entry for 7.12.70.

administered an emetic followed by castor oil, cholera drops in tea, citrate of magnesia, barley water and essence of beef.⁹⁰ Others who sickened did not have the benefit even of inexpert medical attention. In June 1871, E. Fitch rode with Knuckey from Charlotte Waters to Dalhousie Springs to fetch salt, was smitten helpless with rheumatic fever, begged his leader to shoot him, and lay fearing Aborigines twenty-four hours upon the stones, too weak to raise his hand to brush away the ants that swarmed into his eyes and mouth, or to frighten the crows that gathered about him, or to press a revolver to his head, until rescued by a wagon sent by Knuckey.⁹¹

But few suffered as much as Fitch, and when in health and adequately fed most found life pleasant enough. Alfred Giles has left the following description of life at the Junction camp before a way was found over the central ranges:

...the horses and sheep were thriving as fast as good grass and water could make them, and the same might be said of the men, especially those of Mr. Harvey's party, who had a long way to go before commencing their section, and had little to do but eat the choicest of mutton, go fishing, or fire off their revolver cartridges at cormorants for targets. Others stretched their hammocks between shady gum-trees, upon which hour after hour passed in reading old newspapers or worn novels, and alternate dozes...⁹²

90. Ibid.

91. J.B. Richards, op. cit., pp.16-17 (account supplied by R.R. Knuckey); McMinn, Diary, entries for 19.6.71, 27.7.71, 29.7.71.

92. Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.63.

Such peaceful moments were disturbed only by a cook's call to dinner, or anxiety for loved ones, or fear of lurking Aborigines.

The construction of the overland telegraph co-incided with a revival of interest in the Australian colonies in exploration. After the burst of exploration in the fifties and early sixties, land-hunger had been widely satisfied, and drought and depression kept it that way for some years. By the early seventies, however, there was a growing demand for new pastures. When, therefore, the men of the overland telegraph reported favourably on the climate and potential of the Centre and built stations which could be used as bases for further exploration, there was no dearth of men interested in penetrating the great unknown to the east and west of the line.

A number of men who constructed the overland telegraph nursed ambitions to do some exploring after their work was finished, but only one was presented with an opportunity. Having completed his duties as officer-in-charge of Section B, G.R. McMinn took horse with one companion for the country east and south-east of Alice Springs. He turned back, however, after four days, having merely cut new tracks in country already explored by Ross.⁹³ On 29th July he left

93. McMinn, Diary, entries for 29.6.72ff.

Alice Springs for the south. At Marchant Springs, where he paused to hoist the line high on masts above the Finke, he met an exploring party from Victoria, consisting of Ernest Giles, S. Carmichael, Alexander Robinson, fifteen horses and a dog, financed by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, Giles's brother-in-law, George Gill and Giles himself, and intending to cross from Chambers Pillar to the settled districts of Western Australia.⁹⁴ When he reached the Alberga, he 'spoke' to Adelaide and the Commissioner of Crown Lands and was surprised to be offered the leadership of his own exploring party: the Government had decided to take advantage of the favourable season and the men and equipment already in the field to send an expedition by camel from the vicinity of Central Mount Stuart to Perth. A.T. Woods had already been offered the leadership, but had declined it; and now McMinn, presented with a golden opportunity to realize his ambition, allowed it to slip by because of his prejudice against camels and his reluctance to start at the onset of summer before tasting once more the joys of civilization.⁹⁵ William Christie Gosse of the Lands Office in Adelaide, having no such objections, was appointed to the

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94. McMinn, Diary, entry for 15.8.72; Ernest Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, etc. (London 1889) Vol. I, pp. xlix, 3-5; ———, Diary 1872 (S.A.P.P. 21/1875), p.1.
95. See S.A.A. 262/10, 262/18, 262/19, 262/20; McMinn, Diary, entry for 13.9.72 and pp.115-19, 150; T. Reynolds to McMinn 13.9.72 (in pocket of McMinn's Diary).

position. At about the same time, two wealthy South Australians - Thomas Elder and W.W. Hughes - were preparing to send Major P.E. Warburton, Commissioner of Police in South Australia from 1853 to 1867 and ex-officer in the Indian Army, from the Burt Creek to the western coast in search of pastoral country.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Giles's small party had followed the Finke River to the MacDonnell Ranges and then travelled some 100 miles to the west. Giles, who has been described as 'a man of iron, cast in a rougher mould than Stuart',⁹⁷ and as a 'romantic Voss-like figure in the down-to-earth existence of the Australian outback',⁹⁸ and who described himself as an explorer by nature and from love and the whole of his pilgrimage as 'a divine service'⁹⁹, was born in Bristol in 1835 and joined his parents in South Australia immediately after completing his schooling at Christ's Hospital, London. It was with both experience as an explorer and a passion to win a place in the long line of explorers since Columbus that he came to Central Australia in 1872.¹⁰⁰

96. W. Marcus (Ed.) op. cit. p.95; Percival Searle, Dictionary of Australian Biography (Sydney, 1949) Vol. 2, p.460.

97. C.T. Madigan, op. cit., p.31.

98. Louis Green, 'A Voss among the Explorers: The Career of Ernest Giles' in Quadrant, Vol. VII, No. 3 (1963) P.17.

99. [E. Giles], Mr. E. Giles's Explorations, 1873-4. (S.A.P.P. 215/1874), entry for 24.9.73; E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed etc. (London, 1889), Vol.2, p.342.

100. E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, Vol. I, p.xvfi.; L. Green, art. cit., pp.17-18.



III. MAP OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
 Showing Routes of Exploration by Ernest Giles, 1872-1874
 1st. Journey: ——— 2nd. Journey: ———

Giles left Chambers Pillar on 23rd August. A week later he entered the gorge the Finke has cut through the James Ranges and was surprised to find it lined with strange and subsequently famous palm-trees (Livistonia Mariae). He did not, however, as is commonly believed, discover Palm Valley, which lies to the west of the route he took.¹⁰¹ Following the Finke up to the MacDonnell Ranges, he found his path blocked by floodwaters, retreated, and struck west. Owing to a dearth of surface water, however, he failed to penetrate far beyond Ehrenburg Range. Turning south, he descried Mt. Olga from the Vale of Tempe and on 17th October set out towards it; but was halted by waterless country and the boggy salt surface of Lake Amadeus. His stock of provisions running dangerously low, Giles now decided to dispense with the services of Robinson and turned east in order to find a way back to the telegraph line for him. Though he expected Carmichael, whom he subsequently blamed for his failure, to accompany him to the west again, he appears to have advised him to accept a share of the outfit in lieu of wages, which he could not pay, and to return to the settled districts while there was yet time. When on 6th November at Stokes

101. Cf. P.A. Scherer, Venture of Faith: An Epic in Australian Missionary History (Tanunda, 1963), p.69; C. Chewings in Adel. Observer 1886 Vol.2, p.90.

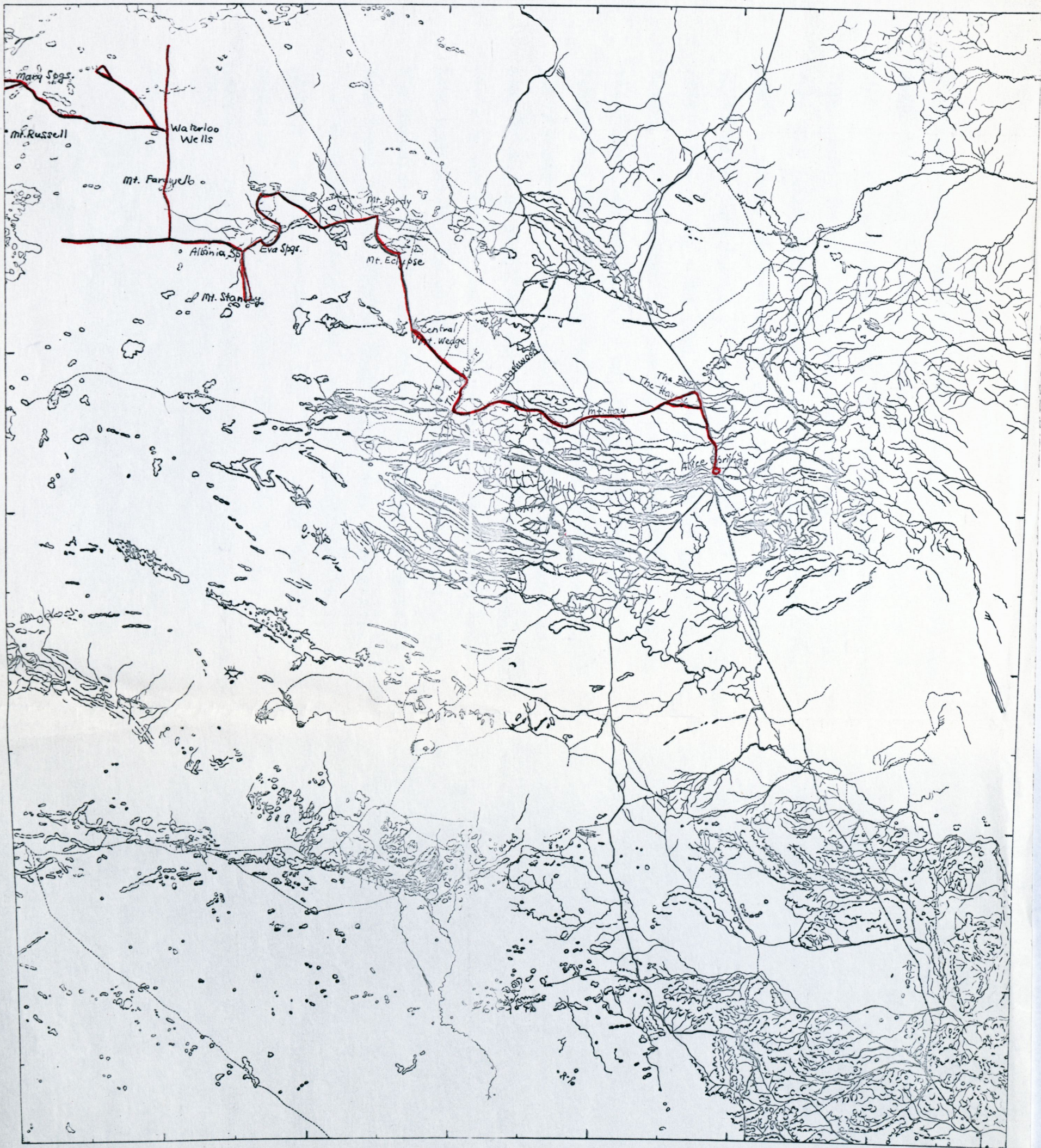
Creek Carmichael decided to act on this advice, the expedition came to an end. Fifteen days later, at the Junction, the three explorers parted ways, each taking a share of the remaining horses and equipment.¹⁰²

Arriving at Charlotte Waters on 1st December, Giles met Warburton and was surprised to learn that two expeditions had been fitted out in his absence to succeed where he had failed.¹⁰³ After extracting valuable information from Giles, Warburton pushed up the line to Alice Springs, which he reached on 21st December. There he was informed by the telegraph men, who had been deceived into regarding the previous season as the norm for Central Australia, that summer rains would prevent his moving until April of the following year; and promptly despatched A.G. Burt, who had arrived from the north with five camels Elder sent for the estafette and who was to act as his second, to Adelaide for additional provisions. Burt arrived back in Alice Springs late in March 1873 and decided, for an unknown reason, not to accompany Warburton: perhaps it was because none of the predicted rain had fallen.¹⁰⁴

102. See E. Giles, Diary 1872, entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; ———, Australia Twice Traversed, p.128; S.A. Register, 21.5.73, p.6 (letter from S. Carmichael).

103. E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, pp.xliv,132; P.E. Warburton, Diary 1872-3 (S.A.A. 304), entry for 1.12.72.

104. See P.E. Warburton, Diary 1872-73 (S.A.P.P. 28/1875) p.1 and (S.A.A. 304) entries for 21.12.72, 22.12.72, 29.3.72; E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, p.132.



IV. MAP OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
Showing Route of the Exploring Expedition
under Colonel Egerton-Warburton
1873

Annoyed at himself for not having started before the rains that did not come, Warburton left Alice Springs on 15th April with his son, R.E. Warburton (second-in-command), John Lewis, Dennis White, two Afghans, and an Aboriginal from the Peake, his seventeen camels so fat that saddles could scarcely be secured on their backs. Proceeding cautiously, he crossed the western boundary of the Territory, after discovering some good country north of the MacDonnell Ranges and exploding the popular belief that the Hugh and the Finke rose there, only on August 5th. Not until January of the following year, by which time an exploring party under John Ross had been fitted out to search for him,¹⁰⁵ did he reach the western coast, having eaten, lost, or left behind fifteen of his camels. He thanked 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' for his safe arrival, but his immediate thanks were due to the superb bushmanship of John Lewis and of Charlie Peake Warburton, Aboriginal.¹⁰⁶

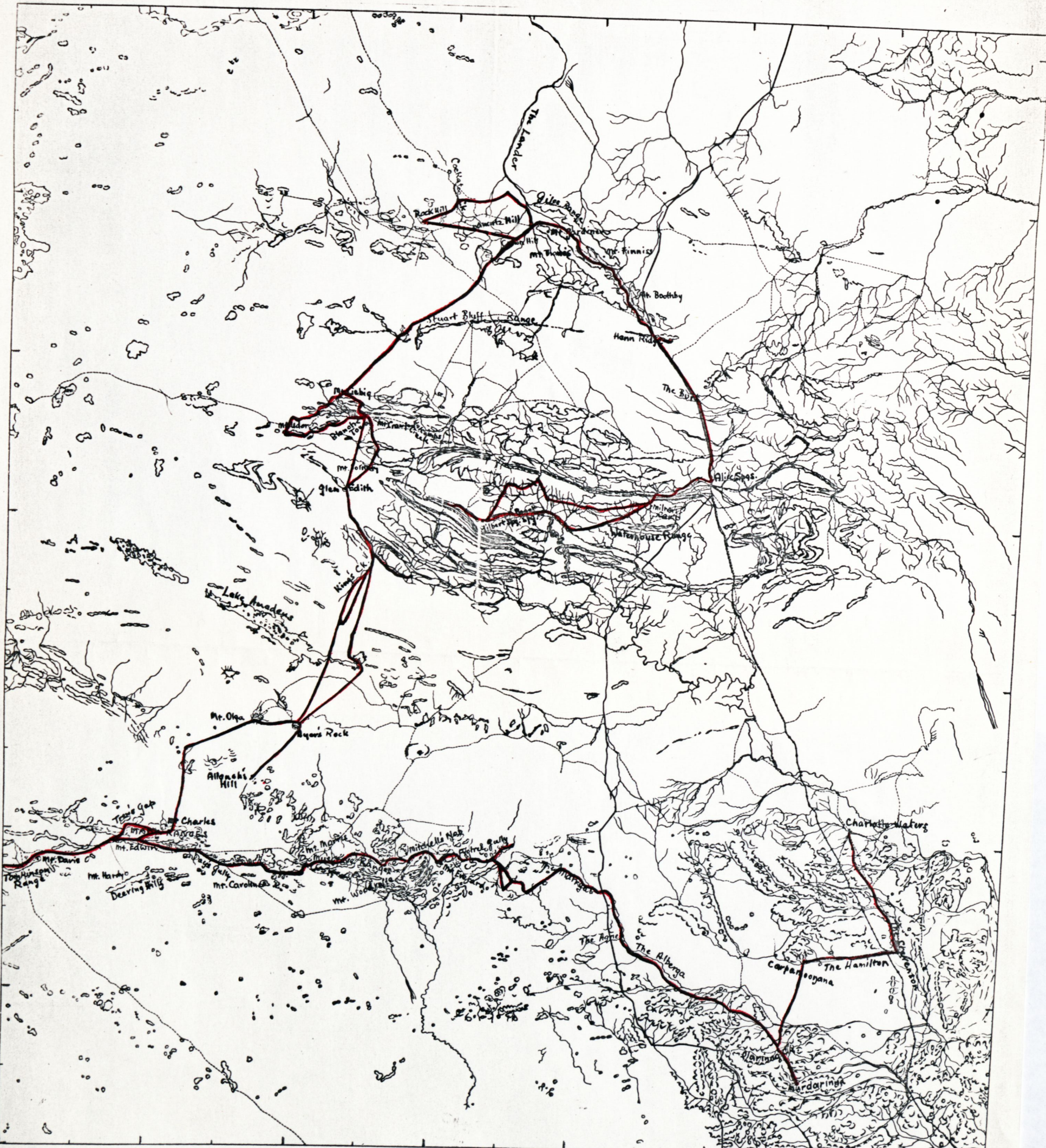
William Christie Gosse, born in Hertfordshire in 1842 but a South Australian since the age of ten and an employee of the Adelaide Land Office since the age of

105. S.A. Register 31.1.74 (Supplement) p.12; Ernest Favenc, The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888 (Sydney, 1888) p.261.

106. See P.E. Warburton, Diary 1872-73, entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; S.A. Register, 31.1.73 (p.5), 10.11.75 (p.6) (re Charlie Peake Warburton:); Searle, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.461; Favenc, op. cit. (1908) p.208; C.T. Madigan, op. cit. p.188.

seventeen, left Elder's Beltana Station shortly after Warburton in October 1872 with eight companions (including three 'Afghans' and an Aboriginal), eleven camels, twenty-seven horses, and a wagon. Having waited, like Warburton, for rains that did not come, he started from Alice Springs on 23rd April and a week later reached Woodforde Creek and decided to travel west via the Reynolds Ranges instead of via Central Mount Stuart. Failing to get through to the west, he turned south, contrary to instructions, towards country already explored by Giles. Had he remained in the north, however, he could only have followed Warburton's tracks (which his horses would have been hard pressed to do) or at the very most have followed the Lander down into virtually impassable country. By 20th July he had reached Ayers Rock, which was, the Register soon predicted, 'destined to become famous as one of the most singular and prominent of Australian landmarks',¹⁰⁷ and from the summit of which Gosse and 'Afghan' Kamran descried the Musgrave Ranges. Turning west, Gosse reached the Territory border on 3rd September but, owing to the weakness of his horses and his failure to find water, was able to proceed only some 120 miles further. He returned via the Musgrave Ranges to the telegraph line at Hamilton Crossing, where he reacted unfavourably to

107. S.A. Register, 24.12.73, p.4.



V. Map of Central Australia
 Showing Route of W.C. Gosse's Central & Western Exploring Expedition,
 1873

suggestions received from the Surveyor-General that he continue his explorations, and set out for Adelaide on 24th December.¹⁰⁸

Unknown to Gosse, the indefatigable Giles had passed through the Musgraves before him. Though feeling himself to be 'a minnow among Tritons',¹⁰⁹ because he was denied the patronage of the only man in the colonies who possessed camels, he had returned to Adelaide after his first trip and immediately made preparations for another attempt to cross to the western coast. He secured, through Baron von Mueller, the support of a number of wealthy Victorian gentlemen and extracted £250 from the South Australian Government. ('My poverty', he explained, 'and not my will, consented to accept so mean a gift.')¹¹⁰ With William Henry Tietkens (second-in-command), Alfred Gibson, James Andrews, and twenty-four horses, he left the junction of the Stevenson and Alberga Creeks on 4th August 1873 for Mt. Olga, from where he was convinced he could find a route to the west. At Mt. Olga he almost abandoned the expedition when he saw Gosse's wagon tracks going west,

108. See W.C.Gosse, Report and Diary of Mr. W.C.Gosse's Central and Western Exploring Expedition, 1873 (S.A.P.P. 48/1874 and the original in library of R.G.S.A., S.A. Br.), entries for dates mentioned in text and passim; S.A.A. 262/7, 262/21, 262/26, 262/28, 262/31; E. Favenc, The Explorers of Australia and their life-work (London, 1908), p. 215.

109. E. Giles, Diary 1873-4, concluding remarks.

110. Australia Twice Traversed, p.li.

but on second thoughts decided to overtake his rival and come to an agreement as to lines of march. Somewhere in the west, however, the two explorers, travelling in opposite directions, passed one another without realizing it. On 7th October, Giles reached Gosse's furthest point and saw the wagon tracks turning back. Knowing now that he had the field to himself, he tried desperately for some seven months to break through the desert that hemmed him in, turning his back on his foe only after Gibson had perished and his party had been reduced to eating their horses. On 10th July he reached Crown Point, where he presented the remains of the fourth horse he had killed to the dogs of teamster Alfred Frost and was rewarded with a lordly repast and news of the outside world.¹¹¹

Giles, Gosse, and Warburton largely solved the mystery of what lay to the west of the telegraph line in Central Australia; there remained a wide expanse of unexplored country to the east of the line, but this was not to be tackled until later in the decade.¹¹² Of the three, Giles discovered the best country: the pastoral regions of the upper Finke and Palmer Rivers and of Ayers and George Gills Ranges. On the other hand, he was more easily impressed

111. See E. Giles, Diary 1873-74, entries for dated mentioned in text and passim; Louis Green, art. cit., pp. 22-27; W.H. Tietkens, Reminiscences, 1859-87 (S.A.A. 82); Ferdinand von Mueller to Sir Henry Ayers 19.2.73 and 10.3.73 (S.A.A. D.3141).

112. See Chapter 4 (below).

than either Gosse or Warburton. So extravagant were his accounts of the upper Finke region¹¹³ that an English journalist was moved to write:

It is possible that the Corporation [of the City of London] may be induced to take up tracts of land in the Vale of Palms which in a few years may return them fifty-fold for any small outlay they may see fit to advance for that object, besides enabling them to provide for any of their young and energetic members who may feel disposed to settle in that highly-favoured country.¹¹⁴

Gosse saw some of the country described by Giles, but his assessment of it was not nearly so favourable, the difference being no doubt due partly to a difference in temperament and partly to the fact that Gosse saw the country after, Giles before, a dry summer. On the whole, the reports of Gosse and Warburton acted as a foil to Giles's glowing accounts. The only good country reported by Gosse was thirty square miles at Ayers Rock and parts of the Mann, Musgrave and Reynolds Ranges; and he emphasized the fact that a wide expanse of arid country lay between all of it, except the Reynolds Range, and the telegraph line.¹¹⁵ Warburton was impressed with the country immediately to the north of the MacDonnells, but reported an absence of permanent water. The only other

113. See E. Giles, Diary 1872, entries for 2.9.72ff.

114. Quoted in S.A. Register 29.7.73, p.5.

115. See Gosse, Diary 1873, entries for 3.5.73, 19.7.73, 15.8.73; Report to Surveyor General, 1.2.74 (in S.A.P.P. 48/74).

country he reported at all favourably upon was that in the Stuart Bluff Range and Treuer Range areas.¹¹⁶

It was the construction of the overland telegraph, rather than the work of these explorers, that prepared the way for the pastoral penetration of Central Australia. Not that much suitable new country was discovered during the building of the line: the construction parties did not deviate far to the east or west of Stuart's route and most of the new country on the Todd and Waite Rivers and in the Fergusson and Harts Ranges, upon which Ross reported favourably,¹¹⁷ was not settled until after 1910. It was glowing accounts of country more accessible and already for the most part discovered by Stuart that attracted pastoralists in the seventies. Todd, for example, reported all the country from the Waterhouse Range to north of Barrow Creek 'a splendid country for stock.'¹¹⁸ C. Giles

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116. Warburton, Diary 1872-73, entries 19.4.73, 23.4.73, 28.4.73, 9.5.73, 14.5.73, 22.5.73. Concerning the explorations of Giles, Gosse and Warburton, see, in addition to the sources indicated above, Threadgill, op. cit., Chap. 6; R. Duncan, op. cit., pp.44-46; Chapman, op. cit., pp.55-60.
117. See Ross, Diary 1870-71, entries for 4.9.70, 11.9.70, 14.9.70, 15.9.70, 20.12.70, 21.12.70, 25.12.70; A. Giles, Diary 1870-71, entries for 10.12.70, 15.12.70, 18.12.70, 20.12.70, 22-24.12.70.
118. Lecture 1873 (loc. cit.) p.53. Cf. Todd to Chief Secretary in S.A.P.P. 25/71, p.3.

said of the land on either side of the lower Finke, 'Finer stock country I have seldom or never seen.'¹¹⁹ And R.P. Boucaut was reported to have written that 'the country about the MacDonnell Ranges has plenty of water, thousands of square miles fit for grazing, and thousands of acres of land as good as Belalie',¹²⁰ which was about to be thrown open for agricultural settlement. As they trickled back into Adelaide, men of the construction parties talked of grass waving feet high and sweet water abounding.

Furthermore, the construction of the overland telegraph provided the future pastoral industry in the Centre with the rudiments of a skilled work-force. Many of the men who built the line, having received valuable training in the art of successfully battling with the Central Australian environment, returned as overlanders, teamsters, or stationhands.¹²¹ The fact, moreover, that after the completion of the line the Centre was equipped with depots of supply and easy means of communication with the outside world could scarcely have been uninfluential with those squatters who planned to move their herds to new pastures. More important, perhaps, the

119. C. Giles, art. cit., p.27.

120. Anon, 'Overland Telegraph Line - 1870 to 1872' (in R.P. Boucaut, Miscellaneous Papers) p.25. See also, for example, Renner, Diaries and Rough Diaries, passim; Address of Welcome to Todd, Officers and Men, Adelaide, 15.11.72 (S.A.A. 187); Woods to Todd, 18.10.72 (S.A.A. 140/45); Mills to Todd 12.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/47).

121. See, e.g., Port Aug. Desp. 2.2.78; A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T. pp.71,98; Chapter 4, pp.305,308,329 (below).

construction of the telegraph opened what appeared to many to be an all-season stockroute to the Centre, but which in reality was practicable only in good seasons. At the time the line was completed, stock could be taken with ease from the Peake via numerous waterholes and springs and at least six wells to Tennant Creek.¹²² Only when dry seasons set in did it become apparent that many more wells would have to be sunk before the road became practicable for teamsters in all seasons, let alone for large mobs of travelling stock, for which expensive troughing and appliances would have to be erected. In 1875 a small beginning to this enormous task was made when Todd let a contract to one Docherty to sink four wells between Alice Springs and Katherine. By January 1876 he had completed Kelly and Wycliffe Wells and was working on another near Mount Boothby.¹²³

Most important of all, perhaps, the men of the over-land telegraph 'proved' that stock would thrive in the Centre. After the rains of February 1871 lean and hungry livestock were nowhere to be seen. A teamster on the line reported in June 1872 that, though he had been 'in every

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122. Todd, Notebook 1872, passim; Knuckey, Report to Todd, 2.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/46); Mills, Report to Todd, 12.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/47); Woods, Report to Todd 18.10.72 (S.A.A. 140/45); Harvey, Report to Todd, 23.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/44). Cf. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.153; Woods, Journal, entry for 13.2.71 (draft of report to Todd); Todd, Report 1873 (loc. cit.); J. Lewis, op. cit. pp.71-83.
123. S.A. Register 20.5.76, p.6.

part of South Australia', he had 'never been anywhere where cattle will do so much work and keep their condition as between here and the Peake'; and warned that 'South Australian capitalists ought to look out sharp after this country if the Northern Territory gold-fields go ahead... there are plenty of Queenslanders who would quickly avail themselves of the opportunity of collaring good country like this.'¹²⁴ Nor did any disease invade the herds, though imported pleuro-pneumonia carried off a few bullocks.¹²⁵ Some natural obstacles to the breeding and overlanding of sheep, however, had been encountered: dingoes, coarse and prickly grasses, and a poison bush (Gastrolobium grandiflorem), which scattered the bones of 3,000 of Milner's sheep and lambs along the Sutherland Creek.¹²⁶ Todd and others, however, were confident that sheep could be shepherded from dingoes by Aborigines and the poison bush dodged.¹²⁷

Alfred Giles, however, did not dodge the bush when in

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124. Ibid, 8.6.72, p.12. See also ibid 2.1.73 (p.11), 31.3.73 (p.5); Todd Lecture 1873 (loc. cit.) p.27.
125. See p. ²⁰⁵ (above) and reference 41.
126. R. Milner, Reminiscences (loc. cit.); A.J. Giles, 'Central South Australia' (in F.S. Carroll, Atlas of South Australia and the Northern Territory, Adelaide, 1876), n.p.; Ashwin, art. cit. p.57; C. Giles, art. cit., p.24; S.A.A. 140/44; John Lewis, op. cit., p.79. The estimates of the number of sheep poisoned range from 1500 - 3000. 3000 was Milner's own estimate.
127. Todd, Notebook, entry for 27.7.72. Cf. Todd to Chief Sec. in S.A.P.P. 25/71, p.3.

1873 and 1875 he took sheep across the continent for the telegraph stations: some 500 of a flock of 5,000 were poisoned on the first occasion, some 400 of a flock of 4,500 on the second.¹²⁸ He left some 2,000 ewes at Alice Springs in 1875 for a breeding experiment, but it is not known how many sheep he distributed among the other stations in the Centre. Apart from the poison bush, the only serious obstacle he encountered (and overcame) was a ninety-five mile dry stage north of Alice Springs in 1875.¹²⁹

Giles demonstrated that, with expert droving, large mobs of livestock could be overlanded to the Centre and beyond even in a dry season. Others (apart from Milner) who followed or preceded him travelled with smaller mobs: teamsters plodding up the line with supplies, and prospectors going overland, especially in 1873, to goldfields in the Top End. Giles himself in 1873 took 188 horses to Yam Creek for a party of Kapundaites who preferred to travel by sea. Todd met two men on the Taylor on their way to the Top End diggings as early as August 1872, and in the following year at least five parties went across, including Campbell and nine men with 250 of Elder's horses for sale

128. The larger figures represent the size of the flocks when Giles began his trips. In 1875 Giles overlanded 500 goats in addition to the sheep.

129. See A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T. pp.8-11, 20-46; A.J. Giles, art. cit. (n.p.)

on the fields.¹³⁰

South Australians became so excited about the possibilities of the route - for the shipment of tropical products to the south and of horses to India, for trade with the East, for shortening the journey of mails to and from England, for federating the Australian colonies, for bringing gold from the Top End, and for developing the interior - that the idea of a railway across the continent was mooted. In April 1872 a Bill providing for a grant of 200,000,000 acres to the local Port Augusta and Port Darwin Railway Company was introduced in the Assembly by A. Blyth, who was said to be a good friend of the chairman of the company, R.D. Ross; but lovers of acres and pastoralists combined to defeat (by one vote only) a motion to obviate the Speaker's ruling that the Bill was a private one and ought not be proceeded with.¹³¹ Meanwhile, there were favourable reactions to the proposal in the eastern colonies, and the Colonial Office suggested a horse tramway across the continent and the establishment of towns at Charlotte

130. See S.A. Register, 29.1.73, 22.4.73 (Supplement), 23.6.73, 21.8.73, 9.10.73; Todd, Notebook, entry for 10.8.72; A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., p.8; P.E. Warburton, Diary 1872-73 (S.A.A. 304) entry for 15.3.72.

131. S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 17.4.72, col. 524ff.; 30.4.72, col. 687; 15.5.72 col. 939ff.; 19.6.72, col. 1299ff.; 26.6.72, col. 1364ff; 4.7.72, col. 1463; 24.7.72, col. 1724; 19.8.73, col. 171; Duncan, op. cit. p.250.

Waters, Alice Springs and the Peake.¹³² Men envisaged a network of branch lines radiating from the Centre to all capital cities, and one enthusiastic Melbournian informed South Australians that they had it in their power 'to give to Australia the beginning of her history and life as a nation.'¹³³ In August 1873 Blyth, now Chief Secretary and Premier, introduced another Bill, this time throwing open the work to the world and promising no more than 50,000 acres for every mile of railway constructed; but a series of adjournments prevented it from becoming law that year, and in the following year it was not proceeded with, probably because Blyth and others realized, now that the gold boom in the Top End had collapsed and the potential of the Territory was better known, that there would be no takers.¹³⁴

After the bustling years when the line was constructed, life at the telegraph stations quickly assumed a pattern which was not to be greatly disturbed until a railway reached Alice Springs in 1929. By 1876 the main buildings

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132. Threadgill, op cit. p.159; S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) col. 1065; S.A. Register 9.12.73 (p.5), 27.1.73 (p.7). Cf. S.A.A. 140/51.
133. S.A. Register 28.1.73 (p.6), 13.1.73 (p.6). Cf. A.J. Giles in N.T. Times, 22.11.1901; N.T. Times, 19.8.1910.
134. See S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 19.8.73, Cols. 169ff.; 8.10.73, col.681; 13.11.73, cols. 1065ff; 20.11.73, cols. 1142ff; 4.12.73, cols. 1339ff.; 16.12.73. col.1490.



PLATE 12

Alice Springs Telegraph Station in the Nineties

By courtesy S.A.Archives



Telegraph Officials - Charlotte Waters - NT

PLATE 13

Charlotte Waters Telegraph Station and Staff in the Eighties

By courtesy S.A.Archives

at each of the stations were complete.¹³⁵ At first six men (a station-master, an assistant-operator and four 'linesmen') were employed at each station, the station-master at Alice Springs being entrusted with the general supervision of the line from Attack Creek to Beltana.¹³⁶ Whenever an interruption occurred between two stations, a party from each would set out towards one another - by buggy with ladders if the matter was not urgent, on horse-back without ladders if it was - until the fault was found. If without ladders, the men would climb the poles with the aid of two stirrups joined by a piece of rope, and their agility in performing this feat soon earned them the sobriquet of 'polecats'.¹³⁷ Interruptions to the line, however, were few,¹³⁸ and in 1873-74 Todd took steps to make them fewer; he sent expeditions from the north and the south to repole the line with iron poles north of a point thirty miles south of Tennant Creek, and made plans to plant iron poles alternately with wooden ones throughout

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135. S.A. Register 5.10.75, p.6. The buildings at Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs and Barrow Creek were completed by the end of 1872, the erection of a permanent building at Tennant Creek being delayed for some years while Todd tried to decide whether the station should be built there or at Attack Creek, (see S.A.P.P. 29/73).
136. Subsequently from Attack Creek to the Peake. See Todd, Report 1873 (loc. cit.); S.A. Register 24.2.74; Todd, Report 1884 p.146; S.A.P.P. 30/91, p.212.
137. S.A. Register 2.4.75, p.6.
138. Todd, Report 1884, Appendix M.

the Centre.¹³⁹ When not repairing or operating the line, the telegraph men spent their daylight hours trying to establish gardens, caring for the station livestock (for which reservations of twenty-five square miles at each station were approved in 1875, though they were proclaimed only in 1888),¹⁴⁰ or transmitting meteorological observations to Adelaide for publication in the daily papers. In the evenings they played at whist or euchre and recounted the gossip gleaned from the telegraph line.¹⁴¹ Probably in 1874 the staff at Alice Springs was increased, for it had been found that, owing to extraordinarily favourable weather conditions only the central repeating station was normally required to operate in a thousand miles of country.¹⁴² Since it was also the depot for supplies to the stations to the north, Alice Springs became the largest station on the ^{line.} _A

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139. See S.A.P.P. 44/1878, p.32; Todd, Notebook, entry for 18.7./1872/; ———, Report 1884, (loc. cit.) pp.146f; S.A. Register 3.4.73 and 20.5.76; S.A.P.D. 2.6.74, cols. 317-8.
140. M.C.N.T. In 376/87 (17/75 enclosed); S.A. Govt. Gazette 29.3.88 (p.703), 18.7.88 (p.95); Reserves of 25 square miles were created also at Goyder Well, Anthony Well, Tea Tree Well, Wycliffe Well and Kelly Well by the March proclamation. The Barrow Creek reserve was increased to 50 sq. miles in 1892 (ibid, 7.4.92, p.802) and in 1893 one sq. mile was reserved around Coramina (Deep) Well (ibid, 17.5.93, p.1082).
141. S.A. Register, 5.10.75. See also M.H. Ellis, Long Lead: Across Australia by Motor Car (London/1927/); Madigan, op. cit., pp.29-30; Adel. Observer, 23.4.04, p.39.
142. S.A.P.P. 44/1878, p.30. Cf. J.L. Stapleton to Mrs. J.L. Stapleton, 17.8.73 (in S.A.A. D.2741).

It was even nominated in 1875, as the future capital of Australia.¹⁴³ Most of the men seem to have been contented with their lot. In 1875 the only complaints they are known to have made to the authorities in Adelaide concerned the arrival of mail and the treachery of Aborigines. North of the Peake the mails were entrusted to teamsters and other travellers, but this arrangement did not work well in a dry season or when an overlander delivered the mails to himself.¹⁴⁴

Before the relations of Europeans with Aborigines during the years 1870-75 can be discussed, it is necessary to examine the nature of previous white-Aboriginal contacts. As far as is known, Stuart was the only white man to have had any dealings with Aborigines in the Centre before 1870: there is no evidence that Ross met any on his trip to Mount Humphries in 1869. It is probable, however, that both the Southern Aranda and Iliaura had heard of the white man

143. Correspondent, of The Hour (London) quoted in N.T. Times 4.3.76, p.2.; S.A. Register 2.4.75, p.6. Cf. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.21; A.J. Giles in N.T. Times, 22.11.1901.

144. See South Australian Police Gazette, 11.2.74; S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 21.10.74, cols. 2108-9; S.A. Register 2.4.75, p.6.

independently of Stuart and before the construction of the overland telegraph. Christopher Giles found a large glass marble inside a pair of 'Kadaitcha' shoes on Section A in 1871,¹⁴⁵ and in 1870 Ross reported that an Aboriginal he met on the Waite distinctly said '"white felly"' and pointed towards the country occupied by Queensland squatters on the Herbert River in the 1860's.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as we have seen, a European disease, transmitted by neither Stuart nor the men of the overland telegraph, ravaged the Aboriginal population in the late sixties or early seventies.¹⁴⁷

The most frequent Aboriginal reaction to Stuart on each of his three journeys through the Centre was fear and avoidance. Not until he reached the Finke in the vicinity of Chambers Pillar did Stuart see an Aboriginal north of the 26th parallel on his first journey. As he crossed that river he 'saw a Blackfellow among the Bushes, pulled up and called to him, at first he seemed at a loss to know where the sound came from, but as soon as he saw the other horses coming up he took to his heels and was off like a shot and we saw no more of him'.¹⁴⁸ This was

145. Art. cit., p.20.

146. Ross, Diary, entry for 25.12.70; A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.44.

147. See Chap. 1 (above).

148. Journal, entry for 6.4.60.

the typical reaction of the few Aborigines seen south of Warramunga territory on six different occasions on his first trip and of an unspecified number seen on five occasions on his second trip.¹⁴⁹ Of the Aborigines seen on the second trip, only a solitary lubra and child were north of the James Range, and they 'went off screaming at a great rate,'¹⁵⁰ On a number of occasions on both trips, of course, it was obvious to the party that Aborigines, who remained unseen, were in their immediate vicinity. During the third trip the occasions on which Aborigines met by Stuart reacted with fear and avoidance were proportionately fewer than during the first and second journeys, but still more frequent than the occasions on which they reacted in any other manner.¹⁵¹

Probably because of the transitory nature of their contacts with Stuart, Aborigines made few tentative approaches to his party. Stuart travelled too quickly for them to overcome their fear. Only on one occasion did they make approaches on their own initiative: two Warramunga men visited Stuart's camp in June 1860, presented him with a gift of parrots and opossums and 'wished to

149. Ibid, entries for 6.4.60, 17.5.60, 22.5.60, 17.7.60, 17.2.61, 21.2.61, 3.3.61, 6.3.61, 30.7.61.

150. Ibid, entry for 30.7.61. Cf. entry for 22.5.61.

151. For instances of fear and avoidance on Stuart's third trip see ibid, entries for 16.2.62, 23.2.62, 13.9.62, 25.9.62, 29.9.62, 3.10.62, 5.10.62, 9.10.62, 17.10.62, cf. 13.10.62.

steal everything they could lay their fingers on!¹⁵²

Curiosity and acquisition were evidently among their motives. When Stuart or his men themselves took the initiative they sometimes succeeded in gaining the confidence of a few Aborigines, but their efforts usually ended in failure.¹⁵³ On other occasions yet, curious or suspicious Aborigines were caught prowling about the camp or examining the tracks left by the party.¹⁵⁴

Aborigines offered resistance or incipient resistance only on one occasion¹⁵⁵ during Stuart's first journey. On June 26th 1860, at Attack Creek, about thirty Warramunga warriors caused Stuart to flee south into the night until 11.00 p.m., wishing that he could stand and fight.¹⁵⁶ It is clear from Stuart's diary that this attack was provoked by the party's intrusion on precious water supplies (and clearer yet that a number of Warramunga fell before the white man's bullets); and the fact that Stuart's party

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152. Ibid, entry for 23.6.1860; The Adelaide Observer, 23.1.97, p.41. This incident occurred at Kekwicks Pond, beyond the limits of the Centre as I have defined it, but within Warramunga territory.
153. See Stuart, Journal, e.g. entries for 13.6.60, 2.3.61, 13.9.62, 2.10.62, 9.10.62, 25.10.62.
154. See ibid, e.g. entries for 16.7.60, 19.7.60, 26.7.60, 16.2.62, 15.3.62, 3.10.62.
155. There were, however, a number of other incidents which it is possible to interpret as instances of incipient resistance but which I have interpreted as instances either of tentative approach or of fear and avoidance. See especially ibid, entry for 17.7.60.
156. Ibid, entries for 26.6.60, 27.6.60. Cf. The Adelaide Observer 23.1.97, p.41 (account by Ben Head).



PLATE 14

The artist, Stephen King, accompanied Stuart on his third attempt to cross the continent.

By courtesy S. A. Archives

numbered only three and that the terrain offered good cover may have emboldened the Warramunga to attack. During the second trip there were no clear instances of resistance, but it is evident that a number of Aborigines had lost some of their fear of the white man. On the Goyder and the Finke they set fire to the grass on the party's tracks,¹⁵⁷ and on the Hugh an old man angrily apostrophized and spat at them.¹⁵⁸ John Woodforde's assertion, as related by A.C. Ashwin in 1927, that Stuart's men were attacked by Warramunga at Attack Creek and 'used their revolvers and cutlasses on the natives, and gave them a lesson',¹⁵⁹ is probably untrue: Woodforde deserted¹⁶⁰ Stuart in 1862 and may have harboured a grudge against him; and on his third journey Stuart noted that two Warramunga he met at Attack Creek 'seemed to dread the appearance of a gun' not because of any incident during his second trip but because guns had been used against the Warramunga in June 1860.¹⁶¹

Incipient resistance or resistance was much more in evidence on Stuart's third journey. South of the MacDonnells Aborigines caused the explorer considerable annoyance by firing grass to the windward of his party¹⁶² and on one occasion they scared off his horses, delaying a start till 11.00 a.m.¹⁶³ On the Finke south of Horseshoe Bend, after

157. Stuart, Journal, entries for 15.2.61, 27.2.61.

158. Ibid, entry for 6.3.61.

159. A.C. Ashwin, art. cit., p.61.

160. Webster, op. cit., p.205.

161. Stuart, Journal, entry for 13.9.62.

162. Ibid, entries for 15.2.62, 27.2.62.

163. Ibid, entry for 16.2.62.

Southern Aranda had encircled the party with smokes, Stuart prepared his men for attack: but any danger there might have been vanished when Thring, out looking for horses, surprised three warriors behind a bush and 'was obliged to use his revolver in self-defence' at twelve yards.¹⁶⁴ In Laurence Gorge on the Hugh, Stuart twice deemed it necessary to order Auld to fire close to a number of defiant Central Aranda 'to let them know what distance our weapons carried' and scare them off.¹⁶⁵ Near Mount Hay Stuart adopted the same tactics with a group of armed Northern Aranda; in reply, they came running towards his party, apparently determined to attack. 'They were received with a discharge of Rifles which caused them to retire and keep at a respectable distance.'¹⁶⁶ The causes of these attacks and threatened attacks are by no means clear. The Aborigines' early fear of Stuart had probably been largely replaced by a fear lest he become a permanent intruder and a desire to prevent this from happening. It is worth noting, moreover, that none of the attacks took place in open country. On the other hand, Stuart, with his large party, was more ready to resort to force and less willing to make careful and time-consuming

164. Ibid, entry for 17.2.62.

165. Ibid, entry for 25.2.62; S.King Papers (S.A.A. 143/5) pp.8-9.

166. Stuart, Journal, entry 5.3.62; S. King Papers (S.A.A. 143/5) pp.9-10.

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Outcrops of Malines near Mt Honey

S. King
March 15th 1860

PLATE 15

By courtesy S. A. Archives

efforts at conciliation than previously.¹⁶⁷

The pattern of reaction of Central Australian Aborigines to the construction parties and the explorers who followed them was similar to that encountered by Stuart, each phase varying in intensity according to the nature of contact.

By far the most common initial reaction to Ross, Giles, Gosse, and Warburton, (who had dealings chiefly with previously uncontacted Aborigines), and to the construction parties when on the move, especially in 'new' country or country where Aborigines had had little contact with explorers, was fear and avoidance. When, however, the explorers and construction parties remained at one place for some time, or where Aborigines had been previously contacted, this phase of reaction commonly gave way to tentative approach or, less frequently, to incipient resistance or resistance. Thus, in all his travels, Ross met with instances of tentative approach only in country which he himself or some other explorer had previously passed through, or where Aborigines had already heard of the white man. Returning from his first journey, he managed to win the confidence of a number of Eastern Aranda on Giles Creek, gave one a tomahawk and

167. See pp. 258-9 (below).

invited them into his camp; whereupon they proved themselves 'expert thieves', stealing a rifle and shot-gun in broad daylight.¹⁶⁸ From this incident and others during the travels of Ross, Alfred Giles formulated the dictum: 'As a rule, when once wild blacks lose their first terror of the whites, the job is to keep them out of the camp'.¹⁶⁹ Five timid Southern Aranda Ross met at the Junction as he travelled north on his second trip became very friendly when invited into camp and proved themselves 'great thieves but otherwise harmless'.¹⁷⁰ On the following two days they were in the camp at daylight and tried, together with five others who joined them on the third day, to make off with various items of the party's equipment.¹⁷¹ Tentative approaches were made to Giles, Gosse, and Warburton only in similar circumstances. Thus a number of Loritja desiring access to water or the satisfaction of their curiosity, came to within 100 yards of Giles's camp at Glen Edith after it had been established for a number of days;¹⁷² Warburton, after spending six weeks at Waterloo

168. Ross, Diary, entry for 24.9.70; A. Giles, Diary, entry for 24.9.70; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.28-30.

169. A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.97.

170. Ross, Diary, entry for 1.12.70; A. Giles, Diary, entry for 1.12.70; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.40.

171. Ross, Diary, entries for 2.12.70, 3.12.70; A. Giles, Diary, entries for 2.12.70, 3.12.70; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.40-41.

172. E. Giles, Diary 1872, entry for 27.10.72.

Wells, was able to induce a number of Walmalla Walbiri to visit his camp;¹⁷³ and three Aborigines - probably the same three whom Gosse contacted on 4th August 1873¹⁷⁴ - paid an 'inoffensive and civil' visit to Giles at Ayers Rock on 19th June 1874, and departed with a pair of pliers.¹⁷⁵ Tentative approaches were more frequently made to the men of the construction parties, who worked in country previously visited by explorers and who tended to camp in one place for long periods; and, as elsewhere, curiosity and acquisition seem to have been among the motives of the Aborigines who made them. C. Giles, Harvey, and McMinn all complained of the annoyance natives occasioned them by stealing articles from their camps.¹⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that the first approaches were invariably made by adult male Aborigines only: women and children were seen only when caught unawares or, (more rarely), after several approaches had been made by adult males.¹⁷⁷

173. Warburton, Diary 1872-73, entries for 13.7.73, 19.7.73.

174. See Gosse, Diary, entry for 3.8.73.

175. Ernest Giles, Diary 1873-74, entry for 19.6.74. For instances of tentative approaches to these explorers by Aborigines contacted by Stuart and the men of the overland telegraph, see E. Giles, Diary 1872, entries for 12.11.72, 13.11.72; ———, Australia Twice Traversed, pp.128-32; Warburton, Diary 1872-73, entry for 16.12.72.

176. C. Giles, art. cit. pp.20ff., 28; McMinn, Diary, entry 7.6.71; Harvey, Report to Todd 23.12.72 (S.A.A.140/44). For other instances of tentative approach to construction parties see McMinn, Diary, entries for 20.5.71, 21.5.71, 22.5.71, 25.8.71, 26.8.71, 5.9.71, 5.8.72, 6.8.72; Renner, Diary, entries for 11.5.71, 2.6.71; Woods, Journal, entry for 14.1.71.

177. See, e.g., McMinn, Diary, entry for 25.8.71.

In rare instances the initial reaction of Aborigines was incipient resistance or resistance. This happened only when the Aborigines concerned considerably outnumbered the Europeans, when the intruders took possession of precious water supplies, or when the terrain lent itself to safe attack. Thus Ross was scared off 'a little stinking water' on the Todd by a group of angry Eastern Aranda during his first trip.¹⁷⁸ In 1872 Giles was threatened by twenty or thirty Western Aranda as he passed through the narrow Glen of Palms¹⁷⁹ and by an even greater number of (Loritja) Matuntara as he travelled along the foot of George Gills Range;¹⁸⁰ and when he entered Escape Glen alone he was forced to retire to the sound of thudding boomerangs and spears.¹⁸¹ In March 1874, in the Petermann Ranges, sixty or seventy Pitjandjara unsuccessfully attacked Giles's party on one day and forced him to flee on the next.¹⁸² Warburton and Gosse, however, encountered no resistance from the Aborigines they met.¹⁸³ This may have been partly due to differences in the attitudes and policies of the explorers. Giles was brought up in a

178. Ross, Diary, entry for 22.9.70; A. Giles, Diary, entry for 22.9.70; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.27.

179. E. Giles, Diary 1872, entry for 31.8.72.

180. Ibid, entries for 3.11.72, 5.11.72.

181. Ibid, entry for 9.11.72.

182. Ibid, entries for 15.3.74, 16.3.74.

183. Two members of Gosse's party were attacked, however, by the Pitjandjara about thirty miles west of the Northern Territory border. See Gosse, Diary, entry for 10.9.73.

rougher school for the treatment of Aborigines than either of his rivals, and on one occasion expressed a desire 'to catch a native', adding 'I'd walk him off alongside my horse, until he took me to water.'¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, Warburton transferred a similar desire into action on at least one occasion.¹⁸⁵ A more probable explanation is that Warburton rarely passed through country suitable for surprise attacks and that, unlike Giles, both he and Gosse encountered only small parties of Aborigines.

Where contact had been repeated or prolonged, the Aborigines sometimes seemed prepared to back up their desire to acquire European goods with force. 'War was declared, and hostilities commenced on 18th April 1871 at Charlotte Waters', wrote Christopher Giles.¹⁸⁶ Having failed to steal a tarpaulin and other articles from the construction camp at Charlotte Waters, about twenty Southern Aranda made a show of force and were driven off by Knuckey and his men.¹⁸⁷ 'Evidently they are getting accustomed to us', wrote Knuckey, 'and seeing that we are on guard against thieving, think that they can conquer us by force. I hope for their sakes that they will not try it on again.'¹⁸⁸ According to Giles, they did try it

184. E. Giles, Diary 1872, entry for 8.10.72.

185. Warburton, Diary 1872-73, entry for 18.6.73.

186. C. Giles, art. cit., p.22.

187. Ibid, pp.22-23. (Giles here quotes from Knuckey's Journal, subsequently lost).

188. Quoted in ibid, p.23. J.B. Richards (op. cit. pp.15-16) also quotes an account supplied by Knuckey.

again: this was 'only one of many similar incidents', and as a rule the relations between the men of Section A and the Southern Aranda were 'somewhat "strained"'.¹⁸⁹ More commonly, Aborigines previously contacted offered incipient resistance or resistance when conditions similar to those which were present whenever they offered resistance during first contact prevailed, and when they had already met with rough treatment at the hands of Europeans. It may be that the Southern Aranda resorted to force in 1871 partly because of rough treatment accorded them while attempting to steal camp equipment. The only other people with whom the construction parties clashed - the Warramunga - were clearly motivated partly by memories of their clashes with Stuart. In 1871 Ross was provoked to fire upon some sixteen armed Warramunga at Attack Creek,¹⁹⁰ John Milner was killed by a Warramunga at the same place,¹⁹¹ and teamster Burt was attacked some forty miles further north¹⁹²; and in the following year Renner¹⁹³ and W.W. Mills¹⁹⁴ encountered hostile Warramunga on separate occasions. Similarly, Ernest Giles, crossing from Perth to the overland telegraph line in

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189. Ibid, pp.23-24. Cf. Renner, Diary, entry for 20.4.71; McMinn, Diary, entry for 28.7.71 (McMinn was forced to fire upon a number of Southern Aranda north of the Junction).
190. A. Giles, Diary, entry for 14.4.71; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, pp.72-73.
191. R. Milner, Reminiscences (loc. cit.); A.C. Ashwin, art. cit., pp.57-60.
192. A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.119; Harvey to Todd, 23.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/44).
193. Renner, Diary 1872, entry for 12.3.72.
194. Harvey to Todd, 23.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/44).

1876, narrowly escaped another collision with the Pitjandjara of the Petermann Ranges,¹⁹⁵ who long remained hostile to Europeans.

In summary, the usual initial reaction of Aborigines to Stuart, the construction parties, and Giles, Gosse and Warburton was fear and avoidance. Only when they had been deprived of water, when the terrain was rugged, or when they considerably outnumbered the intruders did Aborigines react first with resistance. The phase of fear and avoidance was normally followed by a phase of tentative approach, which was never present at first contact. The initial approach was usually made, sometimes within a few days of first contact, by adult males only; and curiosity and acquisition were important motives of the Aborigines who made tentative approaches. Where incipient resistance or resistance had not been the initial reaction of Aborigines, it sometimes followed the phase of tentative approach. Occasionally resistance flowed directly from an increase in the acquisitiveness of Aborigines who made tentative approaches. Oftener it occurred where the Aborigines, through repeated or prolonged contact, had lost their **fear** of the white man, where this fear had been replaced by anxiety lest the intruder had come to stay, or where they

195. Proceedings of the Honorable Thomas Elder's Expedition, under the command of Ernest Giles from Perth to Adelaide. (S.A.P.P. 18*/1876) p.14.

had been roughly treated previously. Even then, they rarely attacked unless in rugged terrain or unless they outnumbered their enemy.

There is no evidence to suggest, however, that bloody clashes between Europeans and Aborigines were 'inevitable'. On the contrary, such conflicts seem, through luck or the deliberate implementation of a policy of conciliation, to have been avoided by the construction parties on Sections B, C and D, and they were subsequently avoided by the Hermannsburg missionaries among the Western Aranda.¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately, Aborigines were not always prepared to resign themselves, without a showdown, to the fact that Europeans intended to remain in the Centre, and Europeans showed a tendency, owing to attitudes derived largely from contact with Aborigines both before and after they came to the Centre, to drift from a policy of conciliation to a policy of pacification.

Most Europeans came to the Centre paying at least lip-service to, or with instructions¹⁹⁷ to adopt, a policy of conciliation towards the Aborigines. However, most came also with a set of linked attitudes and beliefs incompatible with the effective implementation of such a policy: belief in progress and the superiority of their

196. See Chapter 5 (below).

197. See, e.g., A. Giles, Exploring in the 'Seventies', pp.30,60; Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.150.

own culture, a conviction that Aborigines were doomed to extinction, contempt for the 'capacity and persons' of Aborigines, and (to lesser extent) a conviction that Aborigines were treacherous and murderous. Ernest Giles, though he was probably more influenced by Darwinian ideas than most other Europeans who came to the Centre, provides a good example of a person who believed in the superiority of his own culture and the inevitable extinction of Aborigines. '...the Great Designer of the Universe', he wrote, 'in the long past periods of creation, permitted a fiat to be recorded, that the beings whom it was His pleasure in the first instance to place amidst these lovely scenes [in the Musgrave Ranges], must eventually be swept from the face of the earth by others more intellectual, more dearly beloved and gifted than they. Progressive improvement is undoubtedly the order of creation, and we perhaps in our turn, may be as ruthlessly driven from the earth by another race of yet unknown beings of an order infinitely higher - infinitely more beloved than we.'¹⁹⁸ E.J. Harris left an extreme example of the contempt in which some men who came to the Centre held Aborigines. On his way to become an operator at Alice Springs he 'jumped a claim of fire-wood which the blacks had brought for the purpose of celebrating

198. E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, p.184. Cf. Proceedings of the Hon. Thos. Elder's Expedition (loc. cit.) p.14.

the funeral of one of their coloured friends they had not used it tho for the grave was quite open & the defunct 'smut's' marrow bones showing at the bottom. We stuck the cranium on a stick close to the water and with an old hat on one side of its head, it looked quite distingue and knowing [*sic*].¹⁹⁹ Even Todd, who had a theory that he could deter Aborigines from interfering with the line by playing on their superstitions, derived 'great fun' on a number of occasions from giving Aborigines electric shocks while 'dipping their hands into a bucket of water to pick out money and tobacco'²⁰⁰ and from firing signal rockets in the direction of their camps.²⁰¹ The conviction that Aborigines were treacherous was well illustrated by A.C. Ashwin. 'I was used to bad native', he wrote 'and was always on my guard, and whenever I came upon them I always kept them in their proper place, never made free with them, and never let them into the camp.'²⁰² When, therefore, John Milner made friends with the Warramunga who later murdered him, Ashwin and others who thought like him hunted the Aboriginal from the camp with their rifles on a number

199. E.J. Harris, Diary, entry for 21.10.71.

200. Todd, Diary 1870(2), entry for 13.11.70; cf. S.A. Register 28.1.63 (report of lecture by Todd to the Adelaide Philosophical Society).

201. Todd, Notebook, entry for 23.8.72. Cf. C. Giles, art. cit. p.25.

202. A.C. Ashwin, art. cit., p.54.

of occasions. They believed that Milner was killed because he was kind to the Aboriginal; it may be that the Aboriginal blamed Milner for their own unkindness.²⁰³

At least one of these attitudes was strengthened during contact with Central Australian Aborigines, probably none was weakened. In general, it was virtually impossible for Europeans to have more contempt for the Aborigines of the Centre than for the semi-detribalized and frequently diseased Aborigines they saw further south, or to feel more superior to them, or to be more convinced of their inevitable extinction. Contact had not yet been sufficiently prolonged to produce disastrous effects on the appearance and numbers of Aborigines north of Charlotte Waters, or to present Europeans with opportunities to observe 'disgusting' Aboriginal practices. On the other hand, little occurred to weaken attitudes of contempt in which Europeans already held all Aborigines. Central Australian Aborigines were rarely of direct assistance to explorers, there is no evidence that the construction parties employed local Aboriginal labour, and the fact that 'native wells' and Aboriginal smokes and footprints were often of assistance to Europeans in search of water

203. See Ralph Milner /Reminiscences/, loc. cit.; A.C. Ashwin, art. cit. pp.54,57-60,69,82. Cf. Harvey to Todd, 1.1.72, (S.A.P.P. 41/72) p.6; do to do 23.12.72 (S.A.A. 140/44).

did little to engender favourable opinions of the Aborigines themselves. The belief that Aborigines were (potentially) treacherous and murderous, however, was undoubtedly strengthened, especially by the clashes explorers and men of the overland telegraph had with the Southern Aranda, the Warramunga and the Pitjandjara. The men/^{who}took part in these clashed long remembered them, and, by circulating (and perhaps inventing) gory details, confirmed others in their belief in the murderous propensities of Aborigines. 'It was a heavy blow', wrote Ashwin fifty-five years after the death of Milner, 'smashing his skull from the ear to the eye. Both his eyes were out on his cheeks.'²⁰⁴ Incipient resistance or resistance, together with the acquisitiveness displayed by Aborigines who made tentative approaches, generated fear, exasperation, and a desire to 'teach the natives a lesson' in Europeans, causing them to favour pacification rather than conciliation. Thus Stuart, who had pursued a policy of conciliation at least until repulsed by the Warramunga on his first journey through the Centre, and who had proudly hoped that the flag he planted on the summit of Central Mount Stuart might 'be a sign to the Natives that the dawn of liberty civilization and Christianity is about to brake upon them/sic/',²⁰⁵

204. A.C. Ashwin, art. cit., p.60.

205. Stuart, Journal, entry for 23.4.60.

came to favour pacification. On his third journey he wrote of the Northern Aranda who attacked his party near Mount Hay, 'Should they threaten us again I shall allow them to come closer and make an example of them',²⁰⁶ and his men became anxious to 'chase them to let them know what we could do'.²⁰⁷ By the time he was nearing the north coast he was sufficiently exasperated to write, 'I can stand it no longer. They must be taught a lesson.'²⁰⁸ At Taylor Creek, on his return journey, Stuart resented the fact that a number of Kaititja seemed to think that 'they had done great things by keeping us so quite [sic]', but consoled himself with the thought that 'they would have been rather surprised had they attackt us to find that we spoke and injured by fire [sic]'.²⁰⁹ Similarly, Ross and party drifted towards a policy of pacification. Returning from his second trip Ross met at the Junction three of the Southern Aranda who had attempted to steal items of equipment during his outward journey, and, 'knowing what adept thieves they are',²¹⁰ motioned them off. They went only thirty yards, however, and next morning became so bold that Giles and Harvey had to force them away at gun-point.²¹¹

206. Ibid, entry for 5.3.62.

207. S. King Papers, (S.A.A. 143/5), p.10.

208. Stuart, Journal, entry for 3.8.62.

209. Ibid, entry for 10.10.62.

210. A. Giles, Diary, entry for 24.1.71.

211. Ibid, entry for 25.1.71; ———, Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.60.

Giles subsequently made it clear that he and Harvey would have dealt with them much more severely had they not been instructed to conciliate Aborigines they met.²¹² On his third journey Ross discharged his double-barrelled shotgun 'over the heads' of sixteen hostile Warramunga near Tennant Creek, but Giles 'thought the leading savage might have got a pellet or two, which no doubt would amuse their medicine men to extract and, I hoped, teach them a lesson.'²¹³

The Centre lay within the district of the Northern Territory Police Force, with headquarters at Port Darwin, but when it was thought necessary in 1873 to station a trooper at Charlotte Waters and another at Barrow Creek, they were sent from the newly-created Far Northern Division of the South Australian Police Force, the headquarters of which were at Melrose.²¹⁴ This set a precedent, the Centre remaining part of the beat of the Far Northern Division until 1911. The arrangement was adopted, no doubt, because the route to the Centre from the south was easier than the route from the north and because it enabled

212. Exploring in the 'Seventies, p.60.

213. Ibid, pp.72-73; A. Giles, Diary, entry for 14.4.71.
Cf. Todd, Diary 1872, entry for 14.4.72.

214. S.A. Govt. Gazette 3.7.73 (p.1048), 18.12.73 (p.2147).
The N.T. Police were constituted a separate force in 1873 (S.A.A. ~~Eds.~~ N.456). Headquarters of the Far Northern Division were removed to Port Augusta in 1884.

the authorities in Adelaide to exercise a more direct control over the police in the Centre than they could have exercised through the Northern Territory force.

The probable reason why the two troopers were stationed in the Centre is that Todd's promises to play on Aboriginal superstition and the fact that the telegraph stations were built like forts had not entirely allayed fears that the Aborigines might interrupt communication with Europe.²¹⁵ With few exceptions, however, relations between Aborigines and Europeans working at the telegraph stations or bringing supplies up the line were peaceful,²¹⁶ though one exception caused the authorities to wish that they had sent many more troopers in 1873. In general, Aborigines along the telegraph line had ceased to fear and avoid Europeans by 1875 and ~~had~~ begun, or continued to make, tentative approaches. Todd had instructed his officers at the telegraph stations to endeavour to establish or maintain friendly relations with Aborigines and to supply rations to the old and infirm and those who worked.²¹⁷ Some took advantage of this offer of food, but there was

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215. See S.A. Register, 28.1.63 (report of Todd's lecture to the Adelaide Philosophical Society, 27.1.63); S.A.P.D. (H. of A.) 7.6.70, col. 126; S.A.P.P. 60/71, p.6; N.T. Times 27.2.74, p.2. But cf. Treas. to Agent General, 11.10.70 (S.A.A. 634).
216. Cf. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.150.
217. S.A. Register 5.3.74, p.5. Cf. Todd to Chief Sec. 23.2.74 (C.S.O.In 333/74).

for the most part considerable coming and going and an absence of the more or less permanent Aboriginal camps adjoining the stations which were to mark the phase of intelligent exploitation. Others attached themselves to travelling parties in the hope of securing European goods. When Alfred Giles passed Crown Point with sheep in 1875, a 'large mob' of Southern Aranda, at first retiring and suspicious, followed his party in order to secure old clothes, scraps of food and the offal of sheep regularly slaughtered.²¹⁸ Even outside the country immediately bordering the line it was possible to meet Aboriginal males who no longer feared and avoided white men: Ernest Giles at Rogers Pass on the Palmer River in 1872 came upon a number of Aborigines who had been given European names by the men of the construction parties and who held his horses' bridles and gathered firewood for him.²¹⁹ The material products of European civilization wandered even further afield. As early as August 1873 the Aborigines of Ayers Rock had added at least one iron tomahawk or axe to their collection of implements.²²⁰ Occasionally, Aborigines borrowed wire from the telegraph line or smashed insulators and used the porcelain chips as cutting

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218. A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., pp.28-30.
219. Ernest Giles, Diary 1872, entries for 12.11.72, 13.11.72.
220. Ernest Giles, Diary 1873-74, entry for 24.8.73.

tools or spear heads, so that by 1878 Todd had ordered his men to supply them, when convenient, with these commodities.²²¹

On the whole, however, Aborigines caused little inconvenience, and those south of the MacDonnell Ranges earned a reputation for friendliness.²²² But teamsters and men of the telegraph stations, unable to forget the 'treachery' of the Warramunga, tended to regard all Aborigines north of the ranges as 'bad' or hostile.²²³ And the attitudes of contempt men brought with them to the Centre were now being reinforced by a growing 'knowledge' of the manners and customs of Aborigines there. In 1875 Christopher Giles of Charlotte Waters, in answering a questionnaire circulated by Missionary George Taplin of Point McLeay, could not bring himself to describe the 'disgusting practices' connected with marriage among the Southern Aranda,²²⁴ while J.D. Woods, in a paper delivered to the Adelaide Philosophical Society in 1878, information for which was gleaned largely from officers of the overland telegraph line, related how the bowels of

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221. S.A.P.P. 44/78, p.33. Cf. Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.149 and Appendix M; S.A. Register 24.2.74, 10.12.75 (article by A.J. Giles).
222. S.A.P.P. 44/78, p.33.
223. Cf. S.A. Register 24.2.74, p.5.
224. Geo. Taplin (Ed.) op. cit., p.90.

a lubra slashed by her husband at Alice Springs for committing adultery came out at her back, asserted that the inner life of Aborigines was 'made up of the most barbarous cruelties and the most loathesome obscenities that can be conceived even of a savage people', and assigned the Australian savage to the lowest scale in humanity.²²⁵

Already in 1874, however, there had occurred an incident at Barrow Creek which temporarily put an end to the Government's policy of conciliation and paved the way for the pacification of Aborigines in the Centre. Trooper Samuel Gason, author of a pamphlet on the Dieri tribe,²²⁶ arrived at Barrow Creek on 14th February 1874.²²⁷ A few months earlier, James L. Stapleton - a Canadian who, after serving for some years in the telegraph office at Mt. Gambier and unsuccessfully trying his hand at farming, had been appointed sub-overseer for the Government in the Top End during the construction of the overland telegraph - had arrived to replace R.C. Watson, whom scurvy had driven to Adelaide, as station-master. He had taken severely ill shortly after being appointed station-master at Katherine

225. 'The Aborigines of South Australia' in Trans. and Procs. and Report of the Philosophical Society of Adel., S.A., for 1878-9, pp.83-86.

226. The Dieyerie Tribe of Australian Aborigines: their Manners and Customs, Adelaide, 1874.

227. Gason to Commissioner of Police, 16.2.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74. This docket also contains P.C.O.In 260,266, 298,303,319,333 and 480 of 1874).

in 1872. Deeming a change to be absolutely necessary for his health, he had asked to be transferred to Barrow Creek, which, he had been informed, had an agreeable climate and might give him an opportunity for profitable investment of his small savings, for indications of gold and good pastoral country had been found there. At Barrow Creek, in contrast to Watson, who had warily kept the Kaititja at a distance, he showed some confidence in the Aborigines, supplied their aged and infirm with rations and endeavoured to make the able-bodied useful.²²⁸

On Sunday 22nd February at 11.00 a.m. a number of Kaititja men came to the station and demanded flour, but were told that only the sick and infirm and those who worked were entitled to food. Seeming offended, all save Umpyama,²²⁹ who was greatly pleased by an invitation to accompany a party to inspect the line, retired. As the sun sank over the flat-topped hills that day the telegraph men, six in all, and Trooper Gason took their dinner, and at 7.00 p.m. retired unarmed, together with black boy Jemmy (who probably hailed from the northern districts of South Australia), to the northern side of the building to smoke and chat. Stapleton brought out his violin and sat

228. See Letters of J.L. Stapleton, 1870-73, with telegrams etc. relative to his death at Barrow Creek (S.A.A. D.2741); C.S.O.In 334/74; Gason to C.P. 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 332/74); S.A. Register 9.10.73, 24.2.74, 3.3.74; N.T. Times 27.2.74, p.3.

229. Also spelt 'Umpyanna', 'Umpajanna'.

before them on a keg. Fifteen minutes later some young Kaititja men approached them and asked for flour; and were told that they would be given it on the morrow. At 8.00 p.m., while Umpyama was engaging the attention of the men, a large body of Kaititja warriors crept down the gully at the rear of the telegraph station. Stapleton fiddled on his violin. A spear hissed through the air and struck him on the chest. Jumping up as one, the telegraph men rushed for the eastern and only entrance to their arms and fort; but were repulsed by a body of Kaititja and raced south around the building in order to draw the warriors away from the entrance, John Franks in the lead, Ernest Flint wounded in the leg. Arriving first at the gateway, Franks found it still guarded by a few Kaititja, rushed at them, ran four yards and fell dead with a spear in his heart. All the others save Jemmy, who had to be let in through a window after receiving severe wounds, arrived safely inside. The gate was clanged to and Sniders hurriedly thrust through loopholes. Three shots were fired at twenty yards and two at one hundred. A number of the Kaititja fell dead, the rest retired.²³⁰

230. See P.C.O.In 261/74; C.S.O.In 332/74; F.J. Gillen, Camp Jottings, entry 7.6.1901; Govt. Resident, In A177/1874.

After the wounded had received rough attention the telegraph wire to Adelaide began to hum with news of the calamity. Gason demanded immediate reinforcements and announced that a second attack was expected at any moment.²³¹ In Adelaide, Todd hastened to his office as soon as he heard the news and called in Dr. Charles Gosse, father of the explorer, to prescribe for the wounded.²³² All through the night the men at Barrow Creek stayed awake, the wounded lest 'their flesh might have been poisoned by spears', the able-bodied lest the Kaititja attack again.²³³ Early in the morning they were heartened by a telegram from the Commissioner of Police: 'Keep the station at all hazards. Save your ammunition and don't fire without effect';²³⁴ and at 7.00 a.m. fired four shots at a number of warriors who appeared at 500 yards, one or two of whom were seen to fall.²³⁵ A few hours later they buried Franks. Meanwhile, Stapleton's condition had deteriorated and in the afternoon became so serious that his wife was called to the telegraph office in Adelaide. '...one little Scotch terrier!', Stapleton had assured her in 1871,²³⁶ 'would keep off a hundred'

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231. Gason to C.P., 22.2.74 at 9.44 p.m. (in P.C.O.In 261/74); do to do, 22.2.74 at 9.45 p.m. (in ibid).
232. C.S.O.In 33/74.
233. Gason to C.P. 23.2.74. (in C.S.O.In 332/74); S.A. Register 24.2.74, p.6.
234. C.P. to Gason 23.2.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74).
235. Gason to C.P. 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 332/74).
236. J.L. Stapleton to Mrs. J.L. Stapleton (n.d., 1871; incomplete. S.A.A. D.2741).

Aborigines. He died at 9.45 p.m., and on the following morning was buried alongside Franks. A neat cross with a suitable inscription was subsequently erected over the graves, and today a headstone and solid stone fencing mark the spot.²³⁷

Todd reported the attack to the Chief Secretary first thing on Monday morning and called for increased police protection and effective measures 'to teach the blacks the consequences to themselves of such wanton and cruel acts of aggression' lest 'worse disasters' occur.²³⁸ Gason telegraphed a detailed account of the attack to the Commissioner of Police and informed him that 'Your instructions will be carried out relative to firing on natives without effect',²³⁹ whereupon the Commissioner, an ex-drover and ex-pastoralist, recommended that six or more troopers be sent from the Northern Territory diggings 'fully armed with firearms and swords' to punish the Kaititja immediately and severely lest they come to believe that it was beyond the powers of the white man to avenge the attack: 'if this idea takes possession of them', he warned the Chief Secretary, 'every telegraph station north of the Peake will be in

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237. See C.S.O.In 334/74; Gason to C.P. 23.2.74 at 5.52p.m. (in P.C.O.In 261/74); do to do 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 332/74); S.A. Register 24.2.74, 5.10.75; E. Flint to Mrs. J.L. Stapleton, 23.2.74 (S.A.A. D.2741); letters by C. Todd to Mrs. J.L. Stapleton re death of J.L. Stapleton, 1874 (S.A.A. D.3409).
238. Todd to Chief Sec. 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 333/74).
239. Gason to C.P. 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 332/74).



PLATE 16

Barrow Creek Telegraph Station
Showing the gully in which the Kaititja assembled
prior to the attack.

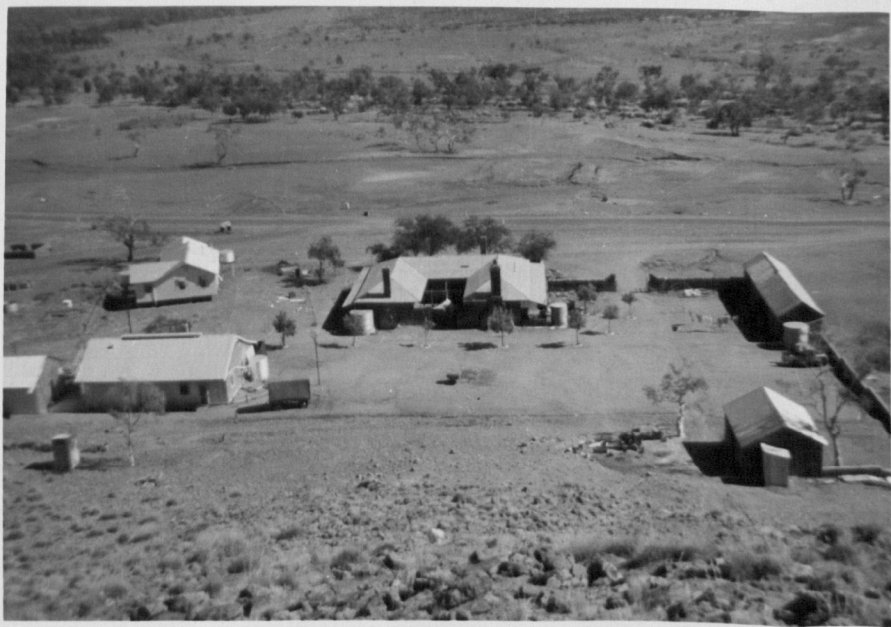


PLATE 17

Barrow Creek Telegraph Station
Showing the original building (centre) and
the graves of Stapleton and Franks (left).

danger of being at any time attacked and the line seriously interfered with if not eventually abandoned'.²⁴⁰ Unfortunately for the Kaititja, many South Australians still feared that Queensland or New South Wales would build a rival line if there was any sustained interruption on the overland telegraph.²⁴¹

On the following day both Adelaide dailies loudly demanded that the Government take action for 'prompt and severe retribution',²⁴² and Cabinet met hastily to consider the matter. The Commissioner of Crown Lands having reported that no police could be spared from the diggings and that even if they could be spared they would take too long to reach Barrow Creek, the Commissioner of Police was requested to make other suggestions for dealing with the Kaititja as speedily as possible.²⁴³ He recommended that the troopers at the Peake and Charlotte Waters and Tucker, the station-master at Tennant Creek, who was out on the line eighty miles north of Barrow Creek, be called to the scene of the outrage and a party organized at once to go out and punish the Kaititja. If this were considered illegal, he thought that the Attorney-General could devise means whereby it could

240. C.P. to Chief Sec. 23.2.74 (ibid); S.A.A. Res.Note 286; S.A.A. D.3200.

241. Cf. S.A. Register, 8.7.73 (editorial).

242. Adel. Advertiser, 24.2.74; S.A. Register, 24.2.74.

243. Cabinet minute 24.2.74 on C.S.O.In 332/74.

be made legal,²⁴⁴ though he himself was of the opinion that, the circumstances being exceptional, 'a too close adherence to legal forms should not be insisted on.'²⁴⁵

Cabinet approved of this suggestion on Wednesday morning, and instructed the Commissioner of Police to order Gason to warn and secure the services of teamster Bond and his four men, who had arrived at Tea Tree Well on their way north, and to have warrants issued for those attackers whose names were known.²⁴⁶ Warrants were issued for Harry Boy, The General, Spritely, Sunkeyes, Coonarie, Apongita, Tungalla and Umpyama,²⁴⁷ and the Advertiser²⁴⁸ carried a leader which called, in effect, for war.

Meanwhile at Barrow Creek the contents of the only rainwater tank had leaked away, perhaps through a bullet-hole, and water was scarce in a well 150 yards from the station.²⁴⁹ At 1.00 p.m., the Kaititja attempted to surround the buildings, but dispersed after three shots

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244. Pursuit and arrest by civilians could have been made legal had a Special Magistrate or a J.P. been present at Barrow Creek to swear in Special Constables (see Act 15/1869-70, s.21). No such persons were present, however, and it is significant that Gason, when reporting the attack, called for the appointment of a Special Magistrate at Tennant Creek, Barrow Creek and Alice Springs (C.S.O.In 332/74).
245. Minute by C.P. 24.2.74 in P.C.O.In 261/74.
246. Cabinet minute 25.2.74 in P.C.O.In 261/74.
247. See P.C.O.In 261/74 (warrants dated 25.2.74). 'Tungalla' is spelt 'Tongalla' in some sources.
248. 25.2.74.
249. S.A. Register, 26.2.74, p.5.

were fired and another of their number killed.²⁵⁰ That evening unexpected relief arrived in the shape of Cowan and two men who were on their way to the Top End.²⁵¹ Next morning the Register carried an angry editorial which accused the Government of procrastination and regretted that Tucker and his men had not been brought on immediately to help form a party which could 'have killed, red-handed as they were, a sufficient number to strike terror into the hearts of the whole tribe'.²⁵² The editor of the Advertiser expressed greater confidence in the Government, and wrote of the party about to be sent out, 'We can hardly expect that many arrests will be made, but a punishment will doubtless be given to the bloodthirsty rascals, which will be remembered for some years to come. A heavy blow well struck now may prevent the striking of many blows in the future. We hope Trooper Gason is not hampered by too many instructions....Retribution, to be useful, must be sharp, swift, and severe.'²⁵³

Gason was not hampered by instructions. The Commissioner of Police merely ordered him to lose no time in

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250. Trooper Andrew Hart to C.P. 25.2.74 (in P.C.O.IN 261/74); S.A. Register 26.2.74, p.5.
251. Adel. Advertiser 26.2.74, 27.2.74; S.A. Register 27.2.74.
252. S.A. Register, 26.2.74, p.4.
253. Adel. Advertiser, 26.2.74.

fitting out a party and 'pursuing the natives',²⁵⁴ and asked few questions later. On Thursday evening Tucker and his linesmen, and W.T. Cooke and two men, arrived at Barrow Creek after fighting their way through a Kaititja 'ambush' on the Taylor.²⁵⁵ The telegraph men slept soundly for the first time since Sunday. Meanwhile, Cowan and party had started south to fetch Bond and his men and to leave a placard at Tea Tree Well to warn Clark and party, who were travelling north along the line, of the hostility of the Kaititja;²⁵⁶ and Trooper Born, his black boy Sergeant, and two 'volunteers' had left the Peake for Barrow Creek.²⁵⁷ (Trooper Workman of Charlotte Waters had talked his way out of being sent north, pleading that he was a married man and that his station would be attacked if he left it).²⁵⁸ By this time water had become so scarce at Barrow Creek that more had to be fetched from the Taylor.²⁵⁹ This delayed the start of a party to arrest the attackers, but by 2nd March Bond and his teamsters had arrived, and Gason was able to set out with ten men, leaving ten to guard the station.²⁶⁰

254. S.A. Register 25.6.74, p.5. (Copies of official correspondence re the Barrow Creek 'outrage', laid on the table of the House on 24.6.74, were published in this edition of the Register).

255. Gason to C.P. 27.2.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74); S.A.Register 27.2.74, 28.2.74; Adel. Advertiser 28.2.74.

256. Gason to C.P. 26.2.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74).

257. See Born to C.P. 24.2.74, 25.2.74, 27.2.74, 28.2.74, 7.3.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74); C.S.O.In 347/74.

258. Workman to C.P. 25.2.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74); C.S.O.In 347/74.

259. Gason to C.P. 2.3.74 (in P.C.O.In 261/74).

260. Ibid.

In the south, demands for retribution increased. An 'Old Salt' at Port Adelaide suggested that a swivel howitzer be mounted on each telegraph station and the scrub cleared for a mile around it,²⁶¹ and an old bushman asked to be sent up with fifty stockmen 'and no questions asked'.²⁶² J.H.G. [ordon], a lawyer of Strathalbyn, was the only person to speak out against the idea of severe punishment, arguing that the defence of corporeal possessions could never justify the breaking of the laws of justice and humanity.²⁶³ Trooper Gason rode up the Taylor and, according to his own account, met with a large body of Aborigines in dense scrub on 3rd March and shot several.²⁶⁴ Four days later he rode out again: down the Taylor, then down the Stirling and across to the Hanson where, owing to dense scrub, he was able to catch only a few women and children of a large group of Kaititja he encountered.²⁶⁵ He left Barrow Creek again on 2nd April, his party now augmented by Trooper Born, Sergeant and the two 'volunteers', but returned after following the Taylor for fifty miles without seeing any Kaititja.²⁶⁶ On his fourth excursion,

261. S.A. Register 4.3.74, p.6.

262. S.A. Register 5.3.74, p.7. See also Adel. Advertiser, 28.2.74 (p.2), 3.3.74 (p.3); S.A. Register 28.2.74 (p.5) 2.3.74 (p.5), 4.3.74 (p.7).

263. S.A. Register 5.3.74, p.7.

264. Gason to C.P. 5.3.74 (in P.C.O. In 261/74).

265. Do to do 11.3.74 (in ibid).

266. Do to do 31.3.74 and 6.4.74 (in ibid); Gason to Sgt. Maj. Woodcock 31.3.74 (in ibid).

however, he came upon a large camp of Aborigines (probably Unmatjera) fourteen miles south of Central Mount Stuart and shot three who resisted arrest.²⁶⁷ In his report he claimed that these three had been identified (though no warrants had been issued for them) as having been seen at Barrow Creek shortly before the attack, but on being questioned by the Commissioner he changed his mind and stated that they had actually taken part in the attack.²⁶⁸

If these Aborigines were Unmatjera it is highly unlikely that they did take part in the attack. The anxiety Gason displayed on this occasion to 'cover up', and his earlier promise not to fire on Aborigines 'without effect', suggest that he was not always prepared to tell the whole truth. On his own and others' statements some eleven Aborigines were killed during and after the attack and one wounded. It would be surprising if the tally was not, in fact, much higher. For two months a strong and angry party with a virtual mandate to shoot Aborigines on sight had ridden over the country surrounding Barrow Creek, and no arrests were made. 'I have every reason to believe,' wrote the Commissioner of Police in his annual report that year, 'that the blacks have been overawed, and that the safety of the parties on the entire line has been secured.'²⁶⁹ And

267. Gason to C.P. 13.4.74 (in ibid).

268. Ibid; Gason to C.P. 14.4.74 and 15.4.74 (in ibid); S.A. Register 25.6.74, p.5.

269. S.A. Govt. Gazette, 16.7.74, p.1336.

subsequent accounts by people in a position to know suggest that upwards of fifty were killed. In 1901 Spencer and Gillen met Tungalla at Barrow Creek. '...he was one of those pursued by the avenging party of whites', wrote Gillen, 'and only escaped being shot by hiding himself in a hole, the mouth of which he closed with a tussock of porcupine';²⁷⁰ while Spencer (who considered that 'the old rascal' had 'richly deserved' to be shot) subsequently wrote that Gason's party 'rode out over all the surrounding country, and the natives had such a lesson that they never/^{again} attempted an attack.'²⁷¹ In 1957 T.G.H. Strehlow had this to say: '...camps of natives were attacked with rifles not only at Barrow Creek, but in the districts of adjacent tribes...men, women and children were shot down at places up to fifty miles away from Barrow Creek. One of these places was a small creek named Skull Creek from the bleaching bones of an annihilated camp.'²⁷² (Skull Creek was probably the scene of Gason's last encounter with the Aborigines, when he claimed that only three were shot). Europeans and Aborigines alike have subsequently informed the author that many more than eleven were shot. One white informant, who was implicated in the shooting of a large number of Walbiri in 1928,

270. Camp Jottings, entry for 7.6.1901.

271. W.B. Spencer and F.J. Gillen, op. cit. (1912) pp.321-2.

272. T.G.H. Strehlow, Dark and White Australians (Melbourne, 1957), p.6.

estimated that about ninety met death at Skull Creek.²⁷³ People in the south, however, believed that 'justice' remained unsatisfied. 'The demonstration that was to have overawed the blacks', complained the Register, '...has proved a miserable fiasco.'²⁷⁴

Whatever the number of Aborigines killed, the punishment inflicted on the Kaititja was sufficient to deter them from ever again attacking the station. Memories and fears concerning it live on in their minds to this day and these, together with the fact that they commenced hostilities, have served to maintain Walbiri opinion of them as 'a sullen, suspicious and hostile people.'²⁷⁵

The causes of the attack are more difficult to ascertain. As usual, Aborigines and their synpathizers have alleged that the white were 'interfering' with Kaititja lubras,²⁷⁶ but it is doubtful whether the Kaititja had yet allowed their women to come into contact with Europeans,²⁷⁷ and the fact that the telegraph men were sitting unarmed in semi-darkness outside the telegraph building at the time of the attack indicates that they did not anticipate any danger from this source. On the other hand, it is

273. Informant desires anonymity. Cf. W.H. Tietkens, Reminiscences, (n.p.).

274. S.A. Register 25.6.74, p.4.

275. M.J. Meggitt, op. cit., p.37.

276. Information gleaned on fieldwork; M.C.N.T.In 98/1901.

277. See pp.249,253 (above).

unlikely that the attack was entirely without provocation, as Todd and so many others alleged.²⁷⁸ In general, the conditions prevailing were similar to those which prevailed at the time of other instances of Aboriginal resistance or incipient resistance described in these pages. The attackers greatly outnumbered their victims, and a deep gully immediately behind the station provided them with an excellent opportunity for surprise attack. Furthermore, it is probable that the Kaititja, who tended to be lumped together with the Warramunga in the minds of teamsters, travellers and the men of the line as 'dangerous', had been roughly treated by Europeans prior to the attack. The fact, moreover, that the Kaititja had begun to make tentative approaches shows that they had lost their fear of the white man; and this fear may have been replaced by anxiety lest Europeans become permanent intruders. It may also be that, as in other cases of Aboriginal resistance, the Kaititja decided to satisfy their acquisitiveness by resorting to force. Finally, 1874 was a dry year and it is probable that the men who asked for flour on that fateful day really needed it. The question as to why Barrow Creek was attacked,

278. Todd to Chief Sec. 23.2.74 (C.S.O.In 333/74); Gason to C.P. 23.2.74 (in C.S.O.In 332/74); S.A. Register 24.2.74 (p.5), 4.3.74 (p.7); Adel. Advertiser, 24.2.74; F.J. Gillen, Camp Jottings, entry for 7.6.1901. But cf. minute by Gov. Musgrave 24.2.74 on C.S.O.In 332/74; J.H.G./ordon/ in S.A. Register 5.3.74, p.7.

rather than Charlotte Waters or Alice Springs, is even more difficult to answer. One can only point to the fact that the terrain at Barrow Creek was more suitable for attack than that at either of the other stations, and to the probabilities that the Southern Aranda had already been subdued and that the Aranda near Alice Springs had been better treated by Europeans than the Kaititja.

The Barrow Creek 'outrage' heralded the end of the phase of conciliation in Central Australia and the beginning of the phase of pacification. Central Australians interpreted the attack as yet another instance of white man's kindness being mistaken for fear and a sign of weakness; and the free hand which the avenging parties were given by the Government, supported by press and public, as a carte blanche for punitive action should similar aggression recur. As the years passed the graves by the wayside at Barrow Creek constantly reminded them of the 'treachery' of the Kaititja, yarns concerning the outrage were told around campfires, and written references to it were numerous.²⁷⁹ Partly as a result of the Barrow Creek killings Parliament wrote a clause providing for the execution of Aboriginal murderers

279. See, e.g., A.C. Ashwin, art. cit. pp.82-83; A.J.Giles, art. cit. in Carroll, op. cit., n.p.; A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., pp.22-23; W.H. Willshire, The Aborigines of Central Australia, with a Vocabulary of the Alice Springs Natives (Port Augusta, 1888), pp.28-32; S. Newland, Blood Tracks of the Bush (London, 1919), pp.141-51; N.A. Richardson, op. cit. p.95; J.D. Woods, op. cit. pp.396-7; S.A. Register 2.4.75, p.6; Adel. Observer 15.8.91, p.6; Todd, Report 1884, p.150.

at the scene of their crime into the Criminal Law Consolidation Act of 1876.²⁸⁰ Nor did events north of Kaititja territory improve the mood of Central Australians or of the authorities and public in the south. In 1875 Giles's overlanding party was attacked by Warramunga between the Gibson and Hayward Creeks. At least two warriors were shot,²⁸¹ and according to one account the Warramunga in May 1876 were 'showing a more retiring disposition, owing probably to a lesson lately administered to them by Mr. A. Giles, which has evidently had a most salutary effect.'²⁸² Giles telegraphed particulars to Todd, but heard no more of the matter.²⁸³ In April 1875 two officials of Daly Waters telegraph station were murdered by Aborigines on the Roper River.²⁸⁴ And thereafter for many years frequent news of attacks and murders by Aborigines in the Top End - and in Queensland and Western Australia²⁸⁵ - was to

280. Act 38 of 1876, s.14; cf. S.A. Register 26.2.74, p.4.

281. A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., p.35.

282. S.A. Register, 20.5.76, p.6.

283. A. Giles, The First Pastoral Settlement in the N.T., p.35. See Chap. 4 (below) for an account of Aboriginal resistance to Europeans in the Centre after 1875.

284. N.T. Times, 17.5.75; Todd, Report 1884 (loc. cit.) p.150; J.B. Richards, op. cit. p.25; S.W. Herbert, Reminiscences, p.145.

285. See, e.g., S.A. Register 23.10.75, 30.1.78; N.T. Times, 4.9.75, 9.2.78, 25.1.79, 22.7.82, 4.11.82, 1.9.83, 15.3.84; S.A.P.P. 53B/84; C.P.P. 1913 Vol. III pp. 329-332; Hasluck, op. cit. p.179; G.C. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920 (Brisbane, 1963) pp.37,67,93-95. See also Chap. 4 (below).

maintain the attitudes of men in the south and the anger and fear roused in the breasts of Central Australians by the Barrow Creek killings; so that when, in the early eighties, the Aborigines of the Alice Springs District began killing cattle on a large scale and raided a few homesteads, the white man was prepared to put them down with a heavy hand.