

1934.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.
NEW SOUTH WALES.

ABORIGINES.

(ANNUAL REPORT OF BOARD FOR PROTECTION OF, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1933.)

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Report of Board for Protection of Aborigines for the year ended
30th June, 1933.

Office of Board for Protection of Aborigines,
No. 5 Richmond Terrace, Domain,
Sydney, 20th December, 1933.

The Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department.

Dear Sir,

In accordance with the established practice, we, the undermentioned members of the Board for Protection of Aborigines, duly appointed under the provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, have the honor to submit for the Chief Secretary's information, the following report of the operations of the Board during the period 1st July, 1932, to 30th June, 1933, together with the usual particulars of the numbers, location, and present condition of the Aborigines throughout the State, and means adopted for their relief as far as the funds at our disposal would permit.

GENERAL.

The year under review has again been a difficult one, due to unemployment generally, which resulted in the majority of able-bodied aborigines, who ordinarily would maintain themselves, having to look to the Board for their sustenance. This, of course, involved the Board in considerably increased expenditure; but it is recognised that the cost of ordinary Unemployed Food Relief also has been reduced to that extent.

Apart from the purchase of food, expenditure in other directions was reduced to an absolute minimum; but while the necessity for the strictest economy is fully recognised, the Board again draws attention to the unsatisfactory position, so far as the housing of Aborigines throughout the State is concerned, and expresses the hope that the Government may see its way to view this matter sympathetically when the finances of the State will permit.

Every endeavour is being made to expend the amount now provided to the very best advantage, and in cases where the Aborigines themselves are capable of erecting their own houses, they are encouraged to do so, the Board supplying the iron upon the satisfactory erection of the frames. A small portable saw bench has also been brought into use, and with this timber is being milled for the erection of buildings at centres urgently in need of accommodation. The provision of a moderate increase in the Board's building item would enable it to gradually overtake arrears which are the legacy of former years.

FAMILY ENDOWMENT.

Family Endowment payable to persons of Aboriginal blood is, under arrangement with the Commissioner of Family Endowment, entrusted to the Board for administration, and during the year an amount of £16,234 19s. 11d. was paid into the Board's Office, and expended on behalf of the children concerned, in the provision of food, clothing, bedding, optical, dental and medical attention, improved housing, purchase of furniture, and other comforts of direct or indirect benefit to the endowed children.

There can be no doubt regarding the material benefit of the arrangement with the Family Endowment Department, as the administration of the money by the Board has resulted in a very definite improvement in the children's living conditions. In cases where inquiries disclosed that endowees could be trusted to expend the money for the benefit of their children, direct payment was permitted, but the greatest care is exercised in this regard.

ABORIGINAL STATIONS.

The Board has established at twenty-three centres throughout the State, Aboriginal Stations, which are under the control of permanent officers holding a dual position, as Teacher-Manager, and whose wives also act as Matrons. These stations are actually small village communities, provided with their own store, school, recreation hall, and in many cases also having a church or mission hall, in which services are conducted by representatives of certain Missionary organisations.

At many of the stations also a pumping plant provides a water supply for domestic and gardening purposes.

The population of these centres has considerably increased since unemployment has become so prevalent, and this has considerably added to the Board's anxiety in connection with adequate housing and sanitary arrangements.

At those stations where conditions will permit, attempts are being made to cultivate potatoes, turnips and other vegetables, to improve the diet of the Aborigines and reduce the cost of their ration. Lucerne is also being grown to provide feed for cows, thus enabling the distribution daily of fresh milk to the residents. Where possible also, the Board buys and kills its own stock, which permits the issue of a more liberal meat ration at a lower cost.

ABORIGINES' RESERVES AND CAMPS.

Apart from the stations, there are a large number of reserves situated at various centres, and which are merely under the supervision of the nearest local Police. Unauthorised camps have also been formed at many places, in most instances adjacent to a town, which presents certain attractions to the Aborigines concerned. The conditions obtaining in these unauthorised camps are most unsatisfactory, there being no proper sanitary arrangements and the dwellings being, in most cases, merely shelters constructed of bagging, petrol tins, and bark. The Board contemplates asking the Government for certain amendments of its Act, which will enable it to remove these camps and concentrate the residents thereof on to stations where they, and particularly the women and children will be housed, and encouraged to live, under better moral and physical conditions.

Similar action could also be taken in connection with some of the smaller reserves. Of course, it is recognised that to enable these removals to be effected, suitable housing will have to be provided.

TRAINING HOMES.

The Board has Homes at Cootamundra and Kinchela for the care and training of girls and boys, respectively.

The inmates of these homes have, in nearly every instance, been removed thereto from unsatisfactory surroundings, and are educated and given a training prior to being drafted out to situations.

At Cootamundra the girls are given a thorough grounding in all domestic duties, including sewing and other work of a useful nature, and many hundreds have passed through the Home into situations where they are kept under the supervision of a lady Welfare Officer. The bulk of their earnings is collected by the Board in trust, and as a consequence most of them have substantial amounts standing to their credit, which are available to be drawn upon when they complete their employment, and in most instances marry and settle down.

The boys are, of course, trained in farm work, and most of them are placed in service on stations and farms under conditions somewhat similar to those governing the girls.

There can be no doubt that the steady pursuit of this policy of child training and employment has resulted in a general raising of the standard of living, as compared with that adopted by the Aborigines of over twenty years ago, when the system was first introduced.

The United Aborigines' Mission has a Children's Home at Bomaderry, on the South Coast, the Board supplying rations, medical attention, and other assistance. Children are only allowed to remain at this Home until they attain a maximum of 10 years of age, when they are transferred to Cootamundra or Kinchela.

EDUCATION.

At every centre where the Aboriginal population warrants it, and where there is objection to the attendance of the Aborigines at the Public School, separate Aborigines' schools have been established, and are subject to examination by the District School Inspector when making his periodical visits to the locality.

The reports furnished by these officers disclose that satisfactory results are being obtained, the children receiving an education appropriate to their mental capabilities, and fitting them to later take their places in the white community.

The average Aboriginal child appears to show an aptitude for manual work, and some excellent displays of raffia, basketry, carpentry, and sewing are to be found in the Board's schools. The Aboriginal child also has a natural ear for music, and responds readily to training in part singing, etc.

EMPLOYMENT.

As already indicated, Aborigines have experienced, during the year, difficulty in securing work with outside employers, and have had to be rationed by the Board. In return for such rations, however, the able-bodied men have carried out work on the stations where improved facilities were necessary, such work consisting of fencing, road making, gardening, drainage, clearing, and in some cases the erection of buildings with bush timber and any second-hand material available. No difficulty has been experienced in securing this return of work for the rations, the morale of the men, indeed, being raised and improved thereby.

NUMBERS AND EXPENDITURE.

On 1st June a census of Aborigines throughout the State was taken, and the figures made available to the State and Federal Government Statisticians. These disclosed that in New South Wales there remain 1,251 full bloods and 8,437 half-castes, a total of 9,688 (as compared with 9,680 the previous year), in the care and protection of which an amount of £57,271 5s. 8d. was expended (as compared with £55,517 the previous year), including items within the Votes of the Aborigines Protection Board, and the Departments of Public Health, Education, Government Stores, and Resumed Properties.

HEALTH.

The general health of the Aborigines throughout the State was satisfactory, there not being any serious epidemics of infectious or contagious disease. In the Brewarrina district, however, it was discovered that trachoma or a kindred complaint had affected a large number of the Aborigines, not only at the local Aboriginal station but also at other centres situated within a considerable radius of that place. Steps were accordingly taken to establish at the station a treatment room, which was placed in charge of a fully trained nurse, where all those requiring attention are receiving treatment at her hands, and under the general supervision of the local Government Medical Officer. The treatment will, of course, involve considerable expenditure, but this is quite unavoidable, and the results to date fully justify the action taken.

At all centres facilities are available to the Aborigines for hospital or medical treatment, and at places where neither hospital or doctor is located, the services of the local Bush Nurse are requisitioned. A supply of simple remedies is also stocked at each Aboriginal station for the use of the Manager and Matron in the treatment of simple minor ailments.

CONCLUSION.

The Board again desires to place on record its appreciation of the services and assistance rendered to it by the members of the New South Wales Police Force, the members of which act as the Board's agents at places where it does not possess its own officers, and without whose co-operation it would be difficult to carry on the work.

Yours faithfully,

W. H. CHILDS,

Chairman,

E. B. HARKNESS,

Vice-Chairman,

ROY S. VINCENT,

ROBERT DICK,

B. C. HARKNESS,

A. W. GREEN,

H. J. BATE,

W. J. SCULLY,

A. McCLELLAND,

Members of the
Board.