NOT BY EASTERN WINDOWS ONLY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL ADVICE TO AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS IN 1938

W.E.H. Stanner and Diane Barwick

By the late 1930s, as Professor A.P. Elkin has noted, . . . the Mandate principle of the League of Nations Covenant had influenced people of goodwill, and . . . anthropological research in Australia had begun to throw definite light on the problem of contact and depopulation . . . and to spread reliable knowledge of the aborigines and their conditions. It seemed that if a positive policy designed to promote the progress of the aborigines were framed and implemented, they need not die out but might well play an important part as citizens of Australia. This view was expressed increasingly, and before the 1930s had gone by, every Government concerned with Aborigines (States and Commonwealth) modified its policies and administration.¹

Many of the circumstances in which a more positive policy was developed in the late 1930s are well known.² What is not so well known is the pressure which was put upon the Australian authorities by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland and its Standing Committee on Applied Anthropology. These notes are intended to round out the record of events by describing the contribution of Australianists in London in 1937-38. Early in 1939 the Minister then responsible for the Northern Territory, Mr (later Sir John) McEwen, announced what became known as the 'New Deal' policy for Aborigines under Commonwealth control. Professor Elkin had been his local advisor.³ But the Committee on Applied Anthropology had also helped to influence government action, by means of a memorandum which I drafted for the members.

Anthropology in Britain had developed largely around the Royal Anthropological Institute, and in the 1930s the Institute's London premises were the major centre for meetings of scholars interested in archaeology, ethnology, linguistics and physical anthropology. Anthropology was now taught at four British universities, but only about twenty men and women had completed postgraduate training in social anthropology. The Institute's membership included many talented scholars of

¹ Elkin 1951:53-59.

² See Elkin 1957, 1962; Rowley 1970; Biskup 1973.

³ Elkin was not consulted when the Committee's Memorandum was drafted, but I still have his letter of 23 February 1938 saying he had that morning received mine of 8 February with its news of London events. He urged me to:

Get down at once to the writing of a systematic study of cultural change and native administration. It should prove very useful. The Federal Government at present is trying to redeem the past. I am to have a long talk with the Minister of the Interior and the secretary of the Department tomorrow.

private means who had no other institutional affiliation, and many distinguished colonial officials and missionaries who had published anthropological studies. Foreign visitors and students studying at British universities, as well as colonial administrators on home leave, attended and presented papers at the Institute's fortnightly meetings, where discussion covered a wide range of topics of general interest, including the practical problems of administration in the colonies and Dominions of the British Empire.

Since the 1890s there had been much discussion in Britain of the utility of anthropological research for enlightened administration. Pressure groups had long attempted to influence the British government, the authorities in the Dominions and local colonial officials to establish University departments and research institutes to undertake field studies and provide training for administrators and missionaries. The major forums for debate on this issue were the Royal Anthropological Institute⁴ in London, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (which met in Australia in 1914), and international meetings such as the Pan-Pacific Science Congress (held in Australia in 1923). The Australian government was among the first to act on this advice, appointing a 'Government Anthropologist' in Papua in 1921 and another in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea in 1924, and establishing a chair of anthropology at Sydney University in 1925. Professor A.R. Radcliffe-Brown offered short courses for administrators, as well as an undergraduate and Master's degree programme soon after his arrival from Capetown in 1926.

Since the sponsors of this chair had emphasised the need for practical advice on 'native administration', it is not surprising that Radcliffe-Brown focused on 'applied anthropology' in his presidential address to the anthropology section of A.N.Z.A.A.S. in 1931, and that the government anthropologists E.W.P. Chinnery and F.E. Williams discussed the need for anthropological research and training in Australian-controlled territories in their own A.N.Z.A.A.S. presidential addresses in 1932 and 1939.⁵

Yet the State governments which controlled all Aborigines except those in the Northern Territory ignored the severe criticisms of their administration published by anthropologists and others during the 1920s

⁴ It is significant that a number of the Institute's presidential addresses were devoted to the topic (Keith 1917; Myres 1929, 1931; Smith 1934). Professor John L. Myres (1931:xxix) discussed administrators' prejudice against anthropology in his 1931 address, ruefully quoting a correspondent's comment that:

if as at present the Colonial Secretaries look upon anthropology as a mild joke and quite valueless as a means of promotion, it is very unlikely that any officer who devotes himself to anthropology will be promoted to the post of Colonial Secretary or of Governor.

See also Forde 1953, Kuper 1973, the papers in Asad 1973 and Owusu 1975, and the reminiscences by Firth, Richards and others in *Anthropological Forum*, 4 (2), 1977.

⁵ Radcliffe-Brown 1931, Chinnery 1932, Williams 1939.

and 1930s,⁶ although Prime Minister Scullin did take note of criticisms made by the Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute in a memorandum dated 2 October 1930. His 1931 reply explained that the Institute's recommendations about reserved land and unified administration could not be implemented, because the Commonwealth government had found that the State authorities were 'opposed to any such transfer of control'.⁷

Pleas by interested bodies for Commonwealth control of Aboriginal affairs were again rejected as 'impracticable' at the 1936 Premiers' Conference. But many concerned people hoped that the 'Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities' held in Canberra in April 1937 would lead to major reforms. Newspapers gave considerable publicity to the poor diet, health, housing and employment conditions of Aborigines in northern Australia, and to the policy decisions announced in the official report of this conference. In fact there was little result. The Commonwealth government announced that consultations on major issues would be deferred for a year, since the authorities would meet annually.

Therefore it seemed to us in London that there was an urgent need to publicise the issues — and so influence informed opinion — before the second conference of 'Chief Protectors' and other officials which was expected early in 1938.

In 1937-38 learned or interested bodies in England paid a remarkable amount of attention to the Australian Aborigines. In 1937 two notable Australianists were invited to address the Royal Anthropological Institute. On 5 January Mr N.B. Tindale showed a film and lantern slides illustrating 'A day in the life of a Pitjandjara native, Mann Range, South Australia'. Among the discussants were three Australians: Professor V. Gordon Childe, Dr Ralph Piddington, and Mr W.E.H. Stanner (then a doctoral student in Professor Malinowski's department at the London School of Economics, and temporary part-time research assistant to Dr Raymond Firth). In October 1937 Radcliffe-Brown, recently appointed to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Oxford, delivered a lecture on 'Social organisation of Australian tribes', and in June 1938 he was awarded the Institute's

⁶ Elkin's many publications and Thomson's reports on his Northern Territory patrols are well known. Influential criticisms appeared in *The Aborigines Protector*, first published in 1935 by the Association for the Protection of Native Races; in *Man* (Piddington 1936); and in *Mankind* (McCarthy 1934; Stanner 1936). See also Warner, Radcliffe-Brown and Burton 1928.

⁷ Scullin 1931. Scullin and other delegates to the Imperial Conference held in London in October 1930 had been addressed by Lord Lugard on the topic of 'Anthropology in administration'; Lugard and the Royal Anthropological Institute were also corresponding with Scullin about the threatened withdrawal of funds for the Sydney department (Lugard 1930; Elkin 1970:261-262).

Rivers Memorial Medal for his work in the Andaman Islands and Australia. 'Rev. A. Capell' was a discussant at a March 1938 meeting, and Firth and I were among the discussants of Miss Phyllis Kaberry's address, illustrated by lantern slides, on 'Women's secret corroborees in north west Australia' on 5 May 1938. Later in May Dr Donald F. Thomson (then visiting Cambridge) led the discussion at a Committee on Applied Anthropology meeting,⁸ and he showed his film 'An anthropological survey of Arnhem Land' to an appreciative audience at the Institute's meeting on 13 December 1938. The 1938 Wellcome Gold Medal for anthropological research was awarded to Thomson for an essay entitled 'The Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the problem of administration: a demonstration of the practical application of an anthropological method of approach'.⁹

The 1938 issues of the Institute's monthly periodical *Man* contained papers by Tindale and Thomson, some speculation on the origin of the Tasmanians, strong criticisms by Radcliffe-Brown and Piddington of M.F. Ashley-Montagu's 1937 book on the Aborigines (which had a laudatory foreword by Malinowski), praise for Elkin's 1937 monograph on totemism, and criticism of current Australian policy by the reviewer of Chewings' popular book. The well-read (and well-connected) laymen and practical administrators who probably comprised a majority of the Royal Anthropological Institute's London membership at this time thus had access to information obtained by anthropological fieldwork, as well as the press reports on recent events in Aboriginal affairs.

The London press had given generous coverage of the condition of the Australian Aborigines during the 1930s, and on 25 November 1937 *The Times* published an article by 'an Australian correspondent' which caused quite a stir. This and the supporting leader were reprinted as a pamphlet (in an edition of around a thousand) widely distributed by the influential 'Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society' (Plates 1-4). I had signed the article but had to accept anonymity as the price of publication. Radcliffe-Brown told me that he protested to Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times*, who was also a Fellow of All Souls. But Dawson's assistant, Barrington-Ward, explained that *The Times* could not consider me a sufficient authority to write under my own name. However, Radcliffe-Brown at once wrote to *The Times* (Plate 5) in praise of the 'admirable' article — and in criticism of an over-sensitive and defensive letter written by Sir Hal Colebatch, the Agent-General for Western Australia in London.

⁸ The summary which appeared in *Man* (38, 1938:106) was later corrected (Thomson 1938).

⁹ The medal, then awarded for studies of culture contact and applied anthropology, had been won by Mair in 1936 and Fortes in 1937. As Thomson had already left England his medal was 'handed to his mother' at the Annual General Meeting of 27 June 1939 (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 69, 1939:123).

Leading Article reprinted from

THE TIMES

Thursday November 25 1937

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

Last month a pathetic petition reached the GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF AUSTRALIA. It was addressed to the KING, and signed by over 1,800 "blackfellows," who asked HIS MAJESTY to save them from extinction and to allow them to be represented, directly or indirectly, in the Federal Parliament. In an article which is published on this page of *The Times* a well-informed Australian Correspondent draws attention to the needs of these unfortunate people. Their fear of extinction is only too well founded. It is believed that Victoria had 12,000 black inhabitants when white settlement began a century ago. It now has fifty. Tasmania may have had 2,000 aborigines in 1803 when the first settlers landed on the island. The last of them died in 1876. In the unsettled or thinly settled parts of Australia the same process of tribal decay and racial decline threatens the few score thousand surviving blacks. Its causes vary from district to district. A restless drift into areas of white settlement endangers some tribes; others are decreasing in numbers through diseases brought by Europeans and the physical weakness and sterility which they cause; many seem simply not to possess the power to adapt themselves to change and to be dying out partly through their inability to understand their real interests. It is unfortunately true that the obstinate preferences of too many aborigines who like overcrowding, break all the rules of health, and work for poor whites in return for cheap tinned food, tobacco, alcohol and cast-off clothes, tends to drive their friends to despair. Still the fact remains that the great majority of the blackfellows are underfed and get little medical attention. Their condition is the more surprising when it is remembered that the Australian administrators of

British and Mandated New Guinea and the Melanesian Islands have shown a skill and humanity that has aroused general admiration.

The immediate cause of this deplorable state of affairs has been the lack both of trained administrators and of the funds which any comprehensive scheme of native administration requires. PROFESSOR WOOD JONES, an eminent scientist, recently ascribed its ultimate cause to official and popular indifference. In his opinion neither the Australian Governments nor the Australian people had ever desired to preserve the natives. His farewell address to the Victorian Anthropological Society, a summary of which is also published in *The Times* this morning, is a scathing indictment of official neglect. At the same time recent measures taken by the Federal and State authorities of Australia indicate that sections of public opinion are beginning to be disturbed by the decline of the aborigines and by the emergence of a half-caste problem. A little over a year ago the Government of Western Australia introduced a Bill providing for the better control and protection of natives, the revision of enactments dealing with their estates and property, and the establishment of native Courts. Last April a conference of Federal and State authorities at Canberra discussed measures for the preservation of the aborigines, and by a majority recommended the absorption of the increasing proportion of half-castes by the whites, with education and employment at white standards, as the only solution of the half-caste problem. A few days ago the South Australian Government appointed an Aborigines Advisory Committee to examine the whole problem. Other schemes devised by Churches and humanitarian organizations are also under consideration. It is to be hoped that the Australian Governments and the Australian people will support a more constructive native policy than that of *laissez-faire*. Nearly a century ago a South Australian newspaper warned its readers in a leading article that the speedy extinction of the whole race is inevitable, save by the introduction of means for their civilization on a scale much more comprehensive and effectual than any yet adopted.

These words are even more applicable to-day.

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Reprinted from

THE TIMES, Thursday, November 25, 1937.

DYING RACES OF AUSTRALIA

PETITION TO THE KING

'BLACKFELLOWS' IN NEED

From an Australian Correspondent

Some 1,800 members of the dying race of Australian "blackfellows" recently sent a petition to the King asking his Majesty to save them from extinction and to empower one of their own people, or a sympathetic white, to represent them in the Federal Parliament. They are not speaking for themselves alone.

In the far bush regions of the unsettled parts of Australia, and in the halfway house of the sparsely peopled sheep, cattle, and mining country, there are between 40,000 and 50,000 other blackfellows who need able and resolute help if they too are not all to go the way of the hundreds of tribes which have been obliterated in Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales. Tribe after tribe can now be seen dying on their feet from causes which in many cases might have been avoided. One can travel for thousands of miles in the east and south over country which has no sound or echo of native life, where the tribes, after flinging a few spears, turned and helped with the development of land of which they had been dispossessed, and soon after died out. The frontiers of settlement have been more or less stable for half a century, but the tribes keep on dwindling, so that, clearly, forces are still at work which cannot be attributed to the immediate and perhaps inevitable effects of rough frontier handling.

METHODS IN NEW GUINEA

It is an extraordinary comment upon the different methods of native administration within the Commonwealth that a petition should be sent to the King by the aborigines,

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when in Papua (British New Guinea) and in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, for both of which Australia is responsible, the official skill and insight shown have earned high praise. Much the same general problems are involved in native administration in all three areas, but it has seemed impossible within Australia to develop the administrative methods to a level comparable with that reached in Papua and Melanesia.

The primary reason is that "the native problem" in Australia has never been seen in the clear lines in which it presents itself in New Guinea. Once the worth-while Australian land was taken up the old tribal owners, after lingering for a few years, in most cases solved their own problem by dying out. The result has been that comparatively few Australians have ever seen a blackfellow, and their understanding of the "problem" is drawn from occasional newspaper articles and an uneasy feeling that the vanished blacks were probably not treated very well. Missionaries and the Protection of Native Races Association have not been able to arouse any lasting public interest, and almost the only serious movements for better treatment of natives have begun in the context of murder trials and atrocity charges. The outcome has usually been negligible. The cases were settled, the indignation subsided, and the movements faded out without political implement. Several piecemeal local reforms of recent origin are now under way, but are too fragmentary to arrest the decline of widely separated tribes.

A second reason is that the tribal disruption has gone so far that the practical difficulty of knowing where to start after 150 years of *laissez-faire* means heavy and persistent discouragement at the outset of any attempt to rebuild. A third reason is the baffling opposition of the blacks themselves. What can be done with tribes which refuse to give up a poor, unbalanced diet because they like it; live in insanitary huts because they wish to sleep near kinsfolk, and regard bacterial earth not as dirt, but as earth; and willingly break up their tribal life to work unwittingly to their own destruction for poor whites whose own livelihood often enough depends on a supply of unpaid labour? These initial difficulties become almost insuperable when the administrations' funds are extremely limited (as they are), when there is no trained staff to make a career of native administration (as there is in New Guinea), and when

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NOT BY EASTERN WINDOWS ONLY

the supervision of the aborigines is left almost wholly to busy police, postal officials and others equally unequipped for a task for which men need the most careful coaching. The result has been that the administrations have been forced back on elementary protective measures which have necessarily taken on a repressive character, widening more than ever the breach between the intentions of "big fella Guv'mint" and the natives' interpretation of them.

THEIR OWN ENEMIES

Among people with a lifetime's experience of the blacks an attitude of complete despair for them is common. The aborigines are felt to be their own worst enemies, because of their inability to see where their best interests now lie. On all sides in "outback" Australia one hears that "the blacks are bound to die out." At least 150,000 have in fact died out, and the others assuredly will unless some action is taken with great determination and, above all, with expert knowledge of immediate requirements in different localities.

Many thousands of natives are living in bands of 10 or 20 or 30 in squalid camps, on the fringes of bush towns or cattle stations. They are quite detribalized and the spirit of life has not much reason to be strong in them. Many more thousands are in large organized camps or reservations, such as those at Palm Island, Menindee, and Moola Boola. There are mission settlements in the rural areas of every State in the Commonwealth, each with its now settled population, and each of those in the more remote regions visited regularly by nomad tribes. Almost every country town has its handful of shabby, unkempt black hangers-on, who live in a half-world of their own, neither wholly black nor indifferently white, although the last days of their traditional tribal activity ended more than 50 years ago. At the other extreme are a great number of uncivilized tribes, representing at least several thousand individual natives, still living much as they did centuries ago, in the rough hills of the Kimberlies, in isolated parts of Cape Yorke, on the monsoon coastal flats of the Northern Territory, and in the arid wilderness of spinifex and mulga of Central and West Australia.

The blacks of all these different stages of degeneracy constitute not "a problem," but a

series of separate problems. The need of a higher standard of nutrition is probably common to all; their medical supervision could be trebled and things still be undone; the legal system under which the conflicts which arise are now settled needs a great deal of adaptation to tribal complexities; but there is such variety in local conditions that it is a matter for policies rather than "a" policy. At Menindee medical help is welcomed, but on the outer edge of North Australian settlement the blacks ran in panic at the whisper of "doctor man," surgery there being not unrelated to sorcery. At Darwin the remnants of the tribes could not be sent back to bush life at pistol point, but in Cape Yorke are tribes who are reluctant to leave the shelter of the trees. On the Victoria River it would be easier to bind running water with string than to keep the tribes on their reserve, yet within 100 miles is a tribe for whom the only hope may be to keep them forcibly on their own land.

There are six different administrations each trying to deal with such situations, which have never been adequately studied. Each State is faced with declining tribes in a dozen different stages of detribalization. Land hunger, disease, poor food, sterility, dullness, epidemics, falling birth and conception rates, loss of social equilibrium, a widespread decline in tribal spirit, a drift to white settlements—all have had and are having their share in the break-up and extinction of the tribes; but the incidence of any one factor on each tribe, and on different tribes at different stages of disintegration, is not known to anyone.

LACK OF MONEY

Financial provision for the work is not adequate, and a hundred things have obscured its urgency. In the Northern Territory, for example, the administration in 1934 had to do the best it could with less than 10s. a year for each native in the territory [500,000 square miles in extent], and the natives themselves contributed several shillings of this sum, which had to cover the cost of all the undertakings for their welfare, including the rations for aged and sick people. Yet in this State it still seems possible with a resolute and an informed policy to prevent the disruption of tribes in several unsettled areas, but to do so it will be necessary to finance the work of the native administration upon a much more generous scale.

One alarming fact which has been discovered recently gives urgency to the natives' petition that a last effort should be made to do something for them. It is the report of several anthropologists working among the tribes in the most remote parts of the continent that these undisturbed natives are restlessly moving off their traditional lands and that some are drifting into areas of white settlement. Once this drift passes a certain stage it will be irreversible. Segregation of some of these tribes still seems practicable, although it will be expensive to maintain adequate patrols, to supplement food supplies, and to provide proper medical supervision, especially where one tribe may inhabit an area as large as England. Otherwise the break-up of their old life is imminent, even if it is not already too late to prevent it. Disturbance and extinction are the beginning and the end of a process only too readily started among the tribes. Yet it cannot be said that every possible measure of assistance has been attempted.

Offers of assistance in distributing literature, arranging meetings and lectures and in securing *Funds*, which are *urgently needed*, will be welcomed by:—

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Letters to the Editor

THE AUSTRALIAN
ABORIGINESCASE FOR SCIENTIFIC
UNDERSTANDING

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The admirable article on the subject of dying races of Australia which appeared in your columns on November 25 raised some points which have been somewhat obscured in the correspondence to which it has given rise. The really important point seems to be that it is the duty of the people of Australia to do more for the surviving remnant of the blackfellows than they are doing at present.

Let it be granted that the Governments of Australia are doing more for the natives than they used to do. There is still a great deal more that might be done, and a good deal that is called for in the name of common humanity. It is irrelevant to recall the callous brutality with which the white Australians have occasionally treated the occupants of the land they have taken, and equally irrelevant to refer to the exemplary benevolence of many of the pioneering squatters or the devoted labours of missionaries. What matters now is the present and the future, not the past.

Sir Hal Colebatch suggests that the aborigines are dying out because they were "an already decaying people" when the first European voyagers landed on their shores. This is an idea that one often meets with in Australia, and it is sometimes offered as an excuse for not being more concerned over the fate of an unfortunate people. But there is nothing that a scientist could accept as evidence for this belief. Sir Hal Colebatch refers to the scanty aboriginal population in 1788. As I am the person responsible for the estimate of 300,000 as the total population at that date I may say that in the course of the studies on which the estimate is based I came to the conclusion that this was about as large a population as the country could support so long as the inhabitants had to depend on the natural food supply of wild animals and plants. The figure therefore gives no support to the thesis of Sir Hal Colebatch.

The blackfellows are dying out, already reduced to one-fifth of their former numbers, because their lands (and therefore their food supply) are taken from them, their social organization is

destroyed, and new and deadly diseases for which they have no acquired immunity have been introduced, such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and gonorrhoea.

What is needed to alleviate the unfortunate condition of the aborigines is:—

(1) A greater interest in the subject by the general public of Australia, many of whom have just as little personal knowledge of the blackfellows as we have of the Assyrians in Iraq; (2) a somewhat more generous financial provision; and (3), so far as concerns those whose tribal life has not yet been completely destroyed, utilization of the special knowledge of native life and native thought which is possessed by anthropologists who, in their field research, have been specially engaged in gathering it.

People having the best intentions often through ignorance do harm where they wish to do good, or fail to accomplish the good they intend. Many instances relating to the treatment of the Australian aborigines could be quoted, including some from the work of the missions. In all the social problems of our time one difficulty, and perhaps the greatest, is the lack of a real scientific understanding of how the mechanism of a social system works. This is very evident in our administration of subject peoples. It is still often very difficult to get people to recognize, what is none the less true, that a thoroughly trained and competent anthropologist can learn more about a native tribe in a few weeks than an untrained person can do in several years. The value of the expert knowledge that can be supplied by the anthropologist is now gradually coming to be recognized in some parts of the British Empire. The Commonwealth Government of Australia was in advance of many parts of the Empire in giving recognition to anthropology in its administration of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. During the last 10 years all the cadets entering the administrative service have had a year of training at Sydney University in theoretical and applied anthropology.

Is there any good reason why more use should not be made of anthropological knowledge in Australia itself?

Anthropologists sometimes make themselves unpopular with officialdom. By reason of the intimate contact that they have to maintain with the natives for months on end, investigating all the details of their lives, the anthropologists see abuses of which others are unaware. They are accused of taking sides with the blackfellows against their own people—the whites. There is doubtless some truth in that, for one cannot live in close contact with the blackfellows for months without learning to like them and appreciate their good qualities and without feeling sympathy with them and some indignation at the lack of humane consideration with which they are sometimes treated.

Yours faithfully,

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN.

All Souls College, Oxford.

Very heavy pressure compels us to ask correspondents to write as concisely as possible. Letters intended for publication should be typed or written on one side only of the paper.

While the correspondence¹⁰ continued I was preparing the address on 'Anthropology and the dying Australian Aborigines' I had been invited to give at the Institute's meeting on 11 January 1938.¹¹ My criticism that administrators had made no attempt to 'assess the reasons for past failure' and my contention that the reforms announced in 1937 'appear to most anthropologists to be insufficient in scale and inadequate in conception' were strongly supported by my fellow-student Phyllis Kaberry and my supervisor Raymond Firth from their own knowledge of Australian conditions.¹²

I was already writing an angry commentary on Aboriginal administration (in which I attacked the 'tragi-comic' irrelevance of most of the 1937 conference resolutions) for a volume intended to 'take stock' of Australian society.¹³ Now I was asked to draft a memorandum to be sent to the Australian authorities by the Institute's new Committee on Applied Anthropology. The Institute's annual report for 1936-37, presented in June 1937, announced that this standing committee had been formed to promote research into the 'problems of the contact of native peoples of Africa, Oceania and the Orient with western civilization'; the next annual report, presented in June 1938, stated that the Committee had been very active 'in the first full session of its work', having had seven discussion meetings and three business meetings.¹⁴

It is a little difficult after so many years to remember — or to ask others to recall — all that happened, and it seems that the Institute no longer has all the documentation. But the records I have seen¹⁵ suggest that the interest of Institute members in 'applied anthropology' had been stimulated by, among other things, the public discussion of a burning issue: whether a case could be made for the return to Germany of some

¹⁰ *The Times* 29, 30 November; 9, 15 December 1937.

¹¹ A summary appeared in *Man* (Stanner 1938a).

¹² Firth had supervised Australian field-workers while he was teaching in the Sydney department 1930-32; as Acting Professor he was in charge of the Australian National Research Council's fieldwork programme in 1931-32. He and Phyllis Kaberry (1910-1977), like most others attending Malinowski's seminars at the London School of Economics just before the war, were deeply concerned about the effects of rapid social change and confident that 'practical anthropology' could benefit indigenous communities. We were, it seems to me, as impassioned and as interested in political activism as the young anthropologists who demand 'relevance' and 'commitment' today.

¹³ Stanner 1938b.

¹⁴ *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 67, 1937:iv; 68, 1938:iv.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Mr W.B. Fagg, Hon. Librarian and Archivist of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and his assistant Mrs J.M. Swart, for access to relevant minutes of the Committee and the Council. I thank the Council for permission to publish these extracts. I am also indebted to Dr James Urry and Miss Rosslyn Fraser for their help in providing information; to Miss B.J. Kirkpatrick, Senior Bibliographer of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, for her untiring assistance; and to my friend and co-author, Dr Diane Barwick, for much help and guidance.

of her former colonies. A Council sub-committee was set up to report on the anthropological implications of such contemplated transfers.¹⁶ On the strength of this report the Council of the Institute resolved on 23 February 1937 that 'representations should be made to H.M. Government that no transfer of territory within or without the Empire should be undertaken without considering the anthropological implications of such transfer'. The Council minutes also record the establishment of a permanent committee (soon to be known as the Committee on Applied Anthropology) to 'consider questions of the application of anthropological knowledge to practical problems'. Its first members were Dr (later Sir Edward) E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), formerly Professor of Sociology at Cairo and currently Research Lecturer at Oxford; Dr Audrey I. Richards, already an authority on African nutrition and labour problems, who had recently accepted a lectureship at Johannesburg; Dr Lucy P. Mair, then 'Lecturer in Colonial Administration' in Malinowski's department, who had already published two books on social change and 'native policies' in Africa; the archaeologist Mr Kenneth de Burgh Codrington, then Keeper of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum; and Rev. Dr Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957), the missionary who had published classic works in applied anthropology and had been the first director of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. This Institute had sponsored most of the fieldwork done by Malinowski's students during the 1930s, with funds provided by the Rockefeller Foundation (which had also financed the fieldwork sponsored by the Australian National Research Council). The new Committee also included the officers of the Institute, 'with powers to co-opt'.

The Council met on 16 March 1937 and set the new Committee its first tasks: to re-draft the earlier sub-committee's report as a memorandum for the government, and to suggest specific investigations 'in pursuance of the recommendations'. Dr Mair convened the first meeting on 23 April 1937 and was then appointed secretary. Those attending were all Council members: Mair, Richards, the Institute's president (then the physical anthropologist Dr H.S. Harrison), the secretary Dr (later Sir Raymond) Firth, then Reader at L.S.E., and the treasurer, Mr Harold Coote Lake (1878-1939), who had long been secretary of the Folk-Lore Society. They resolved to co-opt additional members: the Oxford archaeologist and historian Professor (later Sir John) L. Myres (1869-1954), who had been

¹⁶ The report of this Council sub-committee was signed by Charles Gabriel Seligman (1873-1940), who held the chair of ethnology at the University of London 1913-34, and by J.H. Driberg, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, R. Firth, L. Mair, J.L. Myres, A. Richards, and E.W. Smith. Mair (1972:290) comments that 'some members of the committee believed that a move might be made to avert war with Germany by offering to restore her former colonies, and were anxious to have anthropologists included in the conference that they assumed would be held for this purpose'.

General Secretary of the British Association 1919-32, a past president and secretary of the Institute, the founder of *Man* and its editor 1931-46; Professor John H. Hutton (1885-1968), elected William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge in 1937 and a member of the Indian Civil Service 1909-1936; Mr Jack H. Driberg (1888-1946), who had worked in the Uganda and Sudan administrations before becoming lecturer in anthropology at Cambridge in 1931; and Mr E.B. Haddon, only son of the famed Professor A.C. Haddon of Cambridge. Professor Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was asked to serve as chairman. The other co-opted members were distinguished civil servants. The geologist and ethnologist Mr Charles William Hobley (1867-1947) had been Acting Commissioner for the East African Protectorate before his retirement from the Colonial Service in 1921. Lt-Colonel David L.R. Lorimer (1876-1962), formerly Quartermaster of the Khaiber Rifles, political agent and consul, had published extensively on Persian languages and led an anthropological expedition to the Hunza in 1934-35. Dr R.S. Rattray (1881-1938) had achieved fame for his many publications on the Ashanti while head of the Anthropological Department on the Gold Coast from 1921. Major (later Sir Hanns) Vischer (1876-1945), a former missionary and Director of Education in Northern Nigeria, had been the senior education advisor to the Colonial Office since 1923 and was currently Hon. Secretary-General to the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. Rev. T. Cullen Young, for many years a missionary in Nyasaland, was then Secretary of the United Society for Christian Literature.

As discussion of future work had been 'postponed' at this meeting, the draft 'plan of future work' attached to the agenda paper for the second meeting on 21 May 1937 was probably prepared by Dr Mair. These notes proposed that the Committee meet regularly for discussion of 'problems of applied anthropology' and made suggestions for action:

- (a) the stimulation of popular and official interest through such means as the publication of articles in *Man*, representations to Colonial governments through the Colonial Office, or personal contacts with officials.
- (b) discussions tending to the elucidation of concepts belonging to this particular aspect of anthropology, such as "detribalisation", "cultural stability", "cultural disintegration".
- (c) the organization and systematisation of plans of research in this field. This aim might be achieved by discussions within the Committee and with experts who have been engaged in research and can put before it the situation with regard to a particular problem, and by getting into contact with persons about to undertake investigations and enlisting their cooperation in accordance with a considered plan.

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Suggested questions on which research might be pursued are: programmes of "popular" or "village" education in their relation to the actual circumstances of native life; the attitude of various governments towards sorcery; the evolution of native law, particularly amongst mixed populations; other sociological problems connected with their populations; attempts to improve diet, standard of living or economic technique of native communities and the reaction to them; modern developments in the function of native political authorities, and their relations with their subjects.

The next meeting of which the Institute retains a record was the business meeting of 3 December 1937. We are thus left uncertain about the activities of the Committee in the meantime. The only correspondence mentioned in the minutes was a letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies acknowledging the Institute's letter about the formation of this committee. This meeting was chaired by Professor Malinowski; other members attending were the Institute's president (now Mr H.J. Braunholtz of the British Museum) and secretary (Dr Firth), Dr Mair, and Lt-Colonel Lorimer. Also present were Dr Margaret Read, who had made extensive studies of African education and nutrition, and the Australianist Miss Phyllis Kaberry.

The meeting of 3 December 1937 was notable for four decisions. The Committee resolved to invite certain learned or interested bodies to nominate representatives to the Committee, 'it being understood that only Fellows of the Institute were eligible for membership' and that not less than two-thirds of the Committee at any time were to be persons 'directly interested in anthropology'. The bodies named were the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (later the International African Institute), the Royal African Society, the London Group on African Studies, the International Missionary Council, and the 'Aborigines Protection Society' (properly the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society). The Committee resolved to co-opt as members 'in their individual capacity' Professor A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955); Dr Robert Redfield (1897-1958), who was in charge of the University of Chicago department which Radcliffe-Brown had left in 1937; Dr Felix M. Keesing (1902-1961), professor at Hawaii, who was completing a study of education in the Pacific; Dr Meyer Fortes, who had just returned from the Gold Coast to lecture at L.S.E.; Dr Ethel J. Lindgren, who had worked among the Khingan Tungus of northern Manchuria and was currently editor of the Institute's *Journal*; and Dr W.B. Mumford, who was on the staff of the Colonial Department of the University of London Institute of Education.

The Committee decided to co-opt further 'all government anthropologists serving in British territories'. Those named were Dr S.F. Nadel (1903-1956) who had recently accepted a post with the administration of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (and who became the first Professor of Anthropology at the Australian National University 1950-56); Mr Godfrey

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1979 3:1

ALL SOULS COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

22 January 1938.

Dear Raymond,

I find Stanner's memorandum
excellent.

I suggest that the point should be made
that there is good evidence that the native
diet in their original condition, derived from
wild animals and plants, etc., was physiologically
much superior to their diet when they
began to rely on rations, and that the deterioration
in nutrition is thus the result of the reception
of tinned food by whites.

I hope to see you in Tucson.

Yours

R.B.

Wilson (1908-1944), then in Tanganyika, who had just been appointed Director of the new Rhodes-Livingstone Institute; Dr Margaret J. Field, then employed by the Gold Coast government; Dr Donald F. Thomson (1901-1970), who had been commissioned by the Commonwealth government to report on Aboriginal welfare in the Northern Territory in 1935-37; Mr E.W.P. Chinnery (1887-1972), who was Government Anthropologist in New Guinea 1924-39 and then seconded as Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory until his retirement in 1946; Mr F.E. Williams (1893-1943), who served as Government Anthropologist in Papua from 1922 until his death; and Mr W.C. Groves (1898-1967), who was then Director of Education in Nauru and became the postwar Director of Education in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Finally, the Committee resolved to compile a list of experts to be invited to attend particular discussion meetings.

As I have already said, things moved rapidly in 1938. Item 3 on the agenda notice for the Committee's next business meeting on 14 January was: 'Future of Australian Aborigines. Proposed memorandum to the Australian Government. Mr Stanner will make a statement'. I have no record of my statement, but probably I developed the points made in my article in *The Times* and in my address to the Institute only three days before. My recollection is that after I spoke I was requested to draft a memorandum to be sent to the Australian authorities. The Institute's secretary, Raymond Firth, then sent my draft to members of the Council; Radcliffe-Brown's reply of 22 January is reproduced here (Plate 6).¹⁷

The minutes of the Council of the Institute record that on 25 January 1938: 'It was resolved to accept the substance of the Memorandum on the Condition of the Australian Aborigines leaving verbal modifications to the officers of the Committee on Applied Anthropology. The memorandum to be circulated to the Australian Governments'. The Council also resolved, at the meeting on 26 April 1938, that a letter 'to be sent to the Times with reference to the meeting of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society' should be left to the discretion of the officers 'in consultation with the Applied Anthropology Committee'.

On 14 February 1938 the secretary of the Institute sent copies of the memorandum to the Australian High Commissioner in London, Mr Bruce; to the Prime Minister, Mr Lyons; to all State Premiers and to the secretary of the 1937 Aboriginal Welfare Conference, Mr H.A. Barrenger, an officer of the Department of the Interior. The text of the memorandum (of which I kept a copy) is reproduced, with Firth's covering letter, as Appendix 1.

¹⁷ Dr James Urry has reminded me that 'native diet' was an important topic for anthropological study at this period. Firth's 1934 paper stimulated publications in *Africa* (9, 1936), and in the Institute's own *Journal*, and several official surveys were published by 1939.

According to the records in the possession of the Australian Archives,¹⁸ Prime Minister Lyons (whose own file apparently has been destroyed) sent a copy to the Minister for the Interior, Mr McEwen. The Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department merely acknowledged receipt of the memorandum, saying 'full consideration will be given to the views expressed'. Barrenger advised the head of his department that copies had also been sent directly to him and to the State Premiers. In a minute to McEwen dated 6 April 1938 (annotated 'seen by the Minister 13/4/38') the Secretary of the Department of the Interior advised his Minister that:

It was intended that the conference of Chief Protectors should be held once a year. In view, however, of the Prime Minister's proposal to hold a conference of Premiers on the matter of Aboriginal welfare, no good purpose would be served by holding the departmental conference this year.

The views of the Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute are interesting, particularly those relating to nutrition and health and medical supervision. They fit in rather well with the outline of policy which you have in mind.

On 20 April 1938 Barrenger informed Firth that no conference of officers would take place in 1938 but a 'Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers' would discuss Aboriginal welfare at 'an early date'. In fact no meeting of officers was held until 1948 and the Ministers did not meet until 1951. But on the same date Barrenger sent copies of the memorandum to all who had attended the 1937 conference: Mr A.C. Pettitt (secretary of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board); Mr S.L. Chapman (head of the Chief Secretary's Department and nominal head of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines in Victoria); the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia, Mr A.O. Neville; and the 'Chief Protector of Aborigines' in South Australia (Mr M.T. McLean), Queensland (Mr J.W. Bleakley) and the Northern Territory (Dr C.E. Cook).

In his covering letter Firth had drawn attention to the Memorandum's emphasis upon the need for training Australian personnel in the 'problems and practice of native administration', yet training was not mentioned in the departmental attention given to the Institute's approach. The need for anthropological training had also been discussed by Thomson, and was surely pointed out by Elkin, who had long been responsible, as had Radcliffe-Brown and Firth, for training officers for the administrative services of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. In the upshot Mr McEwen appointed E.W.P. Chinnery to investigate the administration of Aborigines in the Northern Territory and then to serve as Director of Native Affairs. But their plans for administrative reform and training were disrupted by war.

¹⁸ Department of the Interior I; General Correspondence File Annual Single Number Series: "Royal Anthropological Institute London - re Abo Affairs" 1938-39 (Australian Archives CRS A1 item, 38/8043).

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Unfortunately the Committee for Applied Anthropology was also an early casualty of the war. Most anthropologists were soon involved in war duties, and black-outs and transport difficulties discouraged meetings in London. Between November 1937 and May 1939 the Committee held ten discussion meetings and sent a deputation to the Secretary of State for the Dominions to urge greater 'consultation of native opinion' about the transfer of High Commission territories to South Africa.¹⁹ The Institute's Annual Report for 1938-39, submitted in June 1939, noted that the Committee, with Dr Meyer Fortes as secretary, had had a successful session; the next annual report, in June 1940, announced that the Committee had not met during the year.²⁰

There is indeed a considerable body of evidence that has not been studied closely for its bearing on changes in policy during the 1930s. I am thinking particularly of Radcliffe-Brown's presidential address to the anthropology section of A.N.Z.A.A.S. in 1931, and Firth's 1931 article on 'Anthropology and native administration', to which insufficient attention has been given. But it is clear from the record of events that the impulse to make changes did not come only from within Australia, and that 'not by eastern windows only' when daylight came, came in the light.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES and AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

¹⁹ See *Man*, 38, 1938:25-26, 41-42, 92, 106-107 and 39, 1939:10-12, 43, 111. Mair (1972:290) records that the committee 'drew up a memorandum for submission to the Australian government on the question of whether the joint Anglo-French administration of the New Hebrides should be continued, and actually sent a deputation to the Colonial Secretary to put arguments against the cession to South Africa of Swaziland, Basutoland, and Bechuanaland'. A note in *Africa* (10, 1937:486) reports that in late 1937 the committee was 'preparing a memorandum dealing with problems arising out of modern developments in the payment of bride-price among the tribes of Eastern Central and Southern Africa'.

²⁰ *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 69, 1939:127; 70, 1940:96. Council minutes for 14 November 1939 record that the Committee 'was to be kept in existence with the President [Radcliffe-Brown from June 1939 to June 1941] as acting Chairman and Dr Lucy Mair as Secretary'. But on 23 January 1940 the Council considered 'the proposal for a Committee on Anthropological Problems in International Affairs to study questions especially of a racial and socio-psychological character arising from the war', and resolved that 'this purpose would be best achieved by reconstituting the Committee on Applied Anthropology as a body comprising two sections each with its own Vice Chairman and Secretary, one to deal with colonial and native affairs and the other with international matters'. But the Council minutes of 20 February 1940 note that 'consideration of the revised constitution, terms of reference and personnel' had been deferred pending the completion of the Institute's 'Census of Anthropologists'. Council minutes up to 23 March 1943 make no further mention of the Committee (personal communication, Mrs J.M. Swart, 20 March 1979).

APPENDIX 1

Memorandum on the condition of the Australian Aborigines, drafted by W.E.H. Stanner for the Committee on Applied Anthropology of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1938.

Telephone
2980 Museum

ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE,
52, UPPER BEDFORD PLACE
LONDON, W.C. 1

14th. February 1938

Sir,

The Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute begs to be permitted to bring to your attention the enclosed memorandum concerning the Australian aborigines. It has been drawn up for the Royal Anthropological Institute by its Committee on Applied Anthropology in view of the importance of the approaching Conference at Canberra of Chief Protectors of Aborigines from all parts of the Commonwealth.

A copy of the memorandum has been forwarded to the Premiers of each of the State Governments and to the Secretariat of the Conference.

In this memorandum the Institute has mentioned the need for training Australian personnel in the problems and practice of native administration. It refers particularly to the training which has been given in Sydney for some years to recruits, and to officers who already have experience, in the administrative services of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Similar training is also provided by the Colonial Office for all recruits to its African administrative services.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

Hon. Secretary.

The Rt. Hon. J.A. Lyons, P.C., M.P.

Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

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MEMORANDUM ON THE CONDITION OF
THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

The objectives of Australian native policy as defined by the Prime Minister of Australia in 1931 included: the protection of the nomadic tribes; the establishment and maintenance of inviolable reserves; the protection of the native women from moral abuses; the adequate feeding and medical supervision of broken down tribes; the economic protection of aboriginal employees; the assembly, education and training of mixed-bloods to allow them to take a place in the life of the Australian community. This policy has recently been restated in substantially the same terms.

Evidence in the possession of anthropologists shews that these objectives have not yet been reached, and explains some of the reasons why in a number of areas there is still a wide gap between the principles laid down and actual conditions.

Since 1926 expeditions have been made by 12 social anthropologists to North Queensland, Arnhem Land, the Daly and Fitzmaurice Rivers, Melville and Bathurst Islands, North Australia, Central and South Australia, and the Kimberley, Hall's Creek, and Laverton districts of Western Australia. The information collected in these scientific expeditions may not in all cases be in the possession of the authorities and Governments to whom it would be of most value. The Royal Anthropological Institute therefore begs to be permitted to draw the attention of the Prime Minister of Australia to these data, some already published, and some available in unpublished field reports.

This brief statement is intended to refer only to:

- (a). - the most significant data collected by anthropologists who have worked in such native areas of Australia
- and
- (b). - certain practical suggestions based upon anthropologists' own interpretations of this information.

In submitting this memorandum the Royal Anthropological Institute wishes to make clear that it does not consider the formulation of aboriginal policy to be in any way its province. This statement adheres to that principle and is submitted in order to call attention to certain matters of fact in a disinterested attempt to help Governments in a difficult task.

The Royal Anthropological Institute also wishes to point out, in order to avoid misunderstanding, that the frequent public statements that anthropologists wish to preserve the aborigines in an ideal state, or as museum exhibits, or merely as specimens for scientific investigation are not true, and are not made with any authority from anthropologists. Moreover, these statements contradict the published views of many Australian anthropologists.

In the opinion of the Institute the problem of the aboriginal tribes today seems to be primarily a social and economic one, and as such can only be adequately studied by the techniques of the social anthropologist and the economist, although it is fully recognized that the medical and nutritional aspects of the problem are also of profound importance.

The aspects of the problem to which the Institute wishes to refer are:-

- i. nutrition.
- ii. health and medical supervision
- iii. the state of aboriginal reserves.
- iv. working conditions of aboriginal employees.
- v. administrative personnel.
- vi. finance.

(i) Nutrition.

In nearly every area studied by anthropologists the nutritional standard of most of the aborigines — particularly those in contact with civilization, has been found to be poor and dietetically unbalanced. This standard should be raised to a physiologically adequate level in order that the natives' health, fertility, and general grip on life may be at least stopped from any further decline below the present low level until positive steps can be taken to improve them.

It would seem on field evidence to be wise to apply this also to nomadic tribes as well as to detribalized and semi-civilized natives, whose needs are superficially more obvious.

There is good evidence that in their original condition the natives' diet, derived from wild animals and plants etc., was physiologically much superior to their diet now, when they are forced largely to rely on rations because their lands are occupied by whites. The official rations issued to infirm and indigent natives (as in Northern Territory and Central Australia) are insufficient in quantity and inferior in quality. They consist of small quantities of white flour, polished rice, tea, sugar and tobacco. There is usually no meat ration. The quantity is often just sufficient to induce natives to stay at or close to ration depots, and not enough to give them a full meal once a day. Frequently the food is shared under tribal obligation with other natives, and the entire issue is thus quickly consumed, even a few hours after distribution. The natives then exist as best they can until the next day of issue. The days of issue are variable at the discretion of the local protector, and it seems that the natives have not always received their rations at regular intervals. In one case the rations were three months overdue. In another case through an administrative misunderstanding the rations specifically intended for the infirm and indigent were issued to all the members of a tribe. Thus the whole tribe was being gratuitously encouraged to be parasitic, and the proportion of food available to each individual was quite insufficient to give them an adequate diet.

A medical examination would probably show that most of the partially civilized tribes are under-nourished. The diet of most of them suggests that they must be short of animal and vegetable proteins, fats, mineral salts and most vitamins. There is a high probability that this is true also and in much the same degree of aboriginal employees on many cattle stations and farms where the rations are of the same general type.

Stations and farms in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory differ greatly in size, economic return, the degree of detribalization of their employees, and the effectiveness of supervision. The rations tend to vary accordingly. The experience of anthropologists in most cases observed suggests that in all the rations, irrespective of quantity, the fresh meat allowance is either low or non-existent, the proportion of carbohydrates is relatively far too high (because of the great use of white flour and polished rice), and the other vital constituents are insufficient.

The diet of many white people in the same area is often little better because of the economic poverty of the country where these marginal pastoral and farming ventures are being carried on. It would appear, however, to disregard a cardinal principle of Australian living standards and wage policy to take this fact as an extenuation of the poor diet given the aborigines.

There can be no doubt that the nutritive factor is complicating the Government's task, and could with advantage be given priority over more general questions of policy. The relation of poor food to the social debility of the tribes, to their low fertility and high death rates, and their lack of resistance to the spread of disease, may be very important. Several unanalysed forms of unrest in certain tribes (notably the population drift towards white settlements, and grievances against employers) can be attributed partly to the same factors.

Among the nominally nomadic tribes the position is even less known. Conditions on the tribal reserves cannot be spoken of with any certainty. Food shortage or deficiency (and there is at least some reason to believe they exist) could cause and may well be contributing to tribal mortality and disease without the factors becoming known.

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On at least two of five reserves in North and Central Australia, if the preservation of the nomadic tribes as nomads is envisaged, their permanent water supplies could be improved, and their flesh and vegetable diet could with advantage be supplemented. Drought conditions occur annually in the dry season and seriously affect tribal life even in areas of high rainfall. Hard pressed sections of desert tribes are known to have visited Wave Hill, Hermannsburg, Alice Springs, and parts of Western Australia where drought conditions are more frequent and their intensity greater.

It might be possible by initial concentration on the nutrition of all aborigines to split the general problem into several more easily handled parts. Such a course would expose where and what physical deficiencies and dangers exist, and which tribes have been most neglected, and thus need help more urgently than others, an important consideration where finances are limited. The appropriate remedies in different localities should be apparent from a proper nutritive and medical survey. The information collected by such a survey would greatly increase the "control" over the native situation in all areas and maximize the benefits of any other remedial or palliative action taken by administration.

The nutritive conditions stated above are made possible by and to some extent are the direct result of:

1. the poor economic condition of white industry and settlement in the native areas, and the pressure of white settlers' interests.
2. the small financial provision made for native welfare.
3. the paucity of information about the tribal state and working conditions of each native group.
4. difficulties created by the prevailing attitude of many Europeans towards the natives in their charge.

(ii) Health and Medical Supervision.

Each of the above four factors also operates to the disadvantage of native health and medical supervision, even where an effort is being made (as e.g. in the bush areas of the Northern Territory) not only to keep a check on disease and to provide some limited facilities for treatment, but also to take prophylactic measures.

On points of fact, anthropologists have observed that even in camps of semi-civilized natives, there are many cases of untreated venereal disease, yaws, fevers, common colds, incipient (and perhaps avertible) blindness, neglected eye infections, and (apparently) tuberculosis.

The conditions among nomadic tribes are not known although again, they may be serious. Conditions among native employees in at least some areas visited by anthropologists in Western Australia and the Northern Territory are not markedly better.

It appears that nothing adequate can be done under existing conditions to build up the aborigines' resistance to, or power to cope with, the epidemic diseases which periodically affect them. Some malarial control and prophylaxis are attempted, lepers are incarcerated, venereal cases are treated as they become obvious, but there appears to be no financial possibility of taking tribal quarantine measures to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The responsibility for giving simple treatments, for taking initial measures to prevent the spread of infections, or for detecting disease conditions in development, is left in nearly all the areas of dense native settlement with local protectors. Through lack of knowledge, isolation, and, it must be said, even at times through lack of interest or a bad reputation with natives, these men may not take action, or not be able to act in time to prevent or minimize casualties or mortalities. The natives themselves aggravate by fear, ignorance, and misunderstanding the difficulty of disease control, treatment, and prophylaxis, more perhaps than they aggravate the problem of their nutrition. Many of the less civilized tribes, e.g. on the Daly River, are apt to run away at the mention of "doctor" and every anthropologist has been made aware of the real, even if irrational, fear of white surgery. Many natives, particularly women, will not submit readily to examination. Others, unless their condition is very troublesome, will not seek treatment.

The establishment of a fund in the Northern Territory for the medical benefit of native employees was a most useful measure. But it has been rendered almost abortive in many areas. The indifference or poverty of some employers, the bad working conditions which result, the presence of much undetected illness in camps, the difficulty of employers in distinguishing malingering from real illness, the great distance from medical help, the impossibility of getting assistance in the wet season, the absence of local supervision of the way in which employees are treated, and native fear, ignorance, and unwillingness to be treated are all working against its success. Many of these conditions could be mitigated or avoided by a stronger liaison between natives, employers, and the central medical administration.

In particular, anthropologists are impressed by the need for some attempt to overcome the intense fear of bush natives, if medical facilities are to have their full effect. The removal and exile of lepers from their tribes, terrifying (though unfounded) stories of the surgical practices of white doctors, and the close association in the native mind of sorcery and some forms of surgery on the bodily cavities, are heavily disabling factors standing between the sick or diseased bush native and the doctors who could treat them. Some venereal disease is hidden because semi-civilized native women often fear public examination. The fact that medicines are sometimes labelled "poison" makes many natives afraid of them. The effects of strychnine used by dingo scalpers, the belief in the use of poisons by sorcerers, and garbled camp stories that whites want to poison the natives, to some extent inhibit a co-operative native attitude. The local treatment of aboriginal patients will have to find a way of circumventing these difficulties.

If it were possible (i) to decentralize medical supervision still further, (ii) to establish regular mobile medical patrols staffed by persons with whom the aborigines could become familiar, and approach with confidence, (iii) to establish local centres for treatment where sick natives would not have to go or be taken long distances into strange parts of the country, it seems likely that much of the local weakness of the system might be avoided.

(iii) Reserves.

The provision of inviolable reserves is a cardinal point in all Australian native policies. In no case known to anthropologists, however, are the reserves inviolable or unviolated. Pearlers, trepangers, doggers, miners, prospectors, pastoralists, and others find reasons to enter the largely unpatrolled reserves. When payable gold has been found in any reserve, as at Tennant's Creek, the term "inviolable" has ceased to have any meaning at all.

Other but less obvious influences are at work not only in damaging the sanctity of reserves but in making it doubtful whether reserves will soon be of any use. In Arnhem Land, on the Fitzmaurice River, on the Victoria River, and in the Warramulla spinifex desert of Central Australia anthropologists have found that the supposedly nomadic and uncivilized tribes are in reality substantially influenced by the radiated effects of white settlement. Many of these natives no longer make stone tools, many of them habitually smoke or are familiar with tobacco, desire tea and sugar, wear or are familiar with articles of white clothing, and are not as insulated from other white contacts as they were ten years ago. In the nomadic zones of Central, North, and Western Australia serious social disturbance of these "uncivilized" tribes is reported. Bands of restless natives have been reported some hundreds of miles from their traditional tribal countries. Nomadic aborigines from Arnhem Land and Port Keats have visited Darwin; Fitzmaurice River natives have been taken away to the buffalo camps of Arnhem Land; Warramulla natives have visited Wave Hill; at Alice Springs tribesmen from some hundreds of miles west have masqueraded as local natives; desert tribes of the Central steppes have been reported travelling southwards to country already emptied of its indigenous tribes, or south-west to Laverton in Western Australia. Possibly most of the reserves are affected by this tribal "drift". If this is true, the reserves may soon cease to be of any practical use. Whatever be the Government policy as to the upkeep of reserves, the size and tribal state of the

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population on each reserve should be found out as soon as possible in order that action should not be based on a false estimate of the situation. The "protection" of whatever populations are on the reserves in any case entails some attempt to check this drift. It seems to this Institute that the discussion of the policy of reserves took place at the last Canberra Conference without regard to the above considerations.

The actual population of the tribes as a whole, including those not in the reserves, is not known with real precision. In one nominally nomadic area the official statistics of population have been overestimated by between 10 and 20 per cent. This casts at least some doubt on the rough assessments of population which have been made in other unsettled areas.

(iv) Personnel.

As a statement not of opinion, but of fact, it may be pointed out that the training of those persons who are in charge of the protection (i.e. local administration) of natives in the actual tribal areas, their general level of education, their salaries, working conditions, and their chances of an attractive career in aboriginal affairs, are not equal to the qualifications demanded of and the conditions given to officers with similar work to do in Melanesia, Papua, and Africa. The fact has serious consequences. The position of local protectors is of critical importance since the application of the principles of policy laid down by the Government depends on them. They are in charge at the points where experience shows that the policy measures need their most intelligent application. These are in many parts of Australia the very points where most of the breakdowns occur.

The men given these heavy responsibilities are usually country policemen, postal officials, or civilians. They always have other duties, sometimes incompatible with those of a "protector". Their position often calls on them to do things beyond their competence, e.g. make statistical returns of demographic tribal information with causes of death certified. Conditions and changes among tribes which ought at once to be reported to the central administration are often not observed. The changing level of the tribes on some reserves has thus escaped attention. Local protectors have not the training which would help them to detect movements and conditions which are not obvious on the surface, even to the scientist. For instance, a white farmer in North Australia has been allowed since 1932 to employ members of a nomadic tribe, and has induced them to become sedentary (and thus parasitic) for part of every year, to supply him with unpaid and badly fed labour. The local protector in this case did not see the effect of this on the tribe, since it was not obviously in want or obviously badly treated. There are moreover, a number of areas in West Australia and the Northern Territory where detribalized natives live and work for whites, but are not under any regular supervision by Protectors. Some small outlying cattle stations are seldom, if ever, visited by protectors on patrol. Because of this no close check can be kept upon the treatment of local aborigines.

To the anthropologist it seems that such provisions of the native policy as "protection of nomads", "safe-guarding of native welfare", "assimilation into the white population", etc., need to be translated into clear and practical rules for the guidance of the local protectors. This demands an intimate knowledge of widely different local conditions, and it demands no less an informed co-operation by the protectors themselves. They are not now equipped to give it.

The training of a new administrative personnel, collaterally with the other measures indicated in this memorandum would strengthen the present point of breakdown — the local liaison between the policy and its direct application to the aborigines.

(v) Finance.

The common denominator of the above problems seems to be inadequate finance. It partly (though not wholly) explains why some of these conditions exist.

The scale of the problem seems in the past to have been greatly under-estimated.

An intimate acquaintance at first-hand with the aboriginal situation suggests that nothing substantial in the way of improvement may be hoped for without a greatly increased expenditure.

CONCLUSION.

It would seem therefore that "the aboriginal problem" is in fact not one, but a series of related problems. In each, however, five of the six factors outlined in this memorandum — food, health, working conditions, local administration, and finance — are actively operating to the detriment of the aborigines in every State.

No one individual in Australia, however, is in a position to say what is the precise state of each tribe, what are its most urgent needs, and what are the most practicable local remedies. It is doubtful if even an adequate tribal map exists in Australia. There would appear to be a great need for a skilful co-ordination of all available information, for an immediate survey to fill in the gaps. Adequately financed administrations might then introduce remedial and progressive measures with the certainty that they know what their problems are, and which of these problems might with advantage be faced first.

The Royal Anthropological Institute fully shares the view of Australian Governments that the aborigines should be preserved.

As to the methods by which this objective may be attained there is some difference of opinion. The view taken in this memorandum is that if this is the end desired, it is necessary to halt the decline of the tribes before dealing with more general and more controversial aspects of policy.

The evidence possessed by the Institute points to the problems here outlined as being more immediately important than such problems as the assimilation into the white population of persons of native blood, the education of fullblood and mixed-blood children, the provision of special native courts, paternity and maternity allowances, and so on. These are all highly relevant matters, and if necessary can be dealt with collaterally, but should not be given priority over more immediate needs.

The problems of nutrition, health, working conditions, and reserves have a special urgency, e.g. in North Australia because of the reported intention to develop this area economically. Past experience shows that this will probably lead to a development of investment and industry at points where the contact with the aborigines is closest. The demand for native labour is likely to increase strongly, and added inducements will be held out to the aborigines to stay around settlements, mines, farms, stations, etc. The pressure of white investors' interests are then likely to submerge the interests of the aborigines, and attempts to impose stricter conditions of employment, housing, feeding, and payment of aboriginal employees will tend to be regarded as irksome restraints upon men seeking to develop the frontier areas. Each drive for greater production in the past in the cattle, gold, mining, and farming industries in North, West, and Central Australia has affected the local native populations and may do so again unless the position is closely watched and perhaps guarded against now. The boom of 1933 and after, for instance, led in North Australia to the employment of tribes which until then were still nomadic and largely unaffected by white influences. The general effect of new investment in North Australia will be to widen the area in which profits can be made, and thus widen the physical and economic contact with tribes. This has always proved to be unsettling to aborigines, and has tended to break tribes up into smaller segments. The future of the aboriginal tribes is thus closely bound with, and may materially contribute to, the economic future of areas enclosing or contiguous to their territories. Any future development of the North Australian pastoral industry, for instance, may find the low cost of aboriginal labour an invaluable assistance in competitive production. Aboriginal policy should thus be adjusted to the wider economic and social policy of the same area.

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