
Access to this file is available from:

http://eprints.jcu.edu.au/10414
PART II

FRONTIER CONFLICT
The Colonization of North Queensland.

The wealth of North Queensland's grasslands, minerals, fisheries, and rainforests produced four frontiers of racial contact which will be the concern of Part II of this thesis. The nature of each frontier was determined not only by the lack of effective governmental control and the attitudes of the colonists but also by the environment the wealth occurred in, the ability of the Aborigines to use their habitat as a shield against the invaders, and the nature of the invaders' industries exploiting the resources of the Aborigines' land. Inevitably the pastoral industry which caused the colonization of such vast areas so quickly provided Aboriginal North Queensland with its greatest challenges and wreaked havoc upon the largest number of Aboriginal tribes. It is with this frontier that this chapter is concerned.

After Leichhardt's glowing reports of the pastoral opportunities in North Queensland, settlement did not immediately follow as there were more accessible pastures in southern Queensland, much of which Mitchell's explorations in 1846 and Leichhardt's own in 1844-5 had revealed. The gold discoveries in New South Wales and Victoria after 1851 also diverted attention from the north although, as indicated in the previous chapter, some squatters probably made unpublicised reconnaissances. Gregory's expedition of 1855-6 redirected attention to the north at a time when the squatters' hold on the lands in New South Wales and Victoria was being challenged and their leases due to expire in 1861 so it was predictable that some pastoralists would look to the Barcaldin, especially as it was to be part of a new colony which the squatter interest hoped to dominate.
An imaginative adventurer, George Elphinstone Dalrymple had formed a syndicate and set out on 16 August 1859 to explore and later settle the Burdekin only to have his plans frustrated by the first Queensland government which was vitally concerned with the problem of land legislation and considered the capitalists supporting Dalrymple to be mere speculators. However, because of Dalrymple's knowledge of the country, and in compensation for his successful exploration, he was appointed Commissioner for Crown Land in the Kennedy District. He set out in the Spitfire, on 14 August 1860, to explore the mouth of the Burdekin and to examine the suitability of the recently discovered Port Denison as a port of access. Dalrymple found the Burdekin useless for navigation but reported favourably on Port Denison. On both his 1860 and his 1859 expeditions, Dalrymple reported frequent clashes with the Aborigines and stressed their numbers and aggressiveness. It is ironically symbolic that Queensland's first official expedition used firearms freely whenever Aboriginal resistance was encountered.


By this time, the Queensland Government had passed its land legislation which it hoped would encourage a quick taking up of land without speculation. The Government advertised its intention of accepting applications for pastoral runs in the Kennedy from 1 January 1861 and stressed that settlers would have ample Native Police protection. As indicated in the map, p. 128 the Kennedy District comprised that enormous area drained by the Burdekin and Herbert Rivers and their tributaries. The port of Bowen which Dalrymple established on Port Denison was thus in the centre of the new pastoral district and two hundred miles beyond the then outer limit of settlement at Broadsound. As a result, as will be noted later in this chapter, the settlement of the Bowen District was initially different from the pastoral occupation of any other in the Kennedy District or, indeed, in Queensland.

The government schooner Jeannie Dove and the ketch Santa Barbara sailed from Rockhampton on 15 March 1861 carrying officials, settlers, their families and stores. A number of squatters joined the land party led by Dalrymple to enjoy the security provided by a Native Police detachment of eleven troopers under the command of a Lt. Williams.

5. G. Dalrymple, Commissioner for Crown Land, Kennedy District, to Col. Sec., 24 April 1861, Q.S.A. C.U./Al0, 1261 of 1861; Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 23 February 1861, Q.S.A. C.U./Al0, 660 of 1861; G. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1926 (Brisbane, 1963), p. 20 mentions 'more than a dozen' squatters. Dalrymple stated that he had succeeded in swimming across the flooded Fitzroy 'the whole of the camp equipages and people to the number of 24, not including the horses and parties of several squatters accompanying the expedition'.

5. G. Dalrymple, Commissioner for Crown Land, Kennedy District, to Col. Sec., 24 April 1861, Q.S.A. C.U./Al0, 1261 of 1861; Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 23 February 1861, Q.S.A. C.U./Al0, 660 of 1861; G. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1926 (Brisbane, 1963), p. 20 mentions 'more than a dozen' squatters. Dalrymple stated that he had succeeded in swimming across the flooded Fitzroy 'the whole of the camp equipages and people to the number of 24, not including the horses and parties of several squatters accompanying the expedition'.
On 10 April, Dalrymple led a forward party on to the beach at Port Denison frightening off a large number of Aborigines camped near the harbour. Within six weeks of Dalrymple's arrival runs had been taken up in an unbroken line 550 miles along the Burdekin and its tributaries and about 130 miles inland despite the fact that there was intense conflict with the Aborigines by the third week of settlement. By the middle of 1862, 454 runs and 31,504 square miles had been applied for and, by 1863, almost the whole of the Kennedy District had been settled.

In the southern extremity of this district, Mackay, on the Pioneer River, had been gazetted a port of entry on 2 October 1862 as a result of an expedition setting out from Armidale even before Dalrymple had returned from his 1859 explorations. The leader, John Mackay, had returned with stock to the Pioneer District by 26 February 1862 and, by August 1862, other squatters were taking up runs in the area. Near the northern limit of the Kennedy, Dalrymple himself participated in the expansion of settlement. Impressed by the possibilities of the Valley of Lagoons, he had interested the Premier, Robert Herbert, who in 1862 had then enlisted the support of his friends, the wealthy

and well-connected Arthur and Walter Scott, in a large scale pastoral development. The Scott Brothers and Dairymajie, with Herbert as a sleeping partner, applied for an occupation licence for eighty square miles of the Upper Burdekin at the beginning of 1863; by 1864, they had leased 1,270 square miles believing they would be able to sell some later at a profit to the younger sons of wealthy English friends. Although the scheme was a disastrous failure, it was not abandoned for over thirty years. Attention had been turned to north-west Queensland by the parties, led by Walker, McKinlay, and Landsborough, sent out in search of the Burke & Wills expedition. Walker agreed with Gregory that, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, good country available for squatters was limited to strips 45 miles in depth on the Flinders and the Leichhardt Rivers. However, McKinlay and, especially, Landsborough were much more enthusiastic. Landsborough declared to a public meeting in Melbourne, attended by over 3,000 people, that 'he had never seen better country for stock than he found on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria'.

Thus, twenty years after Stokes discovered the Plains of Promise they were once again beckoning to the squatters as was the newly discovered Flinders and Leichhardt country. In 1868, a route from the Cape River to the Flinders was discovered which was much more suitable for the squatter in bringing up his flocks and herds than the Burdekin and Gulf rivers link Leichhardt and Gregory had indicated. On 1 January 1864, the pastoral districts of Cook and Burke were thrown open and runs were taken up almost immediately,

15. Landsborough, op. cit., p. 66.
many by Kennedy District squatters. 16 Pioneer pastoralist
and historian, Edward Palmer, wrote:

The year 1864 may be styled the year of Regilla or
flight of stock outwards to settle new country; they
came from all parts, and helped to fill the land
everywhere with the beginning of civilization. A
boom had set in for pastoral occupation; the reports
of recent explorations told of enormous tracts of grand
open country waiting for stock to utilize it, and
such one was anxious to be the first to secure some
of it for his sheep and cattle. 17

This was the pioneer's 'greed of country' the pastoralist,
de Satge wrote of. 18 With unconscious irony Palmer commented:
'... The settlers were like a great advancing army, confident
in their numbers and strength; and so they advanced into
the unknown land, and left the rest to fortune'. 19

Palmer himself took up Canobie on the Cloncurry in
1864 and stocked it with cattle from the Wide Bay district. 20
In 1864 Ernest Henry, who had previously taken up Lt. LeConnell
Station, on the Sutter near its junction with the Burdekin,
was one of the first to take up country on the Flinders
when he established Hughenden Station. 21 In the same
year, the first occupation of the Gulf Lowlands occurred;
cattle were overlanded from Bowen Downs in central Queensland
to Beames Brook about sixteen miles above the present
site of Burketown. 22 Almost immediately afterwards, a rush
to the Gulf country was triggered off by J. C. MacDonald's

16. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 27.
17. A. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland (Sydney, 1906),
p. 118.
18. J. and C. de Satge, Pages from the Journal of a Queens-
land Squatter (London, 1851), p. 147. '... but there
is a kind of "greed of country" that comes over the
pioneer, which spurs him up to great efforts if the
reward before him is a good slice of rich sheep country'.
22. ibid., p. 126.
Private explorations from his station, Carpentaria Downs, which he had only established in 1868 and which was then one of the most northerly stations. Most of these squatters came from the Kennedy District. Settlers had thus pushed out as far west as the Barkly Tableland, which Landsborough had discovered only three years previously, and north to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The wave of pastoral expansion had surged into all parts of North Queensland except Cape York Peninsula. Kennedy's tragic expedition had certainly shown the east coast to be inhospitable. In 1884, the expedition led by Frank and Alec Jardine found the western side of the peninsula equally uninviting and met with determined and prolonged resistance from the Aborigines that the run hunters were not induced to scour the country ahead of settlement as they had elsewhere in North Queensland. As the editor of the journals of the expedition commented: 'It has also made known with tolerable definiteness, how much, or rather how little, of the "York Peninsula" is adapted for pastoral occupation'.

The vast area of Cape York Peninsula was thus branded as a dangerous disappointment for the pastoralists and had to await the incentive of gold to attract settlement. The other region still to be opened up was the rainforest-covered area north from the Herbert River to just south of the Endeavour River and inland to the eastern slopes and plateaus of the Great Dividing Range. Timber, mineral wealth, and fertile soil would eventually attract the invaders to this daunting wilderness although it was

already partly known to the fishermen and traders who were beginning to exploit the wealth of the sea from the Torres Strait south to Mackay.

In this rapid expansion of the pastoral industry, the role of the Native Police was vital but limited. A large detachment had accompanied Dalrymple's overland party and immediately began far-reaching 'dispersals' driving the Aborigines from the river valleys which were so essential to the economies of both races. In December 1861, after a routine patrol, Lt. Powell, then in charge of Native Police in the Kennedy District, reported that the Bogie River was nearly cleared of large groups of Aborigines but that 'immense' numbers still occupied the Bowen River where Powell had twice attacked parties of sixty to eighty men. At the same time, the pastoralists were actively engaged in the process of dispossessing the Aborigines. Thus, a squatter on the Bowen had formed a vigilante to break up a large group of Aborigines menacing his employees while Powell had dispersed another group on the same river only thirty miles away. At this time, Powell believed his forces inadequate to protect the settlers on the Bowen and the Bardekin yet others were already on the Sutter and Belyando. 26

Indeed, while the settlers were establishing themselves, they constantly sought Native Police assistance. By early 1862, there were two camps in the Kennedy District, one at Bowen and another on the Bowen River. Although Dalrymple pointed out that such inadequate protection would cause the

26. Lt. Powell to Dalrymple, 9 December 1861, incl. in Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 9 December 1861, q.S.A. Col/A23, 8161 of 1861. See also Dalrymple to Lt. Powell, in charge of Native Police detachment, Bowen, 27 April 1861, incl. q.S.A. Col/A17, 1527 of 1861; and Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 23 April 1861, q.S.A. Col/A16, 1362 of 1861.
squatting to take the law into their own hands, the government would not increase the force at that time. In May 1862, Dalrymple presented a petition from thirteen influential residents requesting greater police protection because of the 'extreme hostility of the aborigines'. Yet in August 1862, the new commandant, Bligh, reported the frontier was completely protected. The government expected the squatters to be active partners in dispossessing the aborigines and protecting property. A third detachment was moved to the Upper Burdekin from the pacified Wide Bay and Burnett areas, bringing the Native police strength in the Kennedy District in July 1862 to twenty-three out of a total force of 164 officers and men. However, the Upper Burdekin detachment of seven troopers deserted when Lt. Williams left them unsupervised.

Probably, no frontier region considered itself, nor indeed was, adequately protected against Aboriginal resistance. Dalrymple had correctly pointed out that Queensland's policy of not establishing effective control over such districts as the Kennedy before allowing settlers to take possession of Aboriginal land ensured that they would impose their authority with the rifle: 'It is almost necessity impels the whitesman to adopt hostile measures for the preservation of his life from a numerical preponderance.

27. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 22 February 1862, R.A.A. Col./A26, 317 of 1862; Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 22 February 1862, Q.S.A. Col/A26, 321 of 1862; Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 9 December 1861, loc. cit.
30. Commandant Bligh's Monthly Return of Native Police Force, 1 July 1862, to Col. Sec., Q.S.A. Col/A22, 1367 of 1862. The Kennedy District's high rate of desertion was not atypical.
capable equally of wearing him out or overwhelming him with numbers'. 31

The Pastoral Frontier 1861–1870.

In North Queensland, throughout the period 1861 to 1863, there was an almost complete uniformity in the procedures that the pastoralists adopted towards the Aborigines. When the pastoralists took up their runs, they adopted the same practice that had developed in the south. The 'kept the blacks out'. In November 1869, a pastoralist sympathiser to the Fort Denison Times described what this meant in North Queensland, not to criticise the process but to urge caution where the Aborigines were being 'let in'. Most Aborigines were friendly at first, he declared, but as some had been 'treacherous' (presumably when they realized the significance of the alien presence) the pioneers were forced 'to keep them out':

'Let is, never to allow them near a camp, out-station, head-station, or township; consequently they were hunted by anyone if seen in open country, and driven away or shot down when caught out of the scrub and broken ground. This course adopted by the early settlers and pioneers was unavoidable and quite necessary under the existing circumstances. 32

Although extra men were employed to protect the runs, he asserted the Europeans would have been at the mercy of the Aborigines if they had been 'let in' and realized the weakness of the squatters. He admitted:

This system of keeping them out, however has led to dreadful results ... every bushman had to take the law into his own hands in self-defence, and for a time every man's hand was against the blacks, and their hands against every man – as those who had been peacefully inclined towards the settlers at first

---

32. P.O.T., 20 November 1869. The article is entitled 'A Black Protector'.

---
became revengeful, and committed several most horrible murders, ... and killed sheep, cattle, and horses. Despite the fact that it was a violation of one of the conditions of lease to deny the Aborigines free access to a run, there was no expectation by the government that the squatters would comply with this stipulation and no pretense by the squatters that they were doing so. In 1887, the Under-Colonial Secretary even rejected a request by a squatter that the Aborigines be let in at that time.

During this period of 'keeping them out', communications between the races were minimal. This is perhaps best illustrated by Dalrymple's attempt to prevent bloodshed in the establishment of the township of Cardwell as a port for the Upper Burdekin in 1884.

The owners of the Valley of Lagoons, with government assistance and the expectation of reimbursement through Premier Herbert's influence, decided to establish a port at Rockingham Bay. Dalrymple, the leader of the expedition, believed that if the Aborigines were made to understand the new order being imposed upon them the initial violence and hostility would be avoided. For this purpose, he took James Morrill with him as interpreter. Two canoes came to the ship as it pulled into the bay and were ordered away by Morrill who conversed with some difficulty. The next day some Aborigines approached Dalrymple and Morrill. In answer to Dalrymple's questions about a route over the ranges to the Burdekin, they lied that none existed and, thought Dalrymple, tried to send him off in a different

33. ibid. Much less restrained descriptions had been published in this newspaper by opponents of the system.
34. F.B.T., 18 April 1887. A.L. McDougall referred to the regulation when replying to the Under Colonial Secretary. The letters were reproduced in the newspaper.
direction into an ambush. They wanted to know whether the Europeans came as friends or enemies whereupon, at Dalrymple's direction Morrill answered that

... we came as friends ... I then told them they must clear out and tell others to do so as we wished to occupy the land, and would shoot any who approached, that we were strong, and that another party would soon follow. They told us to leave and not to return and then they went away. 36

Except for the definition of the word 'friends', communications between the two races was unambiguous. Dalrymple's instructions had been less provocative than Morrill's translation but the ultimatum was the same. The Aborigines had to surrender some of their tribal land to the intruders.

Three days later, Dalrymple and the Native Police detachment came upon a party of armed Aborigines, possibly waiting to attack those left at the settlement whereupon, according to Morrill, 'they were set upon suddenly by Mr. Dalrymple's men and rather cut up'. 37 Dalrymple's good intentions had evaporated and the scheme to persuade Aborigines to accept passively the loss of their lands had collapsed. Yet this pitifully inadequate attempt at communication was obviously atypical.

A general pattern of conflict can be observed in the European colonization of North Queensland which was in part typical of Aboriginal response to alien intrusion, but as well consequent upon the nature of the challenge the pastoralists offered. Most commonly the Aborigines

36. James Morrill, 'Journal of an Expedition to Rockingham Bay'. Most of this journal is republished in The Story of James Morrill, pp. 26-33, from Morrill's own diary now in the possession of Mrs. D. Jack Senior, Brandon, Ayr, North Queensland. However some pages are missing including the above interesting information. The rest of the journal was discovered in the course of this research in the Port Denison Times, 26 March 1864 and 2 April 1864 where the complete journal is published.

avoided the small number of pastoralists and their employees first moving into their tribal areas, sometimes almost completely, for periods of a few months to as long as two years. After this initial period, clashes occurred with increasing intensity until overt Aboriginal resistance was broken by the combination of squatter and Native Police action. As will be subsequently seen, this period could extend for several years and in some areas where the terrain favoured Aboriginal resistance continued for as long as twenty years. Perhaps the pastoral occupation of the Burke District provided the sturdiest example of this initial 'lull-before-the-storm' pattern.

The Burke Pastoral District stretched from the Great Dividing Range in the east to the Queensland-Northern Territory border in the west and from the Selwyn Range in the south to the Gilbert River in the north. It was thrown open for settlement on 1 January 1864. The owners of two stations in the Burke District clearly described the pattern of contact from this time to April 1868 when conflict was at its height:

Outrages by the blacks are seldom committed in the earliest stages of the settlement of a new district, and this has been particularly the case in this district of Burke, where for the first two years the blacks were quiet enough to make many settlers believe them incapable of violence and to consider them harmless. The limited evidence available fully supports this account.

By September 1866, most of the Gulf Country had been taken up. East of the Great Divide where conflict was then intense, the settlers were surprised to have such

38. See map, p. 128.
39. Little & Netzer, Urilla Station near the junction of the Samby and Flinders Rivers, and Brodie Brothers, Donors Hill Station near the junction of the Cloncurry and Flinders Rivers to the Col. Sec., 13 April 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A166,1720 of 1868.
reports from the Gulf lowlands and the Cloncurry River as: 'The blacks are very quiet'. 40 Some settlers on the Albert River even had enough confidence to go into their camps unarmed to talk to them. 41 The Barcaldine correspondent to the *Port Denison Times* remarked in late August 1865, 'The aboriginals of this district appear to be a fine race of men and thus far have proved very friendly'. 42

Although there had been some suggestions of sporadic conflict in 1864, 43 the first indications of serious trouble came in February 1867 with reports of attacks on travellers on the Flinders road. These led to the Native Police dispersing a large group who had apparently gathered for bora ceremonies. The Aborigines were found to possess such a large number of European articles that it seemed that their successful attacks on unknown travellers had been much more extensive than had previously been realized. 44 Conflict became very widespread thereafter and, 45 as late as December 1874, the Aborigines were still regarded as dangerous and had not yet been 'let in'. 46

The Aborigines killed and robbed sufficient invaders and did enough damage to their stock and property to alarm them greatly and to infuriate them into determined and ruthless retaliation. In 1867, one traveller was killed

40. *P.D.T.*, 9 September 1865. Referred specifically to the Gulf Lowlands but intended as a general comment. See also *P.D.T.*, 26 September 1865, giving Edward Palmer of Canobie on the Cloncurry river as the source.

41. *P.D.T.*, 18 October 1866. Note that this was thought to be noteworthy.

42. *P.D.T.*, 29 August 1866.


44. *P.D.T.*, 27 February 1867.


46. Telegram, Acting *C.C.L.*, Burke Town, to Minister for Lands, 17 December 1874, Q.S.A. CCL/1462.
and one wounded on the Cloncurry River. In September 1867, the Aborigines attacked four men near Canobie Station on the Cloncurry River, killing one and wounding two others. The men were travellers caught within sight of the station. In late 1867 or early 1868, four Aboriginal employees from Hilde Bay who had been employed by various settlers bringing out stock were killed by hostile Aborigines while they were returning to their homes. In March 1868, a shepherd was killed, others wounded, and property stolen on Urilla Station near the junction of the Sarby and Flinders Rivers. In March 1868, two Europeans and a Chinaman accompanying one of the Europeans were killed near the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Thus, in the first year of conflict in the Burke District ten of the colonists or their Aboriginal employees were reported killed by Aborigines. There were almost certainly others killed but unreported or undiscovered.

It is obvious that the details of only a small percentage of Aboriginal attacks and European acts of aggression or retaliation have been discovered in this

47. Brodie Bros. & Little & Hetzer to Col. Sec., 18 April 1868, loc. cit.
49. Brodie Bros. & Little & Hetzer, 18 April 1868, loc. cit. See also Queensland, 23 May 1868, letter 'The Poor Blacks', dated 26 March 1868.
50. ibid.
51. ibid. See also P.I., Barketown, to Col. Sec., 18 April 1868, Q.S.A. CCL/A106, 1788 of 1868.
52. C.E.T., 27 February 1867, for discovery of belongings of such people in Aboriginal camps. The probability of such unknown or unreported killings by Aborigines was further illustrated at Townsville in November 1872 when the five year old skeletons of two men, McPhaff and Ross, were found at nt. Stewart. The Cleveland Bay Express reported that they had obviously been killed by blacks. See Queensland, 10 November 1872. See also C.E.T., 22 March 1874, for the accidental discovery of an unidentified victim of an Aboriginal attack on the Palmer.
study. Indeed, generally only the most blatant activities of the Native Police or the most alarming activities of the Aborigines were recorded and it would be foolish to believe all of these have been unearthed in this research.

The Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Burke District had requested increased police protection in September 1867 so, upon the receipt of a petition detailing most of the Aboriginal attacks described above, another detachment of Native Police was despatched. The officer in charge of both the native and ordinary police, Sub-Inspector Uhr, had previously earned the respect of the residents with the limited force he had at his disposal. With the increase in conflict between the settlers and the Aborigines he soon won enthusiastic approval for his ruthless reprisals. In one of the few extant detailed accounts of a Native Police dispersal, the Burketown correspondent to the Brisbane Courier exulted at Uhr's success in killing fifty-nine Aborigines in retaliation for the slaughter of 'several horses' within ten miles of Burketown and the killing of a Mr. Cameron near the Norman River:

I much regret to state that the blacks have become very troublesome about here lately. Within ten miles of this place they speared and cut steaks from the rumps of several horses. As soon as it was known, the Native Police, under Sub-Inspector Uhr, went out, and I am informed, succeeded in shooting upwards of thirty blacks. No sooner was this done than a report came in that Mr. Cameron had been murdered at Liddle and Hetzer's station, near the Norman.

54. Brodie Bros. and Little and Hetzer to Col. Sec., 13 April 1868, loc. cit. See Col. Sec's minute, 9 June 1868.
55. ibid.
Mr. Uhr went off immediately in that direction, and his success I hear was complete. One mob of fourteen he rounded up; another mob of nine, and a last mob of eight, he succeeded with his troopers in shooting. In the latter lot there was one black who would not die after receiving eighteen or twenty bullets, but a trooper speedily put an end to his existence by smashing his skull. 56

The complacent tone of this report and the absence of any hostile reaction and of an official inquiry demonstrate the changed attitude towards Aborigines in the Burke district even more strikingly than the ferocity of the deeds themselves. They suggest that this was, perhaps, only the most successful act of revenge and bloodshed. The Barketown correspondent concluded: 'Everybody in the district is delighted with the wholesale slaughter dealt out by the native police, and thank Mr. Uhr for his energy in ridding the district of fifty-nine (59) Ayalls'.

As well as killing or attempting to kill the invaders and their animals, the Aborigines of the Burke District appropriated their goods and possessions and destroyed much property. Indeed robbery seems to have been a strong motive for many attacks. Aborigines took great risks to obtain food as their own resources became limited by the increasing number of stock. The looting of shepherd’s huts was so frequent that some squatters built iron huts with padlocks which still did not stop the Aborigines. There was, however, another motive besides robbery. The settlers were surprised at the apparently wanton destructiveness of the Aborigines who took everything, even articles that could be of no use to them. It is clear that the need for food and the desire to have European goods was now

56. T.W.T., 4 July 1868. From Barketown correspondent to the Brisbane Courier. Other newspapers reprinted this article e.g. Queenslander, 15 June 1868, 'Carpentaria'. The name 'Liidle' seems to be 'Little' in a letter which has been previously referred to.
57. Ibid.
mixed with a determination to resist and harm the invaders. Indeed, there is a strong suggestion of desperation in the Aboriginal daring the settlers described. 58 The flare-up of Aboriginal resistance over such a wide area of the Burke District was linked by the settlers with 'bora' ceremonies. In February 1867, the Native Police had 'dispersed' (i.e. attacked and broken up) a group of Aborigines estimated at more than two hundred on the Flinders Road where travellers had been menaced and some, whose bodies and identities were never discovered, robbed and killed. 59 This was a common criticism of large Aboriginal gatherings, and although they would have resulted from traditional religious and socio-economic causes, it is inconceivable that, at such meetings, grievances against the invaders were not discussed. This would reinforce the natural desire to strike back which could, in part, account for sudden outbreaks of resistance over a wide area.

The initial pattern of conflict examined in the Burke District could be illustrated as well by reference to other areas where sufficient records survive. Thus, speaking of the Kennedy Pastoral District as a whole, one of the first commentators on its history of conflict pointed out that this was at its worst between 1864 and 1868 and that the earlier years had even promised a peaceful dispossession in some areas. 61 This claim is supported by evidence from such parts of the Kennedy as the Townsville and Mackay districts. 62

The extended period of Aboriginal avoidance of the pastoralists is not difficult to explain. The normal Aboriginal reaction of fear and avoidance was reinforced

58. Brodie Bros. and Little and Netzer to Col. Sec., 13 April 1866, loc. cit.
59. F.D.T., 27 February 1867.
60. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 43 for A.C. Gregory's opinion.
61. F.D.T., 20 November 1869: 'A Black Protector'.
62. See Appendix C.
firstly by the reputation the aliens brought with them from the Bowen district and the settled regions to the south; and, secondly, by the clashes that frequently occurred with the initial European intrusion. As the feared invaders did not at first seem to offer an unendurable threat to the Aborigines' way of life and made clear their determination to 'keep out' the Aborigines, they were avoided. There is clear evidence in North Queensland that Aborigines were able to communicate information accurately over very long distances and, no doubt, where actual conflict did not occur, knowledge of the European destructive potential was well known. As the limited bloodshed involved in Aboriginal 'warfare' contrasted starkly with the firepower of even a few Europeans, this awareness must have resulted in greater caution. However, once the Aborigines came to understand the nature and permanence of European occupation, conflict was bound to occur unless the pastoralist took positive steps to establish meaningful communications with the Aborigines and provided the Aborigines with the economic resources of which his activities were depriving them. This happened on a very few runs only.


64. The Story of James Morrell, pp. 16, 17: Morrell reported Aborigines communicating over considerable distances precise details of the arrival of the first settlers and their subsequent actions. See also Eyreley, Jardine's Journals, p. 78. Aborigines later interviewed by the Jardines at Somerset could describe in precise detail the death of the expedition's mule that had occurred almost five hundred miles south and had articles in their possession from the mule's pack saddle. Other details narrated made Frank Jardine believe these Aborigines had followed them this distance. It is more likely, however, that the information and the articles were transmitted from tribe to tribe.

65. Lammermoor was one of the few in North Queensland. See H.M. Bennett, Christison of Lammermoor (London, [1827 or 1928]), pp. 56-60, 67, 81. Lammermoor was renowned because it was the exception to the rule.
The most notable exception to the pattern of conflict outlined above occurred in the settlement of the Bowen hinterland. Dalrymple had given specific instructions that the settlers were not to disembark on the mainland if they arrived before his land party but to camp on an island in the bay. Despite his previous experiences, he was hopeful that he could establish a pattern of contact different from that known on the pastoral frontier in the south. The presence of the mounted land party, he hoped, would deter Aboriginal opposition or rout it if absolutely necessary.

Unique among the pastoral districts of Queensland, the hinterland of Port Denison was separated by more than 200 miles from the nearest settled district, Broadsound. An opportunity existed for making a fresh start in establishing relations with the local Aborigines, one which might avoid the brutal dispossessions which had occurred elsewhere. Although the government showed no interest in these possibilities, Dalrymple was eager to seize them and optimistic of success. His intentions were benevolent, but he had no real comprehension of the ways in which white intruders injured Aboriginal interests. Other settlers did not even share his intentions, and were wholly beyond his control.

Despite the fact that, inter alia, he had deliberately appropriated some Aboriginal wells large enough to supply 'the requirements of the port for some years to come', Dalrymple believed the Aborigines would quietly resign

themselves to the presence of 'an irresistible [sic] force'. Such naive optimism was short lived. Within three weeks, three squatters were driven back to the settlement by an estimated 120 Aborigines. Moreover the Native Police had already begun far-reaching 'dispersals' and were soon emulated by the squatters moving out to claim runs. Dalrymple feared the town would be attacked and assumed the role of commander-in-chief. The infant colony met with intense Aboriginal opposition and retaliated vigorously. Eight years later, a resident of Bowen wrote: 'We know that our town at least had its foundations cemented in blood'. The same could be said for much of the early settlement of the Bowen District. One year after Dalrymple's arrival at Port Denison, he was still complaining of the 'extreme hostility of the Aborigines'.

There are several factors which probably account for the difference between the early contact experienced in the Bowen District and that experienced in more remote areas. Firstly, the exceptionally rapid spread of settlement from Bowen must have appeared from the first an invasion of menacing proportions, in contrast to the more gradual infiltration of graziers elsewhere. Secondly, in the

69. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 24 April 1861, Q.S.A. COL/AL6, 1261 of 1861.
70. Dalrymple to Lt. Powell, in charge of the Native Police Detachment, Bowen, 27 April 1861, encl. Q.S.A. COL/AL7, 1527 of 1861; Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 28 April 1861, Q.S.A. COL/AL6, 1262 of 1861.
71. M.W. Cunningham, 'The Pioneering of the River Burdekin'. Original in the possession of Mr. E. Cunningham, Strathmore Station, Collinsville, Queensland. Typescript copy at History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland.
72. P.D.T., 1 May 1869, 'Shall We Admit the Blacks'. No one disagreed despite the fact that the author was then involved in a controversy on the subject.
73. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 14 May 1862, Q.S.A. COL/A29, 1428 of 1862.
early years the district drained by the Burdekin and its tributaries was constantly disturbed by travelling settlers with their flocks and herds looking for or going to runs further out. Thirdly, in the Bowen District the Native Police were provocatively used in the first weeks of settlement and subsequently aggressively scoured the river valleys attacking assemblages of Aborigines. In most areas, because the demand for Native Police exceeded their supply, they patrolled districts intensively only after conflict had occurred or was thought imminent. Fourthly, in some districts, early clashes demonstrated the power of the invaders so strikingly that the Aborigines avoided further contact as long as possible. Finally, in yet other areas, the Aborigines probably avoided contact during the early stages of pastoral occupation because of knowledge of the invaders' destructive potential communicated from the Bowen District. The initial reckless daring of the Bowen Aborigines in attempting to oppose what was apparently perceived as an inescapable threat was repeated in remote Cape York Peninsula in opposition to the Jardine's expedition and to the Palmer rush. It can be assumed that, in such areas, a lack of information of the firepower of the invaders was an important factor in such apparently suicidal confrontations.

In suggesting the above pattern of conflict on the pastoral frontier of North Queensland, it was not intended to give a comprehensive and detailed account. This would have been impossible with the data available. From the reports of the Police Commissioner, however, the areas of greatest conflict can sometimes be discovered. Thus in his report for 1868, he commented of the Aborigines from Mackay south to St. Lawrence:

The blacks in this district are very bad ... complaints and requests for assistance are every day received.

Of the Aborigines north of Mackay, he commented:

The coast country all along from Townsville to Mackay is inhabited by blacks of the most hostile character. On some of the stations north of Bowen, such as Woodstock, Salisbury Plains, and some others, it is almost impossible to keep any cattle on the runs; and south of Bowen some stations are or were about to be abandoned, in consequence of the destruction of property by the blacks. 75

D.T. Seymour, who was Police Commissioner from 1864 to 1895, was not one to exaggerate Aboriginal hostility. It was more typical of him to blame the settlers for not taking adequate precautions to protect their own lives and property or to accuse the local newspapers of exaggeration. 76

Even though the number of Native Police at Seymour's disposal was reduced greatly as a result of economy measures associated with the 1866-1870 commercial depression 77 and the use of the Native Police as gold escort, 78 he went to extraordinary measures to pacify the Townsville to Mackay coast. At a time when he was giving each detachment a larger area to patrol, he pointed out that he was unable to reduce the Native Police on the Townsville to Mackay coast and that he had established two 'flying detachments'. These would have no settled camps but would patrol constantly, one between Townsville and Bowen and the other between Bowen and Mackay. 79

75. 'Report of Commissioner of Police Upon Tour of Inspection', 1868 V. & P., pp. 51, 52.
77. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 38-42, for an account of the commercial depression.
78. R. Stewart, J.P., Southwick Station, Dalrymple, to Police Commissioner, 20 October 1868, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/A116, 100 of 1869.
TABLE I

STRENGTH OF QUEENSLAND POLICE FORCE, 1864-1872

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DEPARTMENTS</th>
<th>WHITE POLICE</th>
<th>NATIVE POLICE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>£43,397</td>
<td>74,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>£44,972</td>
<td>87,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>£52,297</td>
<td>96,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>£53,888</td>
<td>99,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>£50,223</td>
<td>107,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>£57,045</td>
<td>109,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>£57,716</td>
<td>115,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>£58,326</td>
<td>125,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>£64,287</td>
<td>135,497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 'Report from the Acting Commissioner of Police for the Year 1872', 1873 V. & P., p. 918. In 1868, the total should be 411.

The Cost of Frontier Conflict to the Aborigines.

The conflict described in this chapter persisted unabated for more than seven years during which time most of North Queensland was colonised by European pastoralists. The cost of such protracted struggle, measured in the broadest sense, must have been very great for both races, but especially for the Aborigines. Rarely, of course, was the cost of the European invasion of Aboriginal land chronicled with an Aboriginal perspective. It is therefore fortunate in North Queensland that there was a European who had lived with the Aborigines for seventeen years and had heard the descriptions of the first encounters from his black friends.

On 25 January 1863, when James Morrill made contact with
the advancing white settlers at Inkerman Station, he was able to describe something of how the Native Police and 'keeping them out' affected the Aborigines. He told of misunderstanding, fear, and malice. In 1860, a ship, which Morrill believed to be the 'Spitfire' engaged in Dalrymple's Burdekin exploration hove to at Cape Cleveland. The Aborigines tried to make the Europeans understand that there was a white man living with them in accordance with Morrill's request. The Europeans grew alarmed and fired upon the apparently menacing 'savages', killing one of Morrill's friends and wounding another.\(^80\)

The next encounter Morrill heard of occurred about three years later. Some Aborigines were lamenting the death of an old man when an unnoticed settler fired upon them killing the old man's son. Presumably, this was the opening gambit of 'keeping the blacks out'. Later the Aborigines induced this settler to dismount and slew him. Thinking the horse was also rational and malevolent, they tried to kill it too.\(^81\)

Reports of the encroaching whites increased, each one bringing fresh evidence of their ruthlessness. A party of white and black men, possibly the Native Police with squatter volunteers, shot down the Aborigines Morrill had lived with at Port Denison.\(^82\) Next, fifteen members of the tribe Morrill was then living with were shot dead while on a fishing expedition.\(^83\) By 1863, 'keeping them out' meant that the Aborigines could not safely win their livelihood from their own country.

They also realized that their tribal lands were being changed by the mere presence of the white men. Some had

---

81. *ibid.*, p. 16.
82. *ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.
83. *ibid.*, p. 17.
watched while a herd of cattle drank a waterhole dry, temptingly exposing the fish which they were afraid to come forward and take. 84 Morrill had commented on the great variety of edible plant life utilised by the Aborigines, much of which would have been consumed or destroyed by the vast numbers of voracious, hard-hoofed cattle pouring into the region. 85 At a simple economic level, the food and water resources which were just sufficient to support the tribes in a dry season were being limited and free access to them denied. Eventually, Morrill persuaded the Aborigines to let him go as an emissary to attempt to come to terms with the invaders. 86

Morrill made it clear to the Aborigines that the Europeans would dispossess them of their land, a prospect which caused great distress. They requested Morrill to ask the Europeans to let them keep some of their tribal lands, even if only the coastal swamps which were valueless to the invaders. 87 Morrill probably helped formulate the proposal and gave it much emphasis in his pamphlet published in 1863. The Queensland government, however, made no response and a unique opportunity in Aboriginal-European relations in Queensland was lost.

It was not because Morrill was held in low esteem. Governor Bowen conversed with him on several occasions and, 'finding him to be a very respectable and intelligent man', obtained a job for him at Bowen where one of his principal duties would be to act as interpreter in communications between the Europeans and the Natives, and so (it was hoped) to prevent some of those misunderstandings between the two races, which often lead to unfortunate circumstances.

At Bowen Morrill married an emigrant girl and was universally

84. ibid.
85. ibid., pp. 20-22.
86. ibid., p. 17.
87. ibid., pp. 18, 26.
liked and respected; the chief journals of the Australian colonies were much interested in his experiences, as was the Secretary of State, the Duke of Newcastle. 88

Morrill's eagerness to act as mediator was deemed a failure before the close of 1863. Bonwick had heard that the squatters were dangerously hostile to him because they believed him in league with the Aborigines to destroy their flocks while, it was alleged, the Aborigines had come to mistrust him because of his association with the settlers. 89

In his obituary in the Port Denison Times, mention was made of the government's fear that he would rejoin the Aborigines and cause mischief. 90

It was unlikely that a squatter-dominated government would legislate to give land rights to a race it regarded as nomadic savages. Even the sympathetic Governor Bowen had claimed the Aborigines only 'wandered' over the country. 91 Europeans would only accept the land rights of nomadic hunters and food gatherers if they were forced to do so.

Like Dalrymple, Morrill did not understand the basic conflict of cultures which required more than goodwill to provide a solution. 92

As early as 1863, Morrill was able to describe the depopulation in the Bowen District resulting from frontier conflict which was still continuing: 'The work of extinction is gradually but surely going on among the Aboriginals. The tribe I was living with is far less numerous now than when I went among them'. Morrill indicted the settlers and the

88. Q.S.A. Governor's correspondence, outward despatch, 77 of 1865, Bowen to Sec. of State, Cardwell, 4 December 1865.
90. P.D.T., 1 November 1865.
91. Q.S.A. Governor's correspondence, outward despatch, 74 of 1861, 16 December 1861.
92. P.D.T., 10 June 1865.
Native Police but also blamed '... the wars, fights, ... and the natural deterioration of the people themselves'. Yet Morrill had previously acknowledged that traditional Aboriginal 'wars' caused little loss of life, an observation supported by modern authorities. Similarly Morrill spoke of the 'natural deterioration of the people', presumably implying their decline in health and numbers. It seems clear that Morrill was indicating the increased inter-tribal warfare and an unnatural deterioration in the physical and, possibly, mental health of the people consequent upon the chaos into which Aboriginal life was thrown by the European intrusion. The very basis of the Aborigines' economic, social, and religious life was disrupted, natural resources restricted, alien land trespassed upon, dietary habits changed, and the security of their sacred life shattered.

In their determination to break Aboriginal resistance, the settlers often provoked it. Thus they deliberately destroyed or appropriated such important Aboriginal equipment as spears, fish nets, wallaby nets, rugs, and tomahawks which the Aborigines had been forced to abandon. More provocative, of course, was the indiscriminate slaughter of unoffending Aborigines which was inherent in the policy of 'keeping the blacks out' and the associated Native Police policy of 'dispersal'. A brief report of what was probably a routine Native Police reprisal will reinforce these conclusions. In retaliation for heavy stock losses, Inspector Isley and six troopers swept south from Bowen 'dispersing' two 'mobs' of Aborigines on the Don River, through the

95. P.D.T., 21 July 1866; 1875 V. & P., p. 624.
96. P.D.T., 24 August 1872. An article: 'The Blacks - A Suggestion' commented on the Native Police who 'wreak their vengeance on the first blackfellows they meet and thus punish the innocent for the guilty'.
Proserpine District to the Mackay District where Isley attacked at least five more 'mobs' several of which were termed 'very large'. In the area he had passed through, the Aborigines had re-commenced killing cattle so, on his return north, he attacked them driving them over the ranges. Even frontiersmen well-disposed towards the Aborigines believed this was unavoidable, justifying it on the grounds of tribal, and often, it seems racial responsibility for particular offences against the settlers. Thus one commented: '... each tribe is fully aware that it is responsible not only to the whites but to other tribes of blackfellows for the acts of its members'.

Aboriginal social and political organization rendered this expectation unreal and Aborigines must have often concluded that the invaders were inexplicably and irrationally murderous.

Another common source of great provocation during this period of frontier conflict was the kidnapping of Aboriginal women and children. As will be seen, this practice was common throughout the whole North Queensland frontier. It was also a feature of life in the pacified areas where it will be discussed in more detail. However, even while frontier conflict raged, squatters took Aboriginal women, or allowed them to be taken, from their tribes to provide concubines for themselves, for white employees, and for the Aboriginal employees they brought from the south. These women soon became useful sources of labour. In the predominantly male society of the frontier, it was predictable that at least some squatters and their white employees would turn to Aboriginal women to satisfy their sexual needs either on a casual basis or through some more permanent relationship. However, it is obvious that when Aboriginal

97. P.D.T., 16 June 1866.
98. ibid.
were kidnapped or taken from their tribes without the sanction of their kin this would be extremely provocative. Children too, were commonly taken from their parents or kin to work on the stations during this period of frontier conflict. Thus Charles Eden, a Police Magistrate at Cardwell, recorded in his reminiscences his kidnapping of a twelve-year old boy because he thought the boy would be useful; while Richard Anning described how his father, who had taken up Reedy Springs on the Upper Flinders in May 1862, had captured a young lad to work on the station - 'catchem young' he recorded. Even in the Burketown district before hostilities developed, settlers were insensitively exploiting the Aborigines for their labour and their women. Often the Aboriginal women and children either accepted their fate or came to prefer it to their tribal life. Thus, in the Burketown District before the outbreak of hostilities, an Aboriginal parent reclaimed his son only to have the boy run away to return to the station. Some old Aborigines interviewed in the course of this research have also indicated their great reluctance to return to tribal life after being taken into stations as children. However, it is clear that the removal of Aboriginal women and children from their kin was as destructive of traditional Aboriginal life as the massacre of the men and often no more humane. Yet, the full cost or
frontier conflict was not apparent to the Aborigines until the Europeans 'let them in'.

Except in a very few circumstances, the Aborigines had not been allowed to reach an accommodation with the colonists until after the invaders had asserted their dominance. The Aborigines were engaged, generally for a number of years, in a bitter and bloody conflict which not only damaged their way of life but also must have caused great personal stress and produced a fierce resentment against those inflicting the suffering. Basic to the conflict was land usage and land ownership. Accommodation could only mean dispossession.

The Cost of Frontier Conflict to the Pastoralists.

Dispossessing the Aborigines entailed many obvious costs for the Europeans. Conflict was almost universal in the process of pastoral occupation and it was not until 1868 or 1869 that pastoralists in parts of the Kennedy thought it safe to let the Aborigines in. Even then some thought it premature.

Before the Aborigines were allowed in, an important cost to the squatter was the tension of life on the frontier. W.R.O. Hill, manager of a station west of Bowen and later a respected public servant, wrote:

I can only say that life was never safe, and the only wise thing to do on seeing a black was to shoot, and shoot straight, otherwise he would certainly spear you. 107

106. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 211. Charles Eden, referring to a station near Bowen, probably F. Bode's Strathdon, where this had occurred in 1869, considered it 'a very bad plan indeed' because he thought it ended in 'wholesale massacre'. He was no doubt thinking back to the Wills and Fraser massacres in southern Queensland. He thought conflict first arose over Aboriginal women. At the time he wrote, many squatters were beginning to adopt the practice.

107. W.R.O. Hill, Forty-five Years' Experience in North Queensland 1861-1905 (Brisbane, 1907), p. 31. Hill's pastime was conducting the church choir wherever he went.
There was a very real fear that death could come to a settler out of a clear blue sky, suddenly without warning and, it appeared to most settlers, without provocation. Each local newspaper reported Aboriginal attacks and European deaths from all over North Queensland often in horrifying detail and in a period of almost universal frontier conflict this must have helped reinforce the belief that a sudden 'treacherous' attack was always possible.

Contemporaries believed that the loss of life on the frontier during the 1860's was very large. Robert Gray of Hughenden Station estimated that (10-20)% of the white population were killed by the Aborigines while a police officer said (20-30)%. They were probably taking into account the killing of shepherds and travellers, otherwise unrecorded, but possibly over-compensated. In the course of this research, 56 deaths were discovered which could reliably be attributed to Aboriginal resistance on the pastoral frontier during the 1860's, with indications that there may have been ten more. Because of the paucity of the records in this early period, these figures are probably misleadingly low. However, if one considers the extremely limited population on the frontier where Aboriginal resistance could be expected, a death rate of between six and, say, twelve a year would be significant and frightening, especially as this was combined with a much larger number of unsuccessful attacks, woundings, and threatened and feared attacks. Indeed, there was also the fear, perhaps expectation, that the numerous attacks on cattle and sheep were as suggestive of danger to the human as to the animal invader. Indeed the number of lives thought to have

108. See Appendix D.
110. C.C., 5 April 1876. 'It is not because they have restricted their outrages as yet to horses, and an occasional man or two, that they will not improve the occasion and commence slaughter on a wholesale principle.'
been lost or believed to be in imminent danger was more important than statistics, however accurate, which were not known at the time. 111

There may have been another aspect of the danger involved in dispossessing the Aborigines. Thus Montagu Curr, looking back over a long life, claimed that it had added the spice of adventure to taking up land. He wrote:

We thoroughly enjoyed those days of wild and romantic life, with our horses and our gun, swimming flooded rivers, with the danger of being dragged under by undertows or swept under driftwood, and always the danger of being speared by some blackfellow ambushed under cover, so we had to be ready to protect ourselves and try and keep our powder dry. 112

When Byerley edited and published the Jardines' journals in 1867, he proclaimed their reluctance to shed blood; yet it is clear that they accepted opposition as a declaration of war and ignored any real effort to come to terms with the Aborigines. And Byerley, anticipating an appreciative reading public, glorified the encounters, terming one, in which at least thirty unarmed Aborigines were killed, 'The Battle of the Mitchell'. 113 In 1865, the Queensland newspapers had carried long extracts of this journal, much space being devoted to the conflict with the Aborigines. An entry for 21 December read: 'In this instance it was thought better to carry the war into the enemy's camp than to have them throwing spears at us in the night. Most of our party went after them, and an exciting chase commenced'.

To some, it seems, such was life on the frontier.

111. See Appendix B for an assessment of deaths attributable to Aboriginal resistance.
114. P.D.T., 4 October 1865. Quoted from the Empire.

In this instance no one was hurt on either side.
Yet, in North Queensland, Aboriginal resistance was often a very important obstacle facing the pastoralists. There has been a popular tendency to see Aboriginal resistance as spasmodic, as almost a non-intelligent reflex response to periodic irritations. As has been previously indicated, in North Queensland at least, and probably more often elsewhere than has been realized, there is ample evidence that Aborigines communicated the nature of the threat the invaders offered over long distances and that they reacted in a variety of ways according to the nature of such information. In areas where the nature of European firepower was apparently not understood such as at first in the Bowen district and later with the Jardines in Cape York Peninsula, the Aborigines sometimes responded to what they must have regarded as a hostile intrusion with direct and determined confrontation.

As the Aborigines came to understand better their enemy, they began to adopt more appropriate responses wherever possible. In the Kennedy District where conflict was almost universal, Aborigines responded to the settlers and the Native Police, by generally attacking isolated shepherds, unsuspecting travellers, and station homesteads they thought were poorly defended. Often, the inability of the settlers to retaliate effectively produced more determined Aboriginal resistance. Thus where the terrain was suitable their attacks were often prolonged despite the fact that constantly retreating to inhospitable hills, scrubs, and islands must have meant very great readjustments.

115. 'Minutes of Evidence', 1861 V. & P., p. 51. J. Fraser had heard that Aborigines in the Port Denison District were quite unacquainted with firearms and the power the settlers possessed over them.
to their traditional life. This aspect of Aboriginal resistance will be discussed later. When the runs were heavily stocked, Aboriginal food resources decreased or became less accessible, and Aboriginal raids on the settlers' herds and flocks increased. Thus in June 1866, one station in the Mackay District reported twenty-five cattle killed, while ten other stations in that area had all suffered losses. On one station, the pastoralist claimed the Aborigines had killed two hundred cattle in one year.

Attacks on the settlers' cattle in the Townsville District became so frequent that the local newspapers remarked more than once that they were tired of the subject.

However, the deliberate destructiveness of Aboriginal raids noted in the Burke District seems to have been characteristic of the later stage of resistance when the Aborigines were retaliating against the settlers' presence or aggressive actions and, often, it seems, attempting

116. 'Report of Acting Commissioner of Police', 1872 V. & P., p. 1494; M.M.: 11 January 1868; 7 March 1868; 28 March 1868; 8 July 1868. The above references refer to the region between Bowen and Mackay where resistance was prolonged because of favourable terrain. Much of it was mountainous and covered with dense, even impenetrable, scrub. There were also the numerous Whitsunday and Cumberland Islands to provide refuge. Another area where favourable terrain allowed prolonged resistance was Woodstock Station, twenty miles south of Townsville where the scrub and mountain fastnesses around Morrill's Mt. Elliott provided refuge. See M.M., 14 September 1867, extract from Cleveland Bay Express; P.D.T., 31 August 1867. See also P.D.T., 18 March 1871, for prolonged resistance in the lower Burdekin where the particular locality and terrain is not specified, possibly mangrove swamps.

117. P.D.T., 16 June 1866.


to drive them from the land. An Aboriginal woman told
Christison of Lammermoor that the Aborigines understood
the value the whites placed on their horses and cattle
and realized what their reactions would be to Aboriginal
raids but were still determined to kill stock. There
are numerous examples of the driving off of large numbers
of animals and the wholesale slaughter of beasts, with
little or no attempt to use them for food, to attest to
the widespread nature of this determination. From Mackay
infuriated squatters reported that the Aborigines had
killed three to four hundred sheep and taken nothing but
kidney fat. A Bowen resident recorded flocks of two
thousand sheep scattered and up to four hundred killed at
a time. In possibly the most destructive raid reported
in North Queensland, John Yeates, the mayor of Bowen,
whose property was only fifteen miles from that town lost
1,300 sheep which he valued at 10/- each and 36 rams at
£2/10/- each. In addition his huts were pillaged and
damaged to an estimated value of £55. Headstations and
outstations were sometimes attacked and attempts made to
loot and destroy them. In March 1868, the Europeans
at Crystalbrook Station had to flee for their lives, while Meri Meriwal Station was attacked by about thirty

120. Bennett, Christison of Lammermoor, p. 98.
121. M.M., 10 August 1867. See also P.D.T., 6 February
1869. A shepherd was killed and 1,800 sheep driven off.
122. R.T. Wood ('Frederick Smythe'), Bush and Town or
twelve months in Northern Queensland (Unpublished
novel, c. 1868), pp. 93-95. At Mitchell Library
in 'R.T. Wood Papers, 1857-1879'. R.T. Wood, 1845-
1895, married Catherine Stockwell, 1879, daughter
of James Stockwell, a solicitor of Bowen, Queensland.
Much of this is obviously non fiction. See also P.D.T.,
19 November 1864, editorial: two shepherds murdered
and 2-3,000 sheep scattered.
123. 'Petition from John S. Yeates to the Legislative
Assembly', 1867 V. & P., p. 997.
124. P.D.T., 16 June 1866; P.D.T., 26 September 1866;
M.M., 14 March 1868; M.M., 21 March 1868; M.M., 28 March 1868.
125. M.M., 14 March 1868. Crystalbrook Station was in the
Proserpine District and Meri Meriwal Station adjacent
to Ravenswood Station.
Aborigines and the occupants rescued just in time. 126

Yet the animals killed by Aborigines were only part of the loss inflicted upon squatters, and sometimes the least serious. The loss of condition by herds repeatedly disturbed by Aborigines could be much more important. It is not clear how far this was deliberately intended and how far it was a consequence of attempts to kill some or to drive herds from waterholes. This was especially serious when they were to be boiled down for tallow for, until the gold rushes of the late 1860's, there was very little market for beef. 127 At the much raided Balmagowan Station in the Mackay District, only one beast was killed when four hundred cattle were galloped nearly eight miles. The Mackay Mercury complained:

If the blacks merely killed a beast now and again without indulging their propensities for a general onslaught upon the remainder of any mob they may choose to select one from, the loss to a squatter would be comparatively trifling; but this has never been the case, and outrages are invariably accompanied with great injury, especially to those who have stations bordering upon the sea coast.

The Mackay Mercury maintained that the cattle would not fatten because they were so disturbed by the Aborigines and that this had delayed the progress of Mackay's boiling down works. 128 Against this sort of assault the only answer seemed to be more Native Police. 129

In this early period of open conflict, there is very little detailed European comment on the methods used by the Aborigines in their resistance of the settlers and, of course,  

128. M.M., 3 April 1867; M.M., 6 July 1867.
129. M.M., 11 January 1868. See also M.M., 7 March 1868.
an almost complete lack of comment from the Aborigines. However, there is some faint evidence to suggest what becomes more apparent in the later stages of the pastoral frontier and on the mining frontier: that the Aborigines used traditional hunting techniques against the settlers' animals and that they modified these in accordance with the new conditions. As unprotected, docile sheep and cattle were easy game for such expert huntsmen, they used wallaby-drive techniques when they wished to slaughter large numbers of the compliant animals. Aborigines found unguarded sheep easy to handle and sometimes drove them off to remote or almost inaccessible places, this practice being no doubt forced on them both by the policy of 'keeping the blacks out', which often compelled them to occupy regions unused by the pastoralist, and by the fear of reprisals. Eden reported a story he had at second hand of one group of Aborigines copying the settlers and building a yard, regularly shepherding the sheep, and butchering them systematically. This sounds like a traveller's tale except that a similar story was reliably reported from the Tully River where a group of Aborigines were killing, jerking, and drying beef in typical European fashion. In this case, the Aborigines were believed to be escaped Native Police troopers. While there is nothing inherently improbable in the belief that Aborigines formerly in European employ took the lead in such activities, the claim may merely reflect the conviction that Aborigines lacked intelligence to imitate such activities.

131. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 221.
132. I. Henry, Cardwell, to Col. Sec., 9 September 1885, Q.S.A. CUL/A347, 6925 of 1885.
133. Eden is not always reliable on matters of detail; but to reject this story out of hand while accepting much of his other observations would be tantamount to holding preconceptions of what Aborigines were capable or incapable of doing.
Wood indicated that some Aborigines in the Bowen District drove cattle through a narrow pass into natural hilly enclosures where they slaughtered the animals at their leisure.134 Two members of the Koko Patun tribe reported that on the Valley of Lagoons two Aborigines famous for their speed and daring specialized in cutting a bullock out of the herd and driving it towards fellow tribesmen waiting to spear it.135 On the Mulgrave River, Collinson indicated that the Aborigines adapted their custom of digging pits to trap cattle. The pits were placed on well-used cattle tracks and the cattle in them speared.136 The Aborigines thus seemed to adapt quickly to the alien challenge despite the inhibiting dangers involved.

Another common Aboriginal practice that was completely inimical to pastoral occupation was the extensive burning of grass. As has been noticed previously, fire was deliberately used against intruders in North Queensland from the time of Cook and it is very probable that it was used deliberately against the squatter's animals as it was against native game although there is no direct evidence of this. The evidence of fire seriously disturbing the flocks and herds is itself meagre but of such a nature as to indicate that

134. Wood, op. cit., p. 93.
135. Interview with Mr. Harry Gertz at the Valley of Lagoons Station on 14 October 1972. Mr. Dick Hoolihan also once of the Valley of Lagoons Station was present at this interview and participated in it. At the time of the interview Mr. Gertz was approximately 84 years old, Mr. Hoolihan approximately 65 years old. These ages can be reliably accepted. When Mr. Gertz was a boy or an adolescent, Aborigines, then about fifty years old, told him how they had killed bullocks when they were young men. The two Aborigines who cut out the bullocks were remembered as 'Charlie White' and 'Long Tommy'. Mr. Hoolihan knew and accepted this tradition.
136. J.W. Collinson, Early Days of Cairns (Brisbane, 1939), p. 64. Collinson was editor of the Cairns Post and apparently derived much of his material from this.
the practice was common. There is one reliable report, in 1885, that the Aborigines of the Tully River used fire as a weapon against the settlers' property as some Aborigines who had been placated by Isaac Henry, nephew of the pastoralist Tyson, informed him that hostile Aborigines intended to burn him out. As they had killed 69 of his cattle and 200 of Tyson's in ten months and forced three other settlers off their properties, Henry believed this to be no idle threat. It seems likely that fire was used deliberately against the intruders and their animals much more frequently than would appear from the extant records and probably more frequently than the settlers themselves realized.

The effectiveness of traditional or modified Aboriginal techniques was such as to make heavy demands upon the Native Police, a force that had been created especially to counter Aboriginal resistance. Yet the rapid expansion of

137. D.S. Macmillan, Bowen Downs 1863-1963, issued by 'The Scottish Australian Company Limited', to mark the Company's Part in Establishing Bowen Downs Station on the Landsborough Runs in 1863 (Sydney, 1963), p. 20: 'The Blacks set fire to the old grass and the fire extended in all directions excepting where the grass had been partially eaten down by stock'. Bowen Downs is in central Queensland but used Bowen as a port throughout the 1860's. Const. J.D. McGuire, Police Station, Thornborough, to P.M. Herberton, 24 January 1893, encl. Q.S.A. COL/139, 823 of 1895. The Constable mentions that less grass was burnt in 1894 than for previous years. Sgt. J. Whiteford, Musgrave Station, to Insp. J. Lemon, Cooktown, 24 July 1897, encl. Q.S.A. COL/140, 12117 of 1899: 'The Blacks have lately burnt a lot of valuable grass on the Breeza run'. E.M. Curr, The Australian Race: Its Origins, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia and the Routes by Which It Spread Itself over That Continent (4 vols., Melbourne, 1886), Vol. III, pp. 20, 21. Pacified Aborigines accidentally starting a fire were shot dead forthwith. See Beaglehole (ed.) Banks' Journal, p. 90, for description of fire being used aggressively against Cook.

138. I. Henry, Cardwell, to Col. Sec., 9 September 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A347, 6952 of 1885.
European settlement in North Queensland in the 1860s very often left the pastoralists inadequately protected and often not provided with a retaliatory force. This was clearly brought out when twelve men were killed by Aborigines on or near Natal Downs during late 1864 and early 1865. Four of the men killed had been on the main road from the Cape River (and ultimately Bowen) to the Flinders, thus showing the threat to all stock travelling to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Two shepherds had been killed twenty miles from the headstation 'notwithstanding our practice of having 2 men armed with each flock'. The ability of the squatter to protect his employees on a run of this size or to 'keep the blacks out' so that they wouldn't be able to launch a surprise attack was limited unless he had a body of men to roam at will to do just that. He believed this was the role of the Native Police; yet their camp was 130 miles away on the Bowen River and on this occasion, as all of the detachment's horses were knocked up, it could not reach Natal Downs for a fortnight. It was not surprising that John Melton Black abandoned the neighbouring station, Victoria Downs, after two shepherds had been killed, a victory which the manager of Natal Downs claimed had emboldened the Aborigines. The government's response was to form another Native Police camp, which was no nearer Natal Downs than the existing one but which would presumably allow more frequent patrols to the area.

There were very few stations where there was no conflict such as Robert Christison's Lammermoor, south west of Hughenden. Here Christison had taken the initiative, captured an Aboriginal, established friendly communications

139. R. Kellet, Natal Downs, to Col. Sec., 26 January 1865, and I. M. Spry, Mt. McConnell Station, to P.M., Bowen, 23 January 1865, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/64, 499 of 1865.

140. Minute, 13 February 1865, D.T.S. [Police Commissioner], P.M., Bowen, to Col. Sec., 2 February 1865, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/64, 499 of 1865.
with the Aborigines and explained to them the conditions by
which they would be allowed to live their lives in safety
and Christison would be able to develop his station. 141
He had refused to allow the Native Police on his station,
a practice that was hotly criticised by most settlers from
the earliest days of Queensland to the 1880's. 142 The
success of this experiment depended to a large extent on
Christison's humanitarian concern for the Aborigines which
did not evaporate at the first crisis when the Aborigines
decided to attack him. 143 The conflict on adjoining
stations and protection from the Native Police must have
also provided strong incentives for the Aborigines on
Lammermoor to abide by Christison's conditions.

Most pastoralists borrowed heavily in order to stock
their runs, and in the crucial early years of becoming
established had no financial reserves from which to
replace losses or meet 'unproductive' costs like that of
armed protection against Aborigines. The practice was
encouraged, though not created, by the 1860 Land Act which
stipulated that each run had to be stocked to one-quarter
of its capacity before a lease could be granted. This
legislation also tempted the pastoralist with a comparatively
secure, fairly long-tenured lease (fourteen years) at a

141. Bennett, Christison of Lammermoor, pp. 56-60, 67, 81.
142. ibid., p. 83 mentions that the Mortimers of Manumbur
Station, in 1861, had tried unsuccessfully to protect
friendly Aborigines against opposition of other
settlers. In the 1880's Edward Palmer had forbidden
the Native Police to come on to his run in Cape York
Peninsula. See Under Col. Sec. to E. Palmer, Gamboola
Station, Mitchell River, 17 November 1882, Q.S.A. COL/G19,
2091 of 1882, end file; E. Palmer, Linden, Parramatta,
to Col. Sec., 13 March 1883, Q.S.A. COL/4356, 1303
of 1883.
143. Bennett, Christison of Lammermoor, p. 67.
low rental of ten shillings per square mile. Wealthier pastoralists tended to take up a series of runs and stock each to the legal minimum, rather than stock fully a smaller number of runs from the outset. The tendency of the pastoralists to strain their financial resources to the limit on taking up runs was intensified by an 1863 amending act which made stocking the run to the legal minimum the basis of initial occupation. This was intended to close the loophole which enabled a speculator to take out a licence to occupy a choice run in order to sell at a profit a few months later before the first official inspection revealed that no attempt had been made to stock it. The amendment thus increased the competition to put stock on the runs. Such speculation was based on the expectation that northern runs would continue to be an attractive investment. In 1867, an enquiry revealed the still unsatisfactory speculative aspect of the large land holdings and resulted in the stricter enforcing of regulations relating to the stocking of land.

However, during late 1865 the pastoralists were


145. Eden, op. cit., p. 57. See also Farnfield, Dalrymple, pp. 105, 106.

146. Allan, op. cit., pp. 14, 15. The delay could be ten months and was commonly four to six months. See Corfield, Development of the Cattle Industry in Queensland 1840-1890, p. 39. Farnfield, Frontiersman, pp. 47, 48, gives an account of how 'run-jobbers' sold out options on a run in the delay between the application for a run and Dalrymple's inspection.

147. Allan, op. cit., p. 16.
discovering that the sheep industry was unprofitable in North Queensland. As Bolton points out, there is no simple explanation for the failure of the pastoral industry during the 1860's. In part, the graziers found problems adjusting to a tropical environment. As well, costs were high, especially the cost of labour. Shepherds were demanding 50% higher wages than they would have received in southern Queensland. Yet fencing to replace shepherding was almost unknown in North Queensland in the 1860's. Labour was always in short supply and satisfactory labour even more difficult to obtain; yet shepherding required a large labour supply.

Although wool exports continued to grow until 1868, the pastoralists were turning, with no enthusiasm, to cattle for which there was no real market until 1866 when the first boiling down works opened in Townsville. The wool industry was beset by further problems. The wool prices for several seasons dropped alarmingly. On the coast sheep were found to be prone to foot rot, fluke and worms. Yet probably the most decisive factor in the swing away from sheep was the spread of spear grass whose seed penetrated the skin of the sheep and could kill them. The spread of this grass largely resulted from overgrazing although most likely associated with the practice of burning to encourage new growth. Palmer claimed that the presence of spear grass in quantity immediately indicated the run could not support sheep. Thus for a variety of

149. ibid., p. 36.
150. ibid., p. 37. Walter Scott wrote: 'Cattle are certain ruin, but sheep are a little quicker'.
151. ibid.
reasons sheep numbers began falling in the late 1860's and by 1871 had been replaced by cattle on most stations. 154

Some graziers were already selling out to salvage something from their investment and by June 1866 there were many North Queensland stations up for sale with no takers on any terms. 155 The collapse of the Agra & Masterton Bank which was underwriting much of Queensland's extravagant borrowing had a grave effect upon the whole colony, especially the many North Queensland squatters who were still getting established. 156

The Aborigines were thus one of a complex of problems confronting the pastoralist of the 1860's. In some areas, this resistance was enough on its own to cause stations to be abandoned. 157 On more, as the promise of riches from the pastoral industry disappeared, Aboriginal resistance was a crucial factor. The everpresent struggle involving the threat to life, the need to protect the capital invested in animals, and the apparent impossibility of preventing stock losses made Aboriginal resistance much more than just another problem. Yet at this very time the protection offered to the squatter by the Native Police was reduced as a result of the government's economy measures and the use of the Native Police as a gold escort. 158 In some areas the Native Police detachments were removed as the Police Commissioner tried desperately to rationalize his forces to achieve a protective cover for the squatters. Often, as on a station in the North Kennedy, the withdrawal of a detachment was

158. See Table I, p. 150.
followed by an increase in the destruction of stock and threats to life. 159

Indeed it was widely alleged that insufficient Native Police protection against Aboriginal attacks was causing the abandoning of stations. From the latest area settled, the Gulf Country, there were reports that squatters were abandoning their runs for this reason. 160 Here the difficulties of establishment and frontier conflict were aggravated by the extremely high price of labour. Shepherds, no matter how inefficient, could demand 35 shillings per week which was 75% above the south Queensland rate. Graziers in this area were further disadvantaged when the Police Magistrate, Landsborough, decreed that employees could not be held financially responsible for their negligence. 161

While in the first settled region, the Port Denison District, Inspector Marlow reported that the number of 'collisions' with and 'depredations' by Aborigines from the middle of 1865 to the end of 1867 were double that of the previous eighteen months. The Police Commissioner informed the Colonial Secretary that the present force was unable to prevent 'outrages' in the Port Denison District and endorsed a plan from the harassed Marlow which aimed at collecting all the coastal Aborigines from Port Mackay to Townsville and confining them on an island off the coast where they

159. F. Hamilton, Hinchinbrook Station, North Kennedy, to Col. Sec., 18 March 1868 and enclosure, F. Hamilton to John Marlow, Native Police, Bowen, 18 March 1868, Q.S.A. COL/104, 1033 of 1868. See first minute A.W.M., 16 April 1868, Under Col. Sec/, 'The Inspector of the District will do his utmost with the force at his disposal to patrol every portion of his district and to meet any special demand for protection'. Second minute [probably the Police Commissioner]: 'Have not got any money. Mr. Marlow must do the best he can'.


161. ibid.
could be 'taught to be useful'.\textsuperscript{162} The Colonial Secretary was 'unable to entertain' increased expenditure nor to consider Marlow's proposition although he found it interesting.\textsuperscript{163} In this area in 1868, the Police Commissioner reported stations had been abandoned or were being abandoned because of Aboriginal hostility.\textsuperscript{164} One such was Yeates' station fifteen miles from Bowen. As mentioned previously, he had lost 1300 sheep and 36 rams and sustained damage to property estimated at £55. As well, one of his shepherds was killed and five others left the run and refused to return. Yeates, who was Mayor of Bowen, petitioned the parliament for indemnity because he had not been given police protection.\textsuperscript{165} The government expressed sympathy but felt there were no grounds for compensation. Yeates abandoned his station.\textsuperscript{166}

Although Aboriginal resistance was but one of many problems confronting the squatters of North Queensland, it was often the most vexatious. Its consequences were obvious and it seemed that it, at least, could be solved if more Native Police were provided or if the squatters really applied themselves to their often threatened 'war of extermination'. A financial collapse,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{162} D.T. Seymour, Pol. Com., to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868, and enclosures: Insp. J. Marlow, Port Denison, to Police Commissioner, 9 December 1867, and Chief Inspector Murray, Northern District, to Pol. Com., 6 January 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A100, 56 of 1868. Seymour's minute: 'Marlow's/plan would be far more merciful to the blacks than any other plan as yet tried'.
\item \textsuperscript{163} ibid., Col. Sec's minute, Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868.
\item \textsuperscript{164} 'Report of Commissioner of Police Upon Tour of Inspection', 1868 V. & P., pp. 51, 52.
\item \textsuperscript{165} 'Petition from John S. Yeates to the Legislative Assembly', 1867 V. & P., p. 997. See also f.n. 166 below.
\item \textsuperscript{166} I.A. Gregory, Solicitor, Bowen, to Col. Sec., 17 June 1867, enclosing Petition of J.S. Yeates, Mayor of Bowen and Graziar, Q.S.A. COL/A91, 1433 of 1867. Minute A.W.M. (Under Col. Sec.)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
fluctuating markets, ecological changes, diseases in stock were beyond the control and often the understanding of the man on the run. Aboriginal resistance didn't seem to be. As a result, this was the problem that dominated the newspapers of the day and the one that could rouse the pastoralists to fury.

The Aborigines not only drained the squatter's capital by causing destruction; they also increased his expenses. More labour had to be employed than was needed for the actual running of a station to provide increased protection. Sometimes, at least, these men were used aggressively to clear Aborigines off the property, and it was quite plain that pastoral employees were expected to use firearms against Aborigines. John Yeates was criticised by Inspector Marlow as well as other squatters when he claimed he had not armed his shepherds effectively because he did not think it was their right or responsibility to kill Aborigines, a task which he believed the Native Police should fulfil. W.R.O. Hill when managing Reedy Park west of Bowen conformed more to northern expectations. Each shepherd had a Terry rifle and a Colt 12 revolver while Hill's hut was loop-holed to fire through, a precaution which he found 'very useful'.

167. J.E. Davidson, Journal 1865 to 1868 (copy in Library, James Cook University), p. 39. Davidson noted in his diary: '... men declare that they would leave unless they were in a strong party to repel niggers'. P.D.T., 20 November 1869, 'A Black Protector'.
168. Davidson, Journal 1865 to 1868, pp. 42, 43.
169. P.D.T., 7 September 1867, letter from John Yeates; P.D.T., 31 August 1867, letter from 'A Squatter'.
170. Hill, Forty-Five Years in North Queensland, p. 30. See also Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 67, where he comments on the shepherd's need to carry guns. Mr. J. Sullivan and Mr. J. Clive of Ayr told me of a stone stockade built on the present Inkerman Station and I have been told of another being dismantled by a grazier unaware of its previous function. See 'Report on the Aboriginals of Queensland', 1896 V. & P., vol. IV, p. 727, where Meston observed that the government houses along the overland telegraph line in Cape York Peninsula were loop-holed with spear-proof gates to close at night.
The disturbance of the cattle by the Aborigines caused another expense. When cattle were first put on the unfenced runs, they had to be 'tailed'; that is, someone rode around the herd for some months until the cattle were content to remain there. This process often had to be repeated after Aboriginal attacks thus consuming valuable labour and time, giving very real meaning to the common 19th century expression that Aborigines and cattle did not mix.

Even at the high wages employees could command they were difficult to obtain. One moderate speaker at a public meeting in Brisbane asserted that unemployed immigrant townsmen from Britain could not be expected to take lonely jobs up country 'where after a couple of years they would be imbeciles in mind or idiots for life'. This normal reluctance to leave the town was accentuated when the jobs offering were in areas where conflict was occurring with the Aborigines. Gray reported how one of his shepherds refused to stop by himself at Mt. McConnell and 'the less seasoned among them said they were not going to risk their lives for 30 bob a week and tucker'. This evidence, plus that of Yeates near Bowen and Davidson near Cardwell, indicated that such labour was likely to leave when most needed to protect the stock and property against aggressive Aborigines. Shortage of labour and

173. ibid.; Gray, Reminiscences of India and North Queensland, p. 77. See P.D.T., 23 October 1865, where it was stated there were many unemployed who would not leave the town. See also P.D.T., 19 November 1864, editorial: 'men will not undertake the charge of the sheep now at so much peril'.
174. 'Petition from John S. Yeates to the Legislative Assembly', 1867 V. & P., p. 997; I.A. Gregory, Solicitor, Bowen, to Col. Sec., 17 June 1867, enclosing 'Petition of J.S. Yeates, Mayor of Bowen and Grazier, Q.S.A. COL/A91, 1433 of 1867; Davidson, Journal 1865 to 1868, p. 39.
high wages were constant problems of the pioneer squatters for which Aboriginal resistance was in no small part responsible.  

... ... ... ... ...

Many problems faced the northern pastoralists in the late 1860's which not only sapped their finance but their enthusiasm and confidence as well. Edward Palmer, who had experienced these times, wrote: '... the march of settlement was instantly checked, and the outward flow of civilization turned backwards'.  

Stations in outlying areas like the Barkly Tableland were abandoned completely and not reoccupied for a decade when, Palmer remarked, the new generation were surprised to find signs of previous occupancy.  

Between 1868 and 1870 in the North Kennedy, 56 runs totalling 3,154 square miles, were abandoned; in the South Kennedy, 81 runs totalling 5,457 square miles; in the Cook, 28 runs totalling 1,817 square miles; and in the Burke, 134 runs totalling 7,666 square miles. That is, a total of 299 runs or 18,094 square miles were abandoned.  

By 1871, there were few runs occupied on the Barkly Tablelands, the Gregory and the Leichhardt. The stock was abandoned or removed to areas closer in where it was sold or boiled down for tallow. As runs had been abandoned and were available much closer to the coast, the Gulf country runs were valueless. In 1870, the Commissioner

175. Corfield, The Development of the Cattle Industry in Queensland, 1840-1890, p. 27.  
177. ibid., p. 134. Corfield, op. cit., p. 77. The Barkly Tableland was reoccupied after 1877.  
178. 'Pastoral Country Abandoned in Unsettled Districts', 1871 V. & P., First Session, p. 549.  
180. ibid.; Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, p. 75. He mentioned boiling down was still the principal use for cattle. The meat was not considered economically.
for Crown Lands for the Burke District stated that though he had 'so much country, so well adapted for cattle and horses ... unoccupied', the Gulf Lowlands had 'such a bad name that I fear they are not likely to meet with favour in the market if offered just now'. 181

The pastoralists who stayed on were 'a few dozen struggling resident owners' who had all their financial resources and any possible hope for the future invested in their runs. 182 Capitalists, like Robert Towns, John Robertson, and the Bowen Downs Company, who had invested to reap the rewards of other men's labour, could find much more attractive fields of investment elsewhere. 183 The North Queensland pastoral industry became a 'small man's frontier'. But, as Bolton remarked, the owner-managers probably could not have survived without the discovery of the North Queensland goldfields which provided markets for the cattle. 184

The period 1861 to 1863 was unique in the history of Aboriginal-European relations in North Queensland in that it was one of uncomplicated frontier conflict. Until 1863, there was no reported change in the policy of 'keeping the blacks out'. However, in January 1863, Aborigines were admitted at Natal Downs on the Cape River and, later that year, at other stations like Vane Creek on the Belyando. 185 By February 1869, Bode of

182. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 41, 42.
183. ibid., p. 40; Macmillan, Bowen Downs 1863–1963, pp. 26–28, 32.
185. W. Hickson, Vane Creek, Belyando River, to Col. Sec., 7 June 1869, Q.S.A. COL/Al27, 2455 of 1869; W. Chatfield, Natal Downs, to P.M. Bowen, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/Al21, 1483 of 1869.
Strathdon near Bowen, had established communications with his Aborigines and admitted them. The Port Denison Times reported that the 'blackfellows' were anxious to be let in and were appearing openly on the outskirts of the town, to which they were soon admitted. The process of 'letting-in' will be examined in more detail in a later chapter but, suffice to say here, that by May 1869 the process had spread so much that one squatter claimed they were wholly admitted between Bowen and Townsville. The Aborigines and European colonists in many areas of North Queensland were entering into a new relationship.

**Developments on the Pastoral Frontier 1870-1897.**

During the period 1870 to 1897, throughout most of Queensland hostile contact between Europeans and Aborigines still took place mainly on the pastoral frontier. The mining industry, was partly responsible for this in that it stimulated pastoral development in settled areas, revived pastoral activity in many areas that had been abandoned, and attracted pastoralists to Cape York Peninsula.

The period of the late 1860's and early 1870's provided a respite for many Aboriginal groups who had experienced the earlier dramatic pastoral expansion only to see their enemies curtail their activities or retreat with their animals. The resident owners who remained were no doubt even more determined to prevent losses to Aborigines but it is possible that, as the squatters failed to increase,

186. P.D.T., 6 February 1869; P.D.T., 20 February 1869.
187. P.D.T., 6 February 1869; P.D.T., 3 April 1869.
188. P.D.T., 15 May 1869, a letter to the editor signed 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'.
189. See Chapter 5.
and often decreased, their herds, the Aborigines in some areas accommodated to the new situation. One can only speculate on the effect on the Aborigines of seeing the departure of the Europeans from some or all of their tribal lands and their subsequent return a few years later.

The Acting Police Commissioner remarked that, in 1872, 'outrages' of the Aborigines had 'considerably increased as civilization has advanced, and the country became occupied for pastoral, mining, and other purposes'. In 1874 he urgently requested and was granted an increase in both ordinary and Native Police 'in consequence of the re-occupation of the stations in the Northern districts and the sudden influx of population in the hitherto unknown Palmer and Endeavour river country'. In fact, the distribution of the Native Police Force indicates conflict in North Queensland in the 1870's and 1880's was very severe. No doubt the increased prosperity of the Colony was one reason for the expansion of the force. The other was certainly necessity. The Police Commissioner constantly had to rationalise his force during this period to meet the most urgent demands and always worked within the penny-pinching framework of nineteenth century liberal ideas of government; yet it was not until 1889 that there was a sizeable reduction in the force. In 1875, the Police Commissioner announced a plan to move Native Police detachments to the most unsettled districts leaving a tracker or trackers attached to the ordinary police stations. This was meant, in part, to

190. 'Report from the Acting Commissioner of Police for the Year 1872', in 1873 V. & P., p. 918.
help him cope with the 'incessant' demands for additional Native Police protection in the wake of the northern goldfields and pastoral expansion. In reality he was increasing the number of white police performing Native Police duties in areas considered moderately disturbed or pacified but unsafe. These constables or sergeants would perform ordinary police duties but would as well be expected to undertake prolonged, regular mounted bush patrols, retaliate against Aboriginal raids upon stock, crops, etc. and 'disperse' Aboriginals who were considered menacing.  

This change of policy entailed stationing policemen who were good horsemen and good bushmen at strategic points in moderately disturbed areas. Such a procedure was not unknown previously. Now it became part of a slowly evolving plan to such an extent that men like Constables Hansen and Higgins and Sergeant Whiteford became as important to Aboriginal-European relations on the frontier as Sub-Inspectors of Native Police like Douglas, Johnstone, and Lamond. 195 They were expected to keep a district quiet rather than make it quiet. Thus, although they were generally less aggressive than the Native Police and had an ordinary policeman as their immediate superior, they performed many of the functions of that force.

The residents in these moderately troubled areas were opposed to the removal of the Native Police but it accorded with the wishes of the legislature and indirectly

194. For routine of bush patrols to encompass Aborigines, see 'Diary of Duties and Occurrences Cloncurry 18 November 1894-13 June 1896', Q.S.A. POL/14B1; 'Duty Book' 26 August 1893-26 January 1895 Police Department, Port Douglas Station', Q.S.A. POL/12B/N2; 'Letterbook 7 September 1897-20 June 1899, Police Department, Port Douglas, Q.S.A. POL/12B/G2; 'Occurrence Book July 1889-12 September 1892, Police Station Pt. Douglas', Q.S.A. POL/12B/N1.

with that vocal body of public opinion that disapproved of the Native Police. In his report for 1879, the Police Commissioner pointed out that he had broken up several detachments of the Native Police and distributed the troopers as trackers among the ordinary police stations as he had done the previous year. He still regarded this procedure as experimental but envisaged the 'gradual disembodying of the Native Police Force until the Native Police, as a separate Force, ceases to exist'. This did not happen for another twenty years. However, in his report for 1880, one-third of the one hundred and sixty Aboriginal police were trackers, the remainder troopers in the Native Police.

During this period, 1870 to 1897, there were two features of frontier conflict: firstly it was progressively confined to North Queensland; and secondly, it tended to drag on in some coastal areas longer than might be expected, certainly longer than the Police Commissioner expected, a fact he lamented as late as 1884.

In parts of the Bowen District, the Aborigines were still troubling the squatters as late as 1881. The editor of the Port Denison Times doubted 'whether two black troopers here and two at Mackay will be sufficient force to prevent or even check their depredations'. He also pondered philosophically upon the extension, from the Native Police to the ordinary police force, of the customary,

200. P.D.T., 25 September 1880, editorial. See also P.D.T., 30 October 1880; P.D.T., 26 February 1881.
if illegal, practice of arbitrarily shooting down Aborigines and wondered 'whether it will improve the morale of the police to make them executioners not by warrant of law but merely as an experiment on the part of the government'. 201 This, in areas that were first settled in the early 1860's.

In many areas after the main frontier conflict, there was a period when the two races uneasily co-existed. In some areas Aborigines were let in but continued to live traditional lives with, at first, little contact with the settlers. In others, a reduction in Aboriginal attacks may have led settlers to cease direct interference with Aborigines without any conscious adoption of a policy of letting in. 202 During this period of mutual suspicion and fear, occasional hostile actions were common on both sides.

Settlers were sometimes unnecessarily aggressive or provocative or they incensed Aborigines by making unwelcome approaches to Aboriginal women. Thus at Hughenden a constable was accused of needlessly firing Aboriginal camps; while near Bowen a squatter incensed the leader of a group of Aborigines by ordering them away and threatening them. 203

201. P.D.T., 25 September 1880.
202. P.D.T., 24 August 1878 (Bowen District); P.D.T., 30 October 1880 (Bowen District); P.D.T., 26 February 1881 (Bloomsbury District); M.M., 12 December 1874 (Charters Towers District); police inquiry into the death of John Maher, digger, on 21 September 1869, Wandoon Station, Nebo; Q.S.A. JUS/N21, 78 of 1869; P.D.T., 9 January 1875 (Proserpine District); P.D.T., 1 June 1878 (Nebo District); P.D.T., 11 January 1879 (Proserpine District); P.D.T., 10 June 1876 (Proserpine District); P.D.T., 11 January 1879 (Proserpine District); inquest into death of Frederick Toll on Amhurst Selection, O'Connell River, Bowen District, about 25 March 1875, Q.S.A. JUS/N44, 176 of 1875; Hudson Fysh, Taming the North, pp. 88-95, 121-122 (Cloncurry District).
203. Queenslander, 15 November 1879, p. 626; P.D.T., 24 August 1878, article beginning 'Mr. Larry...'. 
Near Cloncurry a station employee was killed in a period when the Aborigines were not troubling the pastoralists because he tried to keep an Aboriginal woman against her and her husband's wishes.\textsuperscript{204} Such provocative liaisons with Aboriginal women became very common as soon as the most tenuous contact was established.\textsuperscript{205}

The Aborigines often renewed attacks on the settlers' cattle, although this was generally on a small scale and presumably for food.\textsuperscript{206} In some cases, 'civilized' Aborigines that is, Aborigines who had worked for the settlers and learned some English and something of the settlers' way of life, were involved in such attacks, and sometimes seem to have assumed leadership. Europeans often referred to Aborigines by a European name, even some who were hostile and aggressively continuing to live a traditional life.\textsuperscript{207}

The settlers considered a 'civilized' Aborigines' return to his tribal life a reversion to barbarism. As well, the thought of an Aboriginal using his understanding of the settlers against them when they were still outnumbered on their runs and extremely vulnerable was a recurrent fear which was very easily activated. Thus the rumour spread.

\textsuperscript{204} N.M., 29 April 1897; N.M., 29 September 1897. See Fysh, Taming the North, p. 210 for the explanation. The newspaper reports indicated that the Judge acquitted the Aboriginal because Cole had fired first upon the husband trying to get his wife back.

\textsuperscript{205} P.D.T., 10 April 1869. See also Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland, pp. 211, 212.

\textsuperscript{206} M.M., 12 December 1874; P.D.T., 9 January 1875; P.D.T., 30 October 1880; P.D.T., 1 June 1878; P.D.T., 14 September 1878.

\textsuperscript{207} M.M., 12 December 1874; P.D.T., 1 June 1878: an Aboriginal, Hector was thought to be leader of a group attacking cattle; P.D.T., 2 October 1880: 'one palaveringer two faced animal stops at the station to watch the movements of the whites, to give them who are doing the mischief the tip — which way the station hands go out — in case the blacks should be caught in the act'; P.D.T., 24 August 1878, 'Mr. Larry'; Hudson Fysh, Taming the North, p. 210.
that the Aborigines of the lower Burdekin were led by a sophisticated southern Aboriginal who was going to kill the whites and use their horses to hunt cattle. 208

Settlers were quick to demand that even minor resurgences of Aboriginal hostility be crushed by the ordinary police or the Native Police. Almost invariably they protested against the removal of their Native Police detachment and demanded its restoration or renewed patrols at the first sign of trouble because of the inability of a constable and two trackers to terrify the Aborigines over a wide area. 209 The Bowen Sergeant of Police was scorned for refusing to take action against a group of Aborigines just outside the town because he 'was not quite sure' they were guilty. 210

As most of the responsibility for intimidating the Aborigines rested on the settlers themselves, even with the Native Police in the district, in this period of co-existence, it is not difficult to see why they objected to the removal of the Native Police. They believed their already onerous responsibility would become almost intolerable and much more dangerous. On Cargoon Station when the Anning brothers rode out to punish some Aborigines who were spearing cattle, one was suddenly attacked by a 'civilized' Aboriginal who had sent the other Anning off on a wild goose chase. 211 Very often the squatter took the law into his own hands to force the Aborigines on his station to accept his conditions

208. P.D.T., 12 June 1869.
209. ibid.; Petition of Bowen farmers to Col. Sec., 22 May 1872, q.s.a. col/469, 1020 of 1872; P.D.T., 2 October 1880, letter signed 'Tete A Tete'; P.D.T., 9 January 1875; P.D.T., 10 June 1876; P.D.T., 16 June 1878, from Mackay Mercury; P.D.T., 11 January 1879, letter from E.G. Smith, Suttor Hotel; P.D.T., 18 March 1871, a request for Native Police to return to disperse.
211. E.M., 12 December 1874.
for co-existence. Such actions could range from fighting and using a stockwhip to shooting and poisoning. In fact, it is possible that poison was used more frequently against Aborigines in this twilight situation than in the previous period of open conflict.

There were also instances where the Aboriginal resurgence seems to have been primarily aimed at harming or driving out the settlers or reasserting Aboriginal authority. Thus the Bloomsbury Aborigines were accused of slaughtering animals for their kidney fat. Settlers in the Cloncurry District believed that the Kalkadunga after a period of comparative quiet were determined to wipe them out. On one occasion an Aboriginal station employee

212. M.M., 12 December 1874; P.D.T., 1 June 1878; P.D.T., 8 June 1878; P.D.T., 24 August 1878. See also R. Cannon, Savage Scenes from Australia: Being a Short History of the Settlement at Somerset, Cape York, in the Form of a Lecture Delivered for the Young Men's Christian Association of Valparaiso, at the Opening of the Session 1885, With Illustration by Mary D'Arcy Cannon from Sketches by the Author (Valparaiso, Helfman, 1885), p. 23, for F. Jardine's use of a stockwhip to intimidate Aborigines, and pp. 29, 30, for his use of the rifle. It was alleged he cut notches in the stock of his rifle.

213. P.D.T., 21 February 1874; Black, North Queensland Pioneers, p. 57, 'Reminiscences of Mrs. Halfpapp!'; Queenslander, 13 September 1890; Queenslander, 22 June 1895. However, compare with 'Dark Doings with the Sable Savages', H.M.N., 31 August 1878, which describes in humorous vein the poisoning of Aborigines in a frontier conflict situation. The tone suggests such poisoning was common.


215. Fysh, Taming the North, pp. 93-95. See also p. 142 when the townspeople feared attack.
claimed to have heard plans by apparently peaceably inclined Aborigines to kill settlers and cattle.\textsuperscript{216} It was also alleged that the Kalkadunga had sent a challenge via an Aboriginal employee in the town to the Native Police at Cloncurry.\textsuperscript{217} After a Native Police detachment was attacked and the officer and three troopers killed, another detachment was sent to break Aboriginal resistance in this area. Sub-Inspector Urquhart, later Commissioner of Police, began a nine week campaign which pacified them for a time.\textsuperscript{218} Another severe clash with the Kalkadunga at Battle Mountain, outside of Cloncurry, finally destroyed the threat this tribe could offer to the pastoralists.\textsuperscript{219} The Kalkadunga seem to have lived in this state of uneasy coexistence with the intruding settlers for long periods of time, intermittently launching determined campaigns which produced severe retaliation. It was probably only the mountainous nature of the country that allowed them to resist for so long so that they provided possibly the most dramatic examples of Aboriginal resurgence and European repression.\textsuperscript{220}

Once again, as with Christison, it is the exception which counterpoints the main frontier theme. William Chatfield had bought Natal Downs after it had experienced several years of conflict with the Aborigines but was one of the first known to let the Aborigines in in North Queensland. He publicly disagreed with those who considered the Aborigines an unmitigated nuisance and the removal of the


\textsuperscript{217} Fysh, op. cit., pp. 142, 143.

\textsuperscript{218} ibid., pp. 141-147. See also Anon., \textit{Pioneering in the North-West}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{219} Fysh, op. cit., pp. 182-184.

\textsuperscript{220} Aboriginal resistance in the far north-west is discussed briefly later in this chapter.
Native Police an unmixed evil. He asserted the Native Police provoked the Aborigines and their removal was a blessing. He claimed that as the Aborigines were then, in 1881, only one-quarter as numerous as they were in 1861, any manager could keep the Aborigines on his own run in order with the aid of the ordinary police. He believed that too much emphasis was placed on the few cattle that the Aborigines in the Kennedy District were then spearing while the more prevalent cattle-duffing by whites received little comment. Chatfield alleged that the Aborigines were blamed for careless management, especially when neglect led to cattle scattering and becoming wild. With 'a little trouble' he believed that the local Aborigines proved very useful in watching the cattle and accustoming them to the run, but were most valuable in controlling the marsupial population. He had seen as many as 300 wallabies and kangaroos hanging in one camp. He referred to Christison of Lammermoor who employed Aborigines all the year round as shepherds and asserted he would not be able to keep sheep on Natal Downs without them. He concluded:

We have a duty to perform toward the aborigines (which does not consist solely in administering lead) and I am convinced we shall find that doing that duty will in the long run pay the best. Personally I have suffered much loss at the hands of the Kennedy blacks, but per contra they have of late done me many services for which I shall ever feel grateful to the "Murray" race. 221

This objective European comment suggests that, in this period of tentative co-existence, the personality and attitude of the pastoralist were of very great importance; and, further, that much Aboriginal resurgence was provoked by the settlers.

Conflict was still so widespread in 1880 that the Queenslander, one of the colony's leading metropolitan newspapers, began a campaign to point out the ruthlessness

221. P.D.T., 5 March 1881, letter from W. Chatfield.
of the Europeans' dispossession of the Aborigines under the title 'The Way We Civilize'. The editor, Gresley Lukin, was determined: 'the public shall understand what they are doing'. The editor of the Bowen newspaper claimed that those parliamentarians who debunked the articles were lying but in the same article demanded more Native Police protection. Such was the pragmatism of the frontier.

The area half-way between Bowen and Mackay, especially near the present hamlets of Bloomsbury and Calen but also near Proserpine and Nebo and along the Bowen River, were scenes of prolonged and often determined Aboriginal resistance till the early 1880's. In fact, the Bloomsbury Native Police detachment was not replaced, and two troopers attached to the ordinary police at Bowen and Mackay, till 1880, while that at Nebo, west of Mackay, had been removed only in 1878. The terrain suitable for Aboriginal resistance - rugged mountainous country, thick scrub and forest, or numerous islands off the coast - which had aided the earlier resistance of the 1860's and early 1870's was also an important factor in prolonging the conflict.

This was probably the case in other coastal areas where prolonged conflict was recorded such as Inkerman near the

222. 'Queenslander', The Way We Civilize; Black and White; The Native Police (Brisbane, 1880), p. 7. Originally published in Queenslander, 29 May 1880.
224. See M.M.: 7 June 1873; 22 May 1875; 18 March 1876; 13 March 1878; 4 May 1878; 22 May 1878; 21 September 1880; P.D.T.: 29 August 1874; 7 August 1880; 14 August 1880; 11 September 1880; 30 October 1880; 26 February 1881. See also file Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 5 January 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A217, 57 of 1876, for account of attack on Crystalbrook Station near Proserpine by an estimated 300 Aborigines. In this series of attacks one European and four station Aborigines were killed. A detachment of Native Police were moved to Bloomsbury as a result.
mouth of the Burdekin, and the Cardwell District. Even on the Valley of Lagoons blocks, especially on the Herbert River just west of Cardwell, Walter Scott was still demanding more Native Police protection ten years after he had first taken up the runs. Yet the Police Commissioner complained that the Valley of Lagoons had been provided with more protection than any other station in the whole colony. In the early 1880's, Walter Scott attempted to prevent Aboriginal raids on his stock by providing the Aborigines regularly with food. This attempt failed. It satisfied the Aborigines on the Valley of Lagoons headstation but not those on the periphery who accepted the rations at the Valley of Lagoons but continued to spear cattle in their own country and on the journeys back and forth.

During the period at present being examined, 1870 to 1897, the change from sheep to cattle made the Europeans much less vulnerable as progressively the isolated shepherd's hut became rarer. As indicated previously, attacks on cattle station homesteads occurred but they were much less common and much more risky to the Aborigines.

During the period at present being examined, 1870 to 1897, the change from sheep to cattle made the Europeans much less vulnerable as progressively the isolated shepherd's hut became rarer. As indicated previously, attacks on cattle station homesteads occurred but they were much less common and much more risky to the Aborigines.

227. P.D.T., 14 August 1880; M.M., 21 August 1880.
228. R.L. Jack, Northmost Australis, Vol. I, 354, quoting Captain Moresby, R.N., of H.M.S. Basilisk, who visited Cardwell in 1874; P.M., Cardwell, to Col. Sec., 3 February 1872, Q.S.A. COL/A166, 254 of 1872; P.D.T., 17 April 1875; P.M., Cardwell, to Col. Sec., 10 November 1874 [telegram], Q.S.A.COL/A200, 7384 of 1874: 'blacks very bad north of town'. See also Queenslander: 11 October 1879; 13 December 1879, for resistance in Cardwell area.
229. See file W. Scott, Sydney, to Col. Sec., 5 August 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A184, 1430 of 1873, especially Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 26 June 1873.
230. P.M., Cardwell, to Under Col. Sec., 16 September 1886, encl. Q.S.A. COL/A483, 7578 of 1886.
231. M.M., 19 September 1874. St. Ann's Station, near Ravenswood was 'stuck up', by 15 or 16 Aborigines and the cook killed. See file: Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 5 January 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A217, 57 of 1876 for attack by an estimated 300 Aborigines on Crystalbrook Station, near present town of Proserpine. Four Aboriginal employees and a European neighbour were killed in this series of attacks. In late 1890's stations in Cape York Peninsula were still being attacked. See Queenslander: 13 July 1895 and 6 June 1896.
Appendix B. are listed the deaths caused by the resistance of Aborigines on the pastoral frontier from January 1868 which this study has revealed. It cannot claim to be complete although these figures are probably a more reliable guide than those for the early 1860's or the mining frontier. It does suggest that the danger to European life on the pastoral frontier was much less than seems to have been the case in the 1860's. After 1875, death caused by Aboriginal resistance seems to have been an isolated occurrence, except in the Cloncurry District which, with Cape York Peninsula, now became the most dangerous place to own a station. From 1879 to 1897, only seven deaths have been discovered, which can be attributed to Aboriginal attacks outside of the Cloncurry District and Cape York Peninsula and, after 1881, only four.

From the early 1880's, Aborigines apparently ceased to trouble pastoralists seriously except in the two areas indicated and in some places around the Gulf of Carpentaria.

232. *P.D.T.*, 22 April 1882: mentions cattle spearing on Gregory Downs on Gregory River, 80 miles from Gulf of Carpentaria; Petition from Burke District 

\[168 signatures\] to Premier of Queensland, May 1885, Q.S.A. COL/422, 3021 of 1885. See Fysh, *Taming the North*, pp. 94-97, 120-125, 140-148, 153, 182-184, 210 for the conflict in the Cloncurry District as narrated by Alexander Kennedy, a pastoralist, who was involved in the conflict in this region and a friend of the Native Police officer sent to quell the resistance. For this district see also *M.M.*, 5 March 1879; *P.D.T.*, 10 May 1879; *P.D.T.*, 27 January 1883; *P.D.T.*, 17 February 1883; Q.S.A. Inquest, Cloncurry, into death of J.P. White about 13 July 1884; *Queenslander*: 16 August 1890, p. 293 and 1 November 1890, p. 842; Q.S.A., Inquest, Carandotta (Boulia District), 2 September 1894 into death of Walter Nathan; and *M.M.*, 29 April 1897 and 29 September 1897; Q.S.A., Inquest, Cloncurry, 15 April 1897, into death of Jack Cole. These largely corroborate the account in *Taming the North*. See also Anon., *Pioneering in the North-West*, pp. 1-5.
This left a very large area of North Queensland where conflict was still occurring and in these areas the struggle was just as intense. This was well brought out by an incident known as the Irvinebank Massacre. In 1884, a detachment of Native Police killed a group of inoffensive, well-known Aborigines at Irvinebank (about 25 miles west of Atherton) and the officer and his troopers were put on trial by the Griffith Liberal Ministry. Many northerners felt such a course of action was a threat to their freedom to solve the Aboriginal 'problem' with violence. The northern newspapers covered the trial with interest but a letter to the *Palmer Chronicle* seemed to reflect the situation in North Queensland so well that it was repeated as the editorial of the *Herberton Advertiser* with the title: 'To Shoot or Not to Shoot That is the Question'. In this article the uncompromising nature of the struggle is clearly brought out. 233

The Native Police ought to be allowed complete freedom, the article argued, and any indiscretions excused. Aboriginal resistance might brutalize the squatters but this was pardonable. Indeed, the writer had been invited to spend the Christmas holidays on the Upper Mitchell 'potting blacks'.

Thus, except for the change from sheep to cattle, the problems for the pastoralists and the consequences to the Aborigines, were much the same on the frontier in the 1890's as they were in 1861 or even in the 1840's. Liberal use of the rifle and poison were still common in Cape York

234. *ibid.*
Peninsula in the late 1880's and 1890's. In 1889, after a European was killed and another seriously wounded at the head of the Archer River (near Coen), three detachments of Native Police, under Sub-Inspector Urquhart, plus volunteers to make up a force in excess of forty, set out to punish the Aborigines. Although Urquhart was wounded in the action, he managed to 'disperse' five Aboriginal camps.

Looking back, after having participated in the policy of dispersal, and forward to the post-1897 policy of protection, Inspector Lamond of Cooktown commented to his Police Commissioner:

I do not wish to refer to the manner in which most blacks have been 'hunted' for many years on all country when found in this and other districts, in so much that they were like the 'Sons of Man' and had not where to lay their heads in safety.

Perhaps no better witnesses could attest to the unchanging thoroughness with which the settlers and government of Queensland had pursued their policy of dispossessing the Aborigines.

235. References to the use of poison are rare but see 
Queenslander, 13 September 1890; Queensland, 22 June 1895. In these two examples Chinese were responsible. The article 'Dark Doings with the Sable Savages', H.M.N., 31 August 1878, implies an acceptance of this method: A pastoralist east of the Hodgkinson found a very large body of Aborigines around the body of a recently speared bullock. They fled. 'Thinking it a pity to lose so good an opportunity of poisoning some of the hawks and dingoes with which the country is infested, our pastoral friend literally peppered the carcase of his quondam grass-eater with that violent corrosive venom - arsenic; and (in order that none of the pilfering curs for whom the feast was intended should partake of it) labelled the body "POISON". His surprise may be imagined when, visiting the spot to see the result of his scheme, he discovered that, disregarding his caution, a large number of the original monarchs of the soil had injudiciously partaken of the insalubrious "bullocky" and, as a natural consequence, most of them had become slightly indisposed.'

236. C.C., 14 May 1889; C.C., 18 June 1889.
CHAPTER 5

CONFLICT ON THE MINING FRONTIER 1869-1897

In large areas of North Queensland it was not pastoralists but miners who made first contacts with Aborigines to exploit the resources of their land. Because of the terrain in which these fields were situated and the nature of the intruding mining industry, this frontier posed challenges to both the Aborigines and the invaders significantly different from those experienced on the pastoral frontier. Aboriginal resistance was facilitated by the terrain and provoked by the fluid nature of the mining population and the depletion of natural resources. These were not replaced by large numbers of easily hunted sheep or cattle. The isolation of the frontier mining fields made them vulnerable not only because of the increased costs associated with exploiting them but also because of their extended communications. Queensland's frontier policy had been inherited from New South Wales experience and developed to meet the needs of the pastoral industry. On the frontier mining fields it was often tested and found wanting.

Despite the optimism of Dalrymple and Leichhardt, the potential mineral wealth of North Queensland for the first few years was ignored as the settlers were preoccupied with pastoral development. Here indeed seemed Eldorado enough for the colonists and for the immediate needs of the new colony's treasury. Goldfields had generally come as an additional blessing subsequent to the primary purposes of settlement and, as yet, the region was too far from the established goldfields to attract the normally impecunious prospectors.

In 1866, some Townsville businessmen stimulated prospecting by offering £1,000 reward for the discovery of a payable goldfield. This resulted in a small, short-lived
rush to the Star River about fifty miles west of Townsville.\(^1\)
Prospectors were in the field and there were soon rumours and shows of colour. About seventy men were attracted to a rush at Mt. Wyatt, south-west of Bowen, in January 1867 but abandoned its obviously limited rewards after two months when the Aborigines proved very hostile.\(^2\) Soon after, in July 1867, gold was discovered on the Cape River south-west of Townsville, and a full scale rush ensued. There were over 2,000 men on the field in 1868,\(^3\) but by 1869 most of the alluvial gold had been worked out and the population dwindled away.\(^4\) By this time, gold had been discovered on Merri Merriwah and Ravenswood stations seventy miles south-west of Townsville.

To this time the goldfields had been discovered within areas opened up by the pastoral industry and the diggers apparently inherited the status quo as far as their relations with the Aborigines were concerned. Except at Mt. Wyatt, conflict does not seem to have been significant. The discovery of the Gilbert River goldfield in April 1869 took the miners to the limits of pastoral settlement and hostile Aborigines were very much a problem. However, the initial reports from the field were so glowing that there was a population of 3,000 in July 1869. By August there were only about 150 on the field.\(^5\)

1. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, pp. 44, 45. He quotes the *Weekly Herald*, 5 May 1866. The Townsville residents hoped in this way to guarantee their port against the competition of Cardwell and Bowen. Because of the limited nature of the field, only £500 was subsequently awarded.

2. ibid., p. 45. There had been promise of a payable goldfield near Bowen in 1865. See P. Pinnock, P.M. Bowen, to Col. Sec., 7 November 1865, Q.S.A. COL/A72, 3031 of 1865.

3. Hill, *Forty-Five Years' Experience in North Queensland*, p. 47. Hill had been clerk of Petty Sessions at Cape River (1868-1870), Ravenswood (1870-4, 1878-82), Georgetown (1874-5), The Palmer (1876-8).

4. ibid., p. 53.

5. Bolton, op. cit., p. 47. The alluvial gold had been worked out, there was a shortage of water, and 'Gulf fever' was raging.
The decline of the Gilbert and Cape goldfields, turned attention back to Ravenswood where easily worked quartz deposits replaced alluvial gold as an inducement to the small diggers. By 1870, a permanent town of about 2,000 people was growing up to feed the crushing mills. An important factor in Ravenswood’s development was its easy access to the coast which lowered freight costs and encouraged the early introduction of machinery. In November 1870, the long-lasting reefing field on the Etheridge River was discovered to the north of the Gilbert once again taking miners to the limit of settlement. Machinery was quickly introduced for the diggers on what was still a small man’s frontier. Meanwhile, close to Ravenswood, in 1871, there was a series of promising discoveries which, in January 1872, culminated in the very rich, easily worked reefing field of Charters Towers. Crushing machinery was introduced almost immediately and by the end of 1872 three thousand miners were working the field. By then, Ravenswood and Charters Towers were producing more than half of Queensland’s gold. Yet, even while Charters Towers and the Etheridge were booming prospecting went on unabated.

In 1872, a Queensland government expedition led by William Hann reported traces of gold, with no real enthusiasm, on the Palmer River, a tributary of the Mitchell. Parties were soon in the field, however, and an experienced prospector, James Venture Mulligan, reported rich alluvial gold

6. ibid., p. 50.
7. This expedition pushed north into the then unknown areas of southern Cape York Peninsula to as far north as Princess Charlotte Bay. The party’s aim was to ascertain the character of the country and its mineral resources with a view to future settlement. See ‘Report from Mr. W. Hann, Leader of the Northern Expedition’ and ‘Copy of a Diary of a Northern Expedition under the Leadership of Mr. William Hann’, 1873 V. & P., pp. 1031-1070. For the discovery of traces of gold on the Palmer see p. 1049.
all along the Palmer. Despite Mulligan's attempt to point out the inhospitable nature of the country, the biggest rush ensued since gold was first discovered in New South Wales and Victoria. Between 1865 and the close of 1879, North Queensland produced a recorded 2,038,170 ounces of gold of which the Palmer produced 1,023,855 ounces, that is, more than half. Four-fifths of the Palmer's gold was produced between October 1873 and December 1877.

The alluvial pickings of the Palmer acted like a magnet on the Chinese in North Queensland and by the end of 1874 all but 500 of an estimated 2,000 had moved to the Palmer. At this time there were six to seven thousand European miners in North Queensland. By April 1877, the number of Chinese on the Palmer had swelled to a maximum of 17,000 and were almost completely male. Yet the population of North Queensland, exclusive of Chinese, Pacific Islanders, and indigenes, at the 1876 census was only 17,606. During 1876, the number of Europeans working alluvial deposits dropped from 1,500 to 300 but by then there were 600 involved in reefing. Between 1877 and 1880 the number of Chinese on the Palmer fell from 17,000 to 3,000, many moving to other fields, especially the Hodgkinson.

8. J.V. Mulligan, Guide to the Palmer River and Normanby Gold Fields, North Queensland, Showing The Different Roads To and From the Etheridge River, Cleveland Bay, and Cooktown, With Map of the Palmer River and Adjacent Gold Fields. And Journal of Explorations (Brisbane, 1875), pp. 9, 10; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 52.
9. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 69, footnote 23. Both of these figures are probably underestimates as much gold was allegedly not reported. The Chinese, especially, were accused of smuggling gold from the country so it is probable that the Palmer's production is the more underestimated because of its large Chinese population.
12. ibid., p. 60. H.M.N.: 26 May 1877; 23 June 1877; 30 June 1877; 2 June 1879.
The Chinese on the mining fields were nearly all alluvial gold seekers. They were in the main, peaceful, industrious and law abiding. They had their own law to punish Chinese offenders and their own organization and were left to themselves as much as possible by the Queensland government officials. The first Chinese came from the south to the Cape River in 1867-8 and others followed but in 1875 capitalists in South China began organizing an export of Chinese labourers to the North Queensland goldfields from which they had to remit a large part of their earnings. Warden Hodgkinson estimated that while a European needed to find gold worth £3/10/- to £4 per week to carry on, a Chinaman could live comfortably on 13 or 14 shillings.

Exploration did not cease with the discovery of the Palmer. Mulligan alone led five more major expeditions from that field, on the last of which, in 1876, he discovered the Hodgkinson goldfield. This was a reefing field which had attracted 1,400 miners by 1877. Other goldfields were opened up on the Coen, north-east of Princess Charlotte Bay (1878), the Mulgrave (1879-80), and the Woolgar, south-west of the Etheridge (1880). By this time the major deposits of surface gold which caused the large-scale, if short-lived, rushes were exhausted and the individual prospectors roaming at large were being replaced by settled mining populations working the more extensive

15. Bolton, op. cit., p.59; H.M.N., 30 June 1877. Warden Sellheim's telegram to the Minister of Mines indicated there were 1,400 working reefs and a total population of 4,800. See Queenslander, 6 May 1876, 'The Hodgkinson Rush'.
underground reefs.

The discovery of wealth and the inflow of capital and labour to exploit it or to provide services for the new centres and the increased population transformed North Queensland. Ports to service the goldfields came into being almost overnight: Cooktown for the Palmer, and Cairns and Port Douglas for the Hodgkinson, while Townsville received a decisive boost from the Cape, Ravenswood, and Charters Towers fields to the south-west and the Gilbert and Etheridge fields to the north-west. 17

The pastoral industry derived immediate benefit from the gold discoveries. Cattle were selling at first on the Palmer for £10 or £12 a head and the supply was not equal to the demand. Stations had reduced their herds during the 1866-1869 depression and had difficulty meeting the needs of 20,000 miners who had suddenly appeared. 18 Fortunately despite the wildly fluctuating populations of the various fields, they were widely scattered and readily accessible to all stations in north-eastern Queensland for extensive periods of time. The pastoral industry had become largely dependent on the mining industry. Indeed, it even led to new stations being taken up in the far north. Although such prospecting explorations as Hann's and Mulligan's had confirmed the limited pastoral potential of Cape York Peninsula, runs were taken up as close to the mining fields as possible, such as along the Mitchell from 1873 and on the western fringes of the Atherton and Evelyn

17. ibid., pp. 48, 53, 59, 60.
18. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland, pp. 136, 137. During the 1870's old runs were taken up and new ones applied for encouraged by the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869.
Tablelands after 1877. 19

On such major fields as the Gilbert, Etheridge, Palmer and Hodgkinson and others less important like the Coen, Mulgrave, Woolgar and Cloncurry, the miners were on or near the frontier and resistance of the Aborigines was often a very real problem, sometimes the greatest problem confronting them. It has sometimes been argued that conflict between miners and Aborigines might have been avoided if the former had behaved with more restraint: in reality the basis of conflict was, as on the pastoral frontier, the invasion of Aboriginal land. 20 However the nature of the invaders' industry and the terrain and isolation of the major frontier fields not only determined the degree of Aboriginal resistance but also produced a pattern of contact significantly different from that on the pastoral frontier. It will be the purpose of the rest of this chapter to analyse this pattern of contact.

... ... ... ...

The nature of mining on the major frontier fields of North Queensland up until 1880 entailed a great deal of 'gully raking' for surface gold by large numbers of miners

19. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, p. 92. 'Stock Depastured in Runs in Settled Districts', 1879 V. & P., Vol. II, p. 999. By 1880 runs were being taken up between the Hodgkinson and Mitchell Rivers by pastoralists of the longer settled districts. They sought second properties as those further south were becoming stocked to their nineteenth century capacity.

20. C.C., 6 April 1878, a letter signed 'Magnum Bonum'. The correspondent blamed the irresponsible trigger happiness of early miners for the conflict on the Palmer, pointing out, correctly, that Mulligan had found them peaceful. See also C.C., 28 February 1877, where Aboriginal retaliation was explained in terms of miners' earlier 'doing a good deal of shooting among them'.

scattered widely, prospecting or working small shows. Miners congregated for varying lengths of time in areas where large quantities of gold had been discovered making them inaccessible to the Aborigines. Often, of course, such areas were streams like the Palmer or the Gilbert which were equally as valuable to the Aborigines. On these, relatively permanent towns grew up such as Palmerville, Maytown (Edwardstown), Gilberton and Georgetown with lines of communication to all parts of the field and to the distant coast. Concentrated in such small areas or scattered widely over large areas, constantly on the move in small or large groups, the European presence was a provocation to the Aborigines. 21

The Police Commissioner, D.T. Seymour, was confronted with the miners' expectation that it was the government's responsibility to protect them as they were providing much of the colony's wealth. Yet it was impossible to do this adequately within the limitations the government placed upon him. As he observed:

In a wild unsettled country it would not be possible for ten detachments of police to protect from the blacks solitary travellers or persons out prospecting who do not take ordinary precaution and who frequently keep as a close secret the direction they intend taking. 22

The Police Commissioner's outburst highlighted several of the problems. Firstly, the miners were often moving into terrain suitable for Aboriginal resistance. Secondly, they often combed the fields in small groups or alone. Even if a miner belonged to a larger group, he sometimes had to separate from the rest whereupon he became an easy

21. Queenslander, 8 June 1878, 'Cost of gold; Or the Murder of Manuel Yous'.
target for Aborigines who often had the miners under observation. 23 Thirdly, the secrecy of many miners who were 'on gold' or hopeful of finding it rendered complete protection impossible with anything less than a full scale military campaign to subjugate each new field. Fourthly, there was an inevitable hiatus when the miners rushed from one area that was patrolled, albeit inadequately, by Native Police to a new one. 24 Indeed, a misleadingly optimistic comment made by Mulligan, nineteen months after the discovery of the Palmer, to encourage diggers to come to the field indicated how serious was the challenge of Aboriginal resistance:

The blacks are now only troublesome on the roads and outskirts of the gold fields, and arrangements have been made by the authorities for better police protection. 25

On the goldfields, inhospitable areas such as around Gilberton and the Palmer where the Aborigines might have been forced to find refuge were just as liable to attract prospectors as the plains were to attract cattlemen. Thus Queensland government policy which had been shaped by the needs of the pastoral frontier was much less able to cope

23. P.M., Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 26 June 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A211, 1781 of 1875, and Queenslander, 8 June 1878, 'Cost of Gold; or the Murder of Manuel Yous'. See also Mulligan, Guide to the Gold Fields, p. 9, for an account of how one of Mulligan's party was alone, unaware that Aborigines were observing him. He fired at a bird and was surprised when 'a squad of darkies fled from behind a rock close by'.

24. Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 30 April 1874, and the rest of this file, ten letters in all, Q.S.A. COL/A195, 1142 of 1874. See Col. Sec. minute, 1 December 1873, John Cameron, Gilbert Brown and P. McCordett, Gilberton, to Col. Sec., 26 November 1873 (telegram). The Police Commissioner had removed the police from Gilberton when most of the inhabitants and miners rushed to the just discovered Palmer. The almost deserted Gilberton was temporarily without police protection while protection for the Palmer in the beginning was virtually non-existent.

with the problems of the mining frontier.

There were several important consequences of Queensland's inability to provide adequate protection for the frontier miners. One was the failure to reach an accommodation with the Aborigines during the period of the major rushes to 1880. This was the time of maximum frontier mining population and exploitation, when racial contact was most chaotic and conflict greatest. In fact, in his 1881 report, the Police Commissioner still lamented his failure to establish communications with the Aborigines in the far north:

During the year the attempts to conciliate the Aborigines in the Northern districts ... have been continued, but owing to the difficulty which has been experienced in inducing these people to come into the camps and townships, have not so far come up to expectation ... 26

On the frontier mining fields, failure was apparently complete yet the days of large scale rushes were over.

Another consequence of the government's failure to provide adequate protection for the frontier miners was the unresolved conflict between government policy and the miner's expectations. As Seymour said, a force ten times as large would have been insufficient. The settlers were expected to take 'ordinary precautions': that is, they were expected to accept their vulnerability to Aboriginal attack and to be armed, vigilant, cautious, in company with other miners, and willing to shoot Aborigines. Seymour, an ex-army officer, was either expecting miners to behave like combat soldiers or accepting loss of European life and a much larger loss of Aboriginal life as inevitable. The immediate consequence was that the southern miners rushing to the new fields were forced to

try to meet Seymour's expectations. Thus the first miners and packers to reach the Palmer soon realized the necessity of firearms and the need to take corporate action against resisting Aborigines. Just over a year after the first rush to the Palmer, the *Cooktown Courier* reported:

> now every man travels well armed and a carriers camp at eventide is a regular 'school of marketry' - no man goes looking for his cattle in the morning unless he has his rifle slung ready for use and revolvers by his side. 27

The typical waggon on the frontier fields of Cape York Peninsula was a 'perfect arsenal in the matter of Snider rifles, double barrelled guns, Colt's revolvers and all kinds of ball cartridge'. 28 Teamsters and packers often travelled in groups for mutual protection from the Aborigines and settlers frequently participated in punitive raids. When the Strau family, husband, wife and child, were killed on the Palmer Road in 1874, 30 at least one settler found himself sworn in as a special constable although he refused to take part in the subsequent massacre of Aborigines at Skull Camp. 31 Corfield, the owner of two bullock teams, joined the Native Police detachment under Sub Inspector O'Connor, unsworn and willingly, to avenge the killing of two of his horses and two packers. 32 Such settler retaliation against the Aborigines, with or without the Native Police, was common and a direct result

---

27. C.C., 5 December 1874.
30. Q.S.A. JUS/41, 274 of 1874. Inquest into deaths of John, Bridget, and Anne Strauer [sic] - elsewhere Strau, Strauwe - on 17 October 1874. See M.M., 7 November 1874 or C.C., 21 October 1874.
33. See C.H., 1 July 1874, 'The Blacks Again', for a frank account of how a party of six teamsters scoured the country to find and attack a large Aboriginal camp. See also P.D.T., 21 October 1882, for an account of settlers on the Annan River, just south of Cooktown, organizing to drive off Aborigines.
of Queensland's inadequate frontier policy.

Not all of the settlers lived up to government expectations and there was a great deal of foolhardiness among the nomadic population of the goldfields. A perusal of inquests of deaths resulting from Aboriginal attack and of contemporary newspapers reveals a surprising willingness to take risks: to push out unarmed or inadequately armed into territory known to be occupied by belligerent Aborigines. Yet the reputation of the Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula was well established by 1873 and increased with the intrusion of the mining frontier. It seems to have been well-merited. An experienced settler like Edward Palmer who had lived at Canobie north of Cloncurry, where the Aborigines earned a legendary reputation, and at Gamboola near the Palmer goldfield commented:

In no district in Queensland have the blacks shown themselves more hostile to the settlers than in the Peninsula. 34

Yet, J.H. Binnie told how as a ten year old child on the Palmer, in the late 1870's, he regularly had to journey, alone and unarmed, through country occupied by hostile Aborigines. Soon after, in the same area, a group of Chinese who had built a stockade were attacked. 35 Binnie often stayed at an isolated mine for two to three days with only a little dog for company. 36 Binnie's father was just as foolhardy with regard to his own safety. When the Aborigines killed his horses, he walked to Cooktown on urgent business unarmed as he did not own a revolver and a rifle would have been too heavy to carry. Although he travelled by night to avoid the Aborigines, he was fortunate to get through unnoticed. 37 On another occasion

34. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland, p. 183.
36. ibid., p. 20.
37. ibid., p. 31.
when Aborigines were near the Binnie's house with hostile intentions, the Binnie family and their nearest neighbours, a Chinese fossicker camped fifty yards away, and two miners camped half a mile away, had not one firearm between them. After the Aborigines were frightened off by barking dogs, Binnie commented, 'However, no time was lost in getting a rifle from Echotown by special messenger'. One of the residents of the Gilberton goldfield even claimed '... that the population in Queensland generally have Police Protection and therefore don't [sic] provide themselves with firearms or ammunition'. This was greatly exaggerated but was probably the basis for the attitude of many who could have afforded firearms but refused to purchase them. Some simply refused to accept the condition of the mining frontier. There were no doubt many others who couldn't afford to buy arms. The Chinese were rarely adequately armed and often not armed at all. They apparently hoped that by travelling in large groups the Aborigines would avoid them. The reputation the Chinese had for running away at the sight of the Aborigines was thus, on most occasions, easily explained. Unarmed miners were not always as fortunate as the Binnies. Donald and Hugh McQuarrie set out from Cooktown unarmed. The Cooktown Courier reported with horror that at Hell's Gate they were 'run down like paddy-wmelons by a merciless mob of infuriated cannibals'.

38. ibid., p. 18.
40. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland, p. 184. See Argus, 19 February 1876, for an account of how several armed Chinese packers fled from three armed Aborigines (M.L. Newspaper Extracts 1875-1880, Vol. 1). This article gives the caricature of cowardly Chinese.
41. C.C., 3 February 1877. See also Q.S.A. JUS/47, for the inquest.
Yet apart from the rashness of entering country occupied by hostile Aborigines unarmed, many of the risks miners took were inherent in the industry. Miners had to scatter widely and to separate in order to prospect. It was unrealistic of the Police Commissioner and the Queensland government to expect miners with generally very limited means to guard one another all the time they were prospecting or to constantly travel in large groups despite the warning of one of the first correspondents from the Palmer that 'the blacks keep driving in all small parties ... No person ought to start without he has four months provisions with him, and he must have horses to carry them ... and well armed'. Another miner informed those thinking of coming to the Palmer '... all diggers must travel in gangs ... When you come bring as many horses as you can and a gun - no man is any good without both'. Often poor and usually optimistic miners ignored such sound advice.

The government's failure to accept the responsibilities inherent in the dynamic frontier industry which had transformed the colony's economy posed serious problems not only for the miners but also for the Aborigines they were dispossessing. Aboriginal resistance often hindered the development of a new field. Before the Palmer field was ten months old, Aborigines were preventing prospecting by single miners or small parties. A group of six armed miners prospecting near Cooktown had been driven in leaving provisions and horses to the mercy of the Aborigines. The Cooktown Herald claimed that such actions, plus Aboriginal raids upon the unattended camps and the spearing of miners and their horses, were causing the men to keep together in the main camps. The paper asserted that this

42. Ravenswood Miner, 6 December 1873.
43. B.M., 10 January 1874.
was one of the main reasons no new auriferous ground was being discovered:

Men did not care to isolate themselves with the chance of a spear terminating their existence suddenly. 44

In early August 1874, the Police Magistrate at Palmerville informed the Colonial Secretary that five men had been reported killed by Aborigines since November 1873 and nine others wounded, as well as horses destroyed to the value of several hundred pounds. He added: '... incalculable loss is suffered by the miners in consequence of not being able to prospect'. 45

Such laments were often raised as a new field was being developed but Aboriginal raids did not cease to be troublesome. Thus, in the Etheridge Gold Field Report of 1881, the Warden remarked nonchalantly: '... the blacks have committed their usual amount of crime. Cattle and horse spearing are [sic] of course normal features 46 and as late as 1885; 'The aboriginals have given a little trouble in stealing rations etc., from miners' camps, but that is no new thing'. 47 Miners did not always accept this state of affairs so fatalistically. They often complained of almost daily depredations and were sometimes forced to work in pairs, one man prospecting while the other stood guard with a rifle. 48 Such complaints not only illustrated the inhibiting effect of Aboriginal resistance, they also pointed out the vulnerability of the miners.

44. Cooktown Herald, 24 June 1874, 'The Black Police'.
45. Police Magistrate, Palmerville, to Col. Sec., 4 August 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A197, 1680 of 1874.
48. W. Steele, Georgetown, to P. O' Sullivan, M.L.A. Burke, 4 July 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A262, 2923 of 1878. See Queenslander, 8 June 1878, 'Cost of Gold; or the Murder of Manuel Yous' for an example of watching Aborigines spearing one of a pair of miners when each worked separately.
The miners' horses were especially vulnerable yet a horse was almost indispensable to the European miner—unlike the Chinese one—as essentially he was a gambler and mobility was of paramount importance. The European miner's dream was a find rich enough to enable him to leave off mining altogether. Consequently he was never content with merely making a living on one field, but remained ever alert for news of new discoveries where he might have better luck. As the richest yields of easily worked gold were usually recovered early in the life of each new field, he had to be able to travel rapidly if he were to have any chance of 'striking it rich'. Only a horse could give him this mobility. Often he would desert a sound claim at the hint of some distant el dorado. Gold Warden, Phillip Sellheim, captured beautifully the mentality of the frontier miner the world over when he described the North Queensland miner:

If the Northern miner has one besetting sin ... it is his readiness at a moment's notice to sacrifice his all, if required, to enable him to hurry off to the scene of some new discovery—good or bad, authenticated or not. He most probably leaves a claim that means good wages, if nothing better, and tramps, suffering all kinds of danger and hardships, on his way to some locality where, on calm reflection, his own commonsense and long experience would have told him that payable gold at the best could be but a very remote contingency. 49

The Chinese who generally moved into a field in large groups after it was opened up might be able to walk but most Europeans thought themselves dependent on horses. 50

Yet horses had to be turned out to graze, and were easy marks for the Aborigines.

50. A regulation in 1878 forbade Chinese entering a new field until three years after its proclamation. See Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 57.
The countless references, in northern newspapers, to the killing and consumption of horses and cattle on the mining field suggest overwhelmingly that the Aborigines killed them for food - not merely to injure the intruders. This conclusion is supported by the accounts detailed below of Aborigines starving on the mining frontier. The opportunity for large scale slaughter of these animals was much more limited than on the pastoral frontier. Most mining fields depended largely on cattle brought from stations removed from the generally inhospitable mining areas, such herds being overlanded directly to the fields or to nearby holding stations from which they were consigned to butchers at Maytown, Palmerville, Cooktown, Thornborough, etc. 51 For most of the time the large herds of cattle on the Peninsula goldfields would have been under supervision.

The Aborigines remorselessly attacked the comparatively small number of teamsters' bullocks and the horses belonging to miners and packers in the outlying camps and along the tracks. They often attacked in large co-ordinated groups and speared or drove off the horses. It was firmly maintained that they were seen driving numbers of horses - from two to more than thirty - into inaccessible 'mountain strongholds' where they would kill and eat them as required. This charge of systematically harvesting horses was made by over two hundred residents of the Palmer Goldfield in a petition to the Colonial Secretary, as well as in the Cooktown Courier, and especially in the Hodgkinson Mining News where it was alleged at least five times in seventeen months. Such attacks were most intense in the early chaotic years of a new rush but persisted until the field was

51. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland, pp. 139-141.
abandoned or accommodation was reached.\textsuperscript{52} Such measures may indicate the ease with which the animals could be killed or driven off. They also indicate that the Aborigines' traditional sources of food had been so damaged, depleted, or rendered inaccessible that they risked very real dangers involved in killing the intruders' animals and the subsequent reprisals. The fact that at least some had to seek refuge in inhospitable ranges and had to take food there to their dependents seems to support this. At this stage of frontier conflict, there was little opportunity for comment on the physical well-being of the Aborigines, but three reports which lend some support to this conclusion. In 1877, an Aboriginal employed on the Hodgkinson claimed to have encountered some Aboriginal women and children west of Mt. Mulligan who were emaciated and starving and scarcely able to walk. They asked him to take some of their children to save their lives and he brought one to Watsonville.\textsuperscript{53} A report to the \textit{Queenslander} was much more specific: 'Perhaps the determination they show may be the courage of despair. The country is not fertile, is poorly stocked with game, and the whites have taken possession of all the main watercourses. Native Police officers say that most of the Palmer blacks seem half-starved, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Petition of 217 residents of the Palmer River Goldfield to S.W. Griffith, Col. Sec., January 1887, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/A453, 552 of 1886; C.C., 18 August 1875; H.M.N., 14 July 1877; H.M.N., 1 December 1877; H.M.N., 22 December 1877; H.M.N., 21 December 1878; H.M.N., 14 June 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{53} H.M.N., 10 November 1877. The possible objection to this testimony that this Aboriginal had kidnapped the child and was lying to hide his crime is less likely than his assertion, given the normalcy of having and kidnapping Aboriginal children. The article asserts there was a famine but it seems that their condition was more likely to have been because Aboriginal life was disturbed than that the Aborigines could not cope with a poor season. See \textit{Queenslander}, 8 December 1877.
\end{itemize}
recent advice from the Hodgkinson describes the aboriginals there as suffering from famine. The white men occupy their only hunting grounds, and in default of the fish, roots, and game of the waterholes and creek "bottoms", they are in a manner compelled to eat horses and bullock'. 54 Even the Police Commissioner noted, in 1880, that the Aborigines on the Hodgkinson goldfield were half-starved. 55 Frontier mining fields, thus, seem to have posed more immediate and urgent challenges to the Aborigines than commonly occurred on the pastoral frontier.

Thus spurred on by hunger, favoured by a suitable terrain, and opposed by intruders whose industry made them especially vulnerable, the Aborigines attacked their enemy wherever possible. Indeed their attacks on the limited number of accessible animals inhibited communications within a field and sometimes threatened its links with the outside world. Horses were essential to enable the scattered miners to keep themselves supplied with provisions. The Cooktown Courier claimed that one field would have to be abandoned because so many horses were being speared that the miners could not get rations. 56 A broader aspect of this problem was the need to keep the roads open for packers, teamsters, and travellers. This was especially important for isolated fields of the Peninsula like the Palmer and Hodgkinson. Indeed the Cooktown Courier in 1877, pointed to the impossibility of keeping even the main road to the Palmer safe. 57 Once again the Police Commissioner contended that packers and travellers expected to have their horses entirely looked after by the Police. Yet

54. Queenslander, 8 December 1877.
56. C.C., 16 July 1874.
57. C.C., 28 February 1877.
teamsters and packers had to allow their animals to graze and could not watch them the whole time as Seymour seemed to suggest. As well, on most roads certain areas were more suitable for camping and allowing the animals to graze than others or, through some districts, the only ones. These were soon known to the Aborigines with the result that there were often attacks that wiped out the best part of or even a whole team overnight. Provisions for the fields were delayed and sometimes destroyed or pillaged.\textsuperscript{58} The destruction of animal capital was often crippling enough to arouse the local newspapers to a criticism of the government and the local member to his responsibilities, an understandable consequence when the cost of such teams is considered. To outfit his second team, Corfield had bought as a bargain 13 steers at £16 per head and then had to break them in.\textsuperscript{59} In March 1878, the Cooktown Courier reported that one teamster had lost ten or eleven horses valued at between £40 and £50 each 'at one fell swoop'.\textsuperscript{60} Thus, one successful Aboriginal attack could destroy all of a teamster's capital and remove one essential unit of

\textsuperscript{58} Pol. Com. to Col. Sec., 18 October 1877, Q.S.A. C6L/A247, 5055 of 1877. See P.D.T., 19 February 1876, extract from Cooktown Herald. Also P.D.T., 18 March 1876, 'The Palmer' from Cooktown Courier. These newspaper articles describe the losses of teamsters and travellers. For the Hodgkinson tracks to Trinity Bay and Port Douglas, see H.M.N.: 2 April 1877; 30 June 1877; 7 July 1877; 14 July 1877; 4 August 1877; 11 August 1877; 24 November 1877; 22 December 1877; 2 March 1878; 30 March 1878; 4 May 1878; 22 June 1878; 17 August 1878; 2 November 1878; 1 February 1879; 6 December 1879; 13 December 1879.

\textsuperscript{59} Corfield, Reminiscences, p. 59.

\textsuperscript{60} C.C., 2 March 1878. See also P.D.T., 19 February 1876 and P.D.T., 18 March 1876 as indicated f.n. 58. Although carrying to the fields paid very well in the early days of a rush, it soon tapered off. By 1876 there was much more competition to the Palmer, especially as the Chinese were using Coolie gangs to handle their own and others merchandise. By 1878, the profitability had fallen further and Corfield turned to the far west. See Corfield, Reminiscences, pp. 54, 60, 70, 71.
transport.

The Aborigines were thus at times the biggest single problem facing the miners, often preventing them from attempting to gather the wealth of a new field that seemed temptingly scattered about. It was unthinkable for colonists to accept such restrictions on their 'progress'. As the Cooktown Herald observed: 'When savages are pitted against civilization, they must go to the wall; it is the fate of their race'.61 Because of the fear of attack from ambush and the impossibility of protecting their stock and property, the settlers would have liked a large enough Native Police force to drive the Aborigines from each mining district.62 The Queensland government increased the size of the Native Police Force and sent an increasingly large proportion of it to the Cook District.63 Yet it became apparent that this did not quell Aboriginal resistance. The scattered nature of the population meant that the increased cost of greater protection was out of all proportion to its effectiveness.64 Contemporaries even criticised the relevance of the whole philosophy of the Native Police on the mining frontier. Four years after the discovery of the Palmer, the Cooktown Courier pointed out that the aim of the force was 'to establish a state of terror among the blacks, and if it fails in

61. C.H., 24 June 1874, subeditorial.
doing so, it becomes worse than useless'.  
Indeed, resistance on the mining frontier provoked discussion of alternatives to the Native Police. The editor of the Cooktown Courier suggested 'justice', as the system of shooting as many Aborigines as possible, innocent and guilty, contained no incentive for the Aborigines to show restraint with the apparent result that 'the blacks had sent around the fiery cross to muster up all their forces to harrass the white intruders'.  
It was also urged that a missionary should go out to the Aborigines to establish peaceful relations accepting if necessary martyrdom as missionaries had done in the South Pacific. The contention that the existing Native Police system on the mining frontier was almost a complete failure led even to the conclusion that the 'present system of desultory little massacres' should be replaced by a policy of conciliation and reconciliation.

Yet, when the government briefly tried to change its policy by attempting to make the Native Police more conciliatory to the Aborigines, there were immediate

65. C.C., 1 January 1878, 'Our Aborigines'. See also C.C., 16 July 1879; C.C., 21 February 1877, editorial; C.C., 28 February 1877, editorial.
66. C.C., 21 February 1877, editorial.
67. C.C., 10 January 1877. The editor was critical of ministers of religion who remained arm-chair critics of frontier violence.
68. C.C., 28 February 1877, editorial.
69. C.C., 11 January 1878, 'Our Aborigines'. 
complaints from the frontier. Nor could a change of government policy change the reactions of the settlers. There are ample records that vigilantes of teamsters or other settlers were formed if Native Police protection was unavailable or inadequate. And, as on the pastoral frontier, a complaint about lack of police protection was always a sensitive and serious political issue which was generally taken up by the local newspapers and regarded as a reflection on the government. Some action was normally promised.

The hostility of the Peninsula Aborigines was often given as the reason for the need for extra protection. Even the beleaguered Police Commissioner admitted:

The chief difficulty in the Palmer District has been occasioned by the aborigines, who in that district have shown themselves to be unusually hostile and intractable.

There were accounts of Aborigines on the Palmer returning to the attack after they had been attacked and put to flight.

70. H.M.N., 29 December 1877. 'The ukase issued from the Department of the Colonial Secretary (which has the administration of all matters relating to the Native Police and the aboriginals) some three or four months back has proved very pernicious in restraining sub-Inspector Douglas' troopers from making the reprisals for the determined cattle spearing of which the natives have been guilty since they have discovered the present punishment, if punishment it can be called, of rounding them up has supplanted the vigorous plan of following up and dispersing them in the old style, breaking up their camps, and destroying their weapons of offence'. C.P., 7 August 1884, letter from John Atherton, Emerald End: 'I am not aware ... that he and his troopers were stationed in the district to protect the blacks, not to punish them ... if this is really the case ... I fail to see what use he is to the white population here ...'.

71. See C.C., 2 March 1878, and P.D.T., 21 October 1882; C.C., 17 July 1879.

72. Petition from the Herberton District, Q.S.A. COL/A335, 2409 of 1882. There were 265 signatures.

73. Ravenswood Miner, 6 December 1873; P.D.T., 19 February 1876.

by the Native Police. After a series of attacks on the Chinese at the Etheridge and the nearby Gilbert, a feeling of panic seemed to grip the residents. Two Europeans were killed and two wounded on the Etheridge in late September 1873. In late November, it seems that five Chinese miners were killed and two badly wounded when the Aborigines raided their camp at Gilberton and a European, bound for Gilberton, was killed. The Police Commissioner protested that the residents were abandoning the Gilbert for the Palmer; yet there seems no doubt that at least some, and possibly all, of the 140 to 160 remaining, panicked and abandoned the field so precipitously that much valuable property, including crushing machinery, was left behind. Large quantities of goods were burnt before leaving to prevent the Aborigines from using them. A telegram to the Cleveland Bay Express from the Etheridge reported: 'Fugitives from the Gilbert are still coming in.' In February 1874, the Gilbert telegraph station was besieged by Aborigines estimated at 'some hundreds'. The station master, his wife, and his assistant barricaded themselves in the office and wired Georgetown for assistance and the goldfield warden, Mr. Sellheim, and a party of volunteers.

76. Mackay Mercury, 27 September 1873, an article entitled misleadingly 'The Gilbert'. See Q.S.A. JUS/N37, 182 and 183 of 1873: Inquests into deaths of Henry Williams (engineer) and Mr. Same Blake (owner and blacksmith) of Caledonia Crushing Machine, about one mile from Walshtown, Etheridge.
77. M.M., 6 December 1873 (Telegraphic News, Georgetown, 22 November) and P.D.T., 6 December 1873, 'The Etheridge', from Cleveland Bay Express. See also J. Cameron, Mt. Hogan (near Gilberton), to Col. Sec., 18 December 1873, enclosed Q.S.A. COL/A195, 1142 of 1874. See also the rest of this file.
78. M.M., 17 January 1874, quoting a telegram from Etheridge, 27 December 1873, to the Cleveland Bay Express. See also file Q.S.A. COL/A195, 1142 of 1874.
arrived from that town and drove the Aborigines off before they could break in. 79

Although such dramatic events were not frequent, they had both an immediate and a long term effect. In the long term they reinforced the lessons learnt from such earlier incidents as the Frazer and Wills massacres where the Aborigines had struck hard at European life and property. They were used to highlight European vulnerability and to strengthen the argument that European firepower was all that prevented the repetition of such events. The attack on Gilberton and the flight of the settlers became a minor part of the frontier folklore, despite its less dramatic basis of a mining field in the process of being abandoned by most of its population. In December 1874, a rather nervous Acting Lands Commissioner at Normanton worried about the attention his office and dwelling were receiving from individual Aborigines or, at the most, small groups, commented:

Fortunately the blacks have made no organised attacks or this place would share the fate of the Gilbert Township. 80

He wanted prompt measures to 'dislodge the blacks' camped near the town. In 1879 when the field was revived and incorporated in the surrounding Etheridge, a local correspondent retold the story to stress what 'a few howling savages' could do if police protection was denied. 81

The immediate reaction can be seen in the fevered reports that appeared throughout North Queensland. The Northern Miner of Charters Towers believed the withdrawal

81. Queenslander, 12 April 1879, p. 467.
of the Native Police from Gilberton when the Aborigines were so aggressive, had 'produced a most pernicious and dangerous feeling among the blacks'. To illustrate his point, he pointed to a similar situation existing near Charters Towers and Ravenswood when the Native Police protecting the pastoral and mining district had been withdrawn from Dalrymple:

What was the consequence. The black telegraph was speedily at work, the news spread among the tribes, two unfortunate Chinamen were murdered by our "black brethren," on the Seventy-Mile road, prospectors have been hunted and their lives endangered. On the outlying diggings life is no longer safe, diggers were stuck up not a week ago by a prowling tribe at Brooks' Camp, and this week there was a general gathering of tribes near Millchester—comprising contingents from the Flinders, Cape, and Belyando tribes. There was a grand "palaver," the general purpose was to attack Ravenswood, and treat it as they treated Gilberton, and, perhaps, they are leaving Millchester as a bonne bouche ... The simple remedy is to restore the troopers to Dalrymple, Gilberton, and other points of advantage on these Northern gold-fields. 82

The Northern Miner asserted that, if the government did not meet its responsibility to protect the whites, a 'Mutual Protection Association' would be formed. It even used the current excitement to threaten the government in Brisbane that North Queensland would have to seek separation. This was not the last time that the two hounds of the north-south battle, separation and organised large-scale vigilantes, would be unleashed because of frontier conflict.

As noted previously, the Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula soon developed a reputation for sustained and vigorous resistance which seems to have been well-merited. Some consideration will now be undertaken of the factors which may account for this. It is probably impossible to discover the extent of the Aboriginal campaigns the Europeans believed to exist at Gilberton, Ravenswood—

---

82. M.M., 14 February 1874, quoting from the Northern Miner.
Charters Towers, on the Palmer and elsewhere on North Queensland mining fields. Historians have tended to ascribe such views to contemporary European ignorance of traditional Aboriginal life. Anthropologists have pointed to the inability of Aborigines to organize such campaigns among the groups they have studied. It is possible, although perhaps not capable of proof, that the added variable of frontier conflict with belligerent and ruthless Europeans produced atypical or more frequent contacts and communications between the various groups on or near the frontier mining fields. European occupancy of the land was often transient or concentrated into the areas currently being exploited. Thus significant displacement of Aboriginal groups could have occurred. Alternatively, it is possible that such large gatherings of Aborigines were initially traditionally orientated, and that they were diverted to concerted acts of resistance because of the shared, widespread resentment of a no longer bearable European presence, or the lack of natural resources resulting from it. There is one reported eye-witness account of concerted resistance planned at a traditional gathering of the Kalkadunga of the Cloncurry District. The Cooktown Courier pointed out, in January 1878 and January 1879, that with the beginning of the wet season the Aborigines were migrating from the coast to the interior. Both of these migrations were associated with attacks on European property, especially the pulling down of telegraph wire which was used for spear points.

83. Fysh, Taming the North, pp. 122-125. Alexander Kennedy described how his Aboriginal employee, Sandy, had witnessed a Kalkadunga corroboree exhorting the warriors to kill cattle and kill Kennedy. These were included among other more traditional corroborees.
During May 1877, the dry season, a group of 300 Aborigines was reported killing cattle and horses close to Cooktown. Such a large group could easily have been gathered at the coast for ceremonial reasons and denied their normal food supply because of the large population of intruders on the Endeavour River. The annual migrations and the driving off and systematic harvesting of horses possibly indicate both Aboriginal efforts to meet new challenges and their attempts to carry on their traditional pattern of life, while incorporating the European additions to their environment that they found useful.

There may have been factors in the traditional life of the Peninsula Aborigines that made them more dangerous enemies to the intruding Europeans. A reading of contemporary European accounts suggests that the Peninsula Aborigines staged a prolonged and formidable resistance and supports the belief that the Aborigines often resisted in very large groups with perhaps more frequency than such large scale resistances were recorded in the south. Yet much of the reputation of the Peninsula Aborigines can be put down to the nature of the industry and the nature of the terrain. The northern fields, as previously indicated, made it impossible for the Native Police to offer adequate protection and the miners were often unable to defend themselves effectively. In addition, the centres of the greatest mining population on each field moved about frequently, thus shifting the greatest challenge to the Aboriginal population from one group to another. Although

85. C.C., 5 May 1877.
86. See, for example, R.M., 6 December 1873; C.C., 13 June 1874, letter to editor from W. Kinmout, 'Attacked by the Blacks'; C.C., 20 June 1874; C.C., 3 October 1874, 'The Palmer'.

this must have had a chaotic effect on traditional Aboriginal life, it must also often have meant that Aboriginal resistance was not being completely broken by a stable population that had a vested interest in such an outcome. Thus, by the close of 1876, only three years after the Palmer was discovered, the number of Europeans seeking alluvial gold had dropped to 300 from 1500 at the beginning of the year while, from 1877 to 1880, the Chinese population of the field had dropped from 17,000 to 3,000.\(^{87}\) The Gilbert, discovered in 1869, had a population of about 3,000 by August which had dwindled to about 150 by October.\(^{88}\) It was abandoned in 1873 with Aboriginal resistance still very great but re-opened by Chinese leaving the Palmer in 1878.\(^{89}\)

Pastoralists sooner or later had to come to peaceful terms with the local Aborigines or wipe them out completely. The latter solution was rarely desired and possibly even more rarely possible. Moreover, as will be seen, financial and labour considerations often made a peaceful accord desirable. On mining fields, however, the industry could survive and attract optimists while there was still the lure of easy gold as long as Aboriginal resistance was inhibited to the stage where it was an acceptable risk. Indeed the difficulty of reaching an accord with the Aborigines may have resulted in the miners' resorting to the use of firearms more easily than did the pastoralists. Thus, in 1876, a party of prospectors chanced upon Mulligan's party at dusk on the Hodgkinson River and, thinking they were Aborigines, opened fire upon them. The explanation of the hostile

---


89. ibid., pp. 60, 61.
action was accepted happily by Mulligan's party. 90

The inhospitable terrain of Peninsula fields was a vital factor. It often favoured Aboriginal resistance especially as there were extensive areas where the miners were greatly outnumbered. It is not co-incidental that the Aborigines of the Cloncurry mining field, where these two factors were also present, had a reputation to rival that of the Peninsula Aborigines. 91 Thus as early as 1870, the Police Magistrate at Burketown reported the Chinese driven away from the old diggings at Cloncurry while those at the new diggings were being threatened. 92 An ex-Native Police officer claimed that the Kalkadunga intended to combine to kill all Europeans on the stations in the district. 93 As the European firepower and mobility were so vastly superior to the Aborigines, it was only in such favourable areas as the Peninsula and the Cloncurry district that Aborigines could aggressively resist for an extended period.

Strangely enough, while the Aborigines of the North Queensland mining fields have attracted a romantic interest because of their fierce resistance, there is much ignored evidence available which suggests that the invaders' brutality and callousness provided much of the motivation. For apart from the Aborigines' natural resentment of the European and Native Police violence and the Chinese


91. /Anon./, Pioneering in the North-West: a few Rambling Notes of Happenings in the Far North-West of Queensland 40 to 45 Years Ago. (n.p., 1920), pp. 1, 2. (typescript, M.L.). The writer claimed to be an ex-Native Police Officer, possibly Sub Inspector Eglington. See also Fysh, Taming the North, pp. 94-97, 117, 120, 124, 140-148, 152-184.

92. W. Landsborough, P.M. Burketown, to Col. Sec., 7 April 1870, S.A. COL/A147, 2311 of 1870.

93. /Anon./, Pioneering in the North-West, p. 2.
intrusion, there was similar extensive kidnapping of Aboriginal women and children to that encountered on the pastoral frontier. Thus, frontier mailman and prospector, J.C. Hogflesh, asserted that the carriers on the Palmer Road were the worst offenders. In Binnie's account of his life on the Palmer from 1876 to 1882, he described how one passing bullock team gave or sold a twelve year old black girl to the wife of the teamster transporting Binnie and his mother from Cooktown to the Palmer. The girl could not understand English and was very frightened, especially of the teamster who threatened to shoot two Aboriginal men working for him (and later did), fired shots at night to warn off local Aborigines, and horse-whipped her when she refused to fetch water from a nearby lagoon because of her fear that Aborigines were hiding there. The disgusted teamster's wife gave her to the owner of a passing bullock team, asking that she be sent to a friend in Brisbane to be 'educated'. Carrier, W.H. Corfield, recorded how the six year old survivor of a Native Police dispersal at the Laura River was retained by Sub-Inspector O'Connor's troopers as a camp pet but, 'Knowing I had no blackboy, he gave me the little fellow he had so well drilled'.

Aborigines were very useful cheap labour for the teamsters and it was apparently common practice to have at least one to look after the animals, help with the loading and unloading, and to help make and break camp each day. Children of both sexes and Aboriginal women were apparently obtained on the goldfields in a variety of ways while

94. J.C. Hogflesh, Herberton, to B.D. Morehead, Chief Sec., 8 October 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A595, 9567 of 1889. He was on the field from as early as 1875 and actually discovered the Straun massacre.
95. Binnie, My Life on a Tropic Gold Field, pp. 8-11.
'civilized' male and female Aborigines from other areas were common. The women and adolescent girls were used often to satisfy the sexual needs of the teamsters and others on the predominantly male frontier. The Native Police here, as on other frontiers, commonly distributed orphaned Aboriginal children or children picked up after a 'dispersal' and presumed to be orphans.

The disposal of Aborigines as if they were the property of the Europeans was thus very common on the goldfields as it was elsewhere in Queensland. However, on the mining frontier while Aboriginal resistance was unbroken and police protection inadequate, kidnapping local Aborigines was a dangerous provocation. In discussing events on the Cloncurry mining field of the late 1870's, an ex-Native Police Inspector wrote:

I may mention that murders of whites by blacks were frequently, and properly so too, referred to as acts of retaliation for cruelty by the whites or revenge for interference with their gins.

Referring to the Palmer, Binnie agreed: 'A great volume of the crimes committed against the whites could be attributed to revenge'.

On some goldfields, the Aborigines were in the happy position of being able to express their resentment.

97. ibid., pp. 46, 47.
98. ibid., p. 59; Davidson, Journal 1865-1868, p. 30; Rev. I.V. Black, Trinity Parsonage, Bowen, to Col. Sec., 7 September 1868, Q.S.A. COL/All1, 974 of 1868, and Col. Sec's reply; Q.S.A., Letterbook of Miscellaneous Letters 2 January 1868-28 December 1870; P.D.T., 3 February 1877, from Cooktown Courier. A naked twelve year old girl, brought back by blood bespattered troopers after a dispersal, was given or sold to a Cooktown resident 'whose property she has now become'.
100. Binnie, op. cit., p. 12.
On the goldfields, too, the Aborigines seem to have quickly adapted their defensive measures and to have used traditional skills to meet the challenge of the intruders. The first report from the Palmer claimed that though the Aborigines were very numerous they were not particularly hostile and 'had evidently never seen a white man before'. They were mystified by the whites' digging in sand and dug similarly, apparently to see what food the Europeans had been looking for. 101

The first large scale intrusions, from the Endeavour River, however, provoked determined hostility. 102 Indeed two separate reports from the Palmer to the Brisbane Telegraph and to the Cleveland Bay Express describe objectively three separate clashes, two of which were probably initiated by the Aborigines. 103 These clashes seem to have resulted in great loss of Aboriginal life. 104

102. R.M., 6 December 1873, 'A Trip to the Palmer', from Cleveland Bay Express.
103. ibid.; Brisbane Telegraph, 20 January 1874, 'The Palmer'.
104. T. Hamilton, P.M., Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 28 March 1874, enclosing (1) a sworn statement from 16 members of the Palmer Expedition, dated 26 March 1874, (2) an article from the Brisbane Telegraph, 20 January 1874, 'The Palmer', and (3) A. Davidson, Aborigines Protection Society, Brisbane, to A. Macalister, Col. Sec., 23 January 1874, Q.S.A. COL/Al/194, 701 of 1874. An enquiry followed the Brisbane Telegraph's report which cleared the expedition, and especially the Native Police, of indiscriminately slaughtering Aborigines. But, as the Police Magistrate inquired of sixteen private members of the accused expedition who would later need to defend themselves against such Aborigines and call upon the Native Police, their sworn statement is less than convincing. They claimed that there was only one clash when 150 Aborigines attacked the expedition at dawn. Their statement, 'We heard there was one black shot in the dispersion', can hardly be accepted, especially as such hearsay testimony, conveniently could not be used as evidence. See extracts from W. Webb's account of the journey from Cooktown to the Palmer in R.L. Jack, Northmost Australia, Vol. II, pp. 420-423. William
Such frontal attacks with their ensuing heavy losses taught the Aborigines a lesson. In February 1877, the *Cooktown Courier* claimed the Aborigines were more wary but not cowed; they had learned the range and efficacy of a rifle bullet. It was believed that their numbers were not appreciably decreased and the country was still not safe, except in patches where considerable numbers of miners congregated. A year later the same paper was still complaining that the Aborigines were more dangerous and audacious than they were the first year after opening the Palmer.

The growing sophistication of the Aborigines in this frontier conflict situation was indicated in a variety of ways. A year after the initial rush to the Palmer, they were readily adapting European articles to suit a great variety of their needs. Bits of hoop iron were beaten out into knives and set in handles, the forehead band of a leather bridle was used as head-band, waggon linch pins

104. Webb, one of the men on this expedition, later informed (cont.) Logan Jack that 'some blacks' and 'a lot of blacks' were killed on two separate occasions without apparent justification and another group who were apparently trying to establish peaceful contact with the intruders were hunted away by the leader of the government party. At Battle Camp where the Aborigines attacked the Europeans 'some' Aborigines were killed in the first assault while an indeterminate number were trapped at a large lagoon and killed: 'all that went there stayed there'. Webb apparently believed that the killing was not indiscriminate and that the government inquiry had reported the full story. He also thought it justified. See also C.H., 19 August 1874. A Palmer correspondent to the *Cooktown Herald*, in August 1874, had heard that thirteen Aborigines were killed at Battle Camp alone.

105. C.C., 28 February 1877.
106. C.C., 2 March 1878.
were beaten out into axes; in fact any metal object was carried away as a prize for later adaptation. 107 They also soon realized that the Chinese were generally less dangerous targets than the Europeans, presumably because they were usually poorly armed and unmounted and thus less capable of instituting reprisals. The Aborigines frequently attacked very large Chinese groups of fifty and more. 108

A series of successful attacks on the Chinese at the Gilbert River in late 1872 and in late 1873 (discussed previously) indicated that the Aborigines were often contemptuous of the Chinese. Similar attacks were recorded on other fields. Attacks of this sort would have been attempted on large groups of Europeans only in the very early days of a new field if at all. 109

The need of the Aborigines to be more circumspect with the better mounted and armed Europeans was increased by the disproportionate number of unprincipled adventurers attracted to the newest frontier. There was the promise of quick wealth otherwise beyond a poor man's dreams and, as usual, anti-social ruffians who could not live happily within the normal constraints of European civilization or who would not be tolerated were among the first to arrive.

109. ibid. See also Q.S.A. JUS/N35: 230 of 1872 inquests into deaths of Ah Pio, and Chang Sang, miners, speared by Aborigines at the Gilbert River on 1 November 1872; 238 of 1872, Hug or Ah Cow, miner, speared by Aborigines at the Gilbert River on 12 November 1872; 241 of 1872, Ah Cook, miner, speared by Aborigines at the Gilbert River on 12 November 1872; and 242 of 1872, Cum Ty, miner, speared by Aborigines at Gilbert River on 17 November 1872. In all of the above inquests Chinese witnesses state how they ran off at the first sight of Aborigines. No mention is made of using firearms to protect themselves. Palmer, Early Days in North Queensland, p. 183.
The Police Magistrate at the Norman River in 1871 was glad to remark that the bad characters from the Burke District had moved on to the Cook District goldfields. Later the Goldfield Warden at Palmerville asserted that some of the Palmer miners were the worst characters in the colony but that many criminals were never charged. In his brief account of the Palmer from 1876 to 1882, Binnie also gave examples of some miners' lawlessness. While in his travels to far north Queensland searching for Aboriginal art sites, Mr. Percy Trezise recorded a tradition handed down by miners of Maytown and Cooktown that many Chinese deaths that have been attributed to Aborigines were actually committed by European gold-robbers who thrust spears into the bullet holes to simulate an Aboriginal attack. It is certainly possible that the Aborigines were sometimes made scapegoats for European and perhaps Chinese criminal acts. W.R.O. Hill who was a government official on most of the northern fields described the Cape River as 'a decidedly rough locality', some of the miners being 'the scum of all the Southern goldfields ... brutal fights ... were a daily occurrence ... I have seen a man kicked to death in the open daylight, the police and everybody else being powerless to interfere'. Certainly the early days of a new rush were crude, hard-drinking, violent places but the impression derived from reading the contemporary newspapers and official correspondence is that law and order quickly followed.

111. Goldfield Warden, Palmerville, to Col. Sec., 23 March 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A208, 1,111 of 1875.
113. Trezise, Quinkan Country, p. 111.
In fact, law and order was demanded as a right. To the Europeans Aboriginal resistance was one aspect of this and it was expected that the Aborigines should be pacified regardless of the cost in Aboriginal lives. Indeed the colonial government drew constant criticism for its inability to confine this atypical challenge within the normal framework of European police action. Once again, the colonists differentiated in their public utterances between killing Aborigines in pacified areas where it would be regarded as a crime and killing Aborigines in areas where the Aborigines were 'bad'. Here it was an act of war forced on the colonist by frontier circumstances or a lax government.115 Some at the time regarded this bloodshed with disgust116 but it was generally approved. Thus sub Inspector Douglas of the Native Police was described with enthusiasm as 'the terror of the blacks',117 while Sergeant Devine was referred to humorously as an active and energetic 'black tracker'.118

The intensity of the conflict may be suggested, however inadequately, by the casualties inflicted by the Aborigines. Although the loss of non-Aboriginal life was many times less than the loss of Aboriginal life, the records for the former, though nowhere near complete, are generally the only ones available. The otherwise unauthenticated, and often it seems uninvestigated, claims of successful

115. C.C., 1 January 1878. See also J. Cameron, Gilbert River, to A.H. Palmer, Col. Sec., 24 November 1873, Q.S.A. COL/Al95, 1142 of 1874. There was even on the nomad gold frontier an attitude that it was degrading, a loss to civilization, to be forced to abandon prosperous pursuits to 'savages'.

116. J.C. Hogflesh to Chief Sec., 8 October 1889, loc. cit.

117. C.C., 20 June 1874.

Aboriginal resistance that commonly appeared in the newspapers, especially with reference to the Cooktown-Palmer District, suggest strongly that more Europeans were killed than has been discovered in this research and many more Chinese. Thus the Palmer correspondent to the Cooktown Courier claimed that the murder of solitary travellers and prospectors was 'neither few nor far between' while the Palmer Chronicle 'believed' five Chinamen had been killed by the Aborigines at Chinkies Gully. Such casual asides indicate an acceptance of the view that widespread loss of life was occurring.

The first indication that Aboriginal resistance was a major problem to frontier miners came from the Gilbert. In April 1873, the Goldfield Warden, Dalrymple, reported ten miners and travellers had been killed, seven in the previous six months. Between 1 and 17 November 1872, at least five and possibly seven Chinese miners had been killed in several spectacular raids by large numbers of Aborigines, the largest group being estimated at two to three hundred. Dalrymple reported 'nearly the whole Chinese population, which formed the valuable alluvial diggings of the field, left the district, leaving the valley of the Gilbert in undisputed possession of the Aborigines'. A year later at least four miners were

119. M.M., 31 October 1874, 'The Palmer' from C.C., 20 September 1874. See also Maitland Mercury, 25 November 1875, for an account of unknown diggers probably killed by Aborigines.
120. P.D.T., 16 November 1878, from Palmer Chronicle.
121. G.E. Dalrymple, Gold Commissioner and P.M., Gilberton, to Col. Sec., 22 April 1873, Q.S.A. COL/Al33, 1009 of 1873.
122. M.M., 30 November 1872. See also inquests Q.S.A. JUS/N35 and N38, 1872: 230, Chang Lang and Ah Pie (plus one other Chinese miner?); Nug Cow; 241, Ah Cook (plus one other Chinese miner?); 242, Cum Ty.
123. Dalrymple to Col. Sec., 22 April 1873, loc. cit.
killed and as many more wounded on the Gilbert and two killed and two wounded on the adjacent Etheridge. As indicated previously in this chapter, the discovery of the Palmer and these Aboriginal raids led to the desertion of the Gilbert.\textsuperscript{124} With the opening of the Palmer there began a period of conflict that lasted more than twenty years. In the first rush from the Endeavour River in October 1873, one miner, probably two others, and possibly a fourth were killed by the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{125} By the end of 1874, at least 24 settlers were killed in the Cooktown-Palmer District, with the probability of five others and the possibility of another four; during 1875, at least nine were killed and possibly 13 more; during 1876, at least two and possibly three more; during 1877, at least two were killed and probably another one; and during 1878, at least four and probably five more. No deaths were discovered caused by Aboriginal resistance during 1879. Thus, from October 1873 to the close of 1879, at least 41 settlers were killed by Aboriginal resistance, probably another 11, and possibly 20 more. During the 1880's, at least another 21 settlers were killed in the Cooktown-Palmer area, and from 1890 to June 1895, when the last death resulting from Aboriginal resistance was recorded, at least eight settlers were killed with possibly two more. In the Cooktown-Palmer mining region, in the period being studied, at least 70 settlers were killed, probably another 11, and possibly 22 more. On all other frontier mining fields between 1869 and 1897 at least 39 settlers were killed, probably another one,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{124} J. Cameron, Mt. Hogan, via Gilberton, to Col. Sec., 18 December 1873, Q.S.A. COL/\textsuperscript{1142} of 1874; M.M., 27 September 1873, 'The Gilbert' and M.M., 11 October 1873. See also Q.S.A. JUS/\textsuperscript{182} and 183 of 1873.
\textsuperscript{125} Jack, Northmost Australia, Vol. II, pp. 421 and 423.
\end{flushleft}
and possibly four more. Thus more than twice as many people were reported killed by Aborigines in the Cooktown–Palmer District than on all other North Queensland frontier mining fields. These figures help to explain the popular legends about bloodshed on the Palmer which will now be examined.

The Palmer especially has become part of frontier folklore and the conflict assumed heroic proportions. Recent commentators have also been less than restrained in their accounts of the Europeans and Chinese killed by Aborigines. In the centenary history of Queensland, Cilento and Lack claimed 'thousands' of Chinese were killed and eaten by the Aborigines on the Palmer while Holthouse stated that 'hundreds' of Chinese were 'ambushed, captured, and taken away to be eaten at leisure'. He claimed that on one new rush 'Chinese were kidnapped by the dozen and taken away to be eaten at leisure'. Holthouse also claimed that Aboriginal resistance cost 'hundreds' of white lives and elsewhere that 'dozens' of white diggers and carriers were killed. It seems impossible to ascertain the facts contributing to the legend. Only 34 deaths attributed with certainty to Aboriginal resistance have been categorized Chinese, in the course of this research; that

129. ibid., pp. 126, 127. I have not sighted the original account of this incident. Most of the incidents mentioned by Holthouse were encountered in the primary sources in this study.
130. ibid., p. 32.
131. ibid., p. 36.
is fewer than half of the 70 deaths confidently accepted. (See Appendix B). Because of the number of Chinese on the field in comparison with the European population, one can only conclude that the above statistics are misleading. It seems likely that the murder of Chinese miners was less thoroughly reported, possibly because of the racial bias of the contemporary newspapers, the limited contact between the Chinese and European populations, and the cohesive nature of the Chinese community which probably meant that they resorted less frequently to the doubtful benefits of Queensland law.

All commentators of the Palmer rush have stressed the loss of life but while the number of European lives lost has always dramatised the seriousness of the conflict, the number of Chinese lives lost has sometimes been seen almost as comic relief to stress the ferocity of the Peninsula Aborigines. Thus the low salt diet of the Chinese was said to make them more appetizing to Palmer River cannibals while some thought the diggers might have encouraged this belief among the Aborigines. 132

It is of course the resistance of the Aborigines that is best recorded in the European records. Very rarely is a glimpse into the condition of Aboriginal society on the mining frontier obtained. The Aboriginal art sites recently discovered by Trezise in the rugged hill country around the Laura River have shown, however, that some Aborigines were trying to accommodate the presence of the intruders in their world picture. Among the last paintings executed by the Aboriginal artists were representations of aspects of the invaders' culture.

Horse and rider, Laura Gallery, Cooktown District.

Above shown with traditional subjects. Mr. P. Trezise in foreground. Reproduced with permission of Mr. P. Trezise.
In a small gallery twenty miles north-west of Cooktown, there is a masted boat drawn in pipe-clay. Trezise believes that the site had been used after the coming of the Europeans because of the presence of two large mango trees outside the shelter. He thinks that the drawing represents a lugger, probably used by an early beche-de-merfisherman. In another gallery, there is a representation of a horse, ten feet long and six feet wide.\textsuperscript{133} Just north of the Laura River, there is a painting of a policeman with a peaked\textsuperscript{134} cap. In each of two other galleries, a ten foot long horse is represented in yellow ochre. A dark red booted figure seems to represent a rifle-carrying black policeman just thrown by his horse.\textsuperscript{135} Near the other horse is a representation of a pig. There are three horses represented in these galleries, two about life size and one an astonishing giant, as well as a stencilled horse's hoof.\textsuperscript{136} Trezise also records the discovery of an actual steel tomahawk at one of the galleries made from a horseshoe broken into two pieces, sharpened, and hafted.\textsuperscript{137}

It is difficult to state with any certainty the function of these drawings. Trezise suggests that the Aborigines, finding themselves unable to defeat the invaders physically, resorted to sorcery to try to destroy their enemies and that this explains at least some of the paintings mentioned. He concludes:

There is no doubt that these shelters, situated high up in rough country, were the last strongholds of the wild warriors. They retired to them after each attack on the access and supply routes to the Palmer goldfield, which wound along the valleys and creeks below. The large sorcery paintings illustrated the last dreadful

\textsuperscript{133} Trezise, \textit{Quinkan Country}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{134} ibid., p. 148.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid., p. 126.
\textsuperscript{136} ibid., p. 127.
\textsuperscript{137} ibid., p. 77.
\textsuperscript{138} ibid., p. 63.
chapters in a long history of art which had its beginnings way off in the Dreamtime. 139

Other paintings, for example of the horses and the pig, may have been associated with increase ceremonies as these animals became important elements in the Aboriginal life and were probably subsumed into their totemic world picture as Sharp has indicated in his description of the Jirjofont. It is possible that the representation of the white man, the Native Police, and their huge and terrifying horses were early attempts to placate these strange demons.

There is only one certain conclusion that can be reached. During the period of frontier conflict, the Aborigines had tried to understand the invaders in terms of their traditional philosophy. They had tried to accommodate to this newest, most revolutionary and most disruptive of alien influences. Their attack on the invaders and their animals was but part of a much wider cultural response.

The mining frontier persisted in parts of Cape York Peninsula throughout the period of this study. During this time there was apparently no appreciable change in the nature of race relations created by this moving frontier. The wave of small discoveries which sometimes at first promised other Palmers rolled up the Peninsula from Coen in 1878, to the Musgrave, to as far as the Batavia River in 1892 where there was a sizeable rush which soon disappointed. There were still 150 miners on that field at the end of 1892 and in 1894 the discoverer of the field, Baird, was killed there by Aborigines while two other prospectors were seriously wounded. 141 The distribution of the Police

139. ibid., pp. 119, 148.
140. R.L. Sharp, Steel Axes for Stone Age People, passim.
indicated that the Peninsula Aborigines were still resisting the scattered pastoralists and miners. In 1889, when there was a very large reduction (approximately one-third) in the strength of the Native Police, there were 43 troopers in the Cooktown District (which included the far northern Peninsula) and another 16 at Port Douglas out of a total of 144, and in 1895 there were still 45 troopers or trackers in the Cook District. In 1894, the Cooktown Courier's Mitchell River correspondent complained of the blacks being 'very troublesome' and threatening the abandonment of country. They had even made an unsuccessful night attack on Sub Inspector Poindistre's Native Police detachment. In the same month, the Cooktown Courier described, with low-key nonchalance, the escape of a beseiged party of miners. There seemed to be nothing unusual about this. The forty odd troopers were no doubt gainfully employed but by this time frontier problems seemed peripheral, even in Cooktown.

Thus the nature of Aboriginal-European relations on the frontier mining fields remained much the same from 1869 to the end of the period being studied. They were characterised by conflict with the Aborigines in the areas being opened up. The intensity of the conflict was dependent upon the location and terrain of the mining fields and the nature of the invaders' industry. The fields were situated on or near watercourses that were essential to both the invading and indigenous populations. As well, they were generally situated in mountainous terrain which made exploitation difficult and expensive and facilitated

144. C.C., 11 September 1894.
145. C.C., 28 September 1894.
Aboriginal resistance. The fluid nature of the mining population meant that there were no sure refuges to which the Aborigines could retire. The unpredictable intrusion of miners must have been extremely provocative and helped produce the intense Aboriginal resistance.

The ephemeral nature of most of the centres of population rendered it virtually impossible for the Aborigines and frontier miners to reach a peaceful accord as happened sooner or later on the pastoral frontier. The diggers were thus even more likely to resort to firearms than the pastoralists. In most areas there was insufficient time for the miners to break Aboriginal resistance completely or for the Aborigines to resign themselves to the presence of miners. Indeed, by 1880, when the period of major rushes was over, Aborigines had not been let in on the frontier mining fields.

Aboriginal resistance posed very serious problems on these fields. The poor and often lengthy communications between mining centres and between the fields and the coast were extremely vulnerable to Aboriginal attack. This was especially true of the Palmer and Hodgkinson fields. An additional reason for attacking the lines of communication and the associated animals was the limited number of pastured stock the Aborigines could attack to replace their natural food supplies which were greatly inhibited by the intrusion of the miners.

An important function of the Native Police was to keep the roads open. This force's normal function of intimidating Aboriginal resistance was much less successful than on the open pastoral frontier because of the vulnerability not only of the miners' tents and camps while the men were gully raking but also of the miners pushing out in small groups, often secretly, into new areas, and splitting up further into ones and twos. Finally, it should be noted that the Queensland government
was never able to offer miners protection that was regarded as adequate even by the standards of the pastoral frontier. Thus, the colony's frontier policy could not cope effectively with the frontier mining fields.