CHAPTER IV

BLACK MEETS WHITE

'Letting the Blacks In'.

For the first seven years of the Bowen District's history, white men met black only as enemies. It is surprising to find, therefore, some residents advising Lt. Marlow to 'let the blacks in' to the town as early as July 1866. The Editor of the Port Denison Times was horrified. He pointed out that wherever this had happened white men were speared and their women violated; the Aborigines fell victim to drink, European diseases, and clothing which they wore unhygenically. Humanitarians desired to offer them refuge in the town from troopers and squatters, but the Editor asserted vigorously that the Aborigines would be in more danger. His main fear, however, was that they would lose their awe of the white man. Subsequent events indicate that no one in the district had admitted them at that time.¹

The next significant attempt to end the open

¹ P.D.T., 21 July 1866. Editorial
conflict came, not from the town but from squatters of substance whose motives were mainly economic and secondarily philanthropic. On 23 January 1867 a meeting of pastoralists considering the 'Black Question' surprisingly expressed a desire to employ the local Aborigines on their stations and to civilize them. The squatters urged that certain stations be set aside where Aborigines could be encouraged to come in and be under the supervision of a Native Police detachment. Officers would be needed to control the reserves and to attract the Aborigines by distributing blankets and tomahawks. The attempt to change government policy came from the frontier as it had when Dalrymple urged a substitute force for the Native Police, only this time the suggestion came from those the government was protecting.

The squatters' petition was placed before the Executive Council which acknowledged their good intentions but considered the scheme would result in increased injury to the Aborigines when they mingled indiscriminately with the European population.
The leader of the movement, A.L. McDougall, replied that the government was supporting the violation of a condition of the squatter's lease by refusing to let the blacks in but the Executive was unmoved.2

At least two of the petitioning squatters had more than economic motivation. McDougall later demonstrated his sympathy for the Aborigines by involving himself in a controversy concerning alleged Native Police outrages,3 while another squatter, Bode, one of three squatters who had first encountered Aboriginal hostility in April 1861, now drew ridicule from other graziers by expressing horror at the 'keeping them out' policy. One squatter, significantly signing himself 'Vici', suggested that the government should oblige by allowing the Aborigines in on Bode's 'Strathdon'

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2. P.D.T., 13 April 1867. McDougall wrote a letter enclosing the Under Colonial Secretary's reply to the squatter's petition, 26 February 1867, and his answer to that letter, 9 March 1867.

and on McDougall's stations. 4

It is doubtful if these gentlemen would have obtained support had the squatters not urgently needed cheap labour. The pastoral slump made them consider an alternative to the crippling expense of 'keeping the blacks out', and McDougall could refer to his New South Wales experience where the Aborigines had been allowed in for thirty years. 5 About the same time the Port Denison Times was urging the admission of cheap Chinese labour, regretting pointedly that the Aborigines had proved useless for this purpose, 6 while a number of Bowen squatters had formed a labour association in September 1866 which had come to nothing. Soon after, attempts were made to use the familiar South Sea Island labour on the stations, ten being signed on at Strathmore in May 1867. The example was soon widely followed and by March 1868 237 of the 407 Islanders employed north of Mackay were pastoral workers. 7 The experiment was apparently

4. P.D.T., 20 April 1867. 'Vici' quoted Bode's statement: 'It is a fearful way to be going on'.
quite successful until in 1877 the Queensland Government began limiting the employment of Islanders to tropical and sub-tropical agriculture despite squatter opposition. Thus, the first significant move to 'let in' the Aborigines in the Bowen district was intimately bound up with the squatters' desperate need for labour and their straitened economic circumstances which could no longer easily support the frontier conflict.

There were other less important influences. Bowen's little gold rush at Mount Wyatt in January 1867 and a previous small rush west of Townsville, at the Star River, probably made the squatters realize the new threat to their critically short labour supply. Moreover, despite the widespread opposition to the movement for change and the

8. O. Parnaby, Britain and the Labour Trade in the South-West Pacific, (Durham, N.C., 1964, pp.124-128. Bolton implies that the use of Island labour on stations was not a success. Parnaby and statistics argue otherwise. In 1877, one-half were working on stations and the squatters objected when white worker influence limited the employment opportunities of Islanders.

conviction that squatters would organize vigilante squads if the Native Police detachment was removed, there seems to have been a genuine yearning for a peaceful way of life without the wearing menace of the Aborigines, the constant vigilance, and brutalizing violence.

When the Executive Council refused the petition, it clearly disapproved of the whole idea of 'letting in' at that time, although Police Commissioner Seymour later claimed the government had only refused the allocation of Native Police to the proposed reserves. The main reasons were firstly, the government's desire to keep police expenditure 'as near as possible to the estimates' and secondly, its unwillingness to create


11. P.D.T., 13 April 1867. See McDougall's letter to the editor.

12. ibid., Under Col. Sec's letter to McDougall, 26 February 1867.


14. Police Commissioner to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A100, 56 of 1868. A Minute from the Col. Sec. states:'... at present unable to entertain any proposition that will entail expenditure beyond that sanctioned by the Legislature and that the Police must be kept as near as possible to the estimates'.


what it believed was an unnecessary and futile social service. As late as 1874, the Governor was but echoing the general opinion when he wrote to the Secretary of State that nothing could be done to improve the habits and conditions of the Aborigines.¹⁵

What happened in the next eighteen months is not clear. The Aborigines certainly continued to be troublesome, and, after the withdrawal of the Bowen Native Police detachment, alarmed the settlers more than ever as they began to move about their tribal lands with greater freedom, apparently willing to take their chance at eluding hostile Europeans. In January 1868 the Police Commissioner complained he could not prevent outrages in the Port Denison District because of the insufficiency of Native Police.¹⁶ Inspector Marlow wrote that the Aborigines were killing as many as eighty cattle a raid and returning confidently to

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¹⁵. Governor's Outward Despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in England, No. 39 of 1874, 10 August 1874.

¹⁶. Police Commissioner Seymour to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868, op. cit.
the run after the overworked Native Police had 'dispersed' them. Settlers were again threatening to abandon their runs and Marlow maintained that reports of collisions with, and depredations by, the Aborigines had doubled since the withdrawal of the detachment. 17 As late as September 1868, several people living on the outskirts of Bowen deserted their homes because of the presence of Aborigines, and a hastily formed 'Provincial Committee' of townsfolk petitioned the government for permission to have special constables sworn in to enable the legal protection of the lives and property of the inhabitants. The alarmed townsmen claimed that horses and cattle had been killed near the town by large numbers of Aborigines. There were two alternatives facing the residents of Bowen: to drive off the Aborigines, as the Provincial Committee recommended, or to let them in.

In the eight years that had elapsed since the first settlement, much had changed. Firstly, with a population of about one thousand in the town alone as compared with

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17. Marlow to Seymour, 9 December 1867, enclosed in Seymour to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868.
120 in 1862, the Europeans could argue confidently from strength.\textsuperscript{18} It also seemed obvious that the numbers of the Aborigines had greatly declined. When some Bowen residents rode out to meet the Aborigines, they found only about thirty male adults where previously they considered there must have been hundreds.\textsuperscript{19} Even by June 1869, four months after they were let in, there were only about two hundred Aborigines in the vicinity of the town.\textsuperscript{20} They were clearly less of a threat and the communal fear of the settlers was not as great an incitement to violence. Secondly, there were Europeans like McDougall and Bode concerned to alleviate the suffering of the Aborigines and unwilling to allow the use of naked force to go unquestioned. Most vociferous of all was the Church of England clergyman, the Rev. I.V. Black, who pointed out the brutality of the old system to ensure that the 'letting in' movement continued.\textsuperscript{21} In horrifying detail he described alleged

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21. \textit{P.D.T.}, 17 April 1869; 1 May 1869; 22 May 1869. A series of articles entitled: 'Shall We Admit the Blacks'.
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excesses of the Native Police and squatters of the district, while admitting that 'the Aborigines have, by all laws human and divine, forfeited their right to continue sole lords of the soil ... and therefore it has sometimes been necessary to teach them our superiority'. Apparently conquest of a technologically primitive people could fit into Black's concept of Christianity, but not brutal conquest. His claim that he had much sympathetic support throughout the district suggested that, by early 1869, the few active humanitarians in the Bowen District had been joined by others who realized that the power of the Aborigines had been broken. 22 Even the Editor of the *Port Denison Times* had shown a complete change of heart and stated the time had come to stop keeping the Aborigines at arm's length. 23

Indeed the wisdom of admitting the Aborigines had already been demonstrated by some outlying squatters. During 1868 they, too, had apparently realized that the Aborigines could be safely let in without extra Native Police to guard them. On such outlying stations as

22. Rev. I.V. Black, Trinity Parsonage, to Col. Sec., 7 September 1868. Q.S.A. COL/All1, 974 of 1868.  
Vane Creek on the Belyando River and Natal Downs, letting in had proved outstandingly successful. After nine months Hickson, on the Belyando, informed the Colonial Secretary there were no depredations whatsoever;24 while Chatfield of Natal Downs had had very large numbers of Aborigines peacefully settled on his run since January 1868 whereas it had been almost untenable from 1864 to 1867. Other stations were following the example, glad to use the labour which cost them food only, and relieved to be free of the frontier warfare tension.25 Though the squatters and their employees were still outnumbered, the will of the Aborigines to resist had been broken. On the Cape River, this had taken only five years.26

By February 1869, as the era of open hostility was ending, the Port Denison Times reported that the


25. W. Chatfield to P.M. Bowen, 6 January 1869, enclosed in P.M. Bowen to Police Commissioner, 30 March 1869, Q.S.A. COL/Al21, 1483 of 1869.

'blackfellows' were showing great anxiety to be let in. It is likely that Aboriginal women and children first found a place on the stations. At Strathdon-Bode had employed a gin for over twelve months. She was sent out to explain the new regime and almost immediately over one hundred Aborigines came in. At Euri Creek some of Bode's southern Aborigines easily persuaded that local group to come in and they promised more would be in within a month. Bode and the Times urged settlers at the mouth of the Don to allow the Aborigines to fish there as they had promised to kill no more cattle, to keep to certain parts of the runs, and not to hunt when cattle were nearby. The conditions of the peace were gradually being detailed.

The Aborigines were apparently as eager as the Europeans to end the conflict. They would now be able to resume their traditional life, at least in part, without the fear of sudden death; but it is possible that their eagerness to come in was increased by the material attractions of the European way of life about which the station women and children could inform them.

27. P.D.T., 6 February 1869.
29. P.D.T., ibid., and 6 February 1869.
The newspaper watched Bode's experiment at nearby Strathdon with great interest. In March it reported it so far successful and touchingly told how the Aborigines had wanted to present their finest fish from the Don expedition to Bode. More important, it reported that Bode was already finding them very useful in the stockyards and, astonishingly, even by then considered them trustworthy.  

Very soon the Aborigines began appearing openly about the outskirts of the town. There were some alarmed rumours of misbehaviour but the Times asserted the Aborigines were 'perfectly harmless' if the settlers did not interfere with the women or give the men drink; for almost immediately some settlers were undermining the peaceful assimilation of the Aborigines. One man had gone to their Queen's Beach camp 'to catch himself a young one', as if he were after a monkey, the Editor complained. He cautioned that 'kidnapping Aborigines is punishable by law' and pointed out the need for a Protector. Within a week, the Times was asserting

30. P.D.T., 6 March 1869.
31. P.D.T., 3 April 1869.
that, as it was illegal for whites to cohabit with Aboriginal women and sell drink to the men, these laws ought to be enforced rigorously. Notable townsmen were known to be debauching the gins, the Times claimed, which would not deter prosecution if only guilt could be proven. With such offences, the Times admitted, this was difficult but hoped that those so endangering the safety of the town would at least be socially ostracised. The newspaper drew the attention of townsmen to the critical nature of racial relations and warned that such irresponsible actions might incite the Aborigines to violence necessitating the return of the Native Police. This, the Times now admitted, would be a retrograde step as 'the troopers are a source of irritation to the blacks, and not unfrequently do more harm than good by their too close neighbourhood'. The editor's disapproval of the Native Police and scathing criticism of his foolish fellow townsmen signified moral disapproval as well as a fear of arousing the Aborigines. This perhaps indicated that the mores of

32. P.D.T., 10 April 1869.
33. P.D.T., 27 March 1869.
Victorian England were beginning to appear in Bowen now that the frontier tension had been removed.

Two petitions were presented to the local Bench, both claiming the welfare of the Aborigines as their prime concern: one urged that the Aborigines should be let in; the other, that they should be kept out. Both attempted to prevent the evil consequences of racial contact. The magistrates concluded they were legally powerless to keep the Aborigines out but applied for government blankets 'to enable them to clothe themselves decently' and remove one objection to their admission which was very real in this little outpost of Victoria's empire.34 When numbers of naked Aborigines entered the town in early May, residents protested to the Colonial Secretary and demanded additional police protection for the danger to their women that they believed must follow.35

By May 1869, then, the Aborigines had been let in on many stations in the Bowen District and could

34. P.D.T., 10 April 1869.
safely visit the town. In the letting in process the role of the government should not be overlooked. Probably through Native Police reports the administration had come to realize that the Aborigines in the district were not as great a threat as they were elsewhere. Thus, by the withdrawal of the local detachment the government had tacitly withdrawn its opposition to letting in, leaving the locals to solve the new phase of the 'black problem'. When the Aborigines were freer to move about, the locals were forced to do just this. The removal of the Don River detachment to Dalrymple in 1868 so that it could serve also as gold escort on the Cape River was an economy measure as well; so probably by existing standards, the removal was premature. By this time, as many Europeans realized that most Aborigines had lost all desire or capacity to resist, the economic and humanitarian motives were able to promote successfully the admission of the Aborigines. The end of what the Port Denison Times Editor now called 'the reign of

36. Police Commissioner to Col. Sec., 8 February 1869, Q.S.A. COL/117, 473 of 1869. Also P.D.T., 9 May 1868, for reasons for proposed transfer of detachment.
THE IMAGES ON THIS PAGE HAVE BEEN REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS
terror by which they have been hitherto kept in subjaction\textsuperscript{37} merely marked the beginning of a new relationship between Aborigines and Europeans in which the Aborigines acknowledged the Europeans as conquerors.

\textbf{A PERIOD OF TRANSITION}

The transition from one kind of relationship to another was not without difficulty and controversy despite the fact that near Bowen, at least, open conflict ceased with dramatic suddenness. The whole history of Aboriginal-European relations in the Bowen district was thoroughly aired for several months showing there was not only much sympathy for the Aborigines but a good deal of residual fear as well.

There was a strong and widely held conviction that the Aborigines must be made completely submissive, especially as it was considered they must harbour resentment against whites 'as long as the race lasts'. Consequently it was believed that any disturbances had to be checked at the outset, even by illegal methods. The \textit{Port Denison Times} approved the Police Sergeant's flogging a gin who had stolen a child's petticoat

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{P.D.T.}, 12 June 1869. Editorial.
because it was 'quite the right thing to do under the circumstances'.

The Editor asserted that even minor offences, committed in ignorance, should be punished 'to teach those principles of submission which our position renders it so necessary for us to enforce'. He further advised the law 'to wink at' Europeans summarily punishing offending Aborigines. Thus, from the Aborigines' admission European opinion condoned their illegal treatment, and the British concept of equality before the law was in practice limited in the pacified area as it had been in the unpacified area.

This was not unexpected as the Aborigines had not overnight sloughed off their culture which in so many ways conflicted with that of the Europeans. Firstly, 'naked savages' affronted Bowen womanhood, it was said, shamed the men, and corrupted the young 'with the undisguised appearance of open, shameless, unrebuked vice'. Presumably they were naked and sexually active. In response to such protests the police fired over the Aborigines' heads to force them to move their camp out

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of view. Their corroborees annoyed some whites and their use of a local waterhole upset the cattle. There were also reports that some Aborigines did not fully understand their new status: some had informed a squatter they would come and go as they chose on his run; one had threatened to club a white man, and others had threatened some women. Yet, despite this friction, there was no major disturbance. A show of white determination or resort to the local police was sufficient to restore the white man's authority.

The haphazard nature of admission was initially the greatest danger. On some stations Aborigines were allowed in, on others not, so that there was always the danger of incorrect retaliation. However, by the end of 1869 most stations had admitted the Aborigines; but there was still the fear that, if alienated again, their knowledge of station life and the comparative

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40. P.D.T., 21 August 1869. The Aborigines were later seen in war paint sharpening their axes in the cemetery wrote a correspondent signing himself 'Hamlet' - for obvious reasons. They apparently thought better of it.

41. P.D.T., 21 August 1869; 25 February 1871; 4 September 1869.
weakness of the squatters would produce much more serious conflict and retaliation. This fear was greater because many stations had dispensed with as many as half their employees because of the adverse economic conditions, or the decreased Aboriginal threat, or both. There was urgent need for a reserve system and staff to protect and control the Aborigines, but the government would not respond to Bowen requests. If such a system was needed at Bowen, it was obviously needed in almost every district.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{Attempts to Improve the Conditions of the Aborigines.}

The welfare of the Aborigines now depended on private initiative both in the town and in the country. If the Aborigines had been admitted to the stations, squatters applied for blankets pointing out generally how the Aborigines were allowed to hunt freely over all or part of the run and how well behaved they had been.\textsuperscript{43} Although the blankets were to be distributed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} P.D.T., 20 November 1869, 'A Black Protector'. Editorials 12 June 1869 and 19 June 1869.
\item \textsuperscript{43} M.W. Reid to James Gordon, P.M. Townsville, 31 March 1869, enclosed in Gordon to Col. Sec., 13 April 1869, Q.S.A. COL/A122, 1568 of 1869. Reid managed Jarvisfield Station near the Burdekin Delta and Woodstock Station, south of Townsville.
\end{itemize}
by Courts of Petty Session, the Colonial Secretary permitted approved squatters to distribute them if they were close enough, theoretically, to be supervised by the Court. Thus, at this time the government's sole contribution to the pacified Aborigines, the annual blanket, was available only to those close to centres of European civilization. It seems probable that the government's desire to control a distribution open to much abuse was reinforced by the Victorian horror of nakedness. 44

There were other attempts to help the Aborigines which were unaided by the government. The first came from a surprising source. By December 1867 Inspector Marlow had found it so impossible to answer all the calls for protection that he suggested an alternative: collecting all the gins and children, which he claimed could be easily done, and sending them to a suitable island. Gradually the men would be gathered and sent

44. Letterbook of Miscellaneous Letters, 2 January 1868-28 December 1870. Q.S.A. Accession Number 48/1316, Letters from Col. Sec. to I.H. Scott, Strathbogie, 5 June 1869; and to W.H. Hickson, Vane Creek, Belyando River, 30 June 1869. P.D.T., 8 May 1869.
to join their families. Police Commissioner Seymour believed that this scheme 'would be far more merciful to the blacks than any other plan as yet tried'; the Colonial Secretary thought it 'unique' but refused to act upon it because once again no extra expense could be countenanced. The scheme shows the same desperation as the Tasmanian tragedy, but its chief significance is the light it throws upon the official mind. Both the Colonial Secretary and the Police Commissioner were aware of the suffering of the Aborigines but the government was unwilling to incur expense to attempt to ameliorate their condition.

The second scheme was more important. The Rev. I. Black, Church of England Minister at Bowen, had been travelling throughout the district trying to help the orphaned Aboriginal children 'greatly on the increase through the war of extermination carried on by the

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45. Police Commissioner Seymour to Col. Sec., 6 January 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A100, 56 of 1868 with Marlow to Seymour, 9 December 1867, enclosed. See Col. Sec's Minute: '... unable to entertain any proposition that will entail expenditure beyond that sanctioned by the Legislature.'
settlers' and augmented by the activities of the Native Police. Black told how adults had even offered to sell their children to squatters for a few pounds of sugar or flour to alleviate their own deplorable condition or to save their children. Several squatters had promised to supply him with orphans whom he would hand over to the many people offering to train and educate them. The Colonial Secretary, however, refused to allow the well-intentioned Inspector Marlow to help officially by collecting orphans although leaving him free personally to participate. Despite Marlow's refusal to co-operate, possibly because of implied official disapproval, Black proceeded to supply the many recipients willing to rear the children 'as a benefit to themselves and eventually to the tribes to which they belonged'. Throughout the district, the young were 'rapidly absorbed'. Black wanted to introduce an equal number of each sex, apparently envisaging a class of black servants growing up within

the community but separate from it socially. Black's scheme was maliciously criticised by some squatters who rankled under his vitriolic criticism of their 'keeping them out policy' and charged him with intimidating the Aborigines at gunpoint to surrender their children. Black replied that he did not even own a pistol.  

The Editor of the *Port Denison Times* made a more balanced criticism. He pointed out that the fostering of Aboriginal children by Europeans was very common elsewhere in Australia and had nowhere benefited the Aborigines. He suggested a supervised reserve in each tribal area from which trusted whites could use Aboriginal labour and on which Aborigines would be protected from degradation. The Editor thought religion might be picked up indirectly from the European Protector unless a missionary, presumably he meant Black, desired to live with them as St. Boniface had done with the Germans who were 'probably as repulsive and certainly more ferocious'.

The *Times* plan was very similar to the one

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47. *P.D.T.*, 22 May 1869. 'Shall We Admit the Blacks No. 3'.
Bridgman put into effect at Mackay where he presented the government with a successful fait accompli, partly solved a labour shortage, organized public support, and asked for government aid. In Bowen, as there was no one of Bridgman's calibre, such a reserve system had to await stimulus from Mackay. 49

Black's scheme was the only one that bore fruit immediately although there is no indication of how many orphans were adopted or how long it was continued as an organized plan. Here once again humanitarian and economic motives coincided. A destitute child was reared and would become a cheap servant. In the emergency Black's scheme no doubt helped many children but it had a number of defects. There was no legal control or official supervision of Black or the Europeans concerned who were allowed to do as they liked with large numbers of Aboriginal children. The lives of many children were commendably saved; but they were suddenly thrust into a cultural no-man's-land

where it was likely few would be contented. Indeed, inducing Aborigines to surrender their children further hastened the break down of tribal life. If one considers the European's ignorance of the Aboriginal kinship system, it is also probable that Aborigines often sold them, not their own children but orphaned classificatory sons or daughters. These they might otherwise have reared, despite the hardship of the times, in accordance with Aboriginal custom. However, Black's effort was a genuine act of compassion and probably the most that could be expected under frontier conditions without government support.

The Beginnings of a New Society

By the end of Bowen's first decade, a new if transient society was being formed by the fusion of the two races. The Aborigines were apparently wholly admitted between Bowen and Townsville and hunted in safety, resuming as much of their traditional life as possible. However, this was becoming increasingly difficult as the Aborigines readily accepted

52. P.D.T., 15 May 1869. A letter signed 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'.
opportunities to work for the squatters, and the squatters presumably began to count on their labour. The newly let in Aborigines aroused the concern of many residents of the district, not only the few proposing schemes to help them. Residents gave them clothes, and raised howls of protest at the early attempts to drive them from the town to be at the mercy of the Native Police and hostile squatters. In February, 1870 the Bench at Bowen estimated there were 1500 Aborigines in the district to distribute blankets to, but such a number no longer aroused fear. In May 1870, the Times remarked that the citizens were getting used to their presence. The Editor probably reflected the changed opinion of many Europeans when he wrote:

The Aborigines of this part of the colony seem to be intelligent, docile and honest, and

54. P.D.T., 21 May 1870
55. P.D.T., 17 April 1869. 'Shall We Admit the Blacks'.
21 August 1869, 'Hamlet's letter'.
56. Bench Bowen to Col. Sec., 9 February 1870, Q.S.A.
COL/AL39, 786 of 1870.
willing to work to earn any little food or clothing that is given to them .../in fact,/ our relations with them are better than it was /sic/ before we let them in ..... Indeed, he asserted that security of life and property had increased, rather than diminished as it was first feared when the idea of letting the Aborigines into the town was first contemplated. 57

By 1871 it had become normal for Aborigines to make temporary camps on the outskirts of the town out of sight of the residents, first at Hatcher's Hill and later beyond Doughty's Creek. They were allowed in to the town to work and to buy European goods with their wages, which were generally in kind, but were forced to leave town between sunset and sunrise. 58 Although they were in 1871 still leading a nomadic life, the growth of these fringe settlements indicated that they were being increasingly attracted by the material benefits of European civilization and as well finding it necessary to augment their own now limited natural

58. P.D.T., 17 June 1871; 8 May 1869. Some Bowen locals can still point to the site outside the town which was the last camp of the Bowen Aborigines. See also P.R. Delamothe, Bowen's First Hundred Years 1770-1870, Bowen Historical Society, /undated/.
resources. By 1871 these two factors were beginning to produce the despised and familiar 'Blacks' Camp'. While the Aborigines were enemies, they naturally had attracted great attention and, latterly, much sympathy. As the fringe dwelling sub-stratum of Bowen society, they ceased to be noticed by respectable whites as long as they did not offend. After being let in, references to them in the Times are very rare. By 1900, it seems that the 1500 in the vicinity who had survived the frontier violence had dwindled to a mere 200. The European peace was apparently more destructive than its weapons.

Alcohol had no part in traditional Aboriginal life, but almost immediately the Aborigines showed a fondness for it, probably as loss of emotional and spiritual security followed hard upon their lack of physical security. Because their old life became progressively less meaningful and satisfying and because of their subordinate position, such stimulants as alcohol and tobacco - later opium - probably found

59. P. Delamothe, Bowen's First Hundred Years, p. 4. Also Bench Bowen to Col. Sec., 9 February 1870, op. cit.
an ever stronger appeal. In October 1869 Aboriginal over-indulgence in alcohol was still rare enough for the Times to report indignantly that two Aborigines were intoxicated on the occasion of the Governor's visit; while by February 1871 Aboriginal consumption of alcohol was so general that the Editor claimed this habit to be the root cause of all Aboriginal crime in the town. 60 Irresponsible locals were ever ready to supply the Aborigines with 'grog', probably as payment for work done or wives loaned.

Aboriginal women had been taken into station life as domestic help or concubines or both even before hostilities ceased. Although the Europeans had the usual Victorian reluctance to comment frankly on the subject of venereal disease, it seems that it was very soon communicated to some Aboriginal women, and by May 1869 they in turn were communicating it to later employees on the stations. At the Bowen Hospital Black spoke with some and subsequently publicised the debauching of the gins. One of Black's most hostile critics admitted the state of affairs by denying that all squatters so used Aboriginal women. 61

60. P.D.T., 16 October 1869; 25 February 1871.
61. P.D.T., 1 May 1869; 22 May 1869. 'Shall We Admit the Blacks'. 5 June 1869, 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'.
By the end of Bowen's first decade, then, the stage had been set for the next phase of Aboriginal-European relations: the disease, degradation, and decline of the Aborigines and the neglect of this situation by the Europeans. This phase is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

So far, the first two stages of Aboriginal-European contact, 'keeping the blacks out' and 'letting them in', have been described. It would be mistaken, however, to think that there was smooth and uniform development. Even while the Aborigines were being admitted in some areas, violent conflict continued in others, and the complexity of the human involvement and reaction was as great. Thus, in June 1869 the Inkerman Aborigines, just south of the Burdekin, were still menacing locals and travellers. At this late date, and in conflict now with local experience, frontier tension raised the old fear that they were organizing with more than usual Aboriginal skill. The rumour spread that a sophisticated Brisbane Aboriginal, Whistler, was
planning to kill the whites and use their horses to hunt cattle. The vision of a cavalry of naked Aborigines, with murderous intent and the efficiency of the Native Police, caused the Times again to urge that prompt, strong measures be taken by the Native Police as 'in such a case it is the wisest and most merciful course to adopt' 62. It was a common frontier fear that a Native Police trooper would use his experience to direct the vengeance of the local Aborigines and no doubt they sometimes did exert a malign influence, but only in a minor way. 63. As late as March 1871, cattle were speared at Inkerman, Jarvisfield, and Leichhardt Downs, causing the Native Police detachment to be summoned from Ravenswood as there were no near coastal detachments by this time. 64. Apparently, now, such occurrences only sporadically caused the squatter to seek such drastic action.

Even close to Bowen in 1872 there were areas where the Aborigines still gave trouble. Along the

63. P.D.T., 27 August 1870.
64. P.D.T., 18 March 1871.
Don farmers claimed Aborigines were stealing their whole season's maize crop while only eight miles south of Bowen Aborigines were stealing sheep. These depredations were so persistent that a Native Police detachment was moved to the Bogie from where it could retaliate more quickly. The Aborigines involved had almost certainly been previously admitted; but such relapses could only be expected as Aborigines on their own tribal land only respected European property through fear of reprisal. A routine dispersal followed. There were probably other reasons for such Aboriginal boldness so close to Bowen. Perhaps they used the mangroves swamps as a natural refuge from European retaliation. Almost surely hunger was responsible as the willingness of the Aborigines to risk the now well-known dispersal indicated a high degree of desperation.

Even at the end of 1874 'pilfering niggers' were

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65. Petition of Bowen Farmers to Col. Sec.; 22 May 1872, Q.S.A. COL/A169, 1020 of 1872. Also enclosed, S. Yeates to Chief Sec.; 18 May 1872; and Barron, Acting Police Commissioner to Col. Sec.; 9 July 1872. In this, he reports the dispersal and the transfer of the detachment.
still plaguing the Don farmers, but by this time a threatened dispersal was spoken of, with some implied distaste, as the 'old' solution to the problem. 66

Conclusion and Discussion: The Immediate Results of Frontier Conflict.

It is hard to estimate the immediate effects of frontier clash. Most whites maintained they were involved in a justifiable war to possess the land in which it had been necessary to kill Aboriginal warriors. 67 In this endeavour the squatters claimed the Native Police officers as allies and friends without whom the north would have been abandoned. However, the constant strain of frontier life produced an uncritical acceptance of killing to protect life and property which was tacitly supported by the failure of the Queensland government to pursue a positive policy of protecting the Aborigines. The squatters and the Native Police were entrusted with unrestricted power to solve the native problem as violently and cheaply as they wished. Indeed, the inadequate size of the protective force ensured that

66. P.D.T., 28 November 1874.

67. P.D.T., 3 July 1869. Typical squatter view expressed in letter signed 'Amicus Justitiae'.
all frontiersmen participated in the inevitable frontier conflict while the Native Police was an irresponsible instrument at their disposal. There were enough accounts of white brutality and indiscriminate killing published by such trustworthy witnesses as squatters Chatfield, Bode, and McDougall, and Editor Rayner to indicate that frontier life had brutalized many Europeans. Reformers like Black naturally focused attention on the worst excesses but the determined efforts of townsmen to prevent the Aborigines from being driven away from Bowen in the early stages of the letting-in process implied that he might not be exaggerating the extreme callousness of at least some Europeans.68 Most however were probably relieved when another solution to the problem of frontier contact was attempted.

The effect of the frontier clash upon the Aborigines no doubt varied greatly throughout the district. Of the Aborigines who visited Bowen, locals

68. P.D.T., 1 May 1869, 'Shall We Admit the Blacks No. II.' Rev. I. Black, extremely critical of the old policy, gives accounts of great brutality.
estimated that only about thirty adult males survived and two hundred members in all.\textsuperscript{69} These undisputed numbers were given to indicate the great decline from the original population but once again contemporary estimates of original numbers were generally highly exaggerated. As well it is often impossible to be sure which geographical area contains the estimate. At Bowen the few adult males, compared with the total number, indicated quite a deal of slaughter; more perhaps than is indicated by the figures because women and children were not always regarded as sacrosanct.\textsuperscript{70} After the Aborigines were admitted on the Cape River, the men were also greatly outnumbered by the women.\textsuperscript{71} It would be foolish to juggle with highly doubtful figures to estimate what proportion of the Aborigines were killed in conflict, but there is a strong suggestion that in many areas a great number of men were killed and the numbers of women and children depleted, but less noticeably so.

\textsuperscript{69} P.D.T., 17 April 1869, 'Shall We Admit the Blacks'. 19 June 1869. The Editor's estimate.


\textsuperscript{71} Curr, \textit{The Australian Race}, ibid.
Morrill's testimony is valuable to illustrate further the causes of the decrease in population resulting from frontier conflict which was still continuing when he wrote. In 1863 he stated: '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 Native Police but also blamed '.... the wars, fights, ..... and the natural deterioration of the people themselves'.

Yet Morrill had previously said their wars were 'not... of a very sanguinary nature', and modern authorities agree that under tribal conditions deaths from feuding were few. The 'natural deterioration of the people' presumably meant their decline in health and numbers, yet it seems clear that such deterioration was not 'natural' but a result of the chaos into which tribal life was thrown by the alien intrusion which changed the very basis of their economic, social, and religious life. Dietary habits were disrupted, natural resources

73. ibid., p.25.
74. Abbie, The Original Australians, pp. 191; 199.
restricted, and the security of their sacred life made meaningless. Without doubt the escalation in tribal warfare which Morrill's account above implied was the result of European intrusion; for example, one group might have been driven on to its neighbours' land without the traditional sanctions for such trespassing.

The _Port Denison Times_ gave a factual description of one routine Native Police sweep from which it is not difficult to imagine Aborigines, friends and foes, being thrown into confused conflict over a vast area. A Native Police detachment dispersed two 'mobs' around Bowen, two more near Proserpine, several very large 'mobs' south of Proserpine, and returned to Proserpine to drive the reassembled Aborigines over the ranges. 75 Aborigines, then, had to compete not only with the Europeans but also with other Aboriginal groups. In addition, the Europeans often deliberately destroyed such Aboriginal artefacts as spears, fish nets, wallaby nets, rugs, and tomahawks which were essential to the native economy. 76

There is no witness to report how inter-tribal

75. _P.D.T._, 16 June 1866.
fighting was exacerbated when one group was forced to raid another because it could no longer find wives from its traditional source. Chatfield's comment that the majority of males were unmarried might indicate that the imbalance had been accentuated in this manner. 77 One could suggest a multitude of ways in which the presence of the European could cause friction between one Aboriginal group and another which would accelerate the destruction of Aboriginal society. However, as so often happens in the writing of ethnohistory, the people with the primitive technology have not left much evidence of such changes and field work has yet to be carried out in this area. What, for example, was bartered for the sea shells the Cape River Aborigines used for ornamentation? Such barter could have been important in the religio-economic life of the coastal Aborigines and its disruption might have seriously disturbed them.

The end of frontier conflict meant that the Aborigines could resume in part their traditional life but it was really a severely limited part. Large

gatherings would still offend the squatter. As seen in Chapter I, traditional gatherings for religious-economic purposes were generally prolonged and the ensuing denudation of the countryside of food would inevitably threaten the pastoralist's animals. It is hard to envisage a squatter allowing an inter-tribal gathering of well over one thousand Aborigines such as Morrill described. Nor would squatters have sanctioned large numbers of strange Aborigines foraging across their stations to attend a gathering of all the tribes between Cape Cleveland and Port Denison. Even much smaller gatherings would have antagonized them. Moreover as the Aborigines began to work for the Europeans to supplement their food supply, they developed strong and increasing economic links with the Europeans and the Europeans with them. This limited their mobility greatly.

There were other ways in which the Europeans were preventing the Aborigines from resuming their traditional life. Often Aboriginal women were taken completely from their old life to be servants or
concubines. 78 While many newly let in men found ready employment, there was an understandable eagerness to get Aboriginal children who could be trained more satisfactorily for service. It even became increasingly common to kidnap boys from the camps of pacified Aborigines for work on the diggings and elsewhere. Apparently the desire for such cheap labour was so great that some Europeans kidnapped Aboriginal children and sold them to others. When such cases were referred to the government, the Crown Law Office pointed out that the 'Slave Act', 5Geo.4Cap.113, could be used by the local Bench 79 but proof of the offence was so difficult and official apathy so great that no record of the laying of such a charge has been discovered in the course of this investigation.

Grenfell Price asserted that European disease preceded open conflict. 80 There is no evidence that

78. P.D.T., 1 May 1869; 22 May 1869; 'Shall We Admit the Blacks' articles. 5 June 1869, 'Within 100 Miles of the Burdekin'.

79. W. Chatfield, Natal Downs, to P.M. Bowen, 6 January 1869, enclosed in P.M. Bowen to Police Commissioner, Q.S.A. COL/A121, 1483 of 1869.

80. Grenfell Price, White Settlers and Native Peoples, pp. 1; 2; 118.
this occurred in the Bowen district although, as noted above, European disease very soon spread to the Aborigines once some sort of peaceful contact was established between the races, even if the frontier conflict continued. It seems, however, that in the second decade of Bowen's history not only venereal disease but also such diseases as measles caused great loss of life among the Aborigines. 31 Probably the complete separation of the two races during the early 'keeping them out' period saved the Aborigines from earlier infection.

Inevitably the Aborigines learnt little if anything of the spiritual and intellectual wealth of European civilization. Few of the Europeans they met had introduced them to it; neither would they have been interested as it was irrelevant to their way of life. They did perceive its material and technological wealth and were increasingly attracted to it. Yet they received only the scraps of this wealth: cast off clothes, cheap blankets, steel axes, poor quality food,

and cheap alcohol. At this stage of contact, however, these were very attractive to the Aborigines and they willingly satisfied the demands of the Europeans to obtain them. The Europeans had taken their land. The old subsistence economy was partly denied them but a new and less physically demanding subsistence was possible if the whims of the Europeans were satisfied.\footnote{P.D.T., 4 April 1874. The Editor commented on 'the wretched half-civilized loafers about the town'.} A new stage of Aboriginal-European relations was commencing which would prove even more disastrous than the first.
CONCLUSION

The Frontier Conflict and Its Place in General Australian Histories

In the three hundred years of European expansion across the globe, it was repeatedly demonstrated how fragile the thin veneer of civilization was when the customary restraints were removed. The Spanish in America, the Portuguese in Asia,\(^1\) and the British in Bengal\(^2\) showed that the responsibilities towards even a numerous conquered people could be forgotten before the temptation of amassing wealth. In the settlement of the Bowen District, once again the normally accepted British value of the worth of human life and the normal functioning of British justice were not applied to the indigenous people whose occupation of the land impeded the growth of the pastoral industry, then the economic mainstay of the infant colonial government.\(^3\) Despite the many accounts of the killing or kidnapping of

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3. Of course the 'normally accepted British value of the worth of human life' was sometimes not put into practice even in England, but it was an espoused value theoretically protected by the law. When a British government took life, it did so only with the sanction of the law.
Aborigines, no record of a charge being laid against a white man was discovered in the course of this investigation. Yet the punishment of Aborigines for offences or alleged offences against the whites was commonplace. There was no indication that the Government tried to limit the well-known aggression of its Native Police or the settlers' use of force against its black British subjects. In fact the Aborigines were most often treated as outlaws. Even after the Aborigines were pacified, there were indications that there would be one law for the Europeans and another for the Aborigines.

The difficulty of racial contact between Europeans and materially poorer non-Europeans is still a problem which politicians and social scientists have not solved. In the nineteenth century the acculturation process was hardly capable of a satisfactory solution. The Europeans' ignorance of the Aboriginal way of life and its values partly contributed to their lack of sympathy for the Aborigines. Yet the powerlessness of the Aborigines placed the greater responsibility for solving the problems of racial contact on the Europeans. This was not accepted by the colonial government, the only body that could have mitigated these problems.
Indeed, Queensland's Native Policy ensured that contact would be violent. It used the Native Police on the outskirts of settlement to break the opposition of the Aborigines and allowed that force to serve the settlers irresponsibly. The inadequacy of the frontier force prevented it from offering protection to both races or enforcing restraint upon them. Implicitly the government required that the settlers take the law into their own hands; and while its own frontier force was so inadequate, it could not consistently question the methods of the settlers to rid themselves of the menace of the Aborigines to life and property.

In North Queensland there was no legacy of penal colony brutality to embitter relations between the free settlers and the Aborigines. Moreover, owing to the remoteness of Port Denison from the previously settled districts, it seems that the Aborigines were not prejudiced against Europeans by a knowledge of previous disastrous contact. A new start in Aboriginal-European contact was possible as Dalrymple had realized. Yet the pattern of contact found elsewhere in Australia was repeated although there was a variety of individual responses within this pattern. North Queensland was
one of the last areas in eastern Australia to be settled and both the Government and the pioneers accepted the southern stereotype of the nature of contact. In effect what ensued was not 'a war of extermination' - although some Europeans pursued it as such - but a war to achieve the unconditional surrender of the Aborigines after their power to resist had been broken.

The written evidence suggests that most settlers did not envisage the 'letting-in' process developing and were surprised by the sudden establishment of peaceful relations between black and white. The resolution of the problem of frontier conflict did not stem from criticism from the town; it was initiated by the squatters because of the wearing nature of the struggle, its expense, the diminution of the Aboriginal threat, and the squatters' need for labour. This economic self-interest was combined with the humanitarian concern of some squatters and some townsfolk. The written evidence further suggests that outlying squatters like Hickson on the Belyando River and Chatfield of Natal Downs had first been able to come to terms with their Aborigines. In this way a climate of
opinion developed in the Bowen District which would not uncritically accept the unrestrained use of violence to solve the 'black problem'.

In the solution of the problem of frontier conflict, the role of the government was negative, the role of some private initiative positive. Because of more urgent needs elsewhere, the government lowered the strength of the Native Police in the Bowen District thus leaving the settlers to solve the, by then, less dangerous problem of contact. From the first settlement, all efforts to reach a new understanding with the Aborigines had come from the settlers. Even Dalrymple's attempts to found the settlement without alienating the Aborigines and later, to replace the Native Police, derived from his personal initiative and were placed before an unreceptive government. Later efforts to mitigate the harshness of conflict by Morrill, squatters like McDougall and Bode, the Reverend I. Black, and even Lt. Marlow met with no positive assistance.

Was there any alternative to the frontier violence? As mentioned in Chapter II, the South Queensland squatter, Haley, was able to reach a peaceful
working relationship with his Aborigines. Even in North Queensland, just to the west of the Bowen District, Robert Christison of Lammermoor was able to establish his station without bloodshed. He detailed workable terms to the Aborigines which allowed them to continue to occupy 'his' station and incorporated them in the new pastoral economy from the start. Significantly, he refused to allow the Native Police to set foot upon Lammermoor. Morrill's account also suggests that at least some Aborigines were capable of appreciating the necessity of coming to terms with the invaders. However, men with Christison's appreciation of the Aborigines were rare on the North Queensland frontier in the 1860's. Only the colonial government could have restrained both settlers and Aborigines and this it refused to do. Its nineteenth century laissez faire attitude could encompass the protection of European life and property with its Native Police Force but it would not protect the Aborigines as this seemed to entail inhibiting pastoral expansion or discouraging capital investment.

4. 'Minutes of Evidence' in 1861 V. & P., pp. 72; 79.
Even if frontier contact had been more effectively controlled, the basic problems of culture conflict remained. The Europeans were determined to dispossess the Aborigines. Yet the Aboriginal economy, religion, and social and political structure were intimately associated with the land. Some Aboriginal resistance was inevitable. The first decade of settlement in the Bowen District brought into conflict two completely incompatible cultures. Even on Lammermoor the Aborigines had surrendered their way of life but the full significance of this was not apparent at the time. In the nineteenth century, European occupation of the land led to the destruction of traditional Aboriginal life and values. It seems that this truism holds even in the twentieth century.  

The Aborigines of the Bowen District must have been astounded at the change in the Europeans' attitude towards them after they were let in. Within limitations they could still live their old life and for little effort they were given material wealth that had an

6. e.g. See W. E.H. Stanner, 'Durragam, a Nangiomeri' in In the Company of Men: Twenty Portraits of Anthropological Informants, Ed. J. Casagrande (New York, Reprinted 1964), passim. The impact of mining developments in such Aboriginal reserves as Weipa and Gove will offer a challenge to concerned governments.
immediate appeal. Their previously implacable enemies would give them clothes, implements, food, and drink, which aroused new expectations and rendered unattractive many aspects of their old way of life. More important, the security of their world picture was shattered. Increasingly, they would find that the creative impulse of the eternal dreamtime did not encompass the activities of the Europeans or sustain the Aborigines in the new life that was developing. One of the most tradition-bound cultures was brought into contact with an offshoot of the most dynamic culture of the time. The violence of the frontier conflict made the encounter even more abruptly traumatic.

Even in retrospect the conflict cannot be deemed trivial. In the Bowen District it extended without quarter for from five to eight years, disregarding occasional later skirmishes. A large number of the Aborigines died as a direct result of this frontier clash yet the Bowen Bench claimed it could distribute blankets to 1,500 survivors. In 1930 Radcliffe-Brown concluded, with regard to the whole of Queensland: 'There is abundant evidence that many thousands of
Aborigines were shot in order that the white man might enjoy undisturbed their tribal lands'. This study of the Bowen District suggests that his conclusion may have been sound.

Robert Gray estimated that (10-20)% of the white population of North Queensland lost their lives to the Aborigines in the 1860's while a police officer claimed (20-30)% was nearer the mark. It is impossible to say with certainty whether European loss of life in the Bowen District approached these figures. However, the threat to life and property was constant and probably more important than the actual number murdered. The settlers were continually made aware of their vulnerability by the well publicised Aboriginal attacks and took strong measures to defend themselves. But, as European power was consolidated while the Aborigines' capacity to resist was eroded, victory was never in doubt.

As stated above there were approximately 1,500

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8. Black, North Queensland Pioneers, p.48. See also Appendix C of this thesis for a discussion of the loss of life in the Bowen District.
Aborigines to receive blankets from the Bowen Bench. In March 1868 there were 2,171 Europeans in the Bowen Police District. Of these 1,144 lived in the town while only 1,027 lived in rural areas. It seems clear that at the end of the period of frontier conflict, the Europeans on the stations were outnumbered by the Aborigines they let in and even in the Bowen District as a whole the Aborigines made up approximately half of the population. Because the Aboriginal numbers subsequently decreased so rapidly and the Aborigines seemed to play such a minor part in Australia's development, it is often overlooked that for a number of years they were not an unimportant minority. If historical importance were crudely based on population, then in this period the Aborigines merited as much attention as the Europeans.

In this study such terms as 'invasion', 'war', 'conquest', and 'terms of peace' have been used deliberately, not to add romance but because to refrain from doing so seems misleading. The Australian

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9. See 1868 V. & P., First Session, p. 306 for population of the Bowen Police District as at 2 March 1868. It is not claimed that the Aboriginal and European populations occupy precisely the same geographic area.
historian's reluctance to use such terms seems to stem partly from the ethnocentrism of the European; partly from a failure to appreciate the significance of the violence.

The frontier conflict is seen as a passing phase in the development of a European civilization in which the Aborigines appear to have no part. Thus Ward's acceptance of Turner's 'frontier thesis' has yet resulted in his devoting less than two pages to 'Mild Aborigines' at the beginning of his *Australia*, a book which 'seeks to stress those elements in Australian history which seem to have been most influential in giving the inhabitants of the country a sense of their own distinctive identity, and so in making a new nation'. Even Manning Clark writes: 'Of the way of life of the Aborigines before the coming of the white man, little need... be said'.


11. Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, Volume I: From the Earliest Times to the Age of Macquarie, (Melbourne, Reprinted 1963), p. 4. H. Reynolds is at present analysing the subject: *The Aborigines in Australian Historiography*. His research has revealed how ethnocentric Australian history is and how concerned the historians have been with material progress.
Greenwood's *Australia: A Social and Political History* declares that 'Australia had large tracts of empty grazing country awaiting occupation', adding that this was a fortunate factor in promoting Australia's sheep industry. This belief that the land before European settlement was waste was repeated: '... the continent was empty, for the unfortunate Aborigines offered no serious economic or cultural opposition...'.

Crawford devotes a chapter to traditional Aboriginal life at the beginning of his *Australia* but only one page to Aborigines in the rest of his book when he admits that: 'The relations of the squatters and the Aborigines have not yet been satisfactorily studied!'. He immediately adds, however, that 'two cultures were meeting which could not both survive'. In *The Story of Australia* Shaw describes traditional Aboriginal life


13. Ibid., p. 92. These are the only two references I found to the Aborigines which are not even mentioned in the index.

in an introductory chapter, 'The Land and Its People', and concludes with one page on the frontier conflict in which, however, he emphasizes 'white violence'. After pointing out how 'the Aborigines were soon driven from the more fertile parts... were not likely to hamper settlement', Shaw unfortunately goes on to discuss in the next paragraph whether the native and exotic animals also provided obstacles to the colonists.\(^{15}\) In these general histories, then, the dispossession of the Aborigines has been quickly dismissed apparently because they have not participated in the development of the 'new nation'. Yet it is obvious that this phase saw the beginning of the destruction of traditional Aboriginal life, which caused the Aborigines to become an unaccepted minority group in their own land.

As the historians examined in this chapter have been primarily concerned with tracing the development of European civilization in Australia, one does not expect to find a history of the various developments within Aboriginal society. Perhaps the frequent failure of the

Aborigines to provide substantial resistance has also caused European historians to ignore them. In South Africa the hundred years of Kaffir wars receives respectful attention from historians\textsuperscript{16} because of their importance in the shaping of colonial and Imperial history. In Australia the hundred years' war to dispossess the Aborigines is largely neglected and the amount of violence between black and white is very cursorily treated.

In a recent Commonwealth government publication, \textit{The Australian Aborigines}, one and a half paragraphs out of 110 pages are devoted to the European conquest.\textsuperscript{17} Clash was inevitable, the writer admits. 'Reduced in numbers, the remnants hung around the settlements and farms...' It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the writer is hurrying over this 'negative' aspect of aboriginal-European relations. Perhaps Australians are reluctant to come to a full awareness of the

\textsuperscript{16} e.g. even in A. Keppel-Jones's slim volume \textit{South Africa: A Short History}, (London, Reprinted 1966), Chapters IV, VII, XI.

\textsuperscript{17} Department of Territories, \textit{The Australian Aborigines}, p. 30.
significance of their conquest of the Aborigines.

Professor Stanner has demanded 'another kind of history', one 'that is less ethnocentric and more sensitive to the contributions which ideas, morals, and values make to events'. 1.8 Probably nowhere is this more apparent than in Australian historians' accounts of culture clash. If the mastering of an inhospitable environment reflects the ambition, drive, and initiative of the settlers so, too, must the conquest of the Aborigines reflect the values and conceptual framework of the Europeans and their government.

So far, as Crawford indicates above, the generalizations about frontier contact have preceded the detailed regional studies. Needless to say the generalizations will need modifying in the light of these closer analyses. Ward states: '... the Aborigines did reply in kind to violent or outrageous acts by the newcomers who occupied their lands; but their reaction was so sporadic and ineffectual that men seldom had to

go armed on the Australian frontier. From Phillip's time until today Australian governments have had to be much more concerned with protecting the Aborigines than with fighting them.¹⁹ This cannot be accepted as true for Queensland in the 1860's; certainly not for the Bowen District.

Similarly this investigation suggests that Crawford's generalization is inadequate for this particular region. 'The relations of both races were often friendly, but in general they make a sad story. There were killings on both sides, and the white man killed less by musket shot than by his diseases and by his unknowing destruction of the Aboriginal culture which had given the natives cohesion and the will to live'. By 1861, the Queensland Government and the Bowen pioneers realised that they were destroying the Aboriginal culture. They had seen it crumble in southern Queensland. They were determined to prevent any semblance of overt Aboriginal cohesion while they kept the Aborigines out and limited it when they let the Aborigines in. They

used violence as a justifiable means of dispossessing the Aborigines. Crawford's last mention of the Aborigines illustrates how ethnocentric his history is: 'Meanwhile, to the squatters and their men on the outer fringes, the Aborigines appeared largely as one of the dangers of pioneering, and were often treated accordingly'. This is, indeed, a 'sad story', not only for the Aborigines but also for the understanding it provides of the values of the 'Pastoral Society' Crawford was describing.

Despite Manning Clark's enigmatic statement that little need be said of the Aboriginal way of life before the coming of the white man, he describes the conflict with compassion and allows the settlers' actions to reflect ironically upon themselves. However, he also writes the Aborigines out of Australia's history. His last serious mention of them describes how the first Federal Parliament excluded them from full citizenship in the new nation. Henry Reynolds has pointed out that the main general historians, Clark, Ward, Shaw,

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Greenwood and Crawford, make virtually no mention of the developments in Aboriginal society after 1850. Only Ward and Shaw comment at all. Ward merely says that to-day the one-sixth of the original number that have survived are 'demoralised', while Shaw briefly indicted the Europeans for their role in this demoralization. Yet the Aborigines are still being detribalised, are still losing their lands to 'progress', and are posing an ever increasing problem of assimilation (or integration) to themselves and to Europeans. The 'Aboriginal problem' that the squatters solved for themselves in a few years is now one that faces the whole nation. The 'dark' Australians did not vanish to suit the ideal of a white Australia.

The writers of Aboriginal history have been anthropologists, like Elkin, the Berndts, Stanner, and Abbie, and ethno-historians like Grenfell Price, Corris, and Hasluck. Their findings have not however been fully assimilated into modern general histories. Nor has the

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23. Reynolds, op. cit. Mentioned in a research paper presented orally at the James Cook University.
European conquest and subsequent neglect of the Aborigines that these writers have revealed been seen to reflect upon the European majority. At the present time the anthropologists and ethno-historians, by virtue of their subject matter, have produced equally one-sided histories in which the European is seen as the intruder. The developments in the European society are treated only incidentally as they affect the Aborigines. It is not too much to hope that a more balanced history of Australia will be written.

Although such anthropologists as Elkin, the Berndts, Abbie, and Stanner differ in their brief historical sketches of Aboriginal-European contact, they all emphasize the continuing nature of the problem. Even Elkin, the most restrained of these, writes: 'Thus, force and punitive expeditions became an institutionalized way of dealing with the Aborigines, and lingered on in the sparsely settled central, north-western and northern parts of the continent until the 1930's'.

As one would expect, such students of the Aborigines have come to appreciate them. Their

language reflects their concern. Without wishing to blame the nineteenth century Europeans for lacking twentieth century liberalism and understanding of the Aborigines, these writers believe the history of frontier contact cannot be ignored. The Berndts, in part quoting other writers, refer to the 'violence', 'clash', 'pacification by force', 'rising of 1842-4' in New South Wales, the 'Battle of Pinjarra', the 'Black Drive of 1830' in Tasmania, and the 'brutality of various kinds ... still taking place right up to the early 1940's!'. They add: 'All this is no secret. But while there is no need to labour the point, it cannot be simply dismissed as irrelevant to the present'.

Abbie and Stanner are less considerate of the feelings of their fellow white Australians. While maintaining strenuously that disease was more deadly than violence, Abbie states: 'The "Aboriginal Wars" marred the early history of settlement in New South Wales, Victoria and especially Queensland ... In all, many hundreds of Aborigines were murdered and some

tribes were virtually exterminated'. South Australia and Western Australia, he concluded, 'have a much less murderous record' than the other states. 28 He points out how the Europeans' treatment of the Aborigines led to a 'reaction ... of progressive disillusionment' which still exists to-day to negate European efforts to help. 'Not unnaturally the Aborigines gradually built up a tremendous antagonism towards the whites that became a tradition, an obsession rather: "we against them"... Their land was stolen, their people murdered, their women raped ... the law was almost invariably settled in favour of the white man'. 29

Stanner points out that 'Most of the conquest of Australia... took place between 1830 and 1890, the period in which economic expansionism, land hunger and pioneering were at their strongest. In such a period nothing which was politically practicable could have been done to isolate the simple Australian tribes. They went down like ninepins, and made no mark on the ground'. 30 He concluded that the life and death of the tribes had

29. ibid., p. 232.
made no impact at all on Australia. Yet Abbie considered European inhumanity towards the Aborigines 'must remain an indelible blot on Australian history'. As yet it clearly hasn't, partly because the most widely read historians considered it of little importance in describing the development of Australia's European civilization. Ward thus, dismisses the conflict: 'Some were hunted down and shot or poisoned like animals, but many more fell victims to the white man's diseases and to the spiritual sickness that resulted from the breakdown of their tribal life'. The role of the white man in the destruction of that society is strangely neutralised.

The anthropologists, thus, indicate not only their concern for the Aborigines but also how the historians' preoccupation with white Australians has in fact concealed a real and important aspect of Australian history.

Both black and white Australians need to understand the development of their intertwined histories as part of their national and racial consciousness. This is especially true of North Queensland where there is a large

31. ibid.
32. Abbie, op. cit., p. 231.
33. Ward, Australia, p. 22.
population of Aborigines who are unaware of their past although very conscious of its results. Throughout the world, repressed ethnic groups have found an historical perspective essential to ethnic dignity. As the Aborigines become more educated and more outspoken, they too, will ask about their history and, one hopes, participate in the writing of it.

White Australians seem to have only the vaguest appreciation of the dispossession of the Aborigines, at best shrugging off the process because of its inevitability and pointing out that it was but part of the inexorable dynamic of world-wide European expansion. Such determinist reasoning leads on logically to an implied sanctioning of European action and, worse still, a comforting complacency as to the fate of the indigenous peoples. In the process of decolonization the indignation being expressed by the westernized elites indicate that such mechanistic thinking has produced a deep failure in understanding that the historian has frequently not attempted to correct. The importance of this is only too apparent to-day when any suggestion of European dominance will unite non-Europeans and evoke the charge of 'colonialism', a word now accepted as connoting arrogant
exploitation. It should, therefore, be a salutary experience for white Australians to learn that the pioneers' drive and resource helped to produce not only the present prosperity and confidence of the whites but also the material poverty and cultural uncertainty of the Aborigines in contemporary Australian society.